ISO 639-3 Registration Authority
Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2015-054 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2015-8-6
Primary Person submitting request: Colleen Ahland, Ph.D.
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Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):
PO Box 50181, Long Beach, CA

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.  [ ] Split a language code element into two or more new code elements (include here a request for a new code element for a divergent dialect of a major language)
6.  [X] 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:

Associated reference name:
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, or the major language and the divergent variety (or varieties) for which a new code element is being requested:

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, or for requesting a separate identifier for the divergent variety:

(c) Does the existing language code element 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.? 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, provided that sufficient information on the rationale is given in (b) above.

In the case of a minority language that has been considered in some contexts to be a dialect of a major language, yet is divergent enough to be unintelligible to speakers of the standard variety of the major language, it may be more beneficial for the users of the ISO 639-3 and 639-2 code sets to create a new code element for the divergent language variety without splitting the existing code element of the major language. The ISO 639-3 Registration Authority may make this determination when considering a request involving a major language and a highly distinct “dialect.” If such a course is followed, the rationale for the decision will be published in a comment by the Registration Authority on approval of the requested addition for the divergent variety.
6. Create a new language code element

(a) Name of missing language: Daats’iin

(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:
Daats’iin is a language previously unknown to scholars. It is most closely related to the Gumuz languages (guk) and, in fact, demonstrates a high cognate count with S. Gumuz. Based on words elicited from the Leipzig-Jakarta word list of the "least borrowable words" (Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009), I estimate the percent cognacy to be 86% (this is based on lexical similarity and not necessarily regular sound correspondences). That said, there are two main reasons for considering Daats’iin a distinct language from Gumuz. First, intelligibility of the languages is low from either direction (based on native speaker reports). Some of the Daats’iin, being from a smaller people group, have learned Gumuz, but there are no Gumuz known to speak Daats’iin. They each claim to not understand the other's language. The Daats'iin and the Gumuz live together in the same area of western Ethiopia but, when they communicate, they use a third language, either Arabic or Amharic. Second, much of the grammar is different between the two languages. While verb roots are mostly cognate, the verbal morphology is very different in some cases. For both Daats’iin and the Gumuz languages, verbs are often polysynthetic. While much verbal morphology is presumed cognate, the morphemes appear in different orders on the verb (e.g. the directional and incorporated prepositions), while other verbal morphology only exists in Gumuz and not Daats’iin (e.g. uncertainty prefix, perfect aspect suffix) or vice versa (1PL inclusive suffix). Also, some verbal morphology in Daats’iin performs the same function as that of Gumuz but is non-cognate (e.g. remote past tense, affirmative prefix, relativizer, subordinating conjunction for time) or is the result of a morphological process instead of merely a verbal morpheme (e.g. pluractional construction). Lastly, the Gumuz verbal templates are split based on tense: future versus nonfuture. Daats'iiin verbal templates are split based on aspect: imperfective versus perfective. This would no doubt result in miscommunication as the 'future' form in S. Gumuz (used solely to express future events) is similar to the 'imperfective' form in Daats’iin (which can be used to express a past event).

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:
I traveled to the Daats’iin area of western Ethiopia in May of 2014 and continued the investigation of the language via native speakers through the end of June 2014. Analysis is based on a word list of 400+ words, five translated and annotated texts, and forty-four hours of targeted elicitation. The texts were gathered from Daats’iin adult native speakers of various ages, both male and female all from the village of Mahadid, Qwara wereda, Amhara Region. The word list and elicitation sessions were conducted with a male Daats'iiin native speaker in his late 20's also from Mahadid village. I also have first-hand knowledge of the Gumuz languages for which I wrote a grammar in 2012. Before entering
graduate school, I worked as a language surveyor in Ethiopia from 1999-2002 and am well-versed in intelligibility testing.

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe: I was first alerted of this possibly unknown language in 2013 by Dr. Alfredo Ruibal-Gonzalez, a Spanish archaeologist investigating the material culture of western Ethiopia. He collected an initial word list which he sent to me for investigation.

(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
An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:

