

Crowdsourcing Initiative Hopes to Prevent Language Extinction

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Video streaming website Viki has recently launched a new programme to help keep endangered languages from disappearing. By having their users translate the shows they stream, the company hopes to aid language preservation.

The [National Geographic Newswatch](#) draws our attention to a recent press release by Viki and the Living Tongues Institute, in which it reveals that subtitles for endangered languages are currently being crowdsourced.

According to the press release, less than 5% of all languages spoken in the world can be found online.

Moreover, for the other 95% the world wide web can both be a way to revitalise a language or kill it. Video streaming website Viki is going for the revitalisation option by asking its 33 million users to subtitle the videos they watch.

Dr. K. David Harrison, Ph.D., who is the and Director of Research for the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages and assistant Professor of Linguistics at Swarthmore College, states that languages cannot solely rely on technology to prevent extinction. People have to be proud of their languages, he says, and have to be willing to creatively expand its use, for example by the Viki initiative.

The Viki platform has been used by linguists, scholars and the like to create subtitles in endangered languages for quite some time. In fact, the press release on Newswatch reveals that the TV shows on the website have already been subtitled in 20 emerging and 29 endangered languages. This adds up to almost a quarter of all languages featured on the service! Viki CEO and co-founder Razmig Hovaghimian explains that in the last two years, many language preservation organisations have asked the company to add their language to their collection in order for young students to practice and learn the language. And Hovaghimian is happy to assist: “We want to help ensure that these languages are not forgotten or lost, but live on in a tradition that has carried them for generations—through storytelling.”

Want to know more about Viki’s Endangered and Emerling Languages Program? [Visit their website.](#)

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