What happened to the Windows 2000 "Language settings for the system" control panel?

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In 2011, a customer had a question about migrating from Windows 2000 to Windows XP. (That's right, this customer was still using Windows 2000 in the year 2011.) Specifically, they noted that in Windows 2000, they can select multiple languages in the "Language settings for the system" portion of the Regional Options control panel, and they couldn't find the corresponding control panel setting in Windows XP.

Regional Options

General   Numbers   Currency   Time   Date   Input Locales

Settings for the current user

Many programs support international settings for numbers, currencies, times, and dates. Set the locale in order to use the standard settings.
Your locale (location):
English (United States)

Language settings for the system

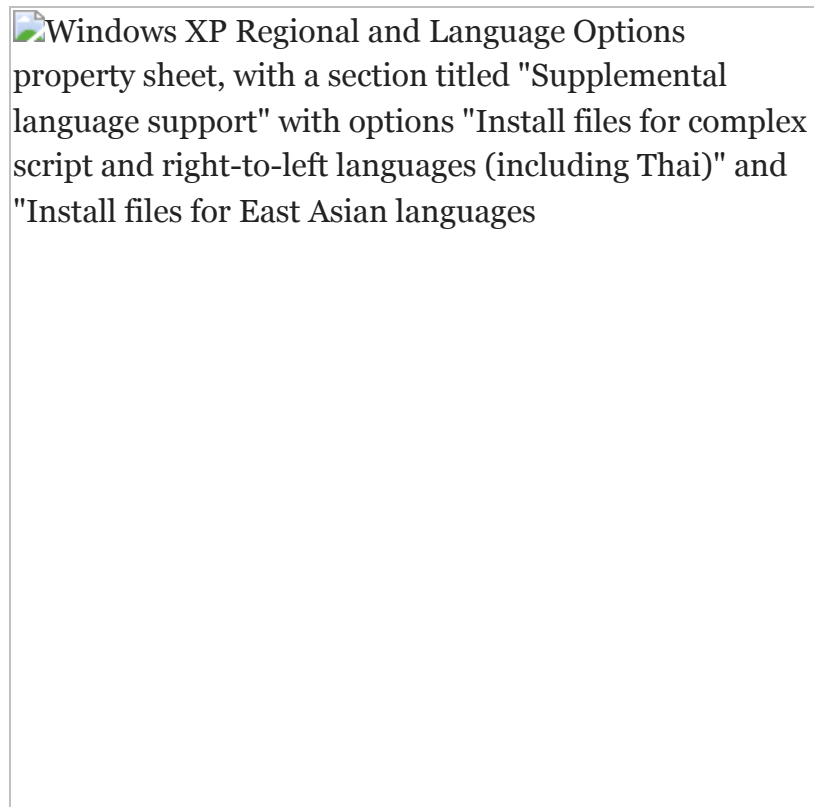Your system is configured to read and write documents in multiple languages.
☐ Arabic
☐ Armenian
☐ Baltic
☐ Central Europe
☐ Cyrillic

In Windows 2000, "Language settings for the system" provides the option to install support (such as code pages, keyboard layouts, and fonts) for various language groups. In Windows XP, the big list of language groups was reduced to three categories:

- Basic (Baltic, Central Europe, Cyrillic, Greek, Turkish, Western Europe)

- Complex (Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Hebrew, Indic, Vietnamese, Thai)
- East Asia (Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Japanese, Korean)

The Basic category is always installed. To install the Complex or East Asia categories, use the "Supplemental language support" section of the Regional and Language Options control panel.

Windows XP Regional and Language Options property sheet, with a section titled "Supplemental language support" with options "Install files for complex script and right-to-left languages (including Thai)" and "Install files for East Asian languages

Someday, that customer might upgrade to Windows Vista, so I may as well answer the question right now. In Windows Vista and onward, things were simplified even more: All language groups are installed at all times. The dialog box went away completely since there were no options remaining. As it turns out, the customer's problem had nothing to do with language support. Of course, they didn't come out and describe the problem they were having; rather, they reduced the problem into multiple pieces, and then asked for help on one specific piece. They tried out a solution based on this new information, but it didn't solve the problem, because as it turns out, the *Language settings for the system* control panel was a red herring. If they had told us what their original problem was, we could have told them "But this setting will do nothing to solve your problem. What you really need is *over there*."

Tomorrow, we'll look at the customer's *actual* problem. (So please don't try to guess or you'll ruin the surprise. I can't believe I had to write that.)

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