ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Date: 2018-8-31
Primary Person submitting request: Linda Jordan
Affiliation: SIL International, Wycliffe South Africa and Instituto de Línguas Nacionais (Angola)
E-mail address: linda underscore jordan at sil dot org
Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:
Sebastian Floor
Wycliffe South Africa and The Seed Company
sebastian underscore floor at sil dot org or sebastian underscore floor at tsco dot org
Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):
7500 W. Camp Wisdom Rd.
Dallas, TX 75236
USA

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
6. [x] Create a code element for a previously unidentified language

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

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.

6. Create a new language code element

(a) Name of missing language: Hungu
(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:

Hungu is a Bantu Zone H language (Guthrie 1970), and its closest relative with an ISO 639-3 identifier is Kikongo [kng]. The Hungu people are an ethnic group found in the provinces of Uíge, Bengo and Cuanza Norte in northwestern Angola, and their speech variety has been claimed as a dialect of either Kikongo or Kimbundu [kmb].

The results of the word list comparison from fieldwork conducted in 2014 and 2017 do not provide conclusive proof that Hungu is either a Kikongo dialect or a distinct language. In the range of 62% to 69%, the resemblance of the Hungu varieties from Uíge and Bengo to Nsoso and Mphombo (Kikongo dialects) is neither high enough to say that all these belong to the same language, nor low enough to say that they are distinct. What is more certain is that Hungu is distinct from Kimbundu, with a low similarity of 47-55% with Ngaji and Ngongembo, two neighboring dialects of Kimbundu.

The two Hungu varieties share 80% of their lexical items. It seems that the Hungu spoken in Uíge Province is more influenced by the surrounding languages, because it has greater lexical similarity with dialects of both Kikongo and Kimbundu. The difference is slight, but the Hungu spoken in Bengo Province seems to be a bit more distinct.

During this study, participatory dialect mapping exercises were also conducted with focus groups in the provinces of Malanje, Cuanza Norte, Bengo and Uíge. According to the data from the groups that made mention of Hungu, the patterns of perceived intelligibility in this area indicate that Hungu does not fit comfortably within either Kimbundu or Kikongo.

None of the main Kimbundu-speaking groups ranked Hungu as being highly intelligible with their mother tongue. Even the respondents who live very close to the Hungu said they need to switch to a language of wider communication or speak through an interpreter when they meet speakers of Hungu.

Hungu was mentioned by participants who are speakers of Zombo, Kisikongo, Nsoso and Ndamba, dialects of Kikongo found in the province of Uíge. The participants from Nsoso and its close neighbor Ndamba claimed full understanding of Hungu, in addition to many other speech varieties (including Solongo, with which Nsoso has only 51% lexical similarity). However, the Hungu respondents in the community of Terra Nova evaluated their comprehension of Nsoso as being only moderate (around 50%). The respondents in the community of Bengo, including speakers of Hungu, said they have little understanding of Nsoso. The speakers of Zombo and Kisikongo claimed low comprehension of Hungu, casting yet more doubt on the results from Nsoso and Ndamba. There is no overlap between the speech varieties that the Terra Nova Hungu understand well and those that the Kikongo speakers understand well. However, there is great overlap between the results from speakers of recognized dialects of Kikongo.

Hungu was also included in the dialect mapping exercise conducted with speakers of Swela, a dialect of Songo [nsx] spoken in Malanje Province. The Swela group also did not include Hungu in their list of speech varieties that they understand well.

The results of this study show that Hungu is distinct from Kimbundu and is more closely related to Kikongo. From the word lists, it is not possible to determine its exact classification in relation to the Kikongo dialects, but the data from the dialect mapping exercises help us to interpret the results. In terms of language attitude, identity and
perceived intelligibility, Hungu can also be considered distinct from these neighboring dialects of Kikongo.

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:
Fieldwork was conducted in the provinces of Uíge, Bengo, Cuanza Norte, Malanje and Zaire by Linda Jordan and Isata Manuel of the Institute of National Languages, during three trips made in 2014 and 2017. All visits to the communities were made with the knowledge and participation of the respective provincial culture directorate and municipal administration. This study is part of the Linguistic Mapping Project of the Ministry of Culture, with the objectives of producing a language atlas of Angola and promoting the use of Angolan indigenous languages in all areas.

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:

(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: