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Babel, a multilingual style-option system*

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1. Introduction

With the babel system of style-option files I try to adapt LaTeX (and plain TeX) to a multi-lingual environment. In the following parts of this article several aspects of this will be discussed.

2. "Repairing" LaTeX

As a lot of LaTeX users have found out, LaTeX was originally developped in an english-speaking environment. The document styles provided by the author were meant as example styles, but they have grown to be standard document styles. The major problem non-english LaTeX-users have with this, is that within these styles the use of the english language has been 'hardwired'. Several ways of 'repairing' this exist and have been attempted.

3. Multi-lingual documents

Especially in a European environment it is possible to conceive that a document might be written, using more than one language. Some of the publications of the European Community can serve as an example for this. For the various languages in use throughout Europe, various typographical conventions should be used. (i.e. the difference between quotation marks in German, English, French and Dutch texts.) The

*Note of the editor: this text is an abstract of Johannes' paper. For further information, readers should refer to "Babel, a multilingual style-option system for use with LaTeX's standard document styles", in *Nederlandstalige TeX Gebruikersgroep*, Verlag 6e bijeenkomst, 91.1, pp. 75-83, 1991.

babel system offers the possibility to implement these language-dependant typographical conventions.

4. Switching between languages

If a document uses more than one language, it should be possible to switch between these languages in a user-friendly way. A means of accompishing this is provided in the babel system of style-option files. Also the preloading of more than one hyphenation pattern, possible with TEX version 3.0, has been included. Some of the problems occuring with the use of more than one hyphenation pattern will be discussed.