ISO 639-3 Registration Authority
Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code
Change Request Number: 2020-017 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2020-5-7
Primary Person submitting request: Dr. Rose Stamp
Affiliation: Bar Ilan University
E-mail address: rose.stamp at biu dot ac dot il

Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:
Marah Jaraisy (Bar Ilan University) Email: mara7geraisy at gmail dot com
Rawan Sarsour (no affiliation, community member) Email: rawan.sarsour at gmail dot com
Tayyeb Badawi (no affiliation, community member) Email: Tayyeb.badwe at gmail dot com
Wehda Sarsour (no affiliation, community member) Email: Wehdi1 at walla dot com
Meyad Sarsour (no affiliation, community member) Email: Meyads at gmail dot com

Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):
Rose Stamp
47 Golomb Street
Kiriat Tiv'on
Israel 3602269

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. ☒ 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 ethnonational 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 ethnonational 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: Kufr Qassem Sign Language (KQSL)

(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:

There are only two sign languages identified in Israel in the Ethnologue records - Israeli Sign Language (ISL) and Al Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language (ABSL). KQSL is a distinct language from both ISL and ABSL - in fact, a study confirmed this. Comparing this lexical data to ISL and ABSL revealed that there was only an overlap of 15% and 19% for lexical signs respectively (Kaster et al., 2014). In sign languages, it is quite common to have some degree of overlap because of iconicity but if there is less than 40% overlap then they are distinct languages. In addition, KQSL emerged as a village sign language - influenced from the surrounding spoken or signed languages - it emerged about a 100 years ago, when Kufr Qassem was still an isolated community. A deaf woman from the south of Israel married a hearing man from Kufr Qassem, and the couple had several deaf children (Kastner et al, 2014; Berger, 2017). The gene for deafness was passed on in the family and before long Kufr Qassem had a high percentage of deaf citizens, relative to the wider community. KQSL developed as a means of communication. There is now more interaction between KQSL and ISL but only in the signing of the younger generation. Signers of KQSL and ABSL are not in contact - Kufr Qassem is in the centre of Israel and Al Sayyid is in the south.

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:

The PI has been involved in data collections at Kufr Qassem since 2014. As part of a project at the University of Haifa, the PI together with Professor Wendy Sandler visited Kufr Qassem to collect data. Nine deaf KQSL signers were filmed, ranging in age. The study looked at referential shift strategies used to identify different characters during a narrative. The results revealed that signers of KQSL used less abstract devices than signers of ISL. This was attributed to the different sociolinguistic situations of KQSL and ISL. In 2018, the
PI joined the faculty at Bar Ilan University. Together with MA student Marah Jaraisy, they have continued to work closely with the deaf community in Kufr Qassem, in particular with the younger bilingual deaf community. In a recent study, looking at the signing of six bilingual KQSL-ISL signers, the results showed a dramatic shift in language preference from KQSL to ISL, with young signers using 73% of ISL signs when signing with another bilingual from Kufr Qassem (Jaraisy & Stamp, 2019). Moreover, even older monolingual KQSL signers showed examples of borrowings from ISL (10%), suggesting that the influence from ISL is infiltrating all generations of the community.

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:
The PI has worked closely with members of the deaf community, namely with Meyad Sarsour, an expert consultant on KQSL, and since her move to Germany, with Rawan Sarsour, a young deaf consultant. The deaf community are supportive of the documentation of KQSL. Meyad and her family have played a significant role in encouraging community members to recognise the importance of documenting KQSL before it disappears. Meyad's mother, Wehda Sarsour, opened the deaf centre in Kufr Qassem in 1995 and since then the deaf centre serves as a cornerstone for the deaf community to come together and share experiences, knowledge and enjoyment. During our last filming session in 2019, the deaf centre served as our filming location. In personal correspondence with Meyad Sarsour, she claims that the population of KQSL is much lower than what has been reported. In 2010, there were 100 signers. Meyad recently reported that there are 100-120 signers, deaf and hearing, in Kufr Qassem but that most young signers do not use KQSL, they use ISL. As a result, the numbers of KQSL signers are dwindling and are estimated to be less than 50.

(c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):
Kufr Qassem is an Arab town located in the Triangle Area in the Centre of Israel. Before 2010, no written documents existed describing the history of the deaf community in Kufr Qassem. In 2010, researchers from the University of Haifa conducted interviews with deaf and hearing members of the community and it is these interviews which offer some information on how KQSL emerged, documented on the University of Haifa's website. About a 100 years ago, when Kufr Qassem was still an isolated community, a deaf woman from the south of Israel married a hearing man from Kufr Qassem, and the couple had several deaf children (Kastner et al, 2014; Berger, 2017). The gene for deafness was passed on in the family and before long Kufr Qassem had a high percentage of deaf citizens, relative to the wider community. KQSL developed as a means of communication. Hearing family members, as well as friends and neighbors, used KQSL to communicate naturally with deaf people in the community. Increased numbers of deaf people led to the opening of a classroom for deaf children at the local elementary school in 1979. When a teacher familiar with ISL joined the class in 1985, the children were exposed to ISL in the classroom for the first time. Today it is estimated that there are less than 50 KQSL signers, deaf and hearing, distributed over four generations. The oldest generation of deaf people represents the remaining monolingual population of the deaf community. These signers did not attend school and therefore they were not influenced by ISL or spoken/written Arabic (Berger, 2017). Many of the signers in the second generation did attend school but likely during the period of oralism when sign language was prohibited. The third and fourth generations attended the deaf classroom, where they were exposed to ISL. As a result, the third and fourth generations represent those signers who are bilingual to varying degrees in KQSL, the local sign language, and ISL, the national sign language of Israel. Nowadays the use of KQSL is restricted to the home and local contexts while ISL is used within school.
contexts and with the wider deaf community outside the town. KQSL is now considered to be an endangered language as no deaf people below the age of 40 are monolinguals in the language. The situation in Kufr Qassem is of particular interest because KQSL, as a young emerging sign language, has offered linguists a unique opportunity to observe language emergence in real time (Kastner et al., 2014). Now by documenting the three adult generations of living signers, we can see the full life cycle of this sign language, from its earliest stages of language emergence to its current shift towards language decline. Previous studies on KQSL indicate that the deaf community in Kufr Qassem is eager to document the language before it disappears. In 2010, researchers at the University of Haifa visited Kufr Qassem for the first time and conducted the first systematic collection of KQSL. One outcome from this was the creation of an online dictionary, including nearly 300 signs related to home life, family, and customs. Comparing this lexical data to ISL and ABSL revealed that there was only an overlap of 15% and 19% for lexical signs respectively (Kaster et al., 2014). In addition, Kastner and colleagues described a unique embedded structure which exists in KQSL. Together, these findings suggest that KQSL is an independent language with distinct lexicon and grammatical structures. Sadly, although plans were made to document the language further, one of the key researchers in this project, Irit Meir, died in 2018, and the language documentation project ceased.


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 maybe 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.

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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:

E-mail: iso639-3@sil.org