


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


By Arika Okrent



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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.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. 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*)

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Review

"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 bin—utopianists 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 linguistical 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.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

George Gomez:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be up-date about what going on or information even knowledge to make them keep up with the era and that is always change and make progress. Some of you maybe can update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know which you should start with. This *In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius* is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Linda Pinkerton:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try and and must have the spare time or they will get lots of stress from both everyday life and work. So , if we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity are there when the spare time coming to you of course your answer will unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, the actual book you have read will be *In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius*.

Beverly Barber:

What is your hobby? Have you heard this question when you got students? We believe that that issue was given by teacher to the students. Many kinds of hobby, Every person has different hobby. And you know that little person including reading or as looking at become their hobby. You should know that reading is very

important in addition to book as to be the issue. Book is important thing to increase you knowledge, except your current teacher or lecturer. You will find good news or update regarding something by book. A substantial number of sorts of books that can you decide to try be your object. One of them is this In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius.

David Murray:

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