Frequently Asked Questions About Lojban

What is Lojban?

Lojban (/LOZH-bahn/) is a constructed language. Originally called 'Loglan' by project founder Dr. James Cooke Brown, who started the language development in 1955, the goals for the language were first described in the article Loglan in Scientific American, June 1960. Made well-known by that article and by occasional references in science fiction and computer publications, Loglan/Lojban has been built over four decades by dozens of workers and hundreds of supporters, led since 1987 by The Logical Language Group.

There are many artificial languages, but Loglan/Lojban has been engineered to make it unique in several ways. The following are the main features of Lojban:

- Lojban is designed to be used by people in communication with each other, and possibly in the future with computers.
- Lojban is designed to be culturally neutral.
- Lojban grammar is based on the principles of logic.
- Lojban has an unambiguous grammar.
- Lojban has phonetic spelling, and sounds can be divided into words in only one way.
- Lojban is simple compared to natural languages; it is easy to learn.
- Lojban's 1350 root words can be easily combined to form a vocabulary of millions of words.
- Lojban is regular; the rules of the language don't have exceptions.
- Lojban attempts to remove restrictions on creative and clear thought and communication.
- Lojban has a variety of uses, ranging from creative to scientific, from theoretical to practical.

The following sections examine each of these points, while answering the questions most often asked about Lojban.

Why was Lojban developed?

Lojban was originally designed to support research on a concept known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Simply expressed, this hypothesis states that the structure of a language constrains the thinking of people using that language. Lojban allows the full expressive capability of a natural language, but differs in structure from other languages in major ways. This allows it to be used as a test vehicle for scientists studying the relationships between language, thought, and culture. If you are reading this as part of the introductory booklet, further discussion of these issues can be found in the section Technical Descriptions.

Are there other uses for Lojban?

Yes, several. Due to its unambiguous grammar and simple structure, it also can be easily parsed (broken down for analysis) by computers, making it possible for Lojban to be used in the future for computer-human interaction, and perhaps conversation. Lojban's structure is similar to existing artificial intelligence (AI)

programming languages, and it may become be a most powerful adjunct to AI research, especially in the storing and processing of data about the world and people's conceptions of it. There are also linguists interested in Lojban's potential as an intermediate language in computer-aided translation of natural languages; and Lojban is of interest as a potential stepping-stone for students learning other languages. Because Lojban was designed to be culturally neutral, and has a powerful vocabulary easily learned by people of different language origins, some are interested in Lojban's potential as an international language. These are only the beginnings of the Lojban applications that will be developed in the future.

Is Lojban a computer language?

Lojban was designed as a human language, and not as a computer language. It is therefore intended for use in conversation, reading, writing, and thinking. However, since Lojban can be processed by a computer much more easily than can a natural language, it is only a matter of time before Lojban-based computer applications are developed. Learning and using Lojban doesn't require you to know anything about computers or to talk like one.

How is Lojban written? How does it sound?

Lojban uses letters of the Roman alphabet to represent its 6 vowels and 17 consonants. The Lojban character set uses only standard typewriter/computer keyboard keys; capitalization is used rarely, and only to indicate unusual stress in the pronunciation of names. Punctuation is spoken as words. The written language corresponds exactly to the sounds of the spoken language; spelling is phonetic and unambiguous, and the flowing sounds of the language break down into words in only one possible way. These features make computer speech recognition and transcription more practical. Learning to pronounce and spell Lojban is trivial.

Lojban has a smooth, rhythmic sound, somewhat like Italian. However, its consonants create a fullness and power found in Slavic languages like Russian, and the large number of vowel pairs impart a hint of Chinese, Polynesian, and other Oriental languages, though without the tones that make many of those languages difficult for others to learn.

Because there are no idioms to shorten expressions, a Lojban text can be longer than the corresponding colloquial English text. The unambiguous linguistic structures that result are a major benefit that makes this worthwhile; and Lojban has constructions of its own that are rather more succinct than their equivalents in English (such as logic-specific formulations, and expressions of attitude.) Moreover, much of the disambiguating machinery of Lojban is optional; you use them only when you need to use them.

As an example of Lojban, Occam's Razor ("The simplest explanation is usually the best") may be translated as:

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roda poi velcki cu so'eroi
    ke ganai saprai gi xagrai
/row-dah poy VELSH-kee shoo so-heh-roy
    keh GAH-nye SAHP-rye ghee KHAH-grye/
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All somethings which-are explanations mostly-are
    (if superlatively-simple then superlatively-good).
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The apostrophe is pronounced like a short, breathy 'h', and is used to clearly separate the two adjacent vowels for a listener, without requiring a pause between them.

(If you are reading this text in the What is Lojban? booklet, a full pronunciation key is available in the Overview of Lojban Grammar.)

What kind of grammar does Lojban have?

'Grammar' is a word with painful memories for many of us. But though Lojban grammar seems strange at first sight, it is actually quite simple. It is based on a system called predicate logic, which states that in any sentence you have a relationship (selbri in Lojban) between one or more arguments (sumti). An argument can be a thing, event, quality or just about anything. To give an example, the English sentence

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Chris adores Pat
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has a relation adore, between two arguments, Chris and Pat. In Lojban this would be

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la kris. prami la pat.
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or, if you prefer,

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la kris. la pat. prami
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(The full stops mean that you have to pause slightly to separate the words — anythingelseinLojbancanberuntogetherwithoutbeingmisunderstood).

You might be thinking "Well in that case a relationship is a verb and an argument is a noun, so why bother with special terminology like selbri and whatnot?" However, in Lojban Chris's feelings about Pat might be described like this:

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la pat. melbi
Pat is beautiful.
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In English you have a verb ('doing word'), is, and an adjective ('describing word'), beautiful. In Turkish, you would say Pat güzel, which is a noun and an adjective, with no verb required. In Chinese you would use meili, a 'stative verb' — but enough! In Lojban you don't need all these language-specific notions.

Now, if there are no nouns, verbs, subjects or objects in Lojban, how do we know that la kris. la pat. prami means that Chris adores Pat and not the other way? Different languages handle this problem differently. In English it is done with word order, and when that isn't enough, with prepositions (words like at, from, to, with and so on). In other languages, like Latin or Turkish, it's done by changing the form of the words, e.g. Pat'i Chris sever in Turkish means "Chris loves Pat", not "Pat loves Chris."

In Lojban, the order in which arguments appear is built in to the meaning of the word. For example, the word dunda means give, but its full meaning is:

$$x_1 \texttt{ gives } x_2 \texttt{ to } x_3$$

So mi pu dunda le cukta le ninmu means "I gave the book to the woman", not "I gave the woman to the book").

The important point is that Lojban has a lot of what we would call 'grammar', but nearly all of this is contained in the cmavo (structure words), and you can use as many or as few of them as you want.

What else is distinctive about Lojban grammar?

In Lojban, it is equally easy to speak of something as being an action as it is to speak of it as being a state of existence. The distinction between the two can be ignored, or can be explicitly expressed in a variety of ways:

- by associating concepts in tanru metaphors (combinations of selbri into single expressions giving novel meanings), involving words like gasnu ('do'), zasti ('exist'), zukte ('act with purpose');

- with a variety of 'operators' (cmavo) dealing with abstractions such as events, states, properties, amounts, ideas, experience, and truth;

- or with four pre-defined varieties of causality (others can be developed through tanru metaphor).

A major benefit of using a predicate grammar is that Lojban doesn't have inflections and declensions on nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Most natural languages have evolved such variations to reduce ambiguity as to how words are related in a sentence. Language change has made these inflections and declensions highly irregular and thus difficult to learn. Lojban uses the simple but flexible predicate relationship to erase both the irregularity and the declensions.

Tense and location markers (inflections), adverbs, and prepositions are combined into one part of speech. New preposition-like forms can be built at will from predicates; these allow the user to expand upon a sentence by attaching and relating arguments not normally included in the meaning of a word.

Numbers and quantifiers are conceptually expanded from natural languages. Many, enough, too much, a few, and at least are among concepts that are expressed as numbers in Lojban. Thus "it costs $3.95" and "it costs too much" are grammatically identical, and one can talk of being "enough-th in line" for tickets to a sellout movie. Core concepts of logic, mathematics, and science are built into the root vocabulary. They enhance discussion of those topics, and are surprisingly useful in ordinary speech, too.

Predicate logic can express a wide variety of human thought; Lojban also has non-logical constructs that do not affect or obscure the logical structure, allowing communications that are not amenable to logical analysis. For example, Lojban has a full set of emotional indicators, which are similar to such interjections in English as Oh!, Aha!, and Wheee!, but each has a specific meaning. Similarly, Lojban has indicators of the speaker's relationship to what is said (whether it is hearsay, direct observation, logical deduction, etc.) similar to those found in some Native American languages.

Lojban supports metalinguistic discussion about the sentences being spoken while remaining unambiguous. Lojban also supports a variety of 'tense' logic that allows one to be extremely specific about time and space (and space-time) relationships. A substantial portion of Lojban's grammar is designed to support unambiguous statement of mathematical expressions and relations in a manner compatible both with international usage and the rest of Lojban's grammar.

Lojban 'parts of speech' are convertible from one to another by using short structure words (called cmavo). One can make numbers serve as nouns or verbs, or invent new numbers and prepositions. Lojban removes many of the constraints on human thought, while preserving tight control on structural syntax.

Lojban seems complex. How hard is it to learn?

Lojban is actually much simpler than natural languages. It is only slightly more complex in its grammar than the current generation of computer languages (such as C++ and Perl). Lojban seems complex only because the varieties of human thought are complex, and Lojban is designed to minimize constraints on those thoughts. Lojban text can appear longer and more complex due to its lack of idiom, its complete explicitness of logical structure, and most importantly, its unfamiliarity. On the other hand, conversational speech uses less than half of the possible grammatical structures, leaving the rest for writing and for other circumstances when one is likely to take time to carefully formulate exact logical phrasings.

Lojban's pronunciation, spelling, word formation, and grammar rules are fixed, and the language is free of exceptions to these rules. Such exceptions are the bane of learning to speak a natural language correctly. Without the burden of ambiguity, Lojban users can be precise and specific more easily than in other languages.

Because Lojban's grammar is simple, it is easier to learn than other languages. Using flashcard-like techniques, a working vocabulary including the complete set of 1350 root words can take 8-12 weeks of study at 1 hour per day. It is by no means uncommon for people who embark on learning Lojban to be able to write grammatical Lojban within a few days, and to hold at least a limited conversation within a few weeks. Natural languages, especially English, take several years to learn to a comparable level of skill.

The available Lojban teaching materials are so structured that you can learn the language without classroom instruction or a close community of speakers. Communication practice with others is needed to achieve fluency, but you can start using the language as you achieve proficiency.

What do you mean by 'unambiguous'?

Lojban has an unambiguous grammar (proven by computer analysis of a formal grammar), pronunciation, and morphology (word forms). In practice this means that the person who reads or hears a Lojban sentence is never in doubt as to what words it contains or what roles they play in the sentence. This is true even if the words are unfamiliar, so long as the spelling and grammar rules are known. Lojban has no words that sound alike but have different meanings (like herd and heard), that have multiple unrelated meanings (set), or that differ only in punctuation but not in sound (like the abominable its and it's). There is never any doubt about where words begin and end (if you hear cargo ship, do you hear two words or three?) Most important, the function of each word is inescapably clear; there is nothing like the English sentence Time flies like an arrow, in which any of the first three words could be the verb.

Lojban is not entirely unambiguous, of course; human beings occasionally desire to be ambiguous in their expressions. In Lojban, this ambiguity is limited to semantics, tanru metaphor, and intentional omission of information (ellipsis).

Semantic ambiguity results because words in natural languages represent families of concepts rather than individual meanings. These meanings often have only weak semantic relationships to each other (the English word run is a good example.) In addition, each individual's personal experiences provide emotional connotations to words. By providing a fresh, culturally-neutral start, Lojban attempts to minimize the transference of these associations as people learn the language. Most Lojban words do not much resemble corresponding words in other languages; the differences aid in making this fresh start possible.

Lojban's powerful tanru (combinations of selbri into novel concepts) and word-building features make it easy to make fine distinctions between concepts. This discourages the tendency for individual words to acquire families of meanings. Lojban's tanru metaphors are themselves ambiguous; they specify a relationship between concepts, but not what the relationship is. That relationship can be made explicit using unambiguous logical constructs if necessary, or can be left vague, as the speaker typically desires. Similarly, portions of the logical structure of a Lojban expression can be omitted, greatly simplifying the expression while causing some ambiguity. Unlike in the natural languages, though, this ambiguity is readily identified by a reader or listener. Thus all ambiguity in Lojban is constrained and recognizable, and can be clarified as necessary by further interaction.

This precision in no way confines the meaning of a Lojban sentence. It is possible to be fanciful or ridiculous, to tell lies, or to be misunderstood. You can be very specific, or you can be intentionally vague. Your hearer may not understand what you meant, but will always understand what you said.

Can you make jokes in an unambiguous language?

Most humor arises from situation and character and is as funny in Lojban as in any language. Humor based on word play, of course, is language-dependent. Lojban has no homonyms, and hence no simple puns; puns derived from similar sounds are still possible, and have in fact been attempted (for example in the Lojban translation of Alice in Wonderland). Since Lojban will almost always be a second language, bilingual puns and word play abound, often based on the relative ambiguity of the other languages involved. Humor based on internal grammatical ambiguity is of course impossible in Lojban, but humor based on nonsensical statements, or on logical structures that would be difficult to clearly express in another language, becomes easier.

As speakers become fluent, and conventional phrases come into use, Lojban will develop its own forms of spoonerisms and subtle puns. Unique forms of Lojban word-play have already turned up; they exploit the way small variations in Lojban grammar create unexpected variations in meaning, and the capability to simply express rather mind-boggling relationships. Like all word-play, these lose zest when translated into other languages.

Related to humor is the aphorism: the pithy saying that gains pungency or poignancy from terse, elegant phrasing. Lojban seems as capable of aphorisms as any language, perhaps more than most; however, because the language is so young, few such aphorisms have been devised to date.

Isn't Esperanto the 'international language'?

There have been hundreds of artificial international languages developed, of which Esperanto is the most successful and widely known. Esperanto, like most other such languages, was based on European languages in both grammar and vocabulary. Although it manages to be relatively neutral between them, it still retains an inherent cultural bias which makes it unsuited for most of the purposes that Lojban was designed for.

Lojban is culturally fully neutral. Its vocabulary was built algorithmically using today's six most widely spoken languages: Chinese, Hindi, English, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic. Lojban's words thus show roots in three major families of languages spoken by most of the world's people. Lojban's grammar accommodates structures found in non-European languages, and uses sounds found in many of the world's languages. Coupled with the potential computer applications that will make Lojban a useful language to know, Lojban's potential as an international language may be more far-reaching than Esperanto's.

Lojban was not designed primarily to be an international language, however, but rather as a linguistic tool for studying and understanding language. Its linguistic and computer applications make Lojban unique among proposed international languages: Lojban can be successful without immediately being accepted and adopted everywhere, and Lojban can be useful and interesting even to those skeptical of or hostile towards the international language movement.

Since Lojban is also not in direct competition with Esperanto, it has proven attractive to Esperantists interested in acquiring a new perspective on their own international language, and who feel less threatened because Lojban has different goals. Lojban's supporters recognize that it will take decades for Lojban to acquire both the number and variety of speakers and the extensive history of usage that marks Esperanto culture. Meanwhile, each language community has much to learn from the other; this process is already well underway.

How about English as an international language?

English is commonly used as an 'international language' in the fields of science and technology, and is probably the most widely spoken language in the world. American dominance of technology in the twentieth century has caused massive borrowing from English into other languages that do not have words for all these new concepts. This dominance, and a heritage of colonialism and imperialism that has built resentment towards American and European impositions on native cultures, has caused recent movements in other countries away from English. The rising influence of other non-English-speaking countries on world economics, science, and technology makes further declines in the universality of English likely.

In addition, many who know English as a second language speak it only minimally, though they may be able to read or understand many words. India is

a prominent example of a country where English is the only language more or less understood throughout the country, which has about 1500 languages and dialects; but the English spoken in India is often unintelligible to Americans or Britons. In fact, English is one of the most difficult languages to learn to use well. In countries where English is spoken along with other languages, it has been adapted into dialects which match the local culture and borrow words from the other local languages. Some of these dialects are as much as 70% unintelligible to American or British speakers, or to each other. As such, there is no single English language to call an 'international' one.

Lojban is a single language, with design features to discourage breaking up into separate languages. While it was developed primarily by Americans, and was designed to be at least as expressive as English is, Lojban's cultural neutrality gives equal priority to the structures and concepts of other languages and cultures. This cultural neutrality enhances Lojban's acceptability as an international language. Since it is as capable as English is of generating or borrowing any words needed to support the concepts of science and technology, and has special advantages for computer applications, Lojban is likely to spread worldwide through the technological community. Far more so than English, Lojban is simple and easy to learn for people of all cultures.

Can poetry be written in a 'logical' language or an 'unambiguous' one?

Original poetry has already been written in Lojban, and some has been translated into the language. Lojban's powerful tanru metaphor structure allows you to build concepts into words easily, as you need them, and has been used to create colorful images and to convey moving emotions. A Lojban speaker doesn't need a dictionary to use and understand millions of words that can potentially exist in the language. The absence of cultural constraints makes consideration of new ideas and relationships easier than in natural languages, spurring creativity. Lojban aids in communicating abstractions by identifying their nature explicitly. Lojban is thus a very powerful language, not only for poetry, but for discussing such abstract fields as philosophy, physics, metaphysics, and religion.

Lojban poets are already experimenting with new (and old) forms of poetry that seem especially well suited to the rhythm, sound, and flow of the language. Rarely do poets have such an opportunity to affect the development of a new language as they now can with Lojban. Lojban's rich and powerful. Lojban unleashes the full potential of poetic expression to communicate both concrete and abstract ideas.

How was Lojban developed?

The language, then called 'Loglan', was first described in the 1950s by Dr. James Cooke Brown. The 1960 Scientific American article Loglan was his call for assistance in developing the language. A revolution in linguistics was simultaneously taking place, resulting in a rapidly increasing knowledge of the nature of human language; this changed the requirements for the developing language. The first widely distributed Loglan dictionary and language description did not appear until 1975; the incompleteness of this description and continued development work discouraged people from learning the language. Furthermore, computers caught up with Loglan just then, making it possible to refine the

grammar, eliminate ambiguity and mathematically prove its absence. For over forty years, this work has been performed by volunteers, and without financial support. Now, after several versions of the language, people have been learning and using the current version, which is the first to be called 'Lojban' (from the roots "logical-language" in Lojban).

This version is the first version with a stable vocabulary, and the first to have a stable and completely defined grammar. The stabilization of the language in this version has followed a painstaking and extensive period of research and analysis, between 1988 and 1998. Thus, in an important sense, Lojban is a very new language. To ensure Lojban remains stable while people learn it, the language definition is being closely controlled; the grammar and core vocabulary have already been baselined (frozen) for several years. When the number of speakers has grown significantly, and a Lojban literature has developed, Lojban will be treated like a natural language and allowed to grow and flourish without constraint, as do other natural languages.

How many people speak Lojban?

Questions of how many people speak a language greatly depend on your presuppositions and definitions — which a language like Lojban, at least, can make explicit! The on-line Lojban mailing list, which constitutes the largest community of people using the language, has over 200 subscribers, with well over 20 regular posters as of this writing. The level of confidence of the language community has already risen to such a level that there is a Lojban-language-only discussion group, as well as the general mailing list. Lojban has also been used extensively in real-time conversation, both electronically (IRC) and face-to-face. Though the Lojban-speaking community is so widely diffused that the opportunity for conversation does not arise frequently, the number of Lojbanists who can sustain a conversation in the language certainly ranges beyond what can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and is steadily increasing. Lojban has been proven in communicative use for well over a decade, and the range and expressivity of the language is being continually explored by the language community.

The first speakers of Lojban have a unique opportunity. They are the history-makers who will shape the flavor of the first totally new language to achieve broad speakability. Their ideas will be most influential in setting the patterns of usage that others will learn from. Their experiences will teach things about language that have never before been learned — or learnable.

Why should I learn Lojban?

There are several reasons for learning the language now. Those who are working with the language now are actively consulted for their opinions on how to teach and spread the language. Within a few weeks of work learning from the materials already written, you will be able to work with those who have already started. You will be a significant part of this small but rapidly growing community. You will receive personal attention to any problems you have with the language from those leading the effort. If you are truly ambitious and committed to the language, you are welcome to join in that leadership.

Those with a computer background who learn the language now will be the leaders in developing the earliest practical computer applications for the language. Meanwhile, computer-oriented Lojbanists can also aid in developing computer-aided instruction tools or converting existing software to run on new computers.

People not interested in computers will also find Lojban a valuable language. You may be interested in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and in the scientific tests to be planned and conducted, or in other language-related research. You may be interested in Lojban's potential as an international language, and in the attempts to use the language to reach across cultural boundaries.

Regardless of your background, you will find learning Lojban to be a mind-expanding experience. Learning any language other than your native tongue broadens your perspectives and allows you to transcend the necessarily limited viewpoints of your native language's culture. Lojban, being simpler to learn than natural languages, provides this benefit much more quickly than does the study of other languages. And being quite different from natural languages, Lojban provides this benefit more directly.

Having learned Lojban, you will find it easier to learn other languages and to communicate with people from other backgrounds, regardless of the language studied; the linguistic principles you learn while learning Lojban are applicable to these languages and the communication problems they entail. The logical organization embedded in Lojban will aid you in organizing and clarifying your thoughts. Your new perspective on language, ambiguity, and communication will allow you to express those thoughts more clearly, even when you use an ambiguous natural language.

You needn't learn Lojban for any practical purpose, however. Many, if not most, of those who are learning Lojban are doing so because it is fun. Learning Lojban is intellectually stimulating, providing human interaction (a way to meet other people and get to know them) and mental challenge. Lojban has all the benefits of games designed for entertainment, with the side benefit of that entertainment developing into a useful skill.

Learning Lojban as an intellectual toy means that you can get enjoyment from learning Lojban without anywhere near the effort needed to benefit from studying other languages. While becoming fluent in Lojban will probably take hundreds of hours over several months, you can feel some sense of accomplishment in the language after just a couple of hours of study. You can use Lojban immediately for fun, while gaining skill with greater experience.

How do I learn Lojban?

This text appears in a booklet including a description of the grammar of Lojban and some introductory learning materials. If you are reading this text in a separately printed brochure, you may write to the Logical Language Group at the address found at the end of this brochure, and we will be happy to provide the complete booklet. We request a contribution of $5 to cover its cost.

If you are reading this brochure on-line, or have access to the Internet, the complete "What is Lojban?" booklet is also available on the World Wide Web for free at the address:

http://www.lojban.org/publications/level0.html

Once you have read this booklet, there are several directions you may proceed, depending on your goals for use of the language.

Most people learning the language will work for some time on their own before working with others. We recommend, where possible, that you identify at least one other person to study and interact with, either in person or by mail. The Logical Language Group maintains lists of Lojban students of various degrees of skill and activity levels. There is also both a general and an in-Lojban discussion group available on the Internet. Information will be found at the end of this document.

Almost any use you wish to make of Lojban requires some degree of mastery of the basic vocabulary. You can learn enough Lojban grammar to support conversation in just a couple of hours, but you will need vocabulary in order to use that grammar.

You can learn the Lojban vocabulary using computer software. The Logical Language Group has computer-aided-teaching programs distributed under the name LogFlash, with MS-DOS/Windows, Macintosh and Unix versions currently available. The software is based on flash-card teaching techniques, which are extremely efficient in helping you learn the vocabulary. Other computer software is available, including a parser and a glosser.

You can learn the Lojban grammar in several ways, including by studying the examples in our on-line text archives and mailing lists, and by going through the formal grammar description. (The formal grammars are available in two formats, YACC and simplified E-BNF.)

An introduction to the grammar of Lojban will be found in Technical Descriptions in the What is Lojban? booklet. There is also a set of introductory lessons available (these cover the basics of the language, but at a more leisurely pace): Lojban for Beginners, by Robin Turner and Nick Nicholas. A complete grammatical description of Lojban, The Complete Lojban Language by John W. Cowan, was published by the Logical Language Group in 1997. This is an authoritative reference, and can be used as an aid to learning the advanced features of the language.

A formal Lojban dictionary is being compiled, and will encompass the word lists already available from the Logical Language Group as of this writing. Draft versions of the dictionary are available on the Lojban web site (see contact details below).

Of course the only way to really learn a language is to use it. The Logical Language Group will assist you in finding other Lojban students of comparable skill level and interests, either in your local area or reachable by post or electronic mail. The on-line Lojban discussion groups regularly contain Lojban text, some with detailed translations and some without translation, as well as discussions of language points by various members of the Lojban community.

There is also a discussion group specifically for beginners as of this writing. Of course the best way to use the language is to recruit friends and associates into studying and using the language with you. Even if they are not interested in the same language goals as you are, the 'hobbyist' aspect of the language will provide interesting and stimulating entertainment for all concerned.

What is The Logical Language Group?

The Logical Language Group, Inc. is a non-profit organization, the embodiment of the Loglan/Lojban community. We were founded to complete the language development process, to develop and publish teaching materials, to organize and teach the community, to promote applications of Lojban, and to initiate and lead research efforts in linguistics, language education, and other areas related to Lojban. Simply put, our purpose is to serve you in all manner of things Lojbanic. The Logical Language Group is not affiliated with The Loglan Institute, Inc., the organization founded by James Cooke Brown.

The Logical Language Group is also called la lojbangirz. (/lah lozh-BAHN-geerz./), its Lojban name. It was founded informally in 1987, and incorporated in 1988. The U.S. Internal Revenue Service approved our status as a non-profit educational/scientific charity in 1989, making donations and grants to the organization deductible under U.S. tax law.

Loglan/Lojban has been developed almost totally by volunteer labor and small donations of money. Lojban attracts people who are willing to devote a lot of time and effort to seeing their dreams become reality. Thus, our only income has been money derived from sales of our publications, and donations from interested supporters.

The Logical Language Group publishes and sells printed materials on Lojban. All language definition information is considered in the public domain, and most Logical Language Group publications are distributed under a policy which allows not-for-charge copying and redistribution. Computer versions of many of our publications are available on-line at no charge. We ask people who receive our materials by any of these means to let us know, so that we may better serve you, and donate liberally, so that we may continue to serve you.

Most materials that we sell require either prior payment, an informal commitment to pay on your part, or your statement that you cannot afford to pay for materials (in which case our supplying these materials is at our discretion). We attempt to flexibly support Lojbanists who have financial constraints, and will accept reasonable offers of reduced or delayed payments subject to our financial condition, given your commitment to actively maintain contact and involvement with the community. Obviously, the level of your prior and current activity and any commitments you make to learning the language, or to volunteer work for la lojbangirz., will be factored into our decision.

la lojbangirz. has a special commitment to support Lojbanists outside the U.S., because so many of the language goals are dependent on building an international community of speakers, and because we recognize the difficulties caused by the international currency market and the relative wealth of nations. We can accept bank cheques in most currencies and international payment via

PayPal. We also encourage people to form groups so that they can receive a single copy of our materials, copying or passing them to others to keep the per-person costs low. We expect a lower standard of contact and contribution from overseas Lojbanists when deciding whether to continue sending our materials at reduced or no charge.

We ask all recipients of our materials to help us financially in any way you can. The Logical Language Group needs your gifts for support of the Loglan/ Lojban project. Artificial languages are historically not self-sustaining financially, and have difficulty receiving outside support. The Logical Language Group, Inc. is prohibited by its bylaws from spending more than 15% of its expenses for administrative purposes, except by special agreement with a donor who agrees to cover such added costs in full.

How does The Logical Language Group serve the community?

The Logical Language Group coordinates and promotes activities involving Lojban and the Lojban community. In that role, it publishes materials enabling people to learn the language, and facilitates their forming a community of speakers. Most people involved with Lojban stay informed by checking our web page or participating in the Lojban mailing lists (see contact details below). The Logical Language Group also publishes newsletters and journals, including both general news, aimed at those not actively involved in learning and using the language, and more specific material, including discussions of features of the language, debates on research issues and applications, letters from the community and responses, and Lojban writings and translations.

Our printed publications are free of advertisements (other than our own ordering information, and occasional mention of individuals and organizations who have contributed particular service to our efforts); and we do not sell our mailing list. Our publications are distributed as cheaply as possible to encourage new people to participate. In the interest of attracting the widest audience possible, we are committed to distributing as much material as possible using the 'open source' concept for computer software and a similar policy for printed publications. This policy retains our copyrights but allows you, with relatively few restrictions, to copy our materials for your friends.

Certain materials that we publish contain information that we place in the public domain. All language definition information is considered to be public.

If you are attempting to learn the language, we will provide as much help as we can to assist you. We will put you in touch with Lojbanists who might be interested in studying or communicating with you in the language. You can also send your writings to us for review, or for indirect exchange with others. We try to foster research and social interaction among those who are learning, or who have already learned the language. We aid such people in organizing, leading, and teaching formal classes and study groups, and will sponsor affiliated groups in local areas where non-profit sponsorship can be of benefit. We conduct an annual celebration of the language and community (July or August), called 'Logfest', in conjunction with our annual business meeting in the Washington DC area. We also expect to support other local meetings and gatherings as the community grows.

Of course, we also try to publicize the language. Our representatives can attend meetings to give presentations on the language. We distribute informational material, including these booklets. Through our efforts, and with your help, the community of Lojbanists is rapidly growing.

What can I do now?

You can become involved in the Lojban project in a variety of ways, depending on your background and interests, and on your available time:

- you can participate in completing the language documentation;
- you can devise applications for Lojban in computers, education, linguistics, and other fields;
- you can help in organizing Lojbanists in your area, and in recruiting new Lojbanists;
- you can help in teaching the language to new people (even while learning yourself);
- you can assist in spreading Lojban to non-English-speaking cultures by helping translate materials into other languages, and by identifying, recruiting, and communicating with contacts in other countries (international involvement is vital to ensuring that Lojban remains culturally neutral);
- you can contribute financially to support our organization, its activities, and its publications;
- you can use Lojban in composition, translation, and conversation with other Lojbanists.

For many of these activities, you need to learn the language first. However, even those who haven't yet had time to learn the language can assist in recruiting and contributing ideas to the effort.

Helping to publicize the language, of course, does not take a lot of time, or necessarily even knowing the language. Talk to friends, relatives and colleagues. We will gladly provide copies of this brochure on request. Lojban tends to sell itself; people who learn of it are more often than not intrigued by it.

Keep in touch with us. We want to know your ideas and opinions on the language, on our various activities, and on our products. We welcome open debate on the language, and have even printed and made available writings that are critical of various aspects of our efforts, when they are of sufficient general interest. Open debate aids in understanding and improves the overall quality of the language and of our presentation of it to the world. Much of the language design is now complete, and the Logical Language Group is committed to maintaining a stable version of the language. Nonetheless, we would rather hear criticism now within our community and either correct our problems or prepare an adequate response, than do so later when such issues are raised by outsiders.

In short, Lojban is a product of all of the community, including you, if you choose.

Of course, the most important thing you can do is to use Lojban!

Lojban will not really achieve the status of 'language' until people use it. We need creative people to write Lojban prose, poetry, and dialog. We need translations made from fiction, technical literature, from religious and philosophical writings, and from music. Only in this way will Lojban be proven practical, and gain the credibility it needs to succeed.

Who do I contact?

We have several volunteers who serve to coordinate Lojban activities in specific regions of the world. There is also a limited amount of Lojban materials translated into languages other than English. This support is constantly being added to; please contact us for details.

The Logical Language Group's website, which contains all its publicly available information, is at:

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http://www.lojban.org
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Several active Lojban-related mailing lists are available on the Internet. The general Lojban list is lojban; the list for discussions in Lojban only is jbosnu; and the list specifically for beginners is lojban-beginners. They may be accessed as follows:

Web

- http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lojban
- http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jbosnu
- http://www.lojban.org/lsg2/ (lojban-beginners)

Email

- lojban@yahoogroups.com
- jbosnu@yahoogroups.com
- lojban-beginners@chain.digitalkingdom.org

E-Mail Mailing Listis

- http://www.lojban.org/lsg2/ for all e-mail lists.

If you have received a registration form and an order form with this booklet, you can provide us with useful information to aid us in serving you, and can order some of our materials. Write or call:

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The Logical Language Group, Inc.
2904 Beau Lane
Fairfax, VA 22031
U.S.A.
(+1 703) 385-0273
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E-mail can be sent to us at: lojban@lojban.org

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Please support Lojban!
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