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Introduction -- Children from the wild, children without language -- Pidgin and Creole -- Preconditions and Self Organization -- I, Robot -- To Hear and to Speak -- To Speak and to Think -- Hunters and Gatherers -- The Languages of Hunter-Gatherers -- The Neolithic Revolution -- Hierarchies -- Pictography -- The Rebus Principle -- Syllabary -- Finally: the Alphabet -- Where printing was invented -- The Shadow of Bi Sheng: Seal, Paper, Ink – and the Press -- Johannes Gutenberg -- Current Developments -- A final thought -- References -- Figures.

**Sommario/riassunto**

Without language, not much else would exist: no writing, no computer – as a matter of fact, no technical or medical progress that make our lives less painful, and easier indeed; but also not some horrors that characterize our world. In fact, language is what defines humans and distinguishes them from other living beings – and is the basis of all other developments. How is it possible that something as complex and fascinating as 'language' has come into being at all? How does language 'work'? And how did it develop? What is common to all languages – and why are there so many? Further questions are how man began to write, and how printing developed – in which languages? Why not in any language? And does this teach us anything for further developments? In trying to answer these and other questions, we experience an exciting history of scientific research. The Author Hans Giessen is a double habilitated professor and affiliated with the University of Helsinki (Finland), Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce (Poland), and Saarland University in Saarbrücken (Germany). He was knighted, as a Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Mérite, by the French president. His works have been translated into several languages.