

Birgit Hellwig (Universität zu Köln)

### **Child language documentation and the adult language**

This talk explores what language documentation and description can gain by taking into account child language and child-directed speech. While our documentary and descriptive efforts remain focused on the adult language, there are nevertheless good reasons to extend these efforts to include the language used by and with children: speech events involving children constitute essential parts of the natural linguistic behavior of speech communities (and thus warrant documentation in their own right); and investigations into language transmission will contribute to our understanding of processes of language endangerment and shift (and thus contribute to language strengthening and revitalization efforts) (e.g., Child Language Research and Revitalization Working Group 2017; Eisenbeiß 2006; Kelly et al. 2015; Kelly & Nordlinger 2014). And we can add a further argument to this list: the insights that child language and child-directed speech offer into the metalinguistic knowledge of adult speakers.

The talk focuses on child-directed speech and discusses its potential for providing insights into the adult language. Drawing on data from an on-going documentation project on Qaqet (a non-Austronesian language from Papua New Guinea; see <http://qaqet.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/>), it is argued that this register constitutes a promising new data type which is set to inform language documentation and description.