Why Concatenation Is Bad for Localization

Three Useful Examples.

INTRODUCTION

The English language is quite simple in its grammatical construction (limited conjugation, no gender differences). You can therefore easily build phrases by concatenation. However, it is rare that this will work for other languages. This practice should be avoided in order to prevent grammatically incorrect translations. Read on to see three concrete examples of how English concatenation impacts translation.

KEYWORDS: *concatenation, internationalization, localization best practices*

Useful Examples:

Number 1:

You have several lists and for each list you have only two choices: **"none"** and **"other"**. These words are stored only once and used for each list.

In some languages (e.g. French), this will not work because these two words change depending on the gender of the dropdown label (E.g. *Industry* (feminine), *Application Type* (masculine)) .

It is better to store each item for each list or component separately.

Number 2:

You have the sentence **"User registered successfully."** concatenated as **"User"** and %s and **"registered successfully."**.

It is better to store **"User %s registered successfully"** as a complete sentence because in some languages the syntax changes.

For example, in Slovak, the literal translation would be odd and the correct translation **"Registrácia užívateľa %s bola úspešná"** (The registration of user %s was successful) not only changes the syntax but also the function of the individual words in the sentence (e.g. a verb becomes noun).

Number 3:

While this is not common, we saw a sentence concatenated as follows:

"The apparatus is ready when {0} is {1} {2} {3} for a {4} of {5} {6}."

The use of placeholders is very tricky as it is not only difficult to guess the meaning of the sentence when translating but it is also very unlikely that the resulting sentence will be grammatically correct.

In general, placeholders should be avoided except for numbers or if you have two phrases separated by a column. Consider the following example:

Error occurred: Incorrect data

It is OK to code **"Error occurred: %s"** and to store each error message such as **"Incorrect data"** separately.

CONCLUSION

The use of concatenation is considered a bad internationalization practice. It makes translation difficult or at times impossible. If your motivation for concatenation is to save cost by recycling strings, you may end up spending much more on localization and debugging as translation defects resulting from concatenated strings can only be found after the translation has been completed and the UI tested. To learn more how to prepare your files for localization and obtain a quick internationalization readiness checklist, contact us at **sales@ezglobe.com** or any of the phone numbers below.