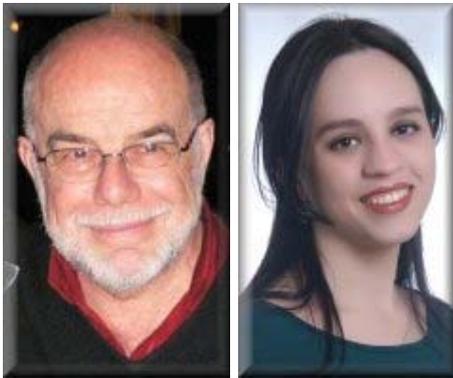


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Danilo Nogueira and **Kelli Semolini** are about the unlikeliest of pairs. Born 40 years apart and living a good 200 kilometers away one from the other, they have met less than half a dozen times. They have practically nothing in common but a sweet tooth—and the love for languages and translation.

Yet, they work well together and are full of plans, three of which they are sharing with Translation Journal readers first hand. First in the pipeline is an online English < > Brazilian Portuguese business dictionary that should reach the testing stage in early January, 2008; next comes a translation course in distance-learning format. There is a book, also, obviously on translation, but they won't mention the details under torture.

If you read Portuguese, you will probably like their blog, which is currently hosted at <http://tradutor-profissional.blogspot.com>.

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Translator Profiles



Thirteen Days in June

Adventures with SDL/Trados

by Danilo Nogueira and Kelli Semolini

The new Trados version is as foreseeable as Christmas: there is one every year, and all of them have more or less followed the same pattern since I bought Trados 2.x, sometime towards the end of last century. However, things ran differently this time and this is a very personal and subjective account of what happened, told from the standpoint of a common translator.

Despite the annual upgrades, Trados has changed remarkably little over the years. A translator (as opposed to a project manager) who learned to use Translator's Workbench (TWB) by the turn of the century would notice autoconcordance, the ability to work with remote memories, and very little else. TagEditor (TE) has become faster and less unfriendly, it is true, but MultiTerm still is the worst terminology manager in the market.

The uprising of our community, spontaneous and disorganized as it was, did work.

Don't take me wrong: MultiTerm is an impressive piece of software that will greatly help a terminologist or lexicographer create a 25-language technical dictionary with all the

terminological information you can think of, plus charts, pictures, links and whatnot. But it gobbles up an inordinate amount of resources and makes TWB and TE very slow. In addition, it makes scaring up a quick'n'dirty glossary on the fly a very difficult proposition.

An Industry Standard

Anyway, there is no denying that Trados is an industry standard. Most agencies take it for granted that professional translators can find their way around pre-translated TWB or TE files. Even competing programs can handle TWB and TE files these days-sometimes better than Trados itself.

Much of the extraordinary success achieved by Trados should be credited to its aggressive and intelligent marketing policies which convinced agencies that There is no Way but the Trados Way. Translators themselves are not so sure and many of us look forward to the time we will be asked to work with .tmx memories and use the software of our choice. That

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day may be a bit nearer than we would have expected a couple months ago.

Great Expectations-and Mixed Feelings

Because old hands know that many of the supercalifragilisticexpialidocious innovations trumpeted by the SDL's ever efficient marketing operation didn't really change things that much, we tend not to be unduly disturbed by the news.

This time, however, the situation seemed to be different. For several reasons of a technical nature, SDL was to do away with TWB and TE, in favor of a single application which would provide all the advantages of a proprietary interface with fewer tags than TE.

Many people were happy about the news: proprietary interfaces have many advantages, as any DVX or MemoQ enthusiast will tell you. And a proprietary interface with fewer tags would certainly be a great plus.

Other translators were not so happy. Many of us are very conservative and more than one uses the computer "as a typewriter." These people consider CAT software a nuisance and have limited themselves to learning the absolutely indispensable to process the pre-translated files supplied by their clients. Sudden and violent changes such as new interfaces scare them. In addition, there was no way to be sure that our clients would also switch to the new Studio.

Fortunately, SDL allayed those fears by saying that the Studio License included a license for Trados 2007 and that, in fact, Studio used parts of the old program.

So, everybody was happy-for the time being.

The icing on the cake, however, was that Studio would be able to process Adobe .pdf files. Everybody agreed that would be a great feature.

Notice that we had to take SDL's word for the changes and their functionality: there is no such a thing as an SDL demo. Everybody else in the market offers demos, but not SDL. Not very simpatico and, perhaps, a bit arrogant, I would say, but that is the SDL way. They rule the market and do as they please-or do they?

Studio was shown to the public at several forums, but if you could not go where they were, that was your problem. And, of course if you went, you would see a carefully planned demonstration, not lay your hands on the program to make sure it worked for you.

It is said that some of the demonstrations did not go as smoothly as expected. Very embarrassing, but part of the game and perfectly excusable: the software was not yet for distribution.

The Fiasco and the Uproar

I downloaded and installed Studio on June 4 and copied the activation code to a .txt file where I keep those things. When

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asked, I copied the code from the .txt file and pasted it on the appropriate place and was duly informed that the product was activated.

But instead of opening a splash screen, the program simply closed. I tried three or four times more, to make sure I was doing everything correctly, but it was to no avail.

I was flabbergasted. How come a program tells me it has been activated and keeps asking for the activation code every time I try to open it and when given the code refuses to open? That made absolutely no sense to me. A quick look at my mailbox showed that I was not alone. The Trados user list was full of messages sent by people who faced the same problem. And they were mad.

The few who had successfully installed it were even madder, for they had found the Trados 2007 license was valid for a single year, a small point we had not been advised of in the barrage of information we had received before.

The list was absolutely ablaze with complaints.

Paul Filkin to the Rescue!

On June 5, Paul Filkin, Client Services Director of SDL Trados Technologies, posted a message to the list. In very plain words, he explained that we were supposed to return our previous licenses to SDL before installing and recognized this had not been made clear in the instructions, which was perfectly true.

SDL also took steps to change their website, making it a lot more helpful to translators. They did it very speedily and the new instructions were very clear. A bit too late for me, but better late than never.

Return my License?

Some translators were not happy with the idea of returning their licenses before they could make sure the new installation would work and they would be left with no Trados to work with.

I very boldly returned my license to SDL and tried again, with the same results: congratulations from License Manager, but no dice. Then it dawned on me that I might have to uninstall and reinstall Studio, which I did. No dice.

To make things worse, since I had returned my license, Trados 2007 was not working either.

Checked "My Account" again, to see whether I had copied the right activation number. Surprise, there was another number there, a number I am sure was not there before. It possibly appeared after I had returned my license. But it applied to SDL Trados Freelance, only and duly reactivated my "old" Trados. I celebrated. Life is made of small victories.

But Studio still did not work and I was asking myself where the previous activation code came from. A short investigation showed that it referred exclusively to AutoSuggest, a feature I was entitled to as a bonus for being

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an early-bird purchaser. Meaning I had never in fact used the Studio License. Silly, silly me. How come I did not see it!

But, on the other hand, where was the Studio License?

A Stroke of Bad Luck

No situation is so bad that it cannot get a lot worse. On Friday morning, my computer went bust with a bang. Because Thursday was a national holiday, and this being Brazil, I had to wait until Monday for a new power source.

There was a second computer. But installing Trados on Machine #2 would mean transferring my license back to Machine #1 again on Monday, which involved far too much trouble-and perhaps just a little risk.

I continued following the messages at the user list and not everybody was happy, to say the least. Many complained of bugs, slowness, an intractable MultiTerm.

This, in itself, is part of the culture. A new product is bound to be buggy and we are often told we should wait until the second patch is released before we try the program. There is a lot of truth in this. On the other hand, if everybody waits until the second patch is released before they try the product, there will never be a second patch.

A more serious complaint relates to .pdf file handling. It was reported that Studio uses SolidConverter to handle the conversion from .pdf into whatever Studio can work with.

There is nothing wrong with SolidConverter, a very respectable product. However, it cannot handle password-protected .pdf files, a small point that should have been touched upon in the information we were provided with. In addition, depending on several other factors, the converted document may be extremely heavy and formatting will not be as easy to handle as would be hoped.

Meanwhile, I received several messages from SDL telling me that my Studio License was available. Decided to wait until I had Machine #1 back home before looking at My Account, for fear I would not resist the temptation of installing Studio in my second machine.

Back in Business and More Disappointment

Monday was a busy day here. The computer was back at home in the late afternoon and I had a lot on my mind-including this article. But, as soon as MSWindows was running, I went to "My account," for the coveted license.

It was not there. At least nowhere I could find it. I give up. No more trying. It is far above and beyond my powers of deduction. I will write SDL for help. I will do it as soon as I have this sent, or the article may be too late for the TJ.

But help may take a little: as far as I can deduct from the user list, they are having a hell of a time getting any help. SDL may be overwhelmed by help requests.

Will Studio Catch?

I have no doubt all the problems (including mine) will be solved. But the question is: will Studio catch and become a standard, as TWB and TE did? Not so sure. People claim that legacy memories provide fewer matches when used with Studio than when used with TWB/TE. If true (or widely suspected), this means an increase in agency costs and it is difficult to envisage agencies buying (and forcing translators to buy) software that will cost them good money and reduce their profits. There may be other problems lurking.

The Power of Complaining

At least two lessons may be drawn from the whole mess.

The first lesson is for us: the uprising of our community, spontaneous and disorganized as it was, did work. We are not as powerless as most of us fear. We protested and SDL came with clearer instructions. They even changed the Trados 2007 license from "time limited" to "permanent"-no small victory for us. Cry loud and long enough and thou shalt be heard.

The second lesson is for SDL itself. I will not dwell on that, it is not in my brief. But I hope they have learned it.

Post-Scriptum

After finishing this article and releasing it to Kelli's editing, I decided to have a further look at my mail before lunch. There was a colleague asking whether Studio included Passolo. Reply: if you switch to the "Home" view in Studio and hover with your mouse over the button "Software Localization" you will see that it says: SDL Passolo 2009 coming soon.

Later on, while Kelli was editing the text, a message came from SDL, informing us that "In between the early testing and the final release of Studio, our regression testing uncovered a compatibility issue with SDLX and SDL MultiTerm 2009 ..."

Will the surprises never end?

This article is a very personal and subjective account of what happened when Studio was launched and what is said here is the responsibility of Danilo Nogueira. Kelli Semolini participated as an editor and revisor, but cannot be held responsible for the contents of this article.