



WCEU 2023

Enable truly global use of your code – Avoid the typical i18n pitfalls

Tor-Björn Fjellner

June 10, 2023

“The Japanese enigma” — the problem

At launch, the Japanese version of WP20 didn't work

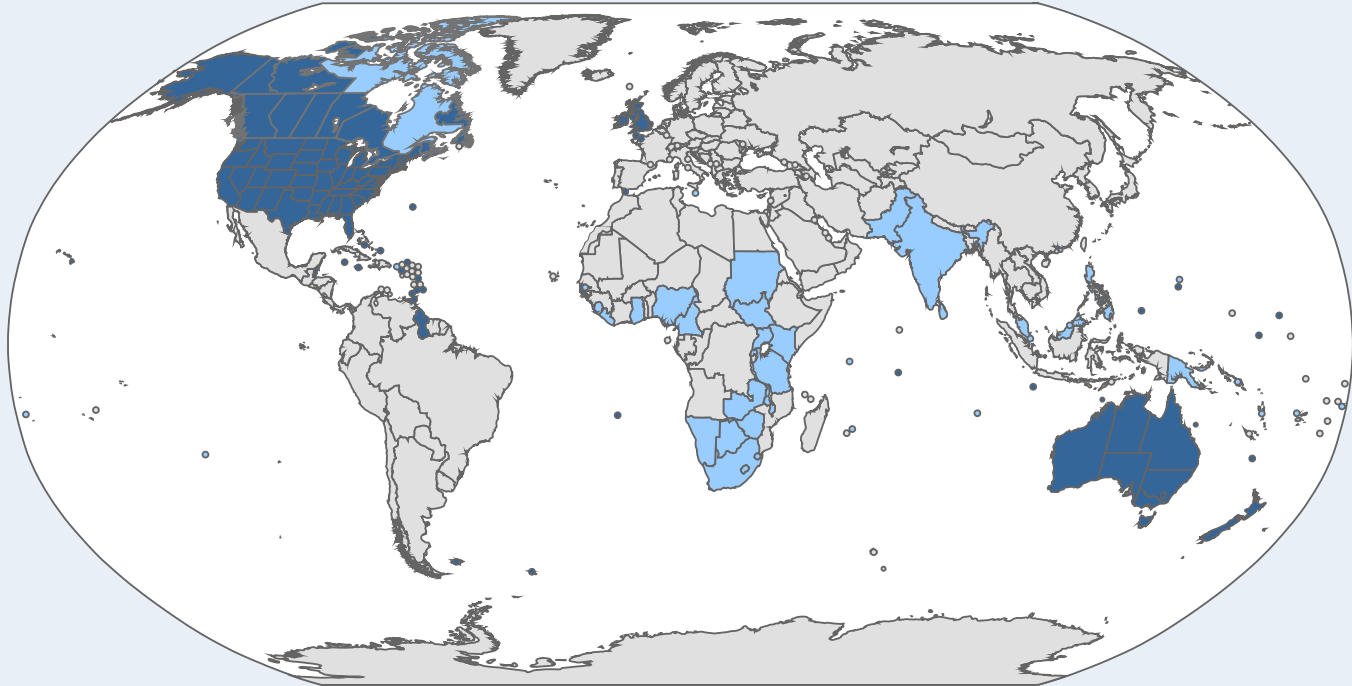


Tor-Björn Fjellner

Swedish multilingual in Spain.
WP hobbyist since 2011.
Global mentor for “Polyglots”
since 2016.



Do you develop for 5%, or the world?



WordPress “tipped over” July 18, 2017

Since then more than 50% of all
WordPress sites use other languages
than US English

Now at 56%, and growing further



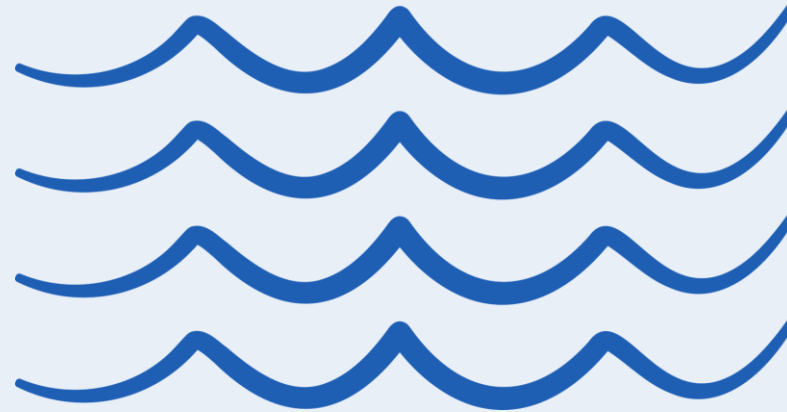


Do i18n right —
DOUBLE your reach

Agenda

The five (5) most typical i18n errors in WordPress

... and we will also solve the
“Japanese enigma”



“The Japanese enigma” – clue #1

This string failed (here from the fa_AF translation)

Translation of wp20.wordpress.net: Persian (Afghanistan) (edit)

Filter ↓ • Sort ↓ • [All \(74\)](#) • [Translated \(0\)](#) • [Untranslated \(74\)](#) • [Waiting \(0\)](#) • [Changes requested \(0\)](#) • [Fuzzy \(0\)](#) • [Warnings \(0\)](#) •

Bulk Actions ▾ [Apply](#)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Original string	Translation
<input type="checkbox"/>	ORIGINAL untranslated	
	The translation for this locale is incomplete. Help us get to 100 percent by contributing a translation .	
	▼ Comment	
	%s placeholder is a URL.	
	▼ References	
	▪ wp-content/mu-plugins/locales.php:243	
		Enter translation here



Fun fact: Farsi is RTL, so translation cursor is right-aligned!

5: Too long strings

Too long strings ...

- Hard to translate in our UI



Too long strings ...

- Hard to translate in our UI
- Hard to review



Too long strings ...

- Hard to translate in our UI
- Hard to review
- Hard to fix “fuzzy matches”*



* A “fuzzy match” is when a previous translation of a very similar source string exists. Usually occurs when a minimal change happens to the original.

Too long strings ...

- Hard to translate in our UI
- Hard to review
- Hard to fix “fuzzy matches”*
- (And imagine translating the full text of an email, but getting credit for only one (1) string 😊)



* A “fuzzy match” is when a previous translation of a very similar source string exists. Usually occurs when a minimal change happens to the original.

#4: Too short strings

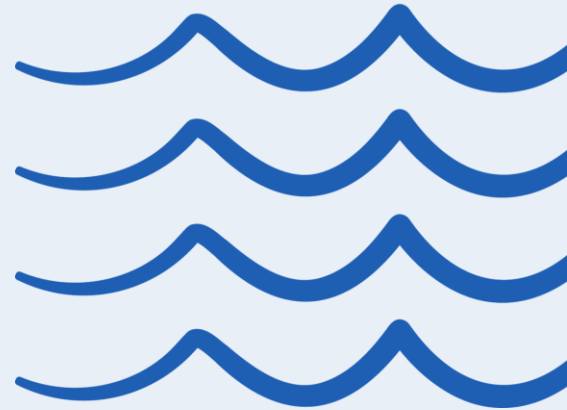
Too short strings ...

- Lack of context (unclear usage)



Too short strings ...

- Lack of context (unclear usage)
- Ambiguity
Would “Post” be verb or a noun?
use `_x()` if needed



#3: Too short strings

Don't construct sentences from pieces

- Word order differs between languages



Don't construct sentences from pieces

- Word order differs between languages
- Placement of “prepositions” differ – include variables and/or HTML in the string



Don't construct sentences from pieces

- Word order differs between languages
- Placement of “prepositions” differ – include variables and/or HTML in the string
- Grammatical congruence for gender/numerus/etc



Don't construct sentences from pieces

- Word order differs between languages
- Placement of “prepositions” differ – include variables and/or HTML in the string
- Grammatical congruence for gender/numerus/etc
- Always include the punctuation marks (their usage differ between languages)



#2: Allow feedback!

Allow feedback

Internationalization issues are easily solved
(if we can reach you!)

Feedback channels (1/4)

Plugin/theme forum

Polyglots team may try to contact via your plugin/theme forum

If you outsource the support, ask them to forward i18n feedback



Feedback channels (2/4)

Register in Slack (via make.wordpress.org/chat)
and mention your username in the readme



Feedback channels (3/4)

Some of us would even feel OK
to drop you a Pull Request on **GitHub**

Provide the repo URL in your readme



Feedback channels (4/4)

Beta: Feedback directly on translate.wordpress.org

More at:

<https://make.wordpress.org/polyglots/2022/09/28/the-feedback-tool/>



“The Japanese enigma”

This is how that string was translated

The translation for this locale is incomplete. Help us get to 100 percent by [contributing a translation](%s).

Comment: %s placeholder is a URL.

この言語の翻訳はまだ不完全です。翻訳に貢献して100%に到達するのを手伝ってください。



#1: Use `_n()` correctly

The `_n()` command is a great tool

...when used correctly

The value *n* MUST be included in the string

```
$text = sprintf( _n( '%s star', '%s stars', $rating,  
'wpdocs_textdomain' ), $rating );
```



n must be in the string

You'll only use it with printf() (or similar)



n must be in the string

You'll only use it with `printf()` (or similar)

Indicate *n* twice

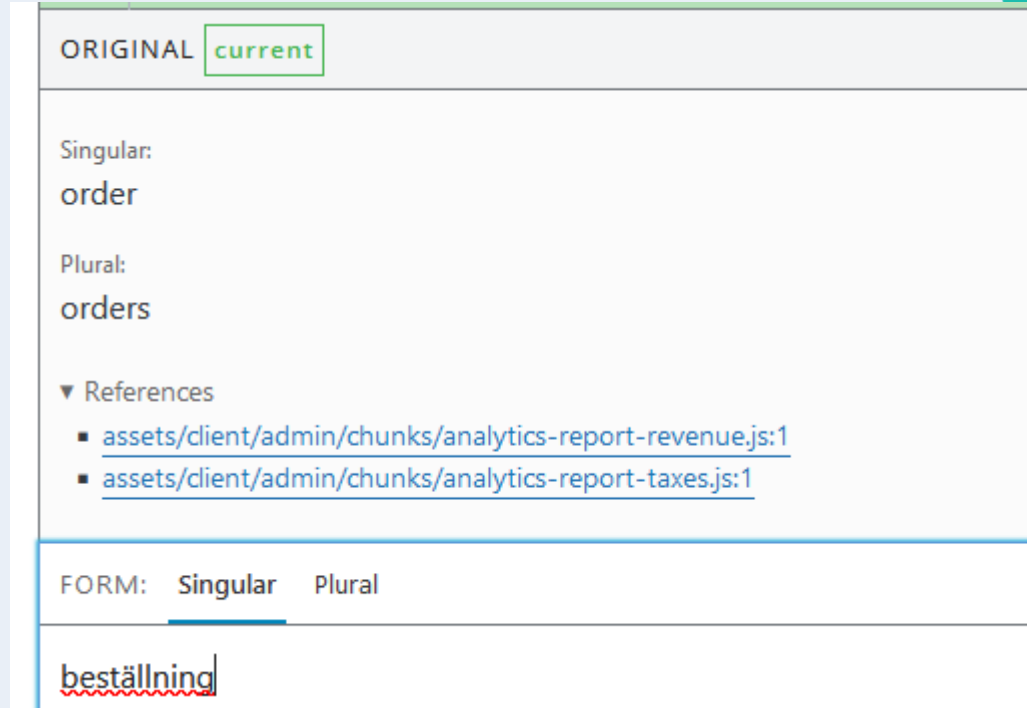
1 steering variable

2 value for insertion



_n() is NOT a shortcut for singular vs. “generic plural”

Looks fine here
(Swedish)



ORIGINAL **current**

Singular:
order

Plural:
orders

▼ References

- [assets/client/admin/chunks/analytics-report-revenue.js:1](#)
- [assets/client/admin/chunks/analytics-report-taxes.js:1](#)

FORM: Singular Plural

beställning

_n() is NOT a shortcut for singular vs. “generic plural”

But look at Japanese!

Singular: order
Plural: orders
▶ References
注文



_n() is NOT a shortcut for singular vs. “generic plural”

... or Arabic!

Plural:
orders

► References

FORM:	0	1	2	3, 4, 5	11, 12, 13	100, 101, 102
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الطلب

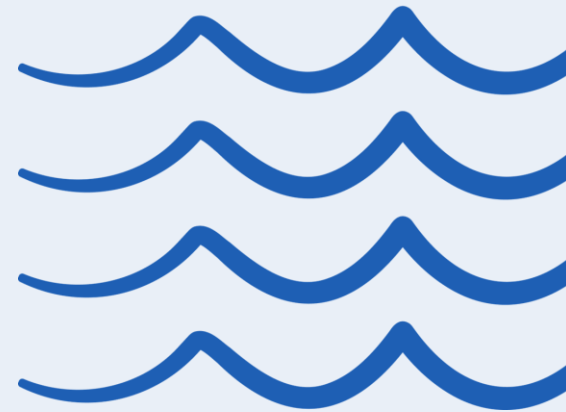
n must be in the string

You'll only use it with printf() (or similar)

Indicate *n* twice

1 steering variable

2 value for insertion



Enigma time!

The Japanese enigma



“The Japanese enigma” – clue #2

This is how that string was translated

The translation for this locale is incomplete. Help us get to 100 percent by `contributing a translation`.

Comment: %s placeholder is a URL.

この言語の翻訳はまだ不完全です。翻訳に貢献して100%に到達するのを手伝ってください。



Source: The translation for this locale is incomplete. Help us get to **100 percent** by [contributing a translation](%s).

Translation: この言語の翻訳はまだ不完全です。 [翻訳に貢献](%s)して **100%**に到達するのを手伝ってください。



Let's summarize

i18n details to remember

Avoid too long strings



i18n details to remember

Avoid too long strings

Avoid too short strings



i18n details to remember

Avoid too long strings

Avoid too short strings

Don't build sentences by combining strings



i18n details to remember

Avoid too long strings

Avoid too short strings

Don't build sentences by combining strings

Be reachable for feedback



i18n details to remember

Avoid too long strings

Avoid too short strings

Don't build sentences by combining strings

Be reachable for feedback

Always include *n* when you use `_n()`



There's more!

gsm.fjellner.com/?s=i18n



And, of course, always welcome to Slack “polyglots” with your i18n questions



Do it right —
DOUBLE your reach

But more important:

Good i18n enables us to democratize publishing



globally

A decorative border at the top of the slide consisting of a series of repeating, stylized waves in shades of blue and teal.

Thank you!