ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2020-031 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2020-7-27

Primary Person submitting request: Adedamola Aregbesola

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

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: gji
Associated reference name: Geji
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:
Fyalu (Pelu)- Mugan (Bolu)

(b) Bu (Zaranda)

(c) Gyaazi (Geji)

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.

(d) Referring to the criteria given above, give the rationale for splitting the existing code element into two or more languages:
The current Ethnologue electronic version have Geji as having two other varieties beside Geji itself: Bolu and Zaranda. However, the SIL Survey Team 2019 on "A Sociolinguistic Profile of the Geji [gji] Language Cluster of Bauchi State, Nigeria" came to the socio-linguistic conclusion that Geji, Zaranda and Bolu should be classified as different languages. In addition to this list, Pelu, which the Ethnologue have as an alternate name of Bolu should also be categorized as a separate or related language to Bolu, and not an alternate name. The summary of their findings on why these languages should be identified as different, and consequently having different identifiers are identified below. Before going into why these languages should be considered as different, we need to make a case for the proper names to be assigned to these language groups. The people of Zaranda reported "Bu" to be their aboriginal name, and the Bolu reported "Mugan" as their more preferred name. The Pelu on the other hand gave their name orthographically as "Fyalu" although the "f" in it is pronounced as [p], with Geji as “Gyaazi”. We hope these names are taken into considerations, and these groups are referred to as they want. Historically, the Fyalu, Mugan and Bu all reported that their immediate point of origin or migration to be from the Zaranda Hill, and there is a big chance the Gyaazi also shares the same account. In addition, these groups are also close geographically and can be found scattered across the Zaranda Hill presently. Consequent of this shared history, cultural similarities and close proximity, these groups are close linguistically, but mostly perceive themselves as having unique identities. The underlying reason for the perception of each group as being separate from the others, appears to be due to more social reasons rather than
linguistic factors, especially among the Gyaazi, Fyalu and Mugan which have a lot of linguistic similarities. Socially, all three groups perceive themselves as different from the Gyaazi. Linguistically, our data analysis shows that Fyalu and Mugan are more closely related to Gyaazi linguistically than Bu. Bu appears to be a lot more apart from these three, sharing an average of 50% similarities with all three languages. Reported intelligibility of the Bu with these other languages is also low. Consequently, with the combination of the low lexical similarities and reported intelligibility, in addition to the social factors, Bu should be a separate language and have an identifier peculiar to it alone. Although there is a high degree of lexical similarities between Fyalu, Mugan and Gyaazi and even a reported inherent intelligibility between all three languages, most of the groups however maintain a strong independent identity. The Mugan and Fyalu see themselves as different from the Gyaazi identity-wise, and so do the Gyaazi. As a result, Gyaazi should be a separate language from this cluster, for Mugan and Fyalu with which it shares a high lexical similarities, about 75-85% on an average, claims to be different socially, and with this also echoed by the Gyaazi. Beside the social reasons, even with a high lexical similarities, question on comprehension arises, as these groups reported not to fully comprehend each other. With Mugan and Fyalu left, arguments could be made for why these languages should be given different identifiers, but it cannot be strong as the arguments for why they should be categorized as one, with not definite name, but a conjunction of the two names; "Mugan-Fyalu". The analysis of the data gathered from the survey showed Mugan and Fyalu sharing a very high lexical similarity (about 85%), which according to Frank Blair means the two language groups can understand each other inherently. There is a high possibility these two languages are the same, with both speaking slightly different, and having a weak and not strong identity from each other. Or, it is possible these languages started out as the same, but with time, started speaking a bit different. Linguistically, these languages can be seen as very related or as one, and socially, they are the only two groups from the four that believe to have more in common. These groups, beside their high lexical similarities and inherent intelligibility of each other, also have a good attitude towards the other. In addition, Wente-Lukas (1985 p53) citing Hoffmann who also cited Hansford et al (1976: 187) reported a language, Bolu and reported it as synonymous to Pelu. In summary, our arguments for Mugan-Fyalu in having a single identifier hinges towards their high lexical similarities, inherent understanding of each other, good attitude to each other and also because these two groups see themselves as closer than with the others. In addition to the linguistic and social factors, the other rationale to why three new identifiers should be created, one for Gyaazi, another for Bu, and the last for Mugan-Fyalu, is that no common literature can serve all four languages. There might be high lexical similarities between all four languages, but one literature cannot sufficiently serve all groups, except maybe Mugan and Fyalu. There is an ongoing Bible translation in Gyaazi, and one of our research goals during the survey on these groups was to find out if the Fyalu, Mugan and Bu would be willing to use the Gyaazi portions of the Scripture, and literacy materials or work with the Gyaazi to produce their own. Their responses also buttressed our linguistic data as to why no common literature can serve all four. The Mugan reported awareness of the Gyaazi Bible translation, but would prefer to either have theirs or work closely with the Fyalu, for they understand Fyalu more than Gyaazi. The Fyalu on the other hand stopped working with the Gyaazi translation team because of the many reported dissimilarities in their languages and the realization that the material would not serve them well. And the Bu would not use the material in Gyaazi because it would be too difficult for them to read and use, and would prefer to have their own separate translation.

P.S: Much research was not carried out on Geji (Gyaazi) and the group, as a result of this, not all sections filled on the "Request for New Language Code Element" form for Geji (Gyaazi).
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: On the 15th to 19th of October, 2020, the survey team led by Samuel Eju and other members of the team like survey specialist, Fittokka Gobak, survey department supervisor, Luther Hon, undertook the mission to discover the true identities of Geji, Pelu, Bolu and Zaranda, and the similarities, linguistically and socially of these groups, and to ascertain if literacy materials in Geji can be extended to the other groups. Different instruments were used to answer these questions: group interview sessions, dialect mapping tools, individual interviews, and eliciting of a 348-wordlist for all groups. With the triangulation of all these instruments, conclusions were made regarding these groups. Identity-wise, the real and preferred name of the Pelu is Fyalu, the Bolu as Mugan, the Zaranda as Bu, and the Geji remains the same. These languages were also deemed different enough to require new identifiers, with Geji, Mugan and Bu as different languages, and Fyalu-Mugan similar enough, both socially and linguistically to be allocated a unifying identifier. A report of our findings is currently undergoing the revision phase before being published on SIL’s Electronic Survey Reports archive. Copies of the most recent edition of this report are available upon request.

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:
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: