

SCALLA 2002, at LRC 2002 in Dublin, November 2002

LRC2002 was organised by Reinhard Schaefer from the Localisation Research Centre at the University of Limerick, in Limerick, Ireland. He had attended SCALLA 2001 in Bangalore, and was keen for the SCALLA project to participate in LRC 2002. This was an opportunity to address the localisation aspects of the project, building on contacts made at the Indic Computing Workshop in Bangalore at the end of September 2002.

Pat Hall, overall coordinator of the SCALLA project and Durgesh Rao formerly of NCST, both of whom had attended SCALLA 2001 in Bangalore travelled to Dublin. In addition Tapan Parikh, one of the organisers of the Indic Computing workshop, travelled to Dublin. We made a joint presentation [a link to SCALLA2002DublinHall.pdf](#), and in addition both Durgesh Rao and Tapan Parikh gave views of computing and localisation from within India.

Ireland is an international centre for software localisation, and during and after the conference we talked with members of the localisation industry in Ireland. We visited two long established companies in the Dublin area - Symantec and IBM-Lotus. From these visits and discussions we developed a view of how a localisation industry might develop in South Asia.

Could South Asia develop a localisation industry like Ireland? Clearly it would not service the Rest-of-the-world in the way that Ireland does, but maybe it could service the newly emerging markets of Asia.

Already a number of companies have established software production facilities in South Asia, primarily in India, drawn there by the talented work force and the competence in English. Changes in government regulation have made this a favourable environment economically. The first condition that led to Ireland's transition into a localisation power has already been met. But there it stops.

Some companies, like Microsoft, are looking to localise in South Asia for local South Asian markets, but not, we believe, for Asia as a whole. All companies seem to do their localisation for Asia either in Ireland or possibly in Japan, Singapore, or Hong Kong. There does seem to be an opportunity here for South Asia, but how could they do it?

For South Asia to succeed it would need translators for East Asian languages, and that means native speakers of these languages. Ireland must have faced these problems, being an isolated English-speaking Island nation, but how did they overcome these problems? Possibly India will need to first become a localisation centre for South Asia, before it becomes one for East Asia. How will the business case for that develop, and will it be fast enough not to be overtaken by Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, etc.?

Trans-national software companies might be persuaded to move their Asian localisation business to South Asia. Or specialist localisation companies might be able to establish subsidiaries, or strategic partnerships, in South Asia. But could they beat off the competition from Singapore and Hong Kong, who also have the advantages of English and access to these emerging markets? We found this path to the future not very promising.

However, software localisation is not just about translation, and there are many engineering processes that must be undertaken – perhaps South Asia could score here, exploiting their advanced skills on software engineering? One of the companies talked to in Dublin has just that in mind, to undertake verification, validation, and testing in South Asia while translation is carried out elsewhere. This seems a much more promising way in which a location industry might develop in South Asia.