

The Problems of Localisation

Localisation is often defined as the technical act of adapting a piece of software or an internet product for the needs of a specific language or culture. This is done primarily through translation but also includes the fitting of additional components that may be needed in some cultures and some software environments. While localisation is mainly treated as a task specific problem involving implementation and adjustment, it is also an area where technology meets politics and culture on the front line. As well as translation, localisation typically involves data conversion, translation memory alignment and management and research into the local legal requirements of certain software. These processes are made more difficult for many projects as localisation often takes place in parallel with the development of the source product. This is done in order to synchronise the release dates of certain applications in different countries, but can make it very difficult for developers when they are trying to localise a piece of software that may not even be complete yet.

{mosgoogle center} There are many questions regarding how localisation is achieved and how deeply it should be done in certain circumstances and certain cultures. Specific cultures and nations need to be addressed differently with regards to localisation as one country may have entirely separate translation needs from another. The programmer or 'localiser' who is in control of any particular localisation task needs to be not only an experienced code developer but also an expert in the two languages and cultures that are involved in the process. This is very specific and a localiser working with two European languages is going to need different skills than someone working between English and an Asian language that uses a different alphabet system. Some languages in Asian nations are especially difficult to localise due to the sheer number and type differences in characters. The differences between language structures brings up many problems and questions regarding the standardisation of how language is coded and stored within a digital environment. During the early years of computing, interfaces relied on text being represented using the ASCII approach. This only allowed a text to be accessed with one language, and as computers and the Internet have now spread all over the world, this is obviously a huge limitation. The solution to this was to use multiple character sets where numeric codes in the text could correspond to a number of different letters depending on the culture of the person accessing the document. This system has become a standard and Unicode, as it is known, has made it possible for the characters of most of the world's languages to be represented uniquely. While the use of Unicode has made localisation a lot easier to implement in some situations, in the case of some languages there are still many problems. With such big markets opening up worldwide, especially in China and India, developers certainly have a good reason to perfect the process of localisation in software development.