

Pragmatic and Sociolinguistic Features of Hybrid Verbs in Instagram Youth Discourse

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Abstract: *The rise of hybrid verbs in Uzbek Instagram discourse reflects increasing language contact between English and Uzbek in digital youth culture. The study documents, categorizes, and examines the structural patterns and pragmatic functions of 50 naturally occurring hybrid verbal constructions from publicly accessible Uzbek-language Instagram content. A qualitative-descriptive corpus analysis was conducted, categorizing each item for morphological structure, social distribution, and communicative function. The analytical framework integrates Yus's internet pragmatics model, Satimova's neologism typology, and sociolinguistic identity theory. Three main structural patterns were identified: 1. English noun/verb stem + qilmoq, 2. English root + Uzbek -la verbalizer, 3. English idiom + Uzbek state verb. Each pattern serves distinct pragmatic functions including linguistic economy, identity signaling, semantic specialization, and multimodal meaning-making. The findings suggest that hybrid verbs are a grammatically principled and socially meaningful phenomenon driven by communicative efficiency and identity performance, with implications for contact linguistics and digital communication research in multilingual communities.*

Keywords: *Hybrid Verbs, Instagram Discourse, Internet Pragmatics, Sociolinguistic Identity, Code-Mixing, Computer-Mediated Communication, Uzbek Digital Language, Linguistic Econom*

1. Introduction

Language has always evolved, borrowing and reinventing itself in response to the social environments where people communicate. The systematic study of such contact-based change dates at least to Weinreich whose foundational account of languages in contact established that bilingual speakers are the primary agents through whom structural features transfer between linguistic system. [1]

Uzbekistan offers a particularly compelling case with its complex post-Soviet multilingual environment, where standard Uzbek, colloquial Russian, and global English coexist, especially in urban digital spaces. Younger generations engage in widespread code-switching, blending all three languages fluidly during online interactions [2]. Instagram, with its visual oriented design and youth-dominated user base, is the primary site where this blending is most visible and most creative. At the center of this creativity are hybrid verbs - novel verbal forms combining English lexical roots with native Uzbek morphological structures. Examples like *prank qilmoq* ('to prank'), *storislamoq* ('to post a story'), and *ghost qilmoq* ('to ghost someone') are not signs of language decay. [3] They are evidence of a dynamic, rule-governed process caused by pragmatic needs and social meaning. Although prior research has documented English borrowings and code-mixing in Uzbek digital communication hybrid verb constructions as a distinct grammatical and pragmatic category have received limited focused study. Based on contact linguistics, internet pragmatics, and sociolinguistic identity theory, this study addresses that gap. The following sections review the theoretical background, methodology, results, and discussion. [4]

2. Methodology

Yus introduces internet pragmatics as a unique analytical framework, arguing that classical face-to-face pragmatics cannot account for platform architectures, digital affordances, and the fragmented, multimodal nature of online interaction. This perspective builds on a broader scholarly tradition including Thurlow and Mroczek who argued that new media discourse is not a degraded derivative of offline language but a site of genuine semiotic creativity deserving its own analytical vocabulary.[5] On Instagram, verbal text never stands alone they are closely connected with visuals, for example, captions accompany photographs, comments answer reels — creating what Yus describes as a layered system of visual explicatures and implicatures. Androutsopoulos similarly showed that computer-mediated environments generate different code-switching patterns determined not only by speaker identity but by the specific affordances of each platform, including its character limits, visual format, and audience design features. Crystal earlier characterized digital communication as a hybrid between spontaneous speech and formal writing, with ‘Netspeak’ pulled toward spoken informality and brevity while remaining technically written.[6] This hybrid nature is directly relevant to the hybrid verbs studied here, which carry the compression of spoken shorthand while appearing in written captions and comment. Muysken gives a widely adopted typological framework for classifying exactly such processes, distinguishing insertion (embedding a constituent from one language into the grammatical frame of another), alternation (shifting between two full grammatical systems), and congruent lexicalization (exploiting shared structural positions across languages) — which clarifies where each Uzbek hybrid verb type belongs.[7] The prevalent English root + *qilmoq* pattern exemplifies what Muysken terms classic insertion: an alien element occupies a native grammatical slot without disrupting the matrix structure. Myers-Scotton explained this matrix structure through the Matrix Language Frame model, which proposes that in bilingual utterances one language always supplies the grammatical frame — the morphological and word-order scaffold — while the other supplies lexical material. Uzbek acts consistently as the matrix language providing suffixation and word order, while English is consistently the embedded language which provides stems.[8] Satimova (adds nuance by distinguishing extralinguistic triggers, interlinguistic transfers, and intralinguistic productivity — cases where the host language’s own grammar actively reshapes incoming material. That third category is most relevant here: Uzbek grammaticalizes English stems into familiar morphosyntactic frames rather than absorbing them passively.

3. Result and Discussion

Language choice on social media represents social belonging and generational identity. Ali highlights that specialized digital jargon acts as a 'marker of identity and solidarity,' and it enables subcultural membership among peers who share the same reference points. In the Uzbek Instagram, a term like *bulking qilmoq* or *winter arc qilmoq* is understandable specifically within fitness communities or gaming circles but not to all Uzbek speakers. Khalilli describes code-switching in youth digital culture as highly stylized and performative, used to 'perform identity, align with peer norms, or resist linguistic authority'.[9] Tarma and Ritonga provide quantitative support, finding that English elements in youth social media posts consistently function as prestige markers while native-language elements retain affective and relational value. Priority was given to authenticity rather than frequency, that is, a single occurrence in naturalistic context was considered more valuable than a frequently repeated form of uncertain origin. Each item was categorized according to three dimensions: (1) structural formation (the morphological template integrating the English root into Uzbek); (2) social distribution (the type of user community most associated with the form); and (3) pragmatic function (the communicative purpose served in its natural context of use). [10]

The last pattern is *English phrase/idiom + Uzbek state verb* and this pattern represents

approximately 16% of the corpus and it combines English multi-word expressions or idioms with Uzbek state verbs such as *bo'lmoq* ('to become') or movement verbs such as *chiqmoq* ('to emerge'). Examples include *trend bo'lmoq*, *viral bo'lmoq*, *glow up bo'ldi*, and *trendga chiqmoq*. These forms express a process of becoming - a transition into a new state - which the Uzbek state verbs convey with precision that a simple *qilmoq* construction could not convey. [11]

Table 1. Representative Hybrid Verbs from the Uzbek Instagram Corpus (A representative sample of 10 items is presented in Table 1 to illustrate the structural patterns. The complete corpus is available from the author upon request)

Hybrid Verb	Structural Pattern	User Community	Pragmatic Function
<i>support qilmoq</i> <i>/ help qilmoq</i>	English noun + qilmoq	Influencers & followers	Solidarity / audience appeal
<i>edit qilmoq</i> / <i>update qilmoq</i>	English noun + qilmoq	Content creators	Professional digital shortcut
<i>prank qilmoq</i> / <i>roast qilmoq</i> <i>blocklab</i>	English noun + qilmoq	Vloggers, teenagers	Humor, sarcasm, playfulness
<i>qo'ymoq</i> / <i>unfollow</i> <i>qilmoq</i>	English root + Uzbek suffixes	Everyday users	Setting digital boundaries
<i>storisga</i> <i>joylamoq</i> / <i>storislamoq</i>	English root + Uzbek suffixes	Casual vloggers	Documenting personal life
<i>ghost qilmoq</i>	English idiom + qilmoq	Gen-Z youth	Abrupt online disengagement
<i>trend bo'lmoq</i> <i>/ viral bo'lmoq</i>	English noun + Uzbek state verbs	Content creators	Signalling digital popularity
<i>postlamoq</i> / <i>sharelamoq</i>	English root + - la suffix	Gen-Z, heavy users	Maximally compressed expression
<i>dm qilmoq</i> / <i>direct yozmoq</i>	English app term + Uzbek verb	All app users	Shifting to private communication
<i>glow up bo'ldi</i>	English idiom + Uzbek past tense	Beauty/fitness subculture	Celebrating personal transformation

Linguistic economy is a consistent pragmatic motivation in all three structural patterns. Many hybrid borrowings persist not due to the absence of native alternatives but because the borrowed form is shorter, more precise, and more user-friendly in context [12]. Hybrid verbs function as powerful identity markers alongside their efficiency. Using a form like *flex qilmoq* rather than a native expression expresses a social positioning including digital fluency, global orientation, and generational membership.[13] This is evident in the close association between specific hybrid verbs and specific user communities. For example, *bulking qilmoq* belongs to fitness culture, *giveawayda qatnashmoq* to commerce communities, and *moodini tushirmoq* to Gen-Z emotional expression.[14]

Khalilli describes this as stylized identity performance where mixing languages in digital captions allows young speakers to be both locally Uzbek through the native grammatical frame and globally connected through the English lexical root.[15]

4. Conclusion

Compared to broader digital code-mixing literature, the Uzbek case stands out for the productivity of its native suffix system. Where some contact situations produce largely unintegrated borrowings, Uzbek Instagram discourse produces forms that are fully grammaticalized, they are derivable, and indistinguishable in their syntactic behavior from native verbs. Blommaert (2010) explains this kind of outcome through the concept of truncated multilingualism which explains this as globalized digital speakers do not acquire full competence in multiple languages but develop partial, strategically deployed repertoires aligned to specific communicative contexts. It can be concluded that this study examined 50 naturally occurring hybrid verbal constructions from Uzbek-language Instagram content and identified three dominant structural patterns and four overlapping pragmatic functions. The central conclusion is clear: hybrid verbs are not marginal or deviant features of Uzbek, they are the productive outcome of a principled interaction between Uzbek's agglutinative morphology and the lexical demands of global digital culture.

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