ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2019-055 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 5/7/2019
Primary Person submitting request: Kirk Miller
Affiliation: E-mail address: kirkmiller at gmail dot com

Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:

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. □ 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: huc
Associated reference name: ＊Hua

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

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

(b) What new value(s) do you propose: ǂ'Amkoe as primary name. Retain ǂHua and add ǂHoan as secondary names.

Note – in case the ISO committee judges the history of the code [huc] to be too confused for its continued use to be practical, I have submitted a new-code request for [vam] ǂ'Amkoe. That is simply a back-up plan., I do not advocate retiring [huc] and replacing it with [vam], nor do I oppose it. If a separate new-code request is required for East ǂ'Amkoe / Sasi, I will be happy to submit one.

(c) Rationale for change:
The Kh’a language coded [huc] in the current (22nd) edition of Ethnologue, which includes Sasi as a dialect, goes by the name “ǂ’Amkoe” in the literature. According to Linda Gerlach (p.c.), who works on the Nǃaqriaxe dialect, the name was proposed by Köhler. It is now used by other researchers working on the language, such as Gerlach herself, Chris Collins and Jeff Gruber. E.g. p. 9 of Collins & Gruber (2013), "We group ǂHȍã and Sàsı́ into a group we call ǂ’Amkoe (meaning “person” in both languages)”. Gerlach (p.c., 2017 August 15) says, “I would prefer to call it ǂ’Amkoe explaining in the first sentence that it is a scientific name for a language group consisting of three varieties Nǃaqriaxe, ǂHoan, and Sasi (which is divided into West ǂ’Amkoe and East ǂ’Amkoe).”

(West ǂ’Amkoe consists of the dialects Nǃaqriaxe and ǂHua (ǂHoan) proper, and East ǂ’Amkoe is synonymous with Sasi.)

Collins (p.c.), who discovered Sasi and established that it was mutually intelligible with ǂHua (ǂHoan), objects to calling ǂ’Amkoe a “language”, but instead calls it a “language group”. He wrote (p.c., 2017 Aug 14).

_I would never say that there is a language ǂ’amkoe. The term ǂ’amkoe is completely made up by linguists. It means ‘person’ in the varieties involved. In fact, the ǂHoan groups did not even know about the Sasi. Neither knew about the other, until I introduced a few speakers to each other. So culturally they are completely independent. Also, there is no group of speakers who say that they speak ǂ’amkoe. If you said to somebody, what is your language? Nobody would ever answer: ǂ’amkoe (since it means person). The varieties do appear to be mutually intelligible, but it seems really strange to say that there is a ǂ’amkoe language. It would be the same as saying picking a single word in Gǀui, Gǁana, Kua, Tsua and Cua, and then calling all those varieties a single language, just because they share that word and mutual intelligibility._

However, Gerlach (p.c. 2017 August 15), didn’t understand why this should be a problem, and had no objection to labeling a text sample of the language “ǂ’Amkoe” in a survey of languages. She then gave her preferences as stated above.

_I am proposing that [huc] be renamed ǂ’Amkoe, rather than that a new code be created for Sasi, because of mutual intelligibility and because Collin’s objections could be applied to hundreds of other ISO languages that have no common endonym and that_
linguists have therefore named after the word for “person”, or that are spoken by separate populations that don’t know of one another. If the ISO committee decides that West ǂ’Amkoe / ǂHua and East ǂ’Amkoe / Sasi should be encoded separately, as I suspect Collins might advocate, I don’t know if it would be better to split [huc] (since Sasi is listed as a dialect in Ethnologue 22) or to keep [huc] for West ǂ’Amkoe / ǂHua + Nǀaqriaxe and create a new ISO code for Sasi. If a split, retaining the name “ǂHua” and adopting the new code [vho] or [vhu] might be considered for the ǂHua + Nǀaqriaxe language, as AFAIK ‘v’ is the only ISO-basic Latin letter ever used for the palatal click [ǂ].

As for the secondary names, both the vowel <u> and the vowel <o> are common in the lit, though ISO <u> seems to be becoming obsolete. The vowel is nasalized, which is indicated by either a diacritic for nasalization or by a final orthographic <n>. The name in native orthography is <ǂHȍȁn>, though in practice the tone diacritics are likely to be dropped. Thus I think that at least the current ISO name ǂHua> and the common form ǂHoan> should be listed as alt names. Also to be considered, the form ǂHȍã> found in the Collins & Gruber grammar, or its diacritic-stripped form <Hoa>.

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:

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:
Emails in 2017 with Linda Gerlach and Chris Collins.

(c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):
Gerlach, Linda (2015) "Phonetic and phonological description of the Nǀaqriaxe variety of ǂ’Amkoe and the impact of language contact". PhD dissertation, Humboldt University, Berlin


perhaps relevant for establishing whether [huc] was originally intended to encode the Kx’a language described here:


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: