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MemoQ: A Strong Contender for the Title of Best Translation Environment Tool

By Naomi J. Sutcliffe de Moraes

I hope many readers have already tried and are using a translation environment tool (TEnt). There are two basic types of environments:

- The dual-column environment used in MemoQ, Déjà Vu X, and others, which includes translation memory (TM) management and terminology database (TB) management as integrated modules.
- The word-processor based environment, like the older versions of SDL Trados and Wordfast, which adds macros to Microsoft Word and provides separate programs for TM and TB management.

The advantage of a dual-column environment is that it is independent of the format of the original document (.doc, .xls, .htm), but one of the disadvantages is having to keep the original document open in the background when formatting context is needed while translating.

MemoQ has solved this problem by providing a preview pane, shown in the bottom left of Figure 1 on

The most important feature in MemoQ is how it allows collaboration with other users regardless of whether or not they have the program, including full SDL Trados compatibility.

page 27. It places each translated segment into the preview as you translate.

Special MemoQ Environment Features

I especially like the search/filter mechanism, shown in the upper left of Figure 1. If you type a word, or several, in the source or target filter, all cells not containing the word(s) are hidden. I find this easier than scrolling through a document like you have to do with most other tools and Microsoft Word. I also like that searching in the source or target language is just as easy, and you can even filter for both source and target languages simultaneously!

MemoQ uses codes for some format-

ting, similar to Déjà Vu X (which uses codes for everything), but like Microsoft Word, it uses buttons for bold, italics, and underline. (These are shown in the upper right of Figure 1.) This is great when the source and target languages have very different grammatical structures. Across also uses a similar system for bold, italics, and underline, although the last time I looked it was not through buttons, but rather a drop-down list, and the drop-down list only contained the options appearing in the source text. If there were no italics in the source, you could not put italics in the target.

The integrated TB feature, similar to the one in Déjà Vu X, is easy to use. Just

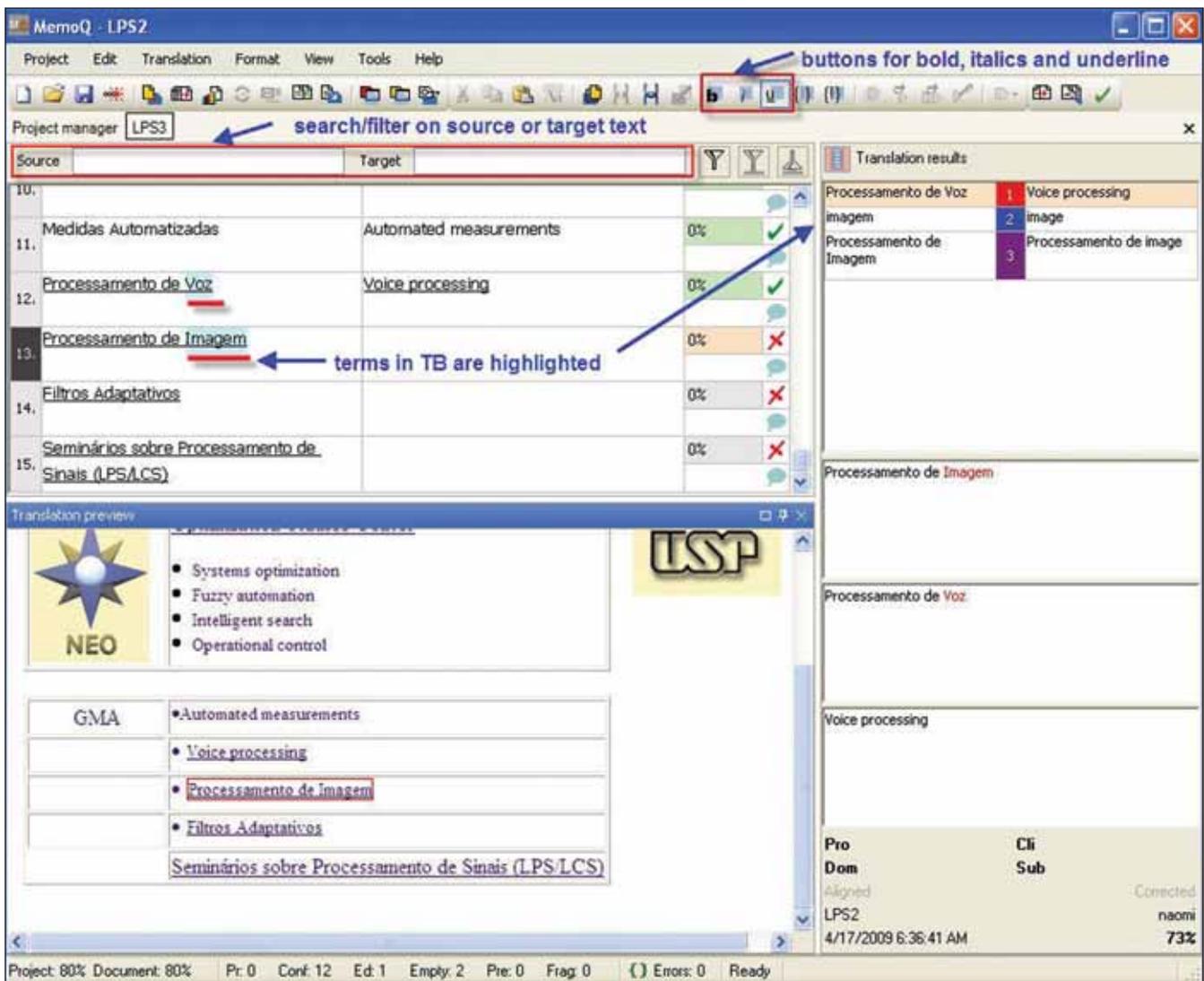
select the term in each column and click, and a small dialog box allows you to add more information. I especially like that it allows you to add alternative spellings/conjugations for a word in the same dialog box, as shown in Figure 2 on page 28. All of the target possibilities show up in the pick list on the right in Figure 2 when any of the source possibilities are encountered in the source text. There is space for additional information,

but it is optional. Note that TB entries can include wildcards, which means you can type in just the stem of a verb, rather than all its conjugations. I do miss Déjà Vu X's lexicon feature, which lets you add terms to a second project-specific database. This is great for proper names and long terms you simply do not want to have to type out 100 times in a given project and do not want in your permanent TB.

MemoQ includes other nice features, for example:

- It works with Dragon Naturally Speaking, the speech-to-text program.
- It can be configured to pre-translate numbers and dates automatically.
- It has an autocorrect function to speed up typing and automatically fix typos. ➔

Figure 1: MemoQ Translation Environment



- It has a quality assurance feature to make sure, for example, that numbers match, identical sentences are translated identically, and terminology is used consistently.
- It allows you to add comments to cells, which are not included when the text is exported.

The shortcuts were not as configurable as I would have liked, but this is a common failing of TEnTs. For example, the default to go from one cell to the next, marking it done, is CTRL-Enter. Why do so many tools ignore the obvious, simple **Enter**? SDLX is the only tool that uses Enter as the default. Across and MemoQ use CTRL-Enter and Déjà Vu X uses the less than optimal CTRL-Down Arrow, which makes you move your right hand far from the home row and is not configurable. MemoQ does let you configure this shortcut, but to anything *but* Enter. Many other shortcuts are configurable.

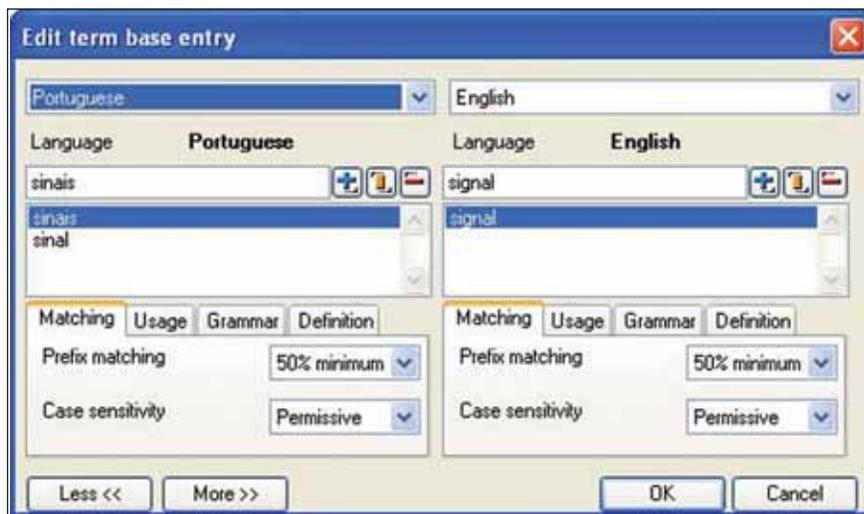
On my personal MemoQ wish list is an integrated Internet search option within the program, like the one Across has been moving toward. For more details, see my review of Across in the October 2007 issue of *The ATA Chronicle*.¹

Under the Hood

The most important feature in MemoQ is how it allows collaboration with other users regardless of whether or not they have the program, including full SDL Trados compatibility. It even lets you edit TTX files (the SDL Trados TagEditor format).

It can export a translation to its own bilingual format (MBD) for editing by another MemoQ user, or export it into the Trados segmented format, which some agency clients prefer for delivery.

Figure 2: Termbase Dialog Box



Summary Data on MemoQ

- Version reviewed: 3.2.14 (MemoQ Translator Pro for 45 days, then MemoQ4Free for another week).
- Manufacturer: Kilgray (Budapest, Hungary) www.kilgray.com.
- Price (as of April 2009): \$910, €620.
- Runs on XP or Vista, but not other operating systems. Microsoft Office must be installed if Microsoft Office files are to be imported into the program.
- Interface languages: English, German, Hungarian, and Spanish.
- Working languages include Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, Hebrew, and all languages using the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets. (See the manufacturer's site.)
- Can import and export many file types, including PowerPoint, HTML, TTX, Trados Bilingual RTF, XML, Adobe FrameMaker, Adobe InDesign. (See www.kilgray.com.)

Even better, if the exported file is edited, it can be imported back into MemoQ so the edits are incorporated into the exported final translation and the TM. (Déjà Vu X has an “external view” function similar to this which produces a two-column word processing file.) MemoQ uses open standards like TMX for TMs and text files with tables for TBs.

One of my favorite features is that you can use an unlimited number of TMs and TBs. MemoQ is the first tool I have used that allows more than two TMs or TBs, though I have been told that other tools not mentioned in this article do permit more than two.

Freeware Version

After the 45-day trial, MemoQ turns into the freeware version. Projects can contain no more than one document. If the documents are in

Many of MemoQ’s innovations could be incorporated into other dual-column tools.

Microsoft Word, you can copy everything into one file, but this is not so easy with other formats. The freeware version creates a new TM and a new TB for each project, so you can only take advantage of repetitions within the document, not from past translations.

The project TM can be exported to another format. The project TB cannot be exported, so you will only be able to use it during the project. Files cannot be aligned and added to the project TM. Though the freeware version is limited, it is still useable.

Final Thoughts

MemoQ is constantly adding new features, while there have been no significant changes to Déjà Vu X since the X version came out a few years ago. Many of MemoQ’s innovations could be incorporated into other dual-column tools, and probably are incorporated into some tools not mentioned here. I was impressed by its stability, which is as good as Déjà Vu X, if not better. It did not crash once during more than a month of use for over 35,000 words. Installation and activation were also a breeze. In short, MemoQ is a great, all-around tool.

Note

1. Sutcliffe de Moraes, Naomi J. “Across: A Translation Environment Tool With an Attractive Price.” *The ATA Chronicle* (American Translators Association, October 2007), 26.

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Other Tools Mentioned:

Déjà Vu X
www.atril.com

Across
www.across.net

SDL Trados, SDLX
www.sdl.com

Wordfast
www.wordfast.net

Translation: Getting it Right

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