

# PASSOLO

## - a very handy little gadget

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by  
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In the days when "software localisation" was still "software translation", dedicated translation tools to handle the text strings included in software programs were as rare as unicorns. The text had to be extracted from the source code, translated, recompiled in the program and only then, would anyone know whether the translated text was actually going to fit into the space allocated by the programmer for all those little dialogs and messages that flashed up on the screen. Nowadays, software localisation tools are popping up like mushrooms. They are all designed to take the guesswork out of translating software text strings by providing dialog editors that enable you to resize critical text fields and, wherever possible, include some way of automatically translating these strings, either by glossaries or translation-memory databases.

Normally, software localisation is a Catch 22 situation - if you do not have access to the source code, you cannot extract the text strings for translation. "Why would you have any business translating software strings if you haven't been asked to do so in the first place?", I hear you asking. There is a quiet, long overdue revolution

going on in some of the more enlightened universities where translation technology is being introduced to translation students. They are given the opportunity to get hands-on experience with many of the tools currently available, including Machine Translation systems, translation memory-based products and terminology management packages. A simple, straightforward software localisation tool would be a very welcome addition. This is where PASSOLO, a relatively recent addition to the growing list of localisation tools, comes in.

PASSOLO is a small, beautifully designed translation tool that automatically extracts strings from EXE files and DLL files. You simply select the file that you want to translate and PASSOLO creates tables containing dialog text, menu text and message strings. When setting up a project, any number of target languages can be selected and the tables are repeated for each target language.

Figure 1 shows a line from the string table selected for translation. The translation dialog box appears with the source text in the upper window and duplicated in the lower window for translation.

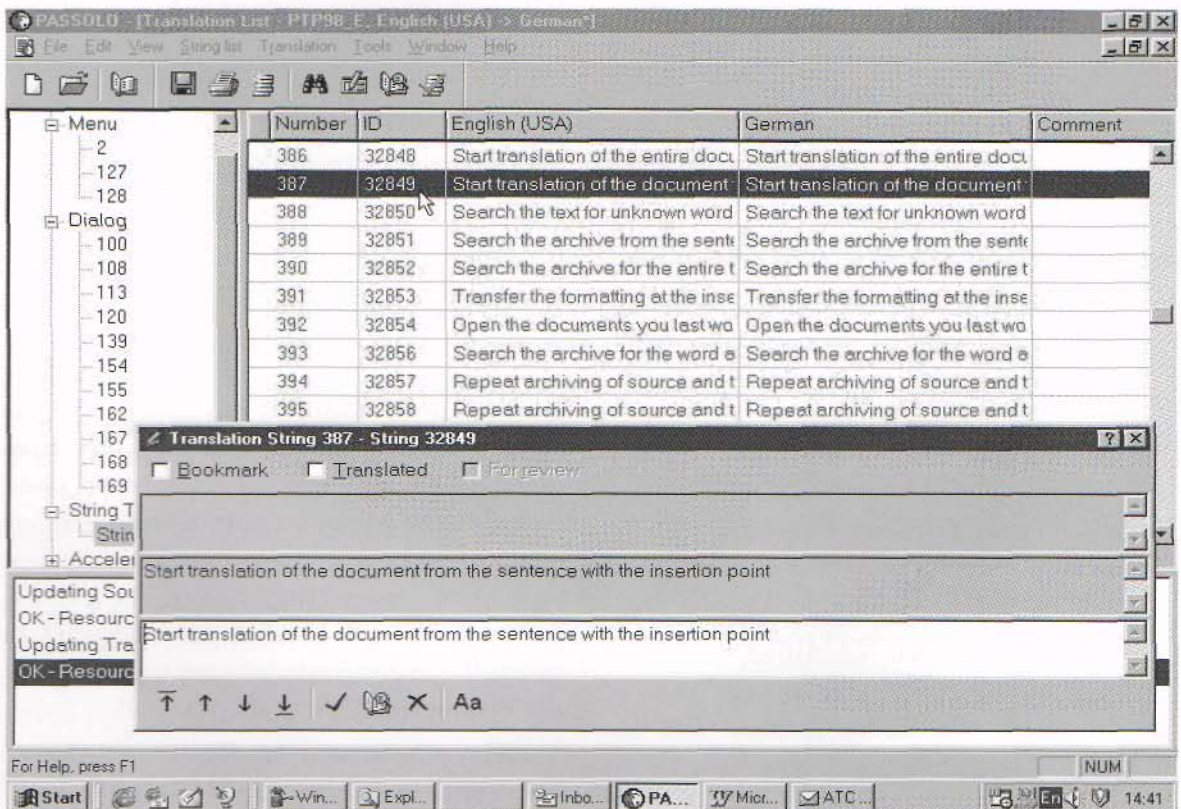


Figure 1

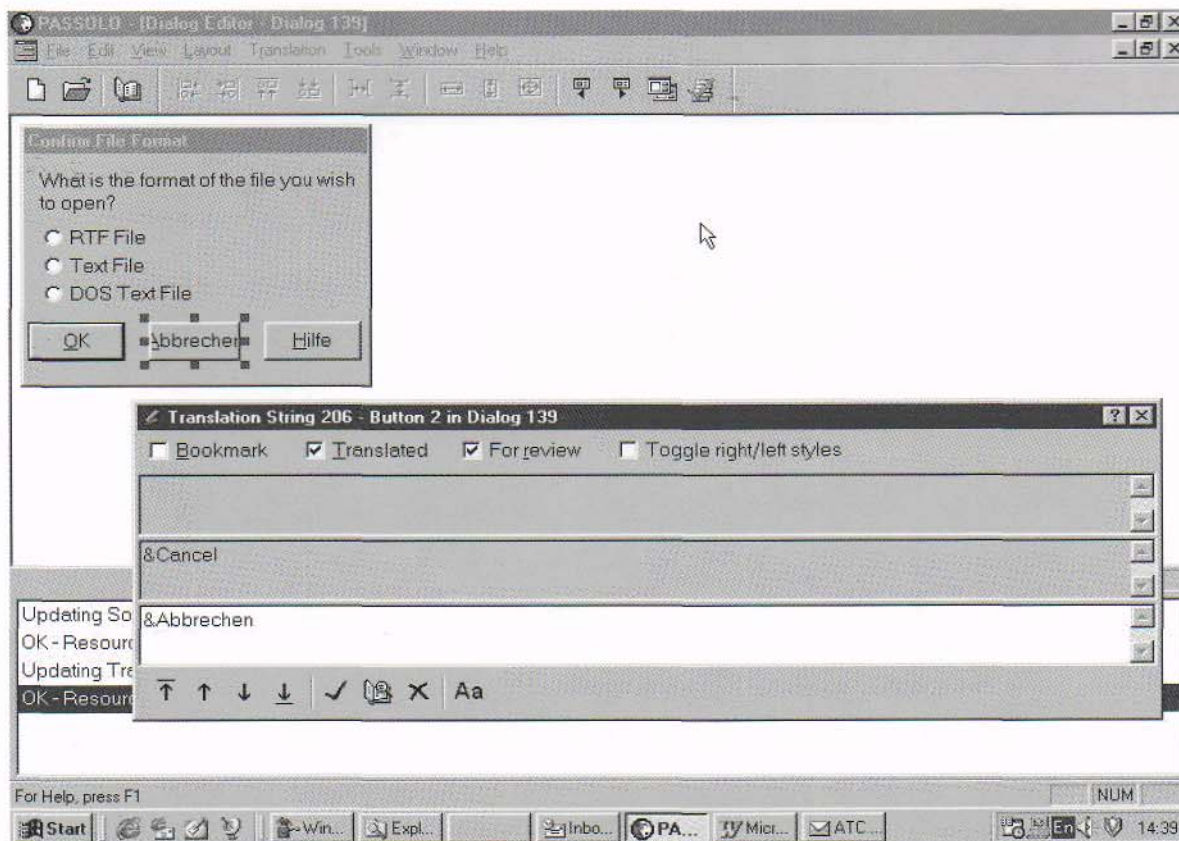


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows a line from one of the dialog strings selected with the translation window and the Dialog Editor visible. The Dialog Editor enables you to see what the translation is going to look like in context. As the illustration shows, the German translation for cancel, Abbrechen, is too long for the button supplied and, consequently, is truncated. The handles that are visible around that button in the Dialog Editor allow you to resize it in order to accommodate the translation. If, for any reason, the truncation were not noticed in the Dialog Editor, PASSOLO would still pick it up with a verification function that will automatically detect any overlapped or truncated strings. PASSOLO is also aware of program semantics and the correct usage of access keys (using the & sign) is also checked.

With PASSOLO, automatic replacement of words and phrases not only accesses the user-defined glossaries, but also other projects currently loaded in PASSOLO. This feature enables PASSOLO to function as a translation memory. Glossaries are easily imported and exported as text files.

When a source file is to be updated, PASSOLO aligns the new version with the database information of the old version. Therefore, we are not just talking about retranslating from a translation memory. This alignment ensures that other, non-textual attributes, such as positions and sizes of controls that have been changed in the target version, will survive an update. This feature can save a lot of work when updating software.

If external translation is appropriate, all text strings can be exported and sent to the translator. Figure 3 shows an exported file. Translation instructions are supplied as a header by default.

This means that the translation can be carried out in any text editor and imported back into PASSOLO. However, as soon as software text strings leave a protected environment, the code is very vulnerable. Even with specific instructions, it is possible to corrupt the file. One way of safely processing an exported string file would be to use one of the more conventional translation-memory workbench products in conjunction with PASSOLO. Figure 4 shows the exported file in the IBM TranslationManager. A simple markup table was created so that all elements other than translatable segments are protected and cannot be deleted inadvertently.

Icons and status information provide clear project management information and a quick overview to check translation progress. Once the translation is completed, a target file is generated that will become the translated DLL or EXE file.

PASS (Process Automation Software Systems) Engineering GmbH, the developers of PASSOLO, are relative newcomers to the localisation tools market. The Bonn-based Company started ten years ago, developing medical applications and, as the number of language versions of their software increased, they soon recognised the need for leveraging previous translations into updated products. As PASS Managing Director, Florian

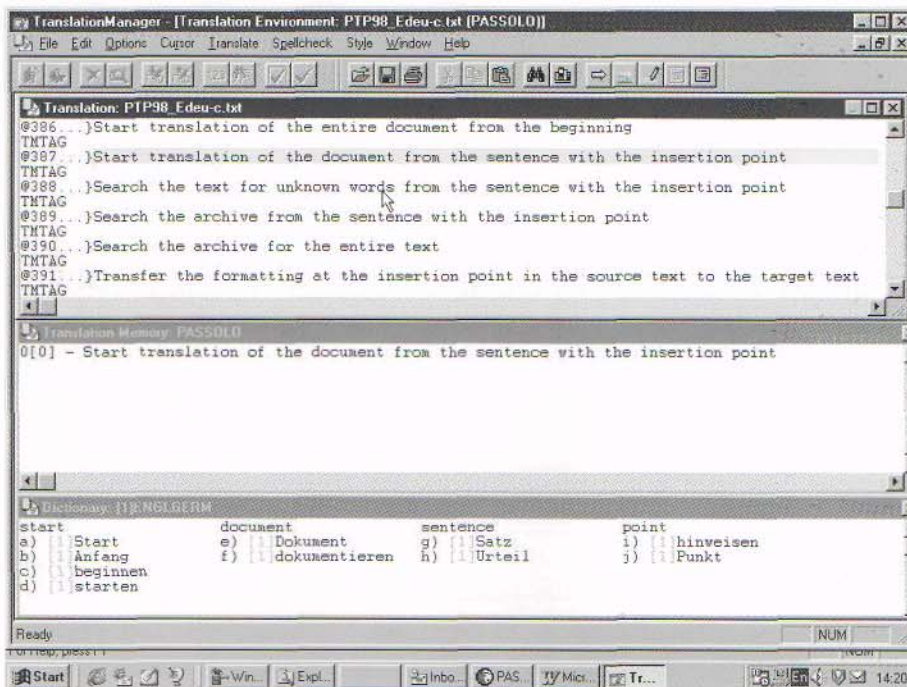


Figure 3

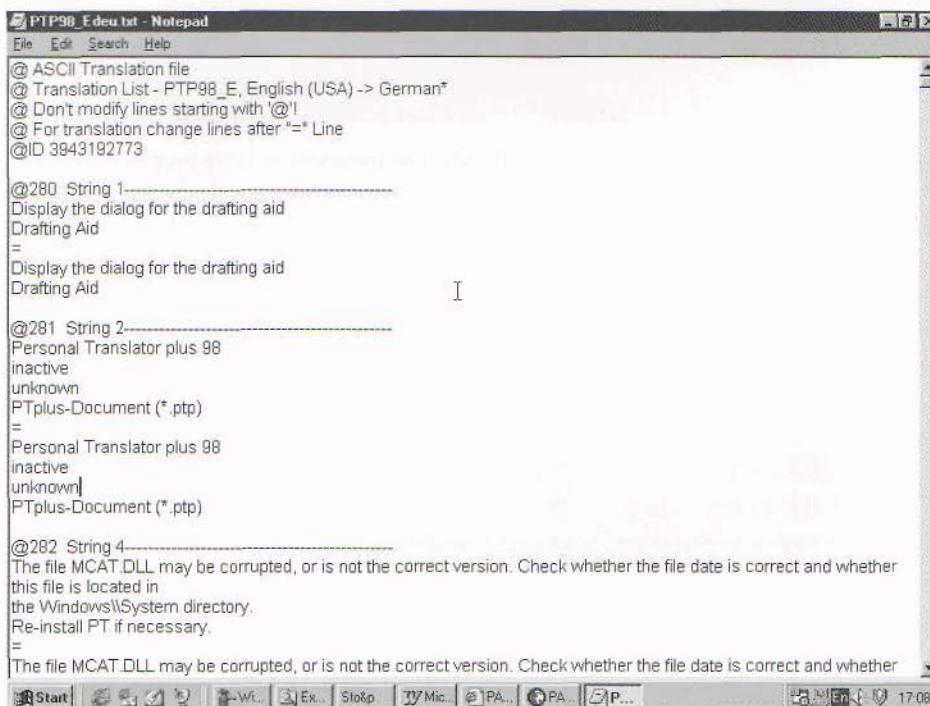


Figure 4

Sachse explained, "In those days, there was very little information about localisation tools available to software developers not directly involved in the localisation industry. As a result, we had to develop our own tool to meet our requirements". Rather than designing a "cure-all" tool as a solution for a particular workflow, PASS have developed PASSOLO to be a very lean, low overhead application with modularity in mind. They hope that developers will be able to integrate their tool into any localisation process.

PASSOLO runs on all 32-bit versions of Windows, such as Windows 95, Windows 98 and Windows NT 4.0. The program supports

applications written in Visual C++ and Borland C++ as well as applications written for Windows CE. Visual Basic Resource files must be stored in so-called string tables. Delphi support is planned for later this year along with plug-ins for other vertical applications. Double-byte languages can be processed using the UNICODE version of PASSOLO. This review was based on the demo version, downloadable from the PASSOLO website. The demo version limits translation to fifty strings. The current price is DM 890.00. For further information, visit the web page at [www.passolo.com](http://www.passolo.com) or contact Claudia Fricke on e-mail at: [cfricke@pass-engineering.com](mailto:cfricke@pass-engineering.com).