

The Impact of Language Policy on National Identity in Timor-Leste from an Incrementalism Perspective

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Abstract. In the early years of its existence, Timor-Leste's government adopted a number of policies to build a national identity in order to achieve national stability and development, of which language policy was an important component. In the wake of the 2006 crisis in Timor-Leste, the government has continued to improve its language policy in response to the social situation. This paper presents a systematic analysis of East Timorese language policy through progressivism theory. It is argued that although improvements in East Timorese language policy have continued, they have been slow and still favour Portuguese. This has created intergenerational differences and marginalised unofficial language groups. This has undoubtedly harmed the construction of its national identity, and the lack of legislation has put Tetum, the national language, in a relatively awkward position. This paper argues that there is still much room for reform in the educational and legislative aspects of language policy in East Timor.

Keywords: Timor-Leste, language policy, national identity, incrementalism.

1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste was established on 20 May 2002, after having been colonized by Portugal and Indonesia. As a newly formed country, Timor-Leste is still deficient in nation-building, although it has undergone a three-year transition period guided by the United Nations. Many policies have been copied from other countries and not implemented in the national context, causing a range of problems. National identity is an essential element of a country's stability and development and is one of the main tasks of nation-building. Since the founding of the country, Timor-Leste has introduced a series of policies to build a national identity, and language is one of the key directions. Timor-Leste is ethnically rich and linguistically diverse, with 20 national languages present in the country. Geographical and local cultural influences have prevented the formation of a unified nation [1]. The multilingualism of Timor-Leste was further developed under the Portuguese 'linguistic laissez-faire policy'. Unlike Portugal, former Indonesian President Soeharto adopted a strong assimilationist policy to strengthen his rule" [2]. The original social life and cultural beliefs of Timor-Leste, including the language, were severely disrupted. Since independence, the Timor-Leste government has promulgated a number of language-related laws and regulations to promote the development of language education and language legislation. The purpose of these measures is to get rid of Indonesia's influence and build East Timor's national identity. Language policy is a special form of public policy and can be analyzed systematically using public policy models. However, the current research on language policy in Timor-Leste has focused on the theoretical aspects of language planning and there is still a gap in the use of public policy models. The development of language policy in Timor-Leste is based on a step-by-step revision of the initial policy, which is in line with the characteristics of the progressivist model. This paper, therefore, seeks to use the progressivist model to review language policy in Timor-Leste and to analyze its impact on the construction of national identity on this basis, to provide some reference for the formulation of language policy and the construction of national identity in Timor-Leste.

2. Definition of Relevant Concepts

2.1. National Identity

The concept of identification was developed by Sigmund Freud, who believed that identification is the process of emotional and psychological convergence between an individual and another person, a group, or an imitated figure and that it is an exploration of self-knowledge [3]. Man does not exist in isolation, but in society, and therefore his self-perception must be based on his social existence and the social relations that result from it. In other words, one perceives oneself through the other. In this relationship constructed between the self and the other, one can determine that self-constitutes identity. The object of this identification can be either individual or collective. National identity is therefore, in fact, the concrete expression of identity at the national level. That is citizens' sense of belonging, political allegiance, and sense of responsibility, pride, and patriotism towards their country [4].

Identity is a subjective social construct that is mediated by factors such as history, geography, institutions, collective memory and the imagination of individuals, as well as power. The meaning of these factors, however, is determined by the subject of the construction of collective identity and its purpose [5]. National identity can therefore be constructed in a variety of ways, including through the political institutions, policies, education, and media implemented by the state. Generally speaking, the elements underlying the construction of national identity can be divided into two categories: cultural factors and political factors. Cultural factors in the construction of national identity refer to history, language, traditions and customs, and collective memory, which give citizens a 'homogeneous' identity. Under the influence of these cultures, citizens strengthen the distinction between 'us' and 'the other' and develop a sense of national identity. The political element refers to the state's political system, ruling institutions, and related legal systems. The political element of the state empowers and protects the rights of citizens, while citizens support the state's political system and fulfil their obligations as citizens, thus forming a political community and developing their national identity [6] [7].

2.2. Incrementalism

Incrementalism was proposed in 1959 by the famous American political scientist Charles E. Lindblom in his article "The Science of Progressive Tuning". The theory was developed based on a critique of the traditional rational decision-making model. Lindblom argues that decisions are not fully rational in their formation and cannot be 'optimal' due to time and cost constraints. The theory was developed based on a critique of the traditional rational decision-making model. Lindblom argues that decisions are not fully rational in their formation and cannot be 'optimal' in reality due to time and cost constraints. And in this theory, decision-making is only a small revision of the original policy on top of it; it is based on experience, and through a process of gradual change to eventually obtain a consistent policy [8]. In other words, the theory of incrementalism means that decision-makers use a progressive approach to modify existing policies based on existing legitimate policies. Through a series of small quantitative changes, the policy objectives are achieved through gradual qualitative changes in the context of social stability. Incrementalism theory contains the following three main features: first, the principle of step-by-step. Firstly, the principle of the step-by-step approach. Decision-making is regarded as a continuous process of gradual repair and correction of mistakes; secondly, the principle of qualitative to quantitative change. Secondly, the principle of qualitative change to quantitative change, that is, decision-making is a gradual process from many small changes up to large changes. Thirdly, the principle of seeking change in stability. That is, to make small amendments to existing policies, to adopt a gradual decision-making idea, to control the cost of decision-making to the greatest extent possible, and to maintain the stability of decision-making.

3. The Development of Language Policy in Timor-Leste under Progressivism

According to Ching-Wen Tu, the process of language policy reform and development in Timor-Leste after independence can be broadly categorized into the following four periods. The first stage was during the early years of the country's establishment when the government stopped teaching Indonesian and constructed the education system in Portuguese and Tetum; the second stage was around the political crisis of 2006-2007 when the original language policy was suspended and the government decided to develop the use of Tetum and Portuguese simultaneously; the third stage was the period of political stability in Timor-Leste when the government gradually transitioned from encouraging mother-tongue teaching to official language teaching; the fourth phase is the period of the new government, from 2017 to the present, when Timor-Leste's language policy has again swung and in favor of Portuguese [9].

3.1. The Initial Objectives of the Policy are Clear But off the Mark

At the beginning of the East Timorese government's independence, to speed up the process of ridding the local population of Indonesian influence, Timor-Leste's government opted for the total elimination of the Indonesian language from the process of indigenous education. In reality, Tetum was widely spoken as a lingua franca throughout Timor-Leste at the time, but the language policy of the Timorese government chose to introduce Portuguese and elevate its social status rather than making Tetum the language of choice for education. Information from the Asia Foundation survey (Table 1) shows the proportion of the population speaking different languages in Timor-Leste at the time [10]. According to the chart, it is easy to see that Tetum speakers are the majority in Timor-Leste, while Portuguese speakers are only a small minority, objectively reflecting an incorrect policy bias that ignores the majority in favor of the minority.

Table 1. Percentage of current population of different language speakers in Timor-Leste.

Language	Percentage of
Tetum	88%
Indonesian	40%
Portuguese	7%

According to a report published by the United Nations Development Programme in 2004, the Portuguese literacy rate of Timorese nationals was only 5% at the time, while their Tetum literacy rate was 82%, confirming that the language policy of Timor-Leste at the time was off the mark [11]. Subsequently, Timor-Leste's language policy, within the constraints of the Education Policy Framework 2004-2008, introduced Tetum into the education system, while allowing for the development of Tetum-related teaching materials [12]. However, the large shortage of Tetum language teaching materials in Timor-Leste has made it difficult to develop Tetum language courses in schools. In addition, in 2006, the government of Timor-Leste announced that Portuguese would be the primary language of instruction in the field of teaching and learning, with Tetum as a secondary language [13]. This has once again raised the status of Portuguese in Timor-Leste and has again squeezed the space for Tetum and its speakers in society.

3.2. The new policy addresses the shortcomings of the previous policy to improve

Timor-Leste is a linguistically rich country with 16 recognized native languages in addition to Tetum and Portuguese, the official languages. As a result, children whose mother tongue is not the official language will face significant stress in their education if they do not have a relatively stable and regulated choice of language to use and choose from. To address this issue, the Ministry of Education of Timor-Leste issued the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education Policy in 2010, which was piloted in 12 kindergartens and primary schools in three districts of Timor-Leste from 2012-2015 [12]. The policy starts with the mother tongue, which is easily understood by students and intersperses this with Tetum and Portuguese, effectively increasing the receptiveness of students in a

progressive manner, improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and effectively promoting the spread of official languages in the education sector.

3.3. The new policy has been enriched based on the previous policy

In 2015, the Government of Timor-Leste issued Decree No. 4 "Approval of the National Curriculum based on the first and second study levels of basic education" to improve students' access to education and build national identity. This decree proposes to give priority to the mother tongue as the basis for teaching, followed by the Tetum language. Once the pupils have mastered Tetum, they will then learn Portuguese. The objective is to enable pupils to master both Tetum and Portuguese at the primary school level to facilitate further educational requirements [14]. This policy follows from the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy and, to implement it in greater depth, the Timor-Leste Ministry of Education has compiled a large number of teaching materials in Portuguese and Tetum between 2014 and 2017, to some extent filling the gaps in the various teaching materials.

4. Characteristics of Language Policy in Timor-Leste from a Progressivist Perspective

4.1. Mutual debugging between policy objectives and policy programs

This paper analyzes language policy in Timor-Leste from an incrementalist perspective and finds that its language policy goals and language policy programs have been mutually tuned in a process of continuous policy improvement. Language policy in Timor-Leste is, by its nature, a process of small-scale incremental change, with new policies reflecting the commitment and continuity of previous policies. For example, in 2018, the Timorese government again revised Decree IV of 2015, and the policy goal was modified from prioritizing Tetum as the language of instruction to a program with Portuguese as the primary language of instruction and Tetum as a secondary language. The Timorese government has so far continued to improve its language policy in various areas, and it can be observed in the evolution of language policy in Timor-Leste that phasing is a distinctive feature of the country's language policy. However, the transitions between the early years of the state, the political crisis, the period of political stability, and the new government have also been somewhat innovative, as in the case of the pilot project on mother tongue-based multilingual education (EMBLI) that the Timorese government began in 2012. The language policy in Timor-Leste is characterized by continuity, stages, and innovation in terms of the subject, the object, and the means of policy.

This paper collates selected Timorese language policies to produce Table 2. The policy has evolved from a rationalist perspective to a progressive one, improving its policy decrees step by step to adapt them to reality. Although there are still many problems with language policy in Timor-Leste and the focus of language policy has wavered, it is still evident that the government has made efforts in the area of language to strengthen the national identity of the Timorese people.

Table 2. Language Policy Development in Timor-Leste.

Time	Some relevant language policy decrees
The early years of the country's existence & Periods of political crisis 2002-2007	Law 8/2004: civil servants are obliged to use the official language as the language of public service; Directive on the Use of the Official Language in the Justice System all court documents "are to be written in the official language; all legal documents are required to be written in Portuguese within the courts Education: the Indonesian language was removed from the school curriculum, transitional bilingualism (Tetum → Portuguese) in the Education Policy Framework 2004-2008, with Portuguese as the medium of instruction, supplemented by Tetum The 2010 Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education Policy allows for the use of other indigenous languages as languages of instruction in kindergarten and primary schools initially, then moving to Tetum and then to Portuguese
Period of political stability 2008-2017	Article 4 of the 2015 Decree approving the National Curriculum based on the first and second cycle of basic education encourages the language of instruction to be changed from the first language → Tetum → Portuguese, with two official languages at the end of primary school Sixth Constitutional Programme 2017: "Develop measures to make the legal system truly bilingual" and work to ensure "the full and equal use of both languages".
Under the new government 2018 to date	2018 Modification of the fourth decree of 2015, with Portuguese as the main language and Tetum as a supplement 2023 the government approved Portuguese as the language of instruction in the Timorese education system, with Tetum and other national languages playing a supporting role

4.2. The process of compromise among multiple policy actors

The socio-linguistic ecology of Timor-Leste has been influenced mainly by the Portuguese colonial power, the Indonesian colonial power, and the forces of globalization, which has led the Timorese government to consider the historical factors behind the different languages and their local impact when formulating and revising language policies [15]. Firstly, the Portuguese colonial power has had the greatest impact on Timor-Leste, having become integrated into the history and culture of the country over a long period of colonization. And, because of the long period of assistance received from the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), Timor-Leste has had to maintain its Portuguese-speaking cultural identity to maintain its special ties with other Portuguese-speaking countries. Secondly, for geopolitical and geographical reasons, Timor-Leste needs to include the Indonesian language in its planning. Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia, and it shares a border with Timor-Leste. During the almost thirty years of Indonesian colonization, many Timorese people began to use Indonesian as a working language. Finally, the East Timorese government cannot ignore the impact of the forces of globalization that have come with the times. Both the takeover by the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor and the ongoing assistance from other international organizations in areas such as economics and security have led to some adaptation of East Timor's language policy to the influence of multiple foreign languages.

5. The impact of language policy on national identity in Timor-Leste

Language policies are closely related to the construction of national identity, and the implementation and variation of different language policies can lead to different effects on the construction of national identity. Language policy is a double-edged sword that can contribute to the formation of national identity but can also sometimes defeat the original purpose of national identity

and become an important factor in social discontent and alienation. The following section analyses the impact of language policy in Timor-Leste on its national identity at both cultural and political levels.

5.1. Cultural aspects of East Timorese national identity are strengthened but still lacking

East Timor has given constitutional primacy to the official languages of Tetum and Portuguese and has weakened Indonesian to emphasize East Timorese's national character. However, the policy as a whole favours Portuguese over Tetum, the national language of the country. The emphasis placed on Portuguese by the East Timorese leadership has led to resistance from the younger generation and intergenerational conflict. Language is the carrier of national culture, a marker of national identity, and the most stable element of national and ethnic identity. As a newly established nation-state that has just emerged from colonization, the primary task of Timor-Leste is to build a national identity to promote national stability and development. This requires the government to establish the native language as the official language and to give it supremacy to express its national identity. In this way, people can distinguish themselves from the 'other' and strengthen their identity as 'Timorese'. The Southeast Asian nation-states around Timor-Leste are good examples, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Burma. After they left their colonial sovereign states, they adopted a monolingual policy, strengthening the status of the main national language and weakening the colonial language, thus building up a relatively stable national identity. In terms of language policy in Timor-Leste, the government aims to eliminate Indonesian influence by constitutionally establishing Tetum and Portuguese as official languages of the country and weakening the status of Indonesian. At the same time, the Portuguese language is used to maintain and strengthen ties with Portuguese-speaking countries and to promote the country's development and prosperity. In terms of the effects of the implementation of the language policy, the influence of Indonesian has indeed been weakened among the new generation in East Timor. However, the policy's excessive promotion of Portuguese hindered the development of Tetum. Firstly, the national anthem, which is a national symbol in the Constitution, is recorded in Portuguese. Secondly, official documents and public information, such as government and court documents, are only published in Portuguese. Thirdly, in the first two stages of education, Portuguese mastery has been the goal of student education for the last ten years. The national language, Tetum, has been relegated to a secondary position as an auxiliary language of instruction [16]. In addition, many indigenous languages in the country have gradually died out due to a lack of attention. These policies have to some extent affected the use of Tetum by the East Timorese and have prevented people from building their identity through the language. Although the Government has continued to improve the policy considering the situation, it has only remained at the legislative stage and the progress of concrete implementation has been slow.

In addition, the turbulent history of East Timor before independence has led to differences in the use of the official language at various stages of its history. This difference has led to intergenerational differences in the identity of East Timorese in the official language, which in turn has hindered the construction of a national identity. Generations are an important type of structural difference in society and an important window into social symptoms. According to sociologist Karl Mannheim, intergenerational groups develop a separate 'historical-social psychology' or collective consciousness because of the social changes they experience during the same period [17]. They are also influenced by the values and behaviours that distinguish them from other intergenerational groups. As a core part of values, national identity is also subject to intergenerational differences due to social change [18]. Timor-Leste can be divided into three periods based on specific changes: the pre-1975 Portuguese colonial period, the Indonesian colonial period, and the independence period. During these three periods, the government adopted different linguistic and educational policies, and these policies led to differences in language use and identity between generations of Timorese, resulting in intergenerational conflicts. The older generation, who lived through the Portuguese colonial period and received a Portuguese education, is the mainstay of the current leadership in Timor-Leste. They speak both Tetum and Portuguese and support the retention of the Portuguese language as a symbol

of the nation. Whereas the younger generation born and educated under Indonesian occupation has only a command of Indonesian and Tetum, the state's bias in favour of Portuguese in politics, education, law, and media propaganda has led this generation to resist Portuguese, interpreting it as the language of another country (the language of the Portuguese) [19]. The official language, as the common language of countrypeople, is a linguistic bond that is formed to bring all people together in a 'community of symbols' and to form a national identity. However, ignoring the national context, an excessive preference for Portuguese will hinder the development of identity.

5.2. The marginalization of non-official language groups at the political level weakens the group's identification with the state

There are many national languages in East Timor, but only the official language is used in the media, courts, government, and other institutions. This excludes non-official language groups from political life and is not conducive to the development of national identity. The identity of the modern state begins with the citizenship it possesses. According to Marshall's theory, modern state citizenship is determined by three major systems of rights: civil, political, and social rights [20]. In other words, it is in the process of pursuing and realizing these rights that citizens interact with the structural system of the state and its institutions to establish their national identity [21]. In this sense, the government needs to empower citizens to participate in the politics of the state to construct identity. According to the 2010 Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census, published by the Timor-Leste National Statistics Office, 36.3% of the population is native Tetum speaking, while only 0.06% is native Portuguese speaking. In this context, the government of Timor-Leste requires the use of Portuguese in official matters; in the legal institutions, the drafting of laws, the formulation of laws and even legal decisions are conducted in Portuguese, excluding a large part of the population who do not speak Portuguese from the government and the courts, which affects the transparency of the government and the judiciary of Timor-Leste and hinders the dissemination of policies and laws among the citizens. Moreover, it increases citizens' distrust of the government and creates an identity crisis. While the Timorese government is aware of the problem and has gradually taken steps to strengthen the use of Tetum in government and legal documents, it has neglected non-official language groups. The fact that over half of the population in Timor-Leste is not native speakers of the official language, combined with the inequality and backwardness of educational resources and standards, has marginalized a large number of people and limited the construction of national identity [22]. While the Timorese government is aware of the problem and has gradually taken steps to strengthen the use of Tetum in government and legal documents, it has neglected non-official language groups. With more than half of the population in Timor-Leste speaking a non-official language, and with uneven and lagging educational resources and standards, many people are marginalized, limiting the construction of a national identity.

6. Conclusion

This paper examines the impact of language policy on national identity in Timor-Leste in the context of progressive decision theory and summarizes the problems of the current language policy by analyzing its existing language policy. In the current situation, the current language policy of Timor-Leste hurts the construction of its national identity, and the lack of legislation has put Tetum, the national language, in a relatively awkward situation.

This paper proposes some suggestions to the government of Timor-Leste to provide a path for its language policy to solve the problem of national identity: first, vigorously promote the excellent traditional culture of the nation, based on the Tetum language group, carry out Tetum cultural activities, and enhance the national pride of the people; second, revise the education system, effectively replace the existing educational resources, increase the proportion of Tetum language teaching, compile and improve the Tetum language Third, legislation should be enacted to raise the status of the Tetum language, to include requirements for the use of Tetum in the employment of state

officials, and to promote public recognition and enthusiasm for learning Tetum through the establishment of laws and regulations, to lay a broader foundation for the development of other fields.

Most of the current studies on language policy and national identity in Timor-Leste are in the field of language education policy. By examining the history and development process of Timor-Leste, this paper is based on language legislation policy and starts from the aspect of job opportunities, thus reflecting some negative effects of its language policy on national identity. The research in this paper will be beneficial for other scholars to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the development of language policy in Timor-Leste and provide a reference for other scholars' research. Due to the current epidemic situation in China and other objective reasons, the author could not go to Timor-Leste to conduct a systematic field survey on the national identity of Timorese nationals. The author expects to be able to communicate with local speakers of different languages in the future and lay a good foundation for further research.

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