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: 2020-5-4

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Associated Change request number : 2020-017 (completed by Registration Authority)
Tentative assignment of new identifier : sqx (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:
Kufr Qassem Sign Language (KQSL)

b) Autonym (self-name) for this language:
Local sign language (this is the literal translation from how it is signed)

c) Common alternate names and spellings of language, and any established abbreviations:
Kafar Qassem Sign Language, Kfar Qassem Sign Language, Kfar Qassim Sign Language, Kfar Qassim Sign Language, KQSL.

d) Reason for preferred name:
Kufr Qassem Sign Language (KQSL) represents the orthography and pronunciation of the town's name in Arabic, as opposed to Hebrew. Kufr Qassem is an Arab speaking community and therefore 'Kufr Qassem' is the most respectful name, given that this is how it is represented by the local community. The alternate names represent Hebrew pronunciation and orthography.

e) Name and approximate population of ethnic group or community who use this language (complete individual language currently in use):
Kufr Qassem deaf community - 50 users, only signers over the age of 40 are monolinguals. Signers under 40 years old are bilingual in KQSL and Israeli Sign Language (ISL).

f) Preferred three letter identifier, if available: KQS
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/iso639-3/types.asp)

For individual languages, also complete:

b) Countries where used: Israel

c) Region within each country: towns, districts, states or provinces where used. Include GPS coordinates of the approximate center of the language, if possible: Kufr Qassem, Latitude: 31.917490, Longitude: 35.222820

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
   n/a

3. MODALITY AND LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION

a) This language is: Signed ☒ Spoken ☐ Attested only in writings

b) Language family, if classified; origin, if artificially constructed:
   Sign language

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:
   This sign language community exists in an Arabic-speaking community - there is some influence from Arabic. There is a clear influence from Israeli Sign Language, especially on the signing of the younger generation. However, the influence is from recent contact and not because these languages are historically related. They are not - KQSL and ISL are independent and distinct languages.
4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

a) What written literature, inscriptions or recordings exist in this language? Are there newspapers, radio or television broadcasts, etc.?:
Youtube and Facebook video clips from community members and a KQSL dictionary online, developed by the University of Haifa: http://signlab.haifa.ac.il/index.php/dictionarytest-2

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?:
No, it is not officially recognised by any level of government. There is a deaf club in Kufr Qassem and a deaf class in the local school which was opened in 1979. However, nowadays ISL is used as the language of instruction in the classroom.

c) Comment on factors of ethnolinguistic identity and informal domains of use:
KQSL is used in informal and local settings - deaf club, in deaf homes, also used by some hearing people who have deaf relatives.
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:
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. Include known dictionaries, grammars, etc. (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 Kufar 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 Kufar Qassem is eager to document the language before it disappear. In 2010, researchers at the University of Haifa visited Kufar 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.

Please return this form to:
ISO 639-3 Registrar
SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road
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: