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WeSay – Dictionary Development Software

www.wesay.org



Cathy Bow & Karl Rolfe

cathy_bow@yahoo.com.au karl_rolfe@sil.org
SIL Australia

What is WeSay?

WeSay is a simple dictionary-building tool for use by native-speakers of under-resourced languages.

WeSay is an **Open Source project** aimed at providing computer tools **to help communities** perform several language development activities on their own. It is extremely **simple, task oriented**, and will be available on hardware that is appropriate to their environment. WeSay currently **helps people build a dictionary in their own language**, and there are plans for further development. WeSay is developed under the Payap University Linguistics Institute Software Unit, a partnership between Payap University (Chiang Mai, Thailand) and SIL International.

Principles underlying WeSay

- (1) it is simple enough to be used by people with little computer knowledge;
- (2) it supports a task-based approach to dictionary creation;
- (3) it keeps the training load to a minimum by encouraging just-in-time training;
- (4) it helps promote community support for the process; and
- (5) it runs on inexpensive, rugged, low-power hardware.

How to download / install WeSay

WeSay currently works on **Windows** (2000, XP or Vista) and **Linux** (using Mono). A Mac version is in development. The Windows version requires Microsoft .Net Framework Version 2 SP1 which is easy to download and install. Some additional software may be required for some higher level tasks, but WeSay can be run by users with **minimal technical knowledge**.

All download files are freely available from <http://www.wesay.org/wiki/Downloads> (choose the file with the extension **.msi** and **the most recent date** – updates are added regularly)

Demonstration

We will demonstrate a **task-based approach** to dictionary creation following these steps:

- add words by Semantic Domain
- add additional information to each entry – meaning, examples, notes, pictures, etc.
- view the dictionary – search items, identify tasks to complete
- explore the Configuration Tool to customise the program for end users

Using WeSay

- Open WeSay Cundeelee project at **MyDocuments\WeSay\Cundeelee**
 - Home page shows current tasks and their status
 - Includes 200 word sample from Cundeelee* language (Western Desert)
- Go to **Semantic Domains**
 - Drop-down menu on top lists a huge range of semantic domains
 - Use the arrow keys to page down to specific questions
 - Scroll down to *1.6.1.1.5 Marsupial*
 - See some Cundeelee data already entered
 - Add any words from your own language
 - Scroll down to *3.5.3 Language*
 - At the bottom of the screen where it says 'Word', add the word in your language for 'language', press Enter
 - Use arrow keys to browse through available questions
 - Moves from general ('what words refer to a language?') to more specific (*types of language, first language, particular subject, secret language, words about language*)
 - Add any relevant words from your language
 - Don't just translate the English prompts given, instead think of words in your own language
 - Added words appear on same screen for each domain
 - Continue on with 'Word', 'Information' and 'Story' as necessary
 - Scroll through other domains to see what else is listed
- Go to **Dictionary Browse & Edit** (tab at top of page)
 - Words down left column are already included in dictionary
 - Can search for variant spellings, by English gloss, etc.
 - Select 'kata' – additional information to be added appears at right of list
 - Under **Voice**, click the circle and record your voice saying 'kata'
 - Under **Meaning 1** add the meaning 'head'
 - Under **Part of Speech**, scroll through to find 'noun'
 - Under **Note**, add the comment '*sometimes 'lata' in joking mood*'
 - Under **Example** add the example sentence '*tjitji kata pika*'
 - Press Enter to create a field called **Translation** and add the English translation of the sentence '*the child has a headache*'
 - Any of these components can be switched on or off to suit the users using the **WeSay Configuration Tool**
- **Sharing / Printing / Backup**
 - Go to the WeSay Configuration Tool and select **Actions**
 - Each of these tasks can be set up as a single-click action for end users
- **Using WeSay with other programs**
 - Data created using *standard format markers* (e.g. Toolbox, FLEX) can be shared, though some extra training may be required
- **Recommended reading:** *WeSay, A tool for engaging native-speakers in dictionary building*, available from home page **www.wesay.org**