translate.org.za

Lessons from the bottom of a Dark Continent

Translate.org.za

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Is 'n nie-vir-profeet organisasies wat Oop Kode en Vry Sagteware ontwikkel met die doel om Suid Afrikaners te hulp en bemagtig.

Die Translate.org.za projek was in 2001 geskep met die visie om Vry Sagteware te vertaal na die elf tale van Suid Afrika.

Vry Sagteware in jou taal is egte bemagtiging.

Freedoms and Translate

i. Freedom to **use**
ii. Freedom to **change**
iii. Freedom to **share**
iv. Freedom to **distribute changes**

- Change
  - Add our translations
  - Fix errors related to our languages
  - Add tools needed for ourselves
- Distribute Changes
  - Producing software with no users would be no fun.

Our Philosophy

- Language is the project
  - Xhosa language translations we see as a project in its own right.
  - Its the only way to get major language impact across the whole of the free desktop.
  - Engenders cooperation and sharing of resource and helps to prevent the silo effect we see currently.

Our Philosophy (2)

- We won't do your work
  - But we'll help you do it.
  - We will not translate languages outside of South Africa.
  - But we assist other teams: Kiswahili, Luganda, Khmer
- Hippos are great firefighters
  - Don't get stuck between a Hippo and a fire.
  - Light lots of fires.
  - See Hippo. See Hippo run. Who's the Hippo?

Our Philosophy (3)

- Remove barriers to entry
  - We will do almost anything to make it easier.
  - We document.
  - We create tools to unify translation efforts.

Business Models

- Non-profit Foundation
  - Advantages
    - Stick to your goal
    - Legal vehicle to raise funds
  - Disadvantages
    - Sustainability
    - Seeking other revenue avenues

Staffing

- Then
  - Volunteers, became fulltime
  - Management burden
  - Retrenchments
- Now
  - Contracted work/ outcome based
  - Only volunteers

Staffing

- St James Software Model
  - 2/5 days
  - Keep your best resources
  - Keep them happy
  - Caution:
    - Hands-on
    - Time management

Quick Language History

- European
  - All Indo-European
  - Afrikaans (derived from Dutch influenced by French, German, Malay and local languages)
  - English
- African
  - Niger-Congo
  - Two major groups: Nguni, Sotho
  - Clicks (IsiXhosa, Cawe, Qumu)
- Influence
  - All influenced by extinct or dying languages: Khoi-San and Hottentot

Choosing Languages

1. Most widely understood
2. All language groups
3. Largest number of speakers
4. Small groups
- In practical terms
  - Afrikaans, Zulu, Northern Sotho cover 50% of 1st language speakers and majority of 2nd language.
  - Venda and Tsonga will ensure all language groups have access.
  - Then every language >3 million speakers
  - Then the rest
  - Note: All of these are official languages. There are still other minority languages.

Choosing Targets

1) Free and Open Source
2) Cross-platform
3) End-user focused
- Therefore:
  - OpenOffice.org
  - Mozilla
  - KDE/Gnome
  - Linux installers
- Probably never:
  - GCC, CVS, etc

Our Software

- Always driven by a localisation need
- Includes:
  - Format converters
  - Translation portal
  - OpenOffice.org multilingual tools
  - OpenOffice.org language selector
  - Locale tools
  - Spell checker tools
- More details…

Software: Format converters

- Nobody uses GSI (well nobody we know :)
- Everybody uses something else
- Started with Mozilla's DTD and Properties files
- Converts everything to a common format. PO for now.
- Why?
  - We translate OOo, Mozilla, KDE, etc it is easier to change the format then change the translator.

Software: Format converters

- We speak:
  - CSV
  - Ooo/GSI
  - Mozilla
  - Txt
  - Sxw
  - HTML – hack

Software: Checking tools

- Many errors are silly but problematic.
- Misplaced brackets or misspelled variables – break the whole of Mozilla.
- Checks include:
  - Variables
  - Accelerators
  - Punctuation
  - More…

Software: OOo multilingual tools

- Purpose: Take monolingual builds and combine them into a multilingual OOo installer.
- Reason: Most South African's understand English and will not use another language unless you make it painless
- Frustrations: Seems that the OOo project has the infrastructure but no desire to pursue this.

Software: OOo language chooser

- Purpose: Change languages once OOo is installed
- Reason: setofficelang.bin -f af ; echo $?
- Frustrations: Getting it tested and working

Frustrations

- Project Driven solutions
  - GSI translators, Mozilla translator
- Localisation is not important
  - Every project says it is
  - No project demonstrates that it is
  - Disconnect between what is needed and what is delivered.
  - Slow pace of change.

Frustrations. More!

- Open Source by name not practice
  - We were guilty
  - Affirmative Action
- High barriers to entry
  - Localisation is really easy
  - But we make it oh so hard
  - Patches, GSI files, compile, sacrifice your first born, donate a kidney.

How you can help

- Use our tools. At the very least the checker will help you.
- Join us to make them better
  - Especially on the portal effort
  - Make the transformer understand other formats.
- Help document their use
- Help promote language as the project
  - Set goals which cut across projects but meet your language needs.

How you can help

- translate.sourceforge.net
- translate-devel@lists.sourceforge.net

Questions

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Thank You, Dankie, Enkosi Kakhulu