MTB-MLE in East Timor and its bidirectional relationship with language ideologies

Melody Ann Ross
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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Language Ideologies

- The macro-attitude within which individual attitudes exist
- Kroskrity’s “cluster concept” - overlapping but analyzable dimensions
Language Programs

- What is their role?
  - Top-down implementation as a result of language policy
  - Bottom-up initiative as a response to language policy
Bidirectional Relationship

Language Programs

Language Ideologies

Data?

Policy?
Language Ideologies

- Three clusters of focus for today:
  - Language as a Resource-drain
    - Spending resources on “under-developed” languages and language programs necessarily drains resources from other sectors.
  - Language as Problem
    - Multilingualism and mother tongues are a problem that must be overcome to promote the supreme literacy.
  - Language as Divisive
    - Multilingualism is a threat to national unity.
East Timor

- 1.2 million people, over half under 25
- 2 official languages, Tetun Dili and Portuguese
- Both languages topic of debate
  - Portuguese: former colonial language, low fluency rates, little regional relevance, nostalgia
  - Tetun Dili: creole stigma, “poor” language, identity
- 2 ‘working languages’, English and Indonesian
- 20ish indigenous languages, about half of which are undocumented
- 10-12 are endangered, 5-6 are critically endangered
- Corruption high, poverty high, development low
- 50% population is illiterate
Language in Education

- 1769-1975
  - Portuguese; small number of students
- 1975-1999
  - Bahasa Indonesia; everyone
- 2003-?
  - Portuguese and Tetun; everyone
  - Tetun a ‘tentative, auxiliary language’
  - Portuguese fluency < 6%
  - Varies by geography and personal philosophy of teachers and principals (Quinn 2007, Shah 2012)
Realities

- Achievement (MoE 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 work in any language

- 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
Timeline of MTB-MLE

- 2009 – Portuguese MoE officials recommend to East Timor MoE to use local lgs in grades 1-4
- 2010 – National Education Commission working group spend one year drafting a policy
- 2011 – MTB-MLE policy was unveiled on Intl Mother Tongue Day
- 2012, April – Pilot programs begin in 12 schools in 3 districts
“Yes, but it’s failed”

- 22\textsuperscript{nd} July, 2012 – Interview with rural teacher and his university-educated son

PI: Have you heard about the \textit{Lian Inan} program?
M: Yes, but it’s failed. It’s failed.
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The importance of mother tongues in the education system

The MoE will implement mother tongues in Oe-Cusse, Manatutu, and Lospalos in 2012.

Civil Society is worried about the implementation of mother tongues in basic education. Infrastructure in TL’s interior continues to decline. Distribution of tables and chairs is slowed, students are worried. To me, this is the ongoing problem that is until now still not resolved, and they want to implement instead this mother tongue pilot project.

Vice Prime Minister Guterres: We need to develop mother tongues. About the implementation of mother tongues in basic education, the Minister of Education must appear before the National Parliament.

About the implementation of mother tongues in basic education, the Minister of Education must appear before the National Parliament.
Ministry of Education cancels the launch of mother tongues
Language Ideologies

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Prime Minister Gusmao: Mother tongues will help, not hinder
Also, since the Timorese languages are only oral in nature, what do we do when we want to work in the abstract? What terms, then, will we use? We will always have to resort to the Portuguese.
Interviews

- F, 20yo - *Tuir hau nia ita bele aprende lian materna iha liur maibe labele aprende iha eskola tanba se wainhira ita aprende lian materna iha eskola ita nunka hatene lian sira seluk hanesan portugues ho inglesh.*

- According to my view, you should learn mother tongues outside of school- not inside, because when you’re learning your mother tongue in school, you can’t learn other languages like Portuguese or English.

- (2013)
2015 – 5 words to describe language in East Timor

interesting unique
confusing retardating
confused organic
diverse
difficult
diverse
difficult
related contentious ad
related development progress
tradition
tradition
dynamic barriers
dynamic barriers
disempowering
exclusive complicated
exclusive
work
work
important politically
disempowering
rich frustrating
rich
2015 Survey

- It is more important to know Tetun than a local language.
  ◦ 63% Agree
  ◦ 33% Disagree

- Children feel confused when they learn Tetun and Portuguese at the same time.
  ◦ 74% Agree
  ◦ 25% Disagree
Three clusters of focus for today:

- **Language as a Resource-drain**
  - Spending resources on “under-developed” languages and language programs necessarily drains resources from other sectors.

- **Language as Problem**
  - Multilingualism and mother tongues are a problem that must be overcome to promote the supreme literacy.

- **Language as Divisive**
  - Multilingualism is a threat to national unity.
“This policy would inculcate a sense of division... it would slowly start to destroy national identity and unity,” said a statement reflecting the strong opposition to the plan in some parts of the country. It was released by a coalition of local NGOs, some of which later withdrew their support.

“We are struggling to consolidate unity so that everybody thinks as East Timorese instead of thinking, I’m a Mumbai, I’m a Fataluco, etc.,” President José Ramos-Horta told IRIN, referring to two of the country’s ethnic groups. In 2008, Ramos-Horta barely survived an assassination attempt that stemmed, in part, from regional factionalism.

He is concerned that a rollout beyond the 12 schools may detract from efforts to boost literacy in Tetum, but proponents of the programme see the opposite.
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Response to Negative Ideology

- Ideologies are not one-way, but:
  - Programs must aggressively advocate for themselves

- Language as Resource-Drain
  - Development as simultaneous, non-competitive processes
  - Education as the long game, and ultimately the most important
Language as Problem
  ◦ Language as Bridge
  ◦ Language as Instrument

Language as Divisive
  ◦ Language as valuable cultural resource
  ◦ Culturally unique to East Timor, unity in diversity, multiple identities
But how?

- **Data!**
  - Surveys, Assessments, EGRA, Test Scores, anything
  - There is a timidity in East Timor’s MTB-MLE program regarding this type of activity

- **Advocacy/Publicity**
  - Televised debates, commercials, showcases, school festivals, international mother tongue day, social media
  - Increasing interest in this type of activity
Recommendations

- MTB-MLE programs must plan for program socialization
  - This is as important as implementation and should be part of regular assessment practices
- Use ideologies as a resource
  - Investigate the specific ideologies that are having a negative impact on your program and address them head-on
References, Works Cited and Sources:

- Malone, Susan. 2010. Planning Mother Tongue Based Education Programs in Minority Language Communities. SIL. Dallas.
References, Works Cited and Sources:

- MTB-MLE Network. (cite this website somehow)
- Pinnock, Helen. 2009. Language and Education: The Missing Link; How the Language Used in Schools Threatens the Achievement of Education for All. CfBT Education Trust and Save the Children Alliance.
Mahalo, Obrigada, Thank You

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Obrigada ba tempu!