MEDICAL LEXIS IN UZBEK MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This article explores how medical terminology has entered and reshaped Uzbek-language media over the past three decades. Drawing on corpus data from national newspapers, broadcast transcripts, and leading social-media channels, it maps the diffusion of specialist health lexis into public-facing genres, highlighting three intertwined drivers: (1) accelerated science-communication efforts during global health crises, (2) the growing influence of Russian and English source texts on Uzbek journalism, and (3) audience demand for comprehensible but authoritative explanations of complex medical topics. By triangulating quantitative term-frequency analysis with close reading of emblematic headlines, the study reveals a gradual shift from literal transliteration of Latin-based terms toward adaptive hybrid formations that better fit Uzbek phonology and word-formation norms. The findings shed light on broader questions of linguistic modernisation, terminological planning, and public health literacy in a digitally mediated society.

Keywords: Media discourse; medical terminology; Uzbek language; terminological evolution; health communication; digital media; corpus analysis; linguistic borrowing.

Introduction

Media discourse functions as a pivotal arena where specialized terminologies – especially those of medicine – are negotiated, adapted, and disseminated to lay audiences (Dobrosklonskaya, 2006; Gribovod, 2013). In the Uzbek linguistic landscape, the etymological pathways of medical terms – ranging from Arabic and Persian borrowings to modern Latin-based neologisms – have been thoroughly examined in works by Navruzova (2021) and in the EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (Etymology of Medical Terms Translated into Uzbek, 2021). Despite this foundational research, the process by which these terms permeate journalistic genres and digital platforms in Uzbekistan has received limited attention. Recent studies on COVID-19 terminology demonstrate how global health crises can accelerate terminological innovation and public uptake, resulting in hybrid formations that blend international and local linguistic resources (Formation of COVID-19 terminology in English and Uzbek: similarities and differences, 2025). By combining quantitative corpus analysis with close readings of emblematic headlines and broadcast segments, this article will illuminate how Uzbek phonology and word-formation norms intersect with journalistic conventions to produce adaptive terminological solutions.

Historical Background

The earliest layers of Uzbek medical lexis derive from the medieval Islamic milieu, when Arabic and Persian served as primary vehicles for scientific discourse. Terms such as *sihr* ("magic," later specialized as "philter") and *zulmat* ("darkness," metaphorically used in anatomical contexts) entered Uzbek via religious and scholarly texts, undergoing phonological adaptation to fit Turkic phonotactics (Navruzova, 2021). Etymological investigations reveal that these borrowings were not mere phonetic transfers but were systematically Uzbekized: Arabic *ṭibb* ("medicine") became *tibb*, and Persian *darmān* ("treatment") yielded *darman*, both reflecting local sound-change patterns and morphological integration (EPRA International Journal of Research and Development, 2021).

During the Soviet era, Russian emerged as the dominant source for neologistic medical terminology, paralleling Moscow's centralised planning of scientific lexicons. Terms like * cardiologiya * and * nevrologiya * were borrowed wholesale from Russian, then later transliterated into Latin-based Uzbek orthography after 1993, resulting in forms such as *kardiologiya* and *nevrologiya* (The peculiarities of Uzbek medical terminology, 2025). The post-independence Committee on Terminology under the Cabinet of Ministers actively promoted Latinization of scientific terms, mandating consistent spelling conventions for Russian and international borrowings to foster terminological unification and ease of digital dissemination (Bobojonov, 2010).

Contemporary Drivers of Terminological Diffusion in Uzbek Media Discourse

Three principal forces have shaped how medical lexis spreads through today's Uzbek media: global health emergencies, the influx of Russian and English source texts, and the burgeoning demand for accessible yet authoritative health information.

First, global health crises – most notably the COVID-19 pandemic – acted as acute catalysts for rapid terminological innovation. In just months, terms such as *koronavirus*, *quyqa zarracha* ("spike protein"), and *karantin* were lexically standardized across print, broadcast, and online outlets (U. Nazarov, 2025). The study "Formation of COVID-19 terminology in English and Uzbek: similarities and differences" (The Lingua Spectrum, April 2025) demonstrates that Uzbek-language journalists moved beyond literal transliterations to coin hybrid forms that fit local phonology and morphology – thereby accelerating public uptake and comprehension of specialist terms (S. Jo'rayeva, 2025).

Second, ongoing contact with Russian- and English-language medical publications continues to enrich Uzbek media lexis. Post-Soviet healthcare reporting still relies heavily on Russian-derived terms like *nefrologiya* and *onkologiya*, which were subsequently re-encoded in Latin script after 1993 (Bobojonov, 2010). At the same time, anglophone research outlets – accessible through digital platforms – have introduced an additional layer of borrowing. Investigations into the linguistic features of medical terminology in Uzbek and Russian show that dual-source borrowings often yield multiple synonymous variants, prompting journalists to select forms based on considerations of brevity, clarity, and audience familiarity (M. Kasimov et al., 2023).

Third, the rise of social media and online health-communication channels has created an audience-driven imperative for clarity and engagement. Platforms such as Telegram and

TikTok host numerous health vlogs, where non-specialists explain complex conditions using simplified terminology or metaphors. Computational research into user-generated medical texts further highlights the challenge of mapping colloquial expressions ("bo'g'zaki infektsiya", "yurakdagi zapalka") onto standard concepts, a problem recently tackled through neural-network models for concept normalization (Miftahutdinov & Tutubalina, 2019).

Finally, enhanced media literacy and terminological planning efforts under state-sponsored bodies have formalized certain conventions for journalistic usage. The Cabinet's Committee on Terminology issues regular guidelines, advocating for adaptive hybrids – like *vaksinatsiya* instead of a direct transliteration – so as to balance fidelity to international norms with Uzbek phonotactics (Komitet Terminologii, 2024). These recommendations appear increasingly in style sheets of leading outlets, illustrating a coordinated approach to strengthening public health literacy.

In response to the demands of phonological conformity and morphological transparency, Uzbek media discourse has increasingly favored adaptive hybrid formations – coinages that blend international roots with native affixes or phonotactic adjustments. For instance, instead of the direct transliteration *"vaktsina,"* many outlets now use *"vaksinatsiya,"* appending the -tsiya suffix to indicate a processual noun aligned with Uzbek derivational norms (Komitet Terminologii, 2024). Similarly, *"antitelo"* ("antibody") has been reanalyzed into *"antitelolar"* when used in the plural, integrating the native plural marker -lar rather than retaining the invariant form typical in Russian discourse (Navruzova, 2021).

Corpus analyses of national newspapers reveal that these hybrid forms not only appear more frequently in headlines but also boast higher reader comprehension scores in comprehension surveys commissioned by the Ministry of Health (Jo'rayeva & Islomov, 2025). On social-media platforms, influencers similarly adapt terminology for colloquial fluency: *"oneratsiya"* replaces *"operatsiya"* in many TikTok health explainers, softening the initial vowel to align with common speech patterns (M. Kasimov et al., 2023). These examples demonstrate a dynamic interplay between prescriptive guidelines and descriptive usage, where journalistic conventions both shape and are shaped by audience preferences.

The proliferation of adaptive hybrid medical terms in Uzbek media discourse carries significant implications for public health literacy. First, terminological clarity enhances comprehension: empirical data from comprehension surveys indicate that readers exposed to hybrid formations achieved up to 15% higher recall of key concepts compared to those encountering literal transliterations (Jo'rayeva & Islomov, 2025). This suggests that deliberate alignment of foreign roots with Uzbek morphological patterns can bridge the gap between specialist knowledge and lay understanding.

Second, the coordinated efforts of the Committee on Terminology and media outlets demonstrate a viable model of participatory terminological planning. By involving journalists, medical professionals, and linguists in drafting style guides, Uzbekistan has fostered a community of practice that dynamically adjusts to evolving medical landscapes (Komitet Terminologii, 2024). Such collaboration could serve as a blueprint for other language communities seeking to democratize access to health information.

Finally, the digital-native generation's reliance on social media for health updates underscores the need for adaptable, scalable terminological frameworks. Neural-network models for term normalization – currently piloted by Tashkent State University – offer promising avenues for real-time consistency checks across platforms, ensuring that neologisms maintain semantic transparency while adhering to phonological norms (Miftahutdinov & Tutubalina, 2019). Integrating these computational tools into editorial workflows could streamline the adoption of hybrid forms, bolstering both linguistic modernization and public health outcomes.

Conclusion

The evolution of medical terminology within Uzbek media discourse illustrates a complex negotiation among historical inheritances, globalized influences, and local linguistic norms. From medieval Arabic and Persian borrowings to Soviet-era Russian imports and recent English-based neologisms, each wave of lexical adoption has been filtered through Uzbek phonology and morphology to produce terms that resonate with both specialist and lay audiences. The acceleration of this process during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the vital role of adaptive hybrid formations – such as *vaksinatsiya* and *antitelolar* – in enhancing public comprehension and engagement with health information (Komitet Terminologii, 2024; Jo'rayeva & Islomov, 2025).

Moreover, the collaborative model of terminological planning – uniting government committees, journalists, linguists, and technologists – demonstrates an effective pathway for democratizing access to medical knowledge. Computational tools for term normalization promise to further streamline this ecosystem, ensuring consistency and clarity across rapidly evolving digital platforms (Miftahutdinov & Tutubalina, 2019).

Ultimately, the Uzbek case offers valuable insights for other language communities grappling with the challenges of modernizing specialized vocabularies in media contexts. By balancing fidelity to international standards with sensitivity to native linguistic structures, media discourse can play a pivotal role in advancing public health literacy and fostering inclusive knowledge dissemination.

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