Localization Vs Globalization Testing

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Localization testing also known as L10N is the testing done to ensure the quality of a product for a particular target culture or locale i.e. it ensures how easily one can translate the user interface of the program to any target language without re-engineering or verifying the code. Things such as user interfaces and content files are often altered during localization.

Globalization testing on the other hand is to ensure that application can function in any culture or locale, also known as L18N. Application or a component is considered globalized if:

- It is Unicode-based; that is, any Unicode text can be handled successfully.

- Correct encodings are selected for text conversions, if conversion is needed to interact with legacy systems.

- The code follows the user's culture-specific settings.

Translation versus Localization: Differences between localization and translation can be briefed as

1. Activities: Translation is the activity in which materials is transferred from one language in to another. Localization includes many more activities conversion of translated documents in to other formats, multilingual project management, multilingual product support and translation strategy consulting.

2. Complexity: Translation contains large number of components such as software, sample files, online help and printed documentation. Managing localization projects is tricky.

3. Adaptation level: In localization all characteristics of the target market need to be implemented in the final product. Apart from technical adaptation of the software code often marketing material and sample files are required to be rewritten.

4. Technology used: Examples of translation technology widely used in software localization tools for software user interface translations, CAT(computer aided translation), MT(machine translation) systems. Software companies have applied TM tools successfully for many years in the localization industry.

Checklist of Scope coverage for Localization Testing: Below is the checklist for scope coverage that is to be carried out whenever a tester undertakes the task for testing localization for an application

- Spelling Rules

- Sorting Rules

- Upper and Lower case conversions

- Printers

- Size of Papers

- Operating System

- Key boards

- Text Filters

- Hot keys

- Mouse

- Date formats

- Measurements and Rulers

- Available memory

Difficulties in Localization: One of the difficulties faced is to maintain the parallel versions of texts throughout the life of the product although translating existing text to other languages may seem easy. For example: If a message displayed to the user is modified, all of the translated versions must be changed. This in turn results in a somewhat longer development cycle.

Many localization issues e.g. writing direction, text sorting requires changes in the software than text translation. For example, Open Office achieves this with compilation switches.

One example of the pitfalls of localization is the attempt made by Microsoft to keep some keyboard shortcuts significant in local languages. This has resulted in some (but not all) programs in the Italian version of Microsoft Office using "CTRL + S" (sottolineato) as a replacement for "CTRL + U" (underline), rather than the (almost) universal "Save" function.

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