

How SIL Global Unified Hundreds of Organizations Around a Shared Data Foundation

Book A Demo

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From ‘almost no integration’ to a **governed warehouse, serving 300+ organizations.**
- ✓

389 active users consuming dashboards and reports.
- ✓

A 3-person core team delivered the first warehouse and dashboards in **less than 2 years.**

Introduction

SIL Global partners with local communities to develop language solutions: supporting literacy, education, development and engagement with biblical scripture. The organization and its partners run 1,500 active language projects in 100+ countries and have long been associated with their language database *Ethnologue*, which provides a comprehensive catalogue of all known living languages on earth. To coordinate efforts and steward donor funds effectively, SIL Global needed a single source of truth that hundreds of independent collaborative organizations could fully trust.

Pre-WhereScape Challenges

- **No central collaboration hub:** 300+ organizations working in parallel with overlapping projects and no easy way to see who was doing what, where.
- **Messy, heterogeneous inputs:** emailed spreadsheets, Google Sheets, assorted APIs— all with little standardization.
- **Minimal integration:** an ASP-based reporting system over isolated databases; virtually no cross-org analytics.
- **Stewardship at risk:** without consolidated insight, *donation resources and people resources* were hard to allocate optimally, and demonstrating progress to funders was difficult.

Why WhereScape?

SIL Global needed a way to move fast with messy data and stand up a proper star-schema warehouse on Microsoft SQL Server: all without hand-coding thousands of lines of ETL. WhereScape RED's low-code automation, built-in best-practice patterns and metadata-driven design were a natural fit. WhereScape's platform-agnostic approach also supports future flexibility as stacks evolve.

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“We were brand new to data warehousing: we first tried out SSIS and got nowhere... so tried out custom code but got nowhere with that either.”

– Dwayne Emberson, Data Warehouse Specialist, SIL Global

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The Solution

Normalized ‘Messy’ Sources Up-Front

A lightweight Python pre-processing layer standardizes partner inputs (spreadsheets, Google Sheets & API data) into CSV and JSON.

Model & Build with WhereScape RED

Dwayne's data team used WhereScape to design a traditional star schema on SQL Server and generate ELT while also managing deployment & documentation.

Enable Analytics for Everyone

Business Intelligence (BI) at the organization originally started on Tableau but now runs primarily on Amazon QuickSight, giving staff and partner-org users role-appropriate access to dashboards that provide insights to daily decisions and strategic funding choices.

Train Once, Then Scale-Up Skillsets

WhereScape training was delivered by a third-party in the form of a one week course. The SIL Global team were fast learners and began building production-ready ELT within a few months. One more recent skillset success story that stands out: a web developer with little database experience, this time being trained by Dwayne himself, became productive quickly on WhereScape.

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“We were developing some of our first ELT processes within a few months of completing a course”

– Dwayne Emberson, Data Warehouse Specialist, SIL Global

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Results

🚀 Building from Zero, To a Shared Data Backbone

- A central data warehouse now serves 300+ organizations with a single, shared view of progress.
- 389 active users consume dashboards and reports across the ecosystem.
- Just a 3-person core team was able to deliver the first warehouse and BI dashboards, all in under 2 years.

🚀 Skills & Sustainability

- WhereScape's UX and templates reduced reliance on niche Data Warehouse expertise; new developers can get productive *fast*.
- Processes are documented and repeatable, supporting turnover and volunteer engagement.

🚀 Improved Stewardship & Transparency

- Dashboards now guide millions of dollars in donations, aligning funding according to need and avoiding overlap.
- Unified metrics power public statistics across many organizations' sites, improving transparency to both donors and communities.

🚀 Day-to-Day Impact at SIL Global

- **Speed:** the data team moved from ad-hoc reports to repeatable ELT with governed data models.
- **Confidence:** stakeholders can now trace metrics back to sources, while teams align together on one clear version of the truth.
- **Collaboration:** funders and operational teams review the same dashboards, enabling them to efficiently prioritize work.

Architecture: Fact File

✓ Automation: WhereScape RED (metadata-driven ELT, deployment, documentation)

✓ Pre-processing: Python (standardizes multi-format inputs → CSV/JSON)

✓ Warehouse: Microsoft SQL Server (star schema)

✓ BI: Amazon QuickSight (primary), Tableau (earlier dashboards)

✓ Users: 389 active report consumers

✓ Scale: 300+ organizations contributing data; global footprint

Why It Matters

SIL Global's mission spans 100+ countries and thousands of staff and partners. Establishing a shared data foundation ensures that donor funds are targeted, progress is visible and overlapping effort is minimized. And all of this isn't simply theoretical: it actively accelerates real-world outcomes for language communities worldwide. Especially to speakers of minority languages that don't have their language represented in many aspects of their lives; something that most majority language speakers take for granted.

Looking Ahead

WhereScape has been proud to count SIL Global as a customer for close to a decade and while they've come a long way, they report that their current stack is working well and the team isn't planning any immediate changes. However, armed with WhereScape's platform-agnostic approach and 25 year heritage, SIL Global's data warehouse can continue to evolve at the pace that they define, alongside the cloud and analytics platforms that they choose.



SIL Global is a faith-based nonprofit that partners with communities worldwide to develop language solutions for local and minority languages.

Industry:
Nonprofit, specializing in faith-based, linguistic research & language development.

Location:
Dallas, Texas - with operations worldwide

Employees:
4,300 staff - across 86 countries