

# The Use of Formal and Informal Language in Subtitling

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**Kelemen, Danijela**

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Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Dvopredmetni sveučilišni diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i  
mađarskog jezika i književnosti

Danijela Kelemen

**Upotreba formalnog i neformalnog jezika u titlovanju**

Diplomski rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Goran Schmidt

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U Osijeku, 29.11.2023.

Danijela Kelemen, 0122229363

Ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

## **Abstract**

The focus of this thesis is the type of audiovisual translation called subtitling, that is, the potential ways in which it could be brought closer to the audience. Subtitling and its recognition as a form of translation rather than just a means of adaptation is increasing every day, which is no wonder, considering that nowadays people do not only watch movies and series on television but on a variety of streaming devices that, naturally, tend to provide subtitles. However, this brings up the question of how subtitles should be presented to the audience. Since they are co-dependent on the situations happening on screen, the emotions of the characters, and the visual representations altogether – it is not enough that they solely provide translation, but they should also be adapted to everything encompassed in the scene. One of the main factors subtitlers should focus on is the audience they are making the subtitles for and the language that particular audience uses in real life. It can often be seen that subtitles are translated more formally than necessary, in all probability to make them more “polite” for the audience. That is one of the subjects to be tackled in the continuation of the thesis. This work will explain subtitling and its challenges and requirements for certain streaming services like Netflix in more detail. Furthermore, there will be mention of formal and informal language and their role in everyday communication, together with examples shown for each. English register and styles together with Croatian functional styles will be presented. In addition, the possibilities of playing with language use and ways of bringing it closer to the audience will be explored.

Keywords: subtitling, AVT, language, translation

## Sažetak

Ovaj rad usmjeren je na vrstu audiovizualnog prijevoda koji se naziva titlovanje, odnosno na potencijalne načine na koje bi se moglo približiti gledateljima. Titlovanje i prepoznavanje titlovanja kao oblika prevođenja, a ne samo kao sredstva adaptacije, svakodnevno se povećava. To nije iznenađujuće s obzirom na to da ljudi danas ne gledaju filmove i serije samo na televiziji, već i na raznim streaming uređajima koji, naravno, imaju mogućnost pružanja prijevoda (titlova). Međutim, postavlja se pitanje kako titlove treba prezentirati gledateljima? Budući da su titlovi ovisni o situacijama koje se događaju na ekranu, emocijama likova, vizualnim prikazima u cjelini, nije dovoljno da samo pružaju prijevod, već bi trebali biti prilagođeni svemu što obuhvaća audiovizualni dio. Jedan od glavnih čimbenika na koji se prevoditelji trebaju usredotočiti su gledatelji za koje stvaraju titlove i jezik koji gledatelji koriste u stvarnom životu. Često se može vidjeti da se titlovi prevode formalnije nego što je potrebno, vjerojatno da bi bili „pristojniji” za gledatelje. To je jedna od tema o kojoj će se raditi u nastavku ovog rada. Tijekom rada pobliže će se objasniti titlovanje i izazovi koje obuhvaća, zajedno sa zahtjevima za određene streaming usluge poput Netflix-a. Nadalje, spomenut će se formalni i neformalni jezik te njihova uloga u svakodnevnoj komunikaciji, zajedno s prikazanim primjerima za svaki. U rad je također uključen pojam registra te funkcionalnih stilova engleskog i hrvatskog jezika. Osim toga, istražit će se mogućnosti igranja upotrebom jezika i načinom približavanja gledateljima.

Ključne riječi: titlovanje, audiovizualni prijevod, jezik, prevođenje



## **Abbreviations used**

CD – Cambridge Dictionary

OD – Oxford Dictionaries

ST – Source Text

TT – Targeted Text

FL – Formal Language

IL – Informal Language

SL – Source Language

TL – Target Language

AVT – Audiovisual Translation

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## 1. Introduction

As an essential part of human communication, language is a dynamic, multifaceted tool that captures the complexity and diversity of human society. Two distinct types that stand out among the wide range of linguistic expressions are formal and informal language. These types encompass numerous styles, lexicons, and organizational frameworks that are applied in various circumstances and have an impact on how we communicate, interact, and build social bonds.

Throughout this work, the usage of formal and informal language is explored more deeply, especially in the context of one of the forms of audiovisual translation – subtitling. The aim is to inspect what kinds of functional language styles exist and which form of expression they require in translation – formal, informal or perhaps both. In subtitling, the use of formal and informal language is a delicate balancing act that is greatly influenced by cultural conventions, linguistic concerns, and the intended target audience, eventually having an impact on the effectiveness of communication and the viewer's experience. Sometimes subtitle translators may use formal language more often than is necessary. This may be due to a number of elements, such as the need to uphold professionalism, the perception that translated information should be formal, or an effort to follow certain linguistic traditions. Insights into how language choices affect audience perception, emotional involvement, and the general viewing experience can be gained by observing how viewers respond to the usage of formal and informal language in subtitles. An experiment focusing precisely on this subject will be presented in this paper, carrying the primary goal of researching translation reception.

This work is divided into several chapters. The first two chapters provide an introduction to the work as well as some theoretical background on translating. Chapter 3 deals with the theoretical part on subtitling since the mentioned type of audiovisual translation is a key element of the research. Chapter 4 presents the subtitling requirements for Netflix and some specific guidelines for subtitling from English into the Croatian language when working for Netflix. It is important to have a clear example of how subtitling rules can look like in order to be aware of the numerous restrictions that subtitlers face on a daily basis. After covering the theory on translation and subtitling, it is vital to review some general facts about language and the various ways in which it functions. The distinction between formal and informal language is further explored in Chapter 5, along with its significance and possible contexts in

subtitling. Furthermore, Chapter 6 deals with the areas of the English language register and Croatian functional styles as well as crucial factors that influence translation techniques, highlighting the significance of cultural adaptation in subtitling procedures. Introducing these styles will give a more detailed perspective on the fact that not everything can be entirely defined, in this case, the time and place of using a specific language style. The concluding chapter provides a research on translation perception, in order to explore the viewers' expectations of subtitled content more deeply. One of the main goals of this work is to observe the reactions of the audience regarding the subject of displaying a variety of possible translations (subtitles) and therefore finding out what their preferences are in order to help in the further development of subtitled work.

## **2. Introduction to translating**

For a better understanding of the research, this section briefly covers the theoretical background of translating as described by Jeremy Munday in his work *Introducing Translation Studies, Theories and applications, Second Edition* (2008). Among many others, Munday mentions John Dryden's categorization of translating, in the preface to his translation of *Ovid's Epistles* in 1680, which will be shortly explained because it is considered an important moment for defining translation. Furthermore, he mentions Roman Jakobson and the way he divided translation into three categories.

Writings on the subject of translating go far back in recorded history. The practice of translation was discussed by, for example, Cicero and Horace (first century BCE) and St Jerome (fourth century CE) (Munday 2008: 24). The term "translation" itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as *translating*) (Munday 2008: 22). The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL) (Munday 2008: 22). This type of translation is called *interlingual* and it is the one we are focusing on the most during our studies.

The further categorization of translating is also described by John Dryden (1680), who reduced it to three categories: *metaphrase*, *paraphrase* and *imitation*. In this case, *metaphrase* would be the literal, "word-for-word" translation, *paraphrase* would focus on the message of

the author rather than his exact words, and lastly, during *imitation*, the translator would forget about both words and author's message in order to create its free translation (some would even call it the *adaptation* of the original). "Dryden's proposed triad of the late seventeenth century marked the beginning of a more systematic and precise definition of translation" (Munday 2008: 51).

In his paper *On linguistic aspects of translation* (1959/2004), structuralist Roman Jakobson describes three kinds of translation: *intralingual*, *interlingual* and *intersemiotic* (Munday 2008: 54). Focusing on *interlingual* (translation between two different languages), translators then encounter an issue of equivalence in meaning between the SL and TL.

"Translation is defined as the cognitive and linguistic process the translator performs in decoding a text which is the result of a communication act in the source language and in encoding it as speech product in the target language by preserving the content and achieving the stylistic quality of the source language text" (Gläser 1984: 123).

While translating could be infinitely dissected into detailed units, its influencing factors can be narrowed down to the following: type of ST, purpose of translating it, targeted readers/audience, cultural differences in SL and TL, context and emotional factors. The mentioned factors are important for both written text and spoken dialogue.

Nowadays, with the creation of machine translation (MT) and computer-aided translation (CAT) technologies, technology has been an increasingly important factor in translation. Translation memory, terminology databases, and other features from CAT programs let human translators work more quickly and consistently. While machine translation uses artificial intelligence and algorithms to translate text automatically, it frequently needs human post-editing to ensure accuracy and naturalness.

Translation is, in general, a difficult and dynamic process that calls for linguistic expertise, cultural sensitivity, and adaptation to accurately translate meaning across languages and cultures. There are different kinds of translation, some are meant to be read-only (e.g. literary, technical, professional and administrative translation), and some are meant to be watched and/or listened to (audiovisual translation such as dubbing, subtitling, voiceovers etc.).

"When it comes to AVT (audiovisual translation), some prefer to talk about adaptation – an attitude that has stymied the debate about AVT and could be tainted as having been one of

the main reasons why the whole area has been traditionally ignored by scholars in translation until very recently” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 22).

In the continuation of this paper, the main aspects, challenges and requirements of subtitling will be explained for the purpose of understanding the choices made by people who work in subtitling but also to awaken some thoughts about what could be changed in the subtitling world as a means to bring it even closer to the audience. In addition, the work digs deeper into the “subtitler” profession in order to present everything it encompasses, because there is more to it than just another means of translation.

### **3. Subtitling in the making**

It is well known that audiovisual translation is tackled quite differently than literary translation because of the numerous challenges it carries due to the visual aspects. The type of audiovisual translation that will be introduced in this section is subtitling since it is the main focus of this paper. In subtitling, it is not enough to only translate sentences and make sure they have a reading “flow” to them (in order to make them easily understandable for the reader), but subtitles also need to match the scene and situation that the viewers are simultaneously watching. Gottlieb (2001: 15) says that “the subtitling consists of verbal messages in filmic media, which are rendered into a different language. These verbal messages are in the shape of one or more lines of a written text and presented on the screen; in sync with the original verbal message.”

When we mention subtitling, we refer to the text that is usually written on the bottom of the screen in a horizontal position, with exceptions in some languages where it is placed vertically (for example in the Japanese language). The text can either be a translation from one language to another or it can be written in the same language as the audio. Naturally, in both cases, the text must be synchronized with the events happening on the screen (dialogues, monologues, songs etc.). In addition, the subtitles must be on the screen long enough for the viewers to be able to read them. According to Cintas and Remael (2007: 9) all subtitled programs are made up of three main components: the spoken word, the image and the subtitles. The interaction of these three components, along with the viewer’s ability to read both the images and the written text at a particular speed, and the actual size of the screen, determine the basic characteristics of the audiovisual medium.

Already by the limitations in the making of subtitles mentioned above, it can be seen why some people would consider subtitling as a form of adaptation rather than translation.

### **3.1. Classification of subtitling**

Since subtitling is united with technology, and technology is endlessly developing, it is quite difficult to classify subtitling since there will always be something new to add to it. In view of this fact, Cintas and Remael (2007: 13) have decided to group subtitles according to the following five criteria: linguistic parameters, time available for preparation, technical parameters, methods of projection, and distribution format. These five criteria will be briefly explained below.

#### **3.1.1. Linguistic parameters**

According to linguistic parameters, subtitles are divided into intralingual, interlingual, and bilingual ones. Intralingual represents a change from oral to written while staying within the same language (which causes hesitance in calling it translation). This type is essentially for people who are deaf and people with hearing impairment (SDH) because, in addition to dialogues, all paralinguistic information that contributes to the forming of the plot or ambience, such as laughter, applause, ringing etc., is also included. Furthermore, it can be used for language learning purposes although it is not its primary focus. Another intralingual type that is becoming more and more popular is karaoke: generally used with songs or movie musicals. Lastly, subtitles for dialects of the same language and for notices and announcements also fall into the intralingual group (Cintas, Remael 2007: 14).

The following type of subtitling is interlingual, which represents translation from SL to TL, made both for hearers and for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH). “Pressure groups in countries such as Germany, UK and Italy have managed to get many foreign films marketed in their countries with two different tracks of interlingual subtitles: one for the hearing population and a second one that addresses the needs of the deaf” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 18).

Lastly, there is the bilingual type where bilingual subtitles are produced in geographical areas where two languages are spoken and in international film festivals (ib.).

#### **3.1.2. Time available for preparation**

Following the time aspect, two types are significant: a) pre-prepared subtitles (offline subtitling) that can be in complete sentences or reduced and b) live or real-time subtitles (online subtitling) that can be human-made or machine-made. “The main difference between these two categories resides in the fact that the pre-prepared subtitles are done after the programme has been shot and sometime ahead of its broadcasting or release, giving translators ample time to carry out their work; whereas the online type is performed live, i.e.



at the same time as the original programme is taking place or being broadcast” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 19).

### **3.1.3. Technical parameters**

From a technical point of view, the two types that can be identified are open subtitles and closed subtitles. The main difference between the two is that in the first case, the subtitles cannot be removed from the image or turned off, but in the second they can be added according to the viewer’s will (Cintas, Remael 2007: 22).

### **3.1.4. Methods of projection**

Methods of projecting subtitles are classified according to the history of subtitling. They are divided into: mechanical and thermal, photochemical, optical, laser and electronic subtitling. “The technical process of transferring the subtitles to the actual film or programme has undergone a considerable evolution, which has led to an improvement in their presentation and stability on screen” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 22).

So far, together with electronic subtitling, laser subtitling has proven itself to be the most effective one and it is most commonly used in cinema. One of the advantages of electronic over laser is that “since electronic subtitles are independent of the audiovisual programme, they can easily be revised and modified from projection to projection” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 23).

### **3.1.5. Distribution format**

Subtitles can be made for cinema, television, video, VHS, DVD and Internet. “Although the conventions applied when subtitling a programme will ultimately depend on individual companies, on the instructions given by the client or on the subtitling program being used, there are some differences from medium to medium” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 23). This includes rules of time of subtitles on screen, number of lines, amount of text, line breaks etc.

## **3.2. Task carriers in subtitling**

In the subtitling process, it is important to distinguish between three individuals: the spotter, the translator and the adaptor.

The spotter (subtiter) has “the technical task of deciding the in and out times of the subtitles, and increasingly for creating templates and master titles with relevant annotations for the translators” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 34). Spotters do not necessarily need to know other foreign languages, but they do have to be familiar with film language, narrative techniques,

and they need to be technologically literate. On the other hand, the translators have to be exceptional in both source and target language because they are the ones taking care of the language transfer. In addition to the languages, translators must know about the cultures they are translating from/to. Furthermore, the adaptors' challenge is to fit the translation in the subtitle lines and search for more adequate structures in the TL without altering the original meaning, and they do not necessarily need to know the SL (Cintas, Remael 2007: 34).

However, in order to avoid mistakes due to too many people working on one project, and also due to the lack of language knowledge when it comes to spotters and adaptors, nowadays, translators are the ones who do the majority of the work that was once divided between multiple people. In other words, subtitlers are, in the majority of cases, translators, spotters and adapters.

### **3.3. The vulnerability of subtitling**

In comparison to literary translation, dubbing, voiceovers etc., subtitling is in a rather more complicated situation when it comes to convincing the viewers of a certain translation. The reason for this is that the viewers, especially the ones with some knowledge of the foreign language that is being subtitled, can immediately tell if something is left out, toned down, or changed in any way regarding to what is being said in the SL.

“In other translation practices it might be easier to deal with some translational problems, since obscure cultural referents or difficult plays on words can be left out or drastically changed, without raising the receiver's suspicion” (Cintas, Remael 2007: 74).

A possible way of dealing with this issue is using the so-called dialogue lists. “A dialogue list is essentially the compilation of all the dialogue exchanges uttered in the film and it is a document usually supplied by the film distributor or producer of the film” (ib.). The mentioned lists, besides providing a transcription of all dialogue, may supply rules about socio-cultural connotations, explain some plays on words, dialectal terms, and any other extra information that could be helpful in subtitling certain content. However, according to Cintas and Remael (2007: 75), dialogue lists are not very common in the profession, and work is usually being done directly from the soundtrack.

The broadcasting or subtitling firm should also provide subtitlers with a style guide, or something comparable, that outlines the key standards to be followed while creating their

subtitles. This is in addition to the dialogue list for the program that needs to be translated (Cintas, Remael 2007: 79).

### **3.4. Translation in subtitling**

Since subtitling is limited with time frames, it often has to utilize some type of text reduction. Most commonly, subtitlers get rid of words that are not important for the understanding of the message in the scene or reassemble the relevant words – mostly both processes are combined (Cintas, Remael 2007: 146). There are no set rules as to what subtitlers should delete or paraphrase, they have to be creative and adapt according to the message that is supposed to be transmitted from the SL into the TL, the target audience, the style guides they are using and other factors that require individual imagination.

One of communication's benefits is its ability to adapt, and despite its volatility, speech is rooted in the community in which it is produced. For films, especially those attempting to present a genuine image of society, this makes it even more compelling. As a result, this mutability is frequently reflected in cinema language in its strictly linguistic sense. As a result, linguistic decisions in movies are never made at random. Through peculiarities and the socio-cultural and geographic markers in characters' speech, which have an impact on grammar, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation, we can learn something about their personalities and backgrounds (Cintas, Remael: 185).

“Most subtitles display a preference for conventional, neutral word order, and simple well-formed stereotypical sentences. This is one of the reasons why many of the interpersonal functions of dialogue get lost in the subtitles: they are perceived to relate to form rather than content” (ib.). This statement proves that subtitle instructions focus on form rather than the message of a certain scene/dialogue, and precisely those instructions impede the possibility of a more realistic interpretation of the characters and the message of a specific scene from a film or TV series.

Before getting into some examples of subtitling requirements in the following chapter, it is advantageous to know that everything mentioned so far is no more than a current overview of a field that is continuously evolving in sync with numerous impactors such as technological developments, culture, younger generations etc. As soon as any of these factors slightly changes, it is possible to approach subtitling from a brand new point of view and to have different rules applied. The best way to progress in this profession is to be up-to-date with

what is appreciated among the viewers, to accept the novelties and to be open to the idea of adapting to possible changes.

#### 4. Netflix subtitling requirements

Like any other streaming service and TV network, Netflix strives to create quality subtitles in order to achieve maximum positive feedback from viewers. They have their own *Timed Text Style Guide* to make the audience “feel like they are watching their content, not reading it” (Timed Text Style Guide: Subtitle Timing Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, 2023). A *Timed Text Style Guide*, often referred to as a *subtitle style guide*, is a set of guidelines and standards that specify how subtitles or captions should be created, formatted, and presented in audiovisual content. These style guides are used by content creators, broadcasters, streaming platforms, and subtitling professionals to ensure uniformity and consistency in subtitling. The phrase “timed text” refers to the fact that these requirements address not only the text's style and substance but also the precise moments in which captions or subtitles appear and disappear on the screen. “Any timed text created specifically for Netflix – Originals or non-Originals – should follow the Netflix Timed Text Style Guide, unless otherwise advised” (ib.).

The minimum duration of Netflix subtitles is 5/6 (five-sixths) of a second per subtitle event (e.g. 20 frames for 24fps), and the maximum duration is 7 seconds per subtitle event. The lines are supposed to be kept down to one, but they can be in two (maximum) if necessary. The line should be separated/broken: after punctuation marks, before conjunctions and before prepositions. The line should not separate: a noun from an article, a noun from an adjective, a first name from a last name, a verb from a subject pronoun, a prepositional verb from its preposition, and a verb from an auxiliary, a reflexive pronoun or negation (ib.).

When it comes to positioning, all subtitles should be center-justified and placed at either the top or bottom of the screen, except for Japanese, where vertical positioning is allowed. Also, key names and phrases/formality tables must be created and used for translation to ensure consistency across episodes and seasons (ib.).

Netflix credits are usually not subtitled unless instructed otherwise (if it is not specifically requested), and the main titles are subtitled as instructed in the themed style guide of the

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<sup>1</sup> Source of the mentioned rules: <https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/215758617-Timed-Text-Style-Guide-General-Requirements> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023)

respective language. As far as money mentions are concerned, they should remain in the same currency when subtitled (ib.).

In the continuation of this work, the instructions for translating Netflix content into Croatian language will be introduced to show everything that subtitlers have to consider while working on the translation for Croatian viewers.

## 4.1. Netflix: Croatian Timed Text Style Guide

This section covers the rules from the Netflix Croatian Timed Style Guide<sup>2</sup> for the following: abbreviations, acronyms, character limitation, character names, documentary and unscripted content, dual speakers, font information, on-screen text, foreign dialogue, italics, line treatment, numbers, punctuation, quotes, reading speed limits, repetitions, songs, titles and special instructions.

### 4.1.1. Abbreviations, acronyms and character limitation

The abbreviations supposed to be written with period are the following: *g.*, *dr.*, *br.*, *npr.*, and *itd.*, while the ones supposed to be written without period are: *gđa*, *gđica*, and *h*.

- *Pobrinut ću se za njega g. Humphrey. Ne brinite. (Gossip Girl S01/EP17)*
- *Ledi Mary. Gđice Sharma. (Bridgerton S02/EP07)*

Acronyms should be written without periods between letters: BBC, CIA, SAD, and characters should be limited to 42 per line.

### 4.1.2. Character names

Proper names should not be translated unless Netflix provides approved translations, nicknames should only be translated if they carry a specific meaning, and language-specific characters are supposed to be used for historical/mythical characters (e.g. Santa Claus).

- Santa Claus (mythical character)  
- *Djed Božićnjak.*
- Blair (proper name (*Gossip Girl*, 2007))  
- *Blair.*
- Hawk (nickname of a character (*Cobra Kai*, 2018))  
- *Irokeza.*

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<sup>2</sup> Source of the mentioned rules: <https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/115002790368-Croatian-Timed-Text-Style-Guide> (Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023)

### **4.1.3. Documentary/Unscripted and dual speakers**

The speaker's title should be translated only once – the first time the speaker appears. Dialogue in TV/movie clips should only be subtitled if plot-pertinent and if the rights have been granted, also, news tickers/banners from archive clips do not require subtitles unless plot-pertinent. It should be avoided to go back and forth between italicized and non-italicized subtitles when the speaker is on and off screen. If the speaker is on camera for at least part of the scene, it should not be italicized. Italics are for off-screen narrators. When it comes to two speakers being present, a hyphen without a space should be used to indicate two speakers in one subtitle, with a maximum of one character speaking per line. According to the *Guide*, text in each line in a dual speaker subtitle must be a contained sentence and should not carry into the preceding or subsequent subtitle. Creating shorter sentences and timing appropriately helps to accommodate this (Netflix Croatian Timed Style Guide, 2023).

### **4.1.4. Font information and on-screen text**

When it comes to font style, it should be Arial as a generic placeholder for proportional Sans Serif, font size should be relative to video resolution and ability to fit 42 characters across the screen, and the font color should be white. In the case of on-screen text and dialogue overlapping, precedence should be given to the most plot-pertinent message. Also, forced narratives that are identical to onscreen text or covered in the dialogue must be deleted, and forced narratives for on-screen text should be in ALL CAPS, except for long passages of on-screen text (e.g. prologue or epilogue), which should use sentence case to improve readability. Moreover, a forced narrative and dialogue should never be combined in the same subtitle (ib.).

### **4.1.5. Foreign dialogue**

If it was translated in the original version and if it is meant for the viewer to understand it, foreign dialogue should be translated. In these cases, special attention should be given to correct spelling, grammar, punctuation etc. Other than that, foreign words should be italicized unless they have become part of regular usage (ib.).

### **4.1.6. Italics and line treatment**

When subtitling Netflix content into Croatian language, the following should be italicized: album, book, film and program titles, foreign words, dialogue that is heard through electronic media (e.g. a phone, television, or computer), when the speaker is not in the scene(s), song lyrics (if rights have been granted), and voice-overs. Italics should not be used to indicate

emphasis on specific words. Subtitles should be within a maximum of two lines, while text should usually be kept to one line unless it exceeds the character limitation (ib.).

#### **4.1.7. Numbers and punctuation**

While numbers from 1 to 10 should be written out (*jedan, dva, tri* etc.), numbers above ten should be written numerically (11, 12, 13 etc.). Although, if a number begins a sentence, it should always be spelt out. However, the mentioned rules may be broken if it is necessary because of space limitations, reading speed concerns etc. Measurements should be converted to the metric system (with the exception of the original unit of measurement being important for the plot), and time should be noted in the 24-hour format. Furthermore, dates should be written with a full stop after the year, and commas should be used as decimal separators. Apart from that, numbers with five or more digits should be written with a space. Lastly, there are no spaces between the characters and punctuation marks (ib.).

#### **4.1.8. Quotes, reading speed limits and repetitions**

Quotation marks ought to be used at the start of the quotation and after the last line of the quotation, marking the beginning and the end, rather than at the beginning and end of every subtitle within the quotation. The quotation marks used should be double (without spaces for regular ones and with spaces for quotes within quotes), whereas punctuation should be included within the quotation marks if the quote is an independent clause and outside if it is not. Reading speed limits for adult programs should not exceed 17 characters per second, and the ones for children programs should not exceed 13 characters per second. Words or phrases repeated more than once by the same speaker should not be translated (ib.).

#### **4.1.9. Songs and titles**

When it comes to songs, only plot-pertinent ones (if the rights have been granted) are subtitled. The lyrics, album titles and song titles should be in italics and an uppercase letter should be used at the beginning of each line. When a song continues in the background, it is no longer necessary to subtitle it since precedence should be given to the dialogue. As far as titles are concerned, only the approved titles can be used for main titles, they should not be translated if the Croatian and the English versions both read with exactly the same words and spellings and should be translated when the approved title for Croatian contains a part that does not fully match the on-screen main title. The maximum character count per line or maximum line limit can be exceeded in the case of the provided translation of the main title not working with a line break in a way that fits within a limit. However, the main title should

never be in italics nor split into multiple subtitle events. Furthermore, episode titles are not supposed to be translated if they do not appear on screen/are not voiced over, and for titles of published works, official or well-known translations should be used – on the contrary, they should be left in the original language (ib.).

#### **4.1.10. Special instructions**

According to the guide, dialogue must never be censored and “expletives should be rendered as faithfully as possible”. Moreover, background dialogue always comes in second place after plot-pertinent dialogue. In addition, the tone must be matched to the one of the original content while also staying relevant to the target audience. Onomatopoeia should not be translated if the Croatian audience would understand it and deliberate misspellings and mispronunciations should not be reproduced unless plot-pertinent (ib.).

Particular instructions like the first and last one mentioned above are in focus. If they are analyzed more closely, they contradict themselves in a way. While the first one suggests not to censor anything, the last one states that deliberate misspellings and mispronunciations should not be translated – this brings up the dilemma about the content being censored in a certain sense.

After analyzing the theoretical background on subtitling and seeing some actual requirements that subtitlers must follow, it is time to shift focus on language. Understanding different aspects of language (such as formality, tone, and style) is indispensable when working on any kind of translation. An enriched knowledge about communication methods, rules and applications helps the subtitler in delivering a high quality product (translation). However, despite being familiar with language in theory, one can never be too prepared for possible exceptions that require a change from a general approach to something more fitting for the particular moment. In the continuation of the work, the wide range of possibilities when it comes to language use will be discovered, as well as the distinction between formal and informal language together with corresponding examples. It will be shown how sometimes their usage is quite clear, while in some instances it can be challenging to decide which way to go. Learning these facts leads to another trait that a subtitler should perhaps obtain, and that is creativity. Creativity with merging different styles might be crucial in some subtitling assignments – depending on the content, the message it is supposed to display, targeted audience, cultural background and other influencing factors.



## **5. Meaning and usage of formal and informal language**

Language is the overall system of communication that consists of several parts and regulations. It comes in many forms and functions. The types that are in focus throughout this research are formal and informal language. While small differences regarding what is “formal” and “informal” exist between languages depending on the culture, religion, tradition etc., generally speaking, the ground rules are fairly common globally and they will be explained in the following section.

As the word itself implies, formal language is the one commonly used in formal situations and while communicating with strangers or people in a higher position (for example: boss, professor, manager etc.). “It helps to navigate conversations that need to have a formal tone as well as academic or business writing, interviews and presentations” (Touro University, 2023). Formal language is less personal than informal language. Formal language does not use colloquialisms, contractions or first-person pronouns such as “I” or “we”. It is used when writing for professional or academic purposes like graduate school assignments. However, the Cambridge Dictionary explains how there are times when writing can be very informal, for example, when writing postcards or letters to friends, emails or text messages.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, informal language is more commonly used in situations that are more relaxed and involve people one knows well. Although informal language is most often used when speaking, “there are also examples where spoken English can be very formal, for example, in a speech or a lecture” (CD). “Most uses of English are neutral; that is, they are neither formal nor informal” (CD). When comparing informal and formal language, it can be said that informal language is less complex and creates shorter sentences than formal language. “Formal language and informal language are associated with particular choices of grammar and vocabulary. Contractions, relative clauses without a relative pronoun and ellipsis are more common in informal language” (CD). “Informal language is more casual and spontaneous. It is used when communicating with friends or family either in writing or in conversation. It is used when writing personal emails, text messages and in some business correspondence. The tone of informal language is more personal than formal language” (Touro University, 2023).

In the following chapter, some examples for both formal and informal language are shown, together with brief explanations regarding the differences between them.

## 5.1. Examples

All of the examples used below are my own.

### Example 1

Formal language:

“*We regret to inform* you that we were unable to proceed with your order.”

Informal language:

“*We’re sorry to tell* you that we *couldn’t* proceed with your order.”

Explanation:

Both sentences have the same meaning, but while the formal one is longer and has a formal tone to it, the informal one is quite direct and uses contractions which make the sentence have a more casual tone. In addition, the vocabulary is different in both cases.

### Example 2

Formal language:

“*Would you like* some tea with those biscuits?”

Informal language:

“*Do you want* some tea with those biscuits?”

Explanation:

While both sentences are polite, the informal one does not use modal verbs like “would” to formalize its tone.

### Example 3

Formal language:

“*I am going to stay in the hotel.*”

Informal language:

“*I’m gonna stay in the hotel.*”

Explanation:

While “going to” and “gonna” have the same meaning, “gonna” is a slang word and it is used exclusively in informal communication.

#### **Example 4**

Formal language:

*“I apologized for my behavior.”*

Informal language:

*“I said I was sorry for my behavior.”*

Explanation:

The choice of vocabulary is modified depending on the formality of the situation. Another interesting fact is that the informal sentence tends to be longer than the formal one due to paraphrasing formal words (in this case “I said I was sorry” instead of “I apologize”).

#### **Example 5**

Formal language:

*“It is believed that subtitling is a complicated type of translation.”*

Informal language:

*“I believe that subtitling is a complicated type of translation.”*

Explanation:

The use of personal pronouns is usually avoided in formal language, which indicates to a more common usage of passive voice.

Overall, the distinction between formal and informal language lies in the level of formality and context. The bottom requirement is for the speaker to determine which one is appropriate in which situation, as well as for the subtitler to recognize when to use more complex ways of constructing sentences and when to simplify the translation. In order to do that, the subtitler must know how to adapt the language according to the targeted audience and the message to be conveyed. Since this work primarily deals with subtitling content from the English language into Croatian, the next chapter will provide a closer look on the English language register and Croatian functional styles.

## 6. Register and style

Register refers to a subgroup of language that stands for a distinct way of communicating in certain situations or social contexts. Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “the style of language, grammar, and words used for particular situations”. Like many other languages, English includes a variety of registers, which can be broadly divided into three categories: formal, informal, and neutral.

On the one hand, a formal register is used in professional or formal settings. Some of the characteristics are complex vocabulary, complete sentences, specific terminology, avoidance of contractions, and adherence to grammar and punctuation rules. The formal register is the one commonly used in academic writing, official documents and business contexts. On the other hand, an informal register is commonly used in personal or casual settings such as friendly, family and other non-formal situations. Furthermore, it requires simple vocabulary, does not demand avoidance of contractions or colloquialisms, and does not adhere to strict grammar rules. Moreover, a neutral register also exists, and it falls right in the middle between formal and informal. Neutral register is the one most commonly used and, in some instances, it is not easy to distinguish it from other registers. One of the reasons for this may be due to the fact that it contains characteristics of both formal and informal registers, and detailed observance is sometimes necessary in order to enlist certain conversations into one of the three registers.

“Register is a variety of language or a level of usage, as determined by the degree of formality and choice of vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax, according to the communicative purpose, social context, and standing of the user” (OD).

However, even if register types can be divided and each type has a certain set of rules, it is easy for the types to intertwine depending on the situation, speakers, emotions and every other aspect of the communication. It can be said that style is closely related to register, but there is a difference between the two, as briefly explained by Bernd Kortmann in the work *A Handbook of Varieties of English (2005)*:

“The choice of register in different types of speech situations is termed “situational variation”. The term “style” is also occasionally used to refer to situational variation. However, it includes variations in grammatical structures, too. It is less predictable and more dependent on personal preferences than register” (Kortmann 2005: 256).

## 6.1. Functional styles in the Croatian language

Since this work primarily deals with subtitling English language into Croatian, it is useful to get to know Croatian functional styles and to take a closer look on to what is considered formal and what informal in the Croatian language. A good way of diving into the Croatian functional styles is by examining the book *Funkcionalni stilovi hrvatskog jezika (2006)* by Josip Silić. In his book, Silić divides functional styles of Croatian into scientific, administrative-business, journalistic-publicist, literary-artistic, and conversational style (Silić 2006: 36).

Scientific style (*znanstveni stil*) is characterized by the lowest degree of individual freedom and therefore the highest degree of objectivity (Silić 2006: 44). The scientific style must be both formal and substantive in accordance with its role, i.e. that the language is not created according to the wishes of the person who creates or corrects the language, but according to the wishes of the content of the text of the scientific style (Silić 2006: 63). Some general characteristic vocabulary for scientific style in Croatian language would include: *znanost* (Science), *istraživanje* (research), *teorija* (theory), *rezultat* (result), *zaključak* (conclusion) etc. Other vocabulary would differ depending on the field of study (e.g. Geology, Medicine, Astronomy and so on). Among other syntactic structures, scientific style tends to use passive voice, nominalizations, complex sentences, subordination, and depersonalization.

Passive voice is frequently used in scientific writing to emphasize the action or results rather than the doer. In Croatian, it is constructed similarly to English, where the object of the active sentence becomes the subject in the passive sentence. For example:

- *Aktivni glagol* (Active Verb): „*Laboranti su prikupili uzorke.*”
- *Pasivni glagol* (Passive Verb): „*Uzorci su prikupljeni od strane laboranata.*”

Nominalizations involve turning verbs or adjectives into nouns, often to create abstract and formal language. In Croatian, this is achieved by using noun forms of verbs and adjectives. For example:

- Verb: „*Ivan se nije odazvao na poziv.*”
- Nominalized: „*Ivanovo neodazivanje na poziv.*”

“Subordinate and dependent clauses are frequently used in complex sentence structures found in scientific writing to offer context or clarify connections between concepts” (CD). There are many different types of complex sentence structures that can be used in Croatian, such as

conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, and relative pronouns. Depersonalization is avoiding the use of personal pronouns like “I” or “we”. Instead, researchers often use passive constructions or substitute impersonal expressions to maintain objectivity.

Furthermore, the administrative-business style (*administrativno-poslovni stil*) is a style for official communication. Some of the general characteristics of this style are simplicity, clarity, completeness, uniformity, and objectivity (Silić 2006: 66). It follows specific syntactic structures to convey information clearly and professionally. These are some of the syntactic structures commonly found in administrative and business style in Croatian: conditional statements, formal salutations/greetings/closings, and passive voice.

Conditional statements are used to express hypothetical situations, conditions, or requirements. For example:

- „*Ukoliko ste zainteresirani, slobodno nas kontaktirajte.*”  
Translation: “If you are interested, feel free to contact us.”

In business letters and emails, formal salutations are used to address recipients, often including titles and last names. For example:

- „*Poštovana gospođo Kovač.*”  
Translation: “Dear Mrs. Kovač.”

The precise structures used may change based on the communication context and objectives, but the essential objective is to communicate clearly and professionally at all times.

The journalistic-publicist style (*novinarsko-publicistički stil*) is the most complex functional style (Silić 2006: 75). Journalistic content has the task to inform, propagate, popularize and transmit enlightening, educational and entertaining messages and ideas. They keep up-to-date with current events, disseminate various teachings, and try to capture the audience's attention with informative and entertaining content. Such activity in expression requires a neutral and expressive means of language (Silić 2006: 77). Precisely because of the mentioned task, this functional style has to combine elements of formal and informal. It is used by journalists and publicists who write articles for daily newspapers, magazines and other publications, as well as presenters of television and radio shows. The mentioned media are characterized by attention-grabbing headlines, direct quotes, the use of active voice, engaging openings, rhetorical questions, conversational tone and so on. The news that is supposed to be presented to the audience should answer five crucial questions:

- What happened?
- Who was/were the participants?
- Where did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?

**Example:**

*„Ključna utakmica posljednjeg kola švedske lige između Malmöa i Elfsborga, koja je trebala odrediti ovogodišnjeg pobjednika natjecanja, prekinuta je zbog nereda na tribinama nakon završetka prvog poluvremena. U poluvremenu utakmice došlo je do bakljade navijača Malmöa, zbog čega se stvorio veliki dimni oblak. Tada se na razglasu stadiona oglasio službeni spiker i obavijestio navijače da napuste tribine stadiona, upalio se i požarni alarm, ali navijači nisu htjeli napustiti stadion.” (Jutarnji.hr<sup>3</sup>, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023.)*

**Translation:**

“The key match of the Football All-Swedish between Malmö and Elfsborg, which was supposed to determine this year's winner of the competition, was stopped due to disorder in the stands after the end of the first half. In the half-time, Malmö fans lit up torches which created a large smoke cloud. Then the official announcer informed the fans to leave the stands of the stadium, the fire alarm also went off, but the fans did not want to leave the stadium”.

The news answers the key questions and provides the necessary information for the audience.

Moreover, the literary-artistic style (*književnoumjetnički stil*) is a way of expression that serves to create literary art that is not realized or processed as it corresponds to the general norms of standard language. Individuality is the most expressive characteristic of this style, and therefore the freedom of expression, which is manifested in numerous poeticisms, lexical synonyms, obsolete words, dialectics and so on (Silić 2006: 100). Silić states that the proofreading of a literary work (if necessary) must be with the consent and under the control of its author (Silić 2006: 107). It can include figurative language, symbolism, repetition, dialogue, ambiguity, inversion etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Source of the article: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/> (accessed 13th November 2023)

Metaphors and other forms of figurative language are frequently used to create vivid and imaginative descriptions.

For example:

- „*Vrata su vrisnula kad su se otvorila.*”

Translation:

- “The door *screamed* while opening.”

Since a door is an inanimate object, it cannot make human sounds. Therefore, saying that the door “screamed” is a metaphor. In addition to metaphor, symbolism and allegory may be incorporated to convey deeper meaning and provoke thought, while repetition of words, phrases, or motifs can be used for emphasis and rhythm. Furthermore, literary works often rely heavily on dialogue since it gives characters a chance to express who they are and advances the plot. Also, they may deliberately include ambiguity, inviting readers to interpret and engage with the text on multiple levels and use inversion of word order for poetic or rhetorical effect.

Further examples:

- „*Oj, sahran'te suzu taku,  
Možete joj dušu spasti;  
Napijete se suzom onom,  
Jošte ćete ljepše cvasti.  
Zadojite svojim mirom  
Srca, krši i doline,  
I onda će duša ona  
Da se smiri i počine...*” (Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević: *Izabrane pjesme, Oproštaj*: 184)
- „*Sutrašnji dan bijaše za Emmu smrtno turoban. Sve joj se učini obavijeno crnim raspoloženjem koje je nejasno lebdjelo nad vanjštinom svega, a bol joj poniraše u dušu uz tihi vapaj kakvim se zimski vjetar oglašava u napuštenim dvorcima.*” (Gustave Flaubert, *Gospođa Bovary*: 91)

In addition, conversational style (*razgovorni stil*) is a functional language style that is used in everyday communication. The content of the conversational style is everyday life, and its



expression is characterized by unpreparedness, informality, spontaneity, and compared to other functional styles, it additionally expresses a concrete way of thinking (Silić 2006: 109). Non-linguistic means of communication, i.e. gestures and facial expressions, also play a significant role in the conversational style. With all its characteristics, it has the greatest influence on the literary, artistic and administrative-business style, and it is itself most influenced by non-standard (primarily local) speech (Silić 2006: 118). Some of the key features of conversational style are informality, ellipsis, contractions, pragmatic markers, nonverbal cues, cultural variation etc. The mentioned features are included in the following examples.

### **6.1.2. Examples of conversational functional style**

#### **Example 1**

*„Hej, šta ima?” or „Kak’ ti je na poslu.”*

Translation: “Hey, what’s up?” or “What’s it like on your job?”

This example shows how greeting someone has a quite casual tone to it, as well as asking questions. Naturally, contractions are present since they are a crucial element in casual conversation. This way is used both in text and speech. Furthermore, when it comes to asking questions, conversational style allows for more informal questions being asked. It is surely not a way of communicating with someone formally. However, there could be situations where the way of communicating should be formal, but it is not (e.g. the director of a company allows his/her employees to talk to him/her as if they are friends and does not require formal behaviour), situations like this put in doubt the whole system of rules for functional styles. There may not exist strict rules for time and place of usage at all, only a gravitation towards certain rules due to the majority of cases.

#### **Example 2**

*„Daj se smiri, sve je okej.” or „Baš mi je loš dan.”*

Translation: “Come on, relax, everything is ok.” or “I am having a really bad day.”

Conversational style allows the speaker to express his/her emotions about a situation and to give some casual orders to the person they are talking to. Moreover, Croatian language is tremendously welcoming to foreign words, which can be seen solely from the fact that the word “ok” is well established in its everyday vocabulary. There are lots of other words that

speakers of Croatian language borrowed from English language and have normalized using them in everyday communication. Some of the mentioned words are “thanks”, “sorry” and “cool”, which are written as „*tenks*”, „*sori*” and „*kul*” in Croatian, as well as swear words like “shit” („*šit*”) and “fuck” („*fak*”) that are often used in casual interactions. Interestingly enough, particular words like that are sometimes left as they are in the original, rather than being fully translated.

### Example 3

In conversational style, colloquialisms are quite common. Words like: *perilica za rublje*, *stolno računalo*, *pećnica*, and *kalkulator* will be replaced with: *veš mašina*, *kompjuter*, *reana/relna* (depending on where the person is from), and *digitron*, which are the colloquial terms for the listed words. Precisely because of this, according to *Proleksis enciklopedija* (2014), conversational language style is also called *kolokvijalni jezik*, which means “colloquial language” (Proleksis enciklopedija<sup>4</sup>, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023). It is the language we use to communicate in everyday situations - at home, on the street, in the store, etc. Its basis can be the speech of any region or the standard language. The style is usually simple, but it can also be diverse, lively and expressive.

### Overview:

With all this being said, it is safe to say that functional styles are not “black or white”, that is, that they are not necessarily completely formal nor completely informal. Most of the time, the amount of formality depends on individual situations. However, due to its high level of potential informality, conversational style can be beneficial in subtitling. Since conversational language tends to be more simple and natural, content being subtitled in a conversational way could make it easier for the audience to comprehend and relate to the scene. Further, conversational language often goes straight to the point, which gives the subtitles the ability to be briefer, and that is beneficial considering the limited time and space for subtitles. Similarly, the language used in conversations is made for specific participants and situations, and subtitle creators should also always consider the target audience. Lastly, the conversational style captures the realistic ways of communicating in real life, while subtitles attempt to be as realistic, engaging, and relatable as possible. Precisely because of these facts, the research part in the next section was created with the objective to evaluate whether the usage of conversational language in subtitling is perceived as being more authentic, relatable,

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://proleksis.lzmk.hr/4691/>. Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023).

and easier to comprehend than standard language. Also, in order to analyze whether the viewers feel more engaged with the subtitled content or they simply do not have preferences in respect of the formality of language. In other words, the aim of the research is to examine and compare perceived authenticity, comprehension, engagement, emotional impact and cultural relevance by seeing how viewers react to watching the same content subtitled in two different ways: conversational and standard.

## **7. Methodology**

The aim of this research was to investigate the viewers' reactions to interlingual subtitles when it comes to the usage of standard and informal (conversational) language. As mentioned earlier, translators often use formal or standard language when subtitled content, and the main question to be examined was – is that what the audience wants? Bearing in mind that the viewers are supposed to “not notice” that the subtitles are present and should not have to stop and think about what exactly is going on in the dialogue, the suggestion is for the subtitles to be adjusted to the conversational language that viewers use in real life. The following questions were related to the way of understanding the emotions, humor and other elements influencing the actual message of certain dialogues – should formal language be chosen over slang, cursing, jargon and other non-formal elements only because it is meant to be displayed on screen? More often than not, this raises the possibility that the actual joke or intensity of emotion will be “lost in translation” and therefore will not fully transmit the writer's message.

### **7.1. Research design**

Having in mind that specific subtitling rules are present at all times and can limit subtitlers while they do their job, but firmly focusing on the language, the same clip was subtitled in two different ways – one containing elements of standard language and avoiding informality in dialogues, while the other one was translated in the most casual way possible, following the way of communicating in real life at the moment. The subtitled scene was taken from the series *Breaking Bad* (Season 2, Episode 5) and it was translated from the English language into Croatian. In both cases, the situation happening in the clip is possible to understand, but the viewers were asked certain questions regarding their preferences. A Google Form was created to gather information. Questions were carefully designed to capture relevant data on participants' experiences, preferences, and opinions. The created questionnaire was shared with the audience through email and social media. In an attempt to gather non-biased results,

the questioned audience included participants of different age groups and different study/work fields. A total of twenty-eight (28) people watched the video twice. One time with subtitles written in standard language, and one time with subtitles written in conversational language. After watching both videos, they answered questions from a questionnaire designed specifically to examine the audience's emotions towards the two different ways of subtitling. There were seven close-ended questions and one multiple-choice question (see Section 7.2). As participants completed the survey, their responses were automatically collected and stored in a Google Sheets document linked to the Google Form. The results are shown in Section 7.2. below. The aim of this research was to contribute valuable insights to the field of media studies, subtitling practices, and audience reception, ultimately helping in the further development of subtitling strategies that resonate effectively with modern viewers.

### **7.1.1. Transcript of the original dialogue**

The following transcript is from the series *Breaking Bad* (2008), Season 2, episode 5 Episode title: *Breakage*.

Jesse: Look, the thing is I...

00:01

Jane: Unbelievable.

00:08

Jesse: I'm currently in-between situations.

00:10

Jane: And I'm currently not renting.

00:12

Jesse: I got the money and I'm totally good for it for, like, ever. Come on, yo, can you please, please just help a brother out?

00:13

Jane: Yo, my dad's not really a "make exceptions" kind of guy. Trust me.

00:21

Jesse: Your dad?

00:25

Jane: Owns the place. I manage it. Pen on paper, that's what I need. Or go run your game somewhere else.

00:26

Jesse: Dude, I got nowhere else to go. This is it. And I got no game, all right? I just need a chance. Look, my folks, they kicked me out. I'm a disappointment, apparently. Didn't meet their expectations, again. So, you know, now I'm persona non gratis or whatever. But you know what? I'm a good person and I work hard. I will pay you every month and I will pay you on time. I will not mess this up, okay? I swear.

00:34

Jane: Rent just went up. A hundred more a month. That's the cash price.

01:16

Jesse: You rock. You won't regret this.

01:21

Jane: And, in addition to the first and last, I want two more months. DBAA fee, nonrefundable.

01:27

Jesse: Of course. No problem. DBAA. Obviously. What's DBAA?

01:33

Jane: "Don't be an assh\*le."

01:43

Jesse: Gotcha.

01:45

Jane: I live next door.

01:46

Jesse: Really?

01:47

Jane: And don't think for one second you have squatters' rights, because you don't. If you blow this, I want you gone. I know guys that'll have your skinny ass out back by the dumpster faster than you can blink.

01:49

### **7.1.2. Transcript of standard translation**

00:00:01,400 --> 00:00:03,400

*Gle...*

00:00:05,024 --> 00:00:07,524

*Radi se o tome da...*

00:00:08,048 --> 00:00:10,048

*Nevjerojatno.*

00:00:10,072 --> 00:00:13,172

*U nezgodnoj sam situaciji trenutno...*

*-U tom slučaju ne iznajmljujem trenutno.*

00:00:13,196 --> 00:00:17,096

*Gle, imam novaca i imati*

*ću uvijek, sigurno.*

00:00:17,920 --> 00:00:20,420

*Molim te, možeš li mi*

*pomoći u nevolji?*

00:00:21,044 --> 00:00:24,544

*Moj tata obično ne pravi iznimke,*

*vjeruj mi.*

00:00:25,068 --> 00:00:26,568

*Tvoj tata?*

00:00:26,592 --> 00:00:28,592

*On je vlasnik stana,*

*ja upravljam njime.*

00:00:29,516 --> 00:00:33,516

*Pisani dokaz mi je potreban,*

*u suprotnome moraš pronaći nešto drugo.*

00:00:34,040 --> 00:00:36,040

*Nemam drugog izbora,*

*samo ovo.*

00:00:36,064 --> 00:00:38,064

*Ne lažem ti, dobro?*

00:00:39,088 --> 00:00:41,088

*Samo mi je potrebna prilika.*

00:00:44,712 --> 00:00:48,212

*Gle, moji su me roditelji izbacili.*

00:00:48,236 --> 00:00:52,736

*Navodno sam razočarenje,*

*nisam ispunio njihova očekivanja.*

00:00:52,960 --> 00:00:57,460

*Opet. Tako da sam "nezahvalnik"*

*ili nešto slično.*

00:00:57,484 --> 00:01:01,484

*No znaš li što? Dobra sam osoba*

*i naporno radim.*

00:01:01,508 --> 00:01:04,508

*Plaćat ću ti svaki mjesec*

*na vrijeme.*

00:01:04,532 --> 00:01:06,532

*Neću ovo zabrljati, dobro?*

*Kunem se.*

00:01:16,056 --> 00:01:18,056

*Stanarina je upravo porasla.*

00:01:18,080 --> 00:01:21,580

*Mjesečno sto dolara više.*

*To je cijena za gotovinu.*

00:01:21,604 --> 00:01:24,604

*Da. Može.*

*U redu.*

00:01:24,628 --> 00:01:27,628

*Super si. Hvala.*

*Nećeš ovo požaliti.*

00:01:27,652 --> 00:01:30,952

*Uz prvi i zadnji, želim još*

*dva mjeseca unaprijed plaćena.*

00:01:30,976 --> 00:01:32,976

*NBK naknada, bez povrata.*

00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:36,500



*Da, naravno. Nema problema.*

*NBK. Logično. Da.*

00:01:39,924 --> 00:01:43,424

*Dobro, što je NBK?*

00:01:43,448 --> 00:01:45,448

*Nemoj Biti Kreten.*

00:01:45,472 --> 00:01:46,672

*Razumijem.*

00:01:46,696 --> 00:01:48,696

*Živim u stanu pored.*

*- Zbilja?*

00:01:49,020 --> 00:01:52,520

*Nemoj ni na trenutak pomisliti*

*da je stan tvoj, jer nije tako.*

00:01:52,544 --> 00:01:54,544

*Ako uprskáš ovo,*

*želim da nestaneš.*

00:01:54,568 --> 00:01:58,068

*Poznajem ljude koji te mogu*

*izbaciti na ulicu dok si rekao keks.*

### 7.1.3. Transcript of conversational translation

00:00:01,400 --> 00:00:03,400

*Vidi ovaj...*

00:00:05,024 --> 00:00:07,524

*Stvar je u tome da...*

00:00:08,048 --> 00:00:10,048

*Nevjerojatno.*

00:00:10,072 --> 00:00:13,172

*Nisam baš u nekoj situaciji sad...*

*-Onda ne iznajmljujem sad.*

00:00:13,196 --> 00:00:17,096

*Slušaj, imam novaca i imati*

*ću doslovno uvijek.*

00:00:17,920 --> 00:00:20,420

*De pliz pomoz bratu u nevolji.*

00:00:21,044 --> 00:00:24,544

*Vidi, moj tata inače*

*ne pravi iznimke.*

00:00:25,068 --> 00:00:26,568

*Tvoj tata?*

00:00:26,592 --> 00:00:28,592

*Stan je njegov,*

*ja ga iznajmljujem.*

00:00:29,516 --> 00:00:33,516

*Treba mi sve crno na bijelo*

*ili se snađi negdje drugdje s tom pričom.*

00:00:34,040 --> 00:00:36,040

*Brate, nemam kud ić'.*

*To je to.*

00:00:36,064 --> 00:00:38,064

*Ne muljam te, ok?*

00:00:39,088 --> 00:00:41,088

*Trebam samo šansu.*

00:00:44,712 --> 00:00:48,212

*Vidi, starci su me izbacili.*

00:00:48,236 --> 00:00:52,736

*Navodno sam razočarenje,*

*nisam ispunio njihova očekivanja.*

00:00:52,960 --> 00:00:57,460

*Opet. Tak da sam sad*

*"nezahvalnik", kužiš. Ili šta već.*

00:00:57,484 --> 00:01:01,484

*Al' znaš šta? Dobra sam osoba*

*i naporno radim.*

00:01:01,508 --> 00:01:04,508

*Plaćat ću ti redovno i to*

*na vrijeme.*

00:01:04,532 --> 00:01:06,532

*Neću ovo zeznuti, ok?*

*Obećajem.*

00:01:16,056 --> 00:01:18,056

*Stanarina je upravo poskupila.*

00:01:18,080 --> 00:01:21,580

*Cijena za keš je*

*sto dolara više mjesečno.*

00:01:21,604 --> 00:01:24,604

*To! Može.*

*Dobro.*

00:01:24,628 --> 00:01:27,628

*Najjača si. Hvala ti.*

*Nećeš požaliti.*

00:01:27,652 --> 00:01:30,952

*Želim da osim predujma*

*platiš i dodatna dva mjeseca.*

00:01:30,976 --> 00:01:32,976

*NBŠ naknada, bez povrata.*

00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:36,500

*Naravno, nemaš beda.*

*NBŠ. Logično. Da.*

00:01:39,924 --> 00:01:43,424

*Ok, šta je NBŠ?*

00:01:43,448 --> 00:01:45,448

*Nemoj Biti Šupak.*

00:01:45,472 --> 00:01:46,672

*Kužim.*

00:01:46,696 --> 00:01:48,696

*Živim ulaz pored.*

*- Ma da?*

00:01:49,020 --> 00:01:52,520

*Nemoj sad mislit' da je stan tvoj jer nije.*

00:01:52,544 --> 00:01:54,544

*Ako zajebeš, letiš van.*

00:01:54,568 --> 00:01:58,068

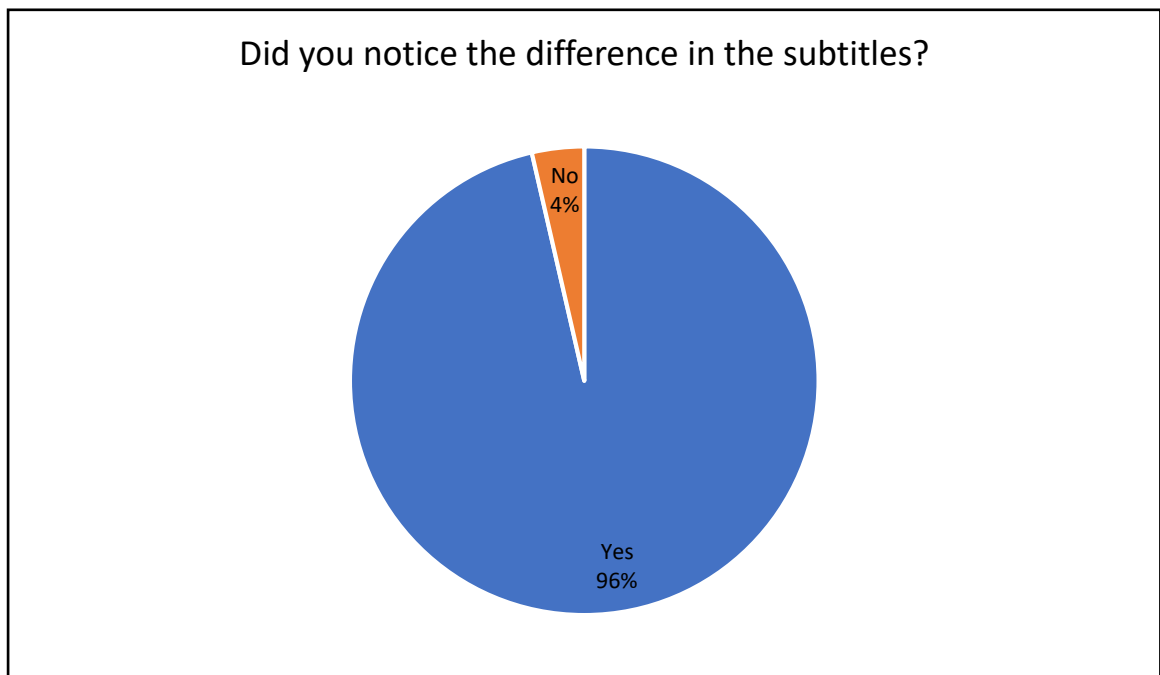
*Znam dečke koji mogu izbaciti tvoje*

*mršavo dupe nazad na ulicu u tren oka.*

## 7.2. Research questions

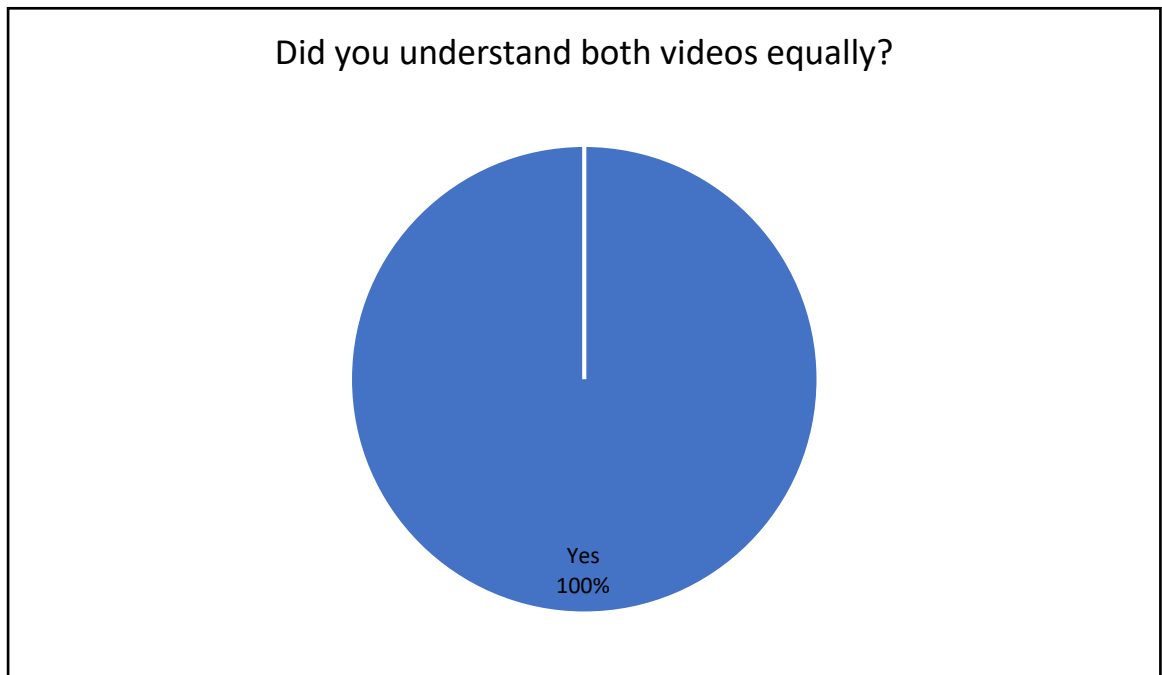
The questions can be accessed via the following link: <https://forms.gle/8kjdxAt5EY2wL6rh8>

1)

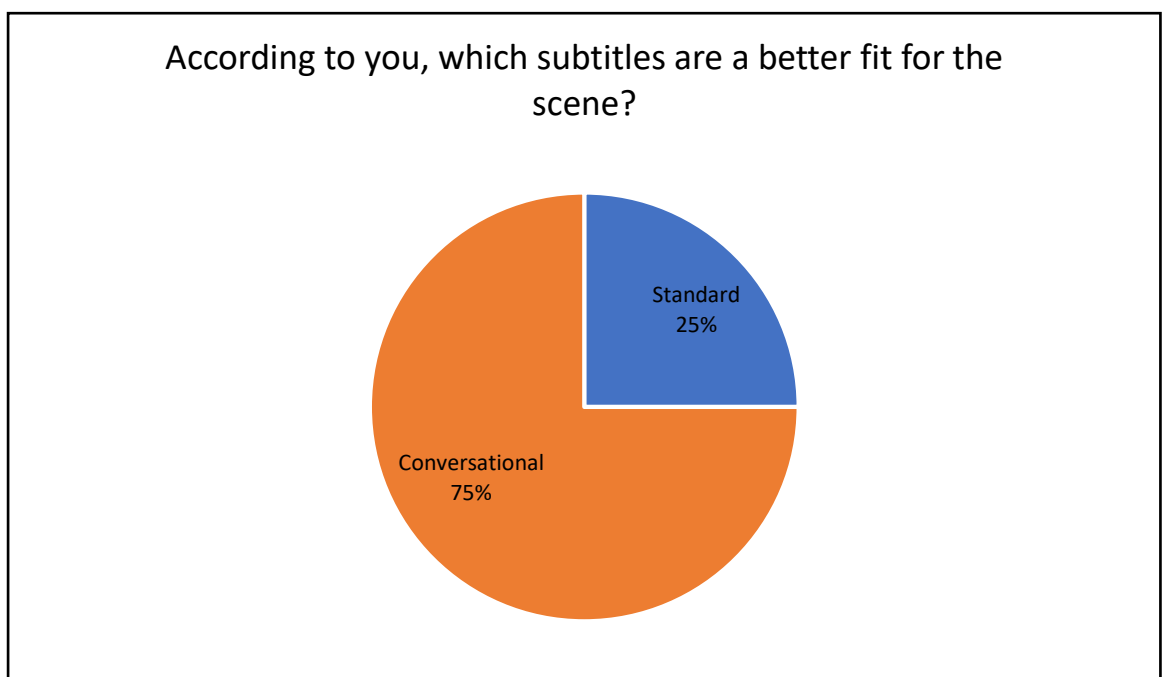


As expected, the majority of the participants noticed there is a difference in the two subtitles. The acknowledgment of the existence of the distinction makes this questionnaire relevant and thus provides the ability for the theory to be further researched. After establishing that there are two different uses of language included in the subtitling process, the participants continued to answer questions based on what they saw, wanted to see, expected, preferred, suggested, and they also had the possibility to answer an open ended question in which they could explain in more detail why they preferred one translation over the other.

2)



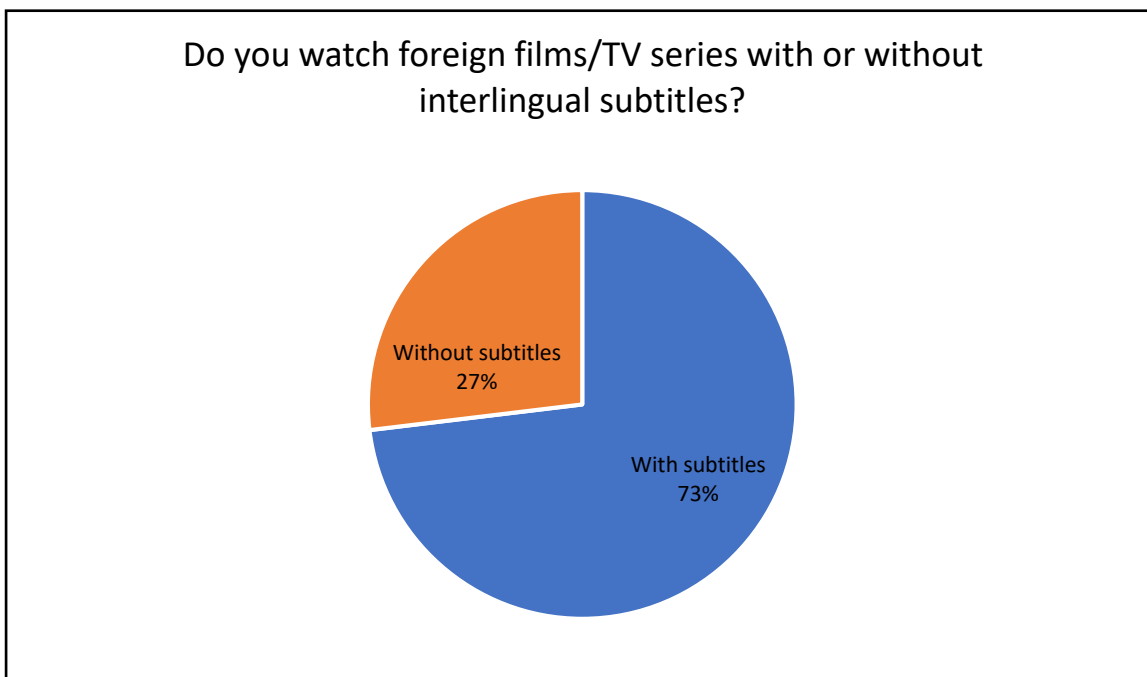
3)



Although this outcome was expected and is the one that provides the most crucial answer to the research questions, the percentages are particularly thought-provoking considering the diversity of the participants. Perhaps the results would be different if

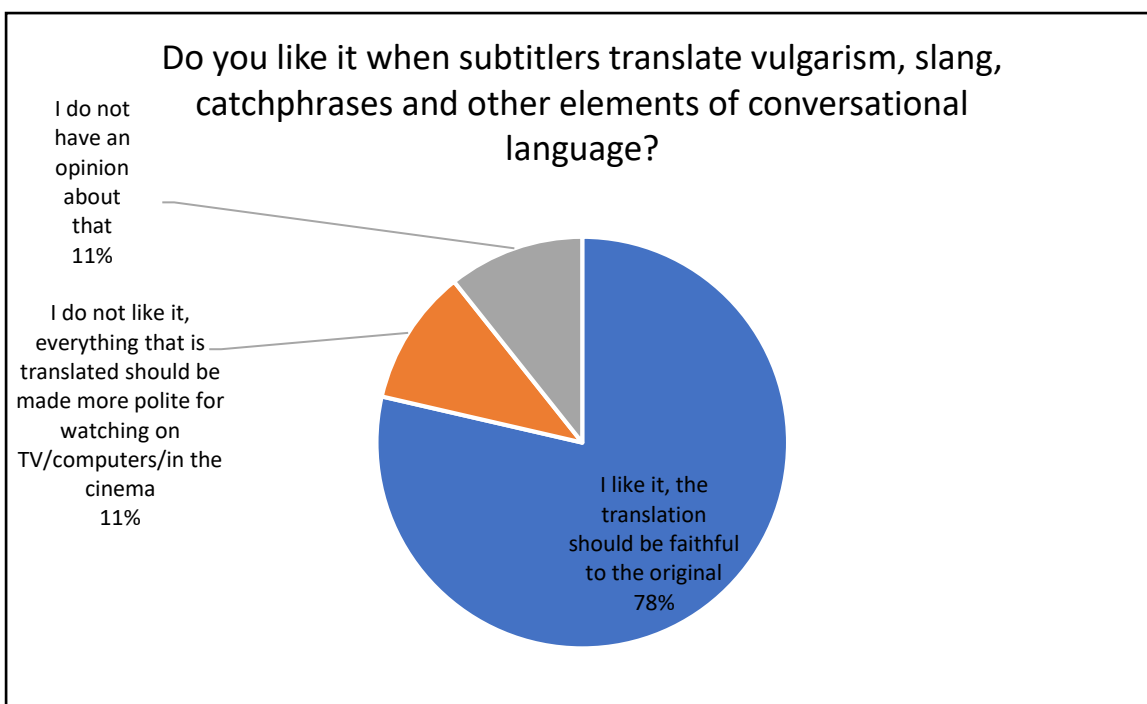
the questionnaire was only in hands of exclusively young adults or exclusively older adults.

4)



Since a total of seventy-five (75) percent of the participants answered how they often watch content with interlingual subtitles, the total results of the questionnaire, that is, the research itself, is automatically more accurate.

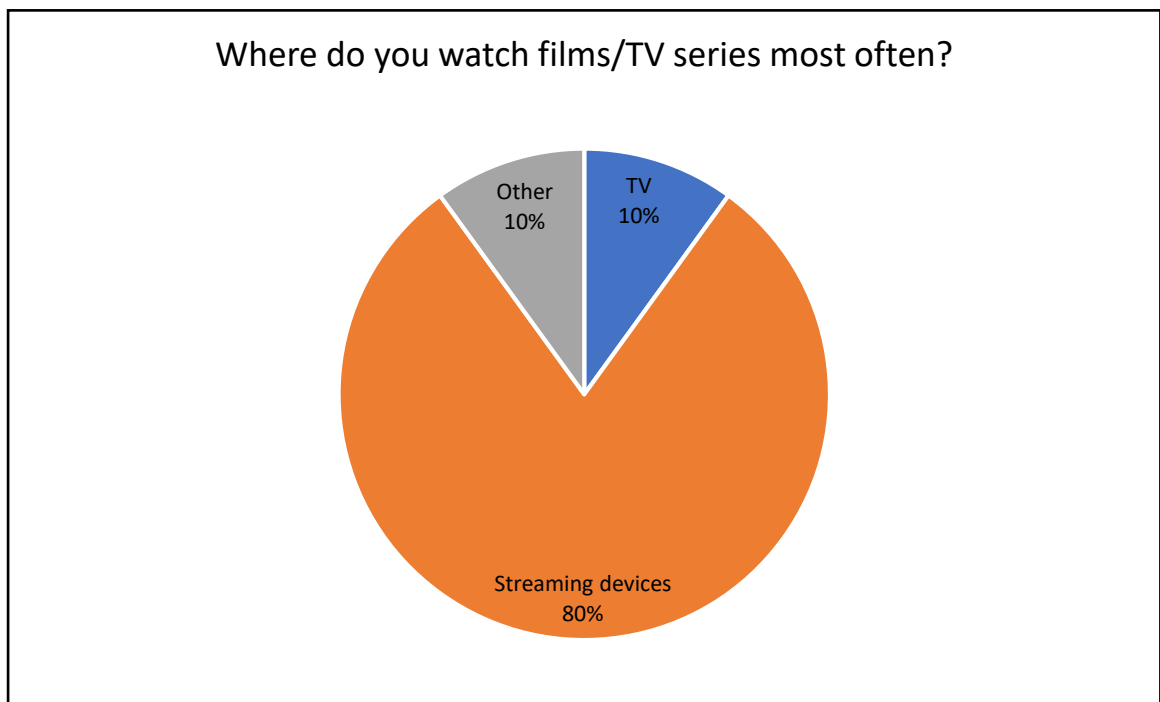
5)



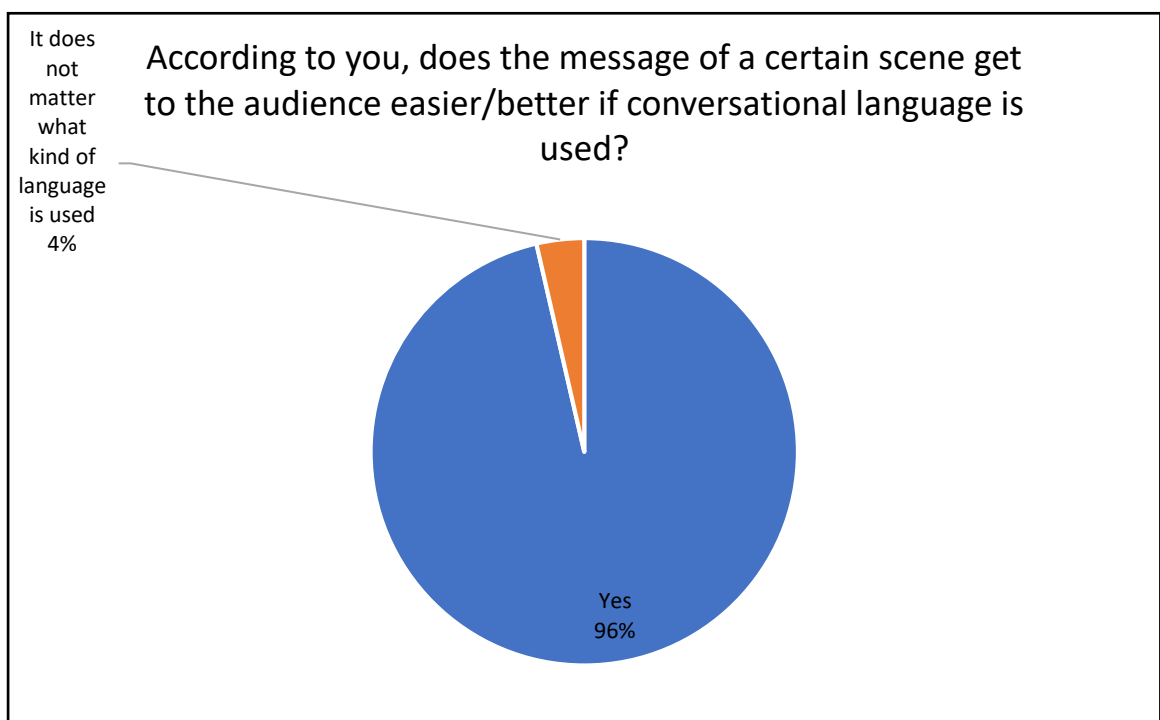


Additionally, confirming how conversational language is preferred among the audience is the fact that seventy-eight (78) percent of them expressed how they agree on the content needing to be faithful to the original, while the rest of them disagree or do not have any preferences.

6)



7)



## 8) Some answers to the open-ended question

Obrazložite svoj odgovor.

20 odgovora

Scena bolje dođe do izražaja

Bolje odgovara originalu

Više mi se sviđa razgovorni jer smatram da ga je ponekas puno lakše za razumiti.

najprirodnije

to mi je opušteniji tip razgovora

Ne moramo se pretvarati da takve riječi ne postoje, istina da bi ih trebali manje koristiti, ali to je sloboda izražavanja, te time scene izgledaju prirodnije i opuštenije znajući da ne postoje ograničenja u razgovoru, pa tako ni u glumi.

Šta kaže to prevedi, smiješno ako nije tako..

Zato što bolje mogu shvatiti neku situaciju ili poruku

Obrazložite svoj odgovor.

20 odgovora

Preferiram pristojno izražavanje.

Razgovorni klip je realniji.

Smatram da ako likovi pričaju razgovornim jezikom isti se treba prenijeti i u titlovima kako bi gledatelji dobili potpuno iskustvo, ali ne treba pretjerivati s izrazima.

Iako je razgovorni stil prikladan za situaciju, ne mogu se oduprijeti navici da titlove gledam u standardnom jeziku pa mi se oni i dalje više sviđaju.

Razgovorni stil bolje odražava društveni sloj i pozadinu likova u odnosu na standardni.

Standardni prijevod daje dojam kvalitetnijeg i profesionalno odrađenog rada. Razgovorni daju dojam niskobudžetnog rada.

Razgovorni više odgovara budući da oboje pričaju prepušteno, s dosta psovki i slengova, kao npr. "Nemoj biti šupak" što je ona doslovno i rekla u toj sceni.

In the answers to the open-ended question, the participants explained why they prefer a particular way of translating over the other. These answers helped analyze more deeply the

feelings of the viewers towards the subject. The reasons why some of them prefer standard subtitles were a general lean towards politeness, watching content subtitled in a standard way out of habit, and individuals even consider it to give an impression of high quality and more professional work, while content being translated in a conversational way may seem like a low budget production. On the other hand, some given reasons for preferring conversational style of language in translated content were naturalness, staying faithful to the original, authenticity, entirely transmitting the message, better understanding and so on.

It appears that most of the participants were able to understand both standard and conversational subtitles. However, twenty-one, that is, 75 percent of the participants preferred the latter. Conversational subtitles likely provided a more natural and faithful representation of the spoken language since they closely matched the way the original content was presented. This preference suggests that the participants value an authentic and relatable viewing experience when it comes to subtitles. Moreover, a number of them stated that translating vulgarisms, slang, and other conversational elements in subtitles is important, rather than avoiding them, in order to preserve the whole impression of a certain scene as well as the personalities of the characters. Eighteen participants of the survey indicated that they frequently watch films and TV series with interlingual subtitles, while the rest of them do not watch content with subtitles or they watch it with subtitles that are written in the same language as the original content. Furthermore, a sizable portion of them stated that their favourite medium for watching content with subtitles was streaming devices. This shows a widespread practice of using subtitles to improve the viewing experience, perhaps for reasons like boosting language proficiency, accent understanding, or conversation clarity. The preference for streaming devices also indicates a shift towards digital platforms for consuming entertainment. Lastly, twenty-six out of twenty-eight participants expressed how they consider conversational style to be better at transmitting the message of the scene to the viewers, while the rest of them disagree or have no opinion regarding the topic.

The presented results imply that subtitling carries not only the responsibility of faithfully translating, spotting and adapting, but also having in mind the audience and their expectations, since audience groups differ in expectations according to age, culture, current social trends, history, religion and so much more. Possibilities of further research on this topic are endless if one decides to focus on any particular aspect. For instance, exploring how some cultures are more welcoming than others to the idea of conversational language, or maybe even explicit language, being part of the subtitling process. The same can be applied

to research that is based on the age of the questioned audience, ethnicity, gender or other variables.

## **8. Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to explore the reception of interlingual subtitles, that is, to examine how viewers would react to a certain content being translated in two completely different ways and therefore to get some insight on what is expected, liked, disliked, possible or maybe even not important from the audience's point of view. After reviewing some theoretical background on translating in general, and establishing the connection between technology development and translating techniques, first it was necessary to look further into audiovisual translation in order to learn how subtitling, which belongs to the AVT family, even came to exist and how many people tried to define and categorize it over the years. There are lots of ways to classify subtitling, as well as numerous components that stand behind each and every subtitled content. Secondly, the task carriers in subtitling and the challenges, rules, expectations, and other requirements to be met while working in this particular field were mentioned, as well as specific guidelines certain companies have prepared for subtitlers. The word "subtitler" gives a quite clear idea on what it means as a profession, but this thesis points out that it is not as simple as it sounds. It is important to repeat that a subtitler not only turns speech into written text, but also does the job of a translator, spotter, adaptor, lector, and there might even be more to it if one makes an effort to see it from different perspectives. Furtherly, since the main topic of the research was translation reception, it was also essential to acquire knowledge of different ways of communication, more precisely, about formal and informal language and their usage in everyday situations. By gaining better understanding of functional styles and focusing on conversational functional style, the idea of comparing it with standard language surfaced and led to the creation of an experiment that would show how viewers would react to a certain content being interlingually subtitled in two different ways. In other words, a questionnaire was created to get some concrete answers on what the audience likes to see in subtitling. One short video was translated from the English language into Croatian, once in a standard way, and once in a conversational way. The participants watched both subtitled videos and, according to what they saw and preferred, they answered questions that were carefully put together in order to collect accurate results. Results of the survey have shown that the majority, that is, seventy-five percent (75) of the participants, consider conversational style to be a more adequate fit for the scene. Since the participants were of different age groups,

professions and areas, it is safe to say that the results could have gone in any other direction. Another interesting fact is that the minority that voted standard language to be a better fit for the scene, consists of participants who happen to be older adults, while the other questioned group consists of young adults. This fact shows that different generations expect different approaches when it comes to subtitling and that it would be interesting to explore whether this example was only a coincidence or the results would be similar if there were more participants with an equal number of younger and older adults. In conclusion, this research examined only one of the numerous possibilities when it comes to using formal and informal language in subtitling. It proved that subtitling goes beyond being a simple means of adaptation and that it deals with innumerable challenges along the way. Moreover, it proved that the audience does observe details and has preferences concerning language usage in subtitles, as well as that being familiar with the target audience can make a vast impact on the perception and success of the final product (in this case, translated content).

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