

How Dubbing Works: The Video Dubbing Process & Best Practices

Dubbing is often preferable to subtitling for video and film localization, but it needs to be done right.

We're often asked about **dubbing vs. subtitling** a video or film. There are a host of reasons to choose dubbing over, or in addition to, subtitling:

- Some markets require dubbing. In France, for example, dubbing film or video is the norm.
- Children's programming is always dubbed, for obvious reasons.
- Visual films or video such as nature documentaries that are heavily narrated are usually dubbed.
- Dubbing AND subtitling are sometimes recommended when a great deal of information needs to be communicated, as in instructional videos of highly skilled procedures.

Once you have opted to dub your video project in a different language than the original version, selecting the right localization provider is key. They will ensure your dub is one that appears seamless to the intended audience. If the vendor doesn't do a professional job, the dub will ruin the entire viewer experience.

You'll want to ask your prospective video localization provider about their process. Here are the typical steps involved in the creation of a good alternate language track (dub) for your film or video:

- 1.** You send the master to the provider, including a script, the video, and an M&E (either stereo or 5.1 and stereo).
 - The provider will specify the technical specs required.
 - If you don't have a script, the provider can transcribe the dialogue.
- 2.** The script is digitized with a visible time code to ensure frame-accurate synchronization and a watermark with split-channel audio, left production and right M&E. The watermark is used for security purposes as it is burned into the proxy.
- 3.** A low-resolution reference file of your video and master script are sent to the target-language team who may reside in-house but often work off-site.
- 4.** A dubbing stem script is created. It is analyzed frame by frame, with every pause in the dialogue, taking into account tonal inflections and general tenor to ensure the nuance of the performance is transmitted to the translators.

5. Specialized translators then work with the dubbing script to translate and adapt it by matching the length of each line of dialogue to the original script.
 - Expert localization providers will use algorithms to count the syllables of the script in the original language. This is key for the adaptation of the translated script to exact the same timing and tempo in the spoken rendition.
 - Some languages tend to have longer words or idiomatic expressions. A good dubbing translation will look to preserve both length of locution and the meaning of the original dialog.
6. Voice-casting usually occurs while translators tackle the script.
7. QC editors work with the dialogue in the target language to ensure the lip-syncing to the video is accurate and well timed.
8. In some instances, selective technical adjustments are made to imperceptibly slow down or speed up the video in order to improve upon the lip sync of the dub. This will ensure that the actors' voice-over recordings match the mouth movements, exactly. It takes patience and a meticulous eye, but makes all the difference in the final product.
9. Following the thorough preparation of the script, the voice talent and directors go into the recording studio. Directors work closely with translators and will, at this stage, have combed through the script for subtle nuances. They guide the actors to tonal, intonation, linguistic accuracy, and expressive excellence.
10. Finally, sound engineers create a mix that incorporates the M&E tracks and is "laid back" to the original video. You now have a professionally created dub!

Some Thoughts Regarding Best Practices

Attention to Detail is Key

Dubbing is a multi-layered post-production project. If lip-syncing is required, recording time needs to be scheduled as efficiently as possible, and all processes leading up to it need to be meticulously planned and executed.

Process, Process, Process

An expert dubbing localization provider will have a Project Manager assigned to you who will have a good handle on the entire process, and should clearly lay out detailed timelines and responsibilities. Attention to detail, awareness of all the different moving pieces and deadlines... that should be the Project Manager's job,



Pay Attention to Voice Casting and Smart Direction

Depending on the type of content being dubbed, the appropriate voice tonality and the voice actor's style can make or break a dub. The genre dictates the actor. A comedian will be great on a comedy. A business expert is better suited for a corporate video. Recording directors often handle the casting, and their expertise is key to your project. Ask for voice samples, and talk to the director if you need guidance.

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Good Translation and Adaptation are Critical

A dub is not simply translating a script and then reading it over the existing video. Preserving meaning is paramount, whether through translation or atmospheric reflection of the mood of the original content. For example if there's a dockworker from the East End of London, the actor dubbing for Russia needs to speak with a working-class accent from Moscow. The flavor of the original content must always be respected.

The Best Outcome Takes Time

Whatever the type of content being dubbed, doing things right takes time—while doing them wrong first takes even longer. One way to avoid the latter is to hire a localization provider with a proven track record and a commitment to the industry. Their passion for the work should be palpable!

We're Here for You!

CMI has worked with major Hollywood studios for the past 30 years localizing, digitally processing and delivering video/film content to the in-flight entertainment industry. This is a global market requiring upwards of 150 unique feature-film files to be delivered daily.

Call us for more information on putting our knowledge about best practices to work for your project.

Give us a call today!

East Coast: 203-989-9955
West Coast: 818-623-2560
Toll Free: 1-800-431-1102