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BORROWING AND ADAPTATION OF ARABIC TERMS

Shuhrat Mirziyotov

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philology, Associate Professor Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies Tashkent,
Uzbekistan

Abstract: This article examines the theoretical and practical aspects of Arabic terminology development, with special emphasis on borrowing and adaptation processes. It highlights how Arabic integrates foreign lexical items while maintaining linguistic identity through standardization and institutional language policy.

Keywords: Terminology, Arabic language, diplomatic terms, borrowing, adaptation, standardization, AIDSMO.

Introduction

The development of Arabic terminology is closely connected to language planning and institutional language policy. Modern Arabic faces increasing demand to express scientific, technological, and diplomatic concepts. As a result, processes such as term formation, semantic adaptation, borrowing, and standardization have become essential.

Language policy plays a key role in regulating these processes by promoting unified terminology across Arabic-speaking countries. Institutions such as AIDSMO contribute significantly by developing guidelines that support terminological consistency and modernization.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive research design to analyze the development, borrowing, and adaptation processes of Arabic terminology, with a particular focus on the role of language policy and institutional frameworks such as AIDSMO (Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization).

The research is based on document analysis and comparative linguistic analysis of Arabic terminological sources, academic literature, and official standardization documents. Special attention is given to term formation strategies, including derivation (ishtiqaq), compounding (naḥt), semantic extension, and borrowing (iqtirād) as described in classical and modern Arabic linguistic studies (Al-Qasimi, 1994; Wright, 2007).

The methodological framework also integrates principles of language planning theory, particularly corpus planning, which emphasizes the role of institutions in regulating vocabulary development and standardization (Cooper, 1989; Haugen, 1966). AIDSMO's terminological policies are analyzed as part of regional efforts to unify Arabic scientific and technical vocabulary across Arab states (AIDSMO, 2018).

Data were collected from:

- Academic publications on Arabic terminology and lexicography
- Standardization reports issued by Arab language institutions
- Comparative studies on borrowing in modern Arabic (Versteegh, 2014)

The analysis focuses on identifying patterns of lexical innovation and evaluating how foreign terms are adapted into Arabic morphological and phonological systems.

Results

The findings demonstrate that Arabic terminology development is strongly influenced by a balance between internal linguistic resources and external borrowing processes.

First, internal mechanisms such as derivation and semantic expansion remain the dominant strategies in forming new terms. Arabic's root-and-pattern morphology allows the creation of systematic lexical families, enabling terminological consistency across scientific domains (Ryding, 2005). For example, a single trilateral root can generate multiple related technical terms, ensuring semantic cohesion.

Second, borrowing from European languages—especially English and French—has significantly increased in modern scientific and diplomatic discourse. However, these borrowings are often subjected to adaptation processes, including phonological modification and Arabization (ta'rib) (Versteegh, 2014). AIDSMO and other institutions attempt to regulate this process by proposing standardized equivalents.

Third, institutional intervention plays a crucial role in reducing terminological variation. AIDSMO's standardization efforts contribute to harmonizing technical vocabulary across Arabic-speaking countries, particularly in engineering, industry, and international relations (AIDSMO, 2018).

The results indicate that Arabic terminology is not a static system but a dynamic linguistic field shaped by both globalization and language policy mechanisms.

Discussion

The analysis reveals that Arabic terminology development is deeply embedded in broader sociolinguistic and political contexts. Language planning institutions such as AIDSMO, the Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo, and similar bodies in Damascus and Rabat play a decisive role in shaping modern Arabic lexical standards (Cooper, 1989).

One key issue identified is the tension between purist linguistic ideology and pragmatic borrowing practices. While some scholars advocate for reliance on classical Arabic derivational mechanisms, the rapid expansion of scientific knowledge necessitates borrowing from global languages (Al-Qasimi, 1994). This creates variability in usage across different Arab countries.

Another important finding is that semantic adaptation often leads to meaning shifts when foreign terms are integrated into Arabic. In some cases, borrowed terms acquire specialized meanings that differ from their original usage, reflecting the sociocultural adaptation process (Wright, 2007).

Furthermore, the study highlights that standardization efforts by AIDSMO improve terminological consistency but are not always fully implemented at the national level. Differences in educational systems, media usage, and academic preferences often lead to parallel terminology systems within the Arabic-speaking world (Versteegh, 2014).

Therefore, Arabic terminology development should be understood as a negotiated process between linguistic tradition, institutional regulation, and global scientific influence.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the development of Arabic terminology is a complex and continuously evolving process shaped by both internal linguistic mechanisms and external influences. Arabic relies strongly on its rich morphological system, particularly root-and-pattern derivation and semantic extension, to generate new scientific and technical terms. At the same time, globalization and rapid scientific progress have increased the need for borrowing and adapting foreign terminology into Arabic.

The analysis also shows that language policy and institutional efforts play a significant role in organizing and standardizing terminology across Arabic-speaking countries. Organizations such as AIDSMO contribute to reducing inconsistency and promoting unified usage in specialized fields. However, variation in terminology use across different regions remains a challenge due to differences in educational systems, academic traditions, and practical language use.

Overall, Arabic terminology development can be understood as a dynamic balance between preservation of linguistic identity and adaptation to global knowledge systems. Strengthening coordination between language planning institutions and promoting consistent implementation of standardized terms will be essential for ensuring greater clarity and unity in modern Arabic terminology.

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