ISO 639-3 Registration Authority
Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3

This form is to be used in conjunction with a “Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code” form

Date: 2008-1-9

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Associated Change request number : 2008-025 (completed by Registration Authority)

Tentative assignment of new identifier : ils (completed by Registration Authority)

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. Use Shift-Enter to insert a new line in a form field (where allowed).

1. NAMES and IDENTIFICATION

   a) Preferred name of language for code element denotation:
      International Sign

   b) Autonym (self-name) for this language:

   c) Common alternate names and spellings of language, and any established abbreviations:
      IS

   d) Reason for preferred name:
      This is the common way to refer to this communication system. Sometimes one sees "International Sign Language", which designation is problematic for reasons discussed later. There is a historical connection between International Sign and an invented body of vocabulary called Gestuno, and because of the connection the two are sometimes associated with each other. Gestuno, as such, is not used any more, and there appears to only have been one publication that can be identified as being about Gestuno. Therefore, we propose that the same code element be used for Gestuno as is assigned to International Sign, but that the preferred name for denotation purposes be only "International Sign".

   e) Name and approximate population of ethnic group or community who use this language (complete individual language currently in use):
      Used by Deaf people and interpreters at international conferences on sign languages. It is no one's first language. Difficult to estimate the number of users; probably in the hundreds or thousands.

   f) Preferred three letter identifier, if available: ils

Your suggestion will be taken into account, but the Registration Authority will determine the identifier to be proposed. The identifiers is not intended to be an abbreviation for a name of the language, but to serve as a device to identify a given language uniquely. With thousands of languages, many sets of which have similar names, it is not possible to provide identifiers that resemble a language name in every case.
2. TEMPORAL DESCRIPTION and LOCATION

a) Is this a

- [x] Living language
- [ ] Nearly extinct/secondary use only (includes languages in revival)
- [ ] Recently extinct language
- [ ] Historical language
- [ ] Ancient language
- [ ] Artificially constructed language
- [ ] Macrolanguage

(Select one. See explanations of these types at http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/types.asp)

For individual languages, also complete:

b) Countries where used:

Worldwide

c) Region within each country: towns, districts, states or provinces where used. Include GPS coordinates of the approximate center of the language, if possible:

International conferences/events of Deaf people and academic conferences that focus on Deaf-related issues, particularly sign language linguistics.

d) For an ancient or historical language, give approximate time frame; for a recently extinct language, give the approximate date of the last known user’s death

3. MODALITY AND LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION

a) This language is: [x] Signed [ ] Spoken [ ] Attested only in writings

b) Language family, if classified; origin, if artificially constructed:

Deaf sign language. The initial impetus for its development was a dictionary of 1500 signs created under the auspices of the World Federation of the Deaf (British Association of the Deaf 1975). Called "Gestuno", it was intended for use in international communication between Deaf people. No grammar was presented at that time. Since then interpreters and Deaf people have adopted the idea of an international communication system, adding grammatical structure to this core vocabulary, imitating the types of grammatical structures that are common in natural sign languages (Supalla and Webb 1995, Webb and Supalla 1994). They have also substituted more iconic vocabulary in many cases, so that there is not much of the original Gestuno vocabulary left (Rosenstock 2004). This subsequent development has not been centrally-planned, but rather happened naturally in the context of actual language use at conferences (Moody 2002).

IS varies considerably depending on the language background of those using it. As such, it tends to borrow heavily from the local sign language in whatever country a conference is being held (Woll 1990). As such, it is more properly considered a pidgin, rather than a full language, although it has more grammatical complexity than a typical pidgin. Although it does not have as much standardization or breadth as a full language, it is clearly more...
developed than the ad hoc signing that occurs when two people who don't know each other's sign language try to communicate with each other (Locker McKee and Napier 2002).

c) Closest language linguistically. For a Macrolanguage, list the individual languages (adopted and/or proposed) to be included in its group. For signed language, note influence from other signed or spoken languages:
Because of the importance of American Sign Language worldwide, International Sign often resembles ASL. Western European Sign Languages (BSL, NGT, DGS) also contribute to the lexicon.

4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

a) What written literature, inscriptions or recordings exist in this language? Are there newspapers, radio or television broadcasts, etc.?:
None. Some videos of lectures and other communications.

b) Is this language officially recognized by any level of government? Is it used in any levels of formal education as a language of instruction (for other subjects)? Is it taught in schools?:
It is used at conferences and deaf community events where Deaf people from many different countries come together. It is not taught in schools and has no formal governmental recognition.

c) Comment on factors of ethnolinguistic identity and informal domains of use:
Limited largely to international conferences (including informal interaction between participants at such conferences). International Sign is also used by the World Association of the Deaf (WFD) and the Committé International de Sports de Sourds (CISS) as a working language. Within that sphere, and despite its variability, it has a recognized identity as a communication system.
SOURCES OF INFORMATION

You do not need to repeat sources previously identified in the form, “Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code”

a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:
   Attendance at conferences where International Sign was one of the conference languages. Rachel Rosenstock wrote her dissertation on use of International Sign at the Deaf Way II conference at Gallaudet University.

b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:

c) Knowledge from published sources. Include known dictionaries, grammars, etc. (please give complete bibliographical references):


   www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/class/edustud/deafcentre/clslr3/index.htm (first paragraph and under Language Policy)


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Sign


www.langmaker.com/db/Mdl_internationalsignlang.htm

http://store.deafnation.com/product/4769/DVDs+and+CDs/Mark+Morales,+Storytelling+in+International+Sign+Language+CD-ROM+.aspxl

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
Email: iso639-3@sil.org
An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

Further information:
If your request for a new language code element is supported by the Registration Authority as a formal proposal, you may be contacted separately by researchers working with the Ethnologue or with LinguistList asking you to provide additional information.

Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:
