ForeWord Reviews
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LANGUAGE ARTS

Luif: A New Language
Tan Kheng Yeang
Trafford
978-1-4269-5511-2
Three Stars (out of Five)

"We need a universal language … A universal language cannot be made by spreading one of the current languages … It can properly be established with only a new language, unconnected with any particular nation."

Tan Kheng Yeang has endeavored to take on the monumentous task of creating that new language in his current book, *Luif: A New Language*. He is the author of twelve books, including *Dark Days: Reminiscences of the War in Hong Kong* and *Life in China 1941-1945*. He studied civil engineering at the Universtiy of Hong Kong and worked as an engineer for most of his career before focusing on his writing.

This book contains four parts to help readers acquire the language: formation and rules, classified dictionary, alphabetical dictionary, and specimen pieces. The section on formation and rules is filled with characters, word classifications, vocabulary, and composition. This information is a bit overwhelming as it introduces new alphabet and number symbols, rules for forming words, and how to compose in the new language. The dictionaries list words and their English equivalents and make for a good reference. The specimen pieces are examples of a dialogue, an essay, and a poem written in both English and Luif.

Luif is a language that sets out to be simple to learn and that takes no pieces from other languages. Yeang created a new character system for both letters and numbers. The symbols are meant to be simplistic and easy to use, yet the similarity of the shapes and sizes of the symbols would make it easy for differences in handwriting to lead to confusion. For example, the "o," "e," and "m" are all the same shape (like an x with a line connecting the bottom together) but the angle and size of the lines vary only slightly. Other letters also share similar shapes. This could lead to problems when the symbols are written by hand and don't vary much from one another.

Despite the confusing symbols, this book is very well written. Yeang has a conversational style that makes for an easy read, even when the subject matter itself isn't as easy

to grasp as the author attempts to make it. The viability of a new universal language is not very likely, and Yeang's Luif isn't as simple and user friendly as his book purports it to be. That said, people who enjoy language arts and linguistics may enjoy reading this book.

Laura Munion