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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **A Corpus-Based Study on the Calquing of Arabic Subtitles in English and French Movies**

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**ABSTRACT**

Calques, also known as loan translations, are expressions that are translated literally from one language to another. Arabic subtitles of three English and French movies are utilized as a corpus for this study where their formation techniques are deduced and categorized as either lexical calques or structural calques following the categorisation proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 32). Their calque quality is assessed and classified as good, or bad calques as proposed by Hervey & Higgins (2002, p.35) depending on their level of flouting to the TL norms. However, this study proposes adding a new category, to be referred to as 'perfect calques' to current binary good-bad categorization previously proposed by Hervey & Higgins (2002). Perfect calques are ones which would sound natural in Arabic to the extent that they would sweep unnoticeably into the stock of Arabic vocabulary. This study recommends that Arabic language authorities, government media bodies, academics, and translators should place importance on the issue of calquing in order to avoid language contamination.

**KEYWORDS**

Calques, subtitling, language planning, literal translation

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**1. Introduction**

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the linguistic term *calques*, was originally taken from French, and means the "loan translation of a foreign word or phrase." In translation, a calque is formed when a word or phrase is translated, literally, from one language to another. They often create a language structure that mimics the source language while failing to reproduce the quality of naturalness that a good translation should strive to reproduce. In the past, calques were referred to in various ways such as loan translation, literal translation, and borrowing; however, the term calques has superseded others and has become the most common term currently used.

Studies on calques can provide valuable insights into language evolution, language contact, and linguistic-cultural exchange. Languages, despite differences in their acceptance rates of new concepts, borrow by means of translation; marking the importance of the role a translator has, navigating through cultural and linguistic challenges. Moreover, comparative linguistic aspects can be better understood through examining calques, providing a window into the dynamic of languages. Calques, modelled on anglicisms in European languages; especially Spanish and German, show structural differences and reflect different attitudes towards English. The use and acceptance of structural calques vary across languages. For instance, Spanish and German show different patterns in adopting calques from English, influenced by their structural differences and attitudes towards English. This variation highlights the complexity of identifying and categorizing calques across different linguistic contexts (González, & Knospe, 2019). For example, structural calques in Croatian anatomical terminology are formed either at word-forming level (morphemes are translated one by one) or semantically (motivation for a specific meaning is taken over particularly from German) (Popiolek, 2015). The tendency to use structural calques can be influenced by the translator's style and poetics. In the case of the Catalan

translations of Edgar Allan Poe's works, the translator's preference for calquing affects word order and transitivity, demonstrating how individual translation styles can propagate structural calques (Marco, 2004).

While calques are seen as a productive method for word creation, enriching the target language by facilitating the development of new words in both general and specialized vocabularies (Larizgoitia, 2010); they can frame the way users of the target language conceptualize new concepts, influencing their cognitive processes and cultural understanding (Giaber, 2023).

Audio-visual translation, subtitling in particular, has always influenced recipient languages and cultures. The content load that is transferred by translation has various direct and indirect implications. One of the more obvious and notable implications is: lexical borrowings that occur in the translation of culture-oriented references and scientific terms. Arabic linguists have historically tended to be purists in their acceptance of lexical borrowings. This is one of the reasons why Arabic Language Academies have primarily been established. As stated in their objectives, they set out to protect the stock of Arabic vocabulary from the influence of translation utilizing various techniques of Arabization. According to Ghazala (2012, p.16), Arabic language academies "are the authorized source to suggest new terminology and export it to the academic institutions and official bodies of the Arab Countries to be put in use".

Moreover, a long-term influence on Arabic can result in a 'semantic shift,' whereby words incur subtle, gradual change in both connotative and denotative meanings. Words get aligned with slightly different, or completely new contexts where their meanings are tweaked by language users caused by semantic widening. '*Normalization of relations*' is a good example of a calque that has changed colours in the Arabic context. It is mainly translated as تطبيع العلاقات (*taṭbīʿ al-'alaqat*), in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, تطبيع (*taṭbīʿ*) (i.e. normalization) is becoming more neutral now in the Arabic conceptualization after having remained negative since the very beginning of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian lands, in 1948.

One might argue that the influence of calques on Arabic grammatical patterns may sound like a far-fetched claim owing to the well-established tradition of Arabic grammar. Nonetheless, the modern-day classifications of Arabic into either Classical or Modern Standard, with the many grammatical changes the latter has acquired, compels us to not completely ignore the idea. Some stylistic deviations from traditional norms have been caused by the adoption of new grammatical forms leading to innovations in the syntactic structures of the target language. More interestingly, subtitling is a modern day form of language contact. There is a high potential of hybridization where elements from the two languages blend to create a new linguistic variety. For example, '*Arabizi*' - coined by blending *Arabi* and *Englizi* (Arabic and English respectively)- is a linguistic variety that is very common nowadays among youngsters where they use code-switching and unconventional Arabic inflections such as ثروباك (*throback*) or البست (*al-best*) for 'throwback' and 'best friend,' respectively. Additionally, idiomatic expressions find their way into the stock of language, as well. Translators, who often find the translation of idiomatic expressions challenging, sometimes provide a literal translation (i.e. a calque) that may not account for the entire semantic and cultural load. "You made my day" is an idiomatic expression that has been introduced into the contemporary language used by Arabic speaking professionals as: لقد صنعت يومي (*laqd ṣana'ta yawmi*). This is a sign of language contamination, a term used to refer to the unplanned influence of one language on another during the process of communication, learning, or interpreting (Ahmed and Khoshnaw, 2023), potentially leading to the creation of new idioms, or the adaptation of existing ones, ultimately resulting in language change over time.

Furthermore, influence on language can also stem from culture, since movie viewers, quite often, adopt foreign concepts and beliefs. This can be seen in Arab multi-generational settings, where the Arabic youngster's expression of thoughts is often frowned upon by their elders. The relationship between culture and language is made clear in the interpretation of what constitutes acceptable speech in family settings. It is profound in the Arabic culture to highly respect seniors; whether they are parents, grandparents, or even older brothers and sisters. Conversations taking place between older and younger family members, nowadays, could be seen as impolite in past generations. Movies and their subtitles, thus, push for a new social and cultural standard where traditionally accepted values are substituted with foreign ones.

It is of paramount importance to acknowledge that the impact of translation on culture and language change is inevitable, and complex. Therefore, this study seeks to help subtitlers improve their translation techniques and their use of calquing with greater efficacy. Furthermore, it aims to shed light on the role of other influences, such as language authorities and media bodies, in the pursuit of preserving the Arabic language from decay, and contamination.

## 2. Literature Review

Calquing has been the subject of many research studies and approached from various perspectives. A linguistic attempt to classify calques was made by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 32) who classified calques into two types: lexical calques and structural calques. A lexical calque, "respects the syntactic structure of the TL, whilst introducing a new mode of expression" (ibid). The second one "introduces a new construction into the language." In other words, a lexical calque is one which maintains the structure of the SL, while a structural calque is more TL oriented in terms of the syntactic structure, but still semantically follows the norms of the SL. Both types involve the creation of new expressions in the target language, based on literal translations from the source language,

impacting cognitive, lexical, and cultural aspects of the target language (Carter, & Merii, 2022). They can be seen as a type of linguistic borrowing; in which the framework of a phrase or sentence from one language is directly translated into another. This often results in syntactic and semantic shifts. Translation of structural calques in neologisms can lead to unintelligible or semantically shifted results, highlighting the need for precise meaning preservation and maintaining language structure (Karakoç, 2014).

A lexical calque, according to Giaber (2023), is the production of a new phrase in the target language based on a literal translation of a source language expression in order to convey a new notion in the target language. Secondary term development is involved in this process, which has cognitive, lexical, and cultural repercussions for the target language and its users. Calques, as a result, frame how target language users interpret or view the concepts they signify. Giaber (2023)–found that a lexical calque is a productive form of word-creation, but also has the potential to frame the interpretation made by the target language receiver. Furthermore, He identified several English words that were semantically converted into Arabic using calquing. Some Arabic calques have unambiguous meanings and are denotatively transparent, i.e., they refer to contextually obvious elements, for example, “a moment of silence” *دقيقة صمت* (*daqiqat şamt*), and ‘feedback’ rendered as: *تغذية راجعة* (*taghdhiyah raji’ah*).

Larizgoitia (2010, p. 32) examines the calquing mechanism in contemporary Basque, while translating from Spanish to English. To her, calquing is “reproducing the meaning of an item in another language through imitation using signifiers and structures from the target language.” She classifies calques into the following types: semantic, lexical, lexical-syntactic, phraseological, morpho-syntactic, and discourse calques. A semantic calque occurs at the level of word meaning where “no new compound is created; rather, the existing meaning of a word in the target language is altered” (ibid, 18). Lexical calques, in her analysis, are those “realized as instances of derivation” (ibid, p. 17). A lexical-syntactic calque is “associated with particular syntactic patterns, or argument structures, which require a certain kind of grammatical pattern” (ibid, p.28). A phraseological calque, as the name suggests, is one that is formed as a phrase such as a collocation, an idiom, and a proverb. A morpho-syntactic calque “includes any kind of calque that involves morphosyntactic issues, at the level of the noun-phrase (quantifiers, determiners, etc.), the verb phrase (aspect and tense, periphrastic constructions), or the sentence (case markers, postpositions, coordination, subordination and so on) (ibid, p.30.) The last type are discourse calques, which occur “on the level of connexion, cohesion or modalization”; these include discourse markers, anaphoric markers, and so on” (ibid, p. 31.) This study emphasizes the utility of well-constructed lexical calques in Basque, and sets up criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of a given calque, with calques being viewed as both a means, and a mechanism of new word production.

Sandiac (2018) presents a calque typology for Romanian maritime terminology drawing on the classification and theory presented by Romanian linguist Theodor Hristea. She claims that the structure of Romanian maritime terminology is restricted to particular recurrent categories, such as lexical calquing, semantic calquing, phraseological calquing (idiomatic and non-idiomatic), grammatical calquing, and specific analysis based forms of calques. The findings of this study reveal that a large number of old words have been rejuvenated and enriched with new meanings through the use of phraseological neologisms as a result of linguistic contact with other cultures.

Garnier and Saint-Dizier (2009) use comparable corpora to examine the concept of calquing to highlight that calque corpora can help in error correction in non-native language productions and contribute to more comprehensive linguistic research of the calquing effect. According to Garnier and Saint-Dizier (2009), most errors are results of unfamiliarity with the target language as authors frequently replicate the constructs of their native language, so that the output fits standard terminology and constructions of the target language. Lexical calque errors include wrong lexical choices of prepositions, determiners, adverbs, modals, and incorrect idiomatic expression. Grammatical calques errors include adverb and adjective misplacement, argument omissions, and erroneous passive forms. Incorrect temporal sequences, aspect, and punctuation are examples of the stylistic errors (Hammadou, 2000).

Even though calques of phraseological units are a common sort of borrowing, according to Al-Wahy (2022), borrowability research in contact linguistics has tended to focus on morphemes, lexemes, and syntactic structures, instead of phraseology. Phraseology demonstrates the strong effect English has had on numerous foreign languages, especially Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Al-Wahy (2022) evaluates whether or not a calqued phraseological unit shares common syntactic, semantic, or cultural characteristics that influence their selection as members of the MSA phraseological reservoir. Moreover, the study found that cultural considerations have a substantial impact on the acceptance, or rejection, of certain expressions by members of the speech community, in addition to syntactic and semantic variables.

In the same vein, calquing, according to Ali (2005), is a method of enhancing the Arabic language. His research intends to analyze calquing as a term-formation process in Arabic, with a particular emphasis on terminological calques in a variety of

specialized domains. He classified the calques as (1) Full "word-for-word" which include nominal, verbal, and prepositional calques (2) Partial calques (3) Semantic calques (4) Foreign-induced neologisms (5) Compound calques (6) Hybrid calques (7) and Acronymic calques. He observed that "calquing has almost become a standard practice" in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), noting that the current trend leans toward the use of foreign-inspired neologisms and various types of calques, while minimizing borrowings wherever possible (ibid: 125). He concluded that there is a strong inclination in MSA to avoid loanwords, opting instead to use native structures through calquing to create new lexical items for expressing foreign concepts. This tendency, Ali argues, reflects the strength and adaptability of Arabic in adjusting to new linguistic challenges (ibid: 127-128).

### 3. Theoretical Framework:

Various translation techniques are used in audiovisual translation. A subtitle's decision could be influenced by media restrictions, such as the number of characters in each line, abbreviations, the location of the text on the screen, etc. Restrictions could also be linguistic or culture-based; especially when the language pair belong to distant languages or cultures. The closer the languages, the easier the task of translation. Calquing, or the literal translation of a specific phrase, is very popular in audio-visual translation due to the fact that films are rich in cultural expressions that may have no natural equivalent in the TL. Therefore, with a lack of screen space for footnotes, one may be forced to resort to a literal translation.

One of the objectives of this study is to categorize calques as either lexical or structural based on their translation techniques and calquing quality using Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995:32) classification system. Once categorization has been made, calque quality is assessed by dividing them into two categories: a good, or bad calque. Good calques are those which strike a balance between replicating ST features and violating TL syntax, whereas bad calques follow the ST structures to the point that they could be considered grammatically erroneous in the TL (Hervey & Higgins, 2002, p.35).

Below is an excerpt of a real sample which illustrates the distinction between the three types. When the calque is classified as 'bad', the reason is stated.

o	ST	TT	Type of Calque	Calque Quality
	taxiing isn't as sexy as it looks	مهنة قيادة سيارة الأجرة ليست مثيرة كما تبدو ( <i>mihnat qiyadat sayyarh al-ojrah laysat muthirah kama tabdu</i> )	Lexical	Bad calque  Collocational flouting
	there is something so small	ثمة شيء متناهي الصغر ( <i>thammat shay' mutanahi al-sighar</i> )	Structural	Bad calque  Register misfit
	You are very vulnerable	( <i>anti saree'at al-ta'athur bilnaqd</i> )	Structural	Good calque

Example no.1 shows a bad calque that makes a distinct collocational flouting. The adjective مثيرة (*muthīrah*) to translate 'sexy' does not collocate with 'مهنة' (*mihnah*) i.e. the profession of taxiing. The collocational range of this adjective may include Arabic nouns referring to humans such as man, woman, boy, girl, etc., or abstract nouns such as موضوع (*mawḍuʿ*) i.e. topic, but not 'taxiing'. A possible way to improve this calque is to ignore the denotative meaning of 'sexy' and opt for a more contextual alternative such as مربحة (*murbihah*) i.e. profitable, or واعدة (*waʿidah*) i.e. promising, attractive, etc.

Example no.2 is a good example of a bad calque which flouts register level, rendering an informal structure such as 'so small' with a corresponding informal structure such as صغير جدًا (*Sagheer jiddan*), which literally means 'very small'. متناهي الصغر (*mutanahi al-sighar*) is more of an equivalent to the prefix 'nano' as in 'nano-technology' giving a formal shade to it.

Example no.3 features a good calque where no flouting to language is spotted, nor is the expression itself a traditional Arabic one.

Example no. 4 translates the ST with a newly coined idiomatic translation, which literally reads as “he is confident in his decision.”

**4. Research Questions**

- 1- To what extent can Vinay and Darbelnet’s classification be applied in Arabic calquing?
- 2- What can make a calque good, bad, or perfect in Arabic?
- 3- What are the implications of calques on Arabic language planning?
- 4- Can calques contribute to the richness of the Arabic language vocabulary and phrasal stock?

**5. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative approach to analyze samples of calques which are elicited from the subtitle corpora of three English and French movies. The corpora are retrieved from <https://www.podnapisi.net/run/>, which is a platform for downloading and searching subtitles for movies and TV shows. It provides subtitles in multiple languages including Arabic and French. The website allows users to find subtitles for specific movies or TV shows by entering the title. Users can download or upload subtitles in various languages. They can filter results by using advanced filters such as release year, language, or video format. The analysis investigates whether calquing in Arabic conforms to the Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 32) categorization of calques into lexical and structural calques. The analysis also seeks to evaluate the quality of these calques using the criteria outlined by Hervey and Higgins (2002, p.35), which categorize calques as either “good” or “bad.” A good calque is built on the ST structure, but no flouting is spotted to naturalness. A bad calque, on the other hand, is an expression that is built on the literal structure of the source text which clearly deviates from the natural flow of the TT, either in terms of collocation, or as a register misfit.

**6. Analysis and discussion:**

This study sets out to examine the use of calques in subtitles derived from a sample of three English and French movies, with a specific focus on their classification as either lexical or structural calques, as theorized by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995). The analysis also aims to assess the quality of these calques based on the criteria established by Hervey and Higgins (2002), which classify calques as either good, or bad. This framework enabled a nuanced examination of how calques operate in subtitling contexts, where the balance between adherence to the source language and maintaining the natural flow of the target language, is a complex, yet worthy, consideration.

Structural calques employ adding particles such as the emphatic *lam*, (i.e. *lam altawkid*) i.e. as in *كنت لتحب هذا* which is unnecessary and doesn’t create any semantic emphasis in these structures. We can also see that a new innovative way was formed in examples such as *الأسوأ على الإطلاق* (*al-aswa’ ala ittlaq*) meaning absolutely bad- absolute worst, or to render the emphatic ‘ever’ as in: the best ever in *الأفضل على الإطلاق* (*al- afdal’ ala al-ittlaq*). This latter one is found in other Arabic structures such as *على إطلاقه* (*ala’ ittlaqih*) meaning: entirely. Therefore, this may not be considered as a calque that has been solely inspired by a foreign language, but rather one which was actually developed from within the Arabic system by way of derivation. Unnatural transposition is a strategy that has been found in the corpus in structures such as *أقول باطمئنان* (*aqool bi-atm’innan*) to render “without a doubt.”

One noteworthy instance found in the corpus is:

ST: I'm afraid we've had some complaints about you, sir.	أخشى أننا تلقينا بعض الشكاوى. بشأنك يا سيدي  (akhsha inna talaqqainā ba’d al-shakāwā bishā’nak yā sayyidī)
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This excerpt features four calques and demonstrates how immersed calquing is in AVT. “I’m afraid” which is a discourse marker that has no semantic significance, was semantically translated with “أخشى” (*akhsha*), which could naturally be omitted from the translation since this word adds no semantic difference to the translation. The second calque, is the literal translation of “some complaints” with the phrase “بعض الشكاوى” (*ba’d al-shakāwā*). A natural Arabic rendering for this instance would drop the word *بعض* (*ba’d*) i.e. ‘some’, to the word *شكاوى* (*shakāwā*) and as an indefinite noun, it already has the meaning of some embedded in it. It’s a structural calque that is pervasively found in AVT. The third calque found in this excerpt is the translation of ‘about you’

with "بشأنك" (*bishā'nak*). It is a register calque to say the least, as the natural Arabic rendering of 'about you' in such an informal conversation, is "عنك" (*'ank*). The fourth calque is the translation of 'sir' as "سيدي" (*sayyidi*), which is a register misfit, as well. The word سيد (*sayyid*) means master, in Arabic. Traditionally, it is used to glorify someone or speak highly of him. It should not be used to address criminals, for example.

The analysis unveiled a new category that emerged from the good calques classification: *perfect calques*. A perfect calque is one which reads perfectly idiomatic in the TT, where informed readers would not question it. They are considered perfect calques, albeit newly coined, due to the fact that they strike a balance in Arabic between literalness and naturalness to the extent that even a native Arabic speaker would not initially detect that they are calques. A very common example of a perfect calque is سيداتي سادتي (*sayyidāti wa sādāti*), for 'ladies and gentlemen'.

Moreover, this analysis reveals that lexical calques—those involving direct translation of individual lexical items without altering the grammatical structure—are more frequent than structural calques, which require more extensive syntactic restructuring. Examples of lexical calques, which tended to maintain the integrity of the source language while remaining closer to natural patterns of expression in the target language, involve the following:

ST	TT	Quality
in that case	في هذه الحالة، ( <i>fi hādhihi al-hālah</i> )	Perfect
guarded round the clock	يحرسها على مدار الساعة . ( <i>yahrūshā 'ala madār al-sā'ah</i> )	Perfect
une scène de guerre !	منطقة حرب  ( <i>minṭaqat ḥarb</i> )	Perfect
la charge émotionnelle	بعبء عاطفي  ( <i>bi'ib' 'ātifi</i> )	Perfect

The above translations feature literal rendering of English and French STs. TTs have introduced new lexical structures into Arabic, which are now commonly used by modern Arabic language speakers. Since they Cause no violation to collocational norms, nor to register, they can be considered as perfect calques. The following table shows good calques which fall short in achieving TT naturalness:

ST	TT	Quality
All under control.	كل شيء تحت السيطرة  ( <i>kull shay' taḥt al-ṣayṭarah</i> )	Good
I know it sounds crazy,	أعلم أنه أمر جنوني ( <i>a'lam innahu amr junūnī</i> )	Good
on attend une confirmation	يتعين التأكيد ( <i>yata'ayyan al-takīd</i> )	Good
Le bilan ne fait que s'alourdir	عدد القتلى يستمر في الارتفاع.  ( <i>'adad al-qatlā yastamir fi al-irtifā'</i> )	Good

The above translations lack naturalness and acceptability by Arabic native Arabic speakers as they seem to ignore Arabic collocational conventions. For example, the word تحت (*taḥt*), in Arabic, literally means under/beneath, and suggests the location of an object, such as under the table, or under the tree.

However, structural calques, by virtue of replicating more complex syntactic features from the source text, often exhibited a greater propensity for register misfit, or unnatural collocations in the target text. This finding suggests that the syntactic demands of structural calques may increase the likelihood of producing, what Hervey and Higgins term "bad calques."

The following table shows perfect structural calques:

ST	TT	Quality
Good of you to join us.	من الجيد أن تنضم إلينا. ( <i>min al-jayyid an tanḍamm ilaynā</i> )	Perfect
Doesn't matter.	لا أهمية لذلك . ( <i>lā ahamīyah li dhālika</i> )	Perfect
Situation sécurisée	الموقع مؤمن. ( <i>al-mawqī mumin</i> )	Perfect
Je peux te voir ?	هل لديك دقيقة ؟ ( <i>hal ladaykk dqyqh daqīqah</i> )	Perfect

Good structural calques:

ST	TT	Quality
You've got to be kidding me	؟ لا بد أنك تمزحين ( <i>lā budd annaka tamzihīn</i> )	Good
One moment of stupidity, followed by endless regret.	لحظة واحدة من الغباء  يليه ندم لا نهاية له.  ( <i>lahẓah waḥidah min al-ghabā yalihā nadam lā nihāyah lahu</i> )	Good
toute votre confiance	الثقة الكاملة ( <i>al-thiqah al-kāmilah</i> )	Good
Mauvais étage !	الطابق الخطأ ( <i>al-tābiq al-khaṭa</i> )	Good

The noun الخطأ (*al-khaṭa*) i.e. error/the wrong, is more fit to be used as a noun, rather than as an adjective.

Bad structural calques:

ST	TT	Quality
Oh, you'd love that, wouldn't ya?	كنت لتحب ذلك، صحيح  ( <i>kunta lituḥbb dhālika ṣaḥīḥ</i> )	Bad
I plan to unveil my most astonishing creation yet.	الكشف عن أكثر ابتكاراتي روعة حتى الآن  ( <i>al-kashf 'an akthar ibtikārātī rw'atan ḥattā al-ān</i> )	Bad
J'ai une pensée pour les victims	مشاعري مع الضحايا ( <i>mashā'iri ma'a al-ḍaḥāyā</i> )	Bad
impossible de savoir au bataclan	لا زال مبكراً لنعرف كمّ في "باتاكلان"  ( <i>lāzāl mubakkiran lin'arif kam fī Bataclan</i> )	Bad

In terms of quality assessment, good and bad calques largely corresponded to the criteria of naturalness and idiomaticity in the target language. Good calques in the dataset demonstrated fidelity to the source structure without overt disruption to natural target language norms. For example, phrases that directly translated idiomatic expressions, but managed to retain

coherence and flow within the target language context, were deemed “good” by Hervey and Higgins’ standards. These calques, while identifiable as translations, did not detract from the viewer’s experience due to their appropriateness within the context.

Conversely, bad calques emerged where the literal structure of the source text created jarring effects in the target text, often due to mismatched collocations or inappropriate register, i.e. register misfit. Examples of this included cases where idiomatic expressions were rendered too literally, leading to unnatural or awkward phrases in the target text that would sound foreign to the ears of the target language recipients. These instances underscore the limitations of direct transference transmission in subtitling, where maintaining naturalness in real-time viewing is paramount.

The analysis also identified instances of perfect calques—expressions that, while derived from source text structure, read as idiomatic and natural within the target text to the point where their origin would be unrecognizable to informed readers. These calques represent an ideal in translation quality, where the transfer from source to target is seamless, preserving both meaning and fluency. Such examples were less frequent, likely due to the inherent difficulty in aligning the linguistic structures of English, and the target language, in a way that retains idiomaticity without alteration. Nevertheless, these perfect calques highlight the potential for achieving high-quality calque translation when idiomatic equivalence aligns naturally between languages.

Overall, the findings suggest that while calques serve as valuable tools in subtitling, their quality varies significantly depending on linguistic and contextual factors. Lexical calques more readily adapt to the target language, while preserving authenticity, without disturbing naturalness; whereas structural calques, while sometimes necessary for maintaining pattern regularity, pose a greater risk of resulting in bad calques. This analysis emphasizes the importance of nuanced decision-making in subtitling, where achieving an effective balance between maintaining structure and naturalness requires careful consideration of the calque’s impact on readability and viewer engagement. This study thus contributes to the broader understanding of translation practices in audio-visual contexts, underscoring the challenges and possibilities inherent in the application of calques in subtitling, leaving room for further reflection.

## 7. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that calques are not grammatical misfits. Rather, they are capable of conveying meaning effectively, but often fail to achieve naturalness in the target language, limiting their suitability as optimal translations. Unlike the common perception, that calques are generally literal translations, the data has shown that some are relatively developed by translators, drawing inspiration from both the source language, and Arabic. This necessitates a reconsideration of the traditional definition of calques; where literalness has always been key.

While Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995) classification is found usable in the Arabic corpus, a new category of calques has been identified and may be added. We can call this category register calques, which adhere to linguistic structural rules, but deviate from register conventions. Nonetheless, we are proposing ‘*perfect calques*’ as a new category to be added to the binary good-bad calque categorization of Harvey and Higgins (2002). A perfect calque sounds natural in Arabic to the level where it would unnoticeably blend into the stock of Arabic language. A good example of ‘*a perfect calque*’ is the Arabic *ملعبك الكرة في* (al-kurah fī mal‘abik), which is obviously structured both semantically and syntactically on the English phrase “*the ball is in your court,*” but at the same time sounds both natural, and idiomatic, in Arabic. This category encompasses calques that can be seamlessly integrated into Arabic without violating linguistic norms, thereby ensuring both accuracy and naturalness in translation. This type of calque can contribute to the richness of the Arabic lexicon.

The findings of this study hold practical value for English translation students, subtitlers, and fansubbers, helping them differentiate between good, and perfect calques for future projects. Additionally, government media bodies, and Arabic language authorities, should pay more attention to the sweeping nature of calques in order to avoid Arabic language contamination with other languages, as this research aims to raise awareness about the calquing phenomenon and its implications for Arabic and Arabic language planning. By establishing a set of rules to clearly distinguish various calquing techniques, the study aspires to enhance understanding of linguistic innovations and their role in shaping effective and natural translations.



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