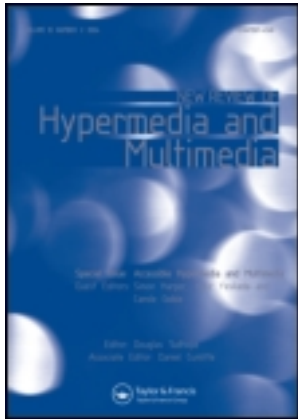


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### Resistance to globalization: Language and Internet diffusion patterns in Uzbekistan

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# Resistance to globalization: Language and Internet diffusion patterns in Uzbekistan

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This paper discusses how the Internet can facilitate cultural expression that resists the homogenizing effects of globalization. It examines how local cultures adapt their linguistic behavior and language choices to the Internet and express themselves in culturally meaningful ways without being subsumed by a global agenda. The research reported in this paper is based on a survey administered in Uzbekistan, a post-Soviet, multilingual society that is experiencing the pressures of global culture as well as Russian culture. Literature about language, nationalism, and Internet use in multilingual societies is presented, and the linguistic setting of Uzbekistan is described. The results of the survey relevant to Internet use, online language choices, and perceptions of language on the Web are reported here.

## 1. Introduction

Globalization is transforming contemporary cultural practices including the production of multimedia. The crossing of national borders by media has traditionally meant a heavier outpouring of Western, particularly American, images over television and in the cinema to the rest of the world than a return flow of non-Western images. Regardless of world location, media outlets often carry a preponderance of Hollywood productions. For example, filmmaker/activist Barbara Trent (1998) notes that cinemas in Mexico are far more willing to book Hollywood films than award-winning local productions because of the profit. The cultural imperialism of media networks is often carried out by corporations from former colonizing nations under the guise of “international” or “global” companies, which imply a multicultural inclusiveness that may not be reflected in practice. In fact, these corporations do not even represent their countries of origin. Masao Miyoshi (1996) observes that these transnational companies represent only themselves and are not actually controlled by a nation-state; they do not have the same social obligations as governments. Besides the reduced diversity of voices represented in world media, the globalization and Americanization of media networks eases the continued spread of capitalist messages and provides an international platform

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for an ideological perspective that prioritizes individualist narratives and uncritically accepts the construction of viewers as consumers.

The Internet is similarly a site of transnational capitalism, but of a different style than that of television and film. Because of its distributed nature and the relatively low cost of digital production, the World Wide Web is not dominated by a few organizations as are television and film. The many-to-many broadcast structure of the Internet, as opposed to the few-to-many structure of previous mass media forms, inspired theorists in the mid-1990s to first embrace the Internet as a site of multiplicity and diversity, one that would allow marginalized voices to share space equally with the mainstream and that would allow users to explore multiple subjectivities by providing opportunities for varied discursive production and consumption habits. In addition, critics perceived the Internet as an opportunity to question the notion of an authentic self, providing a platform for postmodern exploration. Ultimately, the relative ease of publishing a website compared with publishing or broadcasting in more formalized venues contributed to the persistent view of the Internet as a utopian space. This unproblematized view of the Internet suggests that everyone has equal voice and access to an audience. In practice, though, Internet content and interface metaphors have been largely dominated by Western perspectives. The promise of the Internet to transform media hierarchies has fallen somewhat short of those initial optimistic projections. And while critics have in many ways moved past the most utopian constructions of the mid-1990s, each new wave of Internet communication, from web pages to blogs to wikis, produces a subsequent fixation on the power of the Internet to transform discursive practices and reposition the power of mass media.

Meanwhile, from a structural perspective, the Web itself has similarly been associated with the freedom and possibility of the “Wild West”, as attributed by Lawrence Lessig (1999) to the minimal legal regulation of the Internet in its earliest days. However, he also notes that this connotation of freedom is an artifact of the minimal regulation of the Internet in its originary moments rather than a purposefully designed quality or an essential right. Notably, the result of the freedom and lack of regulation of the Internet has been a digital colonization of the Web by Americans, instrumentally affecting its prevailing language, tone, and uses. ICANN and its power over assigning web domain names has been part of this colonization; in addition, American businesses have been leaders on the Internet and have given much of the Web a commercial flavor both in its application and in its design. Furthermore, the computer and network technologies that support the Internet were largely developed in a Western setting. In other words, the Web was not designed explicitly for use by isolated, peripheral cultures, nor did such cultures participate in its inception or current design.

In such circumstances, how do people from peripheral cultures express nationalism and resist capitalist globalization via the Web? In this paper, the discussion of resistance to globalization is drawn from nationalism as expressed by linguistic identity and concurrent choices and refusals to be

sublated by the “internationalism” of the Internet. This kind of activity differs from the overt resistance to capitalism exhibited by the WTO activist groups that have organized themselves via the Internet; however, these patterns of more subtle resistance activities also encompass a broader swath of the population and draw in participants who may not identify themselves as “activists”, but whose activities are clearly part of an anti-globalization agenda.

In this paper, we use Uzbekistan as a site to explore these issues of resistance in Internet adoption patterns. Uzbekistan is a rich region to study such issues because it is a multilingual, multiethnic society where Internet use is still emerging: 675,000 citizens (about 2 or 3% of the population) are estimated by the Uzbek government to use the Internet (Ferghana.ru Information Agency 2005). These early stages of Internet diffusion allow us to see the patterns of resistance that users exhibit when adopting a technology that in many ways conflicts with pre-existing models of communication and media usage. Overall, Uzbekistan’s multifaceted linguistic heritage and historical cultural isolation from the West contribute to its importance as a site of inquiry. Language is a highly politicized issue in Uzbekistan, and since achieving independence from Russia in 1991, the government has exerted significant regulatory effort to push linguistic reform and privilege Uzbek over Russian. The Uzbek-Russian issue is complicated by the added tension of the dominance of English language on the Internet, with one study reporting that over 56% of websites are in English—with German a distant second at less than 8% (“Das Internet” 2002). The preponderance of English is considered in light of literature on Internet use from a variety of countries, including Uzbekistan. Ultimately, this paper examines how Uzbeks express their national identity on the Internet and adapt to the dearth of Uzbek websites; the usage patterns of this novice population are situated within an overall discussion of how minority language content on the Internet provides a way of understanding resistance to media globalization on a larger scale. The paper is based on a survey administered in Uzbekistan in 2003 by researchers at the University of Washington as part of a multi-method study of the effects of Internet on society by the Central Asia and Information and Communication Technologies (CAICT) Project (Kolko, Wei, and Spyridakis 2003). This paper contributes to the continued problematization of the Internet as an egalitarian, utopian space that can give voice to all. Further, it helps researchers and designers of websites understand why supporting less commonly used languages on the Internet matters.

## 2. Nationalism and language on the Internet

The form of nationalism laid out by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1991) provides a key interpretive framework for considering language and national identity online. Anderson describes nations as imagined communities because no one in a given nation will ever know all of his or her fellow citizens. Members of a nation imagine a kinship with one

another and see themselves as part of the same community. This national unity was historically facilitated by the development of national print-languages, which standardized what may have been a diverse collection of dialects in a given region, and gave emerging nations a common vernacular language. These print-languages were spread and canonized in national newspapers and publications. Anderson writes that the emergence of broadcast media such as radio and television supplemented print media's nationalistic influences (p. 135). New media forms like the Internet supposedly can play a similar nationalistic function, but because the communication paradigm of the Internet empowers multiple, diverse people to broadcast their messages, the Internet is not as robust as earlier media forms for enforcing or constructing national identity. In addition, the Internet allows for more user choice in terms of individual consumption patterns. The ability of users to select the source of their daily news online, rather than being constrained to the broadcast signal of state television or the printed state newspaper, means that web content does not play the same authoritative linguistic function as state media.

However, interactions with the Internet may result in the promotion of nationalism for those seeking out domestically produced web material, and in addition, the Internet provides a space for users to self-express their nationalism using their own words and language. This is particularly important with respect to how national identity is constructed and exercised within countries with multiple minority languages. Walter Mignolo (1998) describes creating an opportunity for "barbarian theorizing" in the borderlands where cultures come into contact, a space for "barbarians" (the subaltern culture) to self-appropriate positive qualities about their culture regardless of the dominant culture's boundaries of "civilization". Unlinking language with political power allows cultures besides the dominant ones to theorize about themselves and to enrich the scholarship that lies behind critical theory for all world cultures. So while the problematized national borders exemplified by the Internet call into question the notion of easily defined national identity disseminated via media, those fragmented borders also allow subaltern cultures to compose and broadcast a media presence.

An example of the creation of a space for dialogue is demonstrated by language and Internet use in Taiwan. Mandarin is the official language of Taiwan, introduced when the Nationalist Chinese government relocated to the island in 1949, but it has since evolved with a distinctive accent, perhaps influenced by Taiwanese, a primarily oral dialect that cannot be adequately written with Chinese characters. Language choice in Taiwan is politically sensitive, representing tensions between the people who came from mainland China and the native people who have lived on Taiwan for generations (Sandel 2003). Despite these conflicts, there is often much code-switching between Mandarin and Taiwanese in daily speech, and additionally, city-dwellers will often sprinkle English, a common foreign language, into their everyday speech. Sensitively expressing this linguistic diversity requires creative orthography in textual environments. Hsi-Yao Su's (2003) study of

electronic bulletin boards in Taiwan found that users textually approximated Taiwanese, Taiwanese-accented Mandarin, as well as English with standard Chinese characters and Zhuyin (Taiwanese phonetic alphabet). This playful writing on the Internet allows users to express linguistic preferences and unity that formal writing does not and presents a softer, less showy image than writing in formal, standard Chinese and English. Su notes that Chinese people are proud of their unique orthography; writing English with Chinese characters nativizes and “localizes” it. Such a nativization process is an example of how complex national identities find a platform for expression on the Internet that, in turn, resist monolithic, globalized media formations.

Taiwanese adaptation of the linguistic tools available to them to create their uniquely Taiwan national identity, refusing to be negated by standard Mandarin Chinese or English, is a powerful example of resistance to the homogenizing effects of globalization. It also highlights the barriers that various linguistic cultures face in expressing themselves online. Some languages cannot be displayed on a computer screen without special character sets. Persian is one of the prominent language groups that was until recently excluded from online character sets, a demonstration of segregation afforded by Western technology and dominant cultures. Harald Haarmann (2001) observes that many world languages are not traditionally literate, such as American Sign Language or oral languages, and thus are not easily transferred to the textual environment of the Web. Unfortunately, there may not be much impetus to make these languages available or accessible on the Web because much of the work in software localization is done by for-profit companies—and they may not see it as financially worthwhile to support a small market. One resulting problem is that these cultures cannot fully tap into the rich stream of information on the Web and are being left behind in the digital divide. And regrettably, those who rely on the Internet for information are losing out on the knowledge and experiences that might have been contributed by those excluded cultures. A postcolonial perspective would acknowledge that the body of knowledge encompassed by the Internet today is written by the dominant culture and is missing the intertwined, multiple narratives of marginalized people.

Cultural studies critic Stuart Hall (1997) has highlighted some of the risks of global mass culture: it is not a pure *mélange* of cultural products from around the world. Instead, it is very much centered in the West, especially the US, with Western technology and capital concentration. It is a culture that speaks English and seeks to absorb cultural differences. Rather than trying to create clones of Americanness around the world, globalization tries to leave behind homogenized particularities wherever it has been. The absorption of this difference and its eventual loss to world history distinguishes globalization from traditional capitalism. Mike Featherstone (1996) further echoes Hall in that he agrees globalization is more complicated than a simple erasure of local cultures. The external cultural pressures faced by a group may even appear to unify it superficially, by creating an oversimplified image of the local community to outsiders. However, Featherstone observes that the

conflict between local and global identities is more complex than a single moment of contact. There are other layers of practices and cultures that are present besides local and nation-state cultures such as the “third cultures” of global media messages or purposefully created transnational organizations such as the EU. He finds that the contact between two (or more) cultures allows for the creation of third spaces and localized versions of the global culture. In fact, globalization can spur closer examination of the particularities and values of a culture with the disjunctures and successful adaptations that occur when a local culture comes into contact with a homogenizing force such as the Internet.

The clash between technology and local culture may be obvious immediately when the local language is based on a non-Latin alphabet. On the Internet, some Greeks write with Latin characters rather than the Greek alphabet because of the limitations of Latin-based keyboards and computer systems. A critical discourse analysis of Greek newspaper texts found that some writers see this intrusion of Latin alphabet into Greek language as a threat to national identity because it weakens the stature of the unique Greek alphabet (Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou 2003). Some of the expressed resistance towards the use of Latin characters ranged from a complete rejection of Latin alphabet and English to a more nuanced recognition of the spread of globalization and the need for innovation to help Greek and other “small languages” to survive in the Internet age. Other linguistic communities have similarly started adapting to the demands of the technology, such as the Deaf and their modifications of American Sign Language to suit the webcam environment rather than rely on English or text communication over the Internet (Keating and Mirus 2003).

There may also be successful adaptations of specific cultural groups to homogenizing forces on the Internet that honor the values of the local community. Switzerland has four official languages—German, French, Italian, and Romansch—each closely linked to specific regions, making interregional communication challenging. Native speakers of German make up about 75% of the population, and French about 20%; Italian and Romansch make up very small percentages (Watts 1988). Although German is the dominant language in Switzerland, there are sensitivities associated with it, for example, non-German-speaking Swiss feel they have less access to public life in German regions (Watts 1988). Perhaps in acknowledgement of these logistical and political issues, one study of communication in a Swiss medical student association’s e-mail list found that most messages were written in English which most readers understood, helping reduce cross-lingual misunderstandings that might occur if messages were written only in German or French (Durham 2003). Whereas some scholars have noted that widespread use of English is commonly perceived as a threat to cultural diversity (e.g., Kramaræ 1999), in this Swiss example, English was adopted to solve a practical problem in a culturally appropriate manner. Bearing in mind these examples of local cultures and how they express themselves online without being subsumed

by global media pressures, we now turn the discussion towards Uzbekistan, our site of inquiry.

### **3. Language in transition in Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan is one of the newly independent states of Central Asia that is redefining its cultural, political, and economic identity since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The region has a rich mix of cultures, ethnicities, and languages. The country is predominantly Uzbek ethnicity, with minorities such as Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Tatars, and Koreans. By far the most common language is Uzbek, but Russian is a widely spoken native or second language, particularly in large cities. In different regions of Uzbekistan, other languages are also widely spoken such as Tajik in Samarkand and Bukhara. Individuals with facility in more than one language are the norm in large cities and in ethnically diverse areas. To contextualize the feat of mastering multiple languages, it should be noted that the three major languages of Uzbek, Russian, and Tajik are, respectively, from three completely different language families (Turkic, Slavic, and Persian) and are subsequently distinctive from one another aside from borrowed words and grammatical influences that have permeated the languages due to close contact with one another.

Language is a politically sensitive issue in Uzbekistan. During Soviet times, Russian was encouraged (although never made an official state language) to aid in the formation of a unified Soviet culture and identity; there were also practical benefits such as the ability to communicate with other member countries of the Soviet Union (Schlyter 2003). Russian became a “career language”, an important skill for people seeking higher education, international work, or government jobs. Unlike in Kazakhstan, where the native language of Kazakh substantially dropped off under Soviet influence, Uzbek remained a commonly spoken language, while Russian became the privileged language of the government elite, international businesspeople, and the intelligentsia. Uzbek was also one of the local languages with the most significant written and literary history.

Around independence in 1991, the Uzbek government passed a number of laws related to language to build up an independent Uzbek culture. A state language law was put in effect in 1989, making Uzbek the official state language and Russian the official “language of inter-ethnic communication” (Smith et al. 1998). Furthermore, government workers were required to be able to perform their jobs in Uzbek. The effect of this law was to raise the status of Uzbek language as well as ethnic Uzbeks, the primary speakers of the language. Uzbekistan passed another law in 1993 to convert the alphabet from Cyrillic script to Latin, indicating a distancing from Russia, a new openness towards the West, and increased compatibility of Uzbek language with computer programs (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001). In 1995, the state language law was revised, this time eliminating Russian’s special status and extending the deadline for complete implementation of Uzbek language



reform to September 2005. The result of these language reforms is a political climate where it is advantageous to speak and write Uzbek, yet where many working adults, including government employees, are accustomed to using Russian in a professional setting. Complicating the situation is the upcoming generation of teenagers and youth who have been formally schooled in Uzbek and for whom Russian is a non-native language.

As in many other countries, language use in Uzbekistan is closely linked with ethnicity. A national survey conducted in 1996 found that over 90% of Uzbeks and Russians, respectively, speak Uzbek and Russian as their primary language at home (Smith et al. 1998). But whereas about 40% of Uzbeks claimed “good” or “excellent” facility in Russian, only about 10% of Russians claimed that skill level in Uzbek. Historically, Russians had no career incentive for learning Uzbek, and there may also be the perception that Uzbek is inferior to Russian because its vocabulary is underdeveloped for modern scientific and technical discussions. Informally, the belief that Uzbek language is spoken only by ethnic Uzbeks is widely internalized; that is, most Uzbeks assume they need to speak Russian or English with a non-Uzbek or foreigner. The ties between language and ethnicity and the political climate of Uzbekistan suggest that the use of Uzbek language on the Web would be a political statement with ethnic overtones. Choosing to use Uzbek would be a declaration of Uzbekness and perhaps, as well, that the intended audience of the message is Uzbek.

#### **4. Representation of nationalism on the Internet**

When cultures participate on the Internet, their websites are among the most visible forms of nationalism. They often reveal self-perceptions of identity through the images, language, and design of the page. Communities may choose to present their story for themselves or for others for various strategic reasons. Presenting an image within the group may strengthen the group’s self-identity. Presenting outside the group may encourage foreign investment or tourism. Information may also be presented to outsiders simply to share their culture with others. A study of websites representing Sub-Saharan African governments revealed that they tend to represent these African countries as a commodity to their foreign readers (Fürsich and Robins 2002). The sites are pitched to foreign investors and tourists and depict a symbolic, stylized Africa replete with natural scenery where the African people are obscured except for a few, traditionally dressed individuals. The Africans that are depicted are aloof and exotic, enough to lure tourism but remain non-threatening—in other words, Africans are depicted as Other. The intended audience for these websites is foreign (non-African) countries; there is little content that is relevant to locals, and the languages that are used are those of former colonizing powers. This type of website expresses a national identity where the country exists to be exploited by outsiders. Similarly, the government of Uzbekistan’s official website (<http://www.gov.uz/>) as recently as Spring 2003 was presented only in Russian language, an unusual decision

given the government's own laws privileging Uzbek. Although the site purported to offer Russian, Uzbek, and English versions, only the Russian pages were functional. The Russian-only may have been an artifact of the web-developers' linguistic backgrounds, an example of how actual skills and preferences of citizens may not match the laws. The implicit message of this design decision is that the government found Russian speakers (local elite and foreigners) to be their most important audience. Uzbek and English have since been added to the website, apparently matching the depth and breadth of the Russian content.

Expression of national identity can be explicit and even refuse the prevailing global narrative: after Yugoslavia broke apart, individuals from the former states put competing histories of the dissolution online (Jackson and Purcell 1997). Other ways that websites can express nationalism is how and with whom they hyperlink. Incoming and outgoing hyperlinks provide a suggestion of where the website situates itself in the global spectrum of the Internet. Just as many people spend most of their life within the borders of their country, websites do not usually hyperlink with websites in other domains. A research study has found that websites do not often link outside their home domains (Halavais 2000). In other words, a website in the UK domain is more likely to link to another UK site than to one from another international domain. The findings of this study suggest national boundaries are important even in the digital frontier. Websites appear to link and cluster together based on national origin, regardless of language. Consider that the UK and the US share mutually intelligible versions of English; however, these websites may not interlink heavily because there are other components of culture that influence their decisions. A content analysis of Uzbek websites would likely reveal the form of expression of nationalism and their interlinkages; such research will be an important component of future research. For the remainder of this paper, a selection of results of a survey of Uzbek Internet users will be presented and interpreted.

## **5. Methods**

This article analyzes a portion of the "Daily Life in Uzbekistan" survey, which asked questions related to information-seeking and technology use. The survey was administered as part of an exploratory study that measured baseline attitudes towards and usage of technology, so formal hypotheses were not tested as they might in a traditional experiment. The survey was administered in March and April 2003 to a multi-stage, national sample of 317 adults in Uzbekistan, aged 18 years and older. These subjects were purposively sampled to roughly match proportions of age groups, gender, and ethnicity as reported in demographic statistics from the Uzbek government. Sampling occurred in the cities and regions of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Qarshi, Kokand, Ferghana, and Nukus, which were chosen for geographic distribution across the country and for contrast between the modern city of Tashkent and less developed provinces around the country,

each with its own unique economy and ethnic composition. Sampling also occurred between regional capitals and nearby rural villages. The survey was administered in Uzbek, Russian, and Karakalpak. All surveys were conducted in person by members of the US research team or local research assistants or professionals, with the aid of interpreters when necessary. Participants were asked to write in the survey themselves, but administrators read aloud the survey to participants who could not read or understand the questionnaire. Surveys were administered in various public places such as the street, banks, or bazaars. Data were analyzed in SPSS 11.5 for Windows.

## 6. Results and discussion

The following results refer to a subset of 46 Internet users in order to identify some themes in their views of language and their behavior on the Internet. The responses are not detailed enough to identify particular moments of resistance to the internationalism of the Internet, but they can shed some light on attitudes and potential behaviors. The analysis is restricted to this subsample of participants who self-identified as Internet users because people who have come in contact with the Internet will have perceptions of language and the Internet that are grounded in actual experience rather than conjecture. The percentage of Internet users found in this survey sample is about 15%, which is greater than the government estimate of 2 to 3%. This difference in percentage is an artifact of the sampling method, which matched government statistics of age, gender, and ethnicity but did not attempt to match Internet usage rates because the Uzbekistani government did not explain how it defined "Internet user".

### 6.1 Description of Internet users

As expected in this patriarchal society, there was a gender imbalance among the Internet users: two-thirds were male, and one-third were female. They were predominantly young people: about half were less than 30 years old. The preponderance of young users reflects both trends globally as well as the youth bubble in Uzbekistan. The ethnic distribution of the Internet users reflected the ethnic make-up of the general population: 72% of the users were ethnic Uzbeks. Nearly 85% of the Internet users lived in urban areas, which tend to be better connected to telecommunication services. The Internet users were well-educated, with 90% having completed some form of postsecondary education.

As a group, the respondents appeared to be infrequent Internet users, reporting that they used the Internet an average of 14.86 hours per month (SD = 18.40). The survey asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 (never) to 6 (daily) how frequently they performed various Internet activities. On average, their most frequent uses of the Internet were sending and receiving e-mail and visiting websites, activities that they did a few times a month. They played

games, chatted/instant messaged, or worked on a website less than once a month or rarely. See table 1 for means of the frequency of these activities. The survey's Internet users were fairly novice. They had an average of 2.90 years of experience sending e-mail ( $SD = 1.87$ ) and an average of 2.45 years of experience using the Web ( $SD = 1.42$ ).

Every Internet user in the survey reported having at least some facility in two or more languages, suggesting that multilingualism is very common in Uzbekistan, at least among the educated in urban areas where Internet access is almost exclusively found. Almost 95% reported excellent knowledge of Russian, reflecting past emphasis on Russian language in the education system. 76% reported having excellent knowledge of Uzbek, and 26% knew excellent English. Almost 80% of Internet users claimed to have excellent knowledge of at least two languages. The most common language pair was Uzbek and Russian. Since about 75% of the Internet users were Uzbek and about 75% spoke Uzbek, the ability to speak Uzbek appears to be linked closely with ethnicity. It is surprising that not more people spoke Uzbek given its status as the official language. Most people spoke Russian regardless of ethnicity, which suggests that it is in fact a language for inter-ethnic communication, so Russian may be a versatile language to know in this ethnically diverse region.

## 6.2 Language choice on the Internet

A variety of languages are used on the Internet in Uzbekistan, and surprisingly, language choice does not completely correspond with actual language ability. Not unexpectedly since so many reported the ability to speak excellent Russian, nearly 98% of respondents reported using Russian on the Internet. In contrast, only 13% said they used Uzbek on the Internet, an amazingly low percentage given that a majority reported knowing excellent Uzbek. On the other hand, over 70% of respondents said they used English on the Internet, much larger than the 26% who reported having excellent facility in it. When asked to choose the language they used most often on the Internet, 66% of respondents said they used Russian the most, and 34% said they used English most. Nobody chose Uzbek, the official language of Uzbekistan. The respondents' reasons for preferring Russian and English may include the paucity of Uzbek materials online, as well as their linguistic upbringing at home and at school. The few who reported using Uzbek online

Table 1. Frequency of Internet activities on a scale of 1 (never) to 6 (daily)

Activity	M	SD
Sending and receiving e-mail	3.81	1.60
Visiting websites	3.66	1.41
Playing games	2.17	1.76
Chatting/Instant messaging	1.95	1.21
Working on a website	1.93	1.23

may have been writing emails or surfing the Web, but regardless, they were sending out the initial seeds of dissent, even if unconsciously, against the prevalence of English and Russian in digital space. The widely internalized belief that only ethnic Uzbeks speak Uzbek is also applied to the Internet, where it is assumed that there is very little material in Uzbek because the Internet is a global resource and relatively few Uzbeks are online. Because the most common interfaces for the Internet are web browsers and e-mail programs, which are available primarily in Russian or English, the user's encounter with the Internet is literally framed by one of these dominant languages. Using Uzbek within such a frame is thus in many ways a refusal to follow what could be considered a natural inclination to continue the user experience in Russian or English, especially if he or she were facile in one or both of those languages. For users who are not fluent in Russian or English, struggling through the interface to participate in the Internet in Uzbek is an even stronger moment of resistance against the homogenizing forces of globalization.

Conversely, relying on English and Russian on the Internet may also be an act of resistance against ongoing censorship in Uzbekistan. International media are widely perceived to be more reliable and complete than domestic media. Russian media are probably the most common foreign news sources in Uzbekistan because of historical influences and shared language. The survey asked respondents to rate the trustworthiness of information from various institutions on a scale of 1 (very untrustworthy) to 5 (very trustworthy). Paired samples comparisons revealed that Internet users significantly trust Russian media more than Uzbek. They found information from Russian newspapers to be significantly more trustworthy than state-run Uzbek newspapers, and information from Russian television to be significantly more trustworthy than Uzbek television. See table 2 for results of t-tests. It would not be surprising if lingering suspicion about the trustworthiness of Uzbek media also carried over to material on the Web and that choosing to use Russian and English on the Internet may be an act of resistance against government censorship. The perhaps conflicting forces of pride in Uzbek culture, yet suspicion of the national government and the media that it controls may problematize language use on the Internet for Uzbeks. Internet users may have to rely on a multiplex, multilingual approach towards the Internet that supports their culture and fulfills their need for trustworthy information. Such complexity underscores the inextricable entanglement of these multiple languages within the fabric of Uzbek culture.

Table 2. Results of t-tests comparing trustworthiness of Russian and Uzbek media on a scale of 1 (very untrustworthy) to 5 (very trustworthy)

Media	Russian	Uzbek	T-test
Newspapers	M = 3.46, SD = .81	M = 2.85, SD = 1.07	$t(45) = 3.16, p = .003$
Television	M = 3.64, SD = .88	M = 3.16, SD = 1.19	$t(44) = 2.12, p = .040$

### 6.3 Perceptions of and reactions to language on the Internet

To reveal how multilingual users perceive the availability of various languages on the Web, the survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with a number of statements. See table 3 for means of the levels of agreement with the statements. On average, Internet users agreed that “There should be more websites in Russian”, which corresponds well with the overwhelming majority of users who speak Russian. But surprisingly, the Internet users also agreed that “People have to use Russian too often when they use the Internet”. These seemingly conflicting statements may be hinting at the complex concerns of Internet users. Because language is closely associated with ethnicity in Uzbekistan, “Russian” is sometimes used as code for “foreign” and “not Uzbek”. The sample of Internet users, although almost all fluent in Russian, was only 6% ethnic Russians. “Russian” content, although readable, may not capture Uzbek values, culture, or interests. In addition, most Russian language websites come from Russia and other Russophone countries and, though comprehensible, may not contain information relevant to people from Uzbekistan. For example, there may be Russian language local news, movie listings, or sport scores for an entirely different country. In fact, the Internet users on average were neutral when asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement “There are many websites about Uzbekistan” suggesting that they don’t feel Uzbekistan is especially well-represented on the Internet. On the surface, these attitudinal statements address language presence on the Internet, but cultural heritage and source of web content may also be referenced in the subtext. It may also reflect mixed feelings about the reliance on Russian language.

Internet users on average agreed that “There should be more websites in Uzbek”, suggesting that one of the reasons so few of them use Uzbek on the Internet may indeed be the shortage of Uzbek language content. Since Uzbek is the official language of Uzbekistan, and so many people speak it, it is not surprising that users would like to see more websites in Uzbek. Yet there may be obstacles towards realizing the increased presence of Uzbek content on the Web. Although these Internet users expressed desire for more Uzbek content, they had also reported that they infrequently work on their own websites (see table 1), suggesting it may require more experience, more users, or a local

Table 3. Levels of agreement with statements about languages and the Internet on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Statement	M	SD
There should be more websites in Russian	3.59	.82
People have to use Russian too often when they use the Internet	3.58	.94
There are many websites about Uzbekistan	3.21	.96
There should be more websites in Uzbek	3.69	1.02
People have to use English too often when they use the Internet	4.02	.77
It is difficult to use the Internet if you do not know any English	3.73	1.05

organization to nurture the development of the Uzbek Web. Without impetus to create more Uzbek websites, the emergent Uzbek web space risks languishing and disappearing, taking with it potential expressions of Uzbek culture.

Users on average agreed that “People have to use English too often when they use the Internet” and also agreed, though less strongly, that “It is difficult to use the Internet if you do not know any English”. A paired samples comparison of agreement with “People have to use English too often” and agreement with “People have to use Russian too often” revealed that people agreed that they had to use English significantly more often than Russian ( $t(42) = 3.52, p = .001$ ), which suggests that users perceive the need for English to be more pressing than Russian. This finding is consistent with the fact that English is by far the most common language for websites. In addition, Russian is a more common skill than English among these respondents, so use of English is likely more of a difficulty to them. These statements suggest that English is widely seen as a necessary skill for using the Internet and helps to explain why even those who were not facile in English chose to use it on the Internet. There is a frequent perception that Internet users must have some facility in English in order to use the Internet. Undeniably, knowledge of English would be an asset to Internet users; however, there are many examples of cultures, such as in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea, that do not commonly speak English and have thriving native language Internet. Perhaps with time to nurture Uzbek web space and with more Uzbeks getting online, such a native language Internet may be possible for Uzbekistan.

## 7. Conclusions

The data reported here indicate that multilingualism as well as the politicized nature of language in Uzbekistan requires Internet users to carefully make choices about the languages they use in face-to-face as well as online interactions. They must balance their own preferences with social norms, political climate, and the information resources and technology tools that are available to them. They may feel resistant to the dominant global language (English) as well as the dominant former colonizing language (Russian). However, with the influence of education and custom, Russian may have been nativized into a local language that is very comfortable and practical to use; multilingual Uzbek identity may actually be an intertwinement of Uzbek, Russian, and perhaps English. Hence the survey revealed mixed attitudes, where respondents felt there was too much as well as not enough Russian on the Internet. There is no clear cut acceptance or rejection of Russian and English: the perceptions of the dominance of Russian and English on the Web are to some extent contradicted by the frequent use of Russian and English on the Internet, suggesting that resistance to globalization is a multilayered and nuanced process, just as globalization itself homogenizes local cultural particularities rather than leaving behind a uniform imprint wherever it travels.

That some respondents reported using Uzbek on the Internet suggests it has not been completely sublimated by globalization. However, that so many respondents could speak Uzbek but did not use it on the Web, implies a disjuncture between the culture of the physical world and the culture that is facilitated in the virtual world. This phenomenon may be part of the effacement of local cultures by the globalization of the Internet and a portent that Uzbek is not appropriate for the Web. But more likely it is a cue that researchers must further explore how Uzbek can be included on the Internet. Given that the upcoming generation of young people will heavily favor Uzbek language because of their schooling and the political climate, it seems critical to understand how they interact with digital networks if they are to be included.

Uzbek Internet users, though novices, already use the Internet and hold beliefs about the Web that suggest potential resistance to the agenda of globalization. As the population of Internet users grows and matures with the local information and communication technology infrastructure and pool of software and technology development talent, researchers may observe more active online engagement in resistance to globalization, mirroring the previously cited examples of users in other countries who reclaimed Internet practices to fit their own cultures. The lessons that Uzbekistan offers on the inclusion of less common languages on the Web can be extended to other cultures as well. As more linguistically diverse people get online, it will be crucial to understand how they perceive and use the Internet so that more culturally relevant materials and tools can be created to make the Web inclusive, and so these languages can resist and survive globalization.

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