

# ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

## Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3

Date: 2006-5-10

Name of Primary Requester: Albert Bickford; Myriam Vermeerbergen; Mieke Van Herreweghe

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

Associated Change request number : 2006-001

(completed by Registration Authority)

Tentative assignment of new identifier : vgt

(completed by Registration Authority)

Do not be concerned about your responses causing the form text spacing or pagination to change. 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:

Vlaamse Gebarentaal

- b) Autonym (self-name) for this language:

(not easily shown due to difficulties in transcribing signed languages)

- c) Alternate names and spellings of language, and any established abbreviations:

abbreviation: VGT; name in English: Flemish Sign Language

- d) Reason for preferred name:

The most common convention among Deaf communities and sign language linguists is to refer to a sign language using its accepted name in the dominant spoken language of the country or region where the sign language is used. The preferred name in Dutch (Vlaamse Gebarentaal) was endorsed in October 2000 by FEVLADO, the Deaf Association in Flanders (<http://www.fevlado.be/>).

- e) Name of ethnic group or description of people who use this language and approximate population of users, if in use today:

Flemish Deaf community, approximately 6000 signers. (Loots, G., Devisé, I., Lichtert, G., Hoebrechts, N., Van De Ginste, C., & De Bruyne, I. 2003. De gemeenschap van doven en slechthorenden in Vlaanderen. Communicatie, taal en verwachtingen omtrent maatschappelijke toegankelijkheid. Gent: Cultuur voor Doven.)

- f) Preferred three letter identifier, if available: vgt

Your suggestion will be taken into account, but the Registration Authority will determine the identifier to be proposed. Language identifiers are 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

(Select one. See explanations of these types at <http://www.sil.org/iso639%2D3/types.asp>)

- b) Countries where used:  
Belgium

- c) Region within each country: towns, districts, states or provinces where used:  
Flanders

- 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

## 3. MODALITY AND LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION

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

- b) Language family, if classified; origin, if artificially constructed:  
Deaf sign language (a provisional pseudo-family; genetic affiliations for signed languages have for the most part not been worked out)

- c) Closest language linguistically. For signed language, note influence from other signed or spoken languages:  
closest language: Langue des Signes de Belgique Francophone (LSFB), see its separate change request. Influence from spoken Dutch, particularly in mouthing.

## 4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

- a) What written literature, inscriptions or recordings exist in this language? Are there newspapers, radio or television broadcasts, etc.?:  
There is no written literature, however, there are some recordings, both on video (VHS) and CD-Rom. In 1996, there was a series of 26 short (15 min each) television programs on Flemish Sign Language and the Flemish Deaf Community. Almost all of these programs included a performance (poetry, song, story,...) in Flemish Sign Language. In 1997 the Vlaamse GebarentaalCentrum "published" a "signing book" consisting of 2 video-cassettes showing the grammar of VGT being explained in Flemish Sign Language. There are also some CD-Roms with poetry in VGT and at this moment there is a project (also from the Vlaams GebarentaalCentrum) producing DVD's with famous child literature narrated in VGT.

- 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?:  
 Formal recognition by the Flemish government was granted on 26 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>; the official version appears not to have been published yet.
- c) Comment on factors of ethnolinguistic identity and informal domains of use:  
 Distinction of VGT and LSBF is based primarily on distinct ethnolinguistic identities derived from the division of Belgium into two federal regions, which became official in 1993 but has its roots much earlier.

## 5. 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:  
 Prof. dr. Myriam Vermeerbergen and Prof. dr. Mieke Van Herreweghe have been involved in a number of research projects on VGT for the past 15 years. They have published (often together) on the linguistics and sociolinguistics of this sign language and on the language community.
- b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:  
 Both Mieke Van Herreweghe and Myriam Vermeerbergen work closely together with the Deaf community in Flanders.
- c) Knowledge from published sources. Include known dictionaries, grammars, etc. (please give complete bibliographical references):  
 Some of the major reference works for VGT are:  
 Demey, E. 2005. *Fonologie van de Vlaamse Gebarentaal: distinctiviteit en iconiciteit*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Ghent University  
 Van Herreweghe, M. (1995) *De Vlaams-Belgische Gebarentaal: een Eerste Verkenning*. Gent: Academia Press.  
 Van Herreweghe, A. (1996) *Prelinguaal Dove Jongeren en Nederlands: een Syntactisch Onderzoek*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Ghent University.  
 Van Herreweghe, M. & Vermeerbergen, M. (1998). *Thuishoren in een Wereld van Gebaren*. Gent: Academia Press.  
 Van Herreweghe, M. & Vermeerbergen, M. (2004). *30 Vragen over Gebarentaal in Vlaanderen en 29 Antwoorden*. Gent: Academia Press.  
 Vermeerbergen, M. (1996). *ROOD KOOL TIEN PERSOON IN*. *Morfo-syntactische Aspecten van Gebarentaal*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Vrije Universiteit Brussel.  
 Vermeerbergen, M. (1997). *Grammaticale Aspecten van de Vlaams-Belgische Gebarentaal*. Gentbrugge: Cultuur voor Doven.  
 Vermeerbergen, M. (ed). (1999). *Grammaticale Aspecten van de Vlaams-Belgische Gebarentaal-videoboek*. Affligem: Vlaams-Gebarentaalcentrum.  
 An electronic dictionary for VGT can be found on the web:<http://gebaren.ugent.be>

**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%2D3/default.asp>  
Email: [iso639-3@sil.org](mailto: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:**

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>