

# *Languages in Education in East Timor*

Katrina Langford , Agustinho Caet, Prof. John Hajek

**Saturday 23 July 2011, Brunswick Town Hall, Melbourne**

- Katrina-       - The Languages of Timor  
                  - Some Timor language myths  
                  - Language in Education  
                  - Current Education situation
- Agustinho      - What does mother tongue mean?  
                  - What is mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)?  
                  - Why MTB-MLE is needed
- John            - Some mother tongue resources  
                  - How can you help?

## **The Languages of Timor**

Katrina Langford

- May 2002- constitution of RDTL comes into effect
- Recognizes Timor as multilingual society
- Tetum and Portuguese are co-official languages (constitution article 13.1)
- English and Indonesian are working languages (article 159)
- Tetum and other national languages should be valued and developed by the state (13.2)

### Local languages of East Timor

- Adabe (atauro)
- Baikeno (oecussi)
- Bunak (central interior Timor)
- Fataluku (lautem)

- Galolen (manatutu, laleia)
- Habun (laclubar)
- Idate (laclubar)
- Kairui-Midiki (baucau)
- Kemak (maliana)
- Lakelai (same)
- Makasae (baucau)
- Mambae (ermera, aileu, ainaro)
- Nauete (Uato lari)
- Tetun Terik (south coast- suai and atambua)
- Tukudede (liquica)
- Waima'a (baucau)

### **Some Timor Language Myths**

- Tetun Dili comes from Portuguese
- Tetun Dili and Tetun Terik are the same language
- Other languages are 'dialects' of Tetun
  - Languages not written yet
  - Not 'real' languages

Dialect- mutually intelligible

## Multilingualism in Timor-Leste

**L1s:**The national languages (community, indigenous, heritage languages).  
Tetum is L1 for around 30% of population (increasing).

**L2:**Currently Tetum is L2/3 for most people (around 86%).

**L3/4:**Portuguese (around 36%) and/or Indonesian (around 60%) depending on age West  
close to border (Maliana, Oecussi, Suai- Increased levels of Indonesian)

**L5:**English (around 20%).

*Capability*, i.e. “the capacity to speak, read or write or any combination of the above as  
informed by the interviewee” (Direcção Nacional de Estatística, 2006, p. 47)  
Adult literacy rates

## Current Enrolment Levels

- 70% of kids drop out of school by grade 6

-14% of children in primary school are repeating a class level.

— 34% of these children are repeating Grade 1

(ministry of education data: April 2008 data for 2006/7)



East Timor is not unique!



Same problems in many other countries



No one problem



Language issues large part of problem

## Languages in Education

- Portuguese and Tetun. Base Law for Education (Law 14/2008) “The teaching languages of the Timorese education system are Tetun and Portuguese” (Article 8)

- Tetun is L1 for around 30% of population (increasing).

- Portuguese not L1

- Tetun is L2/3 for most people (around 86%).

- Portuguese L3/4 (around 36%)

Mother Tongue-  
Based Multilingual  
Education  
(MTB-MLE)

- Initiative of Ministry of Education through establishment of National Education Commission
- Focus- initial years of schooling
- Aim- overcome some current problems
- Support from many at all levels
- Potential lack of support from some
  - Perception that this initiative is ‘anti’ Portuguese / Tetun
  - BUT... Will support better learning of official languages Portuguese and Tetun

**Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in  
Timor-Leste**

**Saturday 23 July 2011**

**Brunswick Town Hall, Melbourne**

Agustinho Caet,

Ministry of Education, Timor-Leste

**What is meant by mother tongue/ lian-inan ou língua materna?**

A language or languages:

- spoken in the home and/or community;
- that one has learnt first (L1);
- one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others;
- one knows best; and/or
- one uses most.

UNESCO 2003, Education in Multilingual World, p. 15

**What is mother tongue-based multilingual education?**

- A structured program providing a strong foundation in the L1 and successful bridging to additional languages.
- MTB-MLE enables the use of all languages in the curriculum for lifelong learning.
- Children able to operate equally in their community language and their additional language(s).

Dekker, Malone, 2001

**MTB-MLE curriculum and teaching methods ...**

- Build on what is known about how children learn best.
- Begin with what children know (mother tongue) and then move to the unknown (new language).
- Allow the child to be more engaged in learning.
- Use culturally familiar concepts to teach basic concepts in the curriculum.

### **MTB-MLE curriculum and teaching methods ...**

- Use the language the child knows best to teach reading and writing.
- 6. Build on child's known vocabulary in their L1 and adds the L2 vocabulary using the L1 as medium of instruction.
- Allow the child to develop cognitive skills in a language they are already using for thinking.
- Emphasise understanding, meaning and communication as well as accuracy and correctness.

### **Basic Education Act 2008**

- Article 12d: To “guarantee the mastery of Tetum and Portuguese.”
- Article 12e: To provide learning of a first foreign language.\*
- English to be taught from Grade 5 according to the National Education Strategic Plan.
- Article 12g: To “develop knowledge and appreciation of the official and national languages.”

### **Why mother tongue-based multilingual education for Timor-Leste ?**

- Appropriate for a nation seeking to interact with the wider world and maintain its distinctive identity.
- Promotes equal access to education.
- Need for disadvantaged, minority and rural populations to attend and succeed at school. Promote EFA.
- All East Timorese languages are fundamental elements of local and national identity.
- Facilitates learning of the co-official languages, Portuguese and Tetum.

## LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION MODEL

Pre Primary – Mother Tongue

Grade 1-3 -                      **Oral Tetun Introduced**  
   Mother Tongue  
   **Oral Tetun continued**  
   **Oral Port. introduced**  
Grade 4-                      12                      **Bilingual Tetun/Port.**  
   **Mother tongue if possible**



English is taught as a foreign language from                      Grade 7. Some schools may begin teaching it at Grade 5 depending on capacity of the schools.



Indonesian is taught as an elective in Grade 7.



At lower secondary level, Portuguese and Tetum are languages of instruction.

### **Necessary elements**

- Orthography (spelling system) development
- Production of learning materials
- Teacher training
- Public awareness / socialization
- Community involvement
- Political commitment and funding

### **Demonstration schools**



To introduce national languages at pre-primary level in three districts                      in six willing pre-primary schools linked to six primary schools (Oecusse, Manatuto, Lautem).

- Expected to begin in early 2012.

### **Teaching assistants**

- Where qualified teachers do not speak the students' local language, they are supported by **teaching assistants (TAs)** from the local community.
- TAs are phased out as more teachers are trained and teaching assistants themselves train as qualified teachers.

### **Councils for the promotion of mother tongues**

- Representatives from local communities to work voluntarily with local and international linguists to advise in development of orthographies and dictionaries of their languages.
- Two councils already functioning in Manatuto and Oecusse.
- To work closely with teachers to develop reading and teaching materials in the national languages.
- The INL works towards production of harmonised and agreed orthographies and additional linguistic resources, e.g. dictionaries for the national languages.

### **How can stakeholder groups help promote MTB-MLE?**

- Speech Communities: Local knowledge, support, teacher aides, materials writing.
- Donor agencies: Encourage positive climate; develop policy; develop curriculum guidelines; train teachers and trainers; provide funding.
- NGOs: Linguistic expertise; train teachers; develop curricula; facilitate development of literature; provide funding.
- Academic institutions: Collect information; train teachers and speakers, provide linguistic expertise.



## **Resources for Mother Tongue Literacy**

John Hajek

- Why mother tongue literacy?
- How to support official language policy?
- What is currently available in mother tongue resources?
- How are resources developed?
- Myth: making resources is expensive and requires special technical skills

### **Chicken Little (1)**

- Adaptation of traditional story presented in Indonesian children's book
- Pictures drawn by hand with pen, pencil, and \$2 pack of textas
- Editing in Microsoft word

Governing principles: no special skill, no cost

### **Chicken Little (2)**

- Availability – worldwide
- [www.rumaccc.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.rumaccc.unimelb.edu.au)
- In what formats? Why?
- New applications – translation into non-ET languages – many previously unwritten

- Developing new orthographies

**Graded 'little readers series'**

- Currently 20 books and more on the way
- Networking---- Sue Worcester, qualified teacher, educator and publisher of kid's book in Tetun.
- Series of kids books produced with excellent quality pictures and based on teaching methodology (readers graded from simple to complex)  
Kids producing own books
- Many hands- kids books with drawings by Timorese children
- Community involvement and engagement

**Translation into local languages**

- Native speaker together with linguist (to ensure consistency in writing)

**CURRENTLY:**

- Many Hands books: Tetun and Fataluku
- Chicken Little reader series: Tetun, Fataluku, Waima'a, Baikenu
- Chicken little books: 15?? Local languages as well as many other languages

**Cost so far....**

- Writing /adaption of books \$0
- Illustrations \$0
- Translations \$0
- Editing \$0
- Production cost of printing

### **How can you help?**

- Subsidizing printing costs
- Taking books across to Timor if printed in Australia
- Networking (writers, illustrators, teachers, education specialists, schools)
- Producing new materials

**Thank you - any questions?**