

ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2007-082 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2007-5-26

Primary Person submitting request: Jamin R. Pelkey

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Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:

Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):
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PLEASE NOTE: This completed form will become part of the public record of this change request and the history of the ISO 639-3 code set.

Types of change requests

This form is to be used in requesting changes (whether creation, modification, or deletion) to elements of the *ISO 639 Codes for the representation of names of languages — Part 3: Alpha-3 code for comprehensive coverage of languages*. The types of changes that are possible are to 1) modify the reference information for an existing code element, 2) propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group; 3) retire a code element from use, including merging its scope of denotation into that of another code element, 4) split an existing code element into two or more new language code elements, or 5) create a new code element for a previously unidentified language variety. Fill out section 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 below as appropriate, and the final section documenting the sources of your information. The process by which a change is received, reviewed and adopted is summarized on the final page of this form.

Type of change proposed (check one):

1. Modify reference information for an existing language code element
2. Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group
3. Retire a language code element from use
4. Split a language code element into two or more new code elements
5. Create a code element for a previously unidentified language

For proposing a change to an existing code element, please identify:

Affected ISO 639-3 identifier: ysn

Associated reference name: Yi, Sani

1. Modify an existing language code element

(a) What are you proposing to change:

- Language reference name
- Language additional names
- Language type (living, extinct, historical, etc.)
- Language scope (individual language or macrolanguage)

(b) What new value(s) do you propose: Sani

(c) Rationale for change:

RATIONALE FOR OMISSION OF "YI" IN TITLE ENTRIES:

The title "Yi" is a exonym adopted in the 1950's to serve as a cover term for the official Yi nationality--a nationality containing significant internal ethnolinguistic diversity. Some anticipate that more than 100 languages will eventually be identified from within the Yi nationality (cf. Bradley & Bradley 2002:95, Gerner 2002:11). Although this official ethnic sense is often the one intended by the use of "Yi", the title "Yi" is currently used in at least three distinct senses (Pelkey 2005:51):

1. A metonymic reference to the most vital and prototypical member of the Yi nationality—namely, Nosu [iii].
2. A reference to the Ngwi (formerly Loloish) branch of Tibeto-Burman's Burmic group. Thus, 'Yi' in this sense includes such diverse languages as Akha, Phowa, Lahu, and Nasu.
3. A general reference to the Yi nationality itself and/or constituent members included in the nationality.

Any one of these senses may be easily confused or conflated with another unless care is taken to understand use in context. Due to this background and some other issues, using "Yi" as a title in an ISO or Ethnologue entry is problematic. Such usage would, presumably, intend the third sense, but this interpretation is not guaranteed. Such usage would also seem to be more concerned with official ethnic classification than actual language identification since there are many members of Yi in sense 2 (phylogenetic grouping) above who are not members of Yi in sense 3 (official nationality). Furthermore, if we consistently apply the Yi exonym (and/or other peripheral/traditional ethnohistorical affiliations) to all Yi nationality entries, we inevitably end up with unnecessarily cumbersome titles like "Yi, Nisu, Southern" or worse, "Yi, Phula, Muji, Jinping". This seems to miss the point of the actual entry title--assuming the point of an entry title is not to list all ethnohistorical affiliations of the variety in question, but to provide an accurate shorthand that matches emic ethnolinguistic affiliation and identity as closely as possible (adding geographic or other disambiguators when necessary). If we apply the Yi exonym to some entries and not others, however, we run the real risk of implying that some languages are part of the Yi nationality while others are not: an equally unacceptable outcome. The only consistent way ahead, then, seems to be reserving notes about official Yi affiliation (along with other ethnohistorical exonyms like "Phula") to the comments and/or alternate names section in the Ethnologue report affiliated with a given ISO code, but not in the reference name itself.

2. Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group

(a) For an existing Macrolanguage, what change to its individual language membership do you propose:

(b) Rationale for change:

For a new Macrolanguage proposal, please also complete the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”), which must also be submitted to fully document the intended meaning for the new macrolanguage.

3. Retire a language code element from use

(a) Reason for change:

- There is no evidence that the language exists.
- This is equivalent to another ISO 639-3 language.
- This is a variety that is fully intelligible with another ISO 639-3 language and should be merged with it.

(b) If one of the latter two reasons, with which ISO 639-3 code element (identifier and name) should it be merged :

(c) Rationale for change:

4. Split a language code element into two or more code elements

(a) List the languages into which this code element should be split:

By the language identification criteria set forth in ISO 639-3, the simple fact of distinct identities is not enough to assign separate identifiers. The criteria are defined in the standard as follows:

For this part of ISO 639, judgments regarding when two varieties are considered to be the same or different languages are based on a number of factors, including linguistic similarity, intelligibility, a common literature (traditional or written), a common writing system, the views of users concerning the relationship between language and identity, and other factors. The following basic criteria are followed:

- Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if users of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety) at a functional level.
- Where intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be strong indicators that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language.
- Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of well-established distinct ethnolinguistic identities can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages

- (b) Referring to the criteria given above, give the rationale for splitting the existing code element into two or more languages:

- (c) Does the language code element to be split represent a major language in which there already exists a significant body of literature and research? Are there contexts in which all the proposed separate languages may still be considered the same language—as in having a common linguistic identity, a shared (or undistinguished) body of literature, a written form in common, etc.? If so, please comment.

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3_NewCodeRequestForm.doc” or “ISO639-3_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted for each new identifier that is to be created. That step can be deferred until this form has been processed by the ISO 639-3 registrar.

5. Create a new language code element

- (a) Name of missing language:

- (b) State the case that this language is not the same as or has not been included within any language that already has an identifier in ISO 639-3:

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted to more fully document the new language.

Sources of information

Please use whichever of the points below are relevant in order to document the sources on which you have based the above proposal.

- (a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:

- (b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:

- (c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):
 BRADLEY, DAVID and MAYA BRADLEY. 2002. Language policy and language maintenance: Yi in China. Language endangerment and language maintenance, ed. by David and Maya Bradley, 77-97. London: Curzon.

GERNER, MATTIAS. 2002. Predicate compounding in the Yi group: the continuum of grammaticalisation: *Studia Typologica* 3. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

PELKEY, JAMIN R. 2005. Puzzling over Phula: Toward the synthesis and statement of a sub-branch. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area*, 28.2:43-78.

The change proposal process

A request to change the code set goes through a six-step process:

1. A user of ISO 639-3 proposes a change and submits it to the ISO 639-3 Registration Authority (ISO 639-3/RA) using this form.
2. The ISO 639-3 registrar processes the change request to verify that the request is compatible with the criteria set forth in the standard and to ensure that the submitter has supplied all necessary information. This may involve rounds of interaction with the submitter.
3. When the change request proposal is complete in its documentation (including all associated New Code Requests), the change request is promoted to “Proposed Change” status and the ISO 639-3 registrar posts the request on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA. Also at this time, an announcement is sent to anyone requesting notification of new proposals matching their specified criteria (region and/or language family of interest). Periodically, a message maybe sent to the general LINGUIST discussion list on Linguist List (<http://linguistlist.org/issues/index.html>), and other appropriate discussion lists, inviting individuals to review and comment on pending proposals. Anyone may request from the ISO 639-3 registrar to receive notification regarding proposals involving languages in a specific region of the world or specific language family.
4. Individuals may send comments to the ISO 639-3 registrar for compilation. The consensus of early reviews may result in promotion to “Candidate Status” (with or without amendment), or withdrawal of the change request, if the conclusion is that the request is not in keeping with the stated criteria of the ISO 639-3 standard.
5. Three months prior to the end of the annual cycle of review and update, a new notice is posted on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA, and an announcement listing the Candidate Status Change Requests is posted to the LINGUIST discussion list and other discussion lists, as requested by their owners. All change requests are then open to further review and comment by any interested party for a period of three months. A Change Request received after the start of Candidacy phase must wait until the next annual cycle for consideration. The purpose of this phase is to ensure that a minimum of three months is allotted for the review of every proposal.
6. At the end of the formal review period, a given Change Request may be: 1) adopted as a whole; 2) adopted in part (specific changes implicit in the whole Change Request may be adopted separately); 3) amended and resubmitted for the next review cycle; or 4) withdrawn from consideration. All change requests remain permanently archived at the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA.

Please return this form to:

ISO 639-3 Registrar
SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road
Dallas, Texas 75236 USA
ISO 639-3/RA web site: <http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/>
E-mail: iso639-3@sil.org

An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:

Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/> .

Linguist List. Ancient and Extinct Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfAncientLgs.html>

Linguist List. Constructed Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html>