



## GeekSpeak

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### The Gutsy Move

The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost also publishes a free technical newsletter for translators ([www.internationalwriters.com/toolkit](http://www.internationalwriters.com/toolkit)).

**When SDL** released the new version of Trados (Trados Studio 2009) there was no shortage of excitement among translators. The newsgroups were full of raging complaints about SDL: the license policy was condemned (SDL completely changed it in response to those criticisms); some very vocal early adapters had problems installing the program or importing files (giving many the impression that this was what we should all expect, when in reality this was the exception rather than the norm); while only a very few brave souls stood up for SDL to defend their moves and products. I had a chance to talk to a number of SDL representatives during those days and, boy, those voices sounded tired.

I would like to now switch industries to draw a parallel. I live in the Pacific Northwest and my wife went to college in Seattle during Microsoft's infancy, so naturally many of her classmates were hired by Microsoft. Many of those who were hired right after they graduated have long since retired as millionaires and are now mostly doing philanthropic work, but a few started to work for "The Company" years later and are still hanging in there. They are among some of our very best friends. We love to hang out with them and their kids. They come down to Oregon to play with us at the ocean, and when we go to Seattle we stay in their posh houses. There is only one thing we rarely discuss: "The Company." These folks are so tired of the criticism heaped on them because of their association with Microsoft that they have developed defense mechanisms that tend to make discussions sort of fruitless.

The translation community has long elevated the owners of Trados (now SDL, earlier the TRADOS GmbH) to a nearly Microsoft-status

Evil Empire—overlooking the fact that we are talking about humongous differences in size and ambition—and its representatives often get to feel the brunt of that. And I feel for them. Really, I do.

Now, I know that there are valid complaints against the owners of Trados. Before there was paid Trados support, its support reputation was not particularly good; since we have had access to paid Trados support, it is, well, paid. Trados also does not have the agility of smaller contenders, who are often willing and able to implement bug fixes or new feature requests literally overnight (though its response to the licensing policy was almost immediate). Plus, in the minds of many translators, Trados is still (unfairly?) charged with introducing the scheme for the weighted perfect, fuzzy, and no-matches payments per word.

However, I would argue that with the release of this new version of Trados, SDL has proven many critics wrong. Let me illustrate this with an example from Microsoft's product history. As we all know, Microsoft virtually owns the desktop office application market. Still, it was a gutsy move when it released Office 2007. Most of the new Office programs had a radically different interface design, and many of its users did not like the idea that they had to completely relearn some of their old ways of doing things. But once the new system was installed, only the most stubborn users failed to see that the new logic of the system was quite easily transferrable to the old. And there was no need to spend much time in "training."

But if Microsoft's move was gutsy, how much gutsier was SDL's move to release a software that has truly been redesigned? True, SDL is the market leader, but they certainly have some very strong competitors in the transla-

tion environment tool market. So SDL by no means had the same assurance that Microsoft had of staying at the top of the market when they released Office 2007. And unlike with Office 2007, I would argue that there is some training necessary (whether through training-by-doing or with an external course is beside the point) when switching to the new Trados system.

So why did SDL go that route? There are several reasons. Immediately after Trados was bought, SDL announced a "road map" according to which SDL's home-grown product SDLX and Trados would be separately maintained for several releases but then merged into a single product. This is what happened in the Studio 2009 product. But more importantly, Trados was stuck in a legacy format—ironically Microsoft Word—that was originally used to translate all file formats through RTF conversions. At a certain point this was considered too inefficient and was replaced with the TagEditor interface (and for a short while the T-Windows fiasco), an interface that was sufficient in some areas but too slow and tedious in others, and as such was never completely embraced by the translation community as a whole. So rather than beating a dead horse with either MS Word or TagEditor, SDL went the smart way by creating a whole new interface—an interface that certainly contains some elements of the SDLX interface, but which also has many elements that are simply new or that can be found in other competing tools, such as Across, MemoQ, or Déjà Vu.

The move to the new product was a necessary but nevertheless gutsy move, because for the first time in a long while it opens up the translation tool market and pegs the new (and much improved) Trados against its many competitors. Since the Trados update

feels more like a switch in products than just an update, many old Trados users will feel that it might be prudent to look at other products (again). Plus, with data exchange formats such as TMX, TBX, and XLIFF finally becoming a reality in most translation environment tools (TEntTs), the data is at the forefront and tools can increasingly vary in a production chain between translation buyer, translation agency, and translator.

In an upcoming issue of this magazine, I will publish a review of the new version of Trados focusing primarily on these areas:

- The new interface: How effective is it in comparison with earlier Trados interface(s) and those of competitors?

- The new exchange formats and translation file formats supported by Trados Studio.
- Trados' new subsegment-matching feature.
- The new underlying translation memory format and the newly designed terminology maintenance program.

Until then (and beyond that as well), let's give the guys from SDL a break and try to look at products on the basis of their merits and shortcomings rather than our emotional attachments (or detachments).

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### Blog Trekker Continued from p. 33

similar meanings, and have it handy on your computer for easy reference.

For a searchable compilation of idioms, visit The Free Dictionary by Farlex ([www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)).

2. Mikkelsen, Holly: *The Art of Working with Interpreters: A Manual for Healthcare Professionals* ([www.acebo.com/papers/artintpr.htm](http://www.acebo.com/papers/artintpr.htm)).

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### Notes

1. Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idioms>).

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