Preferred Language Tag

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1. **Abstract**

This memo defines a new tag which will help users and servers
to determine the best language in their communications.
For example, error messages coming from SMTP servers or HTTP servers
can use this tag to send those error messages in the preferred
language for the user.

2. **Introduction**

Messages sent by servers or applications to users are often in
the english language because the server or the application have
no prior knowledge of the preferred language of the end user.
Sometimes, servers or applications send messages in the proper
language of the user but they were preconfigured with a priori
knowledge of the end user. In the context of internationalization
of the Internet and in the context of internationalization of the
protocols as discussed in [RFC-2277], it is much useful to know a
priori which language a user wants to interact with.

Since many protocols do not necessarily interact with
the user by some negociation, like two SMTP servers relaying a
email message, there is a need to give a list of preferred
languages in order inside the tag, so that if, for example,
a user is requesting french, swedish and then english as preferred
languages, the server who don't have french error messages, will
send the message in swedish or in english.

2.1. Other tags

HTTP [RFC-2068] defines the tag Accept-Language, which defines not only
a preferred language tag, but also a language quality factor assigned
to it. Current work on LDAP[ldapextlang] defines an attribute type.

2.2. Requirements notation

This document occasionally uses terms that appear in capital
letters. When the terms "MUST", "SHOULD", "MUST NOT", "SHOULD
NOT", and "MAY" appear capitalized, they are being used to
indicate particular requirements of this specification. A
discussion of the meanings of these terms appears in [RFC-
2119].

3. Preferred Language Tag

Language tag mechanism has been described in RFC-1766. This memo
defines a new tag: Prefer-Language to specify the list of preferred
languages that the user (or to be more general, the issuer of
this tag which can be a process, server, ...) wants to receive
when communicating with other parties.

The values and the syntax associated with this new tag are those
defined in RFC-1766. The language strings are separated by
commas. The order of preference is from left to right, the first
in the left position being the most preferred one.

For example, this tag will specify that a user prefer french, if
not possible deutsh, if not possible english:

        Prefer-Language: fr, de, en

4. Processing the tag

This tag is optional. A server or a client MAY ignore it.
But all proxies or forwarders MUST forward it.

5. Default language

This memo defines no implicit default language. Default language

is discussed in [RFC-2277].

6. Placement of the tag

This new tag will be normally placed in the headers of the protocols
that use them. This memo do not attend to list protocols and
specify where to place them.

It is envisionned that software developers will put a config option, so
the user can fill his requirements and the client software will send
those tags in all communications.

7. ABNF

The ABNF for this new tag is:

preferred-language := "Prefer-Language" "=" language (separator language)

separator := ","

language := <registered language tag [RFC-1766]>

8. Security Considerations

The knowledge of a user's preferred language can
help an attacker to impersonate the user by giving the receipient more
confidence on the sender of the message.

The applications that will process this tag should take care of
restricting the values read in the tag to the syntax, so that
if an attacker insert shell scripts or escapes in the
values of these tags, they will not be interpreted by the application.

9. Acknowledgments

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Harald T. Alverstrand, Martin J. Duerst, John Myers, Francois Yergeau

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