

12 July 2007

By: Victor Mihailescu, Apple News Editor

## [LangSwitch, Fine Tune Localization Settings](#)

*On an application to application basis...*



More and more people worldwide speak several languages and regardless of where you might be from, chances are that one of them is English. This is practical since the language is so widespread and it is especially useful when it comes to computers, since a lot of program interfaces come in English. Of course, OS X, like all modern operating systems comes in many languages and applications offer localization support for multiple languages. Many people use the computer in their native language, while many others use it in English, regardless of what their native language might be. It all comes down to what is most familiar. The issue comes with the way OS X handles languages. You drag your languages in the order you prefer them and it will show that language if it is available, but you cannot make individual changes to specific applications, not without something like LangSwitch.

**What it does** LangSwitch is a simple application that you can use to change the language settings of any individual application. This will affect only the chosen application, leaving the system and all other applications unchanged and ignoring the global settings for that application. You can keep the settings for as long as you like and you can change the application back to the default settings at any later time. **Working with it** LangSwitch is very easy to use. When you open it, it will prompt you for an application. Simply drag the program you want to change language settings for onto it and it will be automatically selected and processed. LangSwitch will display the icon of the application in its window and its name overlaid in the middle, so that it is clear what you currently have selected. Once a program is selected, LangSwitch will parse it for all available localizations and display them in the drop down menu. Not all programs will have all localizations and in some programs they are labeled with the country code, but this shouldn't pose too much of a problem. Beside the language itself, you also have the option to quit the application if it was already running, as well as launching it after the language settings are applied. This lets you quickly and easily change between localization with minimal effort. Last but not least, the switch button applies the changes, while the reset button will reset LangSwitch, taking you back to the program selection phase. **Why use it** There are many reasons why an Application such as LangSwitch is handy to have around. For those using their computer in some languages other than English, they might want to avoid a bad localization. Since many programs are developed by small teams, they rely on regular users for localizations and these localizations might be very, very poor. In cases such as this, you might be better off with the original English localization even if you are less comfortable with the language because it will be at least vaguely familiar. The same goes for localization where there are errors and mislabeled buttons that could cause a lot of problems if you don't keep that in mind. For developers, LangSwitch helps avoid a serious problem with localizing applications. Because of the way OS X works, languages are pretty much universally assigned, so while you are modifying and testing your localization, the system and every other application will also be in that language. Not only is it time consuming to have to go into the system preferences every time in order to make the necessary changes, but if you are not familiar with that particular language, then things can get really messy, especially if you are also doing other things in the background. Having all your programs including the system in Chinese can be a daunting experience. While these situations don't necessarily happen very often, LangSwitch can really save you a lot of trouble if they do come up. **Language lock and defaults** Because of the way LangSwitch works, assigning a certain program in a certain language will effectively lock that program into that language irrespective of what your localization settings are and what changes you make in the system preferences. The

system will not overwrite the language that LangSwitch assigns, so if you want to get back to normal, you have to use LangSwitch again and tell the application to use the 'default' language. This is important to remember because once you change an application to a certain language, you will need LangSwitch again in order to change it back. **The Good**A great tool for developers that need to localize their applications and a useful tool for regular users having to deal with poor localizations. Easy to use and as fast as it can get, it has no drawbacks. **The Bad**The only thing that could be better was if you could simply drag and drop to select another application without having to reset beforehand. **The Truth**Not everybody needs an application like LangSwitch, but for those who do need it, this program is simply great. It does everything you need fast and easy and makes life much easier. Here are some screenshots, click to enlarge: