

## **Reversing language shift and the future of linguistic diversity: where ideology and theory meet**

Suzanne Romaine (Oxford University)

Most RLS (reversing language shift) theories and efforts are byproducts of European indigenous minority problems, and the ideological bias of Fishman's model of RLS privileges intergenerational transmission in the context of stable diglossia. My talk examines the utility of this framework as an appropriate model for the stabilization of endangered languages or for their eventual revitalization as fully functioning native languages. I will argue for the need to question the assumptions and theoretical perspectives underlying terms such as 'reversing language shift' and 'language revitalization' and to reconceptualize what it means for a language to be maintained and survive without intergenerational mother tongue transmission. As an increasing number of communities around the world face the impending loss of their languages, it is imperative to clarify these issues not just for theory's sake, but in the interest of providing sound advice.