

D-Cinema language codes: additional practices

The ISDCF metadata register recommends language codes for use in cinema:

<https://registry-page.isdcf.com/languages/>

This document provides additional practices.

Case sensitivity

Note that BCP 47 2.1.1 states “At all times, language tags and their subtags, including private use and extensions, are to be treated as case insensitive: there exist conventions for the capitalization of some of the subtags, but these **MUST NOT** be taken to carry meaning.” “Although case distinctions do not carry meaning in language tags, consistent formatting and presentation of language tags will aid users.

Region Subtags

RFC 4646 states “Region subtags are used to indicate linguistic variations associated with or appropriate to a specific country, territory, or region. Typically, a region subtag is used to indicate regional dialects or usage, or region-specific spelling conventions. A region subtag can also be used to indicate that content is expressed in a way that is appropriate for use throughout a region, for instance, Spanish content tailored to be useful throughout Latin America.” For example, there are separate tags for Spanish (es) and Latin American Spanish (es-419). Other language tags with region subtags may be used when it is necessary to distinguish between different regional variations of languages (such as en-US and en-GB).

SMPTE 429-16 (Additional Composition Metadata and Guidelines) notes “Matching desired playback language with language tags is not trivial, IETF RFC 4647 specifies practices for such matching.” Playback systems must consider that a show playlist (such as that in a SMPTE 430-11 Auxiliary Content Resource Presentation List) may represent the concatenation of several compositions. For example, a trailer might be have a language attribute of “en,” while the feature might be “en-US.” A playback system must not send these to separate caption streams (or language channels) such that the user would only see captions for the trailer on one channel and the feature on another.

ISDCF recommends that the SYSTEM (server/closed caption rendering) implement a method to direct outputs of a class of languages to a specific channel (e.g., channel 1 is Spanish, channel 2 English, etc.) for each theater. The channel would have a set of rules for language tag priority (in case there are two region subtags for the same language). The selection would be part of the UI of the system.

SMPTE 429-16:2014 table B.1 provides a list of language tags similar to that above.

Revision History

- 2011-11-29 – Original version
- 2017-08-07
 - Updated link to digital cinema naming convention
 - Removed reference to Richard Ishida’s [Language Tag Lookup](#), since the link no longer works.
 - Added language tags (based on digital cinema naming convention) for Euskara, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian, Urdu, and Welsh.
 - Added Region Subtags section
 - Added revision history
- 2017-08-09
 - Added Richard Ishida’s Language Tag Lookup back with new URL.
- 2017-08-0a
 - Clarified language priority evaluation on a reel by reel basis.
- 2017-08-29
 - Added Navjo language.
- 2017-10-19
 - Clarified second paragraph of Region Subtags.
 - Added ISDCF recommends paragraph.
 - Added “Only used” text in table header.
- 2020-12-08
 - Defer to the ISDCF metadata register for the list of recommended language codes