

Voice over

# Introduction

There is a third audiovisual transfer mode that has not been analyzed in such detail, but which nonetheless is extensively used in many audiovisual markets: Voice Over (VO). Sometimes termed the ‘ugly duckling’ of audiovisual translation (Orero 2006), a ‘damsel in distress’ (Wozniak 2012: P. 211) or even an ‘orphan child’ (Bogucki 2013: P. 20), many academic and non-academic voices have drawn attention to the limitations of voice over (Garcarz 2007), and have accounted for the fact that it continues to be used in some countries in terms of the low costs that it incurs. However, voice over is a reality accepted by many audiences, and its academic study has increasingly captured the attention of translation scholars.

## Definition of Voice Over (VO)

It is a technique in which a voice offering a translation in a given target language (TL) is heard simultaneously on top of the source language (SL) voice (Díaz Cintas and Orero, 2006: P. 477).

## Definition of Voice Over (VO)

Kuhn and Westwell (2012: P. 446-447) define VO quite differently, as the 'voice of an off-screen narrator or a voice heard but not belonging to any character actually talking on screen'

# Types of VO

Orero (2004) and Franco et al. (2010) examine how VO fits within the process of media content assembly and distinguish the following types:

1. **VO for production:** they are given excerpts of audiovisual content that have not yet been converted into a full programme. The translator is often sent excerpts of audiovisual content (for instance, interviews), generally without a script or transcript, and has to deliver a written translation. Then, the excerpts are shaped into a full programme, and the relevant translation segments are voiced.

## Types of VO

**2. VO for post-production:** they are given a fully-fledged audiovisual programme. It is a finished product (for instance, a documentary), generally with a post-production script, is provided to the translator, who delivers a written document that will be used for the final recording in the target language.

## Types of VO

**3. The direct VO:** the standard practice is to use first- person VO, meaning that the translation uses the same pronoun as the speakers in the original programme. For instance, if the speaker says ‘I think . . .’, the translation will keep the first person in the target language, making the translator more invisible.

## Types of VO

**4. The Reported VO:** the role of the mediator is more visible as the words of the speaker are reported in the third person. Examples of third-person voice-over have been provided by Franco (2000: 238), who examines German versions of Brazilian documentaries in which the interviewees' answers are frequently converted into indirect speech.



## Types of VO

5. Single-Voice VO: television VOs in Poland, where only one voice is used for all characters.
6. Dual -Voice VO: documentaries and interviews are voiced-over with the employment of pairs. In other words. They are voiced-over with two VO translators two males VO translators or two female ones.

## Types of VO

7. Multiple-Voice VO: documentaries voiced-over with the use of various voices, both male and female, are resorted to revoice the original speakers. And also the Lithuanian VO of TV films (Grigaraviciute and Gottlieb 1999), in which the common pattern is to use two actors, a male and a female for all male and female actors, respectively.

## Essential features of VO

The presence of a translating voice overlaps with a translated voice. It is worth mentioning that VO involves the observance of various types of synchronies. Inspired by existing classifications in dubbing (Chaume 2004), Orero (2006) and Franco et al. (2010) differentiate four types of synchronies:

## Essential features of VO

1. ‘VO isochrony’ designates the constraining effect that the length of the original speech has on that of the translated text—given that the translation usually begins some words after the original utterance and finishes some words before the latter ends. This allows the original words at the onset and at the end of each VO utterance to be heard, in an attempt to arguably enhance authenticity and make the target language audience feel that the content they listen to is credible.

# Essential features of VO

For Example:

In fictional genres with fast-paced dialogues, reaching VO isochrony is not possible, and the original and the translation may finish approximately at the same time.

According to (Sepielak, 2016), there are different types of Isochronies:

- A. **Full isochrony** : when at least one word is heard at the beginning and at the end of the utterance.
- B. **Initial isochrony**: where at least one word is audible only at the beginning.
- C. **Final isochrony**: where at least one word is heard only at the end of the utterance.

## Essential features of VO

2. 'Literal synchrony' is used by authors such as Luyken et al. (1991: P.141), who favor literal translation when the original voice is heard without any overlapping from the voice providing the translation.

## Essential features of VO

3. 'Kinetic synchrony' refers to translations that are synchronized with the body language of the characters on screen. This means that when a linguistic expression is linked to a certain gesture made by one of the characters, the translation should match this gesture to avoid inconsistencies between the verbal and the visual.

For example Former US President Trump gesture (finger crossing) into Arabic language.

## Essential features of VO

4. 'Action synchrony' involves the synchronization of the translation with the images on screen. The order of the elements in a sentence may differ in the original and in the translation, whether because of systemic differences between languages or because of the rephrasing that VO isochrony often entails. Still, words should be synchronized with the visuals they correspond to, thus avoiding a mismatch between what the translation states and what audiences see on screen.



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