



What makes a catchphrase catchy?

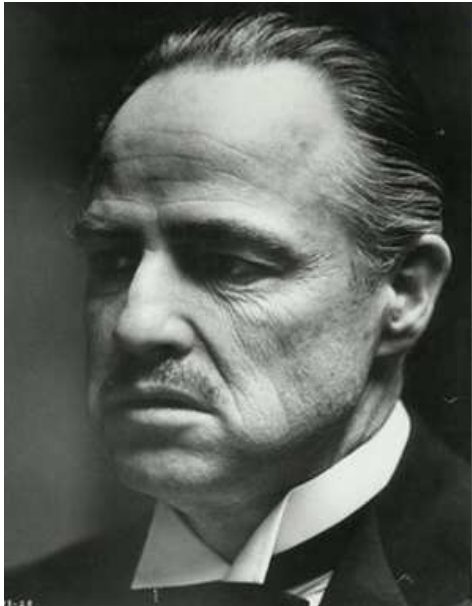
Possible Determinants in the Borrowability of English Catchphrases in Dutch

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RU Quantitative Lexicology and Variational Linguistics





I'll make him an offer he can't refuse

(Don Corleone, *The Godfather*)



Don't mind him, he's from Barcelona

(Basil Fawlty, *Fawlty Towers*)



May the Force be with you
(the good guys in *Star Wars*)



D'Oh!

(Homer Simpson in *The Simpsons*)

Catchphrases

- Expressions that **started** their life **as quotes** from popular TV series, movies, shows, well-known books and maybe even poems
- They have “caught on” in language and are **used spontaneously** in discourse:

“Don’t mind him, he’s from Barcelona”. Is this what Nemanja Vidic thought this morning my time when Samuel Eto’o drifted down the right flank to out step Vidic and score at the 10 minute mark?

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“Don’t mind him, he’s from Barcelona”. Is this what Nemanja Vidic thought this morning my time when Samuel Eto’o drifted down the right flank to out step Vidic and score at the 10 minute mark?

- What determines whether and which quotes catch on?
Specifically: which English movie & series catchphrases end up in Dutch?



Borrowability of English Catchphrases in Dutch

- Theoretical Background
- Case Study on Catchphrases: why
- Case Study on Catchphrases: which & how?
 - Catchphrases
 - Corpus and Counts
 - Predictors
 - Analyses
- Case Study on Catchphrases: results
- The Bigger Picture: conclusion & prospects



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The Spread of English

The aftermath of WW II:

Massive increase in the use of English around the world, both as

- language for communication (*macro-level*)
- a resource for borrowing (*micro-level*)

Hot topic in linguistics

- *macro-level*: ELF, Business English, World Englishes, TEFL
- to a lesser extent on the *micro-level*: Anglicism Research



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Anglicism Research: Shortcomings

1. Structuralist Paradigm

Main focus

- Counting: based on small corpora, purely descriptive
- Classifying: based on internal linguistic features

Largely Ignored:

Why borrow which English items; importance of:

- Cultural factors
- Lectal factors
- Socio-Conceptual factors

Anglicism Research: Shortcomings

1. Structuralist Paradigm

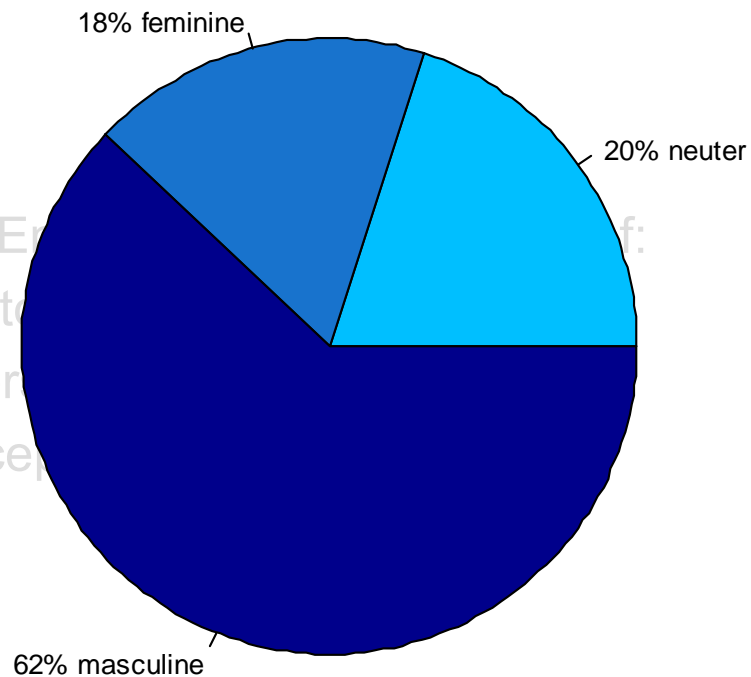
Main focus

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- Classifying: based on internal linguistic features (Onysko 2007: 137)

Ignored:

Why borrow which English word?

- Cultural factors
- Lectal factors
- Socio-Conceptual factors



Anglicism Research: Shortcomings

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Main focus

- Counting: based on small corpora, purely descriptive
- Classifying: based on internal linguistic features

Largely Ignored:

Why borrow and use which English items; importance of:

- Cultural factors **media-influence**
- Lectal factors **regional variation**
- Socio-Conceptual factors **entrenchment**



Anglicism Research: Shortcomings

2. Words as Linguistic Units

Main focus

word = unit under scrutiny (Pre-Firthian)

Largely Ignored

- Borrowing morphemes (*-aholic*)
- Borrowing phraseological sequences (*as good as it gets*)

Anglicism Research: Shortcomings

2. Words as Linguistic Units

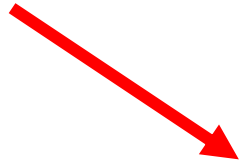
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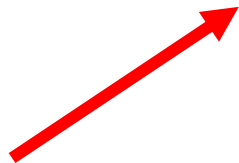
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Narrow focus on internal,
structural features

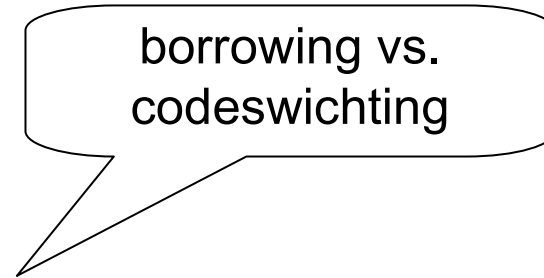
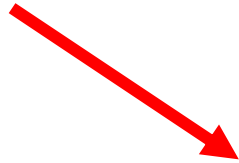


Borrowability of English Phraseological Units:
Cultural, Social and Conceptual Features

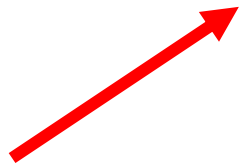
“the word as the unit”



Narrow focus on internal,
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Borrowability of English Phraseological Units: Cultural, Social and Conceptual Features



“the word as the unit”

Borrowability of English Catchphrases in Dutch

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Why Catchphrases?

Niche of phraseological lexicon (compare idioms), but:

Applicability for studying cultural impact:

importance of mass-media for the spread of English

- many (conflicting) opinions
- no proof

how important is familiarity with the media source of the catchphrase for its borrowability, compared to the influence of other socio-conceptual, linguistic and lectal features?

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Data & Methods

From an external set of catchphrases, which are borrowed into Dutch? What features help explain this?

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Overall:

- Borrowability as binary response: catchphrase is borrowed YES or NO
- Predictors
 - which of a set of cultural, lectal, socio-conceptual & formal features are influential, taking the combined effect into account?

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Logistic Regression Analysis



Catchphrases

From an **external set of catchphrases**, which are borrowed into Dutch? What features help explain this?

Set-External Proof: most reliable way of tackling borrowability issues
(see Van Hout & Muysken 1994)

Data-Collection:

- starting-point: nine online catchphrase lists
- cut-off: only catchphrases occurring twice
- restriction: only catchphrases from TV series or movies

→ 229 catchphrases



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Data-Collection:

- starting-point: nine online catchphrase lists
- cut-off: only catchphrases occurring twice (bias list-makers)
- restriction: only catchphrases from TV series or movies
excluded: “I did not have sexual relations with that woman”

→ 229 catchphrases



Corpus & Counts

From an external set of catchphrases, **which are borrowed into Dutch**? What features help explain this?

1. Corpus

Two newspaper corpora:

- TwNC Netherlandic Dutch 1999-2002 300 million words
- LeNC Belgian Dutch 1999-2005 1.3 billion words

Genre: not prone to use catchphrases, but stable and reliable indication of penetration of phrases in language

Corpus & Counts

From an external set of catchphrases, **which are borrowed into Dutch**? What features help explain this?

2. Borrowability

Query: looking for occurrences of the 229 catchphrases (no calques)

Distinction: Not all occurrences of the catchphrase count as proof of borrowing!

Corpus & Counts

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Source-Related Use → original context: familiarity source

“Don’t mention the war “, sist hij zijn vrouw Sybil en zijn knecht Manuel toe , maar uiteindelijk kan hij zelf over niets anders meer praten en paradeert hij zelfs met opgestoken arm door de gang van zijn eigen hotel . (DS 14/07/2001)

He hisses “Don’t mention the war” at his wife Sybil and his help Manuel, but eventually can’t talk about anything else himself and even parades across the hotel hallway with his arm risen way up in the air. (*Fawlty Towers*)



Corpus & Counts

Distinction: Not all occurrences of the catchphrase count as proof of borrowing!

Source-Related Use

Spontaneous Use → penetration in phraseological lexicon

Neen , geen vraag maar een eenvoudige mededeling die geen ruimte liet voor enig tegenstribbelen . Ik hoor het hem al tegen andere mensen zeggen : *I made him an offer he couldn't refuse* . (NB 04/04/2000)

No, no question but a simple statement that didn't leave any room for arguments. I can easily imagine him saying: *I made him an offer he couldn't refuse*. (*The Godfather*)

Corpus & Counts

From an external set of catchphrases, **which are borrowed into Dutch**? What features help explain this?

For all 229 catchphrases:

Spontaneous Use

→ catchphrase borrowed

Only Source-Related Use

→ catchphrase not borrowed

No Occurrences

→ catchphrase not borrowed

Corpus & Counts

From an external set of catchphrases, **which are borrowed into Dutch**? What features help explain this?

borrowed	not borrowed	total
58	171	229

Influential Features

From an external set of catchphrases, which are borrowed into Dutch? **What features help explain this?**

how important is familiarity with the media source of the catchphrase for its borrowability, compared to the influence of other socio-conceptual, linguistic and lectal features?

Influential Features

From an external set of catchphrases, which are borrowed into Dutch? **What features help explain this?**

- Familiarity with the media-source
- Exposure to / popularity of the expression in English
- Encyclopaedic features of the catchphrase
- Linguistic features of the catchphrase
- Regional variation

Familiarity with the media-source of the CPS

How familiar is a Dutch audience with the movie/series the catchphrase comes from?

Google frequencies of the source, pages in Dutch

→ frequency bands (“monty python” + film)

→ broad: “possible” exposure



Familiarity with the media-source of the CPS

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Occurrence “source-related” use of the catchphrase in the corpus

He hisses “Don’t mention the war” at his wife Sybil and his help

- YES: higher familiarity with source
- NO: lower familiarity with source



Exposure to the CPS in International English

How popular is the expression in English / ELF?

Google frequencies of the catchphrase, pages in English

→ frequency bands (“nudge nudge, wink wink”)

→ broad operationalization: “possible” exposure



Encyclopaedic Features

*How important are the encyclopaedic features of the catchphrase?
What can they tell us about the nature of English media?*

Country of Origin (IMDB)

UK “I’m the only gay in the village” (*Little Britain*)

US “Did I do that?” (*Family Matters*)

Source-Type (movies vs. series/show)

MOVIE “I coulda been a contender” (*On the Waterfront*)

SERIES “Engage!” (*Star Trek, the Next Generation*)

Age of the Source (age groups: IMDB)

OVER 50 “Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn” (*Gone with the Wind*)

10-30 “Oh, behave!” (*Austin Powers*)



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Linguistic Features

How important are the linguistic features of the catchphrase? What can they tell us about borrowability?

Length (number of words)

<5 “How Rude!” (*Full House*)

>10 “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine” (*Casablanca*)

Occurrence of non-conventional vocab (proper names, exclamations...)

YES “Yippee-ki-yay, motherfucker!” (*Die Hard*)

NO “I see dead people” (*The Sixth Sense*)

Communicative Function

Declarative

“I have a cunning plan” (*Blackadder*)

Question/ Request

“What’s up, Doc?” (*Looney Tunes*)

Command/ Exclamation

“The horror! The horror!” (*Apocalypse Now!*)



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Command/ Exclamation “The horror! The horror!” (*Apocalypse Now!*)



Lectal Variation

Are there any regional differences in the importance of the features?

Regional Variation

Belgian Dutch vs. Netherlandic Dutch

Influential Features

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Results

Coefficient	Estimate	Std.Error	Z-value	P-value
(Intercept)	-1.47	0.46	-3.23	0.001
Source-Related Use: Y	2.67	0.43	6.27	0.000
Popularity English (1)	0.92	0.28	3.33	0.001
Popularity English (2)	0.33	0.15	2.16	0.031
Sentence: quest/req	0.18	0.62	0.29	0.773
Sentence: excl/comm	-1.40	0.46	-3.02	0.003
Type: series/show	-0.83	0.42	-1.99	0.047



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positive = more borrowed CPS
negative = less borrowed CPS

< 0.05 = significant



very borrowable



unborrowable

QM

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Source-Related Use

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with source-related use (original context)

He hisses “Don’t mention the war” at his wife Sybil and his help Manuel, but eventually can’t talk about anything else himself

without source-related use

Harm can come to a young lady like that (The Goon Show)

unborrowable



Source-Related Use

very borrowable



with source-related use (original context)

He hisses “Don’t mention the war” at his wife Sybil and his help Manuel, but eventually can’t talk about anything else himself

→ In the past, the derby between our neighbouring countries has been spicy, though and bitchy. However, one rule cannot be broken: “Don”t mention the war”

without source-related use

Harm can come to a young lady like that (The Goon Show)

unborrowable



Source-Related Use

very borrowable



with source-related use (original context)

He hisses "Don't mention the war" at his wife Sybil and his help self

→ familiarity with the source of the catchphrase
(use of the expression in its original context)

Extra Evidence: Google hits in Dutch for Source

without

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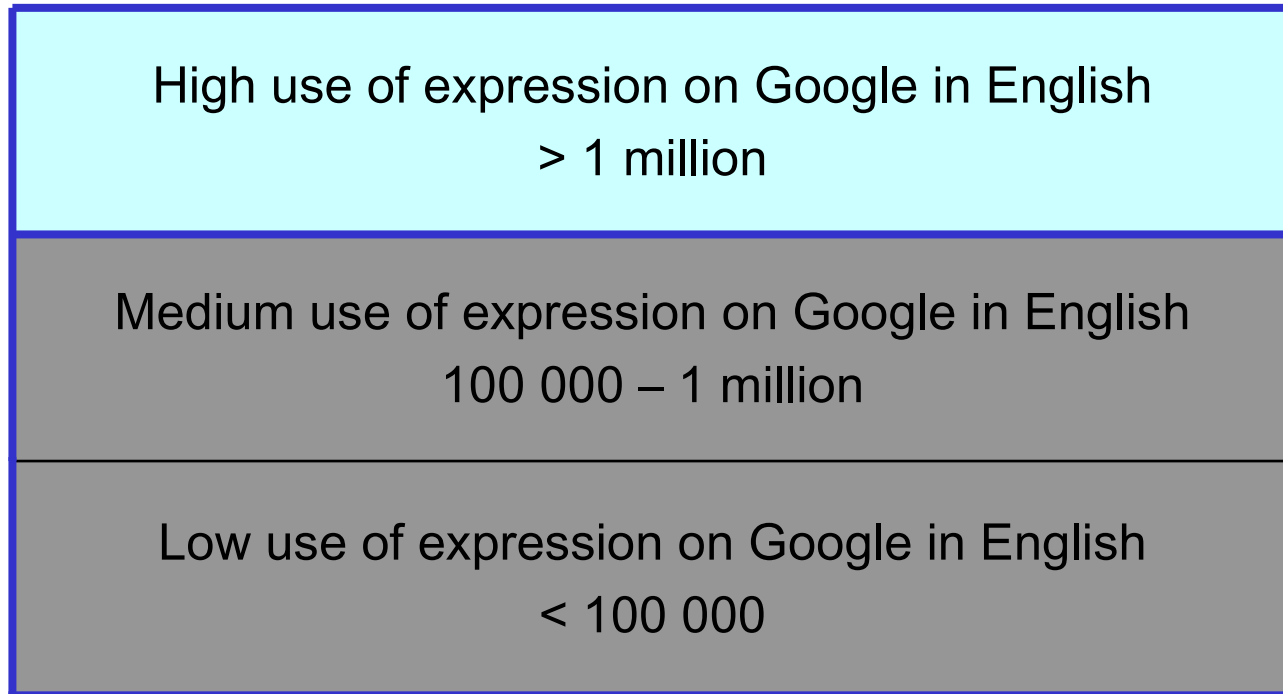


unborrowable

QM

Use Expression on Google in English

very borrowable

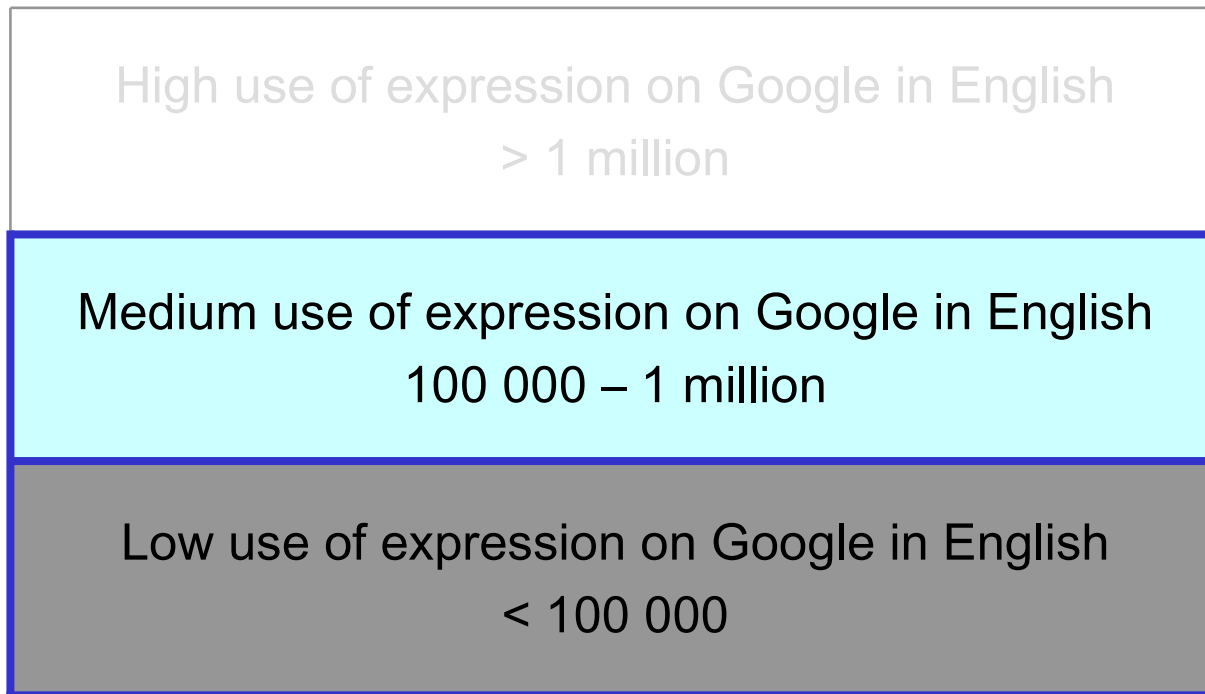


unborrowable



Use Expression on Google in English

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Use Expression on Google in English

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High use of expression on Google in English

> 1 million

→ Popularity of the expression in English
~ “catchphraseness” of the catchphrase in Source Language

Low use of expression on Google in English

< 100 000

unborrowable



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very borrowable



unborrowable

QM

Sentence Type

very borrowable



Questions & Requests

You talkin' to me? (*Taxi Driver*)

Declaratives

There's no place like home (*The Wizard of Oz*)

Exclamations & Commands

Oh my God! They killed Kenny! (*Southpark*)

unborrowable

QML

Sentence Type

very borrowable



Questions & Requests *You talkin' to me? (Taxi Driver)*

De *... (Ward of Oz)*

→ tied closely to corpus (newspaper language)

→ importance of register: Receptor Language Corpus

Exclamations & Commands *Oh my God! They killed Kenny! (Southpark)*

unborrowable



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unborrowable

QM

Source Type

very borrowable



Movies

Is that a gun in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me? (*She done him wrong*)

Series/Shows

I am unanimous in this (*Are you being served?*)

unborrowable



Source Type

very borrowable



Mo

→ importance of ...

happy to see

Series/Shows

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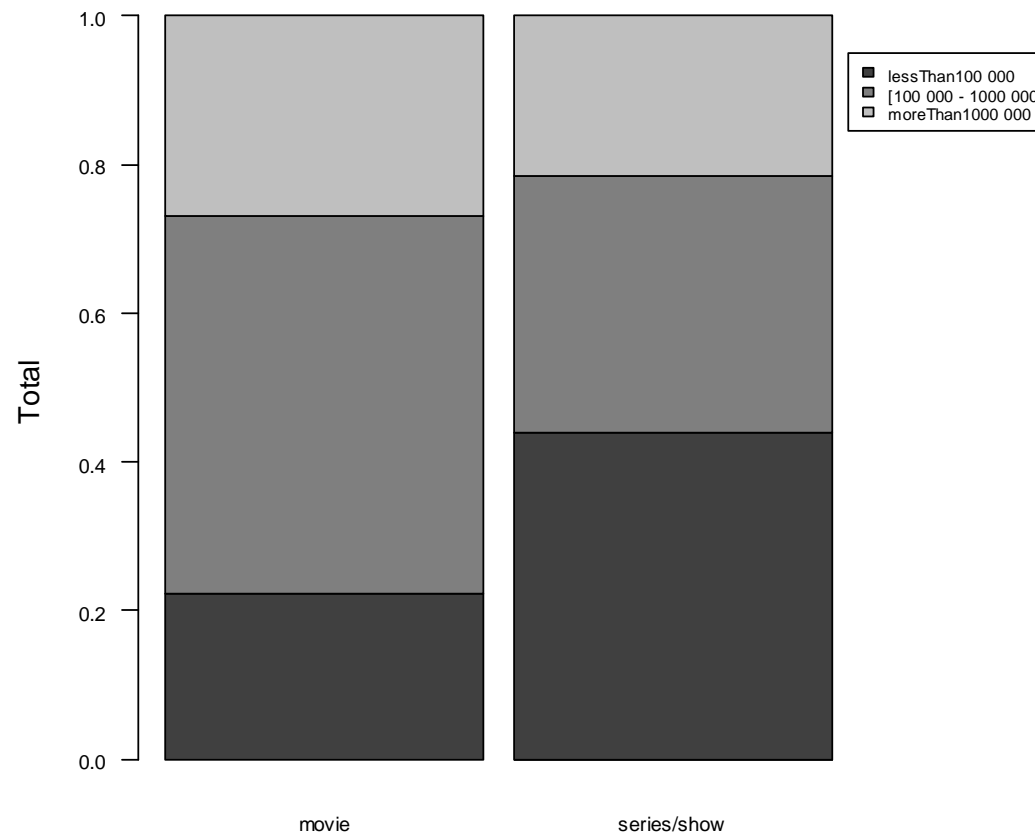


Movie vs. Series: artefact?

Possible: movies catchphrases included by listmakers are more “catchphrasy” than the incorporated series catchphrases

Movie vs. Series: artefact?

Distribution Source-Type over Frequency Bands (English)



Movie vs. Series: artefact?

Somewhat more entrenched movies, but effect movies vs. series stable in all frequency bands:

Frequency Band (English Google)	success-rate movies	success-rate series/shows
Less Than 100 000	0.20	0.06
100 000 – 1000 000	0.47	0.16
More Than 1000 000	0.61	0.23

Movie vs. Series

Difference in Cultural Weight?

- *awareness* of the ephemeral nature of series?
- needed: comparison with lower registers

Influential Features

- familiarity with the source: use of the expression in its original context
- popularity of the expression: *catchphraseness* in Source Language
- sentence type: Register Receptor Language

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Regional variation?



Regional Variation

Cultural History:

Flanders → negative attitude towards French: oil-stain?

The Netherlands → open attitude towards all foreign languages

Comparing the behaviour of Belgian Dutch vs. Netherlandic Dutch by performing two regression models (using confidence intervals)

→ No differences

→ Apparently, purist reactions towards French in Flanders do not spread out to English

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Conclusions & Prospects

- Analyses have shown three important factors in borrowability of CPS:
 - Familiarity with the source of the catchphrase
 - *Catchphraseness* in Source Language (popularity in English)
 - Corpus used for Receptor Language
- Required for complete picture:
 - Exposure in International English: more reliable operationalization
 - Register Variation: lower registers (compare movies/series)
 - Borrowability of fixed phrases: other types of formulaic sequences



For more information:

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