

Windows could not properly load the XYZ keyboard layout

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In my rôle as the family technical support department, I get to poke around without really knowing what I'm doing and hope to stumble across a solution. Sometimes I succeed; sometimes I fail.

Today, I'm documenting one of my successes in the hope that it might come in handy for you, the technical support department for your family. (If not, then I guess today is not your day.)

The boot drive on the laptop belonging to one of my relatives became corrupted, and her brother-in-law had the honor of extracting the drive, sticking it into a working computer, doing the `chkdsk` magic, reinstalling the software that got corrupted, and otherwise getting the machine back on its feet. (It's a good thing I wasn't the one to do it because all of the programs are in Chinese, and I can't read Chinese beyond a few dozen characters.) Anyway, the machine returned to life, mostly. The bizarro proprietary hardware (that a certain manufacturer insists on using in order to make their machines *special*) still doesn't have drivers, but it was happy for the most part.

There was just one problem remaining, and it fell upon me to fix it: She couldn't type Chinese characters any more. Normally, this is done by selecting an appropriate IME, but no matter what we picked, it was as if we were always using the US-English keyboard.

One clue was that if you deleted the IME and then re-added it, you got the error message `Windows could not properly load the XYZ keyboard layout`.

Here is how I fixed it. (This was a Windows XP machine.) Maybe it will help you, maybe not.

First, go to the Regional and Language Options control panel and set everything back to English (US):

- On the Advanced tab, under "Select a language to match the language version of the non-Unicode programs you want to use", select "English (United States)".

- On the Languages tab, under “Text services and input languages”, click the Details button. Change your default input language to “English (United States) – US” and remove all the non-English keyboard layouts.

Restart to make sure that nobody is using those old services.

After the restart, go back to the Regional and Language Options control panel, go to the Languages tab, and uncheck “Install files for East Asian languages.” That is the whole point of this exercise. All the other steps were just removing enough obstacles so we could do that.

Restart to make sure nobody is using any of the East Asian fonts.

After the restart, add the East Asian fonts back, and when you’re asked whether you should use the files already on the machine, say “No.” That way, they will be re-copied from the CD.

(This step was trickier for me, because one of the hardware devices that didn’t work was the DVD drive! I thought I was stuck, but then I realized that the wireless network antenna still was functional, so I went to another computer in the house, put the Windows XP CD in the drive, and shared out the CD-ROM drive. Then I went back to the first computer and told it to install the files from the second computer.)

Once everything gets reinstalled (including the corrupted keyboard layout files), you can go back and add the Chinese IME back, and reset all those other settings back to Chinese.

Neither I nor the owner of the laptop is very good at the other’s native language (though she is far better at English than I am at Chinese), so fixing her computer is the best way I have of showing her my appreciation.

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