

# SpeechRecorder Quick Start and User Manual

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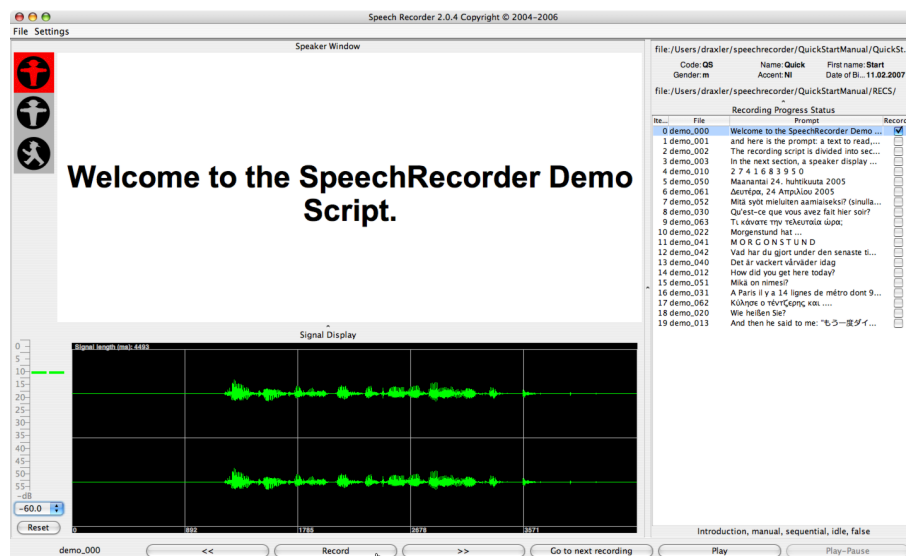
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April 7, 2015

April 7, 2015



*SpeechRecorder* is an application for script-driven speech, audio, and signal recordings. Its main features are

- platform independence
- automatic and manual recording progress
- number of recording channels dependent only on the audio hardware
- speaker and supervisor views on multiple screens
- full Unicode text, image and audio prompts

## Quick Start

*SpeechRecorder* organizes recordings in projects. A *project* is a combination of a speaker database, a set of recording scripts, and a set of recording sessions. A recording session consists of an individual speaker, a recording script, the selected recording settings, and a directory into which the recorded files are written.

1. Download *SpeechRecorder* from <http://www.speechrecorder.org>. Java Web Start on your machine should automatically start *SpeechRecorder*.
2. Select the command **Project > New** from the menu, give the project a name. The following items will now be created:
  - a workspace directory 'speechrecorder' in your home directory
  - a project directory in the workspace directory
  - a sample (or empty) recording script
  - an empty speaker database
  - a project configuration file

On the left side of the display, a small traffic light will show up. In the middle, the prompt area is displayed, and on the right side, the contents of the recording script are listed (see fig. 1 a)).

3. In the **Speakers** menu, select the option **Speaker...** and enter data for a speaker. Select the speaker in the table and close the dialog with the button **select**.
4. Click the button **Record** to start your recording session. Stop the current recording by clicking **Stop** or waiting until the recording timeout has been reached. After the recording has ended, the signal is displayed on the screen. Click on **Play** to listen to the recording.
5. Proceed to the next item by clicking **>>**. Start the next recording with the **Record** button.
6. After the final item has been recorded, *SpeechRecorder* displays a message. Click **Ok** to acknowledge the message.
7. You will find your recordings in the subdirectory **RECS** of the project directory. The menu item **Info** in the **Help** menu will help you to find the project file paths.

You're done – you've recorded your first session using *SpeechRecorder*!

## Demo Script

The first section contains test items, recording progress is manual (i.e. you have to click to start and end a recording, and click again to proceed to the next item), and only the supervisor view is shown. The second section contains sample prompts in different languages and of different types. Recording progress is semi-automatic (i.e. after a recording is stopped, the script proceeds automatically to the next item), and the speaker view is displayed.

## Multiple Displays

If you have two displays attached to your machine, the supervisor view will always be shown on the primary display, the speaker view on the secondary display(s) (see fig. 1 a) and b)).

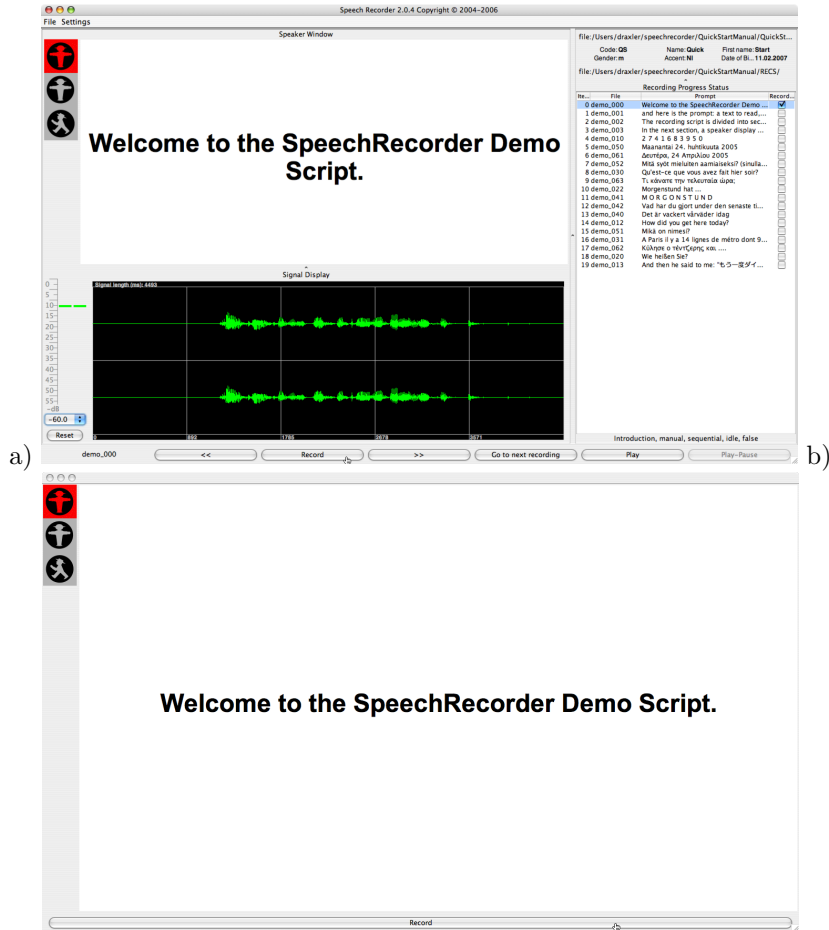


Figure 1: SpeechRecorder supervisor (a) and speaker (b) views

## Citing SpeechRecorder

*SpeechRecorder* was originally presented at the International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation in Lisbon in 2004 [?]. Please use this reference to *SpeechRecorder* in your publications.

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# 1 Recording Script

A script specifies which items are to be recorded. A *script* consists of two parts, a header containing meta-data items, and the recording script proper. The *recording script* is divided into sections. A *section* is an organizational unit that specifies the presentation order, and progress mode for the recording items it contains.

A *recording item* or *recording* consists of the instructions, the prompt item, and a comment. Instructions and comment are optional. A prompt item consists of text, an image, or an audio clip. The text may be stored in the recording script, or fetched from an external file or URL. Images and audio clips must be loaded from external sources, e.g. a file or a URL.

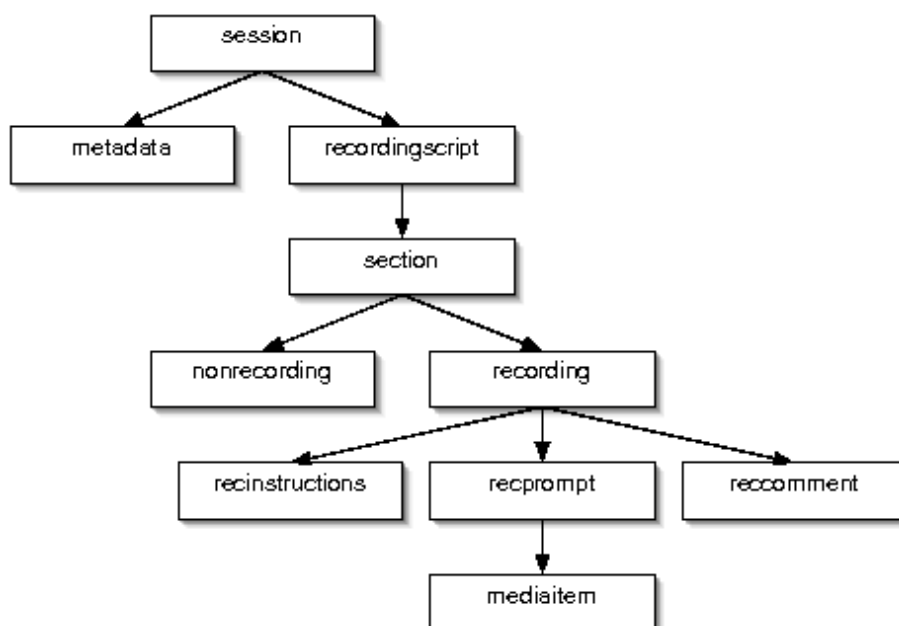


Figure 2: Structure of a *SpeechRecorder* recording script

A recording script is stored as an XML document. The DTD is given in Appendix A.

## 1.1 Edit recording script with internal script editor

Open the recording script editor with the menu item **Edit script...** in the **Script** menu. The editor has its own menu bar. The **Script** menu contains items to add new sections or recording items. In the left column you can edit recording script name, metadata and the list of sections. The middle column represents the selected section and displays the list of recording items. The right column represents the selected recording item. It has two tabs: In the **Prompt** tab you can edit the prompt which will be displayed to the subject. The **Control** tab defines how recording will be controlled during the recording session.

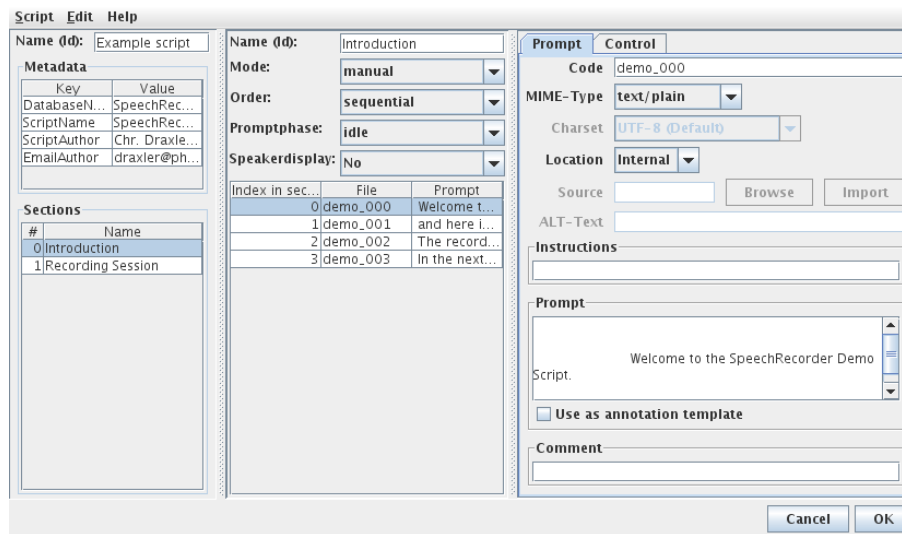


Figure 3: Recording script editor

## 1.2 Edit recording script with internal or external XML editor

If you have some experience using XML files you can edit the recording script with the internal editor (**Edit script source...** menu item in **Script**) or an external XML or text editor. Please note that some text editors are known (e.g. Windows Notepad) to change the encoding of the file.

## 1.3 The <section> element

A *section* groups together items that are presented and recorded in a similar manner.

In a recording script, the `<section>` tag is defined as follows:

```
<!ELEMENT section (nonrecording | recording)+ >
```

```
<!ATTLIST section name CDATA #IMPLIED
                  speakerdisplay CDATA #IMPLIED
                  order CDATA #IMPLIED
                  mode CDATA #IMPLIED
                  promptphase CDATA #IMPLIED >
```

All attributes are optional. *name* specifies the name of the section, e.g. *Introduction* or *Narrative*. *speakerdisplay* indicates whether the speaker view will be shown or not – allowed attribute values are *yes* and *no*.

*order* specifies the order in which the items in this section will be presented. The allowed values are *sequential* or *random*.

*mode* controls the recording progress. The attribute value *manual* means that the user has to click once to advance to the next recording item, and again to start the recording. *autoprogess* means that the user clicks only once to advance

to and immediately start the next recording. *autorecording* finally means that the script proceeds to the next item and starts its recording without user action. However, the user may pause the script and resume recording later.

**promptphase** specifies when the prompt item is displayed. *idle* displays the item already before the actual recording, e.g. to give the user time for preparation. *recording* shows the prompt only during the recording phase (see section 2 for details, and Appendix ?? for problems when using audio or video prompts).

### Sample sections

```
<section name="Introduction" order="sequential"
        speakerdisplay="no" mode="manual"
        promptphase="idle">
...
</section>

<section name="Recording Session" order="random"
        speakerdisplay="yes" mode="autoprogess"
        promptphase="idle">
...
</section>
```

### Section display

Information on the section is displayed below the table with the recording items in the supervisor view (fig. 4).

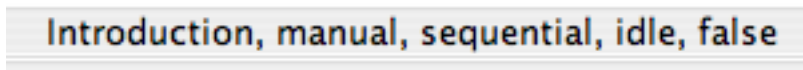


Figure 4: Section information display in the supervisor view

## 1.4 The <recording> element

The <recording> element defines the id, contents, and timing of the current recording item. It consists of the optional <recinstructions> and <recomment> elements, and the mandatory <recprompt> element. <recinstructions> and <recomment> simply contain text – which is displayed to both the speaker and the supervisor, or the supervisor only, respectively.

```
<!ELEMENT recording (recinstructions?, recprompt, recomment?) >

<ATTLIST recording itemcode CDATA #REQUIRED
recduration CDATA #IMPLIED
prerecdelay CDATA #IMPLIED
postrecdelay CDATA #IMPLIED
finalsilence CDATA #IMPLIED
```

```

beep CDATA #IMPLIED
rectype CDATA #IMPLIED
blocked CDATA #IMPLIED
annotationTemplate CDATA #IMPLIED
>

```

`<recinstructions>` may have the attributes `mimetype` and `src` to allow instructions to be read in from an external source (see C for details).

The attribute `itemcode` of `<recording>` is mandatory. It uniquely identifies a recording item. `itemcode` can be an arbitrary string – however, because the `itemcode` becomes part of the audio file name, it may not contain characters that have a special meaning in the file system (see C for details). In the script editor GUI you can activate the media item generator, which generates unique item codes for you. The generator consists of a counter and a formatter. If a new recording is added the counter will be incremented by the value configured until the formatted item code value reaches a string value which does not exist in the script. The formatted value is concatenated by the given optional prefix (default "item") and the counter value as a string with fixed decimal places. The settings of the item code generator in the script editor are not stored to the project configuration. If you want to store this settings to the project configuration, open the corresponding form in the project configuration editor (Project -> Preferences ...-> Prompting -> Script).

`recduration` specifies the recording time in milliseconds. The default is to record infinite. `prerecdelay` and `postrecdelay` specify in milliseconds a time span during which recording is active, but the the prompt is still inactive (see 2 for details).

The `finalsilence` attribute is reserved for silence detection. Silence detection is currently not implemented, the attribute has no effect!

The only `rectype` currently supported is *audio*. Default is *audio*.

The `blocked` attribute is of boolean type and determines if playback of a media prompt (i.e. a audio clip) blocks recording. If `blocked` is set, recording starts when playback of the prompt has finished. If not set playback of the prompt and recording start at the same time.

### Recording sample

```

<recording prerecdelay="2000"
            recduration="20000"
            postrecdelay="500"
            itemcode="demo_001">
    <recprompt>
        ...
    </recprompt>
</recording>

```

## 1.5 The `<recprompt>` element

The `<recprompt>` element holds the prompt item. It holds one or two media items, which will be prompted to the user.

Example: Simple text prompt.



```
<recprompt>
  <mediaitem>Welcome to the SpeechRecorder Demo Script.</mediaitem>
</recprompt>
```

Since version 2.8.x of Speechrecorder all text and image media types can be combined with audio prompts. Such a combined prompt will display the text and play an audio prompt simultaneously. Examples:

```
<recprompt>
  <mediaitem>Welcome to the SpeechRecorder Demo Script.</mediaitem>
  <mediaitem mimetype="audio/x-wave" src="resources/audio/welcome.wav"/>
</recprompt>

<recprompt>
  <mediaitem mimetype="image/svg+xml" src="resources/image/welcome.xml">
  <mediaitem mimetype="audio/x-wave" src="resources/audio/wav/welcome.wav"/>
</recprompt>
```

## 1.6 The <mediaitem> element

The `<mediaitem>` element describes a media item. It may be empty, or contain text which is displayed on the screen.

```
<!ELEMENT mediaitem (#PCDATA)*>

<!--
!DOCTYPE mediaitem [
    <!ATTLIST mediaitem mimeType CDATA #IMPLIED
        charset CDATA #IMPLIED
        src CDATA #IMPLIED
        alt CDATA #IMPLIED
        autoplay CDATA #IMPLIED
        modal CDATA #IMPLIED
        width CDATA #IMPLIED
        height CDATA #IMPLIED
        volume CDATA #IMPLIED
    ]
-->
```

All attributes are optional.

**mimetype** specifies the type of prompt item. For image and audio prompts, this attribute provides a hint for displaying the prompt item – image items are drawn on the screen, audio is played via the system speakers or a headphone. Default MIME type is text/plain. **charset** Charset of external text prompt file. The encoding of prompt text embedded in the recording script is inherited from the encoding of the entire recording script which is by default UTF-8. **src** is a file name or a URL from which a prompt item is retrieved.

`alt` contains the text that is displayed if the item cannot be retrieved from the external source.

`autoplay`, `modal` and `volume` apply only to time-dependent prompt items, i.e. audio clips. If `autoplay` is set to *yes* the clip plays automatically as soon as the item is displayed, otherwise the user has to start playback explicitly. With `modal` set to *yes* item playback cannot be interrupted, and `volume` determines the audio volume for playback.

`width` and `height` specify the width and height in pixels of the image or video to display.

It is up to the recording script author to set the `mediaitem` attribute values to meaningful values. *SpeechRecorder* accepts the combinations given in table 1.6.

mimetype	src	alt	autoplay	modal	width	height	volume
text/plain	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
text/html	URL	—	—	—	—	—	—
text/rtf	URL	—	—	—	—	—	—
image/jpeg	URL	+	—	—	+	+	—
image/svg+xml	URL	+	—	—	+	+	—
audio/x-wave	URL	+	+	+	—	—	+

Table 1: Meaningful `<mediaitem>` attribute combinations.

An audio `<mediaitem>` element without contents displays a generic symbol for audio playback. An audio `<mediaitem>` element combined with text or image media displays the text or image contents and plays back the audio.

#### `<mediaitem>` sample

The following `<mediaitem>` element displays a text prompt:

```
<mediaitem mimetype="text/plain">
  Welcome to the SpeechRecorder Demo Script.
</mediaitem>
```

This `<mediaitem>` element shows a formatted text loaded from a file:

```
<mediaitem mimetype="text/rtf"
  src="promptText.rtf" />
```

Note: RTF prompts only work on Windows operating systems.

This `<mediaitem>` element shows an image loaded from a relative (to the project directory) URL:

```
<mediaitem mimetype="image/jpeg"
  src="images/FelixWas.jpg"
  alt="Boy and washing machine" />
```

This `<mediaitem>` element shows an image loaded from a absolute URL:

```
<mediaitem mimetype="image/jpeg"
  src="http://www.speechrecorder.org/prompts/images/FelixWas.jpg"
  alt="Boy and washing machine" />
```

## 2 Recording Phases

Each recording is performed as a sequence of phases. The sequence of phases is shown in fig. 5.

A modal prompt display means that the prompt item is shown, but marked as inactive, e.g. by using greyed-out text, low resolution images or a disabled audio button. The default setting is to have modal prompt display during the prerecording and postrecording phases, and an active prompt display during recording. The attribute **promptphase** of a **<section>** element determines the start of an active prompt display, and it overrides the default setting.

**IDLE** no recording, red light, prompt item is only displayed if the attribute **promptphase** is set to *idle*.

**PLAYPROMPT** the prompt is playing.

**PRERECORDING** recording, yellow light, modal prompt item display.

**RECORDING** recording, green light, active prompt item display.

**POSTRECORDING** recording, yellow light, modal prompt item display.

A prerecording phase is useful to either record environment noise prior to the main recording, or to give the speaker a precisely delimited time to prepare the utterance. A postrecording phase is most commonly used to avoid signal truncation due to clicking the **stop** button too early.

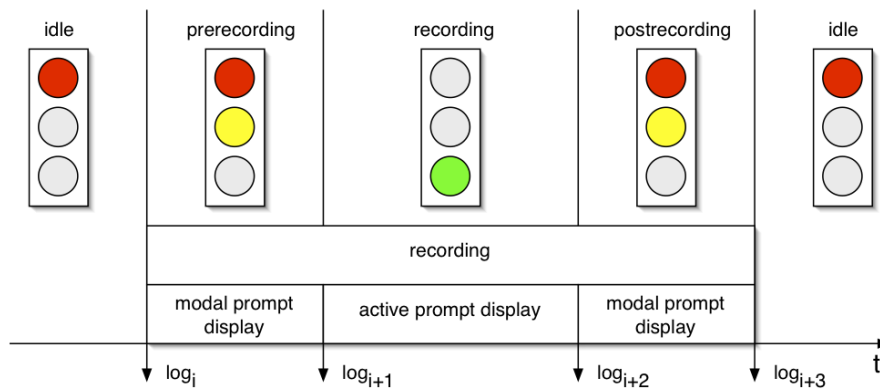


Figure 5: Recording phases

The timing for time-dependent prompts has to be set to appropriate values by the script author, e.g. to make sure that the recording time is sufficient for prompt playback and recording.

## 3 Menu File

Contains commands to save (configuration) files, to print a screenshot of current session and to quit.

## 4 Menu View

Contains commands to toggle the speaker display on and off and to customize the audio signal view.

## 5 Menu Project

Contains commands to create new projects, open a project from the list of known projects or close a project. These projects must reside in the *SpeechRecorder* directory in the user's home directory. A project can only be opened if no other project is open. The **Export** command packs a project archive in a zip-archive file. The **Import** command unpacks a project in a zip-archive file. The project will be deployed in the project directory.

The **Preferences...** command opens a dialog window with the tabs **Project**, **Audio**, **Speakers**, **Recording**, **Control**, **Prompting**, **View**, and **Logging**.

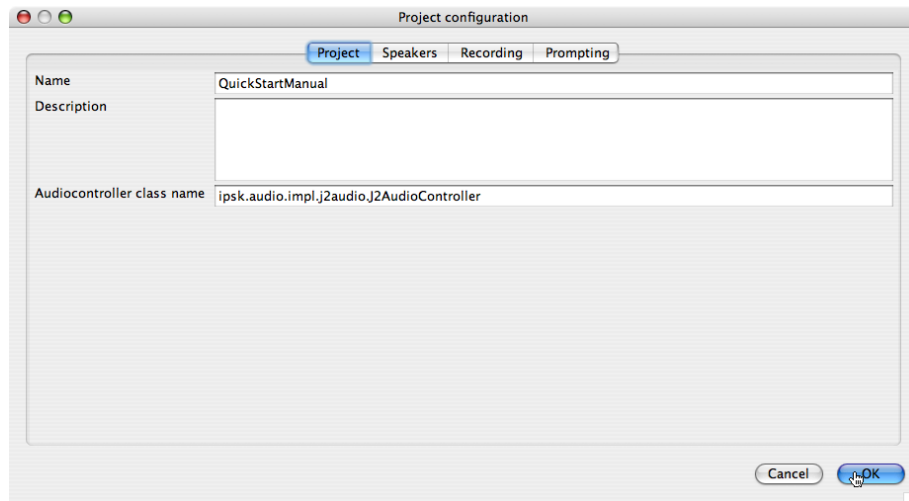


Figure 6: **Settings > Project...** command

The **Project** tab (fig. 6) presents the project name, its location on disk, and the audio class used to record audio.

The **Speakers** tab contains the location of the speaker database. This database can be stored in the project directory, or any other accessible location in the local file system.

The **Recording** tab (fig. 7) allows the user to set the recording parameters. They include the sample rate, quantization, byte order, encoding, number of channels, whether repeated recordings of an item overwrite previous ones or are stored as versions, the progress mode, resetting the level meter for every recording, default values for pre- and postrecording phases, and the location for the recorded audio files.

Note that if the location for recorded audio files begins with **http://**, then the files are saved to a server via the **http** protocol over the Internet. In this

case, the server must be configured to accept input via web forms with data transferred using the post method (see ?? for details).

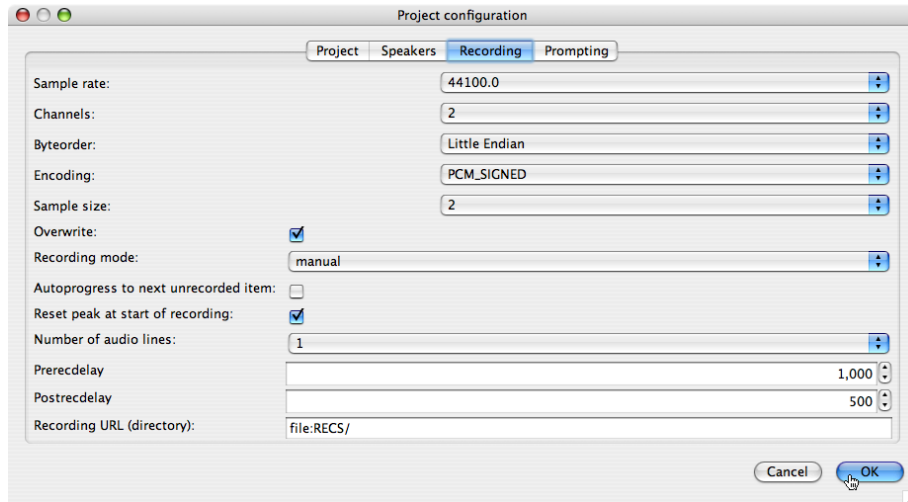


Figure 7: Settings > Project... > Recording dialog window

The **Prompting** tab (fig. 8) displays the lists of fonts for prompt and instructions texts, the location of the recording script file. This recording script file can be stored in the project directory or in any accessible location in the local file system. The speaker window can be customized.

## 6 Menu Speaker

The command **Speakers...** opens the speaker database.

## 7 Menu Script

Contains commands to open the recording script with a editor or to edit the XML source of the script.

## 8 Menu Settings

The **Skip...** command can be used to skip to a given recording item. The **Recording...** command opens an audio mixer GUI (but we recommend to use the audio mixer of the operating system).

## 9 Recordings via the Internet

One of the most interesting features of *SpeechRecorder* is its ability to transfer audio files to a remote server. This is achieved using the **http** (*hypertext transfer*

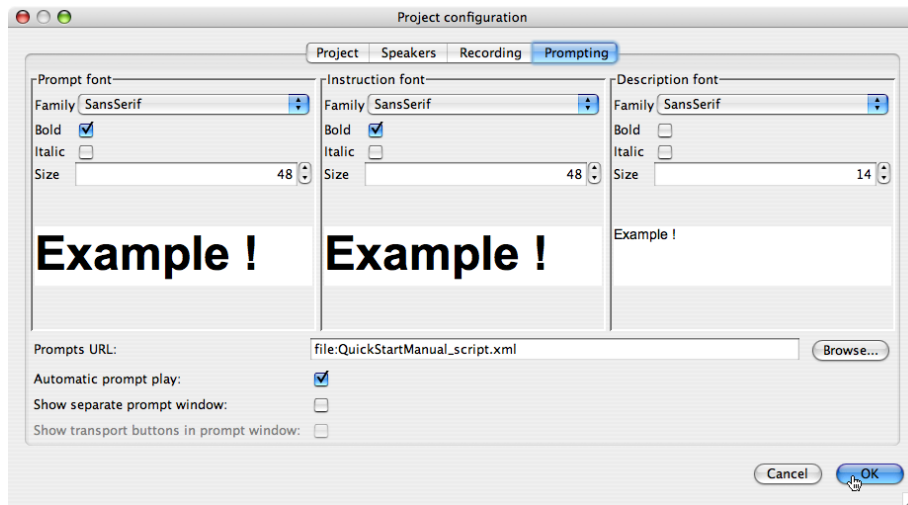


Figure 8: Settings > Project...> Prompting dialog window

*protocol*) in combination with the `post` method for sending data from the client to a server.

We host some recording projects on our <http://webapp.phonetik.uni-muenchen.de/wikispeech/>:WikiSpeech database system.

```
@InProceedings{ips_bibtex_4966,
author = {Draxler, Chr. and J\"ansch, K.},
title = {{W}iki{S}peech -- {A} {C}ontent {M}anagement {S}ystem for {S}peech {D}atabases},
booktitle = {Proc. of Interspeech},
year = {2008},
address = {Brisbane}
}
```

Please contact us, if you are interested in starting a WikiSpeech project.

## 10 Miscellaneous

*SpeechRecorder* logs its activities into plain text log files. The number of log files is dependent on the platform.

## A Recording script DTD

```
<!ELEMENT session (metadata?, recordingscript)>
<!ELEMENT script (metadata?, recordingscript)>

<!ATTLIST session id CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ATTLIST script id CDATA #REQUIRED>

<!ELEMENT metadata (key, value)+>

<!ELEMENT properties (key, value)+>

<!ELEMENT key (#PCDATA)>

<!ELEMENT value (#PCDATA)*>

<!ELEMENT recordingscript (section)*>

<!ATTLIST section name CDATA #IMPLIED
               speakerdisplay CDATA #IMPLIED
               order CDATA #IMPLIED
               mode CDATA #IMPLIED
               promptphase CDATA #IMPLIED
>

<!ELEMENT section (nonrecording | recording)*>

<!ELEMENT nonrecording (presenter?, mediaitem+)>

<!ATTLIST nonrecording duration CDATA #IMPLIED>

<!ELEMENT recording (recinstructions?, recprompt, recomment?) >

<!ATTLIST recording itemcode CDATA #REQUIRED
recduration CDATA #IMPLIED
prerecdelay CDATA #IMPLIED
postrecdelay CDATA #IMPLIED
finalsilence CDATA #IMPLIED
beep CDATA #IMPLIED
rectype CDATA #IMPLIED
blocked CDATA #IMPLIED
annotationTemplate CDATA #IMPLIED
>

<!ELEMENT recinstructions (#PCDATA) >

<!ATTLIST recinstructions mimetype CDATA #IMPLIED
```

```

charset CDATA #IMPLIED
src CDATA #IMPLIED
>

<!--ELEMENT recprompt (presenter?, mediaitem+)-->
<!--ATTLIST recprompt target CDATA #IMPLIED-->

<!--ELEMENT presenter (properties?)-->
<!--ATTLIST presenter type CDATA #IMPLIED
classname CDATA #IMPLIED
>

<!--ELEMENT recomment (#PCDATA)-->

<!--ELEMENT mediaitem (#PCDATA)*-->

<!--ATTLIST mediaitem mimetype CDATA #IMPLIED
charset CDATA #IMPLIED
src CDATA #IMPLIED
alt CDATA #IMPLIED
autoplay CDATA #IMPLIED
modal CDATA #IMPLIED
width CDATA #IMPLIED
height CDATA #IMPLIED
volume CDATA #IMPLIED
>

```

## B Reserved keywords for recording scripts

A recording script may contain the following keywords for recording progress, presentation order, and recording type. Recording progress and presentation order are defined via attributes of the tag `<section>`, recording type via an attribute of `<recording>`, and mime-types via `<mediaitem>`.

**recording progress:** attribute `mode`, values *manual*, *autopprogress*, *autorecord-ing*.

**presentation order:** attribute `order`, values *sequential*, *random*.

**recording type:** attribute `rectype`, values *audio*, *video*. Note: *video* as a recording type is not yet implemented.

**mime-types:** *text/plain* for text, *audio/x-wave*, *audio/x-aiff* for audio, *image/jpeg*, *image/gif* for images.

## C Known issues

The following list contains some of the known problems of *SpeechRecorder*. If you find further bugs and errors, please contact [draxler@phonetik.uni-muenchen.de](mailto:draxler@phonetik.uni-muenchen.de).



- When recording with a laptop please disconnect the power adaptor and record using the battery only. External power adaptors may interfere with the audio signal, causing strong distortions. The effect may vary with the brand and type of laptop.
- If you want to use an external XML editor to edit the recording script:
  - Windows: currently, we recommend to use the free editor jEdit ([jedit.sourceforge.net](http://jedit.sourceforge.net)) to edit recording scripts. Do *not* use Notepad or WordPad, because they do not handle UTF-8 encoded XML-files well.
  - Mac: we recommend to use the free editor TextWrangler ([www.barebones.com](http://www.barebones.com)) which allows you to import and export content in many encodings.
- The following attributes are defined in the recording script DTD, but have not yet been implemented in *SpeechRecorder*:
  - `mimetype` and `src` attributes for the `<recinstructions>` element are ignored.
  - Silence detection to stop a recording is not yet implemented.
  - Recording/prompting video is not yet implemented.
- The directory name into which the audio files are saved is named after the speaker number in the speaker database. Currently, this number is not visible in the speaker database.
- Attribute values for `itemcode` may be arbitrary strings, and the value becomes part of the audio file name. This may cause problems if the string contains characters that have a special meaning for the file system, e.g. `"/`, `":`, `"`, `;` etc. It is thus recommended to use only the characters `a-z`, `A-Z`, `_` and `0-9` for the `itemcode` attribute.

## C.1 Platform dependencies

- *Mac OS X*: USB audio devices only work with AJS (Alternative JavaSound) versions of Speechrecorder.
- *Windows XP*: If the built-in USB audio driver is used, the sample rate will be set to 22.05 kHz when a Windows system beep is output via an M-Audio mobile pre USB device. *SpeechRecorder* does not detect this change of sample rate. All subsequent recordings will be made using the new sample rate. **Solution**: make sure to install and select the most recent M-Audio device driver from <http://de.m-audio.com/>.
- *Windows 7*: If you have problems to select and use a sound card please try a AJS (Alternative JavaSound) version of Speechrecorder.

## D Signal quality problems

If you encounter problems with the signal quality please check your setup.

- When recording with a laptop computer, please disconnect the power cord and run the computer on batteries only. The power supply of many laptops is not well shielded, resulting in strong interferences in the signal (see 9).

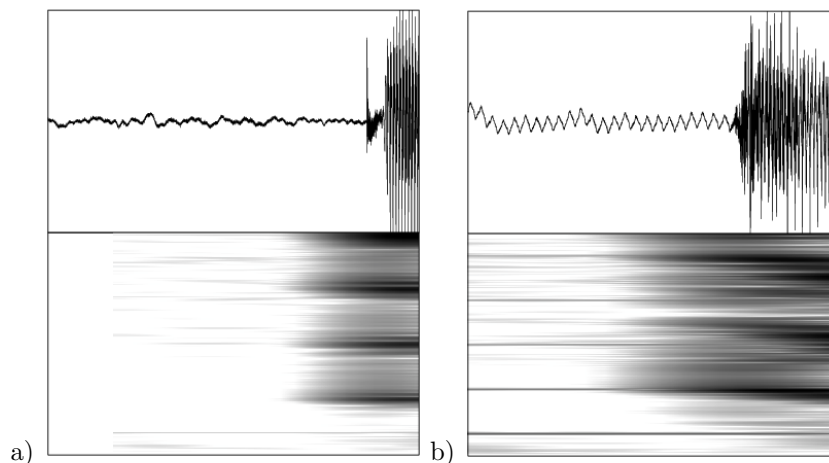


Figure 9: Oscillogram and sonagram of an audiosignal, recorded on a laptop running a) on batteries and b) connected to the power mains. The right oscillogram shows a marked sigsaw-pattern, and the sonagram shows thin horizontal lines at multiples of the mains frequency.

## E Contacts and Copyright

*SpeechRecorder* is being developed by the Institute of Phonetics and Speech Processing of Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, Germany. Its main authors are Christoph Draxler and Klaus Jänsch. Many people have contributed to the software by providing localized versions of the graphical user interface, or by suggesting improvements to the software.

The software is Copyright ©2004-2013 by Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, Germany. This program comes with ABSOLUTELY NO WARRANTY.

Please cite the original article describing *SpeechRecorder* if you refer to the software in your publications: [?]. Alternatively, you may use the following BibTeX-formatted record:

```
@inproceedings{DraxlerJaensch2004,
  Author = {Chr. Draxler and K. J{"a"}nsch},
  Title = {{SpeechRecorder -- a Universal Platform Independent
           Multi-Channel Audio Recording Software}},
  Booktitle = {Proc. of LREC},
  Pages = {559-562},
  Address = {Lisbon},
  Year = {2004}}
```

You may use the software free of charge for academic, research and development, and commercial purposes. We particularly encourage the use of *SpeechRecorder* in university or school courses on speech recording.

You may distribute the software freely, provided that the packed `.jnlp` or `.jar` files are not altered.

The software is provided as is. The authors and Ludwig-Maximilians University cannot be held responsible for any damage caused by the use of the software.

## F Useful links

- <http://www.phonetik.uni-muenchen.de/Bas/software>: BAS pages with links to software and updates
- <http://m-audio.com>: M-Audio web page for devices and drivers
- <http://java.oracle.com>: Java web pages at Oracle