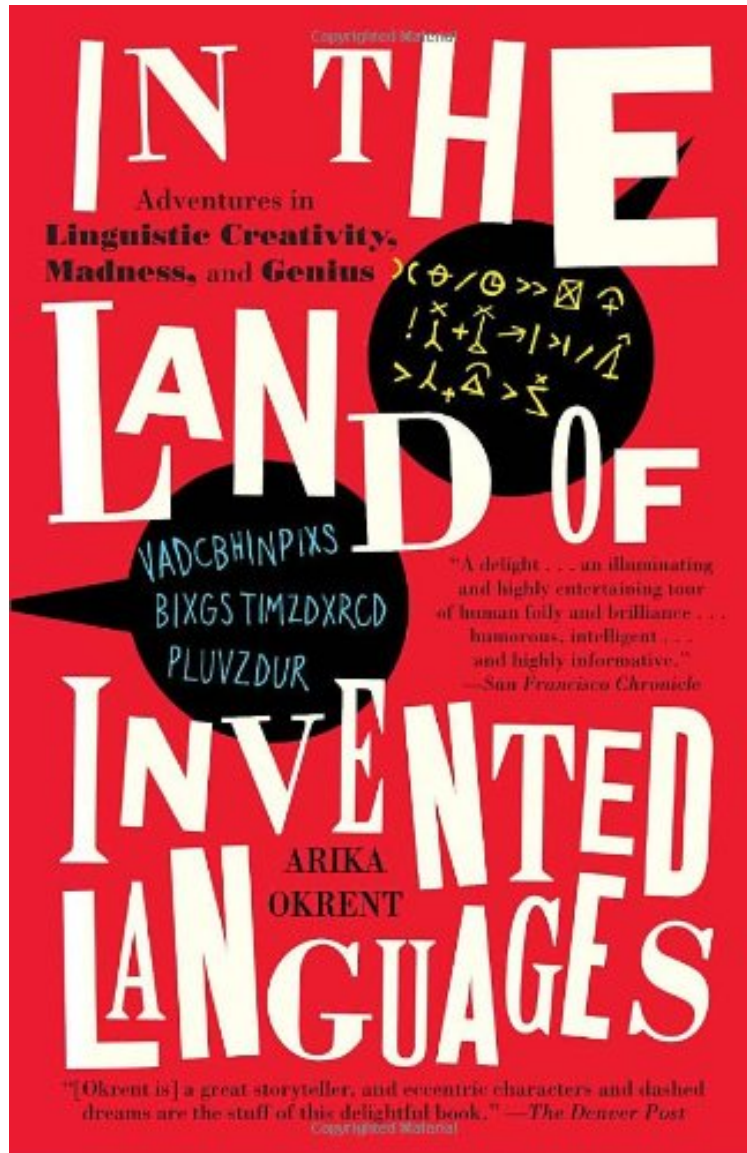


In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius

Arika Okrent

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Arika Okrent : In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating read for any lover of languageBy Seor KhuiThis is,

without a doubt, the most fascinating book I've ever read about invented languages. To be honest, it's the only book I've ever read about invented languages. But that doesn't detract from the book's power. If you're like me and you're fascinated by human languages, don't miss the chance to read this book. If you speak multiple languages, but have never learned a made-up language, you'll be absolutely enthralled by it. The efforts by humans to create "the perfect language" and to overcome the shortfalls and vices of natural human languages prove to be forever quixotic. As the author discovers, the "flaws" and irregularities in human language actually make them more, rather than less, functional. It's also interesting to see how relative the idea of "the perfect language" has been throughout human history. Can you create an ideal language by inventing a precise classification for everything on earth? By basing it on mathematics? By creating symbols that perfectly represent abstract ideas? Can a language like Esperanto be perfect, even if it is very male-centric? Okrent delivers a very readable, entertaining venture into the world of "con langs." You won't be disappointed. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fun for even the least linguistic Customer "A zippy trip through the history of man's attempts to overcome the curse of Babel." Esperanto is the most commonly spoken artificial language and it is even sung at Esperanto congresses. There were many other artificial languages developed at the turn of the century (some quite bizarre) but the effort fell out of vogue with the intellectuals when English became the dominant international language with the solidification of the British Empire. A snippet tells of the survival of Simplified English in some foreign broadcasts (limited words and no passive voice). The book gains feeling during the sometimes blissful history of Semantography despite Karl Bliss' grumpy disappointment with the successful use of his symbols (referred to as Blissymbolics) to teach children afflicted with cerebral palsy (as opposed to use as an ideographic universal language transcending words). Loglan ends in a split with the birth of its "illegitimate" (according to Brown) child language of Lojban which survives trademark legal battles between Loglan's Brown and Lojban's Bob and Nora LeChevalier (Brown's ex-wife married Bob in a Lojban ceremony). Brown also invented a board game "Careers" (marketed by Parker Brothers) where winning is based on reaching monetary, fame and happiness point goals. Loglan was supposed to be based on logic to test the Whorfian premise that language limits thinking, so shouldn't Star Trek switch character names between Spock and Whorf? Klingon is the only invented language to retain trademark status (mainly because no one wants to fight the Paramount lawyers). Laadan has words that sound like proper nouns in P. C. Hodgell's Kencyrath series (like rathom and ramimeth). Tolkien developed several languages with proto-language history as the defining quality of his fantasy races in his latter Lord of the Rings. The appendix lists 500 invented languages which is indicative of the lure of linguistics and the imagination. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great title, but doesn't reflect the book. By Robin Helweg Larsen The first and last chapters are not that bad, but too much of the middle is boringly detailed biography of people, only peripherally dealing with invented languages. Great title, but doesn't reflect the book.

Here is the captivating story of humankind's enduring quest to build a better language and overcome the curse of Babel. Just about everyone has heard of Esperanto, which was nothing less than one man's attempt to bring about world peace by means of linguistic solidarity. And every Star Trek fan knows about Klingon. But few people have heard of Babm, Blissymbolics, Loglan (not to be confused with Lojban), and the nearly nine hundred other invented languages that represent the hard work, high hopes, and full-blown delusions of so many misguided souls over the centuries. With intelligence and humor, Arika Okrent has written a truly original and enlightening book for all word freaks, grammar geeks, and plain old language lovers.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Efforts to make language simpler, clearer, less divisive and more truthful have backfired spectacularly, to judge by this delightful tour of linguistic hubris. Linguist Okrent explores some of the themes and shortcomings of 900 years worth of artificial languages. She surveys philosophical languages that order all knowledge into self-evident systems that turn out to be bizarrely idiosyncratic; symbol languages of supposedly crystalline pictographs that are actually bafflingly opaque; basic languages that throw out all the fancy words and complicated idioms; rigorously logical languages so rule-bound that it's impossible to utter a correct sentence; international languages, like Esperanto, that unite different cultures into a single idealistic counterculture; and whimsical constructed languages that assert the unique culture and worldview of women, Klingons or chipmunks. Okrent gamely translates to and from these languages, with unspeakably hilarious results, and riffs on the colorful eccentricities of their megalomaniacal creators. Fortunately, her own prose is a model of clarity and grace; through it, she conveys fascinating insights into why natural language, with its corruptions, ambiguities and arbitrary conventions, trips so fluently off our tongues. (May 19) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Hats off to Okrent, who expertly exposes the history, culture, and preoccupations of this insular tribe who live among us. She rescues language inventors, or conlangers, from the oddball binutopianists all, they're the first biotechnologists, trying to leapfrog evolution and improve human life. They'll thank her but everyone else will, too, for finally making sense of the conlangers' discontents. Michael Erard, author of *Um: Slips, Stumbles, and Verbal Blunders, and What They Mean* A lively, informative, insightful examination of artificial

languages who invents them, why, and why most of them fail. I loved this book. Will Shortz, Crossword Editor, New York Times

Linguist Okrent explores some of the themes and shortcomings of 900 years worth of artificial languages. Okrent gamely translates these languages with unspeakably hilarious results, and riffs on the colorful eccentricities of their megalomaniacal creators. Fortunately, her own prose is a model of clarity and grace; through it, she conveys fascinating insights into why natural language, with its corruptions, ambiguities and arbitrary conventions, trips so fluently off our tongues. Publishers Weekly, starred review "Arika Okrent is a linguist whose fascination with the "faded plastic flowers" in the "lush orchid garden of languages" is recounted to delightful, often comic effect in "In the Land of Invented Languages." ...Okrent's style is eminently suited to her approach, which is at once serious and playful, exemplified by her marvelous, snappy opening sentence: "Klingon speakers ... inhabit the lowest possible rung on the geek ladder." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette "The author...examines a variety of would-be languages and related philosophical tenets (there are no pure ideas, all signs depend on conventions) in a rigorously linguistic way. And yet her book is a pleasure to read. It shows how language systems connect, or don't connect, with people." New York Times "Anyone who has felt the lure of words, odd grammatical systems or the potential connections between human thought and speech, is likely to enjoy this book just as much as I did." Locus "In the Land of Invented Languages is a delight to read. It's humorous, intelligent, entertaining and highly informative. And it's a great source of knowledge about human languages and why they exasperate some people - because they are not perfect. But neither are we." San Francisco Chronicle "Okrent is a professional linguist and relates the place of these artificial languages in the confusion of human languages. She is also a great storyteller, and eccentric characters and dashed dreams are the stuff of this delightful book." Denver Post

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author Arika Okrent received a joint Ph.D. in the Department of Linguistics and the Department of Psychology's Cognition and Cognitive Neuroscience Program at the University of Chicago. She has also earned her first-level certification in Klingon. She lives in Philadelphia.

From the Hardcover edition.