

ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2006-001

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Person filing request: Albert Bickford

Affiliation: SIL

E-mail address: albert_bickford@sil.org

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

3397 E. Swallowtail Lane, Tucson AZ 85739, USA

Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:

Geoffrey Hunt, SIL <geoffrey_hunt@sil.org>

Thierry Haesenne, Institute of Higher Education Marie Haps <thierry.haesenne@ilmh.be>

Mieke Van Herreweghe, Ghent University <mieke.vanherreweghe@ugent.be>

Myriam Vermeerbergen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel <mvermeer@vub.ac.be>

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) retire a code element from use, including merging its scope of denotation into that of another code, 3) split an existing code element into two or more separate language code elements, or 4) create a new code element. Fill out section 1, 2, 3, or 4 below as appropriate, plus section 5 to document 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.

For changes of type 1, 2 or 3 (proposing a change to an existing code), please identify:

Affected ISO 639-3 identifier: bvs

Associated reference name: Belgian Sign Language

1. Modify an existing language code element

(a) What are you proposing to change:

- Language name
- 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. 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.
- This is a variety that is fully intelligible with another ISO 639-3 language and should be merged with it.

(b) If one of the latter two reasons, with which ISO 639-3 code element (identifier and name) should it be merged :

(c) Rationale for change:

3. Split a language code element into two or more code elements

(a) List the languages into which this code element should be split:

Vlaamse Gebarentaal (VGT) = Flemish Sign Language

Langue des signes de Belgique Francophone (LSFB) = French Belgian Sign Language

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.

Referring to the criteria given above, argue the rationale for splitting the existing code element into two or more languages:

There are clear distinctions in the sociolinguistic identities of the two linguistic communities which parallel the larger sociological and cultural distinctions between the Flanders (northern) and Walloon (southern) regions of Belgium. The actual linguistic differences are apparently less clear, yet the trend within the Deaf communities in these two regions is clearly toward establishing

separate linguistic identities for the signed languages of the northern and southern parts of Belgium. For example:

"In the past the term Belgian Sign Language was commonly used, because one believed there were more resemblances between the two sign languages used in Flanders and Wallonia than between those used in Flanders and the Netherlands. Also, the first sign language research in Belgium was carried out by Flemish and Walloon researchers together. In their publications they always mentioned Belgian Sign Language. Deaf people themselves spoke of signs or sign language without really specifying which one. A few years ago, the name changed. Because of the lack of sufficient linguistic evidence that would enable us to speak of two completely different sign languages, the compromise Flemish Belgian Sign Language was chosen to refer to the variant used in Flanders. However, because of the split of NAVEKADOS (the former Belgian Deaf Association) into a Flemish and a Walloon organization, reduced contact between the Flemish and Walloon Deaf and the different processes of standardization, Deaf people got more and more dissatisfied with the term Flemish Belgian and wanted to change it into Flemish. FEVLADO [the Flemish Deaf association, <http://www.fevlado.be/>] also advocated this change at an Annual General Meeting in October 2000. This is why from that moment on the term Flemish Sign Language is used in all publications concerning the Flemish Deaf community and their mother tongue." [<http://gebaren.ugent.be/information.php>].

"In short, up until about fifteen years ago, people were usually signing, talking, and writing about Belgian Sign Language. Now, many Deaf people feel intuitively that the signed language used in Flanders is very different from the one used in the Netherlands (even though the two hearing communities speak the same language, Dutch) but that it is closer to the signed language used in Wallonia (although the Walloon hearing community speaks French). Right now, not enough linguistic evidence has been collected to know whether the differences between Flanders and Wallonia are big enough to allow talk about two different signed languages. Hence, as a good Belgian compromise, the term Flemish Belgian Sign Language was used in recent years for the signed language variants used in Flanders. However, because of the split of the national Deaf federation into two regional federations, the fewer and fewer contacts among both organizations and their members, and the separate standardization processes, most Deaf people in Flanders prefer to talk about Flemish Sign Language. This term is also the term that was adopted by Fevlado at its last annual general meeting (AGM) in October 2000. At that AGM, the participants were asked to vote for either the term Flemish Sign Language or the term Flemish Belgian Sign Language. The first option was nearly unanimously elected. Even though this choice is obviously more politically than linguistically motivated, I want to respect the opinion of the Flemish Deaf Association and its members and will talk about Flemish Sign Language from now on... [Mieke Van Herreweghe, 2002. "Turn-Taking Mechanisms and Active Participation in Meetings with Deaf and Hearing Participants in Flanders", in *Turn-Taking, Fingerspelling, and Contact in Signed Languages*, Ceil Lucas, ed., available online at <http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/excerpts/TTFcthree3.html>]

Regarding the situation in French-speaking Belgium (Wallonia and the major parts of Brussels), in the early 1980s, the term "Langue Française Signée" (Signed French Language) was used, then it changed into "Langue des Signes Belge" (Belgian Sign Language) or "Langue des Signes Française de Belgique" (French Sign Language of Belgium). However, Deaf people have become quite unsatisfied with these terms and thus, another term was advocated. Since then, Langue des Signes Belge Francophone or Langue des Signes de Belgique Francophone has been used during formal meetings although most deaf people still refer their language as "sign language". There was never a compromise on which term to use. Therefore, sign language researchers hired to write a report on the feasibility of an official recognition of the sign language used in French-

speaking Belgium chose the term "Langue des Signes de Belgique Francophone" and an abbreviation which reflected the close relationship between this sign language and French Sign Language : LSFb.

According to Dr. Vermeerbergen, comprehension of LSFb by signers of VGT varies according to the person, the region from which the two signers are from, and the topic of conversation. For example, older Deaf from Flanders understand LSFb better than younger Deaf, who have had less contact with signers from Walloon. This suggests that the comprehension is based on learned bidialectalism rather than inherent intelligibility. Those from central areas in Flanders understand LSFb better than those from peripheral areas, which is indication that the sign language situation in Belgium is in some respects a dialect chain which the Deaf communities in both regions have decided to break into two separate languages along political lines.

The Parliament of French-speaking Belgium recognised LSFb in a decree of October 2003, which acknowledges the existing internal variation and advocates allowing it to develop toward standardization along its own natural evolutionary path. The decree is available at <http://www.fevlado.be/themas/gebarentaal/documenten/Decreet%20FBelg%20Gebarentaal.pdf>. Official recognition of VGT by the government in Flanders was granted in April 2006 (<http://www.fevlado.be/nieuws/nieuwsDetail.aspx?item=150>). The proposed text of the decree is available at <http://jsp.vlaamsparlement.be/docs/stukken/2005-2006/g729-2.pdf>.

In order to complete the change request, the form "Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3" (file name "ISO639-3_NewCodeRequestForm.pdf" or "ISO639-3_NewCodeRequestForm.doc") 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.

4. Create a new language code element

- (a) Name of missing language:
- (b) State the case that this language is not the same as 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.pdf" or "ISO639-3_NewCodeRequestForm.doc") must also be submitted to more fully document the new language.

5. 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:
(All sources cited in discussion above. All three types of sources are relevant.)

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:

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

The change proposal process

A request to change the code set goes through a five 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 deemed to be sufficiently 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 appropriate discussion lists (those which express in their statement of purpose an interest in the language or language family in focus in the proposal, inviting individuals to review and comment on the proposal. The source of list information is the LinguistList Mailing List index, <http://cf.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-WorkingDirs/lists/index.html>. Responses are sent to the ISO 639-3 registrar for compilation. The consensus of 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.
4. 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 LINGUIST, <http://linguistlist.org/issues/index.html>, and other general language and linguistics discussion lists, as well as lists relating to specific languages or language families. All change requests are then open to further review and comment by any interested party for a period of three months.
5. 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) amended and resubmitted for the next review cycle, or 4) withdrawn from consideration. 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
ISO 639-3/RA web site: <http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/>
E-mail: iso639-3@sil.org

An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:

Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/> .

LinguistList. Ancient and Extinct Languages. <http://cf.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-WorkingDirs/forms/langs/GetListOfAncientLgs.html>

LinguistList. Constructed Languages. <http://cf.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-WorkingDirs/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html>