



## *How did language begin?*

No one really knows, but linguists have a few theories.

(They don't really take them seriously!)

- Pooh-Pooh theory - began with exclamations of emotional expression like "ow!" or "ooo."
- Hey You theory - began as sounds to signal both identity (Here I am!) and belonging (I'm with you!). We may also cry out in fear, anger, or hurt (help me!).
- Bow Wow theory - began as imitation of sounds. The name of a thing was an imitation of the sound it made (dog=arf).
- Ding-Dong theory - began with in-born understanding of the relationship between sounds and what they symbolize. For example, small, sharp, high things tend to have words with high front vowels in many languages, while big, round, low things tend to have round back vowels - teeny, tiny, huge, moon.
- Yo-He-Ho theory - grunts and groans made during group actions which eventually became associated with those actions. (Old sailors pulling up the anchor rope chanting "yo he ho!")
- Sing-Song theory - language came from play, laughter, cooing, and other emotional mutterings. Our first words were actually long and musical, rather than short grunts.