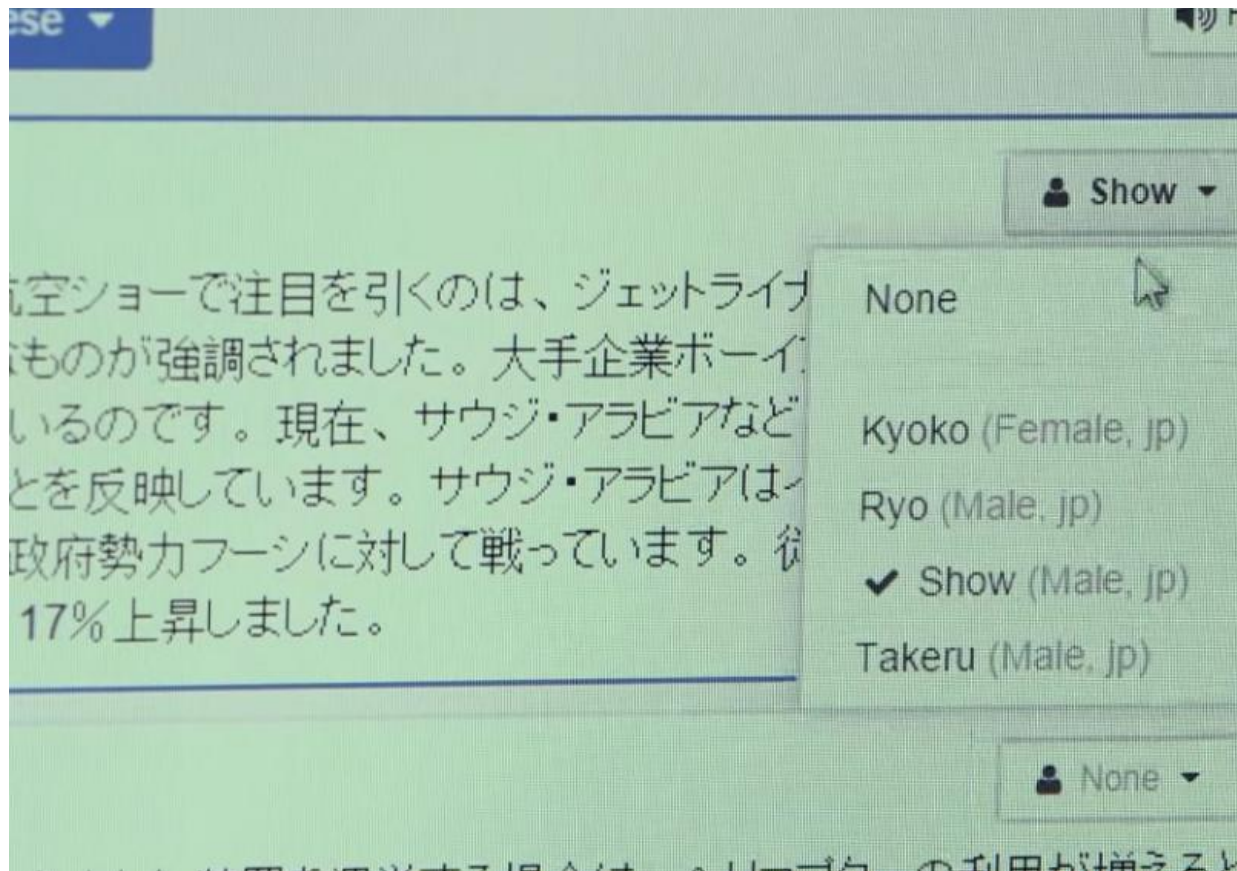


BBC: Voice-over video service to ease language barriers

December 21 2015, by Nancy Owano



People around the world continue to rely on the BBC to know what is happening without fear or favor. The BBC innovators are upping their

game with a strategic use of technologies to make sure they are not only reaching all the people but reaching all the people in their own languages as soon as video news happens.

The latest developments involve their initiative to bring their public short [video](#) news packages in multiple languages.

The "voice-over" service is called Today in Video. It's designed as multilingual voice-overs on top of existing video packages.

This will enable the BBC to offer video to audiences around the world with efficiency as a report would be automatically translated into multiple languages.

The group that developed the service is the BBC News Labs, which *Broadcast* described as the BBC's innovation unit.

The video illustrates how the service works, via preparation with shots taken at a Dubai air show event. "First we take an English language video," said the presenter. They upload the script. The computer translates it. Next journalists "polish up the text to the BBC's highest standards." The next step is when they voice it in a new language. They can choose their favorite synthetic voices. Nieman Lab wrote that the journalist can choose his or her favorite synthetic voices, with male and female [options](#). On with the show.

(Whew. That "polish up" step would calm people. Andrii Degeler, contributing reporter at *Ars Technica UK*, also explained, "Content will still be checked by human journalists before it's uploaded online. Another bit of news about this came in as an *Ars Technica* update to the story, with a BBC spokesperson responding to an *Ars Technica UK* request for comment. "We are currently using Google Translate but it could just as easily be another translation engine and we're likely to work

with others as the project progress.")

Nieman Lab similarly described the process: The BBC service "allows a single editor to generate multi-lingual voiceovers on top of an existing video package and script. The script is translated automatically, edited by a journalist, and converted into a computer-generated voiceover. As the [project](#) develops automatic subtitles will be added."

In the video demo, Susanne Weber, language technology producer, said they are still developing the technology and making improvements. "We want to develop new tools for the journalists so that they can translate video material much more easily and much more efficiently."

Will the service take jobs away from journalists? "Although it might seem that [technology](#) like this could take jobs from humans, an anonymous source at the BBC said that 'the intention was instead to free up reporters to do more journalism rather than administrative tasks,'" said Degeler.

The BBC is starting the pilot service in Japanese, with Russian soon to follow. They hope to add more languages next year. *Broadcast* said the pilot was funded by the World Service.

Broadcast reported that the BBC has plans to include automatically generated subtitles as part of future updates. *Broadcast* said the Today in Video pilot will run until [April](#).

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