

> DTS-L Issue Statement  
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> Challenges that impede the development of digital tools for  
> linguistics  
> include funding limitations and lack of communication among interested  
> parties. These lead to the partial development of tools, erratic or  
> nonexistent technical support, or single-purpose tools which are not  
> portable between programs. Developers also may not know the needs of the  
> documentation community. For example, the most interoperable suite of  
> digital tools, published by SIL, includes Toolbox which does not have a  
> Macintosh-compatible version, although many field linguists operate in a  
> Macintosh environment. While it is possible to port data and analysis  
> between the most available tools, it often takes highly technical  
> knowledge which the general field linguist often does not have.  
> Therefore, many individual linguists and projects are turning to  
> general-purpose software tools such as Excel or Filemaker Pro for their  
> digital documentation. However, this practice raises issues when the  
> presentation format of the annotated and analyzed data is  
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> Important considerations for digital tools for linguistics include  
> interoperability between tools (lexical entries, morphological  
> parsing/analysis, text analysis, media/transcription alignment),  
> cross-platform availability and support, and developers being aware of  
> the needs of the documentation community and the uses they will make of  
> digital tools, and adequate documentation and support of developing and  
> existing tools.  
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> In my opinion, a full suite of interoperable, cross-platform digital  
> tools for linguistics is a pressing need in the documentation community.  
> Linguists and speaking communities need to be able to record and  
> digitize audio and video, align and analyze texts and conversations,  
> link the lexical entries of these texts to a descriptive lexicon,  
> develop the lexicon from both automatic parsing and data entry, produce  
> archival formats which are compatible with approaches from other  
> subfields of linguistics such as typology or historical linguists (e.g.  
> linking to a linguistic ontology), and produce presentation formats for  
> print and web/digital access in both individual and collaborative  
> environments. At this point, a combination of varied tools and often  
> highly-technical manipulation is necessary to accomplish these tasks.  
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> The specifications for such a suite would include the following:  
> •usable interface (intuitive) •Unicode-friendly  
> •variety of output forms (archival and presentation)  
> •cross-platform functionality  
> •both stand-alone and web-based/sharable components  
> •able to input new data quickly but also import previously  
> existing/analyzed data in different formats  
> •customized fields for user-specific/project-specific needs (cognate  
> information, morphological paradigms, etc.)  
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