

4

Finding your voice



Level: 



Let's think!

1. What is your favourite cartoon or animated character?
2. Do you know how the voices of your favourite cartoon or animated characters are made?

PLAYLIST



READ ALONG



Poe Lam: The art of voice acting

1 Artificial intelligence (AI) is gradually replacing voice actors in the industry. To gain a better understanding of this trend, we had the privilege of speaking with Poe Lam, a seasoned voice actor who remains sceptical about the use of AI. During our interview, Poe recounted his eventful career and shared valuable insights on how technology could be used to the advantage of voice actors. 5

2 Who is Poe Lam?

Poe is a Hong Kong voice talent with close to 40 years of experience in the industry. He started out as a voice actor working for a local TV channel. Later, he founded his own company, which provides actors for voice-over work in films, TV programmes, animations, commercials and corporate videos.



10

Extract from the interview:

3 How did you get started in the voice acting business?

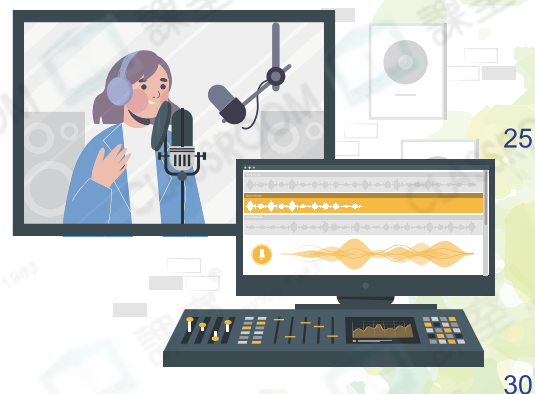
I had just finished secondary school and was looking for a job when I came across an advertisement for an actor's training course at a TV station. Intrigued by the opportunity, I enrolled in the course. After completing training, some of my fellow classmates were selected to become actors, while others were assigned to join the voice-over team. At the age of 18, I was a bit camera-shy at the time, so I was directed to join the latter group. 15

4 What kind of training did you receive?

I mostly learnt to do things hands-on. Even though I only had minor roles, I would spend the entire day in the studio. There, I closely observed senior colleagues and tried my best to replicate their techniques. 20

5 What skills are important for a voice talent?

As a voice actor, one of the most important skills is the ability to convey the personality and emotions of the character you're portraying solely through your voice control. Unlike traditional acting, you don't have facial expressions or body language to rely on, so your voice must carry the weight. Additionally, when doing voice dubbing, it's essential to synchronise your dialogue with the character's mouth movements. This requires you to adjust the pace of your delivery. There is a myth that voice actors must possess unique or distinctive voices. In fact, having a voice that is too recognisable can limit your job opportunities, as you may only be considered for similar roles in the future.



6 How did your career develop?

I started my career in voice-over work by dubbing American TV dramas and Japanese animations into Cantonese. As the TV station shifted towards producing local content, I left the company and worked as a freelance voice actor instead. Initially, I focused on dubbing foreign films for local audiences. However, with the emergence of cable and satellite channels like Cartoon Network and Disney Channel, new opportunities arose. Eventually, I established my own voice talent company, which I continue to run to this day.

7 What does the future hold for the voice acting industry in Hong Kong?

As people become more educated, the demand for dubbed versions of TV shows and films, particularly in English, may decrease. They may prefer to watch content in English rather than in Cantonese because they want to learn more about authentic language usage. For example, they can learn how to use slang or understand cultural references. On the other hand, AI and online games may provide new job opportunities for professionals in the voice-acting industry.

~540 words

Looking into Grammar

A **transitive verb** requires an object to complete its meaning.

✓ Artificial intelligence (AI) **is** gradually **replacing** voice actors in the industry.

An **intransitive verb** does not require an object to complete its meaning.

✓ ... the demand for dubbed versions of TV shows and films ... **may decrease**.

? Circle the transitive verb(s) and underline the intransitive verb(s) in the second sentence of paragraph 1.

Read the text and answer questions 1–8. For multiple-choice questions, choose the best answer and blacken ONE circle only. (23 marks)

1. Read paragraphs 1–2. Determine whether the following statements are True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG).

	T	F	NG
(i) Poe’s first job was as a voice actor at a radio station.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(ii) Poe hires out voice actors to TV stations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(iii) Poe has won multiple awards for voice acting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(iv) Poe thinks AI will definitely take over the role of human voice actors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Read paragraph 1. What is the challenge that voice actors are facing?
-

3. Below are the events in Poe’s life. Fill in each blank with NO MORE THAN TWO words taken from paragraphs 3–4.

PAST	Poe graduated from (i) _____.
↓	He took classes in order to receive (ii) _____.
PRESENT	He started learning to do (iii) _____ by working in a studio.

4. What does ‘the latter group’ (line 19) refer to?
-

4 Which two options are mentioned in paragraph 3?

5. Below is a summary of how good voice actors should be. Fill in each blank with ONE word taken from paragraph 5.

Overall, good voice actors need to have an understanding of each (i) _____ that they are recording for, excellent control of their (ii) _____, and the ability to adjust the pace of their speech to match the lip (iii) _____ of every role.

6. Read paragraph 5. According to Poe, which of the following is TRUE?

- A. Unique voices limit job opportunities.
- B. Recognisable voices open up job opportunities.
- C. Voice actors must perform with good facial expressions.
- D. Voice actors have better prospects than traditional actors.

6 What does ‘myth’ (line 32) mean?

- A B C D

7. Complete the summary of paragraph 7 by selecting the best options from the choices below.

The demand for dubbed versions of TV shows and films may be (i) because more people have become (ii) in the original (iii) of the content. They can understand it without the need for (iv) . There are also those who watch content in order to (v) how to speak English (vi) .

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| (i) <input type="radio"/> A. rising | (ii) <input type="radio"/> A. unfamiliar | (iii) <input type="radio"/> A. props |
| <input type="radio"/> B. dropping | <input type="radio"/> B. curious | <input type="radio"/> B. pictures |
| <input type="radio"/> C. created | <input type="radio"/> C. knowledgeable | <input type="radio"/> C. actions |
| <input type="radio"/> D. remaining stable | <input type="radio"/> D. indifferent | <input type="radio"/> D. language |
-
- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| (iv) <input type="radio"/> A. dubbing | (v) <input type="radio"/> A. think | (vi) <input type="radio"/> A. in films |
| <input type="radio"/> B. acting | <input type="radio"/> B. plan | <input type="radio"/> B. in real life |
| <input type="radio"/> C. usage | <input type="radio"/> C. discover | <input type="radio"/> C. in a funny way |
| <input type="radio"/> D. slang | <input type="radio"/> D. decide | <input type="radio"/> D. culturally |



8. Rebecca and Jim are discussing the extract from Poe's interview. Use the information from the text to match each speech bubble with the paragraph that contains similar ideas. Write the paragraph number under the speech bubble. Each paragraph number can be used ONCE only.

Rebecca

Well, you know, voice acting is challenging as it requires precise control over the speed of your speech to match with the character's mouth and facial movements.

Paragraph (i) _____

I've read that part too. It's interesting that he was trained to be an actor but became a voice actor instead.

Paragraph (iii) _____

Jim

Yes, Poe also mentions that he used to closely watch experienced voice actors, taking note of their styles.

Paragraph (ii) _____

His career fascinates me. His work as a freelance voice actor has contributed to his success!

Paragraph (iv) _____

Vocabulary

GLOSSARY



A. Complete the interview below with the given words. Make sure your answers are grammatically correct.

Adjective: authentic freelance sceptical seasoned

Noun: commercial studio technique

Verb: convey dub synchronise

The impact of AI on the media and entertainment industry



Rebecca: Welcome to our channel! Today we have an expert in artificial intelligence (AI) here to discuss its impact. Let's welcome Kelvin!

Kelvin: Hi, everyone! I'm delighted to share my insights with you all.

Rebecca: Kelvin, some people are (1) _____ about the use of AI. They worry that it may replace humans in the workplace. Could you tell us if this is highly likely to happen?

Kelvin: AI technology has developed to a level that it's now possible to create an AI version of real actors that can (2) _____ lines and emotions like a / an (3) _____ actor who has worked years in the industry. They are so (4) _____ that you might mistake them for human actors. This then raises the question. If AI is just as good as an actor who has spent many years perfecting his (5) _____, then why should (6) _____ spend millions of dollars to hire actors?

Rebecca: Besides actors, are there other workers in the media industry at risk of losing their jobs?

Kelvin: Well, voice actors are also at risk. AI narration software is now able to (7) _____ with the mouth movements of people on screen. I think that, in the near future, there won't be a need to hire voice actors to (8) _____ films into another language.

Rebecca: If human voice actors are no longer needed, I suspect that AI won't be used to do voice-overs for films only, will it?

Kelvin: Indeed. Many companies, especially small ones that don't have large budgets, are now turning to AI to produce voice-overs for their own (9) _____. Many full-time voice actors are already having a hard time finding enough work, and have to look for (10) _____ work instead. I predict that there will be more big changes in the industry within the next few years.



B. Look at the pictures and label them with the given words or phrases.

Areas where voice talents are needed

audiobooks

airport announcements

cartoon shows

online videos

radio advertisements

telephone systems

TV commercials

video games



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____



6. _____



7. _____



8. _____

Writing

Your thoughts on voice acting

Voice-overs have grown in popularity in recent years. What do you think of it? Write an article in about 180 words.