

# The independent alternative

## Iwan Davies tries out MemoQ and is impressed with the quality of this Translation Memory tool, not to mention the level of support from its resolutely independent developer



Iwan Davies MITI provides translation and translation process consulting services through his company, Translutions Limited, which he runs with his wife, financial translator Louisa Davies, in Perth, Scotland.

Although it seems like it has been around for quite a while now, it was just spring 2006 when a relatively unknown Hungarian software developer, Kilgray, released version 1.1 of its new Translation Memory software solution, called MemoQ. Despite the English-sounding company name, the three co-founders are definitely of Magyar stock (the 'Ki' comes from the name of one founder, Balázs Kis, the 'l' from the name of a second founder, István Lengyel, and the 'gray' from the name of the third member of the triumvirate that still leads the company, Gábor Ugray). The pronunciation of the name of the software itself has also been the subject of debate, with most people in the UK, including Kilgray's UK distributor, Amicus Transtec Limited, settling on 'Meh-mok'.

On 4 July this year, Kilgray marked Independence Day with its own Declaration of Independence, in which the company makes a commitment to remain an independent vendor, unattached to any other service provider. In a direct response to the fears expressed by many smaller translation companies when SDL took over Trados, about having to buy technology from a competitor in the language services market, Kilgray undertakes to reimburse LSPs with the cost of the software licence in the event that it is subsequently taken over

by another language services provider. While this move may simply be perceived as a marketing gimmick, it is also an indication of the company's approach to software development, with independence being a watchword.

### Four editions on offer

So, let's get down to the software itself – the latest version, MemoQ 3.0, is available in four different editions. The first, MemoQ4Free, is, as its name suggests, totally free. It is limited to one translation memory and one document per project, but otherwise it can be used as a functioning translation memory system. What is more, any translation memories you create in MemoQ4Free can be exported to the industry-standard TMX format, which means that, unlike some other 'free' editions of TM software products, MemoQ4Free leaves you free to reuse your translation memory elsewhere. For this reason, MemoQ4Free represents a great alternative for those who are new to translation memory and want to try

---

**'Any translation memories you create in MemoQ4Free can be exported to the industry-standard TMX format and reused elsewhere'**

---

out a number of different products while retaining control of their translation 'assets', without spending too much money.

The next edition up the scale, and the one that is most suited to freelance translators who have settled on MemoQ as their TM system of choice, is called Translator Pro. This edition consists of a single-user licence (although Kilgray also provides a simple mechanism for moving licences from desktop to laptop and back) that provides access to the complete MemoQ desktop functionality, including an alignment tool that allows you to access your old translations. Currently costing €620, there are no restrictions on the number of translation memories or documents in a single project, and data can be imported and exported at will.

The remaining two editions are directed at translation companies. They both include a server component that also adds some workflow functionality. The first, LSP5, is a package directly targeting small translation companies. It provides one server licence and five mobile licences that can be activated and deactivated for different translators, thus making it ideal for those who organise projects that are handled by small teams. It allows all translation resources, including the translation memories and terminology databases, to be shared over a network. The final edition, Enterprise, is for larger companies or translation teams. It can be linked directly into a company CMS (content management system), and offers potential for customisation.

Most people will start with MemoQ4Free or MemoQ Translator Pro, which is a 16.3 MB download, available directly from [www.kilgray.com](http://www.kilgray.com). The download is the same for both editions, since the extra functionality of Translator Pro is activated (or deactivated) by a licence. Once you have downloaded and installed the package, it must be activated online. This is done by clicking the relevant option in the Help menu. If your computer is not attached to the internet, you can create a text file containing a serial number for your installation that must then be attached to an email

for offline activation. If you activate the software without having already purchased a licence, then you will be granted a free 45-day demonstration licence of the main Translator Pro version. During this 45-day period, the software has all the functionality of a normal Translator Pro installation. Once the demonstration licence expires, the installation reverts to MemoQ4Free.

### Consider your options

With the software activation complete, the software's translation-related functions become available. Despite an understandable desire to jump straight in and create your first project, it is worthwhile taking a look at the software options at this point, since they are both comprehensive and govern basic software settings such as the default folders used to store translation memories and projects. These are configured in the

**Above: The MemoQ interface**

**'As you move through the translation, MemoQ updates the preview window on the fly, so you can immediately see the results of your work'**

Global Settings dialog, found by clicking Tools-Options. By default, MemoQ saves its translation memories and terminology databases to subfolders of the 'All Users' default user profile on your computer. While this ensures that TMs and termbases are available to all users on your computer, it does break the cardinal rule of keeping your translation data separate from the Windows installation directories.

Another default setting of MemoQ is for translation projects to

be saved in a folder 'My MemoQ Projects' directly under 'My Documents'. Again, this breaks the separation rule that many people like to at least try to keep, and it is probably a good idea to change these three settings at least, if no others, before you start to use MemoQ in earnest. The settings themselves are configured under Appearance-Locations in the Global Settings dialog. The other directory setting you might want to change at this point is the path for exporting translated documents and projects. By default, these are exported into subfolders based on the target language – if that bothers you, these settings can be changed under Export path rules in the Global Settings dialog.

### Quick to adapt

While other formats such as XML and XLIFF are gaining importance

in the translation world, the majority of our work is probably still contained within good old Microsoft Word documents, and MemoQ handles these with aplomb. The software follows the RTF conversion route when importing Word documents, which is a minor annoyance now that Microsoft has published the documentation for its binary formats, but since all other vendors except for SDL Trados do the same, it seems unfair to quibble about it. In any event, Kilgray have proven to be remarkably adaptable and very quick to react to problems in the RTF conversion process. On the odd occasion when an anomaly has occurred in importing or exporting documents, and the problem has been reported to MemoQ's developers along with a copy of the problematic RTF document, a new version of the software has often been made available to deal with the bug within a matter of days. It should also be said that most problems that occur with RTF conversion are down to Microsoft not keeping fully to the standards it has published, and the same is true for all TM tools that go down the RTF route.

### A user-friendly interface

Once the documents to be translated have been imported into a project, all your work is contained within the MemoQ interface, known as the ILE (integrated language environment – I'm afraid Kilgray isn't immune from TLAs). The ILE provides access to all project settings, translation memories, termbases, statistical analyses (which are similar to those produced by SDL Trados and Déjà Vu, but go into slightly greater detail) and, of course, the translation documents. It is, however, also possible to export translation documents in a bilingual Word format for translation by users who do not have MemoQ, even in Trados format if required.

The ILE is dominated by the translation editor pane, which resembles the Déjà Vu and SDLX models of two vertical columns of text, with the source text on the left and target text on the right. The translation is entered directly in this

---

### 'You can assign a status, such as "proofread", to each individual segment, demonstrating the support in MemoQ for collaborative working'

---

grid, with the help of translation memory hits and termbase items which are displayed to the right (although the entire ILE can be rejigged and its component panes moved around). Formatting is dealt with by a combination of WYSIWYG controls (for bold, italic and underline) and codes, like those used by Déjà Vu. Directly below the grid is the real-time preview – one of MemoQ's niftiest features. When you import a Word document, you have the option of creating a preview, which is basically a rendering of the Word document in a web browser.


Normally saving a Word document as a web page is to be discouraged, since Microsoft adds tons of unnecessary code to the file. However, this function has been used cleverly by Kilgray to generate a preview that accurately reflects the formatting and layout of the original document. As you move through the translation, MemoQ updates the preview window on the fly, so you can immediately see the results of your work. And since MemoQ automatically propagates repetitions (if you will excuse the jargon) through the document as soon as you translate the first instance of a repeated segment, you will find that the preview magically contains more of your target language than you have actually typed!

By default, in the MemoQ ILE you work through a document in a linear fashion, from start to end as you would any normal translation. However, the interface also allows you to hide certain categories of segment, such as those with 'context-sensitive' full matches in the translation memory. A context-sensitive match occurs if a segment and one of its neighbouring segments have a full match in the

memory. These are then awarded a match score of 101% in MemoQ – they are even more reliable than 100% matches, since what comes before them or after them is also found in the TM. What's more, you can also sort the segments in a number of different ways, such as by match percentage, segment frequency, and in alphabetical order, which is extremely useful when revising a translation and aligning similar constructions so that the same word order or sentence structure is used every time. You can also assign a status, such as 'proofread', to each individual segment, demonstrating the support in MemoQ for collaborative working.

### Welcome support

Support for industry standards such as TMX and XLIFF is solid, and the latest version of MemoQ now also handles newer standards such as SRX (segmentation rules exchange – a standard that ensures that segmentation is consistent between tools). In its XLIFF support in particular, MemoQ stands out from the other common desktop TM solutions. Current versions of Trados and Déjà Vu can handle standard XLIFF files only after a little careful data massaging, but MemoQ offers 'proper' support in a way that previously was only available from niche vendors such as Swordfish or Heartsome. Given the potential importance of XLIFF for all translators, not just those involved in software localisation, the ability of a TM tool to handle these files easily and correctly could be vital.

This brief article can only provide a glimpse of what this software package can do, but, given the 45-day free trial period, MemoQ is certainly worth consideration. The responsiveness of the tool's developers both to bugs and to requests for new functionality is impressive, and the developers also participate actively in the e-group, which is friendly and helpful. 

---

#### Links:

**Kilgray:** [www.kilgray.com](http://www.kilgray.com)

**Amicus Transtec Limited:**

[www.amicus-transtec.com](http://www.amicus-transtec.com)

**E-group:** <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/MemoQ/>