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Language instinct - Steven Pinker. This book is about acquiring language and a few other things and it's really interesting to read and well written. (and, moreover, written by a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Languages of the world - Kenneth Katzner. I think I've flipped my own worn-out copy of this hundreds of times. The book has three parts, one that categorizes all the main languages and is somewhat insignificant (although I'm not sure how much it's up to the date it is), one that gives brief descriptions and written samples of several dozen languages (this is the most interesting part), and a third list of languages spoken in each country (some of them can be surprising). The Origin of Language - Merritt Rulen This is a very interesting introduction to the methods of historical linguistics, as well as an excellent defense and description of the controversial theory of the origin of the language of the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language - David Crystal This book covers more aspects of language and linguistics than any other book I have seen. World Language Guide - By Merritt Rulen This book is an in-depth look at the classification of the world's languages, and includes an interesting story about the classification of different languages. Writing Systems of the World - Akira Nakanishi is a fascinating look at the many writing systems used around the world, with plenty of information about all the major ones. On the origin of languages - Merritt Rulen Another book about the origin of language (as the title says), this time with a large and large number of lists of words. A bit technical at times, but word lists are pretty fascinating for those interested in the language. If you want to decide what to read in language and linguistics, it's never easy to choose a reading list; there are only so many books out there under the linguistics label, especially that publications in linguistics have grown like wild fire in the last couple of decades. So with limited time and an unlimited number of books, it is always wise to do some research in advance about exactly what you want to read. There is a lot to choose from, and the best book will depend on what you are specifically interested in. Here are some places to start: -- 1. Language Instinct by Steven Pinker is a book for readers of general science, it is very accessible whether you have experience in linguistics or not. It is regarded by many as a milestone in linguistics. This is a great introduction and primer to some of the most basic problems and issues in linguistics. It's entertaining, sarcasm-loaded, and the man so anti-prescribeive! Here are some quotes to tease your appetite: People are so innately wired for language that can no longer suppress their ability to learn and use language than they can suppress instinct to pull their hand back off the hot surface. Language is obviously just as different from other animal communication systems as the elephant trunk differs from the nostrils of other animals. We can shape events in each other's heads with exquisite precision. If you want to give a book a read, find it in the link.-- 2. Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things by George Lakoff This book is a great and accessible primer for cognitive linguistics, and can be seen as an alternative way of doing research in the language. It explores the impact of cognitive metaphors, both universal and culturally specific, on the grammar of multiple languages, and deepens to explore how we classify things in our minds. I think the general audience find this book more interesting because it's a little more fantastic in its approach and the ideas presented in it. The symbolic views of Terry Deacon for those intrigued by the question of language evolution, this is the book for you. It covers the evolution of language in a more comprehensive way than any other book written on the subject. As it progresses, it gets a bit technical, both in terms of discussion of evolution and in terms of discussion of the concept of the character, but the deacon's work is surprisingly comprehensive, and I think it deserves to be put aside next to Pinker and Lakoff. The link to get this book is here. 4. What language John McWhorter Well written, with lots of interesting pop-tidbits about the language, this book offers a fascinating new look at how people communicate. From disappearing languages spoken by several hundred people to mainstream languages such as Chinese, with abundant revelations about the nature of English. You don't need to be a linguist or even a student in linguistics to get cozy with this book, all you have to do is incorporate your passion for language and enjoy what's between covers. Find the book. 5. In the language: Language and responsibility and reflections on the language of Noam Chomsky It is very difficult to choose which book Chomsky to offer for a beginner, because his things are dense and technical. But then again, if you haven't read Homsky, you haven't read linguistics. I chose this volume because it has political things mixed that could make it easier to read, and some are done in interview style as well as making it easier to digest. If you are ambitious and highly tolerant of technical details, go to his early works as Syntax structures. The language is one of the most informal and accessible works of Homsky to date, making it an ideal introduction to his thoughts. Get this book These Wars Randy Allen Harris If you are on the verge of linguistics graduate school, this book gives a great behind-the-scenes look at how linguistics is done, and some personality of the original generative generation of grammar. Sound is a hard currency; meaning a network of cultural and formal conventions that turns it into a stick of gum in a candy store. Noam Chomsky, in particular, speaks categorically and often that he cares very little about the language itself; never was, never will be. His concern is driving with a mental structure, and language is the most revealing tool he has to get to mind. Most linguists these days follow the example of Homsky here. The reference to the book is here. David Crystal David Crystal has a number of textbook-style introductions in linguistics that are great for use in 101st grade. His most notable introductory book remains the Cambridge Encyclopedia of English because it is very accessible and has a lot of great information throughout. I advise everyone who is interested in linguistics to read in this encyclopedia. If you want a link to the encyclopedia, find it here.-- 8. Away from Madding Gerund and other dispatchers from Language Magazine This book is a great option if you like more blog-y style writing. It's a collection of some posts from language magazine, so it's not comprehensive and doesn't actually have a narrative arc, but it's got a lot of great short pieces, like the blog itself, which is good for bookmarking or RSS. The reference to the book is here. Feel free to add your suggestions in the comments section. Don't forget to share these books with other people who might want to read them. -- Looking for a pop linguistics book or linguistics-related fiction to read, find in the library, ask as a gift, or give a nerd language in your life? Here's an extensive list of books you might be interested in. New non-fiction books! The last general books are Old Common Books Most of them I read in the late 1990s and early 2000s so I can vouch for them interesting enough when I read them so that they stuck in my head many years later, but I haven't reread them since and can't vouch for how they'd stack up on re-reading. Just so you know. Specific Topics Beginner friendly textbooks Component but more friendly than actual textbooks: Actual textbooks are still on the introductory level: LingFicFiction, which contains a significant linguistic element, enjoyable for practicing linguists and language lovers: Is anyone else pop-linguistics books (or #lingfic) to recommend, or reviews link? I'll try to keep this list updated as I hear and review other books, old and new, so make sure to check out the original post and my book tags if you view it as a reblog. some great additions in the extensive Stan Carey and Superlinguo. 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