ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS BETTER LOCALISATION

"Globalisation is one of the most important trends of this century, offering companies new opportunities to develop markets and increase profits. Communication in regional languages is essential for international success, and translation and localisation are the key to the global market. " passolo.com

In a previous review of PASSOLO the concurrent releases of software versions have been discussed in two ways. First of all, the problem of having to translate from scratch every new software version and its solution to that: software localisation and its subsequent translation memory philosophy. Secondly, the ever increasing outcome of newer versions of tools that can easily renew themselves over a short period of time for they do not undergo the same translational loss of time other application releases might have.

And now, PASSOLO has come with a new version of its previously acclaimed software localisation programme as well. PASSOLO is a program that provides support for text resource translation or software localisation. Text resources are textual components of a software application that are displayed on-screen for the user. These components are the strings that need to be localised.

Text strings of a software application include the menu structure with menus, commands, and access keys; the dialogs with buttons, checkboxes, and other control elements; as well as the "String Table" in which strings are dynamically linked during "Execution" (these include, for example, error messages or tool tips).With PASSOLO, localisation of these textual components involve several steps: creating a new project and selecting the program to be translated; creating and editing the source list; creating and editing the associated translation list and generating the localised version. These features have been discussed before. Now, let us look at PASSOLO in another way, at other characteristics.

Localisation suitability

In order to check any application before actual translation begins, the Translation Simulator verifies the files on localisation suitability. Hard-coded text, insufficiently sized text buffers, wrong font settings, texts that are marked as read-only and similar
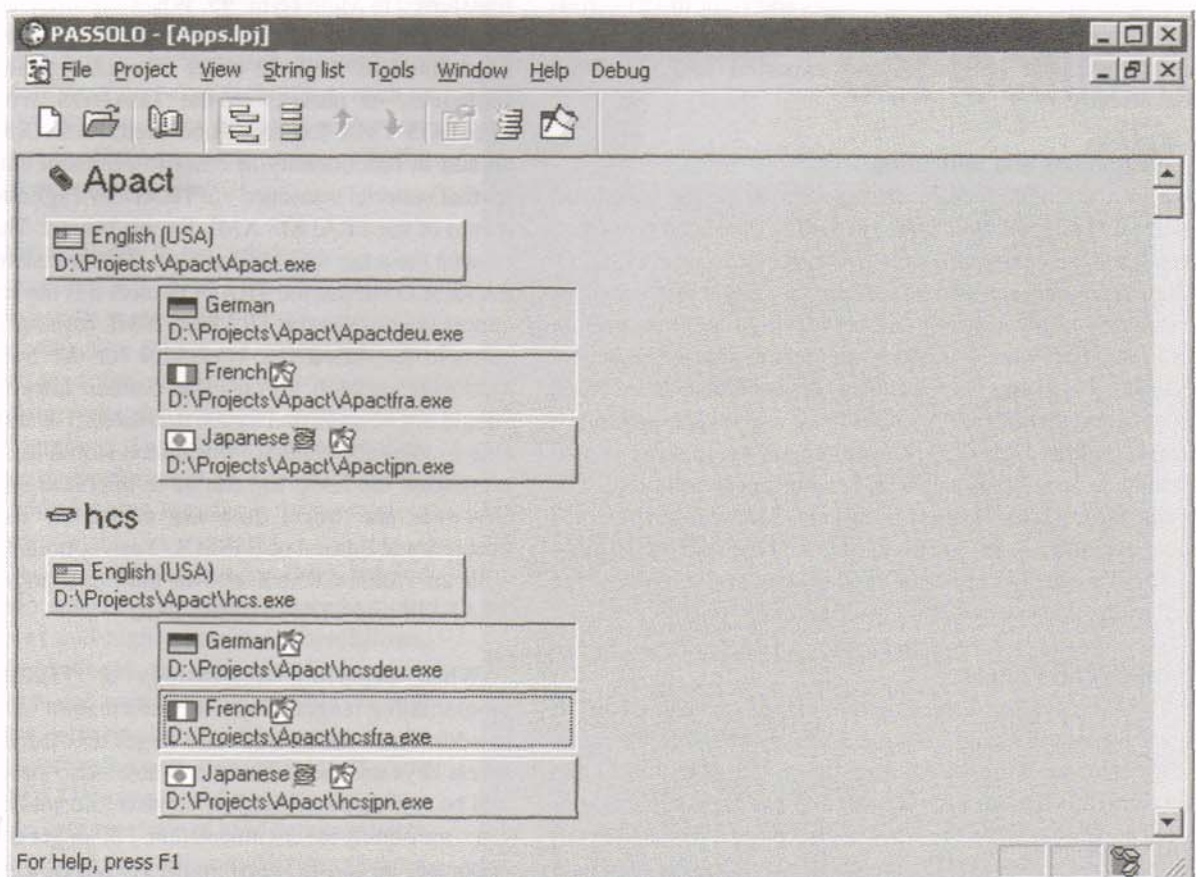
programming errors can be detected easily. Important in clearing all prejudices about software localisation, in casu PASSOLO, is the fact that PASSOLO works on the binary files directly, extracting only the strings that can be translated, protecting the application from unintended modifications. Another step at the very beginning of a localisation project is offered by the Update feature, which makes sure that only changes and additions need to be translated.

Direct Editing

Localising software with PASSOLO has no source file interference. EXEs and DLLs are edited directly. This prevents difficulties from working on source files. There is always a risk to forget some of the files containing localisable information, while the binary file contains all the localisable information, not more, not less.

Variable text length in
source string and translation

The length of texts tends to grow when translated. The safest way to tackle this problem is to allocate a buffer at runtime with the actual size needed. For this kind of string management, the MFC class CString can be very helpful. To make sure that longer texts do not overwrite fixed buffer limits unintentionally, functions with an additional parameter for the buffer length can be used.

In the worst case, strings will be truncated, but no memory will be overwritten by accident. If the translation is being done by means of a static buffer, the size for the buffer for what can be expected better be doubled, giving thus enough free space for even exotic translations. Taking care of text indent is a constant bear-in-mind for PASSOLO supports numerous languages including Asian languages and right to left scripts like Hebrew and Arabic. Translation lists can be separated by application and language, and exported and translated concurrently.

Alignments and matchings

The alignment feature allows you to create translated PASSOLO projects from already existing translated programs, even when these programs were not translated using PASSOLO. Aligned projects can also be used as translation references for automated translation, or can be exported as glossaries In contrast to translation memories, segmentation in the alignment scheme is based on resource entries. Texts alignments are based on resource identities. PASSOLO can use several general or project-oriented glossaries simultaneously, making it also possible to look up translations in a current translation list or in translation lists of other programs. The search considers exact matches as well as similar texts. These fuzzy matches – when reviewed - increase the productivity of the translator as well as the consistency of the translations.

Integrated Editors

The Menu Viewer can be used to inspect and edit menus. It is much easier to assign unique access keys using the menu editor than working in the translation list. PASSOLO can automatically assign access keys and can detect missing or duplicate access keys. For software developed with Microsoft Foundation Classes (MFC), the status bar text associated with

the menu entry will be displayed below the menu. PASSOLO contains a Dialog Editor, which allows the translator to see his/her work context. Dialog layout can be adapted to the translated resource texts without any danger of accidentally deleting or changing existing elements or structures. The dialog editor features operations to adjust layouts like, Align, Space Evenly, Make Same Size or Centre in Dialog. PASSOLO also has editors for bitmaps, icons and cursors. Even text within a bitmap or symbols with specific cultural content can be edited. These editors support features like transparency, as well as allowing for different resolutions in icons and cursors.

Re-use of information and work effort
via translation memory exchange possibilities

"Workflows differ according to projects and client preferences. Non-standard resources are used in many applications, and different programs may be used to translate the documentation. This often generates the typical situation where an inflexible tool will hinder work and therefore lead to loss of the productivity benefit. PASSOLO's Add-In concept guarantees the necessary flexibility."

In a localisation project, the software is translated first, followed by the documentation. The translation of the software generates terminology and terms in the target language that are useful for the translation of the subsequent documentation. The source text and its translational equivalent –split up in translation units - can be reused for the translation of online-help and documentation and this via the export/import functionality for several existing translation memory systems such as TRADOS and STAR. In this way, PASSOLO ensures increased consistent translation of software and documentation. Via the TRADOS MultiTerm '95 Export terminology from PASSOLO can be transferred to MultiTerm '95. When exporting terminology to MultiTerm, the data fields used in the MultiTerm database can be defined as well. In order to exchange longer strings, sentences, or phrases to the TRADOS Workbench, the TRADOS TMX Export can be used. PASSOLO even offers an add-in functionality in order to exchange information via textual material translated via TRADOS TagEditor and this by means of the TRADOS XML Export/Import. The process can be seen the other way around also. If the translators do not use PASSOLO but use the TRADOS tools it is the safest option to export the texts in the TRADOS XML format. The translator can use the TRADOS TagEditor for the translation. The TagEditor protects all tags that contain information, which should not be modified by the translator. The translator is still able to view the context information stored in the tags. After translation the XML file can be re-imported into PASSOLO. However, the world does not centre on TRADOS. The Professional Edition of PASSOLO can optionally be extended with an Add-In which allows data exchange with STAR TRANSIT and STAR TERMSTAR.

When exporting terminology to TERMSTAR even programming language specific information will be exported. In addition to the source- and target text information about access keys and shortcuts are available. Also the string category will be exported so that more context information is available when translating the documentation. For longer texts, sentences, or phrases an add-in functionality for STAR TRANSIT TMX

Export is provided as well. If a translator does not use PASSOLO but the STAR tools in order to translate software-based content, the texts can be exported via the STAR XML format. The translator then uses the STAR Transit Editor for the translation

Finalising the project: testing and statistics

The test feature of PASSOLO detects localisation errors like missing translations, missing or duplicate access keys, missing short cuts, truncated texts in dialog controls or overlapping controls. Using the test feature and the functions to resolve some of the errors automatically, reduces the time needed for quality assurance considerably. The Statistics feature not only counts the text but also the words and characters. Translated text, non-translated text and repetitions are counted separately, and allow a quick overview of the translation volume and project progress. Statistics can be performed per file, per language or per project.

When using PASSOLO it is even possible to start with the software localisation before the software is finished. With minimal additional effort it is possible launch to a product in different countries at the same time or shortly after the release of the native version. This is possible because PASSOLO stores the texts and layout information of a project in a database. If a newer version of the software becomes available most of the translated strings and layout information remain and only new or changed texts need to be translated.

That still is the power of software localisation tools in general and of PASSOLO specifically. The nature of speed of bringing translated software on-screen has changed so drastically, these applications can hardly be missed and yet, there still a long way to go. One step into the right direction is the increased compatibility with other widely used language technology such as TRADOS and STAR. How long, however, will it take a translation suite to offer a complete package? Will it be PASSOLO 4 or someone else?

PASSOLO is available in two editions:

• The Programmer's Edition contains the basic functionality to handle many localisation scenarios as a stand-alone tool. The PASSOLO Programmer's Edition is designed for software developers and translators whose tasks are confined solely to the localisation of programs. This edition does not include statistical functions and cannot be expanded by the addition of export/import interfaces to translation memory systems.

• The Professional Edition can be extended and customised with Add-Ins and can offer productivity gains in complex and highly automated workflows. PASSOLO Professional is intended for project managers, editors, and translators responsible not only for localising the software, but also for translating the associated documentation and managing localisation projects. PASSOLO's statistical functions provide a tool to better calculate the scope of localisation projects. The optional interfaces to translation memory systems help to increase the consistency and quality of translated documents.

• PASSOLO Demo is available free of charge and can be downloaded from the Web site at http://www.passolo.com. This edition only permits 50 text resources for each resource type to be edited. The same restriction applies to the transfer of translated strings to the target file and for import/export operations.

PASSOLO is dongle-protected. The capacity of the operating system may not have to be too performant, but Pentium II seems a minimum for larger projects. PASSOLO runs on Microsoft Windows 95 or higher, and Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 or higher. ■