

# Optimizing Voice Actor Selection: Techniques for Character Animation Performance

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## ABSTRACT

Voice acting plays a pivotal role in breathing life into animated characters, significantly shaping their personality, believability, and emotional impact. The effectiveness of a character's portrayal often depends on how well the chosen voice actor aligns with the character's traits, narrative function, and overall performance style. This study explores techniques and considerations involved in selecting suitable voice actors for character animation. The study employs content analysis of diverse sources, including academic literature, professional handbooks, industry blogs, online articles, and prior scholarly research in voice acting and animation. Through this analysis, the research identifies key factors influencing the selection process, such as vocal quality, performance versatility, emotional resonance, and character-actor compatibility. Additionally, the study highlights common challenges encountered by animators and casting teams, including balancing artistic integrity with production constraints, addressing cultural and linguistic appropriateness, and ensuring consistency across long-form productions. Findings from this investigation contribute to a clearer understanding of effective casting strategies in animation production. The research proposes preliminary guidelines to support animators, casting directors, and production teams in making informed, character-driven voice casting decisions. Ultimately, this study underscores the integral relationship between vocal performance and animated storytelling, and it advocates for more systematic and research-based approaches to voice actor selection within creative production pipelines.

**Keywords:** Voice acting, character animation, casting techniques, vocal traits, cultural factors, character design, qualitative research

## INTRODUCTION

Voice acting is fundamental to character animation, transforming static visuals into vivid personas that resonate emotionally with viewers. From warmth and humour to intricacy and gravity, a character can be given depth by the proper voice, drawing viewers in beyond what is shown on screen. This is particularly important in animation, as maintaining emotional depth through visual exaggeration frequently necessitates similarly expressive voice performance.

**This study aims to achieve specific objectives, as follows:**

- To identify the way vocal traits such as tone, pitch, and clarity influence the perceived suitability.
- To investigate the role of personality and character design in the voice actor selection process.
- To examine the influence of language and cultural background on casting decisions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Voice acting plays an important role in character development and audience engagement in an animation. Contrary to live action films, their facial expressions and body language support dialogue delivery yet animated characters rely mostly on the vocal performance to express identity, emotion, and narrative. Per se, the selection

of voice actors must be strategic, considering both vocal ability and how well the voice matches the character's personality and story arc.

Researchers have shown that to be a good voice actor they must hinge on various vocal elements such as tone, pitch, emotional delivery, and clarity. These factors help the audience connect with the characters and believe in their world. Inharmonious vocal performance can cause a disconnect that reduces immersion, weakens character authenticity, and affects audience enjoyment. In addition, vocal traits must align with visual animation elements, such as character design, movement, and behaviour. This alignment enhances believability and ensures consistency across all aspects of the character.

Technological advancements, such as voice conversion tools, have made it easier to adjust vocal traits. However, the human element actor's skill in controlling vocal qualities remains crucial. The process of selecting a suitable voice actor for character animation is multifaceted and deeply rooted in both artistic interpretation and technical precision. As the literature reveals, the most effective voice performances result from a careful balance between vocal qualities, acting skill, and alignment with character design and narrative intent. Key vocal traits such as tone, pitch, emotional delivery, and clarity are fundamental in ensuring that animated characters feel authentic, engaging, and believable to the audience.

The role of the voice actor goes beyond simply delivering lines; they must embody the character's personality and work in harmony with the visual design to create a cohesive on-screen presence. Their ability to maintain vocal consistency while adapting to the demands of the character's personality and storyline is vital. Personality portrayal, in particular, is a central factor in how the audience emotionally connects with a character, and this relies heavily on the voice actor's range and interpretive depth. Visuals such as character design and voice must work together. When character appearance and vocal attributes align, the result is a seamless performance that strengthens immersion and narrative flow. This synergy is often guided by the director's vision and the actor's ability to interpret visual cues and respond with appropriate vocal strategies.

Cultural and linguistic relevance further shapes voice actor selection. In a global media landscape, it is essential to consider how language, pronunciation, and cultural background influence audience perception and acceptance. A culturally accurate and respectful voice performance not only adds authenticity but also prevents misrepresentation or misunderstanding. In a nutshell, the literature consistently supports a holistic approach to voice actor selection one that values vocal technique, emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability. By understanding and applying these factors, producers and casting directors can ensure that voice actors not only match their characters but also elevate the storytelling experience in animation.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative method to explore the intricate process of selecting suitable voice actors for character animation. Given the subjective nature of human voice or voice perception, character design and cultural nuance, a qualitative approach allow a deeper understanding of the contextual and interpretative elements that influence casting decisions. All through this analysis, examines both existing academic discourse and real-world animated productions to identify patterns and insights.

This research structure around two method that is content analysis and case studies. The content analysis involve itself in depth literature review, drawing on past academic journals, production notes, interviews, and industry texts as well as other useful book related to voice acting or voice over character, character animation development and cultural representation. This review supports the theoretical foundation of the study by providing establish framework and terminologies related to the vocal traits, personality alignment and cultural consideration.

Secondly, this research does case studies of selected animated series of four different animated series, Futurama (1999–2013), Hazbin Hotel (2024–2025), Kobato (2009–2010), and Jujutsu Kaisen (2020–2023). These shows were chosen due to their distinctive character designs, multicultural voice casting, and a range of voice acting styles. These were selected also due to diversity in character design, international production context, and voice acting styles. By analysing voice actor performances and casting choices in these series, the research identifies

real-life examples of how voice, character personality, and cultural context are integrated in production decisions.

Data collection is conducted through secondary sources including video content from the shows, voice actor interviews, and production notes, as well as scholarly and fan-based analyses. Emphasis is placed on evaluating vocal traits such as pitch, tone, and clarity show how these correspond to audience perceptions of character believability. The study also examines how personality traits and visual design of the characters impact the casting process. Episodes were reviewed for vocal qualities (pitch, tone, clarity), character-voice alignment, and cultural representation.

Finally, the research pays close attention to language and cultural representation, especially in shows that feature multilingual voice acting or are adapted across different languages. These elements are analysed to understand how cultural background influences voice actor selection, especially in international productions. Overall, this methodology enables a holistic exploration of the artistic and technical decisions behind voice casting in animation.

## RESULT AND FINDING

Table 2: Summary on Similar Technique to Find Suitable VA for Animation Character

Title	Authors	Elaborations	Keywords	Characteristic	Sound
Voice disguise using a voice transformation system (2015)	Tomi Kinnunen, Chen Yang, Ivan Kukanov, Junichi Yamagishi	Shows how voice actors can use transformation tools to adapt voice identity, helping in portraying various characters convincingly.	Tone Pitch Personality Character design	Adaptive voice skill	Voice modification
Effect of voice quality on recognition of speaker's gender and emotion (2022)	Mahdiah Pouyanfar, Mohammad Reza Rezvani	Highlights the importance of voice clarity and tone in conveying believable gender roles and emotional states.	Tone Emotion Clarity Pitch Gender	Emotionally aware casting	Authentic vocal delivery
Voice Conversion: State-of-the-Art and Challenges (2017)	Tomi Kinnunen et al.	Emphasizes the role of tech in voice flexibility, suggesting voice actors should understand and adapt to such tools.	Tone Pitch Natural Personality	Tech-savvy vocal range	Digital voice shaping
The impact of voice quality on listener impression (2021)	David R. Einberg et al.	Demonstrates how vocal quality influences audience trust and immersion key traits of effective voice acting.	Tone Emotion Clarity Personality	Audience impact	Engaging vocal presence
Casting gender roles: How Australian children's television represents gender through voice (2007)	Catharine Lumby, Elspeth Probyn	Stresses the importance of matching vocal characteristics to gendered character traits for audience relatability.	Tone Pitch Gender Character design	Gender-appropriate casting	Role-fitting tone
Effect of Acting Experience on Emotion Expression and Recognition in Voice (2015)	Rebecca Rogers, Annika Grass, Matthias Drolet, Julia Fischer	Suggests that emotional authenticity in voice acting isn't limited to professionals; natural emotion expression is key.	Tone Emotion Natural Personality	Authenticity over training	Spontaneous expression

The influence of vocal training and acting experience on measures of voice quality and emotional genuineness (2014)	Steven R. Livingstone, Deanna H. Choi, Frank A. Russo	Reveals how vocal training enhances emotional control and clarity useful for actors aiming to refine vocal delivery.	Tone Emotion Clarity Natural Timing	Trained emotional control	Clear, expressive delivery
Sound Design: The Expressive Power of Music, Voice and Sound Effect in Cinema (2001)	David Sonnenschein	Provides techniques for using voice expressively, helping voice actors understand how to evoke emotion and rhythm effectively.	Tone Emotion Clarity Timing Personality	Expressive storytelling	Musicality in voice
Designing Sound for Animation (2005)	Robin Beauchamp	Offers practical guidance on how voice, effects, and timing are integrated in animation essential knowledge for voice actors.	Tone Clarity Emotion Natural Timing Character design	Coordination with animation	Expressive timing

Table 3: Most Frequently Mentioned Elements and Keywords about Voice Actor from Previous Study

Authors	Keywords								
	Tone	Emotion	Clarity	Timing	Personality	Character Design	Pitch	Gender	Natural/Cultural
Tomi Kinnunen, Zhen Yang, Ivan Kukanov, Junichi Yamagishi	/				/	/	/		
Mahdieh Pouyanfar, Mohammad Reza Rezvani	/	/	/				/	/	
Tomi Kinnunen et al.	/				/		/		/
David R. Feinberg et al.	/	/	/		/				
Catharine Lumby, Elspeth Probyn	/	/			/	/	/	/	
Rebecca Jürgens, Annika Grass, Matthis Drolet, Julia Fischer	/	/			/				/
Steven R. Livingstone, Deanna H. Choi, Frank A. Russo	/	/	/	/					/
David Sonnenschein	/	/	/	/	/				
Robin Beauchamp	/	/	/	/		/			/

According to Table 3, the keywords that are most used in the literature are Tone and Emotion. By taking acknowledgment on what is frequently mentioned by the authors in the literature, it highlights the broad use of tone and emotion as most important technique as a voice actor must have to bring a character animation to life as bringing it a soul itself.

## Vocal Trait Suitability

(Futurama, 1999–2013)

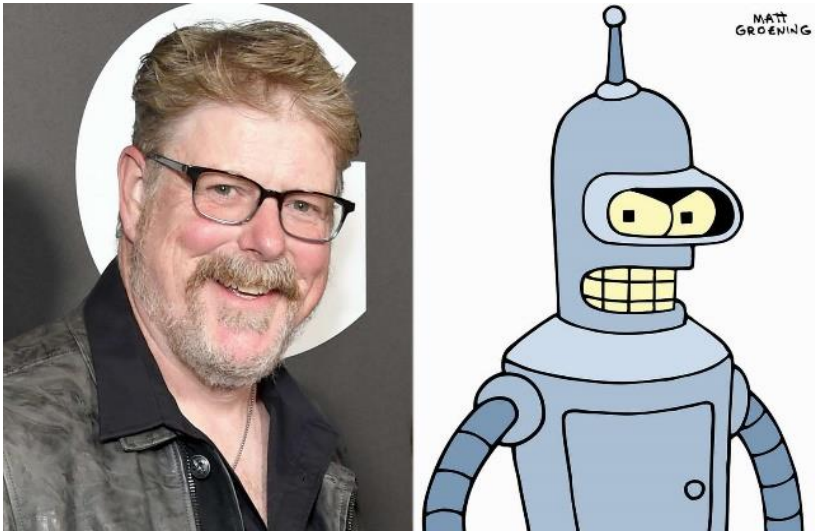


Figure 3: Voice Actor Bender Bending Rodriguez Side by Side

Bender's voice is characterized by a brash, metallic tone delivered with sarcasm and streetwise energy. John DiMaggio uses a gravelly pitch and varied pacing to enhance the robot's rebellious and chaotic nature. The emotional resonance in Bender's voice swings between smug arrogance and drunken melancholy, lending unpredictable depth to an otherwise comedic character. His expressive performance allows the audience to infer complex emotions, even when the animation remains static or expressionless.

A consistent tonal exaggeration gives Bender larger-than-life energy, making him memorable in ensemble casts. The clarity of his voice, despite a synthetic edge, ensures punchlines land effectively and emotional cues remain accessible. This clarity becomes especially important as Bender often mumbles or slurs, yet remains intelligible. Example voice line: "Bite my shiny metal ass!" is delivered with pride and irreverence, embodying his loud-mouthed personality and comedic role.

(Hazbin Hotel, 2024–2025)



Figure 4: Voice Actor of Charlie Side by Side

Charlie's voice is defined by a high pitch, clear articulation, and emotionally charged tone. Erika Henningsen lends a bright, hopeful energy that embodies Charlie's optimistic nature. Her voice is consistently upbeat, yet nuanced enough to convey vulnerability during emotionally complex scenes. This makes her vocal performance a vital tool for expressing internal conflict and narrative hope.



The vocal modulation uses theatrical influences, drawing from musical theatre dynamics. Her vocal brightness avoids becoming shrill by incorporating breathy pauses and melodic rise-and-fall intonation. This expressiveness helps maintain character charm. An example line: “I-I know there’s still good in everyone!” is emotionally weighted and performed with trembling conviction, resonating with her redemption arc.

(Kobato, 2009–2010)



Figure 5: Chitose Mihara from Kobato

Chito’s voice, provided by Kana Hanazawa, features a soft, high-pitched tone with clear pronunciation and gentle pacing. These qualities create an aura of innocence and emotional sensitivity. Hanazawa delivers lines with intentional hesitation and breathy modulation, enhancing Chito’s kindness and politeness.

The emotional delivery is subtle, ideal for slice-of-life storytelling. Her consistent vocal softness builds audience empathy without needing visual exaggeration. Example line: “Kobato, ganbarimasu!” demonstrates emotional enthusiasm through melodic pacing and youthful energy.

(Jujutsu Kaisen, 2020–2023)







Figure 6: Geto from Jujutsu Kaisen

Geto’s voice is defined by a low, controlled pitch with restrained emotional expression. Takahiro Sakurai uses slow, deliberate pacing and minimal inflection to create an aura of intelligence and menace. This vocal calmness adds to Geto’s ideological complexity and emotional ambiguity.

Even in emotionally heightened scenes, Sakurai maintains stoicism, emphasizing Geto’s detachment and resolve. For instance, in “Jujutsushi dake no sekai ni shiyou” translation “Let’s create a world only for sorcerers” his tone is measured and unwavering, making his words chilling rather than fiery. His vocal traits support his role as a charismatic yet tragic antagonist.





## Character Design and Personality Fit

Table 4: Summary of Character Design and VA Trait Work with One Another

Voice Actor (VA)	Character & Series	Remarks
John DiMaggio	 Bender Bending Rodriguez (Futurama, 1999–2013)	<p>Bender’s simple, grey robotic body relies heavily on voice acting to establish personality. His design lacks the detailed facial cues common in expressive animation, putting more weight on vocal tone and timing. DiMaggio’s coarse, confident delivery fits perfectly with Bender’s smug, morally flexible personality. The vocal tone adds personality layers that are not apparent from visual design alone.</p> <p>His unpredictable temperament and comedic timing are strengthened by tonal modulation, supporting his chaotic-neutral alignment. For example, his exaggerated indignation “This is the worst kind of discrimination: the kind against me!” highlights both ego and victim complex. Through such delivery, his voice becomes integral to the narrative role, aligning closely with his character traits and design.</p>
Erika Henningsen	 Charlie Morningstar (Hazbin Hotel, 2024–2025)	<p>Charlie’s blonde, princess-like aesthetic is paired with delicate, graceful animations. Henningsen’s voice matches this appearance, bringing sincerity and hope to every line. The tone supports her gentle personality, while rapid pacing and upward inflection convey her enthusiasm and nervous energy.</p> <p>As a character torn between idealism and Hell’s reality, Charlie’s voice becomes the emotional anchor for her development. The line “Welcome to the Hazbin Hotel!” delivered with dramatic cheer, reflects both her dream and naivety. The vocal delivery bridges her appearance and psychological depth, reinforcing her identity.</p>
Kana Hanazawa	 Chitose Mihara (Kobato, 2009–2010)	<p>Chito’s character design featuring large, expressive eyes and a delicate frame matches perfectly with her vocal tone. Her shy posture and reserved facial expressions are complemented by a voice that avoids dramatic spikes, instead favouring gradual modulation. This synchronicity creates a tranquil, believable character.</p> <p>Her personality is pure-hearted and hopeful, and Hanazawa’s performance captures that with vocal restraint and warmth. Example line: “Sumimasen, ano... arigatou...” is delivered with shy politeness, reinforcing her modest visual traits and character values.</p>
Takahiro Sakurai	 Geto Suguru (Jujutsu Kaisen, 2020–2023)	<p>Geto’s composed appearance a traditional robe, long hair, and subtle smirk requires equally restrained vocalization. Sakurai matches this with speech that is smooth and confident, allowing Geto’s dangerous beliefs to be expressed with persuasive calm. His lack of vocal volatility reflects psychological control and maturity. Visual cues such as posture and narrowed eyes are mirrored vocally by lowered intonation and slowed articulation. Example line: “Watashi wa tadashii to omotteru” by translating it means “I believe I’m right” gains moral gravity through its quiet conviction, further aligning voice and design.</p>

## Cultural and Linguistic Context

Table 5: Character development through VA Influence of Accent

Anime Character	Influence
 <p>Bender Bending Rodriguez (Futurama, 1999–2013) Voice by John DiMaggio</p>	<p>Bender's American accent and slang usage are steeped in late 20<sup>th</sup> century Western humour. His sarcastic phrasing, rapid-fire insults, and exaggerated inflections evoke urban blue-collar stereotypes, adding cultural familiarity for domestic audiences. DiMaggio's choices reflect Western tropes of the loud, rule-breaking antihero, resonating with audiences who appreciate irony and satire.</p> <p>This vocal alignment also mirrors societal commentary, where Bender often acts as a caricature of industrial labour or consumer cynicism. Example: "This is the worst kind of discrimination: the kind against me!" exemplifies narcissistic entitlement through exaggerated American humour. The line's timing and intonation turn critique into comedy.</p>
<p>Charlie Morningstar, The Princess of Hell</p>  <p>(Hazbin Hotel, 2024–2025) Voice by Erika Henningsen</p>	<p>Charlie's American accent is soft, with standard diction that avoids regionalism, making her accessible to a broad audience. Her inflection, however, mimics musical theatre tones common in Western productions, aligning her character with Disney sequel princesses. Henningsen's delivery is culturally coded as "safe," reinforcing Charlie's role as a beacon of hope in a chaotic world.</p> <p>Her style also aligns with American values of empathy, inclusivity, and reform. Example voice line: "I just... I just want to help them, even if no one else believes in it" is vulnerable yet resolute. Its delivery reflects cultural emphasis on self-belief and redemption.</p>
 <p>Chitose Mihara (Kobato, 2009–2010) Voice by Kana Hanazawa</p>	<p>Chito speaks in formal Japanese with careful honorific use, aligning with traditional Japanese feminine ideals. Her soft-spoken tone and polite phrasing reflect cultural archetypes of humility and service. This makes her especially relatable within Japanese domestic media, where 'moe' culture values vocal cuteness and emotional vulnerability.</p> <p>Example voice line: "Hito no kokoro o iyasu koto ga dekitara, sore dake de shiawase desu" by translating it meant "If I can heal someone's heart, that alone makes me happy" embodies Japanese values of selflessness and emotional support, aligning language and character.</p>
 <p>Geto Suguru (Jujutsu Kaisen, 2020–2023) Voice by Takahiro Sakurai</p>	<p>Geto speaks in formal Japanese with philosophical phrasing and few contractions. His diction and pronunciation are academically clean, evoking the speech patterns of teachers or monks. This aligns with Japanese archetypes of stoic, fallen heroes or anti-heroes who possess noble ideals twisted by tragedy.</p> <p>Sakurai's delivery avoids slang and speaks to traditional values like self-discipline and societal order. Some known voice line in the animation "Kanjō wa suteta. Hitsuyō nai" meant here is "I discarded emotion. It's unnecessary" reflects cultural notions of emotional control, reinforcing Geto's role as a tragic, intellectual antagonist.</p>



## CONCLUSION

The selection of suitable voice actors for character animation is a multidimensional process that requires careful consideration of vocal traits, character design compatibility, and cultural-linguistic context. Through a qualitative analysis of literature, case studies, and practical industry examples, this study has shown that vocal qualities such as pitch, tone, clarity, and emotional expression are critical in shaping how audiences perceive animated characters. Characters like Bender from *Futurama* and Charlie from *Hazbin Hotel* showcase how exaggerated or gentle tones contribute directly to the character's personality and narrative purpose, proving that voice alone can define identity and evoke strong viewer connection.

Moreover, aligning voice with character design and psychological depth ensures that the animation feels believable and immersive. When voice performances are matched with the character's physical appearance and emotional arc as seen with Chito from *Kobato* and Geto from *Jujutsu Kaisen* they form a cohesive whole that strengthens storytelling. In addition, cultural and linguistic accuracy has become an essential consideration in casting, especially in today's globalized media landscape. Accents, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge contribute to authentic performances that respect diverse audiences and avoid misrepresentation. This reinforces the need for casting processes to be both inclusive and reflective of real-world diversity.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that casting voice actors should go beyond intuition or star appeal. Instead, it should be grounded in structured evaluation of vocal suitability, character-voice harmony, and cultural sensitivity. A holistic, research-based framework not only enhances character realism and audience engagement but also supports ethical and culturally respectful representation. Future work may build upon this foundation by incorporating empirical studies from interviews with casting directors, surveys of audience perception could validate the theoretical claims can be done for the future studies, besides comparative work between children's and adult animation would extend applicability, highlighting differences in audience expectations and character archetypes.

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