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: 2016-5-17

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Associated Change request number : 2016-021 (completed by Registration Authority)
Tentative assignment of new identifier : sct (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:
      Southern Katang

   b) Autonym (self-name) for this language:
      Katang, Katang Rueal

   c) Common alternate names and spellings of language, and any established abbreviations:
      Katang Rueal, Kataang Rueal

   d) Reason for preferred name:
      Geographical - located south of Northern Katang and separated from them by the mountain chain that runs along the border between Salavan and Savannakhet provinces, Laos.

   e) Name and approximate population of ethnic group or community who use this language (complete individual language currently in use):
      Approximately 40,000

   f) Preferred three letter identifier, if available:

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
      ☒ 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/iso639-2D3/types.asp)

For individual languages, also complete:

b) Countries where used:
Laos

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

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: □ Signed   ☒ Spoken   □ Attested only in writings

b) Language family, if classified; origin, if artificially constructed:
  Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Eastern Mon-Khmer, Katuic, West Katuic, Brou-So

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:
  Northern Kataang [ncq]

4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

a) What written literature, inscriptions or recordings exist in this language? Are there newspapers, radio or television broadcasts, etc.?:
  Literacy materials, Bible portions

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?:
  The Katang language is officially recognized by the Lao government but it is not used in formal education or taught in schools.

c) Comment on factors of ethnolinguistic identity and informal domains of use:
  Used in the home and at the village level.
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:
Ryan Gehrmann has worked with Northern and Southern Katang speakers at the same time in his research and has had the opportunity to observe their interaction. They were unable to communicate with each other using their native tongues and quickly switched to the national language to make themselves understood. There are significant lexical and phonological differences between the two varieties.

b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:
Ryan Gehrmann has interviewed a reliable, educated speaker of Ta’oiq, an Upper Ta’oih [tth] variety, from Champasak province. This man was able to confirm that Ta’oiq speakers in Ta’oi district, Salavan province often call their language Katang or Katang Ta’oiq. He knew this because he had previously traveled in that area himself. The Katang Ta’oiq language was, completely intelligible to him and he reported that he felt very strongly that he and they were speaking the same language despite the different names.

c) Knowledge from published sources. Include known dictionaries, grammars, etc. (please give complete bibliographical references):
Katang is an officially recognized ethnic group of Laos with a population of 118,000 according to the 2005 national census. This makes Katang one of the larger ethnolinguistic groups in the country and so, it is not surprising that the glossonym Katang should require more than one ISO 639-3 code to adequately represent the internal diversity of the language community. As will be shown below, the term Katang is applied broadly, covering speakers of languages from both the West Katuic and Ta’oi subgroups of the Katuic language family (Sidwell 2005).

The current ISO code [kgd] “Kataang” is classified in Ethnologue as a Central Katuic > Ta’oih language, which would make it closely related to Ong [oog] and Upper Ta’oih [tth]. In fact, Katang which was first mentioned by Ferlus (1974) in an article describing the distinctive and non-canonical register systems that are cognate between the Ong, Ta-oy and Katang languages (i.e. creaky vs. modal phonation on vowels whose provenance does not directly correlate with the etymological voicing of initials).

Ferlus never published further on Katang (or, more accurately, Katang Ta’oiq), though his 318 –item lexicon of the language is now available on SEAlang.net’s Mon-Khmer Languages Project. Due largely to Ferlus’s early work on Katang, the law of primacy has ensured that the glossonym Katang became associated with Ta’oi languages in the literature. Subsequent fieldwork, however, has shown that Katang Ta’oiq, spoken primarily in Ta’oi district, Salavan province, Laos, is actually only one of the languages spoken by Katang people.

Huffman (1979) conducted field research in refugee camps in Thailand and collected data on a language called Katang spoken in Salavan province. According to the criteria set out in my thesis (Gehrmann 2016), Huffman’s Katang (hereafter, Southern Katang) is clearly not a Ta’oi language like Katang Ta’oiq but is actually a West Katuic language, with close
genetic affiliations to the languages of Ethnologue’s Brou-So sub-grouping, including Eastern Bru [bru], Western Bru [brv] and So [sss]. Huffman (1985) subsequently discussed Southern Katang vocalism in print but he neither mentioned Ferlus's Katang nor compared the two.

John & Carolyn Miller (1996) undertook an ambitious lexicostatistical comparison of Katuic languages in which Katang data was also analyzed. Five Katang varieties were investigated including one from Wapi district, Salavan province, a second from what was formerly Na Du district (presently Tumlan district), Salavan province, a third from an unidentified village called "Raviang" located 46 kms from Salavan city placing it somewhere in Salavan district, a fourth from Khong Sedong district, Salavan province and a fifth was noted as simply being from Salavan province. All of these represented West Katuic varieties of Katang and the Millers included Katang as a language of their "North Katuic" sub-group, which corresponds to the West Katuic > Brou-So sub-group in Ethnologue.

Ryan Gehrmann has personally conducted research on a Southern Katang variety spoken in Salavan district, Salavan province, Laos whose speakers call their language Katang Rveal [ke.ˈtaːŋˈrɐːal] and found it to be essentially identical to Huffman’s Katang (Gehrmann 2016, Gehrmann & Conver 2015). He also conducted research on yet another Katang variety that spoken farther north in Phin district, Savannakhet province, Laos (Gehrmann 2016, Gehrmann & Conver 2015). Like Southern Katang, this Northern Katang language (called Katang Phin in the aforementioned publications after Phin district, where the variety studied is spoken) is very clearly West Katuic and not Ta'oi.

Based on the evidence presented above from firsthand experience, second hand knowledge and information from published sources, we propose that the Ethnologue be changed to more accurately reflect the reality of the Katang language(s). The evidence shows that there are at least two West Katuic languages that fall under the West Katuic > Brou-So sub-group which we propose be labeled as Northern Katang [kgd] and Southern Katang [new code] following the model employed for Eastern Bru and Western Bru. Furthermore, Katang Ta'oiq should be recognized as an Upper Ta’oih [tth] dialect that has adopted the Katang ethnonym/glossonym from their western neighbors who speak Southern Katang.

References:


Huffman, Franklin. 1985. Vowel permutations in Austroasiatic languages. In Graham


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: