

## Baby Talk

Now it may perhaps seem to some a wonderful but less significant mile/km stone - "*dada*" BUT it is perhaps really, the most significant in a human life. Because it shows, the brain and body are pretty much copasetic, akin to plugging a transit-bus into the diagnostic computer and seeing green lights across the board.

But it is far more than that. It shows that a baby like my grandson Daniel is now in control of all the bazillions of components involved in speech - chest muscles, breathing, throat, larynx, tongue, mouth, and facial/nose muscles, as well as auditory feedback including all the inner and outer ear parts, and a host of assorted areas in the left, right brain making it the most complicated thing a person will ever do bar none, which is an amazing human thing.

Many languages use a version of the repeated morphemes *dada*, *tata* and *mama* for parents or others like *tata*, *baba*, *nana*, *lala*, *djadja*.

### Why do most babies say *dada* first?

Obviously because *dad's are more important than moms!* Ouch - obviously not unless they can breast feed.

Suckling mostly involves the tongue and alveolar (roof of the mouth) and NOT the lips. i.e. although babies keep the nipple sealed with the lips they squeeze the milk from the nipple by repeatedly pressing the tongue to the roof of the mouth and squeezing milk back along to the throat. This action, is related to the **d & t** phonemes - thus it is first more natural for babies to utter *duh* sounds. (My nephew **Alec** has recently been going around making his first "kewl" sound, a plosive "knut" sound using the same mechanics in reverse - the tongue pulled away from the pallet.)

Serendipitously, as I sit here thinking about Daniel speaking - I just listened on-line to a [CBC Quirks and Quarks about a parrot who talks](#) - just listen to the very beginning perhaps to hear a parrot speaking the way Daniel can't yet.

Having pretty much memorized Noam Chomsky's little 100p book *Syntactic Structures* as well as *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* when Language Development was a focus in UBC linguistic studies I was delighted to be able to spend a few years immersed in Tee, Stu and Thms language development.

Around the time **Ronnie Ray-gun** was noted for carrying around Milton **Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*** (which professed unregulated capitalism and banking and didn't work any better than Ray-gun-omics) I was carrying around John **Broderick's *Modern English Linguistics: A Structural and Transformational Grammar*** - now available free at this link.

I highly recommend just taking a glance at it especially, Chpt. 10 **Phonology** in relation to **Daniel** learning to speak, then perhaps **Morphology** and perhaps **Phrase Structure** to see how it has changed and developed. Oh it's all so delicious, I can't decide, other than I am now going to study it again. Understanding this book makes it much easier to read Beowulf in **Olde English**, but as you will probably never do that, perhaps just read it to enjoy the content.

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