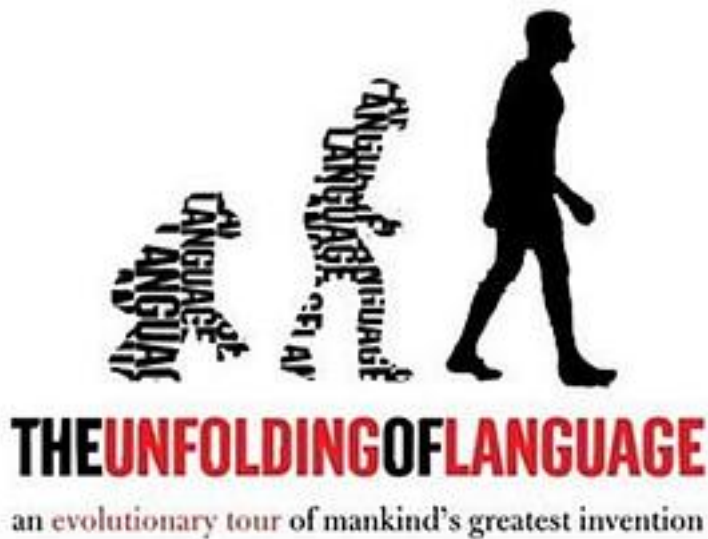# The Unfolding of Language

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Blending the spirit of Bill Bryson's Mother Tongue with the science of Steven Pinker's The Language Instinct, The Unfolding of Language is a remarkably original inquiry into the development of that most essential — and mysterious — of human creations: language.

'Language is mankind's greatest invention — except of course, that it was never invented.' So begins this enthralling investigation into the evolution of language. Given that no-one sits down to design languages, how did there come to be so many, and of such elaborate design? If we started off with rudimentary utterances on the level of 'man throw spear', how did we end up with sophisticated grammars, enormous vocabularies, and intricately nuanced shades of meaning?

Drawing on recent, groundbreaking discoveries in modern linguistics, Deutscher exposes the elusive forces of creation at work in human communication, giving us fresh insight into how language is formed, evolves, and decays. He traces the emergence of linguistic complexity from an early evolutionary 'Me Tarzan' stage to the astonishing power of languages today, with their capacity to express even the subtlest thoughts and ideas. From the written records of lost civilizations to the spoken idiom of today's streets, we move from ancient Babylonian through medieval French to the English of the present. We marvel at the staggering triumph of design that is the Semitic verb, puzzle over single words that can express highly elaborate sentiments, and learn how great changes of pronunciation may result from simple laziness. Through the dramatic story of The Unfolding of Language, we discover the genius behind a uniquely human faculty.

From the Hardcover edition.

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