

IMAP4 Language Extension

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A revised version of this draft document will be submitted to the RFC editor as a Proposed Standard for the Internet Community. Discussion and suggestions for improvement are requested. This document will expire before June 1998. Distribution of this draft is unlimited.

1. Abstract

The Internet Message Access Protocol [[RFC-2060](#)] allows server responses to include human-readable text that in many cases needs to be presented to the user. This document specifies a way for a client to negotiate which language the server should use when sending human-readable text.

2. Conventions used in this document

In examples, "C:" and "S:" indicate lines sent by the client and server respectively. If such lines are wrapped without a new "C:" or "S:" label, then the wrapping is for editorial clarity and is not part of the command.

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [[RFC-2119](#)].

[3.](#) Requirements

IMAP4 servers that support this extension MUST list the keyword LANGUAGE in their CAPABILITY response.

A server that supports this extension SHOULD use the language "i-default" as described in [CHARSET-POLICY] as its default language until another supported language is negotiated by the client. A server MUST include "i-default" as one of its supported languages.

The LANGUAGE command is valid in the non-authenticated, authenticated and selected state.

[4.](#) LANGUAGE Command

Arguments: Zero or one language tag as defined by [[RFC-1766](#)].

Response: A possible LANGUAGE response containing the list of server supported languages.

A possible NAMESPACE response as defined by [IMAP-NAMESPACE].

Result: OK - Command completed

NO - Could not complete command

BAD - arguments invalid

The LANGUAGE command requests that human-readable text emitted by the server be localized to the language specified in the language tag argument.

If the command succeeds, the server will return human-readable responses in the specified language starting with the tagged OK response to the LANGUAGE command. These responses will be in UTF-8 [[RFC-2044](#)].

If the command fails, the server will continue to return human-readable responses in the language it was previously using.

Example 4.1
=====

< The server defaults to using English responses until the user explicitly changes the language. >

C: A001 LOGIN KAREN PASSWORD
S: A001 OK LOGIN completed

< Once the client changes the language, all responses will be in that language starting with the tagged OK to the LANGUAGE command. >

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C: A002 LANGUAGE FR
S: A002 OK La Language commande a ete executee avec success

< If a server does not support the requested language, responses will continue to be returned in the current language the server is using. >

C: A003 LANGUAGE DE
S: A003 NO Ce Language n'est pas supporte

If the language tag argument is omitted, the server SHOULD send an untagged LANGUAGE response listing the languages it supports. If the server is unable to enumerate the list of languages it supports it MAY return a tagged NO response to the enumeration request.

Example 4.2
=====

< A LANGUAGE command with no arguments is a request to enumerate the list of languages the server supports. >

C: A001 LANGUAGE
S: * LANGUAGE (EN DE IT i-default)
S: A001 OK Supported languages have been enumerated

C: A001 LANGUAGE
S: A002 NO Server is unable to enumerate supported languages

If the server supports the IMAP4 NAMESPACE command [IMAP-NAMESPACE], the server SHOULD return an untagged NAMESPACE response if namespace

information changed as a result of the LANGUAGE command. Note that the namespace prefix is to a mailbox and following IMAP4 convention, any international string in the NAMESPACE response MUST be of modified UTF-7 format as described in [[RFC-2060](#)].

Example 4.3

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< In this example a server supports the IMAP4 NAMESPACE command. It uses no prefix to the user's Personal Namespace, a prefix of "Other Users" to its Other Users' Namespace and a prefix of "Public Folders" to its only Shared Namespace. Since a client will often display these prefixes to the user, the server changes these based on the language of the connecting client. >

C: A001 LANGUAGE FR-CA

S: * NAMESPACE ((" " / "))(("Autres Utilisateurs/" / "))(("Dossiers Publics" / ")

S: A001 OK La Language commande a ete executee avec success

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Note: A server should be aware that changing the namespace prefixes based upon the language of the connecting client can invalidate mailbox URLs that are shared by clients of various languages. Addressing this issue is outside the scope of this document, and is part of a much larger problem of how a client should share/send urls to a particular mailbox that may be represented differently by the server based upon the identity of the connected user.

[5.](#) Formal Syntax

The following syntax specification uses the augmented Backus-Naur Form (BNF) as described in [ABNF].

LANGUAGE_Command = "LANGUAGE" [SP <language_tag>]

LANGUAGE_Response = "*" SP "LANGUAGE" SP "(" 1*<language_tag> ")"
; Note: the server is required to support the language i-default
; and as such i-default must appear in the language response.
; Although primarily English text, the "i-default" language may
; contain some non-English text.
; Any international characters in the "i-default" response
; text MUST be encoded as per <text_mime2> as defined in

; [[RFC-2060](#)] and not as <text_utf8>

<language_tag> = <language_tag> as defined in [[RFC-1766](#)]

; After the server is changed to a language other than English, the resp_text as defined by [[RFC-2060](#)] becomes:

```
resp_text = "[" <resp_text_code> "]" SP <text_utf8>  
; <resp_text_code> as defined in RFC-2060  
; <text_utf8> any valid UTF-8 character as defined in [RFC-2044]
```

[6.](#) Security Considerations

This extension allows the negotiation of a language for the human-readable text returned by a server. A user is able to query the languages that a server supports.

[7.](#) References

[[RFC-1766](#)], Alvestrand, H., "Tags for the Identification of Languages", [RFC 1766](#), UNINETT, March 1995

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[ABNF], DRUMS working group, Dave Crocker Editor, "Augmented BNF for Syntax Specifications: ABNF", [draft-drums-abnf-04.txt](#) (work in progress), Internet Mail Consortium, September 1997

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