Promoting Indian languages projects

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1 Problems

There are many problems preventing people contributing to Indian languages in Wikimedia projects:

- The majority of computers in India does not have support for Unicode and/or Indian languages, including fonts.

  - Many still have old versions of MS Windows (9x), which have at the best a very limited support for Unicode.

  - Even recent versions of Windows are not localized in Indian languages.

  - Linux has gone a long way on the path to supporting Unicode. So Linux livecds are another option to consider. But with Linux there is another problem, hardware detection and winmodems. Since for Wikipedia, getting online is essential, and I think most of our target audience is still on dial-up, we need a reliable modem support.

  - A lot of the Linux deployments are either old or do not include Hindi fonts. The ones that do include Hindi fonts do not include good Hindi fonts that can display the text perfectly.

  - Firefox / Mozilla has a nasty bug rendering devanagari script. Developers were contacted, but no action was taken.

- Things have been improving on the Internet side. Broadband has become cheaper and people are getting to surf net through Linux, as well. Some LiveCDs have been released as well. –H P Nadig 7 July 2005 07:46 (UTC)

- People whose primary language of communication do not have access to computers and the Internet.

- People who have easy computer and Internet access mainly use English as a working language.

- There is an almost total absence of keyboards for Indian languages. Using the universally accepted QWERTY keyboard by using overlays of Indian characters clashes strongly with the simple logic of the Indian alphabets. All Indian alphabets share a great deal of similarity of sound but are very different in appearance. So a keyboard which follows the logic of the language is needed. It will meet the needs of many Indian languages.

- There is a strong need to change the approach as it presently exists and totally stop forcing use of the qwerty keyboard.

- There is a strong need to develop configurable virtual keyboards which can be used on touch screen pc's so that each person/community can configure it to his/their convenience. (GOK does solve this problem.)

- There is a strong need for touch type of input devices which can work with the myriad PC's already in use

- Then there are the problems of approaching the problem inherent in 'indianizing' an English language based system , be it hardware or software. PK Sharma

- The 'Indian' programmers at different OS companies are nice, but can't be expected to be high level experts on the methodology of character vocalisation and representation .. they need to bring in other higher level 'experts' to help themselves do the job a lot better. heh? –H P Nadig 7 July 2005 07:46 (UTC) The many ways of spelling the same word creates a chaos in finding a logic for making a dictionary .. which is so important for making spelling checkers The logical translation of webpages, dialogue boxes, panels, menus makes things wierd for the newer indian users People don't want to 'dare' for fear of being ridiculed by the more 'knowing' western 'experts' who have no exposure to the logic of the indian language characters.

- No good speech to text software is yet available. A lot of Indian languages are phonetic, and good speech to text software could make a world of difference.

2 Measures needed to be taken

- Writing tutorials for Unicode and Indian languages support (fonts, keyboard, etc.)

- Promoting localized versions of Linux when the hardware would support it

- Resolving existing bugs on free software (Firefox, Mozilla, etc.)

- Lobbying for compliance with Unicode, localized software, etc.

- Develop good speech to text for Indian languages. A lot of Indian languages are phonetic.

3 References

http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Promoting_the_Indian_languages_projects