Language Attitudes and Multilingual Education in East Timor

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Overview

- Timor-Leste Background
- Why Language Attitudes?
- Surveys in Timor-Leste
  - 2012
  - 2013
- Conclusion
Language and Education in Timor

- Population
  - Just over one million

- Official languages
  - Portuguese
  - Tetun

- ‘Working’ languages
  - English
  - Indonesian

- 25 indigenous languages, about half of which are undocumented
- 10-12 are endangered, 5-6 are critically endangered
Language and Education in Timor

- 1769-1975
  - Portuguese
- 1975-1999 (?)
  - Indonesian
- 2003-?
  - Portuguese and Tetun
  - Portuguese fluency in 2003 < 6%
  - Tetun a ‘tentative, auxiliary language’
  - Varies by geography and personal philosophy of teachers and principals (Quinn 2007, Shah 2012)
Language and Education in Timor

- **Achievement (World Bank 2010)**
  - Over 70% of children do not make it to Grade Nine – highest dropouts in Grades 1 & 2
  - Average of 11.2 yrs to reach Grade Six
  - 70% of Grade One students could not read a single word

- **Language Access (2010 census)**
  - L1 for ages 0-14: Tetun 43%, Portuguese 0.03%
  - More that half of Timorese children are entering a school system where they do not speak the language of education
Language and Education in Timor

- Potential solution: Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education

- Demonstration schools are already operating in 3 districts using 3 local languages
Language Use in Timor

Figure 77. Main languages of communication by village (suco) in 2001

* Number of concerned villages (suco) in parenthesis

Austronesian languages*

Languages of Timor and adjacent islands

- Mambae (105)
- Tetum (73)
- TetumTeric (20)
- Kemac (25)
- Tokogede (18)
- Baequeno (17)
- Galolen (16)

Waima’a group

- Nau’oti (11)
- Laklei (2)
- Idate (1)
- Isni (1)
- Bikeli (1)
- Kaklun (1)
- Mangili (1)

Papuan Languages*

- Uaimua (17)
- Midiki (2)
- Cai Rui (2)
- Bahasa Indonesia
- Indonesian (4)

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Assessment

- **Language Vitality**
  - UNESCO’s Red Book of Endangered Languages
  - Ethnologue’s EGIDS (from Fishman 1991, Lewis and Simon 2010)
  - Catalog of Endangered Languages

- **MLE Program Efficacy**
  - More immediate measure of effectiveness than quantitative measures (test scores)
  - Impact on future of program
  - Stakeholder satisfaction
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2012 Survey Results: Overview

- Demographics
  - Language Use
- Language Attitudes
- MLE Program Attitudes
2012 Survey Results: Demographics

- 63 respondents
- 69% Male, 31% Female
- 68% had some University or a University degree
- over 50% students or educators
- 9/13 districts represented
- 52% currently reside in Dili, 41% currently reside abroad
2012 Results: Language Use

Mother Tongues

- Tetun Dili: 37%
- Galolos: 14%
- Makasae: 13%
- Fataluku: 6%
- Kemak: 6%
- Naueti: 6%
- Waima'a: 5%
- Atauro: 1%
- Baikeno: 2%
- Mambae: 2%
- Nanaek: 2%
- Naueti: 2%
2012 Results: Language Use

What language did your teachers use in...?

- English
- Indonesian
- Portuguese
- Tetun
- Mother Tongue
- Other

- Primary
- Secondary
- University
What languages do you know or want yourself or your children to know?

- Portuguese
- English
- Tetun Dili
- Indonesian
- Local Language
- Other
2012 Results: Language Attitudes

To get a good education...

- Tetun: 1 (Very Important) 2 3 4 (Not Important)
- Portuguese: 1 (Very Important) 2 3 4 (Not Important)
- English: 1 (Very Important) 2 3 4 (Not Important)
- Indonesian: 1 (Very Important) 2 3 4 (Not Important)
## 2012 Results: MLE Program Attitudes

### Comments on Mother Tongues (25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment Topic</th>
<th>Overtly Positive</th>
<th>Overtly Negative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General cultural importance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational importance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety about mother tongue</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety about development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Multilingualism</td>
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</table>

### Comments on Language and Success (22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment Topic</th>
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<td>Indonesian</td>
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<td>Portuguese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tetun</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Multilingualism</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

- Timorese do value their mother tongues, but not as a language of education or economic mobility
  - Some anxiety about language shift
- Multilingualism itself is highly valued
- Highly valued languages: Tetun and English
- Least valued language: ?
Discussion

- Paradox of Portuguese
  - Would like to know it better, that they want their children to know it, and that it was important for economic mobility
  - Low levels of fluency, low levels of importance in daily life, some outright disdain, never used
- Follow-up
2013 Survey Results: Overview

- Demographics
  - “Stakeholders”
  - Language Use
- Language Attitudes
- MLE Program Attitudes
2013 Survey Results: Overview

- 208 Respondents
- 50% Male, 48% Female
- 207/208 Current Residents of Dili
- 13/13 districts represented
- 80% under 30 y/o
2013 Survey: Stakeholders?

Stakeholders (N=107)

Mother Tongue

Non-Stakeholders (N=101)

Mother Tongue

- Bunak
- Idate
- Kairui
- Kemak
- Makalero
- Makasae
- Makasae
- Mambae
- Midiki
- Naueti
- Sa'ani
- Tetun
- Tetun Terik
- Tokodede
- Waima'a
2013 Survey: Stakeholders?

Language Users (N=115)  Non-Language Users (N=93)

Have heard of the program

50%  Yes
50%  No

46%  Yes
54%  No
2013 Survey – Language Use

Stakeholders (N=101)  Non-Stakeholders (N=107)

Fluency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Non-Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tetun</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>Fataluku</td>
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<td>Baikeno</td>
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<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2013 Survey – Language Attitudes

**Stakeholders (N=101)**

- **Always:** 94%
- **Sometimes:** 3%
- **Never:** 3%
- **N/A:** 0%

**Non-Stakeholders (N=107)**

- **Always:** 78%
- **Sometimes:** 21%
- **Never:** 0%
- **N/A:** 1%
2013 Survey – Language Attitudes

Stakeholders (N=101)  Non-Stakeholders (N=107)

There should be more literature in my mother tongue.

Stakeholders:
- 57% Strongly Agree
- 22% Agree
- 8% Disagree
- 12% Strongly Disagree

Non-Stakeholders:
- 47% Strongly Agree
- 28% Agree
- 9% Disagree
- 1% Strongly Disagree
A person can get a quality education in East Timor.
My teachers used my mother tongue in primary school.

- **Always**: Stakeholders and Non-Stakeholders
- **Sometimes**: Stakeholders and Non-Stakeholders
- **Never**: Stakeholders and Non-Stakeholders
- **N/A**: Stakeholders and Non-Stakeholders
2013 Survey – MLE Program Attitudes

Stakeholders (N=59)

- “I think mother tongue is very important in the process of learning in Timor-Leste’s elementary schools. Even though this is a small nation, all East Timorese children do not speak Tetun”

- “Mother tongue is important and should be used with the family, but it is bad when use in education (will make complications for East Timor’s new generation.”

Non-Stakeholders (N=53)

- “I think if we use our mother tongue to teach the student in school and student will not increase their knowledge in terms of international language as well as English.”

- “In schools, especially in districts, if the teachers explain with Tetun and students do not understand, the teachers require to explain in mother tongue (lian inan) in order students are able to understand completely.”
Discussion

- Target Language User ≠ Stakeholder
- Stakeholders valued their languages to a higher degree
  - Which came first?
- Participants whose teachers used their mother tongues in primary school also tended to disagree less that a person could get a quality education
- Anxiety about ‘development’ of languages
- Anxiety about value of mother tongues in global contexts
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Acknowledgements

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Sources


Sources


