



# A-Z of Localization

## Alpha's Alphabet

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### A is for... Alpha

Because we think any localization project should start with us! Here at Alpha we have the expertise you need to localize your products and campaigns from start to finish. So, let us be your guide and take you through the rest of the alphabet.

### B is for... Bug Fixing

No, we're not talking about getting the slugs out from among your lettuces. Bug fixing is the critical phase in software localization before a product goes live, where it is thoroughly checked for errors – or bugs – and these are corrected.

Sometimes this is simply a case of checking through screenshots of the final software release; sometimes testers play the game or use the application themselves to fully check through every element of the user interface, i.e. texts, menus, prompts, options and messages. At Alpha we have dedicated teams of engineers and testers who run software and play the games we're working on to make absolutely sure that what goes out to your customers is a high-quality product with no bugs in sight.





## C is for CAT Tools, Context matches and Concordance

It may sometimes seem like translators and localization experts use a whole different language – and you’d be right! A lot of this terminology stems from the use of translation software or CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation) tools. These tools include a termbase (TB [see also “G is for Glossaries”]) and a translation memory (TM) that stores a record of all previous translations.

These translations are either accessed by pre-translating the text (see “P is for Pre-translation”) or through an internal tool called Concordance. Concordance is rather like a search engine within the TM. Linguists can search for single words or even whole phrases to see how they were translated in the past.

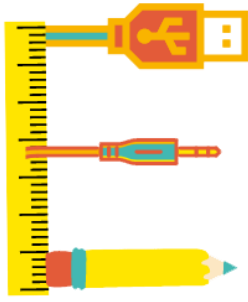
Context matches are segments (such as sentences, see “J is for Join”) that are found in their entirety in the TM – rather than just being word-for-word identical, they appear in the same environment of a document. This ensures that the context is correct and that the translation can be reliably re-used. These segments are often locked before the document goes into translation. This ensures segments that were previously translated are left untouched – saving the linguist time and effort and the client time and money.

## D is for DTP

DTP you ask? Yes, DeskTop Publishing. DTP experts are people who format and layout your final documents, brochures, labels or packaging, usually to match your original. If you send a PowerPoint presentation for translation, the last person at Alpha who will see it is a DTP expert. They will make sure all texts and graphics are arranged just as they should be, ensuring text fits into the boxes and is not truncated, and legends and other information are correctly placed in diagrams and charts. They also localize any graphics or other images that may need adaptation for other languages. They may need to use different fonts, change font sizes and change the page design in case of right-to-left languages like Hebrew or Arabic.



Alpha has a multilingual team of DTP experts who bring many years of expertise to their job.



## E is for Engineering

It might not sound like it has anything to do with localization, but engineering is the key to making sure that your projects are turned around as quickly as possible. The engineering team is responsible for creating gadgets like content connectors, which automate the process of project creation, streamlining and reducing the preparation and management time required.

They are also responsible for working out the best possible workflow solution to suit your particular requirements. At Alpha, our engineers work glove in hand with linguists and project managers to make sure we achieve optimal efficiency. They take care of extracting the elements that need to be localized, and put them back together again at the end. They are precision workers and geniuses!

## F is for Functional Quality Assurance (FQA)

Functional Quality Assurance (FQA for short) is the process of testing software, apps, websites and products in their actual environment to make sure they function correctly. The aim is to ensure that the localization process hasn't introduced any defects.

Testing teams have the actual software or apps installed on a range of different devices. They then use the software/app as normal to try to find any bugs (see "B is for Bugs") which are either functional or linguistic.

Linguistic bugs speak for themselves – these are errors in translation, wrongly placed translated elements, or elements that have been truncated. Functional bugs are where the software, app or game does not actually work, or doesn't let you do something you should be able to do. It also includes other issues such as incorrect times/dates (depending on the target time zone), currencies, units of measurement or national holidays.

Alpha has dedicated FQA testing teams based in Tallinn, Estonia and Cambridge, UK that use a range of devices and operating systems for testing.



## G is for Glossaries

If you want to translate content and put it out globally, you need to standardize your terminology. You don't want people to get confused – you want to make sure the same term is always used for the same thing. If you are talking about a set of Phillips screws, you don't want them being called bolts halfway through your product documentation.

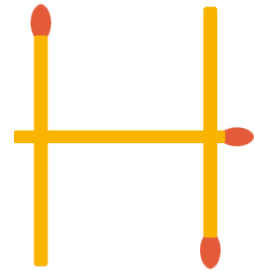
The easiest way to guarantee this is by creating and maintaining a glossary with your preferred translation for all keywords (see “K is for keywords”). This glossary can then be transformed into a termbase (TB), which in turn is attached to all projects completed in a CAT tool (see “C is for CAT Tools, Context matches and Concordance”). This is the best way to guarantee that linguists follow your company guidelines and don’t try to reinvent the wheel 16 times over. Or should that be the spherical moving device?!

## H is for Hardware

You might not think it, but there is a surprising amount of hardware required in the localization business! The days spent trawling through encyclopedia at the local library are long gone, as the internet has overtaken everything as the biggest repository of information in the world (although, of course, you do need to know where to look).

This means that freelance translators the world over have the same hardware requirements: a laptop, earphones, and... super-fast broadband! They also need plenty of software to be able to work using the latest CAT tools (see “C is for CAT Tools, Context matches and Concordance”) and MT plug-ins (see “M is for Machine translation”).

But what about the big localization companies who are working on complex multiple territory projects for global clients? Well, they need servers. And a *lot* of RAM. These servers host all translations as well as all the CAT and LQA tools needed for the linguists and testers to do their jobs. And in the larger localization companies like Alpha, they also host machine translation engines (see “M is for Machine Translation”).



## I is for Internationalization

As well as being a very long word, internationalization refers to an engineering task whereby a product is designed in such a way that it can handle multiple languages, scripts and cultural conventions (currency, number and dates formats) without being re-engineered.

In layman’s terms, it’s about getting your software, program or app ready for localization before the process starts. You don’t want to be told halfway through that actually you have to redesign your entire interface and recreate all your scripts because Arabic reads from right to left...

## J is for Join

Don't worry, we're not a cult! Here it's all about joining segments. You might have heard localization professionals talk about segments and wondered what they are. Segments are translatable units of text segmented by a CAT tool. Mostly, they are sentences, but not always. Any sentence that contains a list of bullet points, for example, will be divided up into several segments.



And, for people working on localization projects, segments are really, really important. Because it is segments that are saved in the translation memory. They are the modules that can be recycled in multiple documents and over many years.

However, for various reasons, segmentation doesn't always work perfectly. Sometimes (usually through poor formatting of the source document, or because of an automated OCR [optical character recognition] process) a sentence gets split into two or more segments in the target language; as a result, the TM won't store that translation in a form that is usable.

When this happens, it's time to "join". That means joining segments where it makes sense and where it ensures that all the information in the source segment is also in the target segment.

It's a crucial element in the modern localization process where human insight into using translation technology tools delivers the best possible outcome. It demonstrates the limits of automation where language is concerned, and shows just how important it is to have a professional translator use their best judgement to adjust the way the tool works. Joined-up thinking, you might call it.



## K is for Keywords

You might just think keywords are critical for SEO (which they are, see "S is for SEO"). But keywords have an important role to play in every translation. If you want your translations to be consistent, you need to make sure the correct terminology is used. Selecting keywords to use for your glossary (see "G is for Glossaries") might seem challenging. For example, which words are key? How many should you pick? Are the same keywords relevant for all

languages?

The answer is simple: if you want all the translators you work with to always use the same word for something, then it's a keyword and it needs to go in your glossary. At Alpha we can help you extract your keywords from documents and previous translations, and compile them into a multilingual glossary, from which we then create a termbase (TB).

These terms are critical: from the moment they appear in a document, the TB will flag them to the translator; once the translation is completed, the QA (quality assurance) check will flag if an incorrect term has been used. Keywords are also critical for SEO, which we'll talk about later.

## L is for Localization

When you're compiling an A-Z guide to localization, well, you have to include it! Localization is where it all begins. It is the generic term for adapting a product or service to a particular language and culture, with the aim of providing it with a local look and feel. It's not just about translating the words – you need the right tone of voice and cultural frame of references.



It's no good referring to Twitter in something aimed at China, or conversely, WeChat in something that's targeting the USA. This is where you need experienced linguists who are well versed in the specifics of both their culture and the industry for which they are providing the translation.

Here at Alpha we have automotive fanatics translating for the automotive industry, financial experts translating for the FinTech sector, and inveterate gamers translating for, yes you guessed it, the games industry. We have a range of in-country experts who understand local cultures and how to adapt brand messages to engage with new audiences.

We live in a global world. But it's good localization that shows you really mean business.



## M is for Machine Translation (MT)

Once upon a time, we all laughed at the idea that machines would ever be able to compete with humans when it came to translation. Then Google switched to using neural programming and artificial intelligence (AI) to train its machine translation (MT) engine. And suddenly, all bets were off.

Arguably the single biggest upheaval of the translation industry since the introduction of computers, the advances in MT production have revolutionized both the industry and the role of translators around the world. Suddenly, rather than starting from a blank sheet, they work on computer-generated translations – with the expectation that they can produce larger volumes, faster.

Very often now, content is run through an MT engine as part of what is known as the “pre-translate” step (see “P is for Pre-translation”). Previously, this step would simply input previous translations from an existing translation memory. Now, anything that is not found in the TM, goes through an MT engine.

The translator then works with a mixture of segments that were translated by humans and stored in the TM, and segments that are fresh from the machine. This means a switch from translating to post-editing – clearly a very different role with a different focus when compared to the traditional task of the translator.

At first, it was a bit of a shock to the system, we admit. But our translators are incredibly adaptable people. And they have got used to this new way of working remarkably quickly.

But beware: not everything can or should be run through MT. While it is very useful for translations that have an informational purpose, it is much less useful for anything that relies on style and wants to engage the reader. It is notoriously bad at coping with elliptic sentences (as in Power Point slides), and since it is heavily context and syntax dependent, it cannot be trusted with software strings or any fragmented texts that you might get out of a content management system.

If your text is very straightforward, uses a limited vocabulary and simple syntax, with a sober, repetitive style – and you have great masses of it and need it quickly – then MT is probably the right solution. Certainly as a first step. You may later decide you want certain parts of it carefully post-edited to make sure it is accurate and does not contain any misinterpretations. Because, without a human review, you can never be sure the machine has not got it totally wrong!

## N is for Non-translatables

Non-translatables are, well, things that don’t get translated. This includes numbers, proper names, copyrighted terms and addresses. The idea is that rather than copying over these things, or even retyping names and numbers, translators can simply click a button to copy those words and figures over into the target segment. This is a time-saving exercise, but also helps to prevent any errors in long number strings such as phone numbers and measurements. And anything that prevents errors is great news!





## O is for Online presence

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the internet is ubiquitous. Most businesses and organizations have a website or an online presence (perhaps a Facebook account or a Twitter profile). Those organizations that have a really effective online presence have not just a website, but also social media accounts that they regularly update in line with their brand and voice.

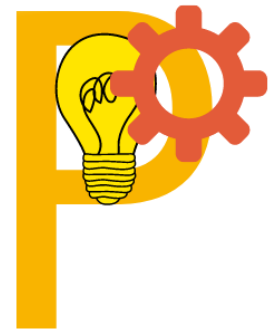
But it's not just about tweeting the odd joke every now and again. Consumers and clients want to know that your company is staying up to date with the latest trends, engaging with its clients online, and providing accurate, useful content rather than just spam. A successful online presence goes beyond what a company does for itself – it includes what other people are saying about your company, and what search engines are bringing up in their results.

The more regular content you put out that is relevant, useful and accurate, the higher up your company will appear in results lists (see “S is for SEO”), but also the better your company's reputation. And if you are producing top quality content in one language, why would you exclude your other target languages and markets?

This is where you need a localization partner who can help with all aspects of localization: not just translation, but also the creation of high-quality content that is specific to your target markets. You want people to know about you, you want people talking about you. It's not about going viral, or being a flash in the pan. It's about building a solid reputation in your field, so that you become the go-to people for information and insight. And that's where Alpha can help you shine.

## P is for Project management, Pre-translation and Post-editing

P is such an important letter, that it covers three important localization topics: project management, pre-translation and post-editing. When you start out on your localization journey, it's easy to think “I don't need a project manager, I know what I want, I can manage it”. But when a couple of months down the line you've got two completed languages, one language that is suffering from delays in LQA, two languages that have mysteriously lost their reviewers, and one language for which the translator has simply disappeared, you might change your mind!



Project management is critical to success, whatever your project – but no more so than in localization. When you localize into several languages simultaneously, there are plenty of things – like setting up the project in the CAT tool (see “C is for CAT Tools, Context matches and Concordance”) of your choice – that can be done once for all languages, rather than seven or eight times.



Often queries and questions are the same for everyone, so only need to be asked once, with the answers then fed back to all teams.

Finally, when you work with a large company like Alpha, one that handles every step of the localization process with their large team of in-house staff, the project manager can keep everyone on track and make sure all languages are delivered in full to an agreed schedule.

The project manager is also responsible for the pre-translation step for each project. This step is key: any relevant translation memories are added to the project, and populate segments with existing, approved translations which can then be locked. This saves both the linguists and you a lot of time, and guarantees that existing content will not be unnecessarily rewritten.

Post-editing, the final of our magical three Ps, is a crucial stage in the modern localization process. This is where content that has been run through an MT engine is checked (see “M is for Machine Translation”), adapted and generally revised. This is a very different task for translators, but one that they are embracing fully at Alpha. For highly technical projects, a well-trained MT engine can considerably speed up the translation and review stage, saving everyone involved time and money.



## Q is for QA

Everyone knows that top quality is critical for success in business. That’s why the QA (quality assurance) step is so important. It’s generally split into Functional Quality Assurance (FQA) and Linguistic Quality Assurance (LQA). We talked about FQA under “F is for Functional Quality Assurance”, so here we’ll just focus on LQA.

LQA is all about picking up those little slip ups that everyone makes, the ones that are so irritating when you spot them. Mistakes with numbers, currencies, capitalization, hyphenation, that kind of thing. If you’re working with a proper, structured workflow, the vast majority of these should be picked up by the automated QA checks that are run when the translator finishes a project. But often these QA checks have to be run again on the final files, just to make sure no errors have been introduced when files are exported from the CAT tool being used (see “C is for CAT Tools, Context matches and Concordance”).

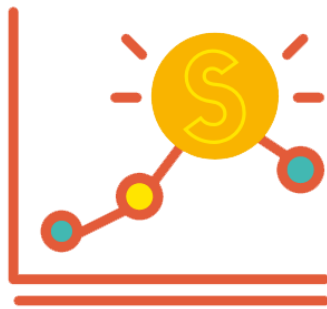
Some of our clients also ask for a specific LQA step within their projects. In these cases, Alpha works with its own Scorecard system, where each error is categorized according to severity. Any major errors are fed back to the translator teams, who then take on board this feedback and correct mistakes in the translation memories. We can also work with our clients’ proprietary LQA frameworks. “A” might be for Alpha, but it’s also for “adaptable”!

## R is for Review

Critical for all translation projects, the Review stage is an integral part of our workflows at Alpha. We work according to the four-eye principle, where all content is always seen by two different people who are experts in their field.

This minimizes the chance of any errors slipping through and ensures that our clients get high-quality translations and content every time. Most CAT tools allow you to track the progress of the Translation and Review stages: the job is assigned to a translator who then submits it to a reviewer. The software means you can see exactly what stage of the project you are at.

At Alpha we also offer Review and Assessment for translations that companies have done internally or by using another provider.



## S is for SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has become absolutely critical to companies in the last decade or so, and it's not hard to see why. With millions of results for common (and not so common) online searches, you don't want to be languishing on the fourth page. You want your company to be one of the first results that flashes up when one of your

keywords is typed in.

SEO is the process of getting your website (or online content) ranked higher in online searches. How does it work? Keywords are a crucial element: you need to make sure that the most frequent search terms for your business are used on your website. You also need to make sure these keywords are used consistently in certain places: for example, headlines and titles. And that they are used in a natural, logical context – not just repeated in a long list at the bottom of the page.

There are a number of tips and tricks that will boost your ranking among search engines. For example, search engines give credit to pages that provide additional, useful information about a word or subject. Not only will this demonstrate your expertise in your industry, it will also improve your ranking. After all, this is one race to the top that you definitely want to win.

## T is for Translation and Transcreation

This one is fairly obvious! But if we're talking about localization, then we have to talk about translation too, as well as its flightier cousin, transcreation. You could say that localization starts and ends with translation: it is certainly a key part!

Translation is the process of transporting the meaning as expressed in one language (the source) to another (the target). Basic requirements are accuracy and faithfulness. The idea is to get the meaning, also called message, across without losing any important information.

Translation is an ancient art, and there are many different theories that try to define what exactly is involved in the process. In its "industrial" form, a translation is a process that provides the equivalent information in another language as its outcome. It must not distort the meaning and neither add nor omit anything.

Transcreation is a term that has not been around for all that long. It can be described as a "higher" form of translation. It asks more creativity from the translator, as it aims at not only conveying the message accurately and without loss of factual information, but is also meant to be evocative and engaging. It takes into account style, register, rhythm and emotional reactions by the reader. It focuses rather more on the target culture, trying to adapt the original message to fit precisely the local audience.

This might mean adding in details that weren't originally there, changing the style and tone of voice so that it suits the target culture better, and sometimes having a completely different communication strategy. It might leave out a reference that is not relevant, or add one that is. This added element of creativity and the necessary decision-taking is more subjective and needs to be approached intelligently.

To succeed with transcreation, a cooperative effort is needed. Just how much freedom do we have? What exactly are you trying to achieve? Who is your target audience? Is there someone in-country whose ideas we can tap into, or who will provide some feedback? What previous experiences have you had that provide valuable insights? These are all useful questions to ask when transcreating content.



## U is for User

When you decide to localize a product or a service, your focus needs to be on one thing alone: your users. Whether you're working on an app or trying to sell high-end consumer goods, your aim is to communicate and connect with your users.

That means a lot of market research before launching your product or services on a market. It means making sure you know who you're speaking to, and what you want to say to them.

It means getting the cultural references right and avoiding cultural faux pas. At Alpha we are here to help you put the user at the center of your localization strategy. Whether it's performing FQA (see "F is for Functional Quality Assurance") with the user experience (see "X is for User eXperience") in mind, or providing market research so you know exactly what your target audience is looking for, Alpha can help you get your business on the right track. And stay on it.

## V is for Voiceover

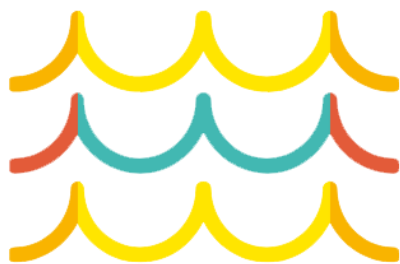
Within localization, you might not think voiceovers are important. Yet customers are 75% more likely to make a purchase when addressed in their own language. And nothing is more natural than dubbing content. In fact, providing an audio track is relatively straightforward when compared to adding subtitles, and adds a lot to your video.



There are some things to look out for with voiceovers. For a start, always use a native speaker with a clear speaking voice and accent. This might sound obvious, but depending on where you are based and where your target audience is, it can be a challenge.

Don't use someone with a very specific regional accent that people from other parts of that country are going to struggle to understand – you want your audio track to work for as many people as possible.

And make sure you choose a professional. There is an audible difference between someone who is an experienced voiceover artist and someone who is just reading from a script. An experienced company like Alpha has a roster of voiceover professionals working in their native tongue so that your listeners will hear your message loud and clear.



## W is for Workflows

Workflows, we hear you say... Surely they just... happen? They're not important, right? Wrong! Planned and organized workflows are key to saving everyone time and effort – and of course money! Nowadays a lot of the general legwork can be done by automation, but this needs to be set up at the start of each project. And of course, what works for one task or client, might not work for the next one.

At Alpha we have years of experience creating and implementing the best possible workflow. We talk to our clients and work out exactly what they need and how we can improve the existing workflow to ease bottlenecks in the system and make sure that an

optimal translation is delivered as quickly as possible. So you can relax, safe in the knowledge that your localization project will run like clockwork.

## X is for User eXperience (UX)

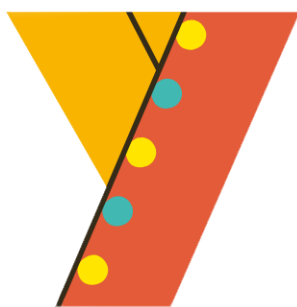
When you're developing a new product, the user experience (UX) is critical. You want users to be engaged and happy with their experience. Any gaps or hurdles that make the UX painful or longwinded need to be overcome – in this day and age, if people can't immediately access whatever it is you are selling, they will quickly give up and go elsewhere.



This means that creating a high-quality UX is key. And an important part of that is both market research and functional quality assurance (see "F is for FQA"). Why market research? Well, you need to make sure that you have a deep understanding of your users. About what they can and can't do. About what they want and need, and conversely don't want and don't need. Only then can you begin to create a UX that meets their expectations and requirements. And wins their praise.

But responding to a need is just the first step. If you really want to make sure your user experience is top notch, you need to make sure that your product and service does exactly what it's supposed to. This means no glitches or bugs. It means pages and menus responding immediately and displaying fully on all devices, operating systems and versions. Studies show that customers quickly get fed up of waiting for websites to load, and if they don't work properly, for example on a mobile device, they simply switch off.

This might seem like a lot to take on board, but at Alpha we can help you with both ends of development: the market research to make sure your product or service is targeted correctly, and the FQA and testing to make sure it works to its full potential. With no bugs or glitches anywhere.



## Y is for Yao

Yao is spoken by approximately two million people in East Africa, and it's possible you've never heard of it. It's one of many smaller, so-called "long tail" languages found right around the world. The term "long-tail" language isn't a linguistic description; rather it refers to those languages that are often forgotten or simply ignored when companies start

localizing their products or services.

It might seem to make financial and strategic sense to stick to localizing into just a couple of key languages: English, French, Spanish and Chinese will certainly reach large swathes of the global population. However, if you really want to communicate with a local market, or target a certain specific region, you need to communicate with your customers in their native tongue.

Of course localizing into 60 languages is a lot harder and more complex than localizing into six. Which is why it's a good idea to work with an experienced language provider who can recruit teams of linguists to cover all your language bases.

At Alpha, in addition to our in-house teams, we have a network of linguists across the globe who can support us for large projects and infrequent languages. So we can come up with a solution for even the rarest of language combinations. Even Yao, if you need it.

## Z is for Zoom

Of course Z is for Zoom, because we have zoomed through localization from A to Z. But also because the video-conferencing app Zoom has become a huge global phenomenon during recent months. How did we ever live without it?



The sudden success of Zoom illustrates just how quickly a market can take off, and how fast you need to respond to a global need across all language bases to be successful. It's all about timing, technology and meeting a global demand – if you can get there fast without compromising quality, you can make a huge impact.

Alpha can help you make the most of these opportunities, even when it involves a fast turnaround, multiple markets and extremely high user expectations.

## And finally...

As you can see, we've covered a lot of ground but hopefully it's been useful. We love talking about this stuff, so if there's a point you'd like to discuss, you have a question or think we've missed something critical, please get in touch.

After all, D is also for dialogue...