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From Learned Borrowing to Endogenous Conceptualization: Scientific Terminology and Amazigh as a Language of Knowledge

من الاقتراض المصطلحي العالِم إلى التأصيل المفهومي الداخلي: المصطلحية العلمية والأمازيغية لغةً لإنتاج المعرفة

De l'emprunt savant à la conceptualisation endogène : la terminologie scientifique et l'amazighe comme langue de savoir

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Abstract

Institutional recognition alone cannot make Amazigh a fully operational language for the production and circulation of scientific knowledge. This study examines the conditions required to move from adapting terminologies developed in dominant languages to a genuine capacity for endogenous conceptualization. It analyses the relationships among learned borrowing, controlled calquing, morphological and semantic neology, definitional reformulation, and language-internal term formation. Using a qualitative terminological approach, the article examines six humanities concepts—stereotype, pragmatics, subjectivation, imaginary, symbolic heritage, and critical anamnesis—according to five criteria: conceptual precision, intelligibility, morphological productivity, cross-variety stability, and discursive integration. The analysis shows that no single terminological procedure can, on its own, generate a stable scientific lexicon: borrowing supports international intelligibility, whereas neology and definitional reformulation activate language-internal resources. The article therefore proposes a pluricentric model based on terminological documentation, attested use, corpus testing, and coordination among institutions, researchers, scholarly journals, teachers, and digital tools. Scientific terminology thus emerges not as a simple inventory of labels, but as an infrastructure for conceptualization, knowledge circulation, and epistemic sovereignty.

Keywords

Amazigh, scientific terminology, endogenous conceptualization, neology, learned borrowing, pluricentric standardization, epistemic sovereignty

الملخّص

لا يـكفي الاعتـراف المؤسـسي بالـلغة الأمـازيغية لجعلهـا لغةً مكتمـلة الفاعـلية في إنتـاج المعـرفة العلـمية وصياغتهـا وتداولهـا، إذ يقتضي ذلـك امتلاكهـا القـدرة علـى تسـمية المفاهيـم المتخصـصة وتعريفهـا وبنـاء العلاقـات بينهـا داخـل أنسـاق معـرفية متماسـكة. تبـحث هذه الـدراسة في شـروط الانتقـال من تـكييف المصطلحـات المتشـكلة في اللغـات المهيـمنة إلـى بنـاء قـدرة فعـلية علـى التأصيـل المفهـومي الداخـلي. وتحلـل العلاقـات بين الاقتـراض المصطلـحي العالِـم، والمحـاكاة اللغـوية، والتوليـد الصـرفي والـدلالي، وإعـادة الصيـاغة التعـريفية، والإنشـاء المصطلـحي من داخـل مـوارد الـلغة. وتعتمـد الـدراسة مقـاربة نـوعية استكشـافية في التحليـل المصطلـحي، تُـطبَّق علـى ستة مفاهيـم من العلـوم الإنسـانية هي: الصـورة النمـطية، والتـداولية، وتشـكّل الذات، والمتخيَّـل، والتـراث الـرمزي، والاستذكار النقـدي، وتُقيَّـم وفق خمـسة معاييـر: الـدقة المفهـومية، وقابـلية الفهـم، والإنتـاجية الصـرفية، والاستقـرار بين التنوعـات الأمـازيغية، والقـدرة علـى الاندمـاج في الخطـاب العلـمي. وتبيّن النتـائج أن أي آلية مصطلـحية منفـردة لا تـكفي لبنـاء جهـاز علـمي مستقـر وفاعـل؛ فالاقتـراض ييسـر التفاهـم والتـداول العلـميين علـى المستـوى الـدولي، في حين تتيـح آليـات التوليـد وإعـادة الصيـاغة استثمـار المـوارد الداخـلية لـلغة. وتقتـرح الـدراسة لذلـك نموذجًـا متعـدد المـراكز يقـوم علـى التـوثيق المصطلـحي، وإثبـات الاستعمـال، والاختبـار داخـل الخطـاب،

والتنـسيق بين المؤسسـات والبـاحثين والـمجلات العلـمية والمـدرسين والأدوات الرقـمية. ومن ثـمّ تغـدو المصطلـحية العلـمية بنيةً تـحتيةً للتفكيـر والتأصيـل المفهـومي والسيـادة المعـرفية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الأمـازيغية، المصطلـحية العلـمية، التأصيـل المفهـومي الداخـلي، التوليـد المصطلـحي، الاقتـراض المصطلـحي العالِـم، التقييـس متعـدد المـراكز، السيـادة المعـرفية

Résumé

La reconnaissance institutionnelle de l'amazighe ne suffit pas à en faire une langue pleinement opératoire pour la production, la formalisation et la circulation des savoirs scientifiques. Cet article examine les conditions permettant de passer de l'adaptation de terminologies élaborées dans des langues dominantes à une capacité effective de conceptualisation endogène. Il analyse les relations entre emprunt savant, calque, néologie morphologique et sémantique, reformulation définitoire et création terminologique interne. L'étude adopte une démarche qualitative et exploratoire d'analyse terminologique appliquée à six notions des sciences humaines — *stéréotype, pragmatique, subjectivation, imaginaire, patrimoine symbolique* et *anamnèse critique* — évaluées selon cinq critères : précision notionnelle, intelligibilité, productivité morphologique, stabilité intervariétale et insertion discursive. Les résultats montrent qu'aucun procédé terminologique ne peut, isolément, assurer la constitution d'un lexique scientifique stable et fonctionnel. L'emprunt facilite l'intercompréhension et l'interopérabilité scientifiques, tandis que la néologie et la reformulation permettent d'activer les ressources propres à la langue. L'article propose dès lors un modèle pluricentrique de stabilisation fondé sur la documentation terminologique, l'attestation des usages, l'expérimentation discursive et la coordination entre institutions, chercheurs, revues, enseignants et outils numériques. La terminologie scientifique apparaît ainsi non comme un simple inventaire lexical, mais comme une infrastructure de conceptualisation et de souveraineté épistémique.

Mots-clés

Amazighe, terminologie scientifique, conceptualisation endogène, néologie, emprunt savant, standardisation pluricentrique, souveraineté épistémique

Introduction

To speak of scientific terminology in Amazigh is not merely to speak of new words. It is to ask under what conditions a language long placed in a minoritized position can become a language of knowledge, research, and intellectual controversy. Official recognition, education, and public visibility are decisive advances, but none of them, by itself, guarantees the capacity to produce abstract categories. A language may be legally recognized and visibly present on institutional façades while remaining dependent on other languages whenever a hypothesis must be formulated, a method defined, or a theoretical object constructed.

This dependence does not reveal any internal deficiency. It results from a social history that restricted Amazigh access to schooling, administration, print culture, higher education, and digital infrastructures. A language kept outside scholarly domains does not necessarily lack morphological or semantic resources; rather, it lacks sustained opportunities to activate, confront, and stabilize those resources. Terminology is precisely one of the sites where such activation becomes visible.

The issue is often framed as an alternative: should technical terms be borrowed from dominant languages, or should Amazigh equivalents be coined? The opposition is politically legible, but scientifically insufficient. Every scholarly language borrows. European terminologies owe a considerable part of their histories to Greek, Latin, Arabic, and international circulation. Conversely, an internally created form is not necessarily clear, accurate, or adoptable. The origin of a term determines neither its precision nor its productivity. The relevant question is therefore less "borrowing or neology?" than "which solution makes it possible to construct, transmit, and discuss the concept within a coherent conceptual network?"

Our hypothesis is that a viable Amazigh scientific terminology must articulate three requirements: anchoring in the resources of the language, intelligibility for its different publics, and compatibility with international scholarly exchange. This articulation rules out both purism and automatic borrowing. It also requires a distinction between lexical proposal and standardization: inventing a form is an authorial act; turning it into a reference term requires definitions, corpora, usage trials, institutions, and procedures for revision.

The article pursues three objectives. First, it clarifies the relationship among terminology, conceptualization, and standardization. Second, it analyses a limited set of proposals in order to show how several strategies—integrated borrowing, calquing, semantic extension, and periphrasis—modify the way a concept is rendered. Finally, it proposes a pluricentric model of stabilization capable of coordinating the unity required by scientific communication with the constitutive plurality of the Amazigh domain. The objective is not to produce a normative dictionary, but to make explicit the criteria and procedures through which a language of memory can also become a language of conceptual elaboration.

1. Terminology: From the Isolated Word to the Conceptual System

Terminology cannot be reduced to a bilingual list. Lexical translation often seeks to establish correspondence between a source term and a target-language form; terminological work, by contrast, reconstructs the relations among concepts. To say "subjectivation", for example, requires specification of the relations among subject, self, identity, agency, enunciation, power, and recognition. An Amazigh form is therefore terminologically relevant only if it can enter this constellation, generate derivatives, and function in definitions as well as in reasoning.

This distinction accords with the tradition of general terminology, which treats the term as the linguistic unit of a concept defined within a domain (Wüster, 1979; Rey, 1979; Sager, 1990). It must nevertheless be adapted to minoritized languages. In a space where scientific uses are recent, dispersed, and multilingual, concepts do not circulate only between disciplines: they also pass through French, Arabic, and English, each with different translation traditions. Amazigh terminology must therefore manage disciplinary precision, linguistic variation, and interlingual mediation simultaneously.

A scientific term has at least four dimensions. It refers to a definition; it belongs to a family of concepts; it takes a linguistic form that can be inflected or derived; and, finally, it is realized in texts. This last dimension is often neglected. A form that appears elegant in a glossary may become ambiguous or cumbersome in an article. Conversely, a periphrasis judged too long may prove extremely useful when a concept is first introduced, before a more

compact form is stabilized. Graphic economy cannot therefore be the sole criterion of quality.

Endogenous conceptualization does not mean that a concept is enclosed within an Amazigh cultural essence. Knowledge is constituted through circulation. Rather, it designates the capacity to rework a concept through the semantic, metaphorical, and morphological resources of the receiving language so that the concept becomes analysable and productive within it. A language conceptualizes when it no longer merely carries a foreign signifier but reorganizes the relations of meaning required for the appropriation of the concept.

This operation engages what may cautiously be called epistemic sovereignty. It entails neither lexical autarky nor rejection of international science. A language is epistemically active when it enables concepts to be formulated, contested, and transmitted without complete dependence on the syntax and lexicon of another language. Dialogue between languages then becomes an exchange between capacities for formulation, rather than a simple division between a language that produces and one that receives.

For Amazigh, this issue carries a particular symbolic dimension. The language is frequently associated with family transmission, orality, heritage, memory, and identity. These functions should not be devalued; they are part of its historical strength. Yet their celebration can become a new form of assignment if it keeps the language on the side of what is preserved rather than what is constructed. Scientific terminology shifts this boundary: it makes the language not only an archive of experience but also a workshop of inquiry.

2. Analytical Approach and Criteria for Admissibility

The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory approach. Its material consists of six concepts used in language studies and the humanities: stereotype, pragmatics, subjectivation, imaginary, symbolic heritage, and critical anamnesis. They were selected because they represent different degrees of technicality and mobilize several resources: metaphor, derivation, composition, semantic extension, and periphrasis. The analytical corpus is not a statistical corpus of actual usage; it is a reasoned set of proposals designed to test a method. The choices presented below are therefore terminological hypotheses, not normative decisions.

Each proposal is examined according to five criteria. Conceptual precision measures the fit between the form and the concept in the relevant domain. Intelligibility refers to the possibility of interpreting the proposal without compulsory knowledge of the source language. Productivity evaluates its capacity to generate derivatives or to join a lexical family. Cross-variety stability concerns its possible circulation beyond a single variety. Finally, discursive integration tests whether the form functions in a definition, an abstract, an argument, and a pedagogical context. These linguistic criteria are accompanied by a social condition: no term can be declared stabilized before it has been confronted with speakers, domain specialists, and real corpora.

The method distinguishes five strategies. Integrated borrowing adapts an international term to Amazigh phonology, orthography, and morphology. Controlled calquing reproduces a foreign conceptual architecture when that architecture remains compatible with the language. Formal neology creates a unit through internal word-formation processes. Semantic neology extends the meaning of an attested word. Conceptual periphrasis explicates the components of the concept through a syntagm. These strategies do not form an absolute hierarchy. The same concept may require a periphrasis in teaching, a compact form in a specialist article, and an international equivalent in parentheses at first occurrence.

This approach also leads us to separate three levels that debates frequently conflate: the selection of a concept and its definition; the codification of a linguistic form; and the institutional decision concerning the recommended form, admitted variants, and domains of use. Inspired by Haugen's models of language planning (1983), this distinction helps explain why a strong individual proposal does not automatically become a norm. A norm presupposes acceptance, functional elaboration, and mechanisms of coordination.

Tableau 1. Analytical grid for terminological solutions

Criterion	Guiding question	Validation indicator
Precision	Does the form designate the concept in its domain?	Definition and counter-examples
Intelligibility	Is the meaning accessible without the source language?	Reader testing
Productivity	Does the form allow derivation and network formation?	Attestable lexical family

Criterion	Guiding question	Validation indicator
Stability	Can it circulate across varieties and institutions?	Multi-regional corpora
Discursive integration	Does it function in real texts?	Articles, courses, and glossaries

Source: authors' proposal based on Rey (1979), Sager (1990), Haugen (1983), and Chaker (1998).

3. From Borrowing to Reformulation: Six Case Studies

The case of "stereotype" first reveals the difference between international recognizability and conceptual transparency. The borrowing stereotip is immediately identifiable to readers familiar with French or English; it may therefore be useful in a specialist text or multilingual index. For other readers, however, it remains opaque. The proposal tugna yettwaseqqnen—literally "a fixed or locked image"—makes the ideas of closure and repetition perceptible. It turns the term into a micro-definition. Its strength is also its limit: depending on the field, a stereotype is not only an immobilized image but a socially shared, reductive representation that can operate as a discursive automatism. The proposal must therefore be accompanied by a definition and compared with other possible forms. It is a semantically motivated hypothesis, not a definitively validated equivalent.

For "pragmatics", the solution Pragmatika ensures continuity with international nomenclature and facilitates documentary retrieval. It does not, however, specify whether the term refers to the linguistic discipline, a philosophical orientation, or the everyday sense of "practical". The periphrasis tasleḍt n usiwel deg tegnit n taywalt—analysis of enunciation in the communicative situation—has pedagogical value because it makes explicit the study of language in context. Yet it risks reducing pragmatics to enunciation and the communication situation, whereas the field also encompasses speech acts, inference, implicature, deixis, and politeness. The most appropriate policy here is probably not the immediate replacement of the borrowing but dual designation: a compact term for disciplinary identification, a definitional paraphrase at first occurrence, and then research toward a more encompassing form.

"Subjectivation" poses a different problem. It does not designate the subject alone, but the historical, discursive, or political process through which an individual becomes a subject within a regime of power and recognition. The proposal asbedded n yiman, which may be understood as "standing oneself up" or "constitution of the self", has considerable metaphorical force. It suggests emergence, self-possession, and the acquisition of a voice. Yet this richness does not by itself guarantee equivalence: the metaphor may privilege autonomy, whereas some theories emphasize subjection. A terminological record should therefore distinguish philosophical, linguistic, and sociological senses and test whether the form can generate coherent derivatives for "to subjectivate", "subject", and "process of subjectivation".

For "imaginary", the hybrid imaginairen preserves recognition of the source word but also imports its ambiguities. The proposal tugniwin, built around image and representation, fits the Amazigh lexicon more closely and may be useful in expressions such as "imaginaries of crisis". It may nevertheless blur the distinction between particular images and the organized set of representations, narratives, and schemas structuring a collective. Movement from the concrete to the abstract is possible through semantic neology, but it must be demonstrated in use. This case reminds us that a motivated translation is not simply an attractive image: it must be able to carry the theoretical density of the concept.

The expression "symbolic heritage" lends itself to composition. Ayla azamulan combines the idea of a received or transmitted good with that of sign and symbol. The construction makes it possible to conceive heritage as a set of meaningful mediations rather than a stock of objects. It also offers a productive lexical family around transmission, collective ownership, and symbolic value. Its evaluation must nevertheless clarify the scope of ayla: does the term imply property in the legal sense, cultural inheritance, or a common resource? The answer will depend on the disciplinary context and may justify several labelled variants.

Finally, "critical anamnesis" brings memory into relation with reflexive activity. Usmektay s tmussni—remembering through or with knowledge—makes visible the work of memory rather than a simple return of recollection. The proposal is suitable for an analysis opposing repetitive commemoration to interrogated memory. It nevertheless remains an interpretive paraphrase. In philosophical or psychoanalytic writing, "anamnesis" carries specific concep-

tual histories that must be documented. The solution illustrates the value of endogenous conceptualization provided that the polysemy of the source term is not erased.

Tableau 2. Provisional status of the six proposals

Concept	Solution examined	Main advantage	Point to validate
Stereotype	tugna yettwaseqqnen	Transparency of fixation	Social dimension of the concept
Pragmatics	tasleḍt n usiwel deg tegnit n taywalt	Definitional value	Full extension of the field
Subjectivation	asbedded n yiman	Processual force	Autonomy/subjection relationship
Imaginary	tugniwin	Internal semantic anchoring	Shift from image to system
Symbolic heritage	ayla azamulan	Productive composition	Legal or collective meaning
Critical anamnesis	usmektay s tmussni	Memory as work	Disciplinary specificities

Source: authors' analysis. The forms are proposals to be tested, not established norms.

4. Stabilizing without Uniformizing: Toward a Pluricentric Architecture

The case studies lead to a methodological conclusion: the linguistic quality of a proposal is necessary but insufficient. A scientific term becomes stable because it is defined, reused, discussed, taught, and revised. Standardization should therefore not begin with a lexical verdict; it should organize the circulation of proposals and make their justifications verifiable. This is where the pluricentric framework developed for the standardization of Amazigh can be applied to terminology.

Amazigh has no single centre. Moroccan and Algerian institutions, universities, associations, Libyan and Tunisian networks, regional communities, and diasporas do not possess the same resources or the same orthographic traditions. A transnational norm imposed by the best-resourced centre would risk converting institutional advantage into general linguistic autho-

rity. Conversely, regional lexicons without correspondences would multiply competing synonyms and restrict the circulation of knowledge. Pluricentrism offers another route: several legitimate centres connected by a shared protocol of documentation and equivalence (Clyne, 1992).

The first level of this architecture is the terminological record. Each entry should include the concept, domain, definition, French, Arabic, and English equivalents, proposed Amazigh forms, morphological segmentation, regional and orthographic variants, contextual examples, possible derivatives, sources, and validation status. A label would distinguish a proposal, an experimental form, a recommended term, and a term established through use. Such a system would prevent an individual creation from being presented as an already acquired norm.

The second level is pluricentric validation. Groups bringing together linguists, domain specialists, translators, teachers, editors, and speakers would examine entries on the basis of corpora. Decisions should be versioned and revisable. When a variant is well established in one region but little shared elsewhere, it could be retained with a label rather than deleted. Interoperability matters more here than formal identity: readers must be able to recognize equivalences, conduct searches, and move from one centre to another.

The third level is discursive testing. Journals and conferences can require every new term to be defined at first occurrence and, during a transitional phase, accompanied by its international equivalent. Annotated corpora would then make it possible to observe frequency, semantic stability, and co-occurrences. School norms, university norms, and popularization do not always require the same degree of condensation. A periphrasis may be retained for pedagogical purposes while a short form circulates among specialists, provided their relationship is made explicit.

The fourth level is orthographic and digital. Terminology cannot be separated from writing systems, but neither should it be captured by the "war of alphabets". A common lexical representation may be realized in adapted Latin, Tifinagh, or, where practices justify it, adapted Arabic script. Published transliteration tables, stable identifiers, and parallel corpora would prevent a change of script from being confused with a change of term. Graphic plurality then becomes a managed property of the terminological resource rather than a conflict of legitimacy.

Finally, this model requires a policy of evidence. Terms should be tested with readers of different profiles: first-language speakers or learners, students or specialists, and readers from different regions. Surveys can measure spontaneous comprehension, memorization, acceptability, and the ability to reuse the form in a sentence. Corpora can test productivity and stability. Without such evidence, appeals to the "authenticity" of the language or the "transparency" of a creation remain authorial intuitions.

5. Discussion — Conditions for a Practicable Epistemic Sovereignty

Endogenous conceptualization contributes to a practicable epistemic sovereignty if it avoids two misleading symmetries. The first opposes internal purity to external dependence. Yet a borrowing can be perfectly integrated and scientifically useful, whereas an internally created neologism may be opaque. The second opposes unity to diversity. A shared terminology does not require the erasure of variants; it requires their documentation, functional hierarchization, and convertibility.

This perspective makes it possible to reformulate language promotion. A language does not become scientific by decree or through the accumulation of neologisms. It becomes scientific when a student can read several studies without relearning the vocabulary on every page; when a teacher has stable definitions and examples; when a researcher can discuss a terminological proposal and retrace the decision that produced it; when a search engine recognizes variants and scripts; and when an author can develop a continuous argument without systematically switching to another language.

The risk of lexical nationalism must nevertheless be taken seriously. Presenting every internal creation as superior because it is supposedly "authentically" Amazigh turns terminology into a test of belonging. Scholarship in Amazigh must remain open to circulation, citation, and international comparability. The aim is not to conceal the foreign histories of concepts, but to make their appropriation active. Maintaining an international term may be preferable when precision and interoperability require it; the terminologist's task is then to ensure its integration, definition, and productivity.

The opposite risk is the illusion of scientificity created by borrowing. A form close to French or English may appear technical while remaining incomprehensible. It can create a university in-group and distance speakers from

scholarly language. Dual designation—a motivated Amazigh form alongside the international equivalent—often provides a productive transition. It enables readers to learn the concept, locate it in the literature, and observe which form becomes established through use.

The study has several limitations. The number of concepts is small and they belong mainly to the humanities. The proposals have not yet been subjected to acceptability surveys or quantitative corpus analysis. Some literal glosses require deeper dialectological and morphological verification. Finally, the question of script is addressed only at the level of interoperability. Future research should compare more technical domains, document regional variants, and evaluate terms in real teaching and writing situations.

These limitations do not diminish the value of the proposed framework; they determine its status. The article is not a ready-to-use normative list but a method for turning lexical intuitions into discussable scientific objects. That transformation is decisive: it moves terminology from identity assertion to research infrastructure.

Conclusion

The promotion of Amazigh cannot stop at institutional recognition, teaching, or symbolic visibility. It presupposes the ability to define, relate, and discuss concepts within the language itself. Scientific terminology contributes to this capacity, provided it is not reduced to the rapid manufacture of equivalents.

The analysis of the six concepts shows that borrowing, neology, calquing, and periphrasis are less competing solutions than instruments to be evaluated according to concepts, publics, and discourse genres. Endogenous conceptualization becomes productive when it makes a concept intelligible and generative without concealing its theoretical tensions. Borrowing remains legitimate when it supports precision and intercomprehension, but it must be defined and integrated rather than merely transcribed.

The movement from proposal to stable terminology ultimately requires pluricentric governance: documented records, corpora, usage trials, labelled variants, coordination among institutions, and transliteration across scripts. Standardizing then means neither uniformizing practices nor imposing the decision of a single centre. It means making concepts shareable, choices traceable, and revisions possible.

Amazigh is not condemned to remain a language that is spoken about only in relation to memory, identity, or heritage. It can become a language in which research objects are constructed and categories of knowledge debated. Under this condition, terminology does not merely enrich the lexicon: it transforms a defended language into a language that produces thought.

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