That's not a duck

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One of the audio features added to Windows 7 goes by the formal name _stream attenuation_, but it is more commonly known to people in the audio world as _ducking_. Ducking is the process of lowering the volume of background sounds in order to draw more attention to the foreground sound. For example, when you're watching a big battle scene in a summer action movie, your ears are assaulted with the sounds of weapons fire, objects exploding left and right, but when the hero turns to his girlfriend-of-the-moment, the sound level of all the death and destruction drops a bit so you can hear him say something tender, or maybe inspiring, or maybe inspiringly tender. Something like that. And then when the moment is over, the sound level returns to normal and once again the sound of things blowing up overwhelms your eardrums. Sorry, I got a bit carried away. Where was I? Oh right, ducking. Ducking is the process of temporarily reducing the volume of background sounds in order to make foreground sounds easier to hear. Here's a presentation from the 2008 PDC by Larry Osterman which covers the technical part of ducking. When the feature was added to Windows 7, the icon on the _Communications_ tab of the Sound control panel was a yellow rubber duck. Those audio folks think they're so cute. Sadly (or perhaps fortunately), the icon was changed to a telephone handset. The subject line of this article is an inside joke: When visiting one of my friends, I would sometimes speak to his three-year-old daughter in German, because they say that exposure to multiple languages is a good thing. At one time, I asked her a question, I forget what it was, and she responded, in English, "That's not a duck!"

None of us could figure out what she was talking about, but it has been a catch phrase among us for over a decade.

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