Towards a Borrowability Scale for Phraseological Units: The Case of Arabic Calques from English

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Abstract

In contact linguistics, studies on borrowability have tended to focus on morphemes, lexemes, and syntactic structures, while the level of phraseology has not received similar focus, even though the calque of phraseological units represents a wide-spread type of borrowing. Phraseology is an area that shows the deep influence of English on many world languages, including Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The present study aims to find out whether there are common syntactic, semantic, or cultural features that characterise calqued phraseological units and determine their selection as members of the MSA phraseological reservoir. Based on a parallel corpus of MSA phraseological units calqued on English expressions, the study investigates the source units syntactically to find which patterns tend to be borrowed more frequently than others, and analyses them semantically to determine to what extent transparency and decomposability can affect the borrowability of phraseological units. While the findings indicate that there are syntactic and semantic factors that considerably affect phraseological borrowability, the study shows that cultural considerations also play a significant role in the acceptance or rejection of certain expressions by members of the speech community.

Keywords: Anglicism, borrowability scales, decomposability, Modern Standard Arabic, phraseological calque, transparency

نحو مقياس لقابلية الوحدات العبارية للاقتراض اللغوي: دراسة للتعبيرات العربية المنقولة عن الإنجليزية

ملخص

تنزع الدراسات التي تتناول ظاهرة القابلية للاقتراض اللغوي في لغويات الاتصال إلى التركيز على الجوانب الصرفية واللفظية والتراكيب النحوية، في حين لم يلق علم العبارات اهتماما مماثلا، رغم أن نقل الوحدات العبارية من أكثر أنواع الاقتراض اللغوي شيوعا. ويمثل المستوى العباري أحد المجالات التي يتجلى فيها تأثير اللغة الإنجليزية العميق على العديد من لغات العالم، ومن بينها العربية الفصحى المعاصرة. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف ما إذا كانت هناك سمات تركيبية أو دلالية أو ثقافية تميز الوحدات العبارية المنقولة وتحدد قابليتها للاختيار لتكون جزءا من المخزون العباري للفصحى المعاصرة. تقوم الدراسة على ذخيرة لغوية من الوحدات العبارية ذات الأصل الإنجليزي في الفصحى المعاصرة، فتحلل التعبيرات الإنجليزية على المستوى التركيبي لمعرفة الأنماط التي يشيع اقتراضها أكثر من غيرها، ثم تحللها على المستوى الدلالي لتحديد مدى تأثر اقتراض الوحدات العبارية بالوضوح والقابلية لاستنباط المعنى من مكونات التعبير. وفي حين تشير نتائج التحليل إلى وجود عوامل تركيبية ودلالية تؤثر تأثيرا ملحوظا في قابلية الوحدات العبارية للاقتراض، تبين الدراسة أن الاعتبارات الثقافية لها دور مهم أيضا في قبول المجتمع اللغوي لبعض التعبيرات أو رفضها.

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1. Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed growing interest in language contact and contact-induced language change. Due to the spread of English as a global language and its influence on many other languages worldwide, research on Anglicism has occupied an increasingly greater space in contact linguistics. The present paper tackles a rather little-explored area in contact linguistics, namely, the grammatical, semantic, and cultural factors that determine the borrowability of phraseological units (PUs), with a focus on PUs that Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has borrowed from English through calque. The study, therefore, represents the interface between two linguistic disciplines—contact linguistics and phraseology. The study seeks to explain why certain PUs are more likely to be borrowed than others and proposes borrowability scales for PUs based on the syntactic and semantic investigation of a parallel corpus of MSA calques of English origin. The PUs are analysed syntactically to see which patterns can or cannot be borrowed into MSA, and semantically to see to what extent borrowability is affected by their degree of transparency. After that, the sociocultural considerations that can facilitate or prevent the borrowability of PUs are discussed.

Studies on borrowability have generally focused on lexical and morphological aspects of language, with relatively little attention paid to phraseology. Apart from some isolated attempts, as Fiedler (2017, p. 89) observes, "phraseological borrowing has not received much scholarly attention so far." It is commonly believed that "most instances of transfer occur at the lexical level" (Riehl, 2019, p. 318), and therefore it is words rather than word combinations that have received most attention in borrowability studies. The high frequency of phraseological units in language was only widely recognised after the emergence of corpus linguistics, which has revealed the permeation of multiword units in authentic language usage. In addition, phraseological borrowing often takes place through calque, where the components of the foreign PU are translated item-by-item into the recipient language, resulting in expressions that are native in form but whose foreign origin is obscured for the ordinary language user (González & Knospe, 2019). In the case of Arabic, while language purists tend to oppose the use of loanwords and call for using native Arabic alternatives, the use of phraseological calque

is not met with equal criticism. Arabic language academies, which are usually keen on providing Arabic equivalents for foreign words of modern civilisation and scientific terms, adopt a more lenient stance towards phraseological calques and regard them as a source of enriching the Arabic language.

The Arabic-English contact setting has its own peculiarity. In spite of the absence of common typological and genealogical features, which can play a significant role in contact-induced language change (Coffey, 2009; Grant, 2020), thousands of English PUs have been borrowed into MSA. Arabic direct contact with English goes back to the British occupation of some Arab countries, which started in the late 19th century and continued for almost seventy years. The influence of English on Arabic intensified with the rise of the United States as a superpower and the spread of American culture and lifestyle worldwide and has increased rapidly with the information and communication revolution, which has facilitated contact with English at various levels. The influence has been further encouraged by the expansion in English language education in many Arab countries and in translation (mainly from English into MSA) of various types of content, including news items, literary works, films, drama, and websites.

2. Theoretical framework

As noted above, the present work is theoretically based on both contact linguistics and phraseology. Contact linguistics is an emerging discipline that started in 1950s, with the publication of works on bilingualism by Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953), and was given great impetus by the work of later scholars (e.g., Matras, 2009; Myers-Scotton, 2002; Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Winford, 2003), as well as the publication of journals and reference works devoted to the topic (e.g., Adamou & Matras, 2021; Hickey, 2020b). Contact linguistics is concerned with the linguistic changes that result from the influence of one language on another in bilingual settings. Though such changes are traditionally dealt with under historical linguistics, they are now increasingly studied within the framework of contact linguistics (Winford, 2007, p. 23). The main aims of contact linguistics include recording contact-induced language change, specifying its various causes, and setting general principles that can describe and predict its frequencies and stages. This last aim is often realised through borrowability scales.

A borrowability scale (also known as a borrowability hierarchy) is a hierarchical system that specifies which linguistic units are more susceptible to borrowing than others. As defined by Meakins (2019, p.

64), it is a scale "of lexical and grammatical categories which are more or less likely to be transferred." Borrowability scales are different from implicational hierarchies, the former being associated with frequency while the latter with the ordering of different stages of borrowing (Matras & Adamou, 2021, p. 241). Borrowability scales and implicational hierarchies have been developed for word classes (e.g., nouns vs. verbs), word types (e.g., content vs. function words), and morpheme types (e.g., derivational vs. inflectional). By contrast, PUs have not been investigated in terms of borrowability scales, even though they constitute a major type of borrowing, especially from English into MSA. Given their linguistic peculiarities and their often culturally-laden nature, there is need for developing a borrowability scale for PUs that takes into account the language-internal and language-external factors that can facilitate or impede their acceptance in recipient languages.

Like contact linguistics, phraseology is a relatively recent field of study. It has attracted increased attention in the last two decades in Western Europe and America, though it has a long history in the Russian and Eastern European traditions. Phraseology is concerned with the study of multiword expressions of various types. Research in phraseology has been boosted by the advances in corpus linguistics, with consistent evidence from large corpora indicating that a substantial part of the language that people use consists of pre-stored multiword units. Much work on phraseology in English is based on Sinclair's (1991, pp. 109–110) distinction between the "idiom principle" and the "open-choice principle," according to which multiword units belong to the former principle while words combined solely by the rules of grammar belong to the latter (e.g., Buerki, 2020; Erman & Warren, 2000; Herbst et al., 2011; Moon, 1998). Sinclair's own work in corpus-based lexicography testifies to the practical applicability of this theoretical distinction.

In the present study, the label "phraseological unit" (PU) is used for the main unit of phraseology, which, as Pawley (2001, p. 122) explains, includes "any multi-word expression up to sentence level." In addition to polylexicality, PUs are characterised by relative stability and conventionalisation. PUs are divided here into collocations, idioms, proverbs, quotations, and pragmatic phrases. Collocations are phrasal combinations of lexical words which tend to occur adjacent to, or in close proximity of, one another and which are semantically transparent. While idioms are also phrasal combinations of words, they have varying degrees of opacity, inversely proportional to their degrees of decomposability. Unlike collocations and idioms, proverbs are sentential rather than phrasal units that usually provide a moral lesson or a piece of wisdom.

Proverbs and quotations also differ in their degree of transparency; some of them are, like collocations, fully transparent (e.g., *al-ghāyah tubarriru al-wasīlah*[1] 'the end justifies the means'), while others have varying degrees of decomposability (e.g., *al-furṣah lā taduqqu 'illā marrah wāḥidah* 'opportunity only knocks once' and *al-gharīq yataʿallaqu bi-qashshah* 'A drowning man will clutch at a straw'), depending on whether or not they contain words used literally. While pragmatic phrases are normally transparent, they are conventionally limited to certain contexts and their elements cannot be freely replaced by synonyms. When pragmatic PUs are calqued, they are used in the same situational contexts as those of the source forms. Examples are *ʿīd mīlād saʿīd* 'happy birthday', *maʿa al-iʿtidhār li-(fulān)* 'with apologies to (someone)', a phrase commonly used by Arab writers and caricaturists when they parody or make use of someone else's work, and *yuʾsifunā 'iblāghukum bi'anna ...* 'we are sorry to inform you that …', used as a polite formula for notifying people of rejecting their requests or ending services provided to them. PUs involve not only linguistic aspects, but also mirror cultural features and moral values, as well as religious beliefs and ideological convictions (cf., Bragina, 2000; Skandera, 2007).

PUs can be borrowed directly, in the same way as loanwords are, or through phraseological calque, which is defined here as the creation of a PU in a given language on the basis of word-by-word or morpheme-by-morpheme translation of a PU or a morphologically complex word in another language. This definition accounts for the fact that many MSA calques are based on English affixed words. Given the lack of correspondence between the English and Arabic affixation systems, English prefixes and suffixes can be translated into MSA as full words, and if the resultant form is used frequently enough, it can become a PU in MSA. For instance, many MSA adjectives starting with *ghayr* 'not, other than' are calques on English adjectives with a negative prefix, such as *un-*, *in-*, or *non-*, as in *ghayr mubarrar* 'unjustified', *ghayr sharʿī* 'illegitimate', and *ghayr qābil li-l-tafāwuḍ* 'non-negotiable'. *Ghayr* is not a prefix in MSA but rather a free morpheme; though it is often annexed to other nouns or adjectives, it can occur in other contexts, as in *lā ghayr* 'only; nothing else' and *ḥuqūq al-ghayr* 'the rights of others'. Other examples are *taʿlīm mushtarak* 'co-education' and *sharṭ musbaq* 'precondition'. Many accounts define calque in terms of "item-by-item"

or "morpheme-by-morpheme" translation (e.g., Haspelmath, 2009, p. 39; Manfredi, 2020, p. 625; Schmid & de Bot, 2004, p. 216; Thomason, 2001, p. 81; Trask & Millar 2015, p. 19).

3. Review of the literature

Many works on the influence of English on MSA phraseology depend mainly on listing MSA PUs borrowed from English, but do not aim to analyse or explain them linguistically or investigate their sociocultural implications. An early example is Blau (1981), who records the influence of European languages on MSA and Modern Hebrew vocabulary, phraseology, and syntax, with ample examples illustrating such influence. The examples in Blau's list are the result of "chance reading" (Blau, 1981, p. 75) and are not classified thematically or linguistically, as Blau is mainly concerned with showing the influence of European languages on Arabic journalistic and, to some extent, literary writing. Blau attributes most of the Arabic phrases he lists to French influence. This probably reflects the situation at the time of his study (the 1981 book is based on a lecture delivered in 1969) or in Arab countries that were under French occupation. The source of influence has now largely shifted to English, whose impact on French and other European languages is acknowledged by many scholars (Andersen, 2014, 2020; Coffey, 2009; Crystal, 2012; Fiedler, 2017; Furiassi et al., 2012; Görlach, 2001; Mott & Laso, 2020; Thomas, 2003; Trask & Millar, 2015; Zabawa, 2017).

Ali (2005) regards calque as a means of enriching the Arabic language. His study aims to investigate calque as a term-formation process in Arabic, focusing mainly on terminological calques in a number of specialised fields. However, most of the examples he provides are general language calques rather than technical terms (such as the MSA calques of *road map*, *internet café*, *to throw light on*, and *to play a role*, to give but a few examples). In addition, the data on which the article is based are collected from students' translations, which do not necessarily represent actual language usage.

Writing in Arabic, Fāyid (2003, pp. 905–907) divides the sources of MSA idiomatic expressions into four classes: borrowings (though she does not refer to the donor languages or source forms), medical and scientific expressions, military expressions, and expressions taken from colloquial varieties. This taxonomy does not seem to be comprehensive or based on mutually-exclusive criteria, for many of the scientific and military examples she offers are also borrowings (e.g., *al-dhakā' al-ṣināʿī* 'artificial intelligence' and *sāʿat al-ṣifr* 'zero hour'). Moreover, she classifies some general expressions as medical or scientific (e.g., *ghasl al-*

mukhkh 'brain washing'). While Fāyid's study includes expressions inherited from Classical Arabic (e.g., *Khādim al-Ḥaramayn* 'Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques'), Classical Arabic is not listed as a source of MSA phraseology.

Apart from Arabic, there is relatively more literature on phraseological borrowing from English in other European languages. For instance, Coffey (2009) shows that Italian and other European languages have calqued a large number of PUs from English, both directly and indirectly. Coffey (2009, p. 59) notes that this is facilitated by genetic relatedness between English and European languages. This, however, does not apply to languages like Arabic, in which the phraseological influence of English has also been strong. González and Knospe (2019) discuss English calques in Spanish and German with the aim of explaining why calque is sometimes preferred to direct borrowing of PUs, arguing that this largely depends of the sociolinguistic attitude of the recipient language speakers. González and Knospe refer to the general pragmatic purposes for which phraseological calques are employed, including euphemism, gaining prestige, and producing humorous effect. They attribute the creation of calque to hasty translation, for example by news correspondents living in an English-speaking country for a long time (see also Mott & Laso 2020, p. 169, who associate calque with "poor or literal translation").

There are other studies that have tackled phraseological borrowing from a pragmatic perspective. Fiedler (2017) focuses on the pragmatic use of two German phrases calqued on the English *that being said* and *nice try*, noting that the German calques are used in the same situations as the English phrases. She also argues that calque from English accompanies the borrowing of English institutions and cultural values, adding that this has parallels in other European languages. Fiedler is rather critical of this phenomenon and expresses concern that it can have "consequences for how people use their mother tongues, including discourse strategies and patterns of behaviour" (2017, p. 100). Fiedler opposes the view that English currently acts as a worldwide lingua franca, since it is not culturally neutral as a lingua franca should be.

Zenner et al. (2015) are also concerned with direct phraseological borrowing rather than calque. Adopting a sociolinguistic approach, they examine the insertion of English loanwords and phrases in informal spoken Dutch, as represented by reality TV shows. They discuss individual and situational features associated with the use of Anglicisms in conversation, such as age, gender, and profession, indicating that the

use of English borrowings is associated with age and gender, as young men tend to use them in discourse to assert their modernity. Andersen (2020) compares the use of three direct borrowings from English in Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian, explaining the pragmatic purposes for which English expressions like *O wait* or *as if* are used in the three Scandinavian languages. Andersen includes the borrowing of the English *ever* (as in *the best dad ever*) as a case of phraseological borrowing. It is not clear how this use of *ever* (which is both a single word and a function word) can be an example of phraseological rather than grammatical borrowing. In spite of the lack of agreement on basic terminology in the field of phraseology (see, e.g., Gray & Biber, 2015; Wray, 2002), polylexicality is a distinguishing feature of phraseological units. The *ever*-construction, as explained by Andersen (2020, p. 6–7), represents a mixed kind of syntactic borrowing, involving syntactic calque and direct borrowing of a function word. To use Sakel's (2007) terms, it combines both "pattern" and "matter" borrowing.

4. Corpus and Methodology

The present study is based on a parallel corpus of MSA PUs of English origin collected by the author from various authentic sources as part of a bilingual lexicographic project that is currently in progress. This corpus consists of 4,306 Arabic PUs with their English sources, all falling within the general domain of MSA, in the sense that they occur in non-technical sources and are addressed to the general reader. It is not claimed that this corpus is a full list of MSA PUs that have been calqued from English; calque from English is an ongoing process and new forms are continually added to MSA phraseology. For instance, many English expressions related to the coronavirus pandemic (e.g., *social distancing*, *herd immunity*, and *home isolation*) have been borrowed into MSA and frequently appear in non-technical discourse. While these are included in the corpus, other calques from different fields can enter MSA phraseology, though this is unlikely to significantly affect the syntactic, semantic, or cultural features of the existing list, which represents the most frequent patterns of English units borrowed into MSA phraseology.

The English forms on which the MSA PUs are based are classified grammatically into phrasal units (e.g., noun phrases and verb phrases), clausal units, and affixed words. Compounds are counted here as phraseological units, as the choice of solid, hyphenated, and open spellings is largely a matter of convention, which can change over time. The same applies to blends, such as *psychoanalysis*, which has been calqued into MSA as two words (*taḥlīl nafsī* 'psychological analysis'), based on the original words composing the blend.

Semantically, the same forms are classified according to their degree of transparency. The idea that semantic transparency is directly related to borrowability has been suggested by work in contact linguistics at the level of morphology (Matras & Adamou, 2021, p. 239; Matras 2009, p. 155), where it is shown that derivational morphemes are more borrowable than inflectional morphemes. In light of the similarities between multiword units and morphologically complex words (e.g., Beck, 2019), it is plausible to assume that transparency can be a decisive factor in the borrowability of PUs. Transparency is also regarded as one of the linguistic factors that can lead to calque (González & Knospe, 2019). Transparency is understood here as a scalar concept that refers to the ability to derive the meaning of a given PU from the meanings of its component words or morphemes, which in turn depends on whether such components are used literally or figuratively. In non-idiomatic PUs, including collocations, non-figurative proverbs and quotations, and pragmatic phrases, the component words are used literally, and such PUs are classified as transparent. Also included as transparent are most affixed words that are sources of MSA PUs.

As for idiomatic PUs, which include idioms and figurative proverbs and quotations, they have varying degrees of decomposability resulting from the non-literal use of one or more of their component units. The concept of decomposability was first suggested by Nunberg (1977) to explain the syntactic variability of some idioms (e.g., through passivisation or modification) as opposed to the fixedness of others. It was later used for explaining idiom processing and accessibility (Gibbs et al., 1989; Tabossi et al., 2009). Decomposability has been defined as "the extent to which the words independently contribute to the figurative interpretation" of an idiom (Libben & Titone, 2008, p. 1103). This definition suggests resemblance with compositionality, as the latter term is defined in semantics and philosophy of language (e.g., Cruse, 2011; Goldberg, 2016; Kroeger, 2018; Saeed, 2016). Although the terms 'compositionality' and 'decomposability' are often regarded as synonyms and are used interchangeably (e.g., Bhatia et al., 2017; Geeraert et al., 2018), the view taken here is that they differ in the angle from which the idiomatic expression is viewed. Compositionality is concerned with the degree to which the constituent words of the idiomatic expression contribute to its overall meaning; it represents a synthetic, bottom-up approach that looks at idiomatic expressions from the angle of encoding. As McGinn (2015, p. 165) observes, compositionality views meaning as "something that works constructively, proceeding from simpler elements

to determine the meaning of more complex elements". Decomposability, by contrast, is concerned with how far the overall meaning of an idiom can be interpreted based on its constituent words. It is an analytic, top-down approach that looks at PUs from the angle of decoding.

Based on this distinction, decomposability provides a measurable way for finding out the relationship between the comprehensibility and borrowability of idiomatic PUs. Particularly relevant in this context is Gibbs et al.'s (1989) idiom decomposition hypothesis, where idioms are divided into three classes: "normally decomposable," "abnormally decomposable," and "non-decomposable." In normally decomposable idioms, at least one of the component words is used in the literal sense. For instance, in *a thorny issue* (which is calqued in MSA as *qaḍiyyah shā'ikah*), the word *issue* is used in its literal sense, while *thorny* is used figuratively. In abnormally decomposable idioms, none of the component words is used literally, though the idiom's overall figurative meaning is derivable from the image represented by its components. An example is *a minefield* (calqued in MSA as *ḥaql 'alghām*), whose meaning, 'a situation full of hidden dangers,' is, as a whole, related to the image expressed by its words, though no word in the phrase is used literally. Finally, a non-decomposable idiom is one whose current meaning, considered in itself from a synchronic perspective, bears no relation to its component words, neither literally nor figuratively, though it may be based on some story or historical origin that can explain its meaning (e.g., *al-ṭābūr al-khāmis* 'the fifth column', and *'allaqa al-jaras fī raqabat al-qiṭṭ* 'to bell the cat'). Such origins, which may not be known to the ordinary MSA user, are not taken into account in determining the idiom's degree of decomposability; the analysis adopts the synchronic viewpoint of the ordinary user rather than that of the etymologist. Clausal PUs, such as proverbs and quotations, are treated in the same way as idioms if they are figurative; otherwise they are regarded as transparent. Transparency and decomposability are scalar concepts, and there can be different degrees within each of the above types.

In addition to the syntactic and semantic features discussed above, there are cultural factors that affect the borrowability of a given PU. For some scholars "the limits to borrowing and borrowability are established by the language systems themselves, and are, as a consequence, linguistic in nature" (Field, 2002, p. 40). For others, there are "no absolute linguistic constraints" on the kinds or quantity of what can be borrowed, and if linguistic and social factors compete to produce or prevent a change, "the social factors will be the primary determinants of the linguistic outcome" (Thomason, 2008, p. 42; see also Thomason &

Kaufman, 1988). It is argued here that both linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects play major roles in contact-induced change. If the goal of contact linguistics, as Winford (2003, pp. 10–11) puts it, "is to uncover the various factors, both linguistic and sociocultural, that contribute to the linguistic consequences of contact," then contact linguistics is necessarily interdisciplinary, and any explanatory approach needs to take account of the language-internal and language-external factors that trigger or constrain contact-induced change.

In regarding a given MSA expression as a phraseological calque, the first step is to identify expressions that have the same form and meaning in English and MSA. The second step is to ascertain that such expressions are absent in pre-contact varieties of Arabic, which is done through search in historical Arabic sources, including Classical Arabic dictionaries, historical corpora, and other electronic and online sources. Two corpora were used for this purpose: the Arabic corpus of King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology, available at https://corpus.kacst.edu.sa; and the ArabiCorpus of Brigham Young University, available at https:// arabicorpus. byu.edu. These corpora allow search in historical varieties of Arabic, which is helpful in ascertaining that a given PU was not used in Pre-Modern Arabic. Generally, the absence of a given expression in pre-contact Arabic varieties, coupled with its presence in English and MSA with the same meaning, can be an indication that such expression is borrowed rather than native. If a similar PU was used in Pre-Modern Arabic with the same meaning, as in *ḥādd al-lisān* 'sharp-tongued', it is excluded as native rather than borrowed. If the phrase existed in Pre-Modern Arabic, but was used only literally or in an idiomatic sense that is different from the current one, it is regarded as a calque. An example is *al-fajr al-kādhib* 'false dawn', which, as indicated by search in historical Arabic corpora and internet sources, was used only literally in Pre-Modern Arabic, but has been used idiomatically (in the same sense as the English *false dawn*) only in MSA.

5. Analysis of data

In this section, the English sources of MSA calques are analysed and classified syntactically and semantically to find out which patterns are more frequently borrowed into MSA than others. The cultural factors that may facilitate the acceptance or rejection of PUs are then discussed.

5.1 The syntax of calque

This section begins with a classification of calqued PUs based on their syntactic features and then discusses the syntactic restrictions on the borrowability of English PUs.

5.1.1 Classification

MSA calques in the parallel corpus are divided into three main syntactic classes according to the source forms on which they are calqued: (1) word-level calques (i.e., calques made through morpheme-by-morpheme translations of English affixed words), (2) phrase-level calques (including noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectival phrases, adverbial phrases, and prepositional phrases), and (3) clause-level calques (including full or reduced clauses as well as compound and complex sentences). Table 1 shows the three syntactic classes and the number of items in each class.

Table 1
*Syntactic Classes of English Sources of MSA Phraseological Calques*

Syntactic Level	Syntactic Category	No. of Cases	%
Affixed Words	Nouns	84	
	Verbs	32	
	Adjectives	192	
	Adverbs	22	
Total Word-Level Calques		**330**	**7.66%**
Phrase Level	Noun Phrases	2533	
	Verb Phrases	974	
	Adjectival Phrases	68	
	Adverbial Phrases	11	
	Prepositional Phrases	278	
Total Phrase-Level Calques		**3864**	**89.74%**
Clause Level	Full Clauses	94	
	Reduced Clauses	6	
	Compound Sentences	6	
	Complex Sentences	6	
Total Clause-Level Calques		**112**	**2.60%**
Total		**4306**	

As Table 1 indicates, calque is more common at the phrase level than at the clause or word level. This is in line with the fact that most multi-word units are phrases (from which the discipline of 'phraseology' derives its name), of which about two thirds are noun phrases. These are followed in frequency by verb phrases and prepositional phrases, while adjectival and adverbial phrases are relatively fewer. This indicates that calques from English into MSA tend to be constituents with some semantic content rather than grammatical constituents (bearing in mind that prepositional phrases derive most of their content from the noun phrase following the preposition). This is supported by the fact that word-level calques are all based on affixed open class words (again with nouns

at the top of the list). Other morphologically complex words (i.e., compounds and blends) are treated as phrasal structures. Clause-level calques are often proverbs and famous quotations, though some are pragmatic phrases, which are conventionally used in specific situations.

Generally, it can be claimed that cross-linguistic syntactic similarity, in the sense that a given pattern has a readily translatable counterpart in the borrowing language, is a factor that facilitates phraseological calque. Examples are English adjective+noun PUs (translatable as noun+adjective PUs in MSA), noun+of+noun PUs (translatable as annexation structures in MSA), and verb+object PUs. The grammatical class of the source expression is typically maintained in Arabic translation, though there are few cases of transposition involving class shift, as in *qaṣṣ wa-laṣq* 'cutting and pasting', in which the verbal binomial *to cut and paste* is rendered as a nominal phrase. The opposite occurs in *yaḍḥaku akhīrā* 'to laugh finally', where the noun phrase *the last laugh* in *to have the last laugh* is rendered as a verb and the adjective as an adverb. As for calques based on affixed words, they are typically phrasal expansions of the source word in the case of nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Thus an English affixed noun (e.g., *autobiography*) becomes an Arabic noun phrase (*sīrah dhātiyyah*, consisting of a noun and an adjective), and the same applies to verbs (e.g., *ʾaʿāda tadwīr* 'to recycle') and adjectives (e.g., *mutaʿaddid al-jinsiyyāt* 'multinational'). Exceptions occur with affixed adverbs, which are typically calqued as prepositional phrases (e.g., *ʿalā al-tartīb* 'respectively; literally, in the order' and *bi-ṭarīqah ghayr mubāshirah* 'indirectly; literally, in an indirect way'). Some affixed words and blends are borrowed both directly (i.e., phonologically) or indirectly (through calque), resulting in two synonymous forms (e.g., *Interpol*, directly borrowed as *al-ʾIntarbōl* and calqued as *al-būlīs al-dawlī*). The word *automatic* is directly borrowed as *ōtumātīkī*, calqued as *dhātī al-ḥarakah*, and translated as *ʾālī*. In such cases, the calque is most formal of the three variants.

Figure 1
Frequencies of Syntactic Types of Phrase-level Calques
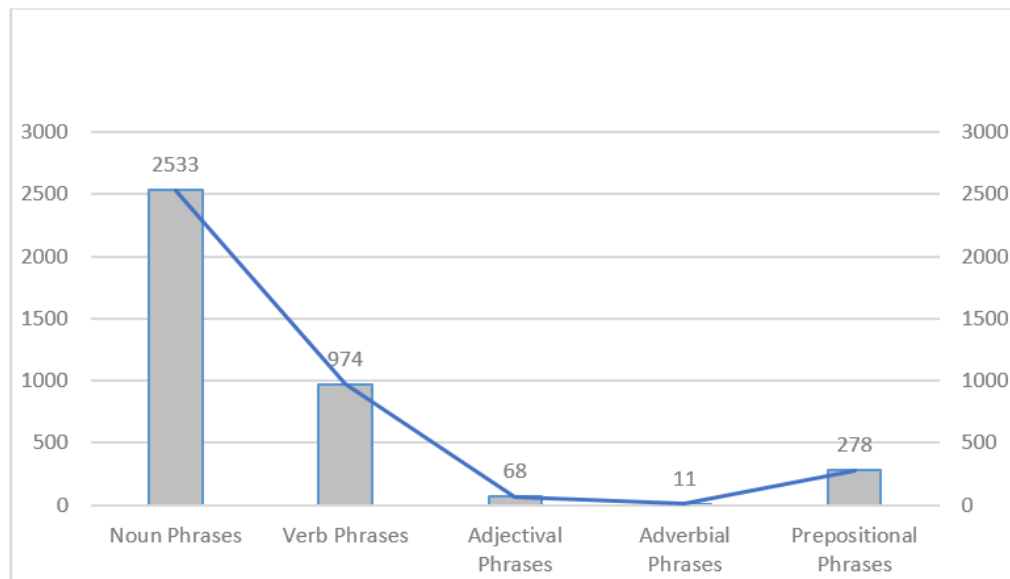
There are some similarities and differences between phraseological and lexical borrowing. For example, just as nouns are cross-linguistically the most borrowed items (Field, 2002; Matras, 2009; Thomason & Kaufman, 1988), noun phrases are the most frequent type of PU calque (Figure 1). Noun phrases are followed in frequency by verb phrases, another class of content words, and then prepositional phrases, which also necessarily contain noun phrases. It is noted that adjectival phrases appear towards the bottom of the list, which makes them different from borrowability scales set for lexical items. As Field (2002, p. 36) observes, "the most likely content items to be borrowed are nouns, followed by either adjectives or verbs." Adverbial phrases are the least often borrowed PUs. This suggests that, at the grammatical level, phraseological borrowing can be different from lexical borrowing.

5.1.2 Syntactic restrictions

Investigation of the parallel corpus suggests that there are syntactic restrictions on the forms that can be calqued into Arabic. Expressions that are ungrammatical in English, and therefore defy Arabic translation for syntactic reasons, are not calqued into Arabic. Examples include *beyond compare, by and large*, and *make believe*. Clausal units with interrogative pronouns as heads are absent from the list (e.g., *what's what*, *which is which*, and *who's who*). Similarly, PUs including as object the impersonal pronoun *it*, which, being both neuter and inanimate, has no equivalent in the Arabic pronominal system, cannot be fully calqued. Examples are *cut it fine*, *cut it out*, *don't mention it* (as a reply to *thank you*), and *easy does it*. However, the pronoun can be omitted if this is allowed by MSA

grammar, as in *believe it or not*, which has been calqued as *ṣaddiq 'aw lā tuṣaddiq* 'literally, Believe or don't believe', without overt pronoun.

The rules of Arabic grammar do not allow the occurrence of a preposition at the end of a constituent. Therefore, PUs ending in prepositions used adverbially (sometimes called "adpreps" or "adpositions") cannot be calqued in MSA (e.g., *day off* or *day in, day out*). While nominal, verbal, and adverbial binomials can be calqued into MSA, prepositional binomials cannot. Examples are *in and out, on and off*, *over and over*, and *out and about*. The same applies to intransitive phrasal verbs, such as *check out*, which has not been calqued, neither in the sense of 'register one's departure from a hotel' nor in the sense of 'die'. There are no similar restrictions if the preposition is followed by a noun phrase, as in *naẓara fī al-'amr* 'look into the matter'. Noun phrases and adjectival phrases ending in prepositions cannot be calqued for the same reason (e.g., *bottom-up* (and *top-down*), *drive-through*, *follow-up*, *hands-on/-off*, *head-on* and *work-out*). This is peculiar to languages in which a preposition cannot occur finally, like Arabic. Phrasal verbs such as *to come back* or *to call someone back* have been calqued into some European languages, such as Spanish (González & Knospe, 2019, p. 246) or Irish (Hickey, 2020a, p. 162).

5.2 The semantics of calque

While syntactic analysis has shown that certain phraseological patterns are more susceptible to calque than others and that some PUs cannot be calqued for structural reasons, the semantics of PUs play a major role in determining whether a given expression can gain currency in the recipient language and thus become part of its phraseological reservoir.

5.2.1 Semantic transparency

As shown in Section 4 above, transparency is a decisive factor in borrowability. The PUs in the corpus have been divided into four main classes: transparent, normally decomposable, abnormally decomposable, and non-decomposable units. Under transparent units come collocations, non-figurative proverbs and quotations, pragmatic phrases, and affixed words. Normally decomposable, abnormally decomposable, and non-decomposable units include idioms and idiomatic proverbs. Table 2 provides examples illustrating different degrees of source PU transparency.

Table 2

Examples of Different Degrees of Transparency in English Sources of Arabic PUs

Transparent	Normally Decomposable*	Abnormally Decomposable	Non-Decomposable
a literary work	*a living <u>language</u>*	*a drop in the ocean*	*a lame duck*
a necessary evil	*a thorny <u>issue</u>*	*a minefield*	*Black Friday*
a source of income	*to be blinded with <u>hatred</u>*	*at the crossroads*	*blue-blooded*
cash reserve	*to embrace a <u>religion</u>*	*fertile ground*	*the philosopher's stone*
evil spirits	*voice of <u>reason</u>*	*spoon-feeding*	*to carry the torch*
in the near future	*wounded <u>pride</u>*	*to play musical chairs*	*to throw the gauntlet*
to show willingness	*the golden <u>age</u>*	*under the microscope*	*to touch wood*

* In normally decomposable idioms, the words used literally are underlined.

Table 3 shows the number of PUs in each semantic type. It is noted that the total number of cases (4330) exceeds the number of calqued PUs (4306). This is because there are twenty-four cases of polysemy, in which two senses of the same PU (typically one literal and the other idiomatic) have been calqued into Arabic. An example is *bayna qawsayn* 'between/in parentheses', which was first calqued in the literal sense together with the adaptation of the Western punctuation system in Arabic. At a later stage, the idiomatic sense of giving a side comment or remark without actually using brackets was also borrowed. Another example is *'abyaḍ wa 'aswad* 'black and white', which can be literal, as in describing photographs or films (both being borrowed inventions), or figurative, as when describing someone who categorising things or people as either good or bad or as belonging to one of two extremes.

Table 3

Semantic Classes of English Sources of MSA Phraseological Calques

Semantic Type	No. of Cases	%
Transparent	2254	52.06%
Normally Decomposable	1511	34.89%
Abnormally Decomposable	501	11.57%
Non-Decomposable	64	1.48%
Total	**4330**	

In terms of frequency (see also Figure 2), collocations constitute the largest number of MSA calques from English, which indicates that transparent units are more prone to borrowing than non-transparent ones. This is further indicated by the fact that, in idiomatic expressions, the

largest number of calques is that of normally decomposable idioms, followed by abnormally decomposable idioms, while non-decomposable idioms are the least frequent. Many non-decomposable idioms are calqued into MSA with the addition of explanatory terms that provide clues to their meaning and increase their degree of transparency (e.g., *to go down to earth*, calqued as *nazala ʼilā ʼarḍ al-wāqiʻ*, 'literally, to go down to the earth of reality', where the word *al-wāqiʻ* 'reality' makes the meaning more transparent in Arabic). When there are two versions of an English PU with different degrees of transparency, it is the more transparent one that tends to be calqued in MSA. For instance, *a race against time* has been calqued into MSA (as *sibāq maʻa al-zaman*), while *a race against the clock* has not. The infrequency of non-decomposable calques in MSA probably reflects their infrequency in English usage, where "opaque idioms are rare and that most idiomatic expressions enjoy at least some degree of transparency" (Moreno, 2007, p. 183; see also Hsu, 2020).

Figure 2

Distribution of Calqued Phraseological Units along the Transparency Scale
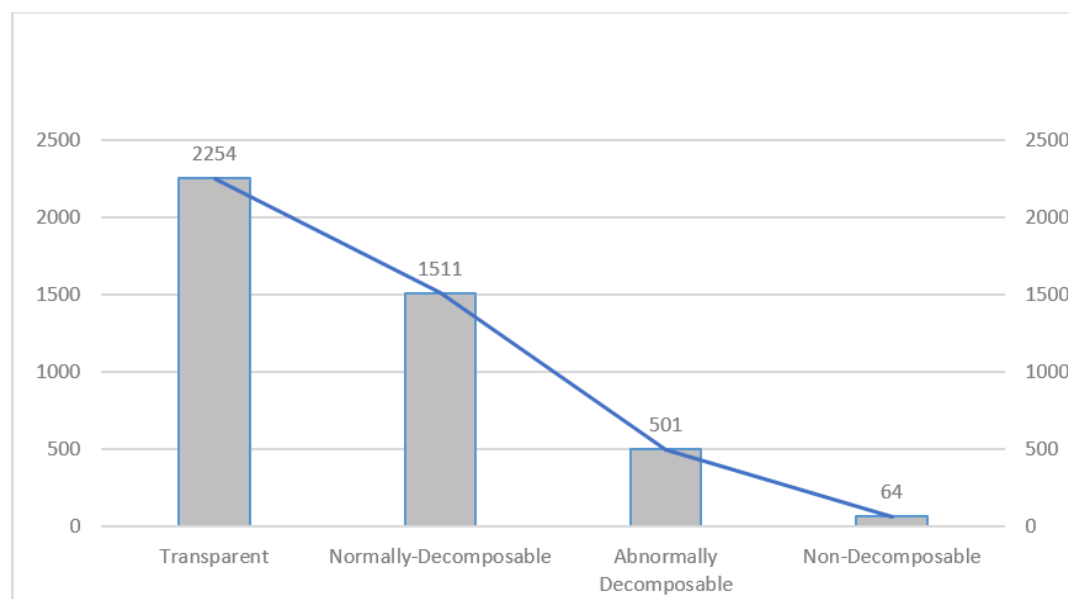
Calques based on affixed words are typically transparent (e.g., *sīrah dhātiyyah* 'autobiography' and *ghayr dustūrī* 'unconstitutional'), and the borderline cases in which an affix is ambiguous are disambiguated in Arabic translation. For instance, the suffix *–able* is translated in various ways according to its specific sense, which increases its transparency in Arabic (cf. *yumkinu tajannubuh* 'avoidable; literally, can be avoided', *qābil li-l-qiyās* 'measurable; literally, capable of being measured', *ṣāliḥ li-l-shurb* 'drinkable; literally, fit for drinking', and

khāḍi' li-l-ḍarībah 'taxable; literally, subject to taxation'). When affixed words are not transparent, they tend to be normally decomposable because of the presence of a root or an affix that is used literally. An example is *underworld*, in which the root is used literally, both in the sense of 'the world where people go after death' and 'the world of crime', the latter being the sense that has been calqued into MSA. Another polysemous word is *misread*, where *read* can be literal or figurative (meaning 'interpret'). Only the latter sense has been calqued in MSA, and the unit is regarded as normally decomposable since *mis-* is used in its literal sense. There are also transparent proverbs and quotations, such as *al-jarīmah lā tufīd* 'crime doesn't pay' and *'ish fī khaṭar* 'live dangerously'.

5.3 Sociocultural aspects

The process of borrowing is generally associated with the admiration and appreciation of a culture that is superior in some aspects to that of the borrowing language. Grant (2020, p. 6) notes that borrowing "goes mostly or entirely in one direction, from the more powerful or prestigious group to the less favoured one." The majority of Arabic PUs in the corpus have been borrowed for reasons of prestige rather than necessity. English is currently not only "the primary example of a dominant language" (Mott & Laso, 2020, p. 169), but it has also been described as "the most prestigious language on earth" (Trask & Millar, 2015, p. 18). Frequent use of borrowed phraseology implies a desire to identify with a foreign prestigious culture and show ability to think in the same way as its speakers do. Some foreign PUs evoke favourable associations in the minds of bilingual/bicultural speakers, who, by calquing them, seek to arouse the same associations in the recipients' minds.

5.3.1 Cultural familiarity

One extra-linguistic factor that can facilitate the borrowability of a given PU is familiarity with the cultural features on which the PU is based. Many calqued PUs are associated with imported cultural systems or institutions. As Fiedler (2017, p. 94) observes, "linguistic borrowing goes hand in hand with cultural borrowing." For instance, in the field of politics, collocations like *majority party*, *minority party*, and *opposition party* were calqued into MSA due to familiarity with the Western party-based government system. In the field of sports, PUs like *extra time, penalty kick*, and *red/yellow card* were calqued into MSA due to the popularity of football in most Arab countries, while lack of familiarity with baseball, for instance, reduces the possibility of calquing PUs such as *ballpark*, *fastball*, or *pinch-hitter*. MSA has calqued expressions like

starched collar and *to take one's hat off to someone* from Western dressing habits, *backstairs* and *backdoor* from architecture, *to hit the right note* and *to change one's tune* from music, and *to bring the curtain down on something* from the theatre.

The idea of familiarity also applies to PUs alluding to proper names. If the proper name and the idea associated with it are well-known in the recipient culture, the PU will probably have a higher degree of borrowability than in the case of unfamiliar names. Thus a *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde personality* has been borrowed into MSA, mostly through the Arabic translation of the famous novel and the film based on it, while, for instance, *the real McCoy* or *the life of Riley* have not.

5.3.2 Cultural acceptability

For a calqued PU to be current in the recipient language, it needs to be ideologically acceptable to the members of the discourse community. Religious considerations are particularly important in this respect. If an English expression violates a taboo in the Arab culture, it will most probably be rejected, regardless of its syntactic borrowability or degree of transparency. This can be shown by comparing the borrowability of the English PUs *the finger of suspicion* and *the finger of God*. The former has been easily borrowed into MSA (as *'iṣba' al-ittihām*), while the latter has not, as it involves personification of God in a way uncommon among most speakers of Arabic. While some idioms of biblical origin have been borrowed into Arabic, others have not, or at least have been confined to non-Muslim circles (e.g., *a Good Samaritan* and *doubting Thomas*). Another expression that has not gained currency for similar reasons is *act of God*, which, in legal discourse, refers to events that are beyond human control, such as floods, earthquakes, or tsunamis. Confining acts of God to unfavourable events, or even associating the two concepts, would be inappropriate in the Arab culture, which is why near synonyms are used in translating this phrase, such as *al-quwwah al-qāhirah* 'force majeure' or *al-qadā' wa-l-qadar* 'pre-ordained fate and decree'.

This is not to deny that some PUs whose historical origins are at odds with Muslim beliefs have been borrowed into MSA, as in *al-dīn 'afyūn al-shu'ūb* 'religion is the opium of the masses'. However, investigation of this PU in use (e.g., in ArabiCorpus) indicates that its users do not subscribe to the ideology behind this quotation (at least explicitly), but usually criticise it or reinterpret it to refer to certain forms of religiousness. In other cases, the mythological origins of some expressions that could be contrary to religious beliefs may not be recognized by the ordinary language users, as in the case of *'Ummunā al-*

’Arḍ 'Mother Earth' or *’Ummunā al-Ṭabī‘ah* 'Mother Nature', which attribute creation to nature or the earth goddesses of Greco-Latin mythology. Clearly, such expressions are used in MSA simply as metaphorical expressions.

Based on the above syntactic, semantic, and cultural investigation, the borrowability scale shown in Figure 3 is proposed for MSA phraseological calques borrowed from English. As Figure 3 indicates, borrowability is a gradable concept, and, apart from cases of syntactic untranslatability, few counter-examples can be found, which can be used on a limited scale or within closed groups. Some taboo-violating PUs have been calqued into MSA with some modification, which has led to lexical variation and inconsistency, as exemplified by the phrase *Black Friday*. This phrase was first calqued literally as *al-Jum‘ah al-Sawḍā’*, but given the sacredness of Friday for Muslims, it was soon felt that the phrase could be inappropriate in the Arab culture, where the adjective *sawdā’* 'black' is generally associated with sadness, disasters, and evil. Some Arab stores have suggested *al-Jum‘ah al-Bayḍā* 'White Friday' as the local alternative to the English phrase. Other alternatives include *al-Jum‘ah al-Khadrā’* 'Green Friday', *al-Jum‘ah al-Burtuqāliyyah* 'Orange Friday', and *al-Jum‘ah al-Ṣafrā’* 'Yellow Friday'. It is for similar reasons that some PUs are deliberately modified to gain acceptance in the Arab world. The Arab national societies affiliated to the *Red Cross* organisation bear the name *al-Hilāl al-’Aḥmar* 'the Red Crescent', which is an early example of the rejection of literal translation for religious reasons (see https://www.britannica.com/topic/Red-Cross-and-Red-Crescent, for the history of the expression).

Figure 3

A Borrowability Scale for Phraseological Calque Based on Syntactic, Semantic, and Cultural Features

Of all language levels, phraseology is particularly tied to social customs and institutions and is often laden with cultural values, ideological beliefs, and ethical attitudes. As Bragina (2000, p. 31) notes, "phraseological units reflect the world-view and the cultural specificity of national languages." Buerki (2020, p. 33) notes that in language contact contexts, the process of calque shows the close link between phraseological change and social and cultural change. Borrowed phraseology can subtly affect people's ideologies and social attitudes towards certain phenomena. This is reflected in the increased use of MSA calques based on English politically correct expressions, such as *'i'āqah sam'iyya* 'hearing impairment' and *dhawū al-iḥtiyājāt al-khāṣṣah* '(people) with special needs'. A related example is *al-mithliyyah al-jinsiyyah*, based on the affixed word *homosexuality*, which shows how calque can be a way of changing prevailing attitudes and moral judgements. Unlike other words and phrases that negatively express the same meaning, such as *al-shudhūdh al-jinsī* 'sexual abnormality', the more recent calque sounds objective and neutral. Its frequent use in the media may result in changing the dominant negative view that regards homosexuality as a cause of shame.

6. Concluding remarks

The above account indicates that not all PUs are equally susceptible to borrowing and that the majority of calqued PUs follow certain syntactic patterns, share certain semantic features, and are constrained by cultural considerations. Linguistically, a PU is a good candidate for calque if it can be translated literally within the limits of the normal syntactic patterns of the recipient language and if it has a high degree of transparency that makes it comprehensible in the recipient language. This is supported by the fact that the vast majority of calqued PUs in the corpus are collocations, followed in frequency by normally decomposable idioms, while non-decomposable idioms are the least borrowable of all PU types. Culturally, a PU is borrowable if it is compatible with the beliefs of the borrowing community and if it is based on objects or phenomena that are familiar in the borrowing culture. By contrast, a PU is an unlikely candidate for calque if literal translation of its components is not permissible in the syntactic system of the would-be borrowing language or if it has a high degree of opacity in the donor language. A PU is also unlikely to be borrowed if it violates a taboo or opposes the beliefs dominant in the would-be recipient culture, or if it refers to elements that are unfamiliar for its speakers.

These are general tendencies rather than strict rules, and, apart from syntactic constraints, there are exceptions at the semantic and cultural levels. Out of admiration of English as a prestigious language, a speaker may use opaque calques or expressions based on culturally unfamiliar phenomena, which may only be accessible to a limited circle of addressees. PUs that oppose the religious beliefs dominant in the borrowing culture may also be borrowed, but tend to be presented from a critical perspective or regarded as metaphorical expressions that have no ideological foundations. In addition, if calque is a kind of borrowing that does not introduce foreign words into the recipient language, still it can subtly introduce foreign images, attitudes, and world-views into the recipient culture. As such, phraseological calque is a source of sociocultural as well as linguistic change.

To wind up, phraseological calque is not a random process, but is largely determined by linguistic and sociocultural factors that interact to facilitate or constrain it. Some of these factors are language-specific (such as cases of syntactic unborrowability) and culture-specific (such as rejecting specific PUs for religious reasons), but others (e.g., syntactic similarity and transparency) may apply more generally. The present paper can be regarded as a step towards developing a scale for the frequency, stages, and constraints governing phraseological borrowing, which can only be achieved through cross-linguistic investigations covering as many language pairs and contact situations as possible. Further quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to test and develop the universality of the borrowability scale suggested here.

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