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: 2021 Aug. 27

Name of Primary Requester: Sih Sîng-hông

E-mail address: ithuan at ithuan dot tw

Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:
ITHUÁN KHOKI <ithuan at ithuan dot tw>
Lau Seng-hian <voyu.lau at gmail dot com>
Shin-Hong Ng <huang.shengfeng at gmail dot com>
Yuwen Lai <yuwen.lai at gmail dot com>

Associated Change request number : 2021-044 (completed by Registration Authority)
Tentative assignment of new identifier : ftg (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:
   Taigi

b) Autonym (self-name) for this language:
   Tâi-gí, Tâi-gú, Tâi-gîr, Tâi-oân-ôe, Tâi-uân-uē, Taiwanese

c) Common alternate names and spellings of language, and any established abbreviations:

d) Reason for preferred name:
   It is a major autonym among native speakers to refer to the language as Taigi. Among the interviewees, 79.21% of them referred to their language as “Taigi” (Gloss: Tai, ‘Taiwan’; gi, ‘language’) in a telephone survey conducted by the ROC’s Ministry of Culture, “Survey on National Languages Facing Crisis in Inheritance” (面臨傳承危機國家語言調查, to be published) in 2020. In the interview, speakers were asked an open-ended question: “What was the first language you acquired when you were a child?” in the survey. 70,000 samples were collected.

e) Name and approximate population of ethnic group or community who use this language (complete individual language currently in use):
   Name: Tâi-oân-lâng (Tai-wan-people); Population: ca 18.9 million in Taiwan

f) Preferred three letter identifier, if available: ftg

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/iso639-2D3/types.asp)

For individual languages, also complete:

b) Countries where used:
Taiwan, US, Canada

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

Taiwan: Taigi-speaking population is in majority in 305 out of 368 townships and cities. For a full list and GPS coordinates, see appendix: “Distribution of Taigi in Taiwan.ods”.1 2

US: Taigi-speaking communities in various regions have established institutes.
- Taiwanese Presbyterian Church In South Bay (2077 Lomita Blvd, Lomita, CA 90717, 33.8011791,-118.3168937)
- Washington D.C. Taiwanese School (10701 Gainsborough Rd, Potomac, MD 20854, 39.0313103,-77.1726505)
- Taiwan school of TAC (4413 Fortran Ct, San Jose, CA 95134, 37.42061,-121.957608).

Canada: the population reported “Taiwanese” as ethnic origin in 2016 statistics.
- British Columbia / Colombie-Britannique(21,455)
- Ontario (10,065)
- Quebec / Québec (2,210)
- Alberta(1,995)

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

1 The population distribution is from Ang, Ui-jin, 2019, Studies on Social Language Geographic of Taiwan.
2 GPS coordinates of townships and cities are retrieved from https://data.gov.tw/dataset/7441
3. MODALITY AND LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION

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

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

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:

Taigi was previously grouped under Minnan Chinese [nan] which belongs to the macrolanguage, Chinese. We request a new code for the language that is NOT grouped under the Chinese [zh] macrolanguage group, based on the distinct ethnolinguistic identity, and the full-blown writing system (Pēh-ōe-jī) (see 4c and 4a, respectively).

**Precedents of similar cases could be found in Urdu [urd] & Hindi [hin] as well as Dungan [dng] & Central Plains Mandarin [cmn].** In these two cases, two mutually intelligible languages were assigned different codes and not grouped under a macrolanguage group due to different writing systems and their distinct ethnolinguistic and political identities. The spirit of SIL language coding criteria respects the nature of such cases. Correspondingly, we propose Taigi should be treated the same way and be assigned a new language code to conform to the current paradigm and criteria.

4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

a) What written literature, inscriptions or recordings exist in this language? Are there newspapers, radio or television broadcasts, etc.?

Western missionaries developed the first romanization system known as Pēh-ōe-jī for Taigi in the mid-19th Century. Pēh-ōe-jī was used in both religious and secular publications. The first newspaper in Taigi, *Taiwan Church News* (台灣府城教會報) was established in 1885. Some other publications are *The Principles and Practice of Nursing* (Lài gōa kho Kḥān-hō-khāk, 內外科看護學, 1917), *Ten of my Humble Opinions* (Chap-hāng koân-kiàn, 十項管見, 1925), Taigi-English Dictionary (*Tâi Eng Sû-tián, 台英辭典*, 1969) among others.³

Compared to the complex logographic writing system of Chinese (Hanji, 漢字), Pēh-ōe-jī is significantly more accessible for the illiterate to learn.⁴ In the mid-19 century, it successfully bridged laypeople to the bible and modern knowledge. Although it was a substrate under the heavy influence of two intrusive languages: Japanese and Mandarin during the Japanese ruling and the ROC regime, Pēh-ōe-jī has never been abandoned. The system has developed into a complete writing system other than Hanji.

In response to the grassroot movements for the revitalization of local languages, the ROC regime’s Ministry of Education announced two Taigi systems In 2006: *Taiwan Minnan Romanization System* ³ For a more extensive collection of Pēh-ōe-jī literatures, see http://ip194097.ntcu.edu.tw/Memory/TGB/MoWT.asp

⁴ Wi-vun Taiffalo Chiung (2001) suggests that the situation of writing in Taiwanese is a case of digraphia, where Hanji-only writing is the high language in digraphia and Romanization (Pēh-ōe-jī) is the low one.
(臺灣閩南語羅馬字拼音方案), modified from Pêh-ōe-jī, and the Hanji writing system *Taiwan Minnan Recommended Characters* (臺灣閩南語推薦用字).

Noticably, an idiosyncratic writing style has been generated: A mixed written form combining Pêh-ōe-jī and Hanji is widely adopted by Taigi writers and publishers. The writing style functions similarly to the Japanese writing system (logographic kanji mixed with syllabic kana). It is truly unique on so many linguistic levels. More excitingly, the system is fully supported in computing: innovations such as different fonts and input methods were created, not to mention all the characters and diacritics are encoded in Unicode. This renovation along with the literature generated from such practice was not found in any other sub-languages that belong to the Chinese macrolanguage, which is another ground for a new status for Taigi.

On the other hand, radio and television programmes with Taigi are prevailing in Taiwanese mass media, public or private. While most channels are Mandarin mediated, they also have Taigi news, drama, and talk shows at random time slots. Notably, these programmes are all named with ‘Taigi’ in the naming system but never with ‘Minnan’ in their titles. In 2019, a Taigi channel, ‘Taigi Channel of the Public Television Service’, was founded and subsidized as part of the resolution of the Development of National Language Act. All of the programmes in this channel are in Taigi with most subtitles written in the Recommended Character System.

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?:

Taigi is recognized by the government of the ROC regime based on the Development of National Languages Act which went into effect in 2019. Its Article 3 clearly stated that “‘National languages’ referred in this act shall mean the natural languages and sign languages used by the different ethnic groups in Taiwan.” Moreover, the Ministry of Culture was assigned the competent authority of language related affairs. Its official documents specified that the term *Taiwan Taigi* (台灣台語) is used instead of the term *Taiwan Minnan* (台灣閩南) in order to “respect the identify of each ethnic group”.

Though not used as the primary language of instruction in compulsory education, Taigi, among other local languages, is taught in K-12 (elementary and high schools) one hour per week. Taigi immersion programs in kindergarten, elementary and high schools are legally recognized and

---

5 The necessity of Pêh-ōe-jī in Taigi writing is stated as follows, by Wi-yun Taiffalo Ching (2001):

According to Cheng (1989: 332), approximately 5% of the Taiwanese morphemes have no appropriate Han characters, and they account for as much as 15% of the total number of characters in a written Taiwanese text. Those 15% purely Taiwanese words are most likely to be written in different Han characters by different writers. Han–Roman mixed writing is proposed by some promoters to solve this problem. That is, Roman script should be adopted for the lexical items which do not have appropriate Han characters, and Han characters should be used elsewhere.

6 One of them is the Jinxuan fonts. See details about the design of Taigi characters in this article: https://blog.justfont.com/2019/01/jinxuan-taiwan-letters/

7 First paragraph of Act 13 states: “The government shall provide incentives for the publishing, production, and broadcast of publications, films, broadcast television programming, and other information broadcasting services to demonstrate the cultural diversity of national languages.”

8 For example, the title of the introduction video of National Languages Development Convention: https://youtu.be/Ks0FRqLYD3o

9 Stated in this official explanation about the act: https://www.moc.gov.tw/content_275.html

10 Stated in Article 9, paragraph 3: “Any national language may be used as the language of instruction at schools.”
subsidized by the government\(^{11}\). There are also courses conducted in Taigi in universities, while three departments at universities specialize in Taigi. An academic center dedicated to Taiwanese teaching and assessment of Taigi speakers, the Center for Taiwanese Languages Testing (CTLT), was established in National Cheng Kung University in 2010.

c) Comment on factors of ethnolinguistic identity and informal domains of use:

An evident sociolinguistic community of Taigi that encompasses peoples who initially used different dialects has been formed. Ang Ui-jin (2003) conducted sound change research focusing on the phonological merging of two major dialects of Taigi in Taiwan. His results demonstrated a dominant General Taiwanese variant that has become the center of convergence and is used by most speakers. Moreover, with the language contact of Austronesian languages and heavy influence from the Japanese language, Taigi has developed linguistic features unique to Taiwan. A community has been generated, and the speakers clearly distinguish themselves from Minnan speakers in China. To support our argument on the identity issue, we outlined political reasons and ethnolinguistic identity aspects that support a decision of assigning separate language identifiers to languages used in Taiwan, adapted from Ng Shin-hong (2021, personal communication):

A. While besides indigenous languages some languages currently used in “Taiwan”, such as Taiwanese and Hakka, were derived from languages acquired from Chinese mainland after the Empire of China gained control over “Taiwan” in 17\(^{th}\) century, after the Empire of China ceded “Taiwan” to Empire of Japan in 1895, such languages started to gain the political positions of “local languages” within the Empire of Japan and “languages used in Japanese territories” on the global stage.

B. Under Japanese rule, languages used in Taiwan that originated from the Chinese mainland became political identifiers and sources of self-identity of people living in Taiwan\(^{12}\) while absorbing numerous vocabularies from Japanese.

C. After the ROC regime started to administer “Taiwan” as an agent performing the Allied Powers’ military occupation since 1945, local languages used by Taiwanese people before 1945 (“pre-1945 local languages”) were used by Taiwanese people to express their self-identity as Taiwanese, to distinguish themselves from Chinese refugees fleeing to Taiwan during 1940s and 1950s, and to express their distaste and refusal to the illegal “Chinese identity” the ROC regime desperately tried to establish, especially after it became a regime-in-exile in 1949.

D. While pre-1945 local languages were suppressed heavily by the ROC regime for decades, and Mandarin, the only official language designated by the ROC regime, gains dominant position as a result, pre-1945 local languages are still preserved and used by Taiwanese people with firm Taiwanese identity and utilized as a political symbol by some users to express their

\(^{11}\) For example, this video shows the earth science course in Taigi in a high school: https://youtu.be/_9EHH3qg5X4

\(^{12}\) For example, according to Ong Si-long (1988:91-92, as cited in Chiung, 2018), the declarations (1925) of the Tokyo Association of Taiwanese Academic Studies (東京台灣學術研究會), which was organized by some overseas Taiwanese students in Tokyo, included:

“To support the liberation of Taiwan!” (支持台灣的解放運動)
“To obtain the freedom to speak Taiwanese!” (獲得使用台灣話的自由)
“Taiwan independence forever and ever!” (台灣獨立萬歲)
refusal to the idea of “reunification of China” and the attempt of labeling them as “Chinese” or “Chinese origin”.

E. After Chen Shui-bian, the candidate of DPP, won the presidential elections of the ROC regime in 2000 & 2004 and ruled this Chinese regime, the revival of pre-1945 local languages gained momentum and showed progress. Grassroot movements for the preservation and revival of these languages gained more attention from the public, and the ROC regime was forced by Taiwanese people to distribute more resources to these languages. The dominant position of Mandarin is gradually eroded by the reviving pre-1945 local languages.

F. Along with the increasing Taiwanese identity of people living in Taiwan, the “Chinese” attributes intentionally attached by the ROC regime onto pre-1945 local languages are facing challenges. For example, Taiwan Minnan ("台灣閩南語"), a term used by the ROC regime to describe Taiji, the most widely used pre-1945 local languages, are criticized for implying the most widely used pre-1945 local languages in Taiwan as a dialect of a language used in the Minnan region of China.

In conclusion, pre-1945 local languages in Taiwan, whether indigenous languages or not, are used as identifiers of Taiwanese identity by people living in Taiwan since 1895, the Taiwan-leaning affiliation of these languages become more and more apparent when the number of Taiwan residents rejecting the “Chinese identity” deliberately planted into their minds by the ROC regime increases. In other words, although “the nature of Chinese regime” of the ROC regime currently governing Taiwan is undeniable, the majority of people in Taiwan now not only reject the “Chinese identity” the ROC regime planted in their mind, but also actively try to replace it with ever-increasing Taiwanese identity.

A political boundary separating people living in Taiwan who use pre-1945 local languages, especially those originated from Chinese mainland, from people living on Chinese mainland who use the originate languages is clearly drawn, and the clarity and intensity of such political boundary justifies the assignment of separate language identifiers to languages used in Taiwan.
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:

b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:

Preferred three letter identifier, ftg, provided by Tân Hồng-huí, the CEO of Lý Kang Khioh Taiwanese Cultural & Educational Foundation. The code ftg stands for “Formosa Taigi” got 86 votes out of 135 in the Internet election held by ÌTHUÂN KHOKI.

c) Knowledge from published sources. Include known dictionaries, grammars, etc. (please give complete bibliographical references):

Ang, Ui-jin, 2019, Studies on Social Language Geographic of Taiwan (臺灣社會語言地理學研究), Taipei: Avanguard (前衛出版)


Ogawa Naoyoshi, ed. 1931–2, Taiwanese-Japanese Dictionary (臺日大辭典), Taihoku (Taipei): Government-General of Taiwan (臺灣總督府). This dictionary is now digitalized and translated, full content available on https://chhoe.taigi.info/


A full list of around 80 published Taigi dictionaries is documented in the appendix of Wi-vun Taiffalo Chiung (2015), "Taiwanese or Southern Min? On the Controversy of Ethnolinguistic Names in Taiwan" in Journal of Taiwanese Vernacular 7:1 pp.54~8

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
Email: iso639-3@sil.org
An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

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:**


LinguistList. Constructed Languages. [http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html](http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html)