MULTILINGUALISM IN AND OUTSIDE ADULT LITERACY CLASSES IN EAST TIMOR:

THE POSITION OF REGIONAL LANGUAGES

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Broad study:
73 literacy groups visited in 8 districts
Self-reported language proficiency by learners in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste (percentages; N=756)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regional language</th>
<th>Tetum (Terik)</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td></td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>77.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Self-reported language proficiency by teachers in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste (percentages; N=110)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regional language</th>
<th>Tetum (Terik)</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Self-reported language use by adult literacy teachers in social and institutional domains (percentages; N=110)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Regional language</th>
<th>Tetum (Terik)</th>
<th>Tetum / TT &amp; Reg.lang.</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>Combinations</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Husband/wife</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>79.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>88.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours</td>
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<td>33.6</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>District admin</td>
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<td>93.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20 classes observed in in-depth study
Multilingual classroom interaction in adult literacy education in TL (1)

• 4 different languages were used: Tetum, the regional language, Portuguese, Indonesian.

• Literacy teaching primarily in Tetum (target language and LOI).

• Regional languages used for extra explanations, repetitions of teaching points, translations, and small talk.

• Portuguese letter names like (/ʒi’gɛ/ for g, /ʒɔtɐ/ for j, /heɡɛ/ for h, and /ɛli/, /ɛmi/, /ɛni/ for l, m and n) were used in 14 classes.

• Subject-related language was in Tetum, with frequent use of Portuguese and Indonesian words.

• Numbers (quantity, ages, amounts of money) were referred to in Indonesian and Portuguese, sometimes in Tetum.
Multilingual classroom interaction in adult literacy education in TL (2)

• On some occasions, the contrast between different languages was used as a meaning-making resource: switches distinguished different kinds of talk.

• On other occasions, teachers and learners simply drew on the communicative resources available to them without attributing particular meanings to the use of particular languages, ‘polylinguaging’ (Jørgensen et al., 2011).

• Overall impression: people were getting things done multilingually.

• The extensive use of regional languages and Tetum and the limited use of Portuguese in adult literacy classes deviates from the language-in-education policies for formal education in Timor-Leste.

• Regional languages appeared to serve as key communicative resources.
Multilingual classroom interaction in adult literacy education in TL (3)

• Tetum would be the ‘on-stage’ language in adult literacy classes in Timor-Leste, and the regional languages the ‘backstage’ languages (Arthur, 2001).

• The teachers and learners seemed to use the full repertoires of linguistic resources available to them (Blommaert, 2013) to make meaning and to make sense of the things they teach and learn.

• Teachers and learners tried to find ‘local pragmatic solutions’ (Lin, 2001) to the challenges involved in taking on a – for most – new language of teaching and learning.
Exploration of the possibilities of using regional languages also as target language (alongside Tetum) in adult literacy classes

• Advantages and disadvantages; pros and cons seen from the perspective of:
  • learners
    status, school, future, modern
  • teachers, coordinators
    easier because own language, spelling, materials, organisation
  • literacy scholars
    - Literacy in L1 facilitates literacy in L2 (Benson, 2005; Bühmann & Trudell, 2008; UNESCO, 2007)
    - L1 seen as ‘only of limited modern utility’, leading to segregation (Coulmas, 1984:15)
    - Discussions use of mother tongues in prim. ed in TL (Cabral, 2013; Taylor-Leech, 2013)

• Experience in 2007 with Hakat ba Oin in Fataluku
References

Thank you for your attention

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