THE ESSENTIAL GLOSSARY OF TRANSLATION:

THE WORDS YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND TRANSLATION

- "A" Language: the mother tongue of a translator
- "B" language: a language that a translator can speak and write almost as well as their mother tongue
- CAT: Computer-aided translation, or computer-assisted, machine-aided or machine-assisted translation with the aid of computer programs, such as translation memory (see term), terminology management and localization tools, designed to reduce the translator's workload and increase consistency of style and terminology. Not to be confused with machine translation (see term)
- Copy-writing: writing of advertising copy. Translation of advertising copy will rarely be satisfactory due to the different cultural contexts it has to be translated in. Adverts for foreign countries should therefore always be produced in those countries, or at least they should be re-adapted instead of simply translated (see Transcreation)
- L18N: It's the abbreviation for Internationalisation (or Internationalization in American English). Because these two spellings differ just in one character, the idea was to use an expression that works for both. "I" stands for the first character, "18" for the number of characters between the first and last character, and "N" for the last one.
- Interpretation: the action of the interpreter that translates verbally the utterance of a speaker into the language of a listener. Interpretation always refers to oral communication.

- L10N: Abbreviation for Localisation (or Localization in American English). As for I18N, because these two spellings differ just in one character, the idea was to use an expression that works for both. "L" stands for the first character, "10" for the number of characters between the first and last character, and "N" for the last one.

- Language pair: the combinations of languages someone can translate from and into

- Literal translation: translation that closely adheres to the grammar and construction of the source text. A literal translation usually appears "stilted" and unnatural.

- Localization: The translation and cultural adaptation of websites, software, documentation and games. It's more than a simple translation, since the content has to be adapted to the local cultural context and the local market.

- Machine translation (MT): Translation produced by a computer program or use of a translation program to translate text without human input in the actual translation process. The quality of machine-translated text, in terms of terminology, meaning and grammar, varies depending on the nature and complexity of the source text, but is never good enough for publication without extensive editing. Not to be confused with computer-aided translation!

- Proof-reading: checking a text or a translation to ensure that there are no mistakes and that the text is fluent. It's now a synonym for revising.

- SEO: Search Engine Optimization. The process of optimizing a website in order to be more easily found by search engines such as Google, Bing or Yahoo. It's very important to make localization effective. Optimization in this case doesn't mean to make it accurate and without grammar mistakes. It means instead (for the part concerning our work, at least) to use some specific keywords that visitors are more likely to look for. It also means to put these keywords in the right place (such as titles, headlines..) as well as embedded in the code of the page (I know, we're translators and we don't like computer technologies, but we should learn at least a bit of HTML, because some words need to be translated even there...)

- SL: abbreviation for Source Language, the language a translator translates from.

- Source Culture: the culture where the text you have to translate has been produced.

- Target Culture: the culture you have to translate a text for.

- Target Language: the language you have to translate into.

- TC: abbreviation for Target Culture

- TL: abbreviation for Target language

- TM: abbreviation for Translation Memory (see below)

- xcTMX: it means Translation Memory eXchange. It's the pure content of the TM, without the container. If you imagine a TM as a bottle full of water, a TMX file is the water that can be poured from one bottle to another. It is used exactly to exchange the work between colleagues, or to combine two or more TMs together. It can be file-based (saved in a computer) or server-based (saved on a remote server).

- Transcreation: (or creative translation) is the adaptation of a creative work into another language or culture. Therefore, it is more than direct translation or localization of the text, as transcreators focus on capturing the desired persuasive or emotive effect of the original. Transcreation services is a growing new industry.

- Transcription: the process of transcribing a speech to obtain a written text. The text can then be translated.

- Translation: for the insiders, "translation" refers exclusively to written communication, otherwise you're talking about interpretation (don't make the mistake of mixing the two when you talk with a translator; they could get mad at you..)

- Translation Memory (TM): a TM is a database which stores chunks of texts and corresponding translations. While you translate using a CAT tool, the program progressively saves each original sentence and the corresponding translation. In this way it creates a database of translated expressions. Every time you come across the same sentence (imagine you are translating an instruction manual where a lot of expressions are repeated) the CAT tool will suggest to you the translation that you previously did and saved. You can then accept it or change it. It keeps a memory of translated segments. Of course a segment can be one single word, but generally speaking a TM is not just a list of words. If you want a words database you have to use a terminology database. A Translation Memory reduces your work as you will never have to translate the same bit twice.