

The All-New Trados

I had a conversation about the new Trados with Daniel Brockmann, the principal product manager at RWS, and his colleague Andrew Thomas, the senior director for Trados marketing. Before the conversation I felt pretty sure we would be talking about Trados 2022, which was released at the end of May. It turns out we did talk about that, but really only very briefly. The rest of the considerable time we spent together was devoted to the new Trados, as in a “newly recalibrated Trados product offering.”

Trados is the market leader among individual translators and non-cloud-based installations at organizations, including translation agencies and translation buyers. This has been the case for a long time. The fact that there’s a qualifier (“non-cloud-based”) in here has been somewhat of a stumbling block for the RWS Trados team. Accordingly, we talked a lot about being an underdog versus being the “top dog” during our conversation—a topic that never would have come up in any of the previous discussions we’ve

had over the many years that Trados and I have been in conversation.

Let’s start by looking at the language technology situation at RWS. After they took an inventory of what they had available, they organized the many different parts into one business unit with a more or less coherent strategy and goal.

As you likely know, the Trados brand used to be owned by SDL, which, along with Trados and all the other SDL technology puzzle pieces, was bought by RWS. The other puzzle pieces related to the translation

technology that came with SDL were either acquisitions SDL made over the years (Trados itself was an acquisition, as were Idiom with its WorldServer product and MultiTrans via Donnelley Language Solutions, not to mention a barrage of other non-language-related products) or a number of in-house solutions (e.g., TMS, GroupShare). Most of these are products directed toward similar customers on the high and high-ish end of the market. These are customers you don’t want to frustrate by discontinuing any of those products because, as in the

case of SDL/RWS, they might well also be buying language services from you.

On top of that, none of these products is a new-generation cloud-based product. (And I’m being kind when I say “new generation”—it’s really not that new anymore!) All these products employ a server-client-based infrastructure—the kind of infrastructure that was *en vogue* in the “noughties” (2000–2009) and early 2010s. This infrastructure allows for collaboration and centralized data hosting, but is not in the less strenuous cloud environment that even the more cautious customers are now requesting. So, let’s take a closer look at some of these products.

Trados Enterprise: With the ongoing integration of the Language Weaver machine translation system (another technology purchase, and incidentally the only one that hasn’t been grouped in the newly formed translation technology unit), a language cloud product was introduced in 2014. This language cloud product was built upon and eventually became its own full-fledged and stand-alone translation management system in 2019. This is now being marketed as Trados Enterprise, the cloud-based translation management solution RWS is offering to translation buyers.

While RWS has not “end-of-lived” (the fact that you can come up with constructs like this is one thing I love about the English language!), any of its other translation management systems will still



Useful Links

Passolo

Trados Enterprise

Trados Studio

Trados Team

provide updates to customers. RWS will develop new features more slowly for these systems and “assumes” that the clients who still use them will eventually switch to Trados Enterprise. (This was—at least from Daniel and Andrew’s perspective—the preferable solution to switching to a competing product.)

So, Trados Enterprise is the full-fledged translation management solution RWS is now actively promoting and selling. (I was promised that in the not-so-distant future, pricing and such things will be much more transparent on the RWS website.)

Trados Team: The product for translation teams of all sizes is now called Trados Team. RWS bills it as a “cloud-based translation project management solution.” It’s very similar to the GroupShare product, except everything is cloud-based. (By the way, GroupShare is the only one of the old guard of products that’s still being proactively offered on their website—but just kind of tucked away between marketing copy for Trados Team.)

Trados Studio: This leaves the last of the three products,

and the one that’s the most familiar to all of you: Trados Studio. Trados Studio obviously is the solution for the individual translator and, if used in relation with one or both of the other products, forms the tail-end of any line in the language business (i.e., the one where translation is taking place—aka “the most important one”).

Unlike the two other products that have completed the switch to an online, web-based environment, Studio is still a decidedly hybrid product, with the hybridization process in the 2022 edition mostly complete. What I mean by that is that the Online Editor (which in its first incarnation in 2016 really was “only” a secondary environment for maybe proofreading purposes) is now a feature-rich environment that allows for productive translation work. (Of course, this doesn’t mean all of you will like it—I know that the prejudices against a browser-based translation environment run deep for many.) You can switch between the desktop and the Online Editor seamlessly—and you’ll be able to do it even more seamlessly when the desktop editor in an upcoming service pack is updated with data from the online environment in a more automated fashion. Also, Trados Studio 2022 gives you access to all “base level of cloud computing,” so there shouldn’t be any extra cost for any online resource you create and use.

Other changes, aside from the typical bug fixes, etc., include relatively minor features such as multilingual

Excel, a handful of binary software file formats (there’s still a new version of the localization tool Passolo, but my sense is that it won’t have a particularly illustrious future as a stand-alone tool), and a new “view” in the desktop’s main interface. This view is called the Manage view and essentially combines the Project and Files views. This is still in beta version, so you’ll have to activate it if you want to use it.


Positive Developments

What does all this mean? Overall, I think it’s positive that, in the midterm view, Trados Studio will no longer have to serve all kinds of unconnected and discombobulated translation management systems. It should certainly be easier for the technology teams at RWS to move forward with further development now that everything is all in one business unit. (According to Daniel, “the current reorg is the best reorg ever” because “it was centered around technology and not corporate,” and I can testify that he has gone through a lot of those reorgs.)

The Trados Studio user can be pretty certain that the desktop environment is going to stay for the foreseeable future, but they also know that the Online Editor is actually productively usable.

For larger clients, this looks like another “TSO” moment. That’s what I called the (Trados Studio) opportunity when Studio 2009 was first released as a complete redesign of the previous Trados. (Oh, was it

buggy!) Back then, I thought this was a great opportunity for a real market shakeup. Everyone who was using the earlier Trados version (the gorilla in the market) had to decide whether to eventually upgrade and relearn a new tool from the same vendor or switch technologies and learn that technology. Amazingly enough, SDL was able to “squash” the “Trados Studio opportunity” and maintain its top dog position—partly because competitors didn’t present attractive enough alternatives. Today, RWS is in a different position when it comes to translation management systems. Between XTM, Memsource, memoQ, and a few others, there are very strong contenders, some of which are already stronger than RWS in the cloud TMS space. RWS knows that, so it will be fun to see what happens.

Oh, and with the strong reliance on the Online Editor for Trados Studio, I cannot imagine that RWS will offer perpetual licenses for Trados Studio for much longer. Subscription-based models have been too successful and make too much business sense, especially when an online environment is frequently updated anywhere. But that’s just my guess. 



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