



The International Journal for
Translation & Interpreting
Research
trans-int.org

The taboo revolution on streaming platforms in Slovakia: *Euphoria* keeps changing the game

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DOI: 10.12807/ti.117202.2025.a06

Abstract: The explicit use of taboo language in the Slovak dubbing of audiovisual products available on streaming platforms has recently started to not only gain the attention of Slovak viewers, but also to spark interest among translation scholars. This paper is aimed at identifying the main strategies used in transferring taboo language in 8 episodes of Season 2 of *Euphoria* into the Slovak dubbed version in order to assess taboo language transfer. The analysis of taboo language is based on Popovič's (1983) model of shifts at the expressive level of the work, which has been adapted for the transfer of taboo language, i.e. strategies of adequate transfer, compensation, amplification, attenuation, omission, and addition. In this paper, taboo language is understood primarily in line with Jay's (2009) definition of taboos, Ávila-Cabrera's (2013) taxonomy and Alsharhan's (2020) concept map of taboo language. The secondary goal of the paper is to investigate the consistency of transfer strategies applied in *Euphoria*, Season 2, with those used in Season 1 which we researched previously (Ukušová & Koscelníková, forthcoming). The results of the analysis are further contextualised by adding information about the reception of *Euphoria* by Slovak viewers and an interview with the Slovak producer and director of the series from Sunrise Studio, who supervised the whole process of creating the dubbed audiovisual product. This will ensure that the analysis will not be suspended in a 'vacuum' by also considering external factors which may have shaped the overall translation conception and the use of specific translation strategies.

Keywords: Streaming platforms, audiovisual products, dubbing, taboo language, translation strategies

1. Streaming platforms and their place in the Slovak audiovisual industry

As argued by Desjardins (2024), the last decade of the twentieth century saw the rise of video-on-demand (VOD) services which marked a turning point in the audiovisual industry, especially in terms of how televised content was being consumed. This consequently foreshadowed the advent of subscription-based streaming. Online streaming platforms, sometimes also referred to as over-the-top (OTT) services, can be understood as any digital platforms which allow viewers to access their favourite programmes and films and are streamed via the

internet (Wilbert, 2024), with the most popular ones being Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, SkyShowtime, Amazon Prime Video, Max¹ and others.

Reflecting on the future path that the audiovisual industry may take, Nikolic and Bywood (2021, p. 63) predicted that streaming and video-on-demand (SVOD) services “will not destroy television or cinema, though the 2020 pandemic may force some radical changes in this area”. They attribute the rise of SVOD services primarily to their easy-access nature arguing that:

Viewers no longer need to wait for the specific broadcast time of their favourite TV series. They can simply download it, or stream it should network connection be available, and watch it on their smartphone, tablet, or portable computer whenever and wherever they wish. (Nikolic and Bywood, 2021, p. 51).

Moreover, the rise in popularity of streaming platforms as well as the increase of audiovisual serialised productions have led to a growing demand for content localization across the world (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda, 2019).

In terms of the Slovak audiovisual landscape, and more specifically streaming platforms represented on the Slovak audiovisual market, there are currently 7 global streaming platforms available to the Slovak audience and several local ones², with the provision of Slovak dubbing or subtitles varying from one platform to the other. Netflix, which launched its official streaming for Slovak viewers in 2016, has the largest library of all streaming services available in Slovakia, offering a wealth of different genres and oriented towards virtually all groups of viewers. Currently, Disney+ offers approximately 1,200 films and 500 series (data to November 2023) to Slovak subscribers, making it the second largest library among the global platforms operating in Slovakia. Max is the successor of HBO Go, which was launched in Slovakia in 2012. It is worth noting that the Max streaming service provides many of its audiovisual products with Slovak dubbing. The other global streaming services available in Slovakia include SkyShowtime, AppleTV+, Amazon Prime Video, and Canal+. The local services include Voyo, the VOD service of the Slovak TV channel Markíza, and JojPlay, the VOD service of the Slovak TV channel Joj.

Table 1: Streaming platforms currently available in Slovakia

| Name of streaming platform | Launch date |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Netflix | January 6, 2016 |
| Max | March 8, 2022 |
| Disney+ | June 14, 2022 |
| SkyShowtime | February 14, 2023 |
| Apple TV+ | November 1, 2019 |
| Amazon Prime Video | December 14, 2016 |
| Canal+ | April 28, 2023 |
| Voyo | August 11, 2011 |
| JojPlay | April 1, 2022 |

Perez et al. (2021) took a closer look at the effects that streaming platforms launched in Slovakia have had on the Slovak audiovisual industry. The authors point out that Netflix’s presence in Slovakia has led to some interesting developments in the Slovak audiovisual industry. One of the consequences has been the provision of Slovak subtitles, which, in the case of products localised

¹ The *HBO Max* platform became *Max* in Slovakia in spring 2024.

² <https://fontech.startitup.sk/velke-porovnanie-streamovacich-sluzieb-2023>

into Slovak, dominates over Slovak dubbing on Netflix, even though Slovakia can still be considered a country where dubbing is the dominant mode of language transfer. The authors argue that this can be explained by the cost, both financially and timewise, of producing Slovak dubbed versions, as well as the streamlining localisation processes of the company which currently operates almost all over the world. This has subsequently had implications for local contexts which seek to adopt these processes (Perez et al., 2021, p. 54). This development is in line with the observation put forward by Nikolic and Bywood (2021, p. 52) who claim that in countries where dubbing was the dominant mode of language transfer, SVODs now also offer subtitles, which allows viewers to choose how they want to watch translated audiovisual content. In the case of other platforms, such as Max or Disney+, both dubbing and subtitles are provided.

The argument that Slovakia can still be considered a dubbing country derives from the fact that dubbing remains the predominant mode of language transfer in Slovak television where foreign audiovisual products are concerned. Moreover, long-established private television companies, such as Markíza (offering the VOD service Voyo) and Tv Joj (with the VOD service JojPlay), have their subchannels aimed at specific viewers, increasing the demand for dubbed audiovisual products. Markíza currently offers three more channels – Doma, broadcasting films, series and programmes focused on love, romance, and relationships; Dajto, focused on action-packed entertainment; and Markíza Krimi, focused on mystery, detective and crime content.³ Markíza plans to provide more subchannels in the future. Tv Joj currently provides several subchannels: with Plus providing more films and series than the bigger main channel, and Wau being explicitly aimed at a female audience, broadcasting on topics such as lifestyle. Tv Joj has further subchannels, but we mention here only those providing dubbed audiovisual products in Slovak. Among the state-funded television companies, Slovak television and radio (STVR) represents an organisation providing original (Slovak) and dubbed audiovisual products. The organisation currently provides four TV channels (:1, :2, :ŠPORT and :24),⁴ with dubbed audiovisual products being mostly broadcast on channels :1 or :2.

2. Streaming platforms vs Slovak television: The taboo revolution

The presence of taboo language in dubbed audiovisual content broadcast on television is regulated by The Council for Media Services (formerly The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission). Its mission is, among other things, to “perform state regulation of broadcast, retransmission, provision of audiovisual media services on demand and provision of platforms for shared content”.⁵

Regulating the use of taboo language in audiovisual products is a part of a larger framework for the protection of minors from the undesirable effects of

³ <https://www.markiza.sk/doma>, <https://www.markiza.sk/dajto>, <https://www.markiza.sk/krimi>.

⁴ <https://www.rtv.slovakia.sk/>.

⁵ <https://rpms.sk/postavenie-poslanie-rady-pre-medialne-sluzby>, translated by the authors.

certain audiovisual products. In Slovakia, this is ensured by several pieces of legislation⁶.

The Act 308/2000 Coll. on Broadcasting and Retransmission and the Amendment of Act no. 195/2000 Coll. on Telecommunications (Section 20 – Protection of Minors, Point 4) states that the broadcaster of a programme service is obliged to take into account the age bracket suitability of the programmes and other components of the programme service for minors, and to ensure their airtime is in accordance with conditions laid down in a specific regulation. Furthermore, the Decree 589/2007 Coll. (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2007) laying down details of a single labelling system for audiovisual works, sound recordings of artistic performances, multimedia works, programmes and other components of the programme service and the way in which these are applied, defines four types of audiovisual works: audiovisual works not suitable for minors up to 7 years of age, 12 years of age, and 15 years of age, and audiovisual works not suitable up to 18 years of age. Based on their definition, not being suitable for certain age brackets is determined by several factors, such as violence, sexual scenes, nudity, racism, discrimination, etc. In the case of the last three types of audiovisual works, vulgarisms are also included among these factors, while the permitted level of their intensity increases with each category of audiovisual works.

Based on the labelling provided by this decree, audiovisual works had to be marked with an appropriate symbol according to the viewer's age, which was valid until July 2024 (see Figure 1).

Annex
to the Regulation of MoC no. 589/2007 Coll.











| Graphic symbol number | Classification according to the uniform rating system | Graphic symbol of the uniform rating system | Dimensions |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| 1. | unsuitable for minors up to 7 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 2. | unsuitable for minors up to 12 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 3. | unsuitable for minors up to 15 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 4. | unsuitable and banned for minors up to 18 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 5. | suitable for minors up to 12 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 6. | suitable for minors of all ages |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 7. | educational suitable for minors up to 7 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 8. | educational suitable for minors above 7 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 9. | educational suitable for minors above 12 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |
| 10. | educational suitable for minors above 15 years of age |  | television channel: 41 x 41 pixels package, disc: 1 cm x 1 cm |








Figure 1: Single labelling system for content broadcast in Slovak television (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (2007, translated by the authors).

⁶ Instead of the term ‘taboo language’, which we use as an umbrella term in this paper, Slovak legislation employs the terms ‘vulgarisms’, ‘vulgar expression’, ‘vulgar language’, or ‘obscene expression’.

Besides the aforementioned Act and Decree, Act no. 264/2022 on media services as amended (in force from 1st March 2024 to 27 June 2025), in particular Section 62, also provides for the protection of minors, specifically if programmes which “may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors are made available only in such a way that minors cannot normally hear or see such programmes or other components of a programme service or an on-demand audiovisual media service,” (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2022) meaning that the content shall be labelled accordingly based on its suitability for minors.

As of 1st July 2024, television companies have had to add more descriptors in order for parents to be aware of the possibility of violence (N), nudity (H), sex (X), discrimination (D), fear (S), addiction (Z), and vulgarisms (V). On 9th July 2023, the Ministry of Culture issued a new Decree no. 328 repealing Decree no. 589/2007, which came into force in 2024. The new pictograms⁷ are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: New pictograms in Slovak television in force as of 1st July 2024 (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (2023), translated by the authors).

| Uniform rating system: Pictograms | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---|---|
| | Pictogram no. | Classification according to the uniform rating system | Pictogram of the uniform rating system |
| Content descriptor | 1. | violence |  |
| | 2. | discrimination |  |
| | 3. | fear |  |
| | 4. | addiction |  |
| | 5. | sex |  |
| | 6. | swear words |  |
| | 7. | nudity |  |

However, non-Slovak streaming platforms, such as Netflix, Max, Amazon Prime Video and others do not have to conform to these regulations. Moreover, Slovak restrictions regarding the use of taboo language do not apply to Slovak dubbing provided for streaming platforms. For this reason, series like *Euphoria*

⁷ The pictograms shall also apply to the Slovak VODs, i.e. Voyo and JojPlay as well.

(Sam Levinson, 2022), *The Last of Us* (Craig Mazin and Neil Druckmann, 2023) or *The Regime* (Will Tracy, 2024), all available on streaming platforms, contain taboo language dubbed into Slovak that would not have appeared had they been broadcast in Slovak television during prime time. Thus, for Slovak television, minors are the decisive factor for potential censorship of taboo language in popular films and series broadcast between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. Television stations are obliged to broadcast programmes that are not suitable for minors after 10 p.m. Therefore, when popular films are broadcast during primetime (from 8.30 p.m. to 11 p.m.), taboo language in dubbing, specifically swear words like ‘fuck’, ‘bitch’, ‘cunt’, ‘bullshit’ and their variations are attenuated. However, since streaming platforms do not conform to any concept of primetime, a viewer can watch (stream) their content as they wish at any time.⁸ In other words, no time restrictions may be applied, regardless of the rating based on the Motion Picture Association regulations, in contrast to the aforementioned Slovak regulations, and explicit language does not need to be attenuated or removed at all.

When it comes to streaming platforms, information on the portrayal of potentially harmful content varies from platform to platform. Max, for example, has recently adopted a new system of labelling according to the Kijkwijzer⁹ system, which changed the verbal description of potentially harmful content, and also introduced the use of pictograms. The pictograms showing the portrayal of violence, fear-inducing content, sex, discrimination, smoking, alcohol and drugs, and foul language (Table 3) and age suitability (Figure 2) appears several times: in the top left corner of the episode or film description screen; when one first starts watching an episode or a film; after commercial breaks; and when resuming watching an episode or a film, as well as in the search results (below an episode or a film).










Figure 2: Age suitability pictograms used on the streaming platform Max

⁸ Yet, if the platforms offer dubbing originally produced for television, it might still contain attenuated content.

⁹ A cross-media information system for parents, caretakers and children (<https://nicam.nl/en/kijkwijzer>).

Table 3: Pictograms depicting potentially harmful content used on the streaming platform Max¹⁰

| Pictogram no. | Content descriptor | Pictogram |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1. | violence |  |
| 2. | fear |  |
| 3. | sex |  |
| 4. | discrimination |  |
| 5. | smoking, alcohol and drugs |  |
| 6. | foul language |  |
| 7. | dangerous behaviour |  |

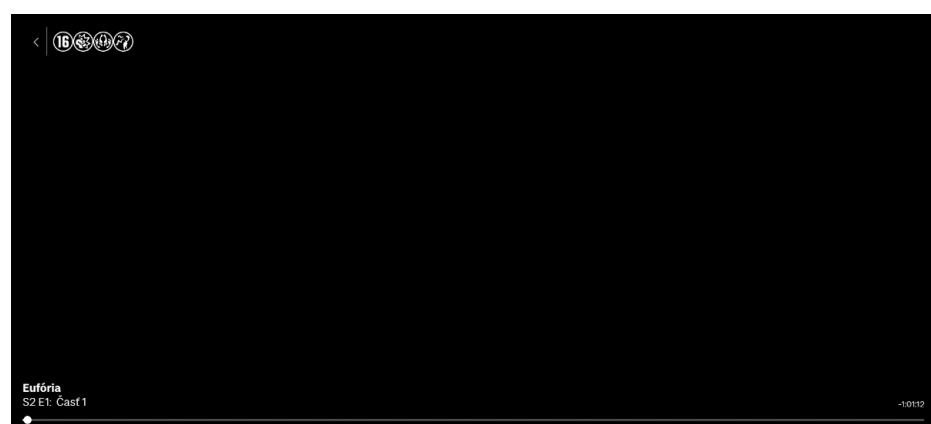


Figure 3: Information on age suitability and portrayal of violence, sex and foul language, etc. in Episode 1 of Season 2 of Euphoria

¹⁰ <https://www.kijkwijzer.nl/over-kijkwijzer>.

3. A closer look at taboo language

3.1. Definitions and illustrations

Having looked at the broader context of the transfer of taboo language in Slovak dubbed audiovisual products, with a primary focus on the differences between audiovisual products containing taboo language and broadcast on Slovak television and those streamed on online platforms, we will now define taboo language and explore how it can be approached from a translational point of view.

Taboo language has been discussed by many scholars (Allan, 2018; Allan & Burridge, 1991, 2006; Alsharhan, 2020; Andersson & Trudgill, 1990; Ávila-Cabrera, 2015, 2023; Ching-Ting, 2010; Hughes, 1998, 2015; Jay, 1992, 2000, 2009; Ljung, 2011) but their definitions of what a taboo is, what it includes, or even what terminology should be used when referring to taboos often differ. Jay's (2009, p. 153) understanding of a taboo, which has been adopted by many other scholars, is based on the definition provided by The American Heritage Dictionary of the English language (2000), which states that a taboo is "a ban or inhibition resulting from social custom or aversion". Jay further specifies that he uses the terms 'taboo words' and 'swear words' interchangeably to refer to offensive emotional language. He argues that "although there are hundreds of taboo phrases and words, the semantic range of referents that are considered taboo is limited in scope" (Jay, 2009, p. 154). He distinguishes the categories of sexual references, profane or blasphemous references, scatological referents and disgusting objects, animal names, ethnic-racial-gender slurs, insulting references to perceived psychological, physical or social deviations, ancestral allusions, substandard vulgar terms and offensive slang (ibid.).

Ávila-Cabrera (2015, p. 42), on the other hand, makes a clear distinction between 'offensive words' and 'taboo words', arguing that 'offensive words' refer to terms that are considered derogatory, abusive and/or insulting, whereas the latter may be perceived as unwelcome terms depending on the context, culture and language in which they are uttered. To make the distinction clearer, he proposed a taxonomy of offensive and taboo language, where offensive language includes abusive swearing (cursing, derogatory tone, insults, oaths), expletives (exclamatory swearword/phrase) and invectives (subtle insults), while taboo language encompasses words or phrases falling into the following categories: animal names, references to death/killing, references to drugs/excessive alcohol consumption, ethnic/racial/gender-based slurs, profane/blasphemous language, references to psychological/physical conditions, sexual references/body parts, references to urination/scatology, and violence.

Simply put, according to Alsharhan (2020, pp. 8-9) taboo language can be defined as language used to discuss taboos. The author further lists a number of characteristics that a word or a phrase needs to have in order to be considered taboo: (a) it is prohibited or forbidden; (b) it is related to social or religious customs or aversions; (c) it is considered taboo at various levels of association; (d) it is considered offensive; (e) it differs from one culture to another, and (f) it could create emotional ambivalence. Based on these characteristics and the previous review of literature on the topic of taboos, Alsharhan put forward one of the most recent and complex concept systems of taboo language¹¹ (Figure 4), which will serve as the basis for our analysis of taboo language in *Euphoria*.

¹¹ Some overlapping can be observed between Alsharhan's concept map of taboo language and Ávila-Cabrera's taxonomy of taboo language. We opted for Alsharhan's concept map primarily due to its complexity and being the most up to date.

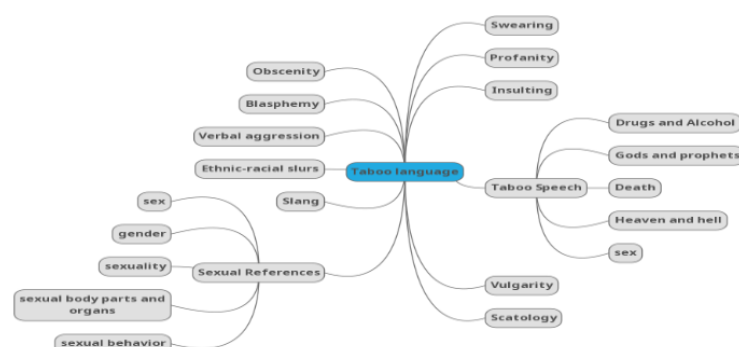


Figure 4: A concept map of taboo language as proposed by Alsharhan (2020, p. 9)

Since we are examining the transfer of taboo language into Slovak dubbing, we find it necessary to introduce the perception of taboos in the context of the Slovak cultural background, where terminological inconsistency persists as well. Rajčanová (1997, p. 211) states that Slovak linguistic theory and praxis most often employ the term ‘vulgarisms’ (and alternatively ‘vulgar words’ or ‘rude words’) which basically functions as an umbrella term for words from various areas of social taboos, including swear words, etc. She opts for the term ‘taboo lexis’, while admitting that the term is still not ideal due to the wide range of words which fall under it.

The Short Dictionary of Slovak Language (2003) defines a taboo as something forbidden and untouchable: something not to be spoken of because of moral, social or other reasons. Taboo language, and its transfer, has so far not been at the forefront of Slovak translation research, especially in the case of taboo language contained in audiovisual products. Studies have focused primarily on the translation of vulgarisms (Račková, 2018; Ukušová, 2021; Bendík, 2023, 2024), yet we believe that the recent rise of online streaming platforms which offer viewers the possibility to watch many audiovisual products depicting a wide range of taboo topics provides fertile ground for examining taboo language transfer in its complexity. Hence, in this paper, we follow Alsharhan’s concept map of taboo language in order to conceptualise taboo language more broadly.

Moreover, *Euphoria* portrays a wide range of taboo topics (with a primary focus on nudity, physical violence, verbal aggression, drug abuse, sexual content, etc.). We therefore argue that the proposed conceptual framework represents a very useful tool for identifying the complexity of the taboo language present in *Euphoria*. By applying Alsharhan’s concept map to the taboo language contained in *Euphoria*, we present representative examples of taboo language categories in Table 4¹².

¹² Only those categories of Alsharhan’s concept model which were represented in *Euphoria* are included in the table.

Table 4: Categories of taboo language contained in Season 2 of *Euphoria* based on Alsharhan's (2020) concept map of taboo language

| Taboo language contained in Season 2 of <i>Euphoria</i> | Category | Example ¹³ |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| | Obscenity | <i>For real, you're pissing me off.</i> |
| | Verbal aggression | <i>Lexi, I'm gonna fucking kill you.</i> |
| | Sex | <i>Because she's that kind of person who would fuck your boyfriend.</i> |
| | Sexuality | <i>She seems, like, gay, or asexual, you know?</i> |
| | Sexual body parts and organs | <i>Because after an 18-year-dick-swinging contest with his dad, Nate had finally won.</i> |
| | Swearing | <i>Shit.</i> |
| | Profanity | <i>Jesus fucking Christ!</i> |
| | Insulting | <i>He was bluffing and you fell for it, cause you're a fucking idiot.</i> |
| | Drugs and alcohol | <i>Are you high?</i> |
| | Vulgarity | <i>She's a cunt, yeah.</i> |
| | Scatology | <i>You keep your stank withdrawal-diarrhoea ass all away from my food.</i> |

3.2. Transferring taboo language

When examining the transfer of taboo words into another language and culture, the differences in accepting taboo language in audiovisual products in the source and target languages and cultures must be taken into account. This idea is pointed out by Díaz-Cintas (2001, p. 65) who argues that “there are certainly differences between the levels of acceptance of bad language and sexual references in audiences that belong to different countries and to different social and ethnic groups within the same country”. Even though we are not aware of any comprehensive studies on the issue of the differences in taboo language acceptance in American and Slovak audiovisual products, the strict regulation of potentially harmful content in TV broadcasting appears to translate into Slovak viewers being less accustomed to hearing strong taboo language in programmes broadcast on TV. This is supported by numerous articles¹⁴ which were published after *Euphoria*'s Slovak dubbing was made available on Max, in which authors express their astonishment regarding the strength and frequency of taboo words in the Slovak version.

In general, two different approaches can be taken when it comes to transferring taboo words. Several studies have recently adopted the typology of translation strategies put forward by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) and Pedersen (2011), originally designed for transferring cultural words in subtitles, thus approaching taboo words from a cultural perspective. The second approach is based on the load that taboo words carry; taboo words are therefore regarded as linguistic units with an expressive (stylistic) value. Ávila-Cabrera (2023, p. 78) presents the following translation techniques when translating taboo words in subtitles: transfer (load is toned up/maintained/toned down) and non-transfer (load is neutralised/omitted).

¹³ Examples of taboo words and phrases are presented uncensored in this paper.

¹⁴ <https://emefka.sk/preco-reves-ty-pca-jbnuta-drsny-slovensky-dabing-serialu-euforia-plny-vulgarizmov-zaujaj-internet/>, <https://refresher.sk/121029-VIDEO-Tvrde-vulgarizmy-v-slovenskom-dabingu-serialu-Euphoria-valcuju-Instagram-Je-es-s-mojim-byvalym-kricia-po-sebe-postavy>.

To ensure consistency with our study of taboo language in the Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria*, Season 1 (Ukušová & Koscelníková, forthcoming), we return to the premise that taboo words can be regarded as linguistic units which have a certain expressive value. To better account for the Slovak linguistic context, we apply the typology of shifts at the expressive (stylistic) level put forward by the Slovak translation scholar Popovič (1983), built on three main pillars: 1) expressive (stylistic) match, i.e. the adequate capturing of the semantic invariant, which can be achieved by expressive substitution (functional replacement) or expressive inversion (functional relocation); 2) expressive (stylistic) amplification, i.e. emphasizing expressive qualities of the original, achieved by expressive typification or expressive individualisation; and 3) expressive (stylistic) attenuation, in other words, toning down expressive qualities of the original achieved by expressive weakening or expressive loss. From these three pillars, the following types of expressive (stylistic) shifts can be derived: adequate stylistic transfer of a taboo word; compensation of a taboo word; amplification of a taboo word; addition of a taboo word; attenuation of a taboo word; and omission of a taboo word. In Table 5 these shifts are defined and further illustrated by selected examples (English – Slovak) from *Euphoria*, Season 2.

Table 5: Popovič's (1983) model of shifts at the expressive level applied to the transfer of taboo words

| Type of shift | Definition | Example |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| adequate stylistic transfer | replacing a source taboo word with a target taboo word with the same expressive value | I am fucking ready. / Som kurva pripravený. (<i>I'm fucking ready.</i>) |
| compensation | compensating for the expressive value of a source taboo word at a different place in a sentence or by different means to maintain the same level of the text's expressivity | I don't fucking care. / Je mi to ukradnuté . (<i>I don't give a damn.</i>) |
| amplification | replacing a source taboo word with a target taboo word with greater expressive value | Before Jade got into heavy drugs . / Predtým ako Jade začala fetovať . (<i>Before Jade started getting high.</i>) |
| addition | translating a source word which is not a taboo word with a taboo word in the target language | She's not looking good. / Je v totálnych sračkách . (<i>She looks like total shit.</i>) |
| attenuation | replacing a source taboo word with a target taboo word with lesser expressive value | It was good to catch up on those meaningless fun bullshit . / Dobre mi padlo počúvať tie nepodstatné, zábavné kraviny . (<i>It was nice listening to the irrelevant fun hogwash.</i>) |
| omission | complete omission of a source taboo word without using any means to compensate for the loss of expressivity | What the fuck is she so happy about? / Čo je mama taká šťastná? (<i>What is mom so happy about?</i>) |

4. Methodology

4.1. Goals

The main goal of this paper is to identify the strategies used in transferring taboo language in Season 2 of *Euphoria* into Slovak dubbing and to examine whether they result in adequate transfer of taboo language or whether taboo language is being significantly toned down or toned up. Our secondary goal is to assess the consistency of applied strategies in *Euphoria*, Seasons 1 and 2 (analysis conducted in our previous research), and to have a closer look at the roles of the production and creative team who are, besides the translator, also involved in the production of the audiovisual product.

The research presented in this paper is both qualitative, as it aimed to identify the type of transfer strategy by comparing a taboo word occurrence in the source and target languages, and quantitative, quantifying the number of each type of strategies per each episode. This combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches allowed us to gain a more complex view on the transfer of taboo language throughout Season 2.

4.2. Research questions

In line with our research objectives, we asked the following questions:

1. What are the main strategies for transferring taboo language into Slovak dubbing contained in Season 2 of *Euphoria*?
2. Do these strategies result in adequately transferring taboo language?
3. Are the transfer strategies consistent with strategies used in Season 1 of *Euphoria*, or can we identify significant differences?

4.3. Corpus

Our research corpus consisted of English-Slovak lines containing taboo language which were manually extracted from eight episodes of *Euphoria*, Season 2 (Table 6), available on the Max streaming platform. Taboo language was identified based on Alsharhan's (2020) concept map of taboo language which, we believe, sufficiently covers all taboo word occurrences in *Euphoria* due to its complexity. All lines with taboo words were presented in the form of one summarising table per episode, which contained not only English and Slovak lines with taboo words but also timecodes and information about the speaker (see Table 7). After this, we categorised the strategies used for taboo language transfer in each of the episodes (i.e. adequate transfer, compensation, amplification, addition, attenuation, omission), taking into account the context in which the taboo words occurred and the emotion they were meant to convey, with the aid of Popović's (1983) model of shifts at the expressive level applied to the transfer of taboo words (Table 5).

Table 6: Example of a line containing taboo language extracted from Season 2 of *Euphoria*

| Timecode | Character | English | Slovak (+ back translation) | Type of strategy |
|----------|-----------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 37:18 | Maddy | Open the fucking door, Cassie. | Otvor tie skurvené dvere, Cassie. (Open the fucking door, Cassie.) | adequate transfer |

5. Findings

Having juxtaposed the results of the quantitative analysis of Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria*, Seasons 1 and 2, we found that Season 2 contained a slightly higher number of taboo word occurrences but that the difference was not significant. While Season 1 contained 1,493 taboo words occurrences, Season 2 contained 1,556 occurrences (Table 7).

Table 7: Number of taboo word occurrences in Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria*, Seasons 1 and 2

| Season 1 | Number of taboo word occurrences | Season 2 | Number of taboo word occurrences |
|----------|----------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| S01E01 | 229 | S02E01 | 305 |
| S01E02 | 206 | S02E02 | 130 |
| S01E03 | 189 | S02E03 | 290 |
| S01E04 | 131 | S02E04 | 211 |
| S01E05 | 152 | S02E05 | 260 |
| S01E06 | 163 | S02E06 | 134 |
| S01E07 | 208 | S02E07 | 79 |
| S01E08 | 215 | S02E08 | 147 |
| TOTAL | 1,493 | TOTAL | 1,556 |

In the following tables, we present the most frequently used strategies for transferring taboo language in both Seasons 1 and 2 (per episode). The data in the tables have been rounded to whole numbers.

Table 8: Strategies used for transferring taboo language in the Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria*, Season 1

| Season 1 | | | | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| S01E01 | adequate transfer (40%) | omission (25%) | compensation (21%) | attenuation (9%) | addition (4%) | amplification (1%) |
| S01E02 | adequate transfer (52%) | omission (30%) | attenuation (11%) | compensation (5%) | amplification (2%) | addition (0%) |
| S01E03 | adequate transfer (40%) | omission (29%) | attenuation (15%) | amplification (7%) | compensation (6%) | addition (3%) |
| S01E04 | adequate transfer (43%) | omission (24%) | compensation (16%) | attenuation (14%) | amplification (2%) | addition (2%) |
| S01E05 | adequate transfer (57%) | omission (14%) | compensation (13%) | attenuation (13%) | amplification (2%) | addition (1%) |
| S01E06 | adequate transfer (48%) | omission (24%) | attenuation (13%) | compensation (9%) | amplification (3%) | addition (3%) |
| S01E07 | adequate transfer (40%) | omission (34%) | attenuation (13%) | compensation (8%) | amplification (3%) | addition (2%) |
| S01E08 | adequate transfer (52%) | omission (26%) | attenuation (13%) | compensation (5%) | amplification (2%) | addition (2%) |

Table 9: Strategies used to transfer taboo language in the Slovak dubbing of Euphoria, Season 2

| Season 2 | | | | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| S02E01 | adequate transfer (46%) | omission (35%) | attenuation (7%) | compensation (6%) | amplification (4%) | addition (3%) |
| S02E02 | adequate transfer (65%) | omission (17%) | attenuation (8%) | compensation (4%) | addition (4%) | amplification (1%) |
| S02E03 | adequate transfer (47%) | omission (31%) | compensation (11%) | attenuation (6%) | addition (4%) | amplification (1%) |
| S02E04 | adequate transfer (51%) | omission (23%) | compensation (11%) | attenuation (7%) | amplification (5%) | addition (3%) |
| S02E05 | adequate transfer (44%) | omission (40%) | attenuation (7%) | compensation (6%) | addition (2%) | amplification (1%) |
| S02E06 | adequate transfer (53%) | omission (25%) | compensation (12%) | attenuation (7%) | addition (2%) | amplification (1%) |
| S02E07 | adequate transfer (60%) | omission (25%) | compensation (6%) | amplification (5%) | attenuation (4%) | addition (0%) |
| S02E08 | adequate transfer (56%) | omission (26%) | attenuation (7%) | amplification (6%) | compensation (4%) | addition (1%) |

Based on the data presented in Tables 8 and 9, we can observe that the applied transfer strategies were very similar in both seasons, with adequate transfer being the most frequently used strategy, while omission represented the second most frequently used strategy. In Season 1, the third most frequent transfer strategy was attenuation (used in five out of eight episodes), while in Season 2, the third most frequent transfer strategy was compensation. These strategies were followed by the strategies of amplification and addition, which were the least applied strategies in both seasons. The consistency in applied strategies can be considered a positive as it translates into maintaining a coherent link between both seasons, uniform portrayal of characters and in particular their idiolect, and the overall viewer's experience, especially for those viewers who watched both seasons.

5.1. The strategy of omission

As stated above, omission was identified as the second most frequently used strategy. While the omission strategy is usually viewed as a form of censorship, which it certainly is in some cases, we will now have a look at other factors related to the specific features of dubbing or differences between the English and Slovak languages which may have had an influence on the final translation solutions. The analysis showed that many omitted taboo words in the Slovak dubbing of Season 2 were most likely:

- a) omitted due to the requirement of lip-syncing (or synchronisation), which involves matching the articulatory and body movements of the screen actors and their utterances in the source and target languages (Chaume, 2006, p. 7);
- b) referred to by other parts of speech (e.g. demonstrative pronouns);
- c) omitted since the information was clear from the context;
- d) omitted since Slovak has other ways of expressing the given emotion (anger, surprise, excitement, etc.);

- e) omitted since it is unnatural to use a swear word as an adjective in Slovak and further changes are needed on the morpho-syntactical level.

Table 10: Examples of functional omission in each episode of Season 2

| Episode | English | Slovak | Grounds |
|---------|--|--|--|
| S01E01 | It's fucking New Years? | To je vážne už nový rok? (<i>Is it really New Years already?</i>) | Taboo word omitted, the emotion of surprise expressed by the particle <i>vážne</i> (really) |
| S02E02 | - No, it was cancer. - Shit . | - Nie, zabila ho rakovina. - Aha. (- <i>No, cancer killed him.</i> - <i>I see.</i>) | Taboo word omitted particle <i>Aha</i> (I see) used |
| S02E03 | Why would you start smoking weed ? | Ale prečo by si to robila? (<i>But why would you do it?</i>) | Taboo word related to drugs omitted, referred to by the pronoun <i>to</i> (it) |
| S02E04 | Because I can't fucking stand you. | Lebo ťa nemôžem ani cítiť. (<i>Because I can't even stand you.</i>) | Taboo word omitted, the emotion of anger expressed with the particle <i>ani</i> (not even) |
| S02E05 | Everybody's mom fucking says that. Even the ones who bury their kids. | To hovorí každá mama, aj tá, ktorá si pochová decko. (<i>That's what every mom says, even the one who buries her kid.</i>) | Taboo word omitted, since it is unnatural to use it that way in Slovak |
| S02E06 | ...pulled her ass off... | A odviezol si ju preč. (<i>And you took her away.</i>) | Taboo word referring to a person omitted since it is unnatural to use it that way in Slovak, substituted by pronoun |
| SE02E06 | I was fucking hot. | Bola som fakt kost'. (<i>I really was a stunner.</i>) | Taboo word replaced by the particle <i>fakt</i> (really/for real), which is pronounced almost identically as the word 'fuck' (and therefore perfectly meets the requirement of lip-sync) and was used frequently instead of 'fuck' or 'fucking' to add emphasis to the statement |
| S02E07 | Yeah, but that shit like changes all the time. | Áno, ale trendy sa každú chvíľu menia. (<i>Yes, but trends change all the time.</i>) | Taboo word omitted; specific noun used to refer to the context (i.e. the strategy of specification) |
| S02E08 | You never fucking lived. | Ty si nikdy ani len nežila. (<i>You've never even lived.</i>) | Taboo word omitted and substituted by particles (<i>ani len</i>) to emphasise the given fact |

We also identified dialogues where taboo words were omitted, for example, when characters were not directly visible on camera, which might have been caused by them not being written in the original dubbing script. In certain dialogues the omitted taboo words were neither translated nor referred to elsewhere in the sentence, as seen in Table 10. Nevertheless, we can claim that such omissions did not result from any legal restrictions, since the series was not broadcast on any Slovak television. As stated earlier, if taboo language is broadcast during prime time, such use would be fined by the Council for Media Services).

5.2. Audience reception

To place the results of the analysis into broader context and investigate the reception of Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria* by Slovak viewers, we conducted a questionnaire survey aimed at the viewers that have watched *Euphoria* (Appendix B). The survey consisted of nine questions: seven closed questions, one semi-open and one open question. It was disseminated through social networks and the website: <https://www.dabingforum.sk/>. We received a total of 15 responses, with 86.7% (13) of respondents having watched both Seasons 1 and 2.

Regarding the transfer of the expressivity of taboo words, 73.3% of respondents considered the taboo words to be translated adequately, and 60% of respondents said that the taboo words sounded natural and corresponded to taboo words commonly used in Slovak. With regard to expressivity, 80% of respondents stated being surprised by the level of expressivity of taboo words in a positive way, and 73.3% of them considered the characterization of individual characters to be the same as in the original. All respondents said that the level of expressivity when it comes to the way taboo words are dubbed in Slovak on television is generally too low, while 66.7% considered the taboo language on streaming platforms to be generally translated adequately in terms of its expressivity. Moreover, 86.7% of respondents expressed the view that taboo language in audiovisual products should not be attenuated.

Lastly, respondents were also asked to provide any additional comments and/or observations on the Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria*. Virtually all comments on the quality of Slovak dubbing were positive: “Great dubbing and dubbing actors.”, “I have no further observations, the dubbing was excellent.”, “Amazing dubbing, emotionally complex characters.” More detailed responses reiterated the key themes mentioned throughout this article, including the general tendency to tone down taboo language in Slovak dubbing on television, expressing the hope for more authentic taboo language transfer and a gradual change towards a higher level of taboo language acceptance in dubbed audiovisual products in the future:

- Finally a series where it [taboo language] hasn't gotten any softer! Even in the English original, the teenage characters cursed a lot, so why neutralize it? Slovak youth swear nonstop in normal communication, and youth was the target audience, so in my opinion it was a win-win [situation]. It preserved the atmosphere and the setting of the original work. Well done.
- I think that the language was quite expressive for the Slovak context but compared to the original, it was adequate. I suppose the Slovak market is slowly starting to accept more expressive dubbing but for now it is still a bit unnatural for the average viewer, [and] it will take time to 'normalize' it.
- Overall, in Slovakia we are used to toning down vulgarisms in public space, so I was really pleased to see that in this dubbing, the same expressiveness was preserved as in the original. I'm not saying that I fully agreed with every translation solution, and of course the dubbing could have been translated in such a way as to employ the toned-down vulgarisms we are used to [see] on

TV (e.g. stupid, asshole, idiot). [...] Euphoria and its Slovak dubbing is something that, in its own way, has gone down in history and, if it is understood correctly, can serve as a very nice blueprint. The ethical aspect – that Euphoria is a series for young people, and they shouldn't hear such words, let alone talk like this and other moralising – has been impoverishing our translations for years. We are creating an artificial image of the use of taboo language and of its users as well, and although it should not be normalized, we need to become aware of the reality:¹⁵

6. Discussion and concluding remarks

While many criticisms of audiovisual work revolve around the translators/editors and their translation solutions, there are in fact other agents responsible for the final version of dubbing, specifically the dubbing director who works with the actors and the text, and the voice actors who read the script to be recorded (Makarian, 2005). To place the findings of our analysis into a broader context, we conducted an interview with the producer of the series Rastislav Jakubek and the director Michal Hallon from Sunrise Studio which created the Slovak dubbing (the transcript can be found in Appendix A). One of the key findings was that HBO wished for the dubbing to be as authentic as possible, and there were no requests to soften the language. Thus, any compensations or attenuations that we have identified in the Slovak dubbing were due to decisions made by the whole creative team. We also learned that the director (Michal Hallon), together with voice actors, notably influenced the final version of Slovak dubbing, and it would therefore be worth researching the edited scripts before the director and the actors further work with them in the studio, and compare them with our analysis. The creative team raised another important issue: the phenomenon of the 'f-generation', which overuses the word 'fuck' and all its derivatives. This resulted in many omissions and substitutions by the Slovak creative team, e.g. frequently by using particles with an expressive load, since translating every single occurrence of 'fuck' with an equally strong swearword in Slovak would not only sound very unnatural, but we believe it would also exceed the taboo language acceptance threshold in the Slovak cultural context. When it comes to streaming platforms, we can clearly see that the adopted translation strategies in transferring taboo language into Slovak differ from Slovak television studio practices, and that the former present viewers with taboo language in its raw and authentic form. It is indeed a huge step from the attenuated or intentionally omitted taboo language in dubbed audiovisual products broadcast on Slovak television, but a positive one in terms of faithfulness of the transfer.

Regarding the first research question, as to what the main transfer strategies of taboo language were contained in Season 2 of *Euphoria*, the main strategies that we identified were adequate transfer, omission, and compensation with attenuation. Besides the four most frequently used strategies, amplification and addition were also represented, but to a much lesser, almost negligible degree. As for the second research question, whether the applied strategies resulted in taboo language being transferred adequately, the analysis has shown that in each episode adequate transfer represented the most applied strategy (from 44% in Episode 5 up to 65% in Episode 2). Attenuation was represented to a much lesser degree (ranging from 4% in

¹⁵ Translated by the authors from Slovak.

Episode 7 up to 8% in Episode 2), while amplification was applied to a negligible degree (1% in Episode 6 to 6% in Episode 8). Although omission was the second most used strategy in each of the episodes (17% in Episode 2 up to 40% in Episode 5), overall, and with respect to the fact that Slovak viewers are not very used to hearing strong taboo language in audiovisual works broadcast in TV, we consider taboo language transfer in *Euphoria* to be adequate. This is also supported by the fact that despite the omission strategy applied, Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria* remains one of the most accurate in terms of the strength and frequency of taboo words. Finally, in answer to the third research question on the consistency of the strategies used in Seasons 1 and 2, we can conclude that the strategies used for the transfer of taboo language in the second season of *Euphoria* were consistent with those used in Season 1. Hence, even though we did not know whether the same translators were involved, the strategies identified were consistent across both seasons

The Slovak dubbing of the *Euphoria* series, among other recently created series available on streaming platforms, provides evidence that the Slovak language offers varied lexical and morpho-syntactical options that can be used to transfer taboo language faithfully with respect to socio-cultural norms, while also ensuring dubbing sounds natural and authentic. As for further research, we aim to investigate the strategies of taboo language transfer in other audiovisual products on streaming platforms. We feel that a larger corpus, further reception studies involving target viewers and a thorough investigation of the recording process in the studio and work of actors and sound director with the dialogue scripts are necessary to reach more robust findings. Even so, our analysis of *Euphoria* and Bendík's (2023, 2024) analyses of the series *The Last of Us* (available on Max) and *Yellowjackets* (available on SkyShowtime) suggest that streaming platforms allow more room for creative freedom when it comes to transferring taboo language into Slovak more faithfully when compared to Slovak television.

Acknowledgement

This article is an output of the research project VEGA 1/0598/24 *Tabuizovaný jazyk ako komplexný lingvistický fenomén v preklade audiovizuálnych diel* (Taboo language as a complex linguistic phenomenon in the translation of audiovisual works).

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Appendix A

Interview with director Michal Hallon and Rastislav Jakubek, the producer of the Slovak dubbed version *Euphoria*. The interviews were translated from the Slovak by the authors.

In order to consider all the factors influencing the final Slovak dubbed version of *Euphoria*, we cannot go past the production team working with the translated and edited dialogue list (or script) and their (possible) influence on the translation and the dialogues. Below, we provide a transcript of the interview with the director of the series, Michal Hallon, and the producer Rastislav Jakubek. They both gave us permission to use their translated answers in the paper.

Questions for the director, Michal Hallon:

1. To what extent did you have to tweak with the adapted script?

To a significant extent. Ivo Gogál was in charge of editing, and although he is one of the best editors, due to his age he was not able to update the dialogue to the language of today's young people. We also consulted the voice actors about all the dialogues: they were young and knew best how to convey the language of young people in the Slovak version.

2. What did you have to edit the most?

In particular expressive words, sentence structure, abbreviated reactions and so on.

3. How did you approach taboo language and how did the actors approach it?

Basically, the way I explained said in my answer to the first question. But above all, and as we always try to do, with the utmost respect for the original wording.

4. To what extent did the actors themselves influence the final lines?

To a great extent. It's a series that (unfortunately) very faithfully reflects the themes that reflect the lives of young people today. One of the lead actors rightly pointed out that this is today's young people, and so it is, even if we all turn a blind eye at times. That is why they all had my full confidence if they commented on something or wanted to change something.

5. What were the most serious language disputes you had to deal with? Or were there any?

Given HBO's open platform stream service, basically none. Compromise solutions are only sought for Slovak TV stations.

6. What about you and vulgarisms and taboo topics? How did you balance the degree of fidelity versus freedom of translation (many 'fucking' adjectives were dropped from the dialogues, in some places one could see that it was done for time and synchronicity reasons, in others there was room for it but the swear word didn't come out – what was that affected by?)

I think that you can see my editing there the most. I had to consider when each vulgar expression makes sense and when it does not. Today's American youth is sometimes referred to as the F-GENERATION. Where the word 'fuck' is just an auxiliary, a filler word that has no direct meaning in a given situation. The Slovak language does not have many expressive words so they have to be handled in a meaningful way and most importantly they need to have meaning in specific situations. With the utmost respect to the original.

Questions for the producer, Rastislav Jakubek:

1. Did the translator and synchronising editor work together or did they each fulfil their part in the production process individually?

The translator was given a free hand regarding the translation, we required him to preserve the atmosphere of the [audiovisual] work and to be as close to the original as possible.

2. Did they consult an expert on drug terminology or were they working on their own?

They worked without experts, the plot was not based on specialised terminology and scientific knowledge, which should be conveyed accurately to the viewer... Common knowledge was enough, it was about universally known things.

3. Who was responsible for the final version of the script – which was eventually uploaded and sent to HBO?

The director has the greatest responsibility.

4. Was there a supervisor from HBO overseeing the project?

I only consulted HBO as to what extent we could use vulgarisms, as these occurred more than usual in the series. The answer was to be as close to the original as possible.

5. To what extent did the director and the actors tweak the script – when it came to specific words or lines?

Whenever it was necessary and he felt it would make the final work better.

6. What were the most serious language disputes you had to deal with? Or were there any?

I cannot even remember this happening at all. There's always an adapted script and that's the basis for the recording.

7. Did you also have to correct anything after the recording? If so, what were the corrections? (And if language, what was so important that had to be re-recorded/added/replaced?)

No, there was nothing to correct.

8. *How did you balance the vulgar language in the work where it had to be dropped due to stylistic and semantic reasons?*

Vulgarisms were either not recorded at all, or replaced with another word if it was necessary for synchronicity.

8. *If something was deleted, why did that happen?*

Sometimes, vulgarisms in the original were used in completely nonsensical and unnecessary places in the dialogue, and these were simply ignored, either because of length/synchronicity or because they would not make much sense in our language and would seem too forced.

9. *Did you warn the actors that this was a popular project full of vulgarisms? Were there any actors who refused to dub the character (e.g. Fezco's grandmother, Fezco, Rue, Nate's father Cal)?*

Believe it or not, but a lot of actors were looking forward to working on this project. They knew the series and welcomed working on it. So, there was no point in alerting them. I don't know of any actor who has refused the work because the series is vulgar. As far as the child actors were concerned, the parents were warned in advance what the project was about so that they could consider whether their child would work on the Slovak version.

Appendix B

Questionnaire for the viewers of *Euphoria* (translated from the Slovak)

Taboo words in Euphoria series

Dear respondents, the questionnaire is aimed at the viewers' reception of taboo words (vulgarisms, profanities, lexis related to drugs, crime, pornography, physical violence, sexuality, etc.) in the Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria* available on the Max streaming platform.

Thank you for your time.

1. Which series of *Euphoria* did you watch in Slovak?
 - a) First
 - b) Second
 - c) Both
 - d) Only a few episodes
2. The translation of taboo words in *Euphoria* resulted in:
 - a) Taboo words sounding too strong due to their excessive use
 - b) Taboo words sounding adequate in terms of their expressivity level
 - c) Taboo words sounding weak; stronger taboo words could have been used
3. The taboo words used in *Euphoria*:

- a) Sounded natural, and corresponded to taboo words commonly used in Slovak
 - b) Sounded unnatural due to translation being too literal and not taking into account the morpho-syntactic requirements of Slovak language
- 4. The level of expressivity of taboo words (in terms of strength, frequency, etc.) in the Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria*:
 - a) Surprised me in a positive way
 - b) Surprised me in a negative way
 - c) Did not surprise me at all
- 5. Do you think that the Slovak translation of taboo words in *Euphoria* preserved the characterization of individual characters?
 - a) Yes
 - b) Partially
 - c) No
- 6. I generally consider the level of expressivity of taboo words in Slovak dubbing on streaming platforms to be:
 - a) Too high
 - b) Adequate
 - c) Too low
- 7. I generally consider the level of expressivity of taboo words in Slovak dubbing on Slovak television to be:
 - a) Too high
 - b) Adequate
 - c) Too low
- 8. Should the level of expressivity of taboo words in audiovisual products in Slovak dubbing be softened in translation?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No, it should remain the same as in the original
 - c) Other...
- 9. If you have any other comments on the Slovak dubbing of *Euphoria*, please provide them here.