EXPLORING LINGUISTIC BLENDING IN UZBEK EFL CONTEXTS

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Abstract. This paper explores the phenomenon of language mixing in Uzbek EFL classrooms, focusing on why and how students blend Uzbek and English during lessons. Drawing from classroom observations and previous studies, it argues that code-mixing is not necessarily a sign of linguistic weakness but often a communicative strategy that aids comprehension and expression. The paper further discusses the cultural and pedagogical dimensions of language mixing and proposes practical methods for teachers to manage it effectively while maintaining English immersion.

Keywords: Language mixing, EFL classrooms, code-switching, Uzbek learners, bilingual education, language pedagogy.

Introduction: In recent years, English education in Uzbekistan has expanded rapidly, with students starting to learn English as early as primary school. However, a common phenomenon observed in classrooms is the mixing of Uzbek and English - often referred to as *code-mixing* or *code-switching*. Teachers frequently encounter students who say sentences like "Teacher, bu word nimani anglatadi?" or "Men homeworkni qildim but I'm not sure if it's correct." Such examples reflect how natural language blending has become in EFL settings. Understanding this phenomenon is vital for improving classroom communication and developing culturally responsive teaching practices [1].

Language mixing, also known as *code-switching*, is a common phenomenon in multilingual environments where speakers alternate between two or more languages in communication. In Uzbekistan, where Uzbek is the native language and English is learned as a foreign language, language mixing often occurs naturally in classrooms. Students tend to insert Uzbek words or phrases into English sentences to express concepts they cannot yet articulate in English. This helps them maintain fluency in speech and reduce communication anxiety. For example, a learner might say, "Teacher, today we have "*imtihon*," replacing the English word "exam" with the Uzbek equivalent. Such patterns are not merely linguistic errors but reflect a developing bilingual competence where both linguistic systems coexist and support each other. [2].

Teachers in Uzbek EFL classrooms often employ language mixing not out of weakness but as a conscious pedagogical choice. In classes where students share the same mother tongue, strategic use of Uzbek helps bridge the gap between known and unknown concepts. For example, when introducing abstract grammar like "conditional sentences" or idiomatic expressions, teachers may explain in Uzbek first, then reinforce the concept in English. This bilingual scaffolding builds a strong foundation for deeper understanding. Moreover, language mixing helps maintain lesson flow and reduces confusion, especially when students struggle to follow long English instructions. Another important factor is time efficiency. Explaining complex terms entirely in English can be time-consuming, particularly for lower-level learners. A brief switch to Uzbek clarifies meaning immediately, ensuring that all students progress together [3].

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language mixing in Uzbek EFL classrooms reflects the intersection of identity, culture, and communication. Many Uzbek learners perceive English as a symbol of modernity and opportunity, while Uzbek represents familiarity, emotion, and solidarity. By alternating between the two, students express both their cultural belonging and their aspiration for global connection. In peer conversations, language mixing often signals group membership or humor. Psychologically, this phenomenon can be interpreted through Krashen's "Affective Filter Hypothesis," which suggests that emotional comfort enhances language acquisition. When learners are permitted to express themselves in both languages, they feel less anxious and more willing to experiment with English. Code-switching also fosters peer collaboration - weaker students receive help from stronger peers through explanations in Uzbek, reinforcing comprehension for both sides. Rather than being a sign of deficiency, language mixing becomes a strategy for managing cognitive load and emotional balance during learning [4].

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