

Books to make you smarter (and a better linguist)

Science fiction with a linguistic element (not just a constructed language)

Lots of sci-fi authors have used language as a premise in their books:

- *Embassytown* by China Mieville (featuring a really, really weird alien race can only communicate literally)
- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell ('Newspeak' used to control the people)
- *The Inheritors* by William Golding (hard to describe without spoilers)
- *The Languages of Pao* by Jack Vance (Strong Sapir-Whorf hypothesis regarding creating 'peaceful' languages)

There are lots more recommended in various lists online. These two are most commonly cited:

- Suzette Hayden Elgin's '*Native tongue*' series
- *The Dispossessed* by Ursula K Le Guin (plus others of hers)

Books about linguistics for a popular audience

These books have been written for intelligent non-specialists, so they assume no background knowledge. There are lots more of these too – these ones are all ones we have read and enjoyed.

- *Because Internet* by Gretchen McCulloch (a thorough, fun, cutting-edge look at online language)
- *A mouthful of air* by Anthony Burgess (beautifully written)
- *Through the language glass* by Guy Deutscher (language as a window to thought)
- *The unfolding of language* by Guy Deutscher (the history of human language)
- *The atoms of language* by Mark Baker (more technical but inspiring, a 'periodic table' of languages)
- *Mouse or rat* by Umberto Eco (translation and linguistic/cultural differences)
- *Language myths* by Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill (dispelling some common misconceptions)
- *The symbolic species* by Terrence Deacon (how and why human language might have evolved)
- *The adventure of English* by Melvyn Bragg (history of English)
- *The great Eskimo vocabulary hoax* by Geoffrey K. Pullum (a collection of columns on language)
- About 50 gazillion books by David Crystal and Bill Bryson (all v readable, but less 'linguistic')

You could do a lot worse than read *Eats, shoots and leaves* by Lynne Truss – it's about punctuation rather than language per se, but she is spot on with her usage guidance (though fussy).

There are lots of blogs about language as well. Some good ones plus a shameless plug for [Linguistlaura](#), by our very own Dr Laura Bailey:

[Language log](#) (technical sometimes but worth dipping into)

[Sentence first](#) (reflections on all aspects of language)

[Separated by a common language](#) (UK vs US English)

[Language hat](#) (general linguistic stuff)

[Allthingslinguistic](#) (aimed at a really non-specialist audience and resources for beginning students)

And if you search the tag #linguistics or #tumblinguists on tumblr you'll find plenty more reading material.

You should absolutely subscribe to podcasts on language! Lingthusiasm and Vocal Fries are two good ones to get started with.

Finally, there is a magazine called *Babel*, which publishes articles about linguistics for a popular readership – borrow a copy or consider subscribing.

Happy reading!