ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2020-020 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2020-6-4

Primary Person submitting request: Matthias Feurer

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Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:
John Dunyi Tilahore, barduni_tilahore at wycliffeethiopia dot org

Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):
Matthias Feurer
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Switzerland

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: koe

Associated reference name: Kacipo-Balesi
1. Modify an existing language code element

(a) What are you proposing to change:
   - [X] 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: Suri, Kacipo-Bale

(c) Rationale for change:
   The New Testament translation team with whom I am working and others of the Suri
   community expressed many times their regret that the Ethnologue list them as Kacipo-
   Balesi (koe) and not according to their self-name “Suri”.

   In a letter John Dunyi Tilahore from the Suri (Kacipo-Bale) community writes:
   “We call ourselves "Suri" without anything added and also our language is called "Suri"
   in both countries (Ethiopia and South Sudan). Additional names for our people and
   language only appeared when outsiders and neighboring people groups were trying to
   name us for different reasons. The name which is used by the South Sudanese
   government is "Kachipo", which means "cautious people". Our brothers in Ethiopia on
   the other hand were called "Bale" which is a clan name within the Suri people group.
   Our preference, however, is to be called Suri. But since the Tirmaga and Chai tribes,
   which have a similar culture but a different language, were mistakenly called by our
   own name "Suri", it is imposed on us that we need to specify our people group and
   language name. For not to be confused with the Tirmaga and Chai, we refer to
   ourselves and our language as "Suri (Kacipo-Bale)" when we speak or write in
generally about our people group. When we refer only to the South Sudanese part of
our people group then we use "Suri (Kacipo)" and when refer only to the Ethiopian part
of our people group we use "Suri (Bale)". I hope this explanation helps to solve the
confusion. I would appreciate if you could use the provided terms above when referring
to our people group.”

   (John Dunyi Tilahore was formerly deputy of the Suri (Kacipo-Bale) community at the South
   Sudanese government in South Sudan. Currently he is team leader of the Suri (Kacipo-
   Balesi) New Testament Translation Project under Wycliffe Ethiopia. Here his
   barduni_tilahore@wycliffeethiopia.org  and phone number +251 900247062)

   As it is seen above, the self-name of the people group is “Suri” and also their language
is called “Suri”. By others, however, they were known by variations of clan names like
Kacipo, Kachepo, Bale, Balesi and under der names Zilmamo/Tsilmamo. Unfortunately
the Ethnologue, and other literature list this language group wrongly under the clan
names as Kacipo-Balesi (Balesi is especially unfortunate, since it only marks one
person of the Bale-Clan) and use “Suri” for the neighboring languages Tirmaga and
Chai, which are culturally close to the Suri (Kacipo-Bale), but linguistically they belong
to a different branch of the Surmic language family.

   Bryant (1999:3) states, “The names Tirmaga and Chai are self-names, each coming
from the opposite dialect’s perspective, yet accepted by both. … Collectively the
Tirmaga and Chai call themselves Suri; however they do not know the origins of this
term. Suri is also a term that incorporates the neighboring Baale people who are similar
to the Tirmaga and Chai culturally, but different linguistically.”
In fact, when you ask a “Tirmaga” what language he speaks, he would say that he
speaks Tirmaga, but if you ask a Suri (Kacipo-Bale) what language he speaks, he
would say “Suri”. Unlike the Tirmaga and Chai the Suri (Kacipo-Bale) people know
where the term “Suri” comes from. According to their history they originally lived in the
South Omo region in Ethiopia. From there they migrated in search for grazing land
north into South Sudan until they reached the desert, hence the name Suri (burnt land).
They continued their migration eastward to the Akobo river (Ethiopia) and a part of the
people group went westward again to the Moga area and further to the Boma plateau
(South Sudan).

Convinced that the self-name of the people group and the wish of the people of this
language group should be respected, I and e.g. my colleagues in Wycliffe Switzerland
and Wycliffe Ethiopia refer to the people group in our publications as Suri. Since the
Ethnologue lists the language as Kacipo-Balesi (koe) and the Tirmaga-Chai on the
other hand as Suri, we were, however, forced to always add in brackets the
specification “Kacipo-Balesi” (cf. e.g. https://de.wycliffe.ch/project/suri-kacipo-balesi/).
The rendering “Suri (Kacipo-Balesi)” is also found in a basic grammar outline booklet
about the language (Kapranova 2011:ii).

According to the mandate I got by John Dunyi Tilahore and the Suri (Kacipo-Balesi)
community I kindly request Ethnologue to change the ethnonym and language name
“Kacipo-Balesi” (koe) into “Suri”. If a specification is needed, use instead of “Kacipo-
Balesi” the term “Kacipo-Bale”, since “Balesi” is a singular word referring only to one
person of the Bale clan.

Sincerely,
Matthias Feurer

Bibliography:
  University of Texas, Arlington.
  Ababa: SIL Ethiopia.

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_NewCode
RequestForm.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:

(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:

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:
As seen in the rationale above, as Bible translation advisor working intensely with the Suri, Kacipo-Bale, I am in regular contact with the Suri, Kacipo-Bale, community. Listening to them speaking about themselves it is very obvious that they always refer to themselves as being Suri. Also their language they call Suri. The name "Kacipo-Balesi" is unfortunate: 1) "Kacipo" refers just to the Suri in South Sudan. Balesi refers just to a person from one Suri clan called Bale in the adjacent Ethiopia. As there is another, culturally similar but linguistically different, neighboring people group the Tirmaga-Chai, who are also referred to as Suri, I suggest to change the name "Kacipo-Balesi" (koe) into "Suri, Kacipo-Bale" (koe). For the language group listed so far as Suri (suq) I propose the specification "Suri, Tirmaga-Chai" (suq).

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:
John Dunyi Tilahore, formerly deputy of the Suri (Kacipo) community at the South Sudanese government in South Sudan, currently team leader of the Suri (Kacipo-Balesi) New Testament Translation Project under Wycliffe Ethiopia writes:
“We call ourselves "Suri" without anything added and also our language is called "Suri" in both countries (Ethiopia and South Sudan). Additional names for our people and language only appeared when outsiders and neighboring people groups were trying to name us for different reasons. The name which is used by the South Sudanese government is "Kachipo", which means "cautious people". Our brothers in Ethiopia on the other hand were called "Bale" which is a clan name within the Suri people group. Our preference, however, is to be called Suri. But since the Tirmaga and Chai tribes, which have a similar culture but a different language, were mistakenly called by our own name "Suri", it is imposed on us that we need to specify our people group and language name. For not to be confused with the Tirmaga and Chai, we refer to ourselves and our language as "Suri (Kacipo-Bale)" when we speak or write in generally about our people group. When we refer only to the South Sudanese part of our people group then we use "Suri (Kacipo)" and when refer only to the Ethiopian part of our people group we use "Suri (Bale)". I hope this explanation helps to solve the confusion. I would appreciate if you could use the provided terms above when referring to our people group.”

(Cf. rationale above.)

(c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):

(Cf. rationale above.)

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. 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: