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Katarzyna Sepielak

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Synchronization Techniques in Multilingual Fiction: Voiced-Over Films in Poland

KATARZYNA SEPIELAK¹
Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain

This descriptive analysis of four multilingual fiction films voiced-over into Polish—*Nine*, *Avatar*, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, and *Inglourious Basterds*—provides insight into the application of different types of synchrony and their function in multilingual movies as well as the relation between synchronization and translation techniques. The results raise important questions about the main assumptions of voice-over translation, such as the illusion of authenticity, voice-over isochrony, and the reasoning behind literal synchrony.

Keywords: voice-over, multilingual films, synchronization, audiovisual translation

Although multilingual audiovisual texts have always been present in European and Hollywood films (Heiss, 2004), it was not until recently that scholars became interested in the issue of how those texts are or should be translated (see, e.g., Bartoll, 2006; Corrius, 2008; Corrius & Zabalbeascoa, 2011; Delabastita & Grutman, 2005; Meylaerts, 2006). These scholars have mainly dealt with how multilingualism was rendered in dubbing and subtitling, leaving the third relevant mode—voice-over—aside, probably due to the fact that it is rarely used in fiction films, except in countries such as Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

Thus, the goal of this article is to analyze two important aspects of voiced-over multilingual fiction films: translation and synchronization techniques. It aims to verify how diverse translation techniques and different kinds of synchronization might reinforce—or, on the contrary—undermine the functions of multilingual segments in the movies.

Katarzyna Sepielak: katarzyna.sepielak@utrgv.edu

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Considering that most studies on voice-over focus on its particular use in nonfiction products (see, e.g., Franco, 2000; Franco, Matamala, & Orero, 2010; Krasovska, 2004; Orero, 2006), the first part of this article introduces the definition and some general remarks concerning voice-over, with a special emphasis on its use in fiction films in Poland. The focus then narrows to different types of synchrony and its application to multilingual segments in selected fiction films. The objective of this part of the analysis is twofold: (1) It aims to study if and what types of synchrony are applied in multilingual segments, and (2) it is designed to establish possible links between different types of synchrony and different types of translation techniques. To achieve this goal, this research is based on the same four movies that were analyzed in a previous study (Sepielak, 2014). The results of that study present a descriptive analysis of translation techniques used in multilingual segments in four fiction films: *Nine* (Rob Marshall, 2009), *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009), *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (Woody Allen, 2008), and *Inglourious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino, 2009), constituting a total of 529 minutes of film to analyze. The choice of films was based primarily on the presence of several languages in the movies—that is, apart from the main original language (L1), English, and the translated language (L2), Polish, the films also contain dialogue in one or more other languages (L3). The selection was refined to comprise four films released in Poland in 2009.² Three genres are represented: drama, science fiction, and adventure (genre categorization is based on the Internet Movie Database, commonly known as IMDb).

Voice-Over(s) in Nonfiction and Fiction Films

In early academic work on voice-over, Luyken, Herbst, Langham-Brown, Reid, and Spinhof (1991) point out two distinctive characteristics of voice-over: (1) the technical aspect, whereby “the original sound is either reduced entirely or to a low level of audibility” (p. 80), and (2) the common practice, which is “to allow the original sound to be heard for several seconds at the onset of speech and to have it subsequently reduced so that the translated speech takes over” (p. 80). As for the first characteristic, some later definitions include the aspect of the simultaneous presence of two soundtracks (see Chaume, 2004; Díaz Cintas & Orero, 2006; Krasovska, 2004). The second feature, termed voice-over isochrony,³ assumes that the translation starts after the original’s onset and finishes earlier. This technique requires additional editing to fit the reduced time slot. Moreover, as pointed out by some scholars (Luyken et al., 1991), the audible original units at the beginning and end of an utterance should be translated literally, trying, as much as possible, to maintain a word-by-word correspondence between the target and the source text. This practice, termed *literal synchrony*, is considered by some to be too constraining and not practical from a professional point of view (Franco et al., 2010; Orero, 2006; Sepielak, 2013). But, as the present analysis demonstrates, this rule does not necessarily hold up in Polish fiction films.

Most studies (see Franco, 2000; Luyken et al., 1991; Matamala, 2009; Orero, 2006) agree that the reason for using voice-over owes much to the illusion of reality that it helps to create as two

² Woody Allen’s *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* had its world premiere in 2008, but it was not released in Poland until April 17, 2009 (*Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, 2009).

³ In fact, voice-over isochrony is inherited from dubbing, where isochrony consists in making sure that the translated text fits between the moments the actors open and close their mouths (Chaume, 2004).

soundtracks are audible, which leaves no room for manipulation (as in the case of dubbing). Franco, Matamala, and Orero (2010) summarize that "voice-over translation has to be a faithful, literal, authentic and complete version of the original audio. Such definitions give voice-over the status of a trustful transfer mode" (p. 26). This characteristic of faithfulness can be controversial (see Franco et al., 2010; Orero, 2006) and might result not from the intrinsic feature of voice-over but rather might be related to the genre being translated. In other words, the perception of voice-over as a trustful mode stems from the fact that it is frequently used in products that present real and true events—that is, documentaries.

All three characteristics—two simultaneous soundtracks, voice-over isochrony, and authenticity (or the illusion of authenticity; see Matamala, 2005)—are accurate when defining voice-over translation in the context of nonfiction products such as documentaries and live interviews, as is frequently done in Western Europe. However, in some Central and Eastern European countries, voice-over is also used in fiction films, which may influence its general perception and practice.

The first difference between voice-over as it is used in Western and Central European countries stems from the fact that, in the latter, voice-over is not associated with the genre of the program but depends on the medium. Traditionally, voice-over is used on television, mostly for programs for adults, in contrast to dubbed programs for children. This general practice generates different attitudes to the so-called illusion of authenticity, because voice-over translations are also applied to fiction. Therefore, the association of voice-over with a trustful translation is not as strong in Central Europe as it is in countries where voice-over is used only for nonfiction products (Sepielak, 2013).

The second distinction of voice-over as used in Central European countries refers to voice-over isochrony. As pointed out by Sepielak and Matamala (2014), "voice-over isochrony is not systematically kept. . . . Indeed, professionals sometimes resort to anticipation and experimenting with sound and voiced text in order to enhance comprehension and maintain characters' defining traits" (p. 154). The reason that voice-over isochrony is less commonly applied in fiction movies is directly linked with the characteristics of those movies. The overlapping dialogues and different speech pace of characters are just a few of the obstacles for voice-over isochrony.

As in the case of the illusion of authenticity, the specific use of voices in voice-over in Poland has its peculiarities. In nonfiction production, the practice includes both women's and men's voices, but, as pointed out by Szarkowska (2009), a preference for a woman's voice is typically limited to cooking programs and nature documentaries. In fiction films, this practice differs, and "regardless of the gender of the screen character, the dialogue in fiction films in Poland will be always read out by a man" (Szarkowska, 2009, p. 189). Rodkiewicz-Gronowska (as cited in Kotelecka, 2006) indicates that the practice of using only men's voices might have its origin in purely aesthetic reasons: "The feminine voice is more personal, warm. It will never be so neutral. . . . I think that feminine voice is too subjective and does not match the movie" (p. 162). According to this stance, which criticizes subjectivism from a rather subjective and questionable point of view, all utterances are read by the same male voice artist because of issues of credibility related to gender prejudices, somewhat established within the same prejudiced framework. It is therefore not surprising that this "mismatch between the gender (and also the age)"

(Szarkowska, 2009, p. 189) is pointed out as the major flaw of voice-over translation in fiction movies and might seem strange for foreigners.

As stated by practitioners (Sepielak, 2010), the decision about which voice will be used in a program, regardless of the voice artist's gender, also affects the translation process, because the reading pace differs among voice artists. All practitioners emphasize, however, that voice artists should have clear elocution and read continuously with a monotonous tone and a stable reading tempo (Sepielak, 2010). On the other hand, in Western European countries, and in other Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Russia, and Lithuania), the choice of the voice artist depends on the gender of the character being translated. Hence, male voice artists translate male characters, and female voice artists read the translations of female characters. In Poland, on the other hand, the choice of the voice artist depends on the genre being translated. Another significant difference in the established practice in Poland refers to the number of voice-over artists: Whereas in Poland only one person translates all the characters, in Western European countries, each character has his or her own voice artist, which effectively makes this practice closer to dubbing.

Finally, despite the similar practice of using two soundtracks in both nonfiction and fiction films, the function those soundtracks fulfill is, in fact, different and strongly depends on the two already-mentioned characteristics. On the one hand, in nonfiction products, the coexistence of two soundtracks relates to voice-over isochrony and literal synchrony—two factors that generate an illusion of authenticity. On the other hand, in fiction films, the existence of the original soundtrack seems to be “an important factor in the perception, since . . . the voice-over version allows them to hear the original voice of the actors” (Woźniak, 2012, p. 212). It could be assumed, then, that those functions are related to different expectations among viewers. Moreover, they strongly depend on another key element in the voice-over translation: synchrony.

Synchrony in Voice-Over

Research on synchrony in voice-over is scarce. Grigaraviciute and Gottlieb (1999) analyze the potential semantic and stylistic loss when translating the Danish TV series *Charlot and Charlotte* for voice-over in Lithuanian. Their conclusion regarding synchrony in voice-over is that some seconds are left at the beginning of dialogues, although “the Lithuanian voices continue for as much as a couple of seconds after the Danish lines have been spoken” (p. 48).

Another important study on synchrony in voice-over is presented by Orero (2006), who based her proposal on Chaume's (2004) classification in dubbing and adapts different types of synchronies for voice-over translation. The first type—*kinetic synchrony*—is based on the assumption that “the message read by the voice which delivers the translation must match the body movements which appear on screen” (Orero, 2006, p. 257). The second category proposed by Orero is *action synchrony*, which requires that voice and action on the screen match. The third category refers to *voice-over isochrony*, and, as already mentioned, is determined by the fact that the translation should fit into the typically short period of time available, leaving some words of the original soundtrack audible at the beginning and end of the utterance. A later in-depth study carried out by Franco, Matamala, and Orero (2010) proposes a fourth

category of synchrony that is closely related to isochrony and the function of the illusion of authenticity. This new type of synchrony, called *literal synchrony*, refers to a literal translation of the audible words. Franco, Matamala, and Orero emphasize, however, that word-by-word translation might result in unconventional phrasing or alien syntax that, instead of strengthening the illusion of authenticity, could have the opposite effect; therefore, it is sometimes not preferred.

An interesting insight into the aspect of synchrony in voice-over is also presented by Woźniak (2012). The author shifts the focus from documentaries to voiced-over fiction movies in Poland, discusses the principles of invisibility and obtrusiveness in voice-over, and suggests transforming voice-over to voice-*in-between*. According to Woźniak, the voice artist “should deliver the text in pauses and gaps in the original dialogue or, if this is not possible,” to reduce the impact by leaving whole sentences or coherent parts of them audible” (p. 216). Such manipulation, as stated in Krzyżaniak (2008), creates the illusion that viewers are listening to the original soundtrack and are able to detect intonation and emotion. Although this assumption is sound from a theoretical point of view, it is not feasible in practice, especially in fast and overlapping dialogue.

The classification of synchrony and the different methods to achieve them in voiced-over fiction movies in Poland are also addressed by Sepielak and Matamala (2014). Their analysis finds that all four types of synchrony previously identified for nonfiction by Franco, Matamala, and Orero (2010) might also be found in fiction products that are voiced-over into Polish—although to different degrees, which might result from the disparate nature and characteristics that define both genres. The methodology used by Sepielak and Matamala (2014) constitutes a basis for the current analysis.

Methodological Approach

Because this study is descriptive, the methodology involves a detailed analysis of the target texts with an exclusive focus on the multilingual segments in four fiction films voiced-over into Polish: 103 replicas⁴ in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, 108 replicas in *Nine*, 118 replicas in *Avatar*, and 570 replicas in *Inglourious Basterds*. The previous introductory study (Sepielak, 2014) analyzed which translation techniques were employed to transfer multilingual elements in voiced-over translation in the four movies. It revealed different functions of multilingual elements used in the four movies. More precisely, in *Nine*, the multilingual context is introduced in a loose way and reminds the audience where the plot takes place. The plot is set in Italy, and, although most of the characters are either Italian or French, they speak English with a strong Italian or French accent and interlay Italian and French words in their dialogue. Similarly, in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, the Spanish language reminds the audience of the setting but

⁴ The unit of replica is adapted from Merino Alvarez (1994), who defines it as a minimal structural unit. According to Merino Alvarez, “beyond the use made of grammatical units or larger units (acts or scenes in theater, film scenes, or sequences in a movie), the dramatic text is elaborated on the page, and also on stage and screen, as an exchange of replicas. In each of these, we have, in general, the character’s name, or discourse that belongs to him or her, together with the indications that surround the oral performance of the speech” (p. 3; my translation).

additionally performs an important function as languages mark clichés and stereotypes. In *Avatar*, multilingualism has a completely different nature. The language, Na'vi, was entirely invented for the film,

with the intention of giving more depth and an appearance of plausibility to the fictional world with which it is associated. Multilingualism clearly marks the line between humans and Na'vi people, but it is also a tool with which to present the Na'vi perspective within the movie. (Sepielak, 2014, p. 159)

Finally, in *Inglourious Basterds*, the language plays a crucial role in the plot and often defines the progression of events. The procedure of introducing multilingualism is not limited to language but also embraces accent and body language and contributes to the credibility of the events.

The analysis, primarily based on the classification of 10 translation techniques proposed by Gottlieb⁵ (1997), described a new translation technique—*exposition*, which provides no translation and leaves the original soundtrack perfectly audible but comprehensible to the target audience. This introductory study also analyzed the multilingual replicas from two perspectives: a global one, which referred to the whole replica (macrounit), and a detailed one, which focused on the multilingual element only (microunits). This fragmentary distinction within replicas, useful when analyzing different patterns of introducing and translating multilingual context, is not, however, relevant for the analysis of synchronization techniques. Rather, such an analysis is based on three complementary aspects—the image, the original soundtrack, and the translated soundtrack—all of which represent a global approach and should be analyzed as such. Hence, this study takes the macrounit as a basis for the analysis, with the goal of verifying how diverse translation techniques with different kinds of synchronization might reinforce—or, on the contrary, undermine—the function of multilingual segments in the movies (see Sepielak, 2014).

The analysis of voice-over isochrony and literal synchrony compares the interdependence of two soundtracks. To offer a structured framework, the presentation includes the time code record (TCR), which indicates when the utterance begins and finishes in both soundtracks. The results will be presented as shown in Table 1. Organizing the data this way allows comparison between the time code record of the original soundtrack (1) and the translated one (3), and, thus, indicates whether a word or words in the original version was/were audible (6). The transcription of the original version (2) and the translated one (4) has two objectives: It identifies the translation techniques, based on Gottlieb's (1997) classification, and it indicates whether literal synchrony was applied (7). Because the study focuses on multilingual segments, English is used as a back-translation (8) in both versions to make the analysis possible.

⁵ Although Gottlieb (1997) originally uses for his classification the term *strategy*, it has been replaced with the term *technique* to maintain a differentiation between translation technique and translation strategy. According to Molina and Hurtado (2002), those two terms “occupy different places in problem solving: strategies are part of the process, techniques affect the result” (p. 507). Gottlieb's (1997) classification includes the following strategies: expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation.

Table 1. Example of a Translated Segment.

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
00:21:25– 00:21:25	<i>FATHER:</i> Hola, hijo. <i>8. (Hello, son.)</i>	00:21:28– 00:21:28	<i>OJCIEC:</i> Witaj. <i>8. (Hello.)</i>	Condensation	Full isochrony	Yes

Because action and kinetic synchronies provide coherence between two important elements—the translated soundtrack and the visual channel—statistics on how many replicas have maintained this type of synchrony are not feasible. The analysis would have to take into account not only each replica but each word of it and relate it not only to every scene but to every shot of the scene to establish whether coherence exists between those two channels. The multiplication of elements to analyze would become endless. Therefore, following the principle of parsimony, the descriptive statistics for action and kinetic synchronies will not be provided. Instead, the analysis focuses to fragments where action synchrony is not kept and examines the results caused by the lack of this type of synchrony.

The next section provides a representative selection of the detected synchronies and translation techniques and discusses the implications of how some solutions may reinforce the function of multilingual elements in some cases and undermine it in others.

Voice-Over Isochrony

The notion of voice-over isochrony assumes that the translation should fit in the time available for the voice-over in such a way that the beginning and end of the original utterance are audible. In multilingual segments, this kind of synchrony allows viewers to identify a multilingual context. There is, however, no specific indication of the voice-over isochrony unit of measurement. In other words, it is undefined whether the gap between the start of the original and the onset of translation should be calculated in seconds, milliseconds, frames, or audible words. Although most authors mention a unit of a second or seconds when defining voice-over isochrony (see Franco et al., 2010; Luyken et al., 1991; Orero, 2006), for the purpose of this analysis, the basic unit of voice-over isochrony is measured in words. The shift from seconds to words is due to another type of synchrony closely related to voice-over isochrony—that is, literal synchrony, where the basic unit is word. To determine whether voice-over isochrony is present in an utterance, at least one open-class word of the original soundtrack should be audible. Open-class words, in this article, are those that carry the content or the meaning of a sentence, in contrast to close-class words, which form grammatical relationships within a sentence (Murray, 1995).⁶

⁶ It should be noted that this assumption might be not reliable because it might be language-dependent.

The analysis revealed that the practice of voice-over isochrony might, in fact, take different forms: *full isochrony*, where at least one word is heard at the beginning and the end of the utterance; *initial isochrony*, where at least one word is audible only at the beginning; and *final isochrony*, where at least one word is heard only at the end of the utterance.

The general analysis demonstrates that, in all four movies, the practice of keeping voice-over isochrony in the multilingual segments is a challenging task. In *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, 68 out of 103 (66%) replicas kept voice-over isochrony. In *Nine*, 38 out of 108 (35.1%) replicas applied this kind of synchrony. In *Avatar*, 33 replicas out of 118 (27.9%) of the segments kept voice-over isochrony, and *Inglourious Basterds* maintained half of the replicas (50.1%) with voice-over isochrony. All four movies use a common practice where voice-over isochrony is kept in a rather reduced number of replicas, although this reduction is larger in some movies than in others.

Another common feature of the four movies is the frequency distribution of different types of voice-over isochrony. In all four movies, the most applied voice-over isochrony is the type where only the beginning of the replica in the original language of the movie is audible. Although the percentage of replicas with initial isochrony varies between the movies—*Vicky Cristina Barcelona* 42.7%, *Nine* 22.2%, *Avatar* 17.7%, and *Inglourious Basterds* 25.6%—it is still the most prevailing type of voice-over isochrony. The same pattern might be observed when it comes to the least applied type of voice-over isochrony. In all the movies, final isochrony is rather scarce (1.9%, 2.7%, 1.6%, and 6.1%, respectively). Full isochrony, where the beginning and the end of the segments were audible, was kept in 22 replicas in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (21.3%), in 11 replicas in *Nine* (10.1%), in 10 replicas in *Avatar* (8.4%), and in 105 replicas in *Inglourious Basterds* (18.7%).

Despite the common pattern in the frequency distribution, it can be concluded that, in practice, there is no intentional voice-over isochrony involved. These findings are consistent with the opinion expressed by professional translators (see Kotelecka, 2006), who point out that the standard practice consists of the voice artist reading the translation after hearing the original utterance. There are no technical guidelines for the time or space unit suggesting when the translation should start and when it should end. The examples provided above indicate that voice-over isochrony gains an additional and probably crucial value in multilingual movies as it becomes the only means for accentuating the multilingual context.

These findings lead to a fundamental question about whether voice-over is an appropriate audiovisual mode for multilingual movies considering all the loss that is caused by the lack of voice-over isochrony. A possible solution to this issue is to introduce subtitling for L3 elements so that viewers could identify and enjoy the coexistence of various languages in the movie. This hypothesis would support Heiss' (2004) suggestion of introducing a "multiplicity of modes" (p. 208) to translate multilingual movies, but in this case combining subtitling and voice-over instead of dubbing (see Heiss, 2004). It should then be verified whether the identification of various languages is significantly more effective in a voiced-over and subtitled version than in a solely voiced-over version.

Further analysis reveals that, in all four movies, voice-over isochrony is related to four main translation techniques: condensation, transfer, paraphrase, and decimation, although the four movies use the technique to varying degrees. In *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and *Nine*, voice-over isochrony appears mostly in replicas where condensation is used as the translation technique (45.6% and 15.7%, respectively). Table 2 presents an example of initial isochrony and a condensation translation technique that prevail in most replicas. In the example presented in Table 2, the Polish voice-over leaves audible the first word of the original version at the beginning. This maneuver allows viewers to hear that the main character speaks Spanish. Although the replica is condensed because it omits the repetitive information ("Are you going to drink vodka now?" and "What's wrong with you?"), the full voice-over isochrony is not kept, and the last word of the replica is overlapped by the translation.

**Table 2. Voice-Over Isochrony: Initial Isochrony;
Translation Technique: Condensation, Vicky Cristina Barcelona.**

1. Time code record original:	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
00:47:49– 00:47:57	<i>JUAN ANTONIO:</i> ¿Vodka? ¿Te vas a tomar un vodka ahora? Con todas las pastillas que te has tomado,¿Te vas a tomar un vodka ahora? ¿Tú estás loca, o qué te pasa? (<i>Vodka? Are you going to drink vodka now? With all the pills you have taken, are you going to drink now vodka? Are you crazy or what's wrong with you?</i>)	00:47:50– 00:47:57	<i>JUAN ANTONIO:</i> Wódki? Chcesz teraz pić? Po zażyciu tylu pigułek? Oszalałaś? (<i>Vodka? Do you want to drink now? After having all the pills? Are you crazy?</i>)	Condensation	Initial isochrony	Yes

In *Avatar* and *Inglourious Basterds*, the condensation technique is second to the transfer technique, which helps maintain voice-over isochrony in 17.7% and 26.3% replicas, respectively. Table 3 provides an example that combines this translation technique with initial isochrony. The syntactical structure in both Na-vi and Polish allowed for a literal translation of the text that almost perfectly overlaps with the original fragment, leaving only one word of the original version audible at the beginning, as was

the case in the condensation technique example presented in Table 2. In this case, however, the identification of the context is not as direct as in the previous example when considering that Na-vi is an artificial language created specifically for *Avatar*.

Table 3. Voice-Over Isochrony: Initial; Translation Technique: Transfer, Avatar.

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
00:10:43– 00:10:47	(Norm) Na'vi: 'Awvea ultxari ohengeyä, nawma sa'nok lrrtok siveiyi. <i>8. (May the Great Mother smile upon our first meeting.)</i>	00:10:44– 00:10:47	Niechaj Wszechmatka rozświetli uśmiechem nasze spotkanie. <i>8. (May the Great Mother smile upon our first meeting.)</i>	Transfer	Initial isochrony	Yes

As mentioned, initial isochrony is the most used technique in all four movies. However, the analysis revealed that whole voice-over isochrony is also used, although to a lesser degree. Table 4 presents an example that combines initial isochrony and the paraphrase technique, the third most applied translation technique in the four analyzed movies. This different expression but with the same meaning in the context leaves the first and last words audible. In this example, the maneuver is significant because it represents the switch between English as L1 (the main language of the source text) and Italian as L3 (other language than L1 presented in a movie). Polish, being the only language of translation (L2), does not introduce this distinction. Hence, voice-over isochrony becomes the only way to accentuate the multilingual context.

Table 4. Voice-Over Isochrony: Whole; Translation Technique: Paraphrase, Nine.

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
00:59:11– 00:59:13	STEPHANIE I'll have one of those. <i>Due.</i>	00:59:12– 00:59:12	I dla mnie. 8. (<i>And for me</i>)	Paraphrase	Full isochrony	No

Table 5 presents an example that combines final isochrony with the paraphrase translation technique. In this example, both the original and the translated soundtrack begin at the same time. The Polish translation finishes a second before the original soundtrack as the character Col. Landa pronounces each word very carefully and slowly. The Polish voice artist maintains the same tempo throughout the movie.

Table 5. Voice-Over Isochrony: Final; Translation Technique: Paraphrase, Inglourious Basterds.

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
00:05:15– 00:05:17	COL LANDA Puis le lait est ce que je préfère. 8. (<i>Then milk is what I prefer</i>).	00:05:15– 00:05:16	Wolę napić się mleka. 8. (<i>I prefer to drink milk</i>)	Paraphrase	Final isochrony	No

The paraphrase translation technique is beneficial in some cases because it exposes the original soundtrack, but where the tempo of the dialogue is much faster, it might require other techniques to condense the information. One solution, then, is to use the translation technique of condensation, omission, or decimation to maintain the whole isochrony. An example of this technique is shown in Table 6. The fast tempo of the dialogue and overlapping lines of different characters oblige the Polish voice-over to recur to an abridged expression with a reduction in content. Despite this significant reduction of the verbal content, the message is still conveyed with the help of the visual channel and the audible original soundtrack, probably comprehensible by the target audience considering that the first words are proper nouns. Decimation helps to expose the beginning and end of the replica in the original and allows viewers to experience the original voices and emotions of the characters. Although this technique is used in all four movies, it is very scarce and limited to scenes where various characters speak at the same time.

**Table 6. Voice-Over Isochrony: Whole;
Translation Technique: Decimation, Vicky Cristina Barcelona.**

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
01:26:47– 01:26:50	JUAN ANTONIO María Elena, María Elena. Mira lo que has hecho. No puedes traer una pistola a casa. Mi amor, no puedes traer una pistola a casa. 8. (<i>María Elena, María Elena, look what you have done. You can't bring home a gun. My love, you can't bring home a gun.</i>)	01:26:51– 01:26:51	Coś ty zrobiła? 8. (<i>What have you done?</i>)	Decimation	Full isochrony	No

The analysis revealed two additional translation techniques related to voice-over isochrony: expansion in *Inglourious Basterds* and dislocation in *Avatar*. However, due to their rare use and space constraints for this article, examples will not be provided.

Literal Synchrony

Literal synchrony, as mentioned, consists in translating the audible original at the beginning and end of an utterance, trying, as much as possible, to maintain a word-by-word correspondence between the source language and the target language. It is directly related to voice-over isochrony and can be analyzed only in those segments when at least partial voice-over synchrony is maintained. As pointed out by Luyken et al. (1991):

The first and last words will not only be heard by the audience but very often be understood by some of them. Because of this, the translator, while struggling to render the message contained in the statement, will also have to give a much more exact translation of the two to four words at the beginning and the end. Sometimes even a well-considered semantic translation will not suffice and a literal translation will have to be given. (p. 141)

Luyken et al.'s prescriptive approach is criticized by scholars (Franco et al., 2010; Orero, 2006, among others) who state that an idiomatic translation that meets the grammatical and acceptability expectations of the target language is better than a translation that maintains literal synchrony with an alien syntax or unconventional phrasing. Another critical approach toward literal synchrony is presented by Mayoral (2001), who raises serious doubts about whether the presence of two soundtracks, the original one and the translated one, in the case of Spain, really makes sense, because the viewers' knowledge of foreign languages is typically insufficient for such a cognitive effort. Mayoral's stance gains considerable relevance for this study, based on a multilingual corpus, where the coexistence of various languages (English, Spanish, Italian, German, and French) undermines the utopian assumption of literal synchrony. This synchrony becomes even more questionable in *Avatar*, where the artificial Na'vi language was designed for the movie and was unknown before. The assumption that viewers in this case would compare the translation to the original version is simply impossible, as shown in the example presented in Table 7. Although the beginning is perfectly audible, it would be impossible to establish whether the replica keeps literal synchrony. Only the pivot English translation, which appears in the original version in the form of subtitles but disappears in the Polish version, allows us to categorize the translation technique and the literal synchrony.

Table 7. Na'vi Language and Literal Synchrony in Avatar.

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
00:42:53– 00:42:57	Neytiri: Ma sempul, oel ngati kameie. 8. (<i>Father, I see you.</i>)	00:42:54– 00:42:58	Ojczy, widzę cię. 8. (<i>Father, I see you.</i>)	Transfer	Initial isochrony	Yes

Given these arguments, it seems that literal synchrony does not constitute a goal in the translation process but is related to and depends on the features of the translation technique. In other words, some translation techniques enable literal synchrony to be used because of the very nature of the translation technique. In fact, all the replicas with the transfer technique, regardless of whether partial or not, kept literal synchrony, as shown in the example presented in Table 8. Literal synchrony is easy to keep, especially in replicas with a phatic function, such as the one presented in Table 8, or with short answers such as "Oui," "No grazie."

Table 8. Literal Synchrony with Transfer Technique in Nine.

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
01:05:40– 01:05:40	DOCTOR RONDI Signor Contini. 8. (<i>Mister Contini</i>)	01:05:41– 01:05:41	Panie Contini 8. (<i>Mister Contini</i>)	Transfer	Full isochrony	Yes

With other translation techniques, the proportion of literal synchrony in relation to voice-over isochrony is significantly smaller. For example, for the condensation technique in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, literal synchrony appears in only 11 replicas out of the total of 47 (10.6%). In *Nine*, out of 17 replicas with voice-over isochrony, literal synchrony was applied only in 7 segments (6.4%). Finally, for the same translation technique in *Avatar* and *Inglourious Basterds*, the ratio is 4 to 7, and 18 to 76, respectively. This decreasing tendency again is related to the intrinsic characteristic of the translation technique. As presented in Table 2, in some instances, the structure of a replica allows the literal synchrony to be kept. But in other cases, as shown in the example presented in Table 9, this maneuver is no longer a priority. As shown in Table 9, the audible original fragment does not correspond to its Polish translation. As the condensation technique is used to save some time and space for the translation, literal translation becomes less important.

Table 9. Condensation Translation Technique, No Literal Synchrony, Inglourious Basterds.

1. Time code record original	2. Original version	3. Time code record Polish version	4. Polish version	5. Translation technique	6. Voice isochrony	7. Literal synchrony
01:11:20– 01:11:27	Bridget Ja, Sie haben Recht. Genghis Khan! Das würde ich nie geraten. 8. (<i>Yes, you're right. Let's see. Genghis Khan! I would never have gotten that.</i>)	01:11:21– 01:11:28	Sprawdźmy. Genghis Khan! W życiu bym na to nie wpadła. 8. (<i>Let's check. Genghis Khan! I would never have gotten that.</i>)	Condensation	Initial isochrony	No

The characteristics of other translation techniques—paraphrase, decimation, expansion, or dislocation—underline the divergence of syntactical form between the original and the translation. This is why, in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and *Avatar*, literal synchrony does not appear in any replica with the above-mentioned translation techniques, while in *Nine*, only one replica with the paraphrase technique does maintain literal synchrony. In *Inglourious Basterds*, there are some replicas with literal synchrony translated by means of paraphrase (5), decimation (4), or expansion (1). Given their single character and taking into account the doubtful function of literal synchrony in multilingual movies, no examples will be provided.

The examples and results from the analysis support the argument presented by Franco et al. (2010), who emphasize that literal synchrony can be kept only when it meets the acceptability expectations of the target language. In multilingual movies, this prescriptive instruction of translating audible fragments lacks reasonable foundations for two main reasons. First, literal synchrony assumes that viewers understand all languages used in the movie. In *Inglourious Basterds*, this is four languages, and in *Avatar*, it would refer to an artificial language created for the movie. The second reason undermining the assumption of literal synchrony refers to a lack of time for such a cognitive effort. One or two seconds are not enough for viewers to identify the switch between languages and then to compare whether the translated version is translated literally. However, further research should be undertaken to verify these assumptions.

Action Synchrony

As observed by Sepielak (2013), action synchrony can take two forms: “1) audio enhances the visual or 2) audio complements the visual” (p. 52). The first form is encountered when both audio and image have the same reference, thus enhancing the explanatory function of the audio. In the second form, audio and image complement each other with no unnecessary repetitions. These enhancing and complementary functions are significant in nonfiction movies because they are closely related to the informative and explanatory nature of these products. However, the format of fiction films differs from the format in nonfiction productions. In fiction films, the plot is usually based on dialogue, which might take a different tempo. Due to the seemingly spontaneous interactions in fiction films (such as an argument breaking out), all voices can blend into one indistinct noise. On the contrary, in nonfiction films, there is generally a figure such as a narrator who maintains the same narrative pace. The informative function of nonfiction movies imposes a clear division between distinct figures that appear in the production. As the function and format in fiction films change, so does the form of action synchrony. Considering that fiction films are full of dialogue, the function of action synchrony consists in keeping the point of view held by the audience of the original version of the movie.

In voice-over movies, this point of view might be affected by the translation itself or by the time-space constraints, as shown in the following example from *Inglourious Basterds*. In the scene where Lt. Aldo Raine wants to extract information about the location of German units from Private Butz, Corporal Wilhelm Wickie acts as an interpreter for Private Butz. The point of view of the original version shows the figure of an interpreter as a key element in the communication between Private Butz and Lt. Raine. What is also significant is the perspective taken by the viewer who, similar to Lt. Raine, must rely on Wickie’s

translation to understand Private Butz. In the Polish version, however, this point of view is affected by the lack of action synchrony as the voice artist reads the dialogue without keeping the distinction between Wickie, Private Butz, and Lt. Raine. Polish viewers do not have to rely on Wickie's translation to understand Private Butz, because his utterances are immediately delivered by the voice artist. Wickie's function as an interpreter becomes less significant in the communication and might even be confusing as he repeats the message.

The introduction of a character that performs the function of a translator is characteristic of multilingual movies and might fulfill two objectives. On the one hand, as in the previous example, the interpreter helps characters understand one another. On the other hand, as noted by O'Sullivan (2011), "interpreters might be generated more by the audience's need to understand than that of the other characters" (p. 163). This is the shift of perspective adopted in the Polish version.

Similarly, in *Avatar*, some characters become intradiegetic interpreters, and the role division is kept in the translated version. In the scene where the main character Jake wants to regain the trust of the Omaticaya people and ask Tsu'tey to translate his speech, Polish viewers are presented with the same perspective as viewers of the original version. Polish viewers not only understand Tsu'tey's role but can hear the Na'vi language. This exposition of L3 elements is important because it strengthens the multilingual context.

As mentioned, one of the characteristics of fiction films is their format based on dialogue that might overlap or become indistinct. In these scenes, it is impossible to use action synchrony due to the intrinsic feature of Polish voice-over of using a single voice artist. In scenes with many characters talking at the same time being voiced by one voice artist, the divisions between characters and their utterances become unclear. A scene in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, where Juan Antonio and Vicky are interrupted by María Elena, who bursts in to the room furiously with a gun, is an example of overlapping voices. The original version leaves the dialogue in Spanish and does not provide any translation. The perception of the scene relies on the image and raised voices of Juan Antonio and María Elena.

In the Polish version, on the other hand, a voice artist reads the dialogue. However, because Juan Antonio and María Elena speak at the same time, it is impossible to synchronize the utterances with the characters on screen. Despite the ambiguity that might have been created by the lack of action synchrony, the effect of the scene is similar to the effect of the original version. The image and audio cooperatively work toward the communicative goal in an integral way.

Kinetic Synchrony

Kinetic synchrony, similar to action synchrony, refers to the coherence between audio and image. However, it is exclusively limited to characters' body language that should be synchronized with the information conveyed verbally. An example of kinetic synchrony is encountered in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* in the scene when María Elena becomes angry after finding out that Cristina decides to leave her and Juan Antonio. María Elena gesticulates by pointing a finger at Juan Antonio's head and screaming in Spanish "Te lo metes en la cabeza!" which means "You plant it in your head." In Spanish, the gesture (image) and the

utterance (audio) match, because they refer to Juan Antonio's head. Interestingly, the original version resorts to subtitles for the Spanish elements and uses the technique of paraphrase, translating the utterance in English as "That's not it!" which does not coincide with María Elena's gesture. On the other hand, the Polish version uses yet another expression: "Wbij to sobie do głowy!" which means "Get it into your head!" making the body movement coherent with the utterance. In the Polish version, the relation between both channels—audio and visual—gains an enhanced meaning as the audio refers literally to what is presented in the image.

The analysis of kinetic synchrony found that, in multilingual fiction films, body language might be important for strengthening the multicultural context. In some instances, as in *Inglourious Basterds*, kinetic elements are inserted into the plot, as in the scene where Lt. Hicox gives his British origin away by ordering three glasses of rum and holding up three fingers: the three fingers from the index finger to the ring finger. As later explained by Bridget von Hammersmark, the German way of indicating the quantity of three is to hold up the three fingers from thumb to middle.

In both cases, whether the kinetic synchrony refers to simple coherence between the audio and the image (as in the *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* example), or it imposes an extralinguistic meaning (as in the *Inglourious Basterds* example), it is not difficult to keep this type of synchrony in the translated version. In fact, no incongruence between body movements and audio channel could be detected in the four movies analyzed. A possible explanation for this outcome is related to the translation technique used. Most of the multilingual replicas are translated by the transfer or condensation techniques (Sepielak, 2014), which seem to enable the effective use of kinetic synchrony. However, the limited number of movies analyzed here does not allow for a causal conclusion to be drawn.

Conclusion

This study provides an exhaustive analysis mapping how two important aspects—synchrony and translation techniques—function in voiced-over multilingual fiction films. The findings have several implications. First, future research should include the distinction between voice-over used in nonfiction productions and in fiction films, because the general perception and practice differ in those two conditions. Second, in the context of multilingual movies, some of the main assumptions, especially about voice-over isochrony and literal synchrony, should be revisited. Third, the findings suggest that the multiplicity of modes suggested by Heiss (2004) could be used in multilingual movies where voice-over and subtitling might cofunction to re-create a multilingual context. However, further experimental research is necessary to verify whether the identification of L3 elements would improve in a version combining the two modes of voice-over and subtitling. The research also should seek to determine whether this solution is feasible, effective, and accepted by audiences. Last, the analysis suggests further research to study viewers' reception of multilingual movies. Although this article is concerned with multilingual movies in voice-over, studies that include other modes such as dubbing and subtitling should be carried out. Continued research on voice-over in multilingual movies with an experimental approach would embrace the voice-over translation mode from different perspectives and would provide a more comprehensive understanding of voice-over translation.

To summarize, a descriptive analysis of synchrony in multilingual movies sheds some new light on how different types of synchrony are applied, examines their functions in multilingual movies, and finds a relation between synchrony and translation techniques. The analysis raises important questions about some basic assumptions of the voice-over translation mode, such as its association with the illusion of authenticity, the practice of voice-over isochrony, and the reasoning behind literal synchrony. Finally, the analysis suggests that the technical point of view presented should be linked to the perceptual aspect of multilingual movies as a coherent totality.

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