

## Einladung zum Vortrag

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# How Language Began: The Story of Humanity's Greatest Invention

This talk lays out the hypothesis further developed and supported in my 2017 book, *How Language Began*, that language is a technology/tool that began 1.9 million years ago, emerging from Homo erectus culture. I distinguish language from communication by the following: Communication is the transfer of information. Language is the transfer of information via symbols.

In the talk, I offer several sources of evidence for the thesis that erectus had language: tools, cultural organization of villages, travel, physiology, evolution of the erectus larynx, evolution of the erectus brain, and sailing voyages, among others. I make the case that the evolution of language followed a "Peircean progression," visible in the archaeological record. All animals use indexes. The first clear example of an icon is the Makapansgat pebble, collected by *Australopithecus africanus* roughly three million years ago. Finally, we see evidence one million years after the first record of an icon for the use of symbols by erectus. Interestingly, this follows the independently developed principles of semiotics of C.S. Peirce. Although erectus had a more primitive vocal apparatus, smaller brains, and less developed form of the FOXP2 gene found in sapiens, they were nevertheless completely capable of full language. I also argue for the existence of three types of grammars: G1 (linear), G2 (hierarchical), and G3 (recursive).