

## MadCap Lingo 4.0:

### Jumping the Gap Between Authoring and Translation

By Scott Bass, President of Advanced Language Translation, Inc.

In the growing landscape of translation memory tools, MadCap Lingo inhabits a special niche; no other tool fits so snugly in the content authoring and translation supply chain. The newest version, MadCap Lingo 4.0, brings new features that will appeal to both translators and technical publication departments who can use MadCap Lingo to manage their translation assets.

Since the first version, MadCap Lingo was meant to work hand-in-hand with Flare, MadCap Software's flagship single-source authoring tool. Technical writers who need access to translation memories and term bases will appreciate MadCap Lingo's interface design, which shares common elements with Flare. Translators and translation service providers will appreciate MadCap Lingo's comprehensive support of content translation and terminology management.

#### THE TRANSLATOR'S EXPERIENCE

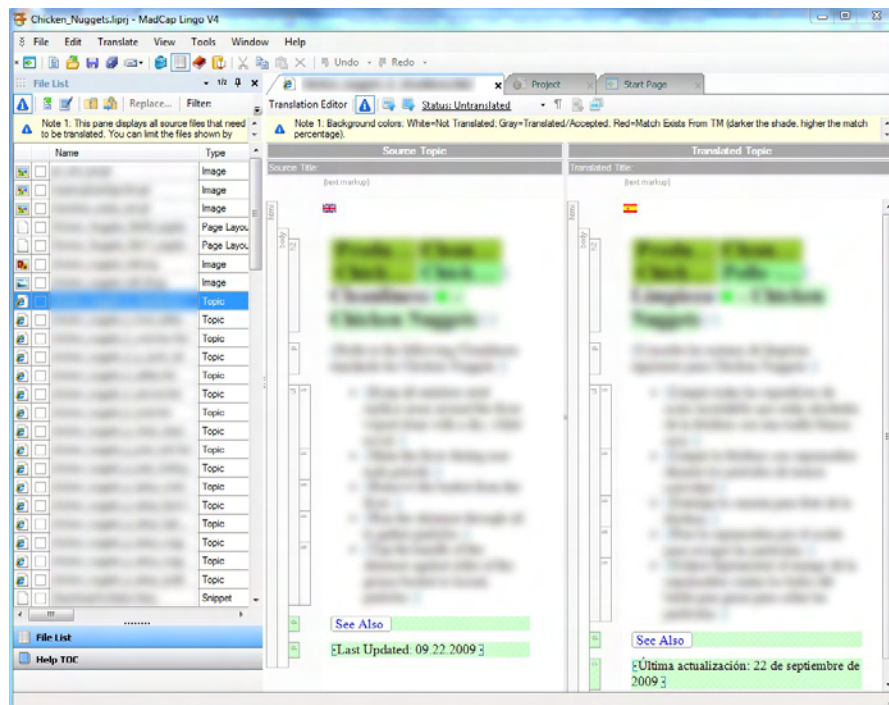
Translators who have worked with Flare will find immediate familiarity with the main panel in the MadCap Lingo interface, since it appears in the same position as where an author would typically work when using Flare. The chief difference is that this space provides the translator with a view of both the English content and the corresponding translation. Additionally, MadCap Lingo offers translators two content views: "Preview" mode and "Translation" mode (see figures 1 and 2, respectively).

Preview mode looks quite similar to Flare's authoring interface, but with MadCap Lingo, the translator can see both the source content and translated text. This mode is for context only, and it is not used for entering translation. Having this on-the-fly preview capability is important, since understanding the context of where a particular block of text appears aids the translator in understanding its meaning.

Preview mode is only available for content that has either been authored in MadCap Flare or imported into Flare prior to translation. While the Translation mode in MadCap Lingo is available for other file types such as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, previewing of the source must be done directly in the original Word or PowerPoint files.

Currently, MadCap Lingo 4.0 supports the following file types: Topic Files (\*.htm, \*.html, \*.xml); a long list of MadCap file formats such as table of contents (\*.fltoc), glossaries (\*.flglo), and snippets (.flnsp) to name a few; Mimic files, Capture Images; MS Word documents (\*.rtf, \*.doc, \*.docx), PowerPoint (\*.ppt and \*.pptx); DITA files; .Net Resource files (\*.resx) and simple text files.

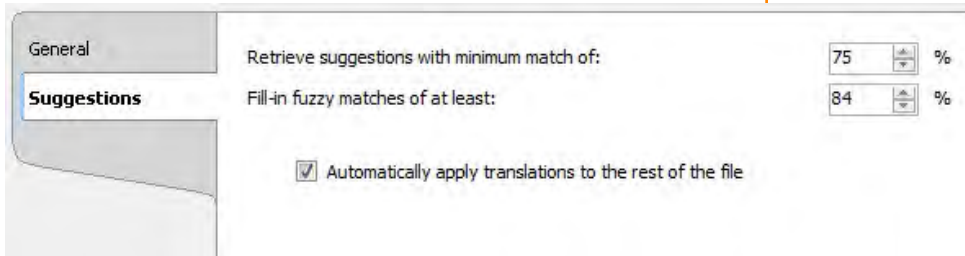
Given the inclusion of RESX files and ubiquitous file types such as Word and PowerPoint, MadCap Lingo is an obvious choice for software developers or other companies already committed to producing the majority of their technical documentation in Flare, who also want



the flexibility to include simpler files such as memos, presentations and press releases in their single-source environment.

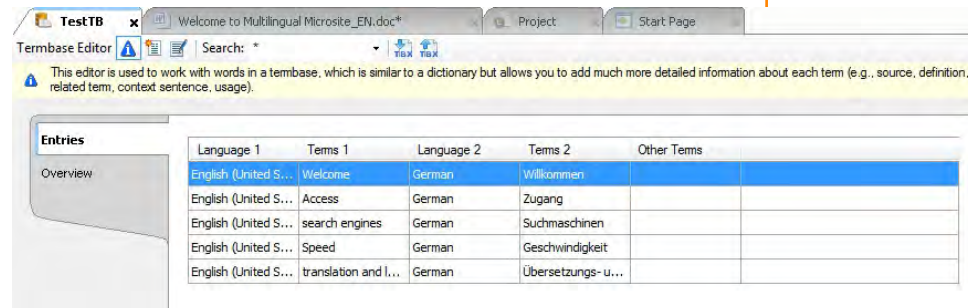
## TRANSLATION MEMORY AND TERM BASE MANAGEMENT

In regard to translation memory (TM) support, MadCap Lingo is TMX-compatible, so importing from and exporting to this format is very easy. The TM backend is SQL Express, which makes the tool simple to install, reliable and networkable. Translation memory options are basic but effective, allowing the user to set a minimum match level for retrieving suggestions from the TM database and to automatically fill-in fuzzy matches at a percentage set by the user. The user also can choose whether or not to automatically apply translations in the TM to the rest of the file.



Version 4.0 features an improved Translation Memory Editor. It no longer spawns a separate window when adding a new segment manually; instead you can now simply add source and corresponding translation in fields at the bottom of each column.

MadCap Lingo also has included terminology management functionality since Version 3.0. The Termbase in MadCap Lingo is basic and functions similarly to tools that many translators may have already seen.



What makes MadCap Lingo's term base management so useful is the ease in which terms can be added to the Termbase. While the translator is working, all that he or she has to do is select a term via the context menu, and click "Add new term." A quick entry dialog box then appears, which allows for selection of the corresponding term in the target language. [see Figure 4 - Quick add of a Termbase Entry from Translation Mode]

Later, additional information can be added to each term entry. The Termbase is concept-oriented and allows for tracking subject, source, definition, external reference, image, and related term or concept information. At the term level under the "Language Set" dialog, the translator can set the language identifier and record a localized definition, customer, project, term source, and geographical usage. It's also possible to track gender, part of speech, location, type and usage.

## TRANSLATION ALIGNMENT

Another great feature in MadCap Lingo 4.0 is the Align tool. The alignment functionality has been upgraded as a separate application, and it supports more file types than the Align Project function in Version 3.0. Having been a user of both Trados WinAlign and SDL's alignment tool I must admit to having low expectations at first. However, much to my surprise, MadCap's Align application performs quite well, and it has functionality not present in the aforementioned tools.

One great feature of Align is the ability to upload aligned segments automatically into a MadCap Lingo translation memory. Most other alignment tools require the translator to export a TMX or similar file for import into a translation memory. MadCap Align allows translators to upload segments as they work, so even if they have to skip some segments or can't complete a whole file, they can upload any segments that are aligned. [see Figure 5 - MadCap Lingo's Align Tool]

MadCap Align also excels at managing troublesome segments by offering five segment swapping options: swap two selected cells, swap a selected cell with the one below or the one above, join two adjacent segments, or split a segment. In most other alignment tools the translator must manually move text between segments.

## SUPPORT FOR AUTHORS

For authors, it is easy to start working with MadCap Lingo thanks to the common interface design it shares with Flare. There is the familiar navigation pane, which enables the user to access all topics or files contained within a MadCap Lingo project. However, the features that allow for the management of translated content and ability to interface with translation providers are what authors will appreciate the most.

MadCap Lingo 4.0 has all the functions one would expect in a current translation memory suite, but where it surpasses many other tools is in support of translation project administration—especially for Flare projects of all sizes.

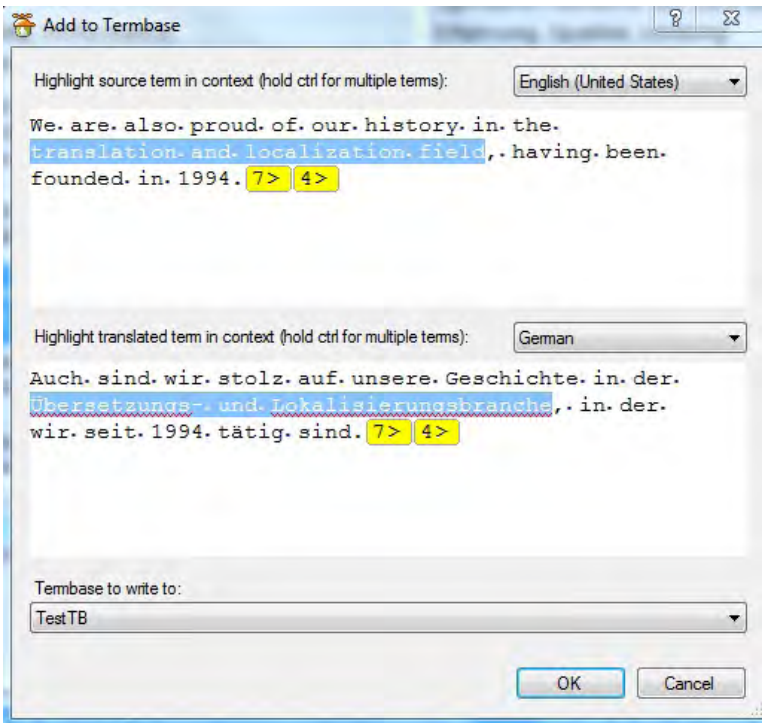


Figure 4 - Quick add of a Termbase Entry from Translation Mode

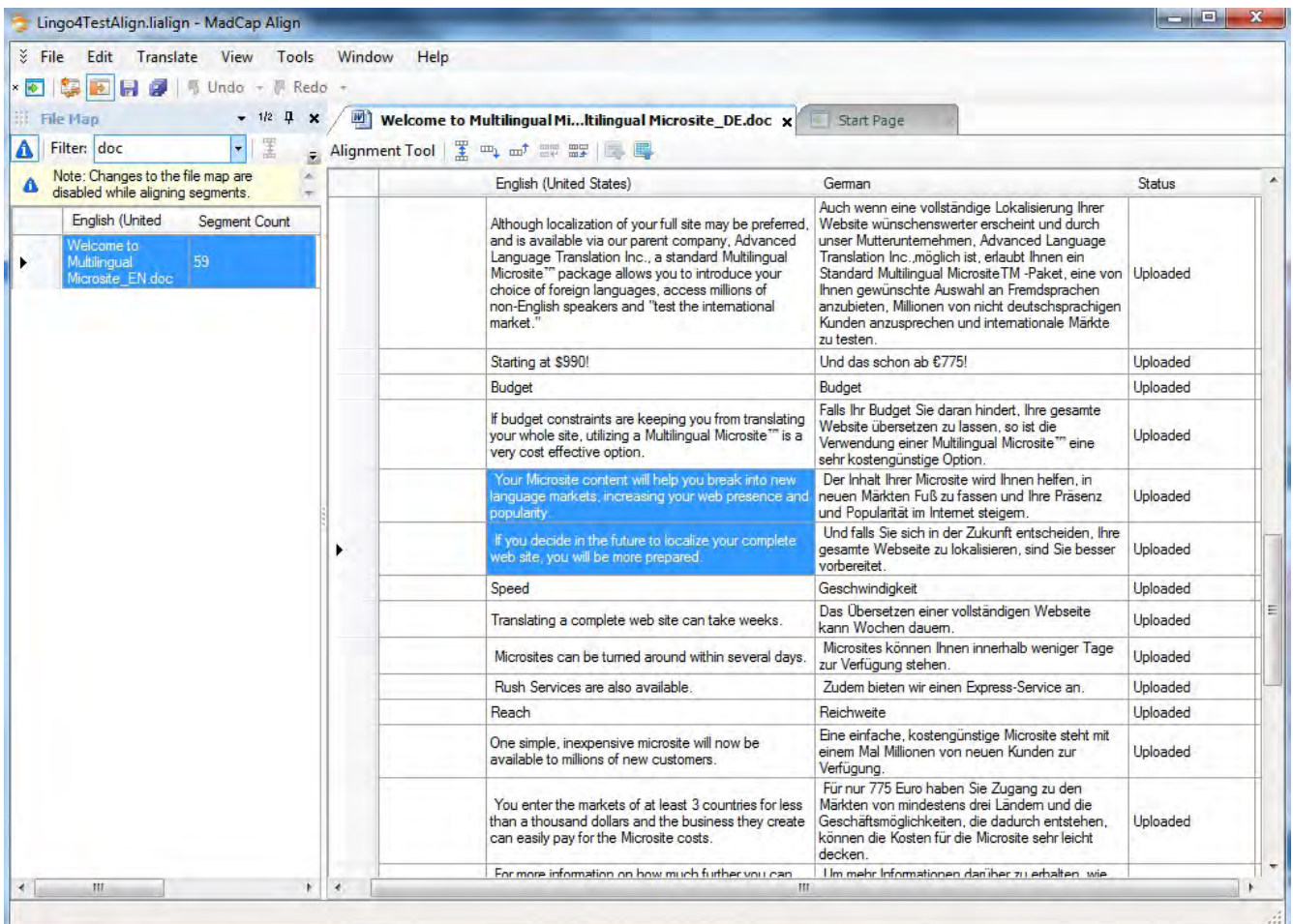
## TRANSLATION PROJECT PACKAGER

Since MadCap Lingo 3.0, there has been a Project Packager that makes it quite easy to hand off translation projects to translators who are not using MadCap Lingo. The Project Packager is simple to use; from the File List, the author simply selects which files to put into the translation package. If the author doesn't choose any files, the default is that all files are included.

MadCap Lingo then processes all the Flare content files, as well as any other necessary files such as the table of contents (TOC), index and snippets. The benefit here is that MadCap Lingo automatically converts the XML files (TOC, index and snippets are all stored as XML) to the XLIFF format. This saves time and effort for the translator, and it ensures that the XML files will be filtered correctly in most third-party translation memory tools, since the majority of them now support XLIFF.

## UPDATE PROJECT FUNCTION

The most powerful feature of MadCap Lingo 4.0 for content creators and translators is the Update Project function. This feature was formerly known as a Difference Project. In Version 3.0, if an author or translator received an updated project, it was necessary to create a new project that compared the previous and current versions. This was known as a Difference Project. Now all



the user needs to do is use the Update Project command within the current project. MadCap Lingo simply generates a list of files that have been changed or added in the project.

The Update Project function is invaluable. From the translation provider's perspective, we find that this is the step most authors prefer not to deal with. MadCap Lingo gives us the ability to quickly assess what has changed in a project. From there we have the option of retranslating files or topics, leveraging from the translation memory, or simply carrying out spot updates.

The other benefit of the Update Project feature is that it checks for changes in all files. A big challenge on many projects is knowing if images as well as text have changed; if an image has been changed, "Different" will appear next to its name. Of course, this is based on last-modified information for image files, but this is enough to alert the translation team to check the flagged images and see, for example, if a new screen shot is needed or a callout on an image may have changed.

MadCap Lingo 4.0 is a solid improvement over the previous version, and it is apparent from the list of feature upgrades that MadCap has been listening to both translators and authors. MadCap Lingo may not have every bell and whistle of products from the myriad competitors in the translation tool jungle. However, it does have everything needed to capture a company's critical content and terminology assets in an effective, efficient manner. The biggest benefits are its shallow learning curve and closing of the gap between authoring and translation.

### BIO:

Scott Bass is the president of Advanced Language Translation, Inc. (ALT), a Rochester, NY-based provider of technical translation and localization services since 1994. More information is available at [www.advancedlanguage.com](http://www.advancedlanguage.com).

