



## The internet threatened to speed up the death of endangered languages. Could it save them instead?

By James Griffiths, CNN Business

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**Pittsburgh (CNN Business)** — Noah Higgs hated learning Irish in school. He hated the way it was taught, overly formal and disconnected from ordinary people's lives. Most of all he hated the effect the lessons had on his fellow students' willingness to speak the language.

But the Dublin native never lost his love for Irish, nor his opinion that more people should be learning the language.

Today, almost 40% of the 7,000 languages spoken worldwide are endangered, according to the United Nations. [More are going extinct every year.](#)

It was once widely feared that the internet revolution would speed up this decline. If developers and smartphone manufacturers aren't willing to invest in supporting minority languages, that would cut off people who speak them from an important way to communicate and trap those languages in the past.

Higgs, 23, though, is one of a small cohort of educators and activists reinventing how minority languages are taught and preserved online by using cutting-edge technology.

When he was 17, Higgs "had this kind of crazy teenage idea." He had begun using Duolingo, a mobile language-learning app, to study French, and wondered if the creators had considered adding support for Irish.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/10/04/tech/duolingo-endangered-languages-intl-hnk/index.html>

## Saving endangered languages:

Users of its smartphone or web app are presented with short, five minute lessons in which they identify words, translate short sentences, or practice speaking and listening. Users earn points for passing lessons, and they can compete in daily and weekly leaderboards. New languages can be created at

<https://incubator.duolingo.com>