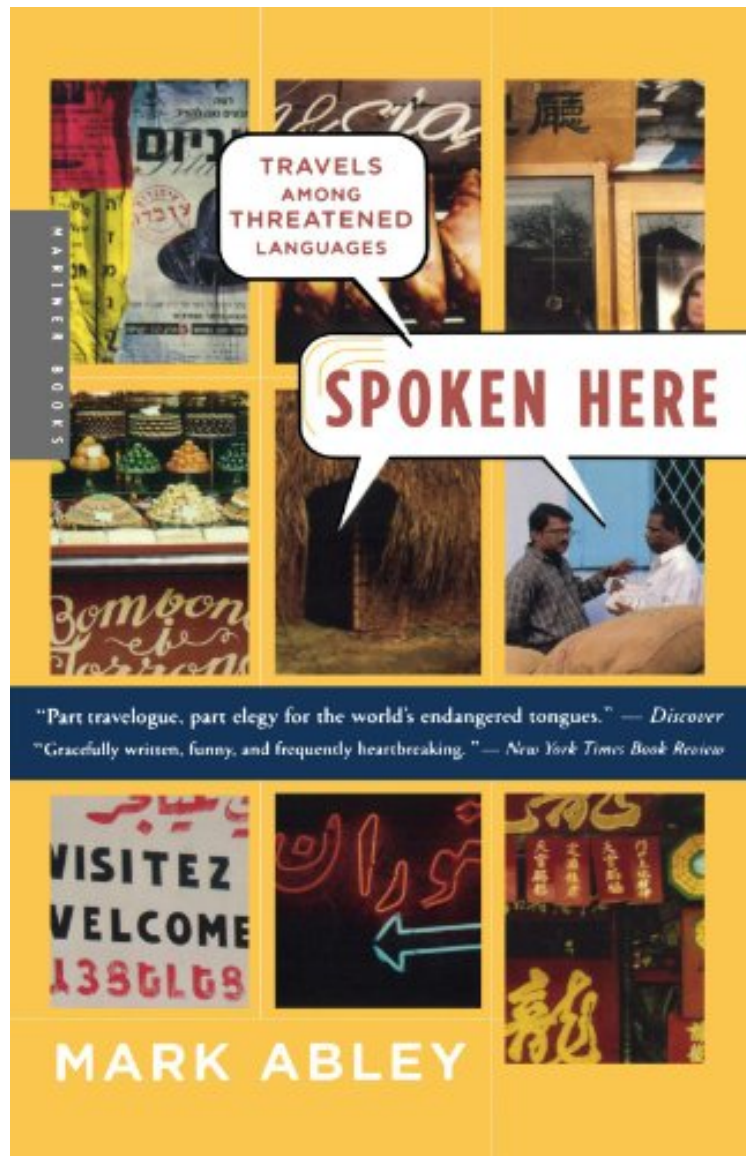


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Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages

Mark Abley

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Mark Abley : Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages:

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regarding the (mostly indigenous) languages whose very existence are at serious risk of extinction. How many have already disappeared since the book was first published is anyone's guess? It's sad that this is happening and it's important to be aware of this. I highly recommend this work. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An inexhaustible subject of tremendous importance By Dr.G. Of all of the many fine loss of language books that I have reviewed here--all great and nothing but praise--this book is at the top of my list. I think you may well come to the same conclusion. But remember, this is such an important and complex subject, that we really cannot have enough books written on it for it is an inexhaustible subject of tremendous importance. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great book. I highly recommend it to anyone with ... By Reuben Conluain A great book. I highly recommend it to anyone with a curiosity for languages or an interest in different ways of viewing our world. And very easy to read.

In *Spoken Here*, Mark Abley takes us on a world tour from the Arctic Circle to Oklahoma to Australia in a fervent quest to document some of the world's most endangered languages. His mission is urgent: Of the six thousand languages spoken in the world today, only six hundred may survive into the next century. Abley visits the exotic and frequently remote locales that are home to fading languages and constructs engaging and entertaining portraits of some of the last living speakers of these tongues. Throughout this exhilarating travelogue, he points out that the same forces that put biological species at risk -- development, globalization, loss of habitat -- are also threatening human languages, and with them, something very basic about their speakers' cultures.

From *Publishers Weekly* There are roughly 6,000 languages in use in the world today, most of them spoken by a tiny number of people--further proof of humanity's ability to generate intoxicating variety. Sadly, the processes of linguistic imperialism may still be as strong as they have ever been; expansion of the major world languages, particularly English, is, according to Abley, likely to bring about the elimination of most of these languages by century's end. Canadian journalist Abley shrewdly frontloads his book with some of the most exotic languages before moving on to better-known cases (which are also considerably less at risk) such as Provençal, Yiddish and Welsh. Readers who think they "get" how languages work may be startled by the considerable deviation from Western norms: for instance, Murrinh-Patha, spoken in Australia, boasts a bewilderingly complex system of pronouns; Mi'kmaq, from eastern Canada and Maine, and Boro, a northern Indian tongue, all but eschew nouns. To read these accounts of dwindling languages--and their often forlorn, marginalized speakers--is to gain insight into the powerful colonial forces still in play. Abley's informal approach makes this more a travel book than a language book; while describing the people and places in affecting detail, he sometimes stints in depicting the languages. Abley also sometimes conflates the extinction of a language with that of the people who speak it; however, his contention rings true that the disappearance of these languages represents "a loss beyond estimation." This generous, sorrow-tinged book is an informative and eloquent reminder of a richness that may not exist much longer. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *The New Yorker* Of the six thousand or so languages that exist today, more than ninety per cent are endangered. Abley has travelled as far afield as arctic Canada and the Timor Sea documenting the survival strategies or last gasps of some of these languages. The state of Israel resurrected Hebrew, albeit at the expense of Yiddish and Ladino. Faroese, a descendant of Old Norse, is a source of pride to the inhabitants of the Faeroe Islands, but the young "see Faroese as embodying the past, Danish the present, and English the future." English, the language of the marketplace, is spoken by more people than any other language in history, and Abley seems resigned to the judgment of Li Yang, who claims "to have taught English to more than twenty million Chinese": "Chinese people don't learn English because they love it, but because Coca-Cola and Microsoft rule the world." Copyright 2005 The New Yorker From *Booklist* Just as biologists work hard to raise awareness of the drastic consequences of the loss of biodiversity, linguists and ethnographers, most notably Wade Davis, are calling attention to the endangered status of hundreds of languages. Canadian journalist Abley presents a lively, well-informed, and truly illuminating discussion of why languages, each "a full and rich expression of a way of life, a culture, an identity," matter, and how their demise diminishes the sum of human intelligence, the web of culture Wade Davis calls the ethnosphere. Abley reports on a fascinating array of threatened languages, marveling at their syntactical complexities, nuanced vocabularies, and crystallizations of perceptions of reality radically different from those of English speakers. From his explications of the vulnerability of Yuchi in Oklahoma, Manx on the Isle of Man, Boro in northeastern India, Provençal in France, and Yiddish (here Abley's otherwise casual expertise and enlivening exuberance turn distressingly patronizing), Abley both catalogs an urgent state of affairs and celebrates the glory and diversity of language, humanity's "first great achievement." Donna Seaman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved