1. Introduction and Objectives

Timor-Leste is a small country in Southeast Asia whose history is characterized by a long period of Portuguese colonial rule, 30 years of violent Indonesian occupation, and the recent presence of the United Nations and other foreign aid groups. One of the most important legacies left behind by this unique history of multi-cultural contact is robust multilingualism. Since independence in 1999, Timor-Leste has been divided on the issue of which language(s) should be embraced; Portuguese and Tetun, the local lingua franca, both hold official status while English and Indonesian are officially recognized as ‘working’ languages. In addition, Timor-Leste is also home to some 20 indigenous languages, certain of which are critically in danger of dying out in the next decades. Only recently has the idea of a distinct Timorese cultural identity begun to flourish as the legitimacy of local governance increases. Issues of language are central to this ongoing identity construction, which makes this an important and exciting period for sociolinguistic research.

1.1 Objectives

(i) examine how educational initiatives are impacting language attitudes and use, and
(ii) investigate the relationship between social stereotypes and the perceptions of language use

This study uses data from a language attitude survey administered in 2013 in Dili, the capitol city of Timor-Leste, in which multilingual participants were asked to identify their mother tongues. As the economic, political and educational hub of the country, only 54% of inhabitants who currently live in Dili were born there and this intra-national migration has led to a high level of sustained societal multilingualism. Focusing on survey participants from mixed-language households, this study demonstrates that mother tongue choice is a complicated but important issue for Timorese people. The concept itself is problematic in a multilingual context, in part because ‘mother tongue’ can be defined in any of several ways; the chronological first language, the language of psychological primacy, or the language of social identity. Indeed, association with a particular mother tongue may not even be predicated on fluency, but on traditional ethnic group membership and self-reporting often represents an idealized view of language use. This study was designed to investigate several factors that correlate with mother tongue choice, such as age, gender, district of origin, attitude about languages in Timor-Leste, as well as attitudes about the nascent mother-tongue education initiative.

1.2 Methods

The data for this survey were collected by the author Timorese students in Dili, Timor-Leste over a period of 4 weeks in July, 2013. Student administrators were chosen from the English language programs at Dili Institute of Technology and the Universidade Nacional de Timor-Leste. Students were trained to administer the surveys before distribution, and were
compensated for their work. Training consisted of 2 1-hour sessions that explained the goals of the project, the language used in the surveys, how to protect the anonymity of participants, and how to select participants. Student volunteers were encouraged to seek participants from the districts of Lautem, Manatutu, and Oecusse (or, speakers of Fataluku, Galolen and Baikeno) whenever convenient. These participants were desirable because of their potential stakeholdership in the mother-tongue based multilingual education program, however, if it was not convenient, student volunteers were not pressured to include these groups.

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and participants were not compensated. The surveys were available in Tetun Dili, English, and Portuguese. Before beginning, participants were given verbal information about the goals of the project. Upon completion, participants were given written information about the project and how to contact the primary investigator (both in Dili and abroad) in Tetun Dili, English, and Portuguese.

1.3 Acknowledgements
I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my Timorese-Hawaiian family, Pelagio Doutel da Costa Sarmento, Felix da Silva, Jonas Guterres, Leonardo Elizario, Nico Oliveira; the irreplaceable staff at DIT, Catharina Williams-van Klinken, Diana Guterres, Venancio Pereira; my hard-working student volunteers, Olda Martines, Aminu, Ule, Avito Julio Henriques, Marcelino Guterres Baptista, Chico and Yosafat Carlos; and my invaluable friends in Dili who had more than a small part in my success, Gil da Silva, Tracey Morgan, Tricia Johns, Agustinho Caet, Rita Nunes. Thank you for the help, support, and advice you have all given to me over the years.
2. Sample Demographics
2.1 Age

Participants in this survey ranged in age from 14 to 49, with the largest group falling between 18-22.

2.2 Home District
2.3 Gender

![Figure 3: Gender](image)

2.4 Current Residence

![Figure 4: Current Residence](image)
2.5 Time in Dili

Figure 5: Time in Dili

Number of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 yr</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 yr</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 yr</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 yr</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>11-15 yr</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-20 yr</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20 yr</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Language Use
3.1 District Language

Question 6 on the survey was a fill-in-the-blank question designed to investigate perceptions of language use in participant’s districts. The question reads “People from my district usually speak ____”. Participants were allowed (and encouraged) to list all the languages that they thought people from their district generally spoke. It is important, then, to view the results of this question as a reflection of the perceptions of language use in each district, and not as a reflection of actual language use in each district.

Languages of Aileu; N=7

![Figure 6.1: Languages of Aileu](image)

Languages of Ainaro; N=10

![Figure 6.2: Languages of Ainaro](image)
Languages of Baucau; N=42

Figure 6.3: Languages of Baucau

- Makasae: 47%
- Kairui: 5%
- Waima’a: 26%
- Tetun: 12%
- Naueti: 5%
- Midiki: 5%

Languages of Bobonaru; N=5

Figure 6.4: Languages of Bobonaru

- Bunak: 40%
- N/A: 20%
- Tetun: 20%
- Kairui: 20%
Languages of Cova Lima; N=8

**Figure 6.5: Languages of Cova Lima**

- Bunak 50%
- TetunTerik 38%
- Kemak 12%

Languages of Dili; N=16

**Figure 6.6: Languages of Dili**

- Tetun 63%
- Mambae 6%
- Kemak 6%
- Galolen 12%
- N/A 13%
Languages of Ermera; N=4

**Figure 6.7: Languages of Ermera**

- Mambae: 75%
- N/A: 25%

Languages of Lautem; N=101

**Figure 6.8: Languages of Lautem**

- Fataluku: 58%
- Makalero: 15%
- Makasae: 17%
- Indonesian: 6%
- Tetun: 1%
- N/A: 2%
Languages of Liquica; N=3

Figure 6.9: Languages of Liquica

- Tokodede: 67%
- Mambae: 33%

Languages of Manatutu; N=65

Figure 6.10: Languages of Manatutu

- Galolen: 45%
- Habun: 12%
- Idate: 15%
- TetunTerik: 15%
- Mambae: 11%
- Tetun: 2%
Languages of Manufahe; N=1

Figure 6.11: Languages of Manufahe

TetunTerik
100%

Languages of Oecusse; N=46

Figure 6.12: Languages of Oecusse

Baikeno
63%

Indonesian
18%

Tetun
17%

N/A
2%
3.2 Mother Tongue

Figure 6.13: Languages of Viqueque

Figure 7: Mother Tongues
3.3 Languages Known Well

**Figure 8.1: Languages Known Well**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baikeno</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banak</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fataluku</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galolèn</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idanè</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karùi</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kernak</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makatero</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makasse</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambae</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mìldiki</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naëeti</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa'ani</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetun</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TetunDili</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TetunTerik</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokodede</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waima’a</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other: Tagalog, Arabic, Korean

**Figure 8.2 Timorese and Non-Timorese Languages Known Well**

- Timorese: 34%
- Non-Timorese: 66%
3.4 Languages Known Somewhat

**Figure 8.1: Languages Known Well**

- Bakeno: 22
- Bunak: 5
- Fataluku: 34
- Galolen: 21
- Idate: 5
- Kaimi: 4
- Kairak: 7
- Kamak: 7
- Mabua: 17
- Mabua: 14
- Mambai: 1
- Madi: 1
- Naudet: 1
- Sattin: 182
- Tettun: 10
- TettunDili: 5
- TettunTerik: 4
- Talotlu: 33
- Waima's: 18
- English: 3
- Portuguese: 3
- Other: 0

Other: Melayu, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Tagalog, Korean

**Figure 9.2: Timorese and Non-Timorese Languages Known Somewhat**

- Timorese: 17%
- Non-Timorese: 83%
4. Parents’ Information
4.1 Mother and Father’s Districts

Figure 10: Mother and Father's Districts

4.2 Mother and Father’s Mother Tongue

Figure 11: Mother and Father's Mother Tongues
4.3 Parent’s Mother Tongue Same?

**Figure 12: Are Parent's Languages The Same?**

- **Same**: 74%
- **Different**: 26%

4.4 Which language?

**Figure 13: Which Parent's Language Does Participant Speak?**

- **Mother's**: 43%
- **Father's**: 46%
- **Neither**: 11%
5. Education Attitudes

5.1 “At school, my teachers used my mother tongue”

**Figure 14.1: "At school, my teachers used my mother tongue"**

5.2 “A person can get a quality education in East Timor”

**Figure 14.2: "A person can get a quality education in Timor-Leste"**
5.3 “I have heard about the lian inan program”

Figure 14.3: "I have heard about the Lian Inan program"

5.4 “I am proud that my language was chosen for the lian inan program”
This graph represents the responses of all participants. It is important to note that only three languages had been chosen and implemented for the Lian Inan program at the time of this survey, and that participants in the survey represented 15 different mother tongues. Speakers of the relevant Lian Inan program languages have been treated separately in section 5.4.1 below.

Figure 14.4 All participants response "I am proud that my language was chosen for the Lian Inan program"
5.4.1 “I am proud that my language was chosen for the Lian Iinan program”

Figure 14.4.1 Target Language response "I am proud that my language was chosen for the Lian Iinan program"
6. Mother Tongue Attitudes

6.1 “I enjoy learning about other languages”

Figure 15.1 "I enjoy learning about other languages"

6.2 “I am interested in helping others learn about my language”

Figure 15.2 "I am interested in helping others learn about my language"
6.3 “I enjoy telling others about my language”

Figure 15.3 "I enjoy telling others about my language"

6.4 “I think my language is important”

Figure 15.4 "I think my language is important"
6.5 “My mother tongue is important in my daily life”

Figure 15.5 "My mother tongue is important in my daily life"
7. Language Development Attitudes

7.1 “I am interested in developing materials in my language”

Figure 16.1 "I am interested in developing materials in my language"

7.2 “The people of East Timor should be working to preserve the languages of East Timor”

Figure 16.2 "The people of East Timor should be working to preserve the languages of East Timor"
7.3 “There should be more literature and media in my mother tongue”

Figure 16.3 "There should be more literature and media in my mother tongue"

7.4 “Professionals should be responsible for documenting lian inan”

Figure 16.4 "Professionals should be responsible for documenting mother tongues"
7.5 “My traditional stories should be available for my children”

![Figure 16.5](image16.5.png)

7.6 “The people who speak my lian inan should be responsible for documenting lian inan”

![Figure 16.6](image16.6.png)