Problems facing small translation teams

Who are we

Kurdish translation team

- small
- no IT professionals
- live in different countries
- victims of the "Ubuntu scandal" in 2006

What have we done

- Mozilla Firefox
- OpenOffice.org
- GNOME
- KDE
- XFCE
- Debian Installer/Ubuntu#

Various Kinds of Problems

General problems

- Social problems
- Technical problems
- and even political problems

Mozilla specific problems

- Technical problems
- Communication problems

Who are (possible) translators in small translation teams?

- not necessarily computer experts
- language enthusiasts: writers, poets, religious people
- people from different cultures (local vs. exile)

Social problems

- Power struggle
- Different experiences, different approaches, different styles

Technical problems: Lacking resources

Language

- No universities
- No IT vocabulary in native language
- No language standardization, different dialects, different writings systems

Language technology

- No keyboard
- No font support
- No spell-checker

Technical infrastructure

- No 24 hours internet connection
- No internet connection at home
- No own computer
- Bad connection
- "So you can't maintain an official Firefox translation"

Political Problems

- Negative language attitude of government: "The Kurdish Ubuntu Scandal"
- Negative language attitude of population
- Legal problems

Translating Mozilla Firefox

Why use Mozilla Firefox?

- Does it render web pages in my language correctly?
  - Unicode support, fonts, right-to-left issues (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Kurdish)

Why (not) translate Mozilla Firefox?

- Most difficult of all projects to translate
- Highest bureaucratic hurdles
- Highest number of file formats that have to be edited (*.dtd, *.properties, *.inc, *.html, *.*)
- Highest requirements of follow up (Bugzilla)
- Least responsive of all projects

So you want to translate Firefox...?

- Sign some paper and fax it to Mozilla !

- Subscribe to some ultra-high-traffic mailinglist

- Choose your recommended tools : Notepad? Mozilla Translator? Translate-toolkit? KBabel? PoEdit? Gtranslator? Lokalize? Pootle?

- Set up CVS ! (great fun)

- You can't set up CVS ? Bad luck !

C – V - S ?!

- What is CVS?
- What is SSH?
- What are branches?
- What has mozilla1.9 to do with Firefox 3?
- Why should I care?
- And what the hell is ☿ ?

Translation: Edit your files

- What is UTF-8 ?
- What is Windows/Unix style line endings?
- Why should I not translate
  - "name" in "NAME=Konsole"
  - "width" in "width=100px"
  - "%" into "percent"

Getting the translations into the UI

- Build yourself an XPI
- Build yourself a browser (great fun)
- First results:
  - UI can be totally broken, browser may not start
  - Dialog boxes can cut off text
  - Access keys

So you've translated Mozilla (or most of it)

- Why opt-in?
- String freezes
- Bug #123456
  - Search Engines in your language
  - ...
- "Post a patch to Mozilla and ask for approval"
- Patch? What patch?
- Diff? What diff?
- Attachment? What attachment?
- ...and don't mess with Google !!!

Even more steps...

- 100% requirement leads to inclusion of untranslated strings
- Tinderbox
- Dashboard
- In-product pages

Result:

- Your translation is held "hostage"

What happened elsewhere?

- Rosetta/Launchpad appeared on the scene and invited everyone to translate
- Wikis became widespread
- OpenOffice.org introduced Pootle at Sun Microsystems

Solutions:

"Remove sources of errors and let translators do what they can best – translate!"

- Use PO-files wherever possible
  - translate-toolkit
- Use translation memory wherever possible
  - Pootle, open-trans.eu, poEdit
- Hide the version control layer from the translator
  - Verbatim / Mozootle / Narro
- Build XPIs automatically
- Rethink the 100% requirement
- provide unofficial builds that do not break

Thank you