ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Date: 2009-8-25
Primary Person submitting request: Bill Hall
Affiliation: SIL Philippines
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Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:
Jason Lobel, University of Hawai‘i, jasonlobel1 at yahoo dot com

Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):

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 and will be posted on the ISO 639-3 website.

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 (duplicate or non-existent)
4.  [ ] Expand the denotation of a code element through the merging one or more language code elements into it (retiring the latter group of code elements)
5.  [X] Split a language code element into two or more new code elements
6.  [ ] 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: mdh
Associated reference name: Maguindanaon

1. Modify an existing language code element

   (a) What are you proposing to change:
   [ ] Language reference name; generally this is changed only if it is erroneous;
if usage is shifting to a new preferred form, the new form may be added (next box)

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

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

(c) Rationale for change:

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.

(b) If equivalent with another code element, with which ISO 639-3 code element (identifier and name) is it equivalent:

(c) Rationale for change:

4. Expand the denotation of a code element through merging of one or more code elements

(a) List the languages (identifier and name) to be merged into this code element and retired from use:

(b) Rationale for change

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

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

(1) Maguindanaon (without "Iranun" listed as a dialect of it); (2) The Iranun of the
Philippines will be inserted in the Iranun of Sabah (Malaysia) [ill]. The Iranun of the Philippines will be included in it in a way that somehow indicates it as being the primary and larger group, whereas the Iranun of Sabah are numerically much smaller (about one-tenth of the Philippine Iranun's population size) and are recognized migrant groups from the Philippines in the past 100-400 years.

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:

The Maguindanaon and the Iranun are two distinctly different ethnolinguistic groups with clearly different identities, although their close proximity to one another and the dominance of Maguindanaon in the local media and in the regional capitol causes higher intelligibility than expected. Iranun (of the Philippines) should never have been included as a dialect of Maguindanaon, for the following reasons: (1) Two SIL linguists (Fleischman and Allison, see references) have themselves published separate works about these languages and referred to Iranun as a separate language from Maranao and Maguindanaon, for the following reasons: (1) Two SIL linguists (Fleischman and Allison, see references) have themselves published separate works about these languages and referred to Iranun as a separate language from Maranao and Maguindanaon, (2) The forthcoming Lobel dissertation also treats Iranun as a separate language from Maranao and Maguindanaon, and is based on a much larger data set than that available to Fleischman and Allison, yet still agreeing with the treatment of Iranun (of the Philippines) as a language distinct from Maguindanaon and Maranao (this is partially covered in "Lobel, to appear"). (3) it is a major mistake to say that Iranun is a dialect of Maguindanaon (a) because the Maranao and Maguindanaon themselves consider themselves to be subtribes of a larger “Iranun” tribe (and not vice versa, although probably nobody would advocate deleting the Maguindanaon entry and listing Maguindanaon as a dialect of Iranun), and (b) because Iranun is a much more conservative language than Maranao or Maguindanaon, phonologically, grammatically, and lexically. Maranaos, Maguindanaons, and Iranuns all would object a statement that Iranun is a dialect of Maguindanaon (or of Maranao). (4) It is an injustice to the Iranun of the Philippines that Iranun of Malaysia (a much smaller community which clearly can be traced to the Iranun of the Philippines between 100-400 years ago, depending on the community) is considered a separate language, while the Iranun of the Philippines (from which the Malaysian Iranun clearly originated) is relegated
to being a dialect of a language which no linguist—SIL or otherwise—has written claiming it to be a dialect of. As such, this appears to be a mistake that was introduced into a much earlier edition of the Ethnologue, perhaps based solely on intelligibility percentages. However, intelligibility testing can tell us whether or not it will be necessary to devote the manpower and financial support to make a new Bible translation for a community that cannot understand another community, or whether two communities can be served by the same translation; but intelligibility testing cannot by itself tell us if two speech varieties are a single language or not. Iranuns and Maguindanaons can understand each other (at least the variety of Maguindanaon spoken in Cotabato) because the Iranun towns invariably border on Maguindanaon towns, and even the regional capital of Cotabato City is considered by both Iranuns and Maguindanaons to be home to both groups. The Iranun must use (or at least understand) Maguindanaon when they go to conduct business in the regional capital, Cotabato City. SIL Survey reports show that the bulk of the fieldwork on Maguindanaon and Iranun was done in Cotabato City, exactly where exposure of Maguindanaons and Iranuns to each other is the highest, skewing the intelligibility figures for both languages. However, Iranuns are never considered to be Maguindanaons, although Maguindanaons (and Maranaos) consider themselves to be Iranun. On that level, the name "Iranun"—besides being the name of a smaller ethnolinguistic group and their language—is also the endonym for all of the peoples who speak what linguists call "Danao languages" (Maranao, Iranun, and Maguindanaon). The folklore of the Maranaos and Maguindanaons indicate that this is because the Maranaos and Maguindanaons originate in the Iranun tribe, and that the sultans of the Sultanate of Maguindanao and other sultanates in that area were Iranun, not Maguindanaon. As for why the Philippine Iranun should be merged with the Malaysian Iranun, this is because the two are basically the same language except that the Malaysian Iranun has borrowed considerably from Malay while the Philippine Iranun has not. Setting aside this borrowing, the Philippine Iranun and the Malaysian Iranun can be considered the same language, and if two speech varieties should be included in one language entry, it should be the Iranun of the Philippines and the Iranun of Malaysia, NOT the Iranun of the Philippines with the Maguindanaon.

(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.

There already exists a significant body of research and literature in Maguindanaon but not in Iranun. Where Iranun has been mentioned (works by Fleischman, Allison, Lobel (to appear), and the forthcoming Lobel dissertation), it has been consistently referred to as a separate language. There is no "common linguistic identity", no "shared (or distinguished) body of literature", nor a "written form in common" between the Iranun and the Maguindanaon.

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.

6. 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:
Jason Lobel, language researcher and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Hawaii, who has done extensive fieldwork on 180 languages in the Philippines, Sabah (Malaysia), Sulawesi (Indonesia), and Brunei.

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:
(1) Discussion with native speakers of Iranun and of neighboring languages in the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, and North Cotabato provinces, Philippines, and in Sabah, Malaysia; (2) This change was discussed and approved by a panel of both SIL linguists and outside linguists at SIL-Philippines in July 2009.

(c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):

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 may be 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) rejected as a whole; or 4) amended and resubmitted for the next review cycle. 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
E-mail: iso639-3@sil.org

An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers: