The Role of Russian Function Words in Urban Colloquial Uzbek*

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Although a number of scholars researching language contact have pointed out the borrowing of core vocabulary including function words and discourse markers (Bernsten 1990; Campbell 1987; Higa 1979; Mougeon & Beniak 1990; Mougeon 1998; Myers-Scotton 1993; Scotton & Okeju 1973), the exact role of these loans in the borrowing language has not been studied in great detail. In this paper I present data from the virtually unresearched language contact setting of Russian and Uzbek in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. I discuss Russian function words found in colloquial speech of Tashkent residents. I show that these loans have acquired a status distinct from any of their Uzbek equivalents: an affective function of expressing emphasis. I also argue that Russian function words belong to the informal register of Uzbek, and as such are likely to remain unaffected by current language reform.

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1. Introduction

During the seven decades of Soviet rule in Uzbekistan, Russian was the prestige language necessary for higher education and career advancement. This resulted in a high rate of bilingualism and an influx of Russian vocabulary into the Uzbek lexicon. Uzbek dictionaries published in Soviet times testify to the extensive importation of Russian cultural loans such as scientific, philosophical, political and other terminology (Tikhonov 1977). But much more interesting are those loans that never made it to the Uzbek dictionary, although they have been widespread in colloquial usage: core loans and, in particular, function words.

In this paper I focus on two examples of Russian function words found in Tashkenti Uzbek. They are the conjunction *a* "and, but, while, whereas," and the adverb *uzhe* "already, now, by now." Like some other core loans present in colloquial Uzbek, these have acquired a specialized affective or emphatic function not associated with their Uzbek equivalents.

2. Uzbek-Russian Language Contact: Past and Present

Uzbekistan, one of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia, became independent in 1991. Its capital, Tashkent, is roughly half Russian and half Uzbek. Because of this, and because of its role as the center of Uzbek education and government, Tashkent is the place where most of daily Uzbek-Russian language contact has taken place.

The history of Uzbek-Russian language contact begins in the 19th century, when Russia conquered the Central Asian kingdoms and Russian immigrants began pouring into the region (Carrere 1994). In the Soviet period, Russian became the official and the prestige language, and the language of higher education. Since advancement in politics, administration, academia, and professional fields required proficiency in Russian, many Uzbek parents sent their children to Russian-language schools. In fact, textbooks for many subjects were only available in Russian, and Russian-language schools and sections at universities had better resources than their Uzbek counterparts (Kreindler 1982). These factors contributed to increased bilingualism. Today, most of the Uzbek population of Tashkent today is bilingual, although there is a wide range in the degree to which they use Russian on a daily basis.

In independent Uzbekistan, Russian no longer enjoys privileged status. Attitudes towards Russian and its role in modern Uzbek society vary. Some Uzbeks bemoan the presence of Russian loans in their language and criticize code-switching, identifying these with the loss of Uzbek culture. On the other hand, Uzbeks educated in Russian almost never speak Uzbek without code-switching, and might even speak Russian at home or with their Uzbek friends. Some feel completely comfortable with this, while others find it embarrassing and say that they prefer speaking Russian because they feel that in Uzbek they sound uneducated and unsophisticated. I encountered examples of all of these different attitudes among the speakers I worked with. For the majority of speakers, however, Uzbek is the language they use when speaking with other Uzbeks, but they code-switch rather regularly and use many borrowed forms.

3. Methodology

My data was recorded in Tashkent, in the summer of 1997. This paper is based on 14 hours of spontaneous conversations, which include 29 speakers from various backgrounds. I recorded the conversations during meetings or dining with friends.

To identify loans I adopted the reoccurrence criterion of three or more instances proposed and used by Myers-Scotton (1993) and Bernsten (1990). Table (1) lists Russian function words found in Uzbek sentences in my data corpus. The most frequent ones are the contrastive conjunction *a* "and, but, whereas," and the adverb *uzhe* "already, now, by now," with *a* used a total of 76 times by 19 speakers, and *uzhe* 33 times by 16 speakers.

(1) The most frequent Russian core loans

Russian Loan	English Translation	Number of Speakers Who Use It	Total Number of Occurrences
a	and, but, whereas (contrastive conjunction)	19	76
uzhe	Already, now, by now	16	33
i	and	12	25
prosto	simply, just	9	16

voobshche	completely, in general	9	12
da	yes	8	11
na primer	for example	6	13
ili	or	6	11
nu	come on, well	5	7
kak raz	just then	4	6
tak, a tak	like this, in general	4	6
srazu	right away	4	4

All translations and interpretations were consulted with a native speaker, who also provided alternative Uzbek sentences without the loans.

4. Russian Function Words in Colloquial Uzbek

Thomason and Kaufman (1988:74-83) observe that core lexical borrowing increases with more intense language contact. This argument is supported in recent studies by Mougeon and Beniak (1991) and Mougeon (1998), which focus on the distribution and usage of English "so" and several other core loans among bilingual francophone speakers in Ontario. Mougeon and Beniak (1991) and Mougeon (1998) show that core loans from English are used more frequently by those francophone Canadians who use both languages in their daily life (as opposed to speakers who use mainly French). Mougeon and Beniak (1991:211-12) argue that through massive core borrowing, intensive language contact can lead to language change, and propose that core loans such as "so" may start out as code-switches. The last claim is echoed by Myers-Scotton (1993). She argues that the crucial difference between cultural loans and core loans is that the latter form a frequency continuum with code-switching; in other words, borrowings that originate as code-switches become loans.

Such a transition from code-switching to borrowing may be what has happened to Russian function words in Tashkenti Uzbek. There, borrowed function words not only are used with high frequency by speakers who experience intensive language contact, but also have entered the mental lexicon of speakers who use predominantly Uzbek in their daily life.

The speakers in my data corpus belong to the three groups into which Tashkent Uzbeks can be roughly divided:

1. Speakers whose dominant language is Russian. This means that they have experienced the majority of their daily interaction in Russian, including education, home, friends and work.
2. Speakers who have had more or less equal exposure to both languages in their daily life. For example, they may have gone to both types of schools, or went to an Uzbek school but their parents spoke Russian at home.
3. Speakers whose dominant language is Uzbek. They have experienced most of their daily interaction in Uzbek.

Table (2) shows the distribution of the 29 speakers in my data corpus into the three groups, and lists the number of occurrences of *a* and *uzhe*. It shows that while most of the speakers who interact regularly in Russian or in both languages use *a* and *uzhe*, a third of the speakers who interact more regularly in Uzbek use them as well.

(2) The language background of speakers and the frequency of using *a* and *uzhe*

Dominant language	Number of speakers	Code switching present?	Total number			
			of speakers using		of occurrences	
			a	*uzhe*	*a*	*uzhe*
Russian	6	always	5	5	27	16
Balanced	9	almost always	8	4	27	5
Uzbek	14	almost never	5	5	20	12

This data offers a preliminary picture of the distribution of *a* and *uzhe* among Tashkent Uzbeks. This picture supports Thomason and Kaufman (1988), Mougeon and Beniak (1991), and Mougeon (1998) in the correlation between the intensity of contact and frequency of core borrowing. Moreover, it suggests that the loans *a* and *uzhe* have spread to those Uzbek speakers who lack such intensive contact.

Additionally, the two loans have acquired an expressive or emphatic meaning distinct from their Uzbek equivalents. Their presence can cause the speaker to use Russian rather than Uzbek syntactic constructions. These observations were first made by Panasenko in his 1984 dissertation, unique among Soviet works in its attempt to analyze the spoken language. But Panasenko (1984:50) believes that, because they are limited to colloquial usage, the Russian function words are "transitory" loans: they will transfer their emphatic meaning onto the Uzbek equivalents and then go out of use. There is no evidence in spoken Uzbek to support such a prediction. As my data shows, the structures permitted by *a* and *uzhe* are ungrammatical when unmixed Uzbek is used. Thus, throughout the colloquial language Russian words are used in their specialized, emphatic function alongside their Uzbek equivalents, with no evidence of transference of meaning suggested by Panasenko.

5. *a* "and, while, whereas"—a contrastive conjunction

The contrastive conjunction *a* does not have one single equivalent in English. It can be used in the sense of "while, whereas, but," as in the sample Russian sentence in (3):

(3) Ya rabotayu v shkole, a moya sestra na universitete.
"I work in school, whereas my sister works at a university."

Sometimes the conjunction *a* in Russian can be used in a sense that is not contrastive, but corresponds to the English "so" or "how about?" This is illustrated in examples (4) and (5):

(4) A on kogda priezzhaet?
"So when is he coming?"

(5) Ya nikogda ne ezdila v Moskvu. A ty?
"I have never gone to Moscow. How about you?"

In Uzbek there is no exact equivalent for *a*. In the contrastive sense, there are the words *esa* and *bo'lsa*, whose meaning is the same but whose structural position is different. According to Uzbek syntax, these words follow the contrasted segment, whereas in Russian they precede it. When *a* is used in Uzbek, however, it does not simply replace the native *esa/bo'lsa*. Instead, it is used in consistence with Russian syntax, at the beginning of the phrase which contains the con-

trasted segment. As such, it offers a way to introduce the contrast earlier, and in this way gives the utterance an additionally emphatic meaning. Below are several examples of utterances with *a*, followed by an alternative without *a*.

A chauffeur tells me about movies shown on Uzbek TV:

(6) a. Oldin qiziq-qiziq kinolar ko'rsatadi, a hozir ko'rsatmaydi uncha qiziq-qiziq kinolar…
"Before they used to show interesting movies, but now they don't show such interesting movies…"
b. Oldin qiziq-qiziq kinolar ko'rsatadi, hozir esa ko'rsatmaydi uncha qiziq-qiziq kinolar…

In (6)a the contrastive *a* is placed at the beginning of the clause, before *hozir* "now." If translated as the Uzbek *esa*, as in (6)b, the conjunction moves to the position after *hozir*.

A high school student is telling me that she often speaks Russian with her friends:

(7) a. Rus o'rtoqlarim ko'p, man, o'shanchun, unoqa, ular ruscha gapirsa, man ham ruscha gapiraman, a o'zbek o'rtoqlarim ham ko'pi ruscha gapiradi.
"I have a lot of Russian friends, so because of that, well, when they speak Russian, I speak Russian also, and as for my Uzbek friends, a lot of them also speak Russian."
b. Rus o'rtoqlarim ko'p, man, o'shanchun, unoqa, ular ruscha gapirsa, man ham ruscha gapiraman, o'zbek o'rtoqlarim esa ham ko'pi ruscha gapiradi.

Placing *a* at the beginning of the phrase in (7)a prepares the listener for the contrast. As judged by a native speaker, it also sets up a comparison between the two groups of friends. This effect is not achieved in (7)b, where the Uzbek *esa* is used instead of *a*, because *esa* has to follow the contrasted phrase *o'zbek o'rtoqlarim* "my Uzbek friends."

The usage of *a* that is approximated by English "so" does not have an Uzbek equivalent. Without using *a*, the same idea has to be

expressed differently depending on the context. This is illustrated in example (8), where a young woman changes the topic of our conversation by asking me about the occupation of someone I know:

(8) A u nimani o'rgatadi?
"So, what does he teach?"

The function of *a* in (8) is both to create a connection with the preceding conversation, and to signal that a new issue or question will be introduced. It is a stylistic device that renders the subsequent question less inquisitive and more informal.[1] In Uzbek, without borrowing a Russian word, a similar effect can be achieved using the Uzbek word *o'zi* "himself," as in (9). In this case, however, the end result is different: the use of *o'zi* places emphasis on the subject "he" without creating the connection with previous dialog or producing a "softening" effect:

(9) U o'zi nimani o'rgatadi?
"He himself, what does he teach?" or "And he, what does he teach?"

Sometimes the emphasis provided by the use of *a* is evidenced in the fact that the speaker uses both a native word and the Russian loan in the utterance. This is illustrated in examples (10) and (11).

A young doctor jokingly explains when doctors are afraid of needles. He uses the Uzbek word *bo'lsa* in the place consistent with the Uzbek syntax (after the contrasted segment), and also uses *a* as consistent with the Russian syntax (at the beginning of the contrasted segment). I have tried to express this effect of double emphasis in the English translation:

(10) Birovga ukol qilishdan ko'rqmaymiz. A o'zimizga bo'lsa, endi ko'rqamiz.
"We are not afraid of giving shots to others. But when it's us however, then we are scared."

[1] Similar devices are used in English. Imagine a woman telling her friend about someone she had a date with. The friend's question about the date's occupation has a different tone depending on whether it is prefaced with "so." Compare: "What does he do?" vs. "So, what does he do?"

In example (11), a high school student describes her competence in Russian. In this case *a* is likewise redundant in the strict sense because it is used alongside the Uzbek *lekin* "however." But in this sentence the presence of *a* creates additional emphasis by licensing a syntactic construction otherwise ungrammatical in Uzbek. Compare (11)a with *a* and (11)b without it, and notice the order of the italicized words:

(11) a. …Yozishga… ha, qiyinaman, lekin a *fikrlashim ruschada* osonroq…
"With writing… yeah, I have trouble, however but *thinking* is easier *in Russian*…"
b. …Yozishga… ha, qiyinaman, lekin *ruschada fikrlashim* osonroq…
"With writing… yeah, I have trouble, however *in Russian thinking* is easier."

The difference in the English translation between (11)a and (11)b shows the difference in focus that is created when *a* is introduced. The different word order, legitimized by *a*, allows the speaker to place emphasis on "thinking" and not on "Russian."

6. *uzhe* "already, now, by now"

The Russian adverb *uzhe*, meaning "already, now, by now," has the Uzbek equivalent *allaqachon* "already, for some time, long since." In some cases, the correspondence between the two can be exact, for example:

(12) Ona uzhe priekhala (Russian)
U allaqachon kelgan (Uzbek)
"She already arrived."

However, there are many cases when the meaning of *uzhe* is not equivalent to *allaqachon*. Panasenko (1984:116) discusses one example where the use of *uzhe* changes the construction of the sentence and adds emphasis or affective meaning:

(13) O'g'limizni uylantirish kerak, uzhe qartaydi.
son-our-acc marry-caus need already get old-past
"We have to marry off our son, he has already gotten old."

Compare with the Russian translation:

(14) Syna pora zhenit', uzhe pereros.
Son-acc time marry, already get old-past
"Time to marry off our son, he has already gotten old."

Without using *uzhe*, it is ungrammatical to use the simple past tense form of the verb *qartaymoq* "to age, to grow old," which appears in (13), and which is the exact equivalent of the Russian verb *pererasti* "to outgrow, be too old" appearing in (14). Instead, the choice and construction of the verb has to carry the meaning of "already," expressed by a compound verb:

(15) O'g'limizni uylantirish kerak, yoshi (endi) o'tib ketyapti.
Son-our-acc marry-caus need age-his (just) pass-gerund go-pres
(compound verb)
"We have to marry off our son, his years are (just now) passing by."

According to Panasenko (1984), the construction without *uzhe*, has less emphasis than the one with *uzhe*: "in the sentence with *endi*, the event is commented upon, while in the sentence with *uzhe* it is evaluated" (116). This judgment is consistent with that of the native speaker I consulted. *Uzhe* carries the meaning of urgency, or of surprise, as in "can you believe that it is already..."

In my data, *uzhe* is often used for emphasis in the way described by Panasenko. In example (16) a young woman is talking about her uncle, who has been visiting Tashkent from Kokand. He was expected to visit her but has not arrived yet. She comments:

(16) U bugun Toshkentdan ketish kerak edi. Uzhe, Qo'qonga. U ketmapdi ekan.
"He was supposed to leave Tashkent today. Already, for Kokand. He hasn't left."

In this sentence, the use of *uzhe* emphasizes the fact that the uncle was supposed to go back home to Kokand already and would not have a chance to see his niece. The Uzbek *allaqachon* might work if it appeared at the beginning of the first sentence:

(17) U allaqachon bugun Toshkentdan Qo'qonga ketish kerak edi.
"He already today was supposed to leave Tashkent for Kokand."

However, once the first sentence in (16) has been said without *allaqachon*, the Uzbek word cannot be used after it. A native speaker's intuition was that *allaqachon* has the sense of "already for some time," so it sounds strange when it follows *bugun* meaning "today." For this reason, (18) is ungrammatical:

(18) * U bugun Toshkentdan ketish kerak edi. Allaqachon, Qo'qonga.

Sometimes *uzhe* does not translate into "already" or *allaqachon*, because it is not used to express time at all. Rather, it emphasizes the degree of whatever is being conveyed, for example surprise, distance, the importance or unimportance of something. This is the case in examples (19) and (20).

A woman is talking about her husband's family after I asked about her relationship to a young man I knew:

(19) Mani erimning ukalari. Ukasi. Maniki katta. Birinchi o'g'il bola, ikkinchisi
Javod, uzhe keyingisi kichkina bola.
"He's my husband's younger brother. Younger brother. Mine is the oldest. The first son, the second is Javod, after that just as small child."

In (19), *uzhe* is used to emphasize the order in which the sons were born. Perhaps the woman wants to stress that she is married to the oldest son. *Uzhe* also has the effect of making whatever follows appear insignificant: whoever was born after that is just a kid. That effect would not be achieved if *uzhe* were replaced with an Uzbek form like *undan* "from there on" or *ulardan keyin* "after them."

In (20), a woman talks about the Tajik-Uzbek border in the mountains:

(20) Tog'dan o'tsa—uzhe Todzhikiston.
"Cross the mountains—and there's Tajikistan."

In this case *uzhe* emphasizes surprise at how short the distance to

the border is. It means something similar to "it's right there, there's not much to cross." If *uzhe* is avoided, the emphatic force of the statement is weaker. The Uzbek construction sounds more like a description than an exclamation:

(21) Tog'dan o'tsa—u yog'i Todzhikiston.
"Cross the mountains—on that side is Tajikistan."

7. Summary of Data

To summarize, all the examples in sections 5 and 6 show ways in which the Russian function words, *a* and *uzhe*, have been borrowed into Uzbek to express emphasis, and have come to play a role not matched by any Uzbek equivalents. Weinreich (1953:58) observes that affective words are prone to losing their emphatic force, creating a need for synonyms or alternative ways of expression. In the case of Uzbek, the bilingual speakers have adopted the Russian words, and the syntactic structures for which they allow, to fulfill this purpose. But they have done so only in colloquial speech.

8. Russian Function Words and the Informal Register

8.1. What is a Loan?

Myers-Scotton (1993:192-93) proposes that a foreign lexical form be considered a loan when it has been entered into the mental lexicon of the host language, and that this should be ascertained by checking for reoccurrence. But do we mean reoccurrence in the spoken language, the written language, or both? How should we approach a lexical item such as the Russian *a*, which is used 76 times by 19 out of 29 speakers during 14 hours of conversations, yet fails to show up in the written language?

Bernsten (1990:75), studying English loans in Shona, notices that numbers and function words are frequently attested in spoken Shona, but absent from the *Standard Shona Dictionary*, in contrast to most high-frequency loans that are nouns or verbs. She suggests that perhaps this means they have not been accepted as " 'legitimate' components of Shona" (75). Bokamba (1988:32) asserts that to be classified as borrowings, lexical items "must be found not only to be common in the speech community, but also in the dictionary of the host language." In the Uzbek case, the word *a* does figure in the Uzbek Dictionary (Akobirov 1981) as a contrastive conjunction, but it is absent from

other written sources, while *uzhe* and the rest of the function words listed in Table (1) do not make it in the dictionary. It is crucial to remember that a word's appearance as a dictionary entry cannot be equated with its acceptance as a legitimate part of the language by the speakers. Dictionaries and the press often perform a prescriptive function, determining what the language *ought to* borrow, especially in places where the official version of the native language (host language) is subject to language planning by the politically dominant group.

Under Soviet rule, written Uzbek was inundated with Russian vocabulary. The percent of Russian-origin words found in the main Uzbek newspapers and the Uzbek dictionary (*Tol'kovyi slovar' russko-internatsional'nykh zaimstvovanii v uzbekskom iazyke*) increased from 0.9% in 1924 to 21.4% in 1957 (Tikhonov 1977:150). This "enrichment" of the Uzbek lexicon was a popular topic with Soviet linguists, whose works repetitively list typologies of the different Russian "loans" found in written sources (Asfandirov 1982; Guliamova 1985; Pulatov 1956; Saitkulov 1984; Tikhonov 1977). None of these works study the spoken language or mention the widespread use of function words. However, one look at Table (1), as well as the above analysis of *a* and *uzhe*, leaves one certain that these words are indeed loans, present in the mental lexicon of Uzbek speakers in Tashkent.

8.2. The Informal Register

Unlike cultural loans, Russian core loans have entered Uzbek not through prescriptive activities of Soviet language planners, but through everyday informal usage of bilingual speakers. Scotton and Okeju (1973:872) point out that borrowing is not a change that affects the entire language without regard for dialects or jargons. Still, many studies do not specify which dialect, jargon, or register their borrowing data refers to. My data, juxtaposed with the surveys of the official written language supplied by Soviet scholars, points to the fact that Russian function words are loans specific to the informal register of Uzbek. They function in colloquial Uzbek not as synonyms of native words, but as new emphatic expressions capable of altering the Uzbek syntax.

9. Conclusion

In independent Uzbekistan the pro-Russian language policy has taken a 180 degree turn, and efforts are now made to remove Russian loans from Uzbek (Schlyter 1997). School children reading the new

Uzbek language textbooks discover that the Russian words used by their parents have been replaced with old Turkic, Arabic, or Persian words, or new Turkic coinages. But vocabulary reformers, much like Soviet planners, focus their efforts on the documented loans in the literary language, not on the borrowed function words which are so salient in the spoken language. While there may be criticism of using Russian function words in speech, it will not be possible to enforce their elimination through formal education precisely because they are not subject to the rules of the formal language. We may thus suspect that the current vocabulary reform will not affect the informal register, and as a result those Russian loans which have typically been ignored will in fact be the ones to survive in Uzbek.

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