

The Revitalization of the Portuguese Language in Timor-Leste

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Abstract

Timor-Leste represents a multilingual nation, comprising its indigenous languages, and languages from abroad, which all coexist. As a former Portuguese colony, the Portuguese language was official during its colonial era. However, the country has transited across several official languages throughout its history. With the country's independence in 2002, the newly formed constitution instituted Portuguese and Tetum as the official and instructional languages, although the Portuguese language is currently spoken by only part of the population.

In this paper, I discuss the mythical significance of the Portuguese language in Timor-Leste, and the revitalization of the language through these ideologies. For this, I initially observe and analyze views, often seen as destined by fate, of the language in the post-independence country. Central to data collection are interactions with and analysis of the discourses of managers and policy makers speaking on language (planning/policy) decisions in the Timorese education system following independence. The majority of these interviewees exhibited patent optimism regarding the permanence and dissemination of Portuguese in future Timor-Leste, yet while acknowledging pressures to alter the language at schools, and the imminent inconsistency of the reintroduction policy of Portuguese in the education system.

The study finds that, through decipherment of the language ideologies of the sample set cohort, the use of the language appears to correlate with the myth of national origin, with the construction of

national identity, and the establishment of the (nation) state, presenting a transcendental signifier, or at least master narrative. I also include ‘mystics’ as a category, that is, those who bind the Portuguese language to the invisible and miraculous forces construed as resurrecting a dying national ideal. Those with pragmatic intentions seek evidence for progress in the implementation of the language and its policies, while those with idealistic intentions view any movement as a journey towards progress. This confidence in the future of the language and nation state, mediated by language ideologies, is multi-layered, and conceptions vary substantially.

Through a qualitative analysis (Biklen & Bogdan 1991) I thus analyze ideologies of the revitalization processes of the Portuguese language, to ultimately build on a socio-anthropological framework, drawing from the work of Bell (2003) and his concepts of collective memory, governing myth, mythscape, and national identity. This analysis ultimately determines that the revitalization of the Portuguese language in Timor-Leste is central to its policy and planning, and more so for the progress of Timorese nationalism.

Keywords: *Mythscape, Timor-Leste, national identity, revitalization, Portuguese language*

Introduction

This paper observes how the languages of a nation constitute or at least contribute to the mythology of national origin as an element of collective identity. Such is the case in Timor-Leste and its national construction during both its ancient and recent histories. As such, I seek to evidence that the Portuguese language is central to the governing origin myth of the Timorese nation. Here, the paper observes the official myth genesis and revitalization of the Portuguese language through speech analysis of a sample of participants. Acknowledging the significance of the Portuguese language in the unity of the Timorese nation appears to correlate with the resurrection of Timor-Leste as an independent nation, following a two-decade dormancy. The Timor-Leste national and language identities have subsequently justified the need for autonomy, where a new governing myth of national origin has emerged.

Until 1975, Timor-Leste was a Portuguese colony. Portuguese navigators first arrived on the island of Timor in 1512, though frequent trade contacts began in the mid-16th century. In the early 17th century, the colonization of islands in the region was extensively disputed through feuds between the Portuguese and Dutch crowns. Finally, in 1851, the Portuguese governor of the archipelagos east of Java ceded sovereignty over the western part of the island of Timor and other islands in the region to the Netherlands (Durand 2009). From that date on, the Timorese national identity was forged slowly and distinctly from Indonesian identity in general and from West Timor in particular. This development of national identity has mainly emerged from two factors: Catholic religion and the Portuguese language (Felgueiras 2001; Gunn 2001). As the Portuguese residents in Timor constituted a small

percentage of the overall population, colonization represented much more a commercial and religious intention than a political one. This colonization took place at the level of the elites. The children of noble families in traditional kingdoms had strong and direct access to schools, which for a long time belonged to various orders of the Catholic church. This elite received school education in the Portuguese language with religious principles and doctrines, and with this motive, identity in the region has always been linked to both Catholicism and the Portuguese Language (Ramos-Horta 1996).

However, in the 1970s, Timor-Leste underwent a process of decolonization, as did other former Portuguese colonies. Alongside this process of decolonization and internal struggle for power, the Indonesian dictatorial regime of President Suharto invaded and occupied the territory of Timor-Leste in 1975 (Magalhães 1999). For a period of 24 years, armed guerrillas, diplomatic representatives and student resistance fought for independence, and ultimately claimed an identity distinct from Indonesia. This occupation lasted until 1999, at which point a UN referendum was affected, with the majority of the Timorese (78%) population voting for independence from the country of Indonesia.

The Linguistic Situation in Timor-Leste

The country of Timor-Leste has developed over a long history of transition across languages, at official and educational levels. All major political changes in East Timor mediated a change in each respective official language. These processes directly affected educational policies and the operation of the educational system. The most recent transition began with the independence of the country, at which time the 2002 Constitution announced Portuguese and Tetum1 the official languages.

Throughout its documented history, Timor-Leste has always presented itself as a multilingual nation. Despite the fact that the Portuguese colony did not recognize or officialize any of the 32 local languages (Thomaz 2002) during the 450 years of colonization, no language was extinguished. This is largely owing to the fact that Portuguese interference on the island was minimal and only small and elite groups had direct access to school and religious education in the Portuguese language (Gunn 2001). Communication within indigenous groups preserved indigenous languages, while the communication between ethnolinguistic groups effected the emergence and development of Tetum. According to Thomaz (2002), Tetum was already a vernacular language prior to Portuguese settlement on the island.

In addition to the many distinct language groups found within Timorese society, still coexisting languages from abroad have significantly impacted on its history. Foremost, the Portuguese language was taught to the Timorese elites during the 450 years of Portuguese colonization. For Timorese society, the Portuguese language facilitated Timor-Leste's uniqueness from other Southeast Asian nations, thus further intensifying the country's identity. In addition to its Indonesian occupation, Bahasa Indonesia has also marked Timorese history. As part of the policy of integrating Timor-Leste into Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia was widely disseminated and even required in all formal environments,

such as in schools and public agencies. However, more recently, English has overtaken Bahasa Indonesia as the dominant language of communication and professional practice, in sectors such as large non-governmental organizations, among both international and local Timorese employees. This prolonged pattern of use over the past 15 years has afforded English a new status in Timor-Leste. In addition to these languages, Tetum has been studied, and its writing systems have been developed, and the language has been formally recognized as a national, official, for both general society and for school contexts. As a result of this formal recognition, Tetum has been integrated into the national education system as the most used language at the classroom. Furthermore, language mixing has also contributed to the nation's multilingualism through the migration of groups with specifically different languages. This group migration and language mixing has predominated in the capital city of Dili, but pervades other district centers.

The Constitutional Assembly of Timor-Leste, elected to establish two official languages when drafting the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2002), stipulated the following statements in Article 13 of the Constitution, that Tetum and Portuguese are the official languages of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Tetum and other national languages are valued and fostered by the State. Subsequently, Article 8 of the Basic Law of Education established the official languages and the languages of instruction, by stipulating that the languages of instruction of the Timorese educational system shall be Tetum and Portuguese (Journal of the Republic, 2008). However, since the introduction of the Portuguese language into the education system, many internal and external criticisms have arisen. These criticisms have been directed towards the inconsistency of the implementation of the linguistic policy adopted in the Constitution. Consequently, the Basic Law of Education has led to changes in approach to implementing language policy and in the national language curriculum (Indart, 2011). Therefore, government has reviewed the decision to standardize and narrow languages and is in the process of legalizing literacy in mother tongues, using Tetum as an auxiliary language in the first three years of primary education (Journal of the Republic, 2015).

The Portuguese language has always been the language of the Timorese elite, and subsequently, 95% of the population had limited fluency in this language at the time of independence. However, the Portuguese language is linked to the Timorese identity. Antunes (2014) conjectures that only a small elite population had a national identity awareness when Portugal began its decolonization; this elite sought to continually position Portuguese as the official language, and until 1975, maintained "a mythical vision of the Portuguese language. This view was elevated to a higher exponent by the brutal violence by the Indonesians" (Antunes 2014, p. 31). The "period between 1975 and 1999 is key to the birth of an idea of [Timor], of an imaginary homeland." (p. 32). As such, the Portuguese language played an important role in this process of awareness. Timor's national consciousness was initially formed only in the minds of a small elite, heir of that Christian and Lusitanian consciousness, still standing today, that progressed. And the Portuguese Language was one of the mainstays used to erect the still mythical and dreamed 'Fatherland.'

Proof of the importance of the Portuguese language for the emergence of a national identity is its use as a subversive device against any Indonesian encroachment or more overt occupation. This resistance to Indonesian occupation was mainly in the form of guerrilla armies. Portuguese was also employed in communication with allied countries seeking to support Timorese independence (Ruak 2001).

Origin Myth

Bell (2003) introduces two important concepts for national identity; collective memory and the mythology of the nation. Bell notes the significance of distinguish between due to their difference an oppositional character. Collective memory is “the product of individuals coming together to share memories of particular events, of time past” (Bell, 2003, p. 65), where these collective representations of the past must be considered mythical, since they are not truly mnemonic.

As the struggle for control of the memory of peoples and the formation of nationalist myths is debated, challenged, and overturned incessantly, Bell proposes the notion of the mythscape. This notion accommodates multiple often conflicting narratives that are written and rewritten as a constant mutating repository for the representation of the past, but with the purpose of reconstructing the present. The mythscape, however, is not as uniform as the governing myth, and questions of personal and collective identity are fundamental in understanding the dynamics of nationalism.

Bell asserts that, just like an ideology that represses the debate about possible political alternatives and rebuts its essentially contested concepts in its discourse, nationalist mythology acts to impose a definite meaning on the past, on the nation, and on its history. However, attempts at de-contestation invariably fail as there are always opposing claims and alternative readings. As such, history will never be accepted consistently and universally, and the governing myth coexists and is contested by subaltern myths which "are capable of generating their own traditions and stories, stories as likely to be concerned with past oppression and suffering at the hands of the dominant groups as by tales of national glory" (Bell 2003, p. 74). The author insists, however, that although the mythscape contains memory, the two are not synonymous, as memory can oppose myth. Memory is a “socially-framed property of individual minds, the neurologically inscribed traces of past events” (Bell 2003, p. 72) and it is only collectively retrieved through ceremonies, rituals, and celebrations, where mythology does not always favour the memory of individuals or groups.

The tension between myth and memory is evident in the distinct memories of colonialism at the time of occupation. At that time the governing myth of Indonesia was integration while memories of the former Lusophone colony were counterhegemonic to occupation. In contrast, the generation that identifies with the Indonesian language today has a memory against the hegemony of the governing myth of the Portuguese language. Emotional memories regarding independence are similarly diverse. The Portuguese and Tetum languages have thus become essential in the discourse of bringing national

unity to the multiple ethnic landscape which is present day Timor-Leste. Here, the Portuguese language is central to the national myth, thus justifying the construction of nation. As such, questioning the maintenance of the Portuguese language is to question Timor-Leste's sociolinguistic autonomy from other countries such as Indonesia. Such an interrogative stance would elicit strong reactions from the Timor-Leste populace toward language policy and Timor-Leste's partners for language development (e.g. the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP)).

I argue, then, that the mythscape of Timor comprises the continuous dynamic process of reinterpreting its national myth. This mythscape is a mixture of myths of origin, the beliefs of the power of the ancestors and the *lulik*, stories of colonial assimilation, heroic struggle for freedom, and emotional post-independence development. Here, social factors such as age, sex, religion and community become factors that motivate the interpretations of the myth, and thus contributing to a broader mythscape. The existing social conflict extends to the issue of national language. In a multilingual context, such as in Timor, no single language can fully represent nation. Conflicting linguistic identity, and contestation of the proclaimed unanimity of the Portuguese Language and national myth will always exist. Despite this, the national myth can effectively effect construction of collective identity and State.

Official Myth Genesis and the Revitaliation of the Portuguese Language

This article is part of a broader survey that identifies and observes the challenges faced in implementing policies to reintroduce the Portuguese language into the educational system of Timor-Leste. The topics cited by the interviewees were analyzed with an anthropological and a sociological approach, as Timorese society maintains non-secular traditions and beliefs in the management of political and educational matters. The focus of this analysis is the perspective of the executors of these policies themselves defined in the Constitution, through speech analysis: three former education ministers (I2, I7, I14); two former directors of the national institute for teacher training (I4, I9); three (former) directors of the Ministry of Education for primary (I1), secondary (I12) and recurrent education (I5); two (former) rectors of the Timor Lorosa'e National University (Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e - UNTL), the only public university in the country (I3, I6); two (former) deans from the UNTL Faculty of Education (I10, I13); two people significantly influencing academic language: one with great political status (a former Prime Minister – I11), and another involved in international organizations that finance and advise the Ministry of Education (I8). Some interviewees hold consecutive senior positions at the Ministry or UNTL, the national public university.

Therefore, I tried to present the criticisms of the interviewees as clearly as the defenses of the role, of assimilation and accommodation of the Portuguese language in the current Timorese context and the main intention was to describe the evaluation that they presented, guaranteeing the contradictory. Biklen and Bogdan (1994) claim that a qualitative investigation does not intend to discover the truth

about its object, but rather a specific perspective of the object. And it is precisely this approach that I intend to use at work - a contribution to the theme of a specific prism, namely: what are the socio-cultural and political causes and effects addressed by the managers of the implementation of educational policies related to the Portuguese language.

As for the type of content analysis used, I opted for evaluative analysis, which is the study of the source's attitudes towards certain objects (Vala, 2007). Still according to Quivy & Campenhoud (2008), the analysis of the evaluation focuses on the judgments formulated by the speaker. The frequency of the different judgments (or evaluations) is calculated, but also their direction (positive or negative judgment) and their intensity. I feel in a privileged position to carry out an in-depth observation and analysis because I have been working actively with managers of language policies and adult education / training for more than a decade and therefore carry out all the research in loco.

In the data collection process, a question guide was prepared in advance, but new questions and observations emerged freely during the interviews, both from the interviewer and the interviewees. The formulation of the script was articulated with a previous interpretation of the polemics of the officialization of the Portuguese language by me as researcher, based on the empirical knowledge I held on the subject. The initial questions were modified and expanded as the interviews were made with singular characters, as it was noticed that the interviewees obviously had different experiences related to specific responsibilities of their respective position, moreover they had more to say than the script suggested. This process greatly enriched the interviews. Some interviews take place in a much more open way and an initial question served only to trigger the subject and arouse the interviewee's interest in speaking freely. I think that the way in which the interviews were conducted fits entirely into the requirements of data collection in the framework of a qualitative investigation. Bogdan and Biklen (1994) argue that even when using a script, qualitative interviews offer the interviewer a range of considerable topics, which allows him/her to raise a number of topics and offer the interviewees the opportunity to shape their content.

I also highlight that some of the managers interviewed do not usually grant interviews for academic investigations, but they consented it to this work. I believe that this is due to the fact that I am known both in the Ministry of Education and in the UNTL by many former managers or even current managers. That is a fact that could compromise the objectivity of my analysis, however, I believe that the advantage of more detailed information and a more natural interview environment for a certain professional friendship between researcher and managers outweighs the risk of subjectivity of analysis. Because the reintroduction of the Portuguese language into the education system is a politically controversial issue, this prior mutual knowledge avoided the interviewees' defensive attitudes and they also had no reason to modify their speeches or behavior in the interview.

To exemplify the interviewees' familiarity with me, I quote some expressions used during the interview that clearly demonstrate it: as do you know that ...; as [you] the [Ph] doctor knows; I don't

know if [you] the [Ph] doctor knows that; you must know; maybe you should also have the knowledge (E1); now we have to see a subtlety here that I wanted to share with you ... maybe it never occurred to you ... (E3); because you know very well that in Timor you still don't value literacy; because you know very well that this in itself is very sacred to us; you can follow on television that the children are speaking Portuguese language well (E5); since 2006 when I took [Portuguese course with you] teacher Karin, right, before going to Brazil; they already have it all with the percentage of it all, this will help [your] analysis; you know that; [you] teacher Karin knows that (E6); because you know that after the referendum there was no school; I don't know if [you] the [Ph] doctor can ask the Ministry of Education; [you] the [Ph] doctor can then speak to the institute about this; as you well know, this was one of the many delicate issues that I had to deal with during my term (E7); Karin knows perfectly well that 2009 until 2012 is practically nothing good for a person to start; even you can see it in the work of some rulers; you were not here yet; don't you think so (E9); were you here [at this time]? (E12); I don't know if you know the story or not; I don't know, you can evaluate, it's not me; as you know, the books all burned; you noticed that moment; I don't know if you noticed that; if you have this data; [you] Mrs who is [there]; as you said; I don't know whether you know or not; I hope the government can work with you who are here; you saw that we managed to take the students home; only [you] Mrs who can evaluate; during that time you was here, in those difficult times; you can ask there in education (E14).

The interviewees granted an interview in their own work offices with the exception of E11 and E14 who preferred to conduct the interviews in their own homes and E9 who gave an interview in my home. E8 would also conduct the interview at my home, but she had to leave the country suddenly for health reasons and ended up sending the answers to the questions in the interview guide via e-mail. Two interviews were reused from a previous investigation, one of the interviewees was absent for a long time from the country for academic reasons and the other was also constantly on academic trips, but the interviews granted contained information relevant to this investigation. The fourteen interviews were recorded, as they were relatively long interviews. The recording also allowed the capture of emphases, expressions and hesitations in the answers that could be important for the subsequent analysis and interpretation more closely than the interviewee actually wanted to say.

Drawing from Biklen & Bogdan (1994) I employ a qualitative approach. As commonly employed strategies in Anthropological qualitative research, participant observation and the interview, semi opened in this case, I found that these methods aligned with my intentions to anthropologically describe the context in Timor-Leste. More so, I adhere to the use of small samples, whereas Biklen and Bogdan note, "given the desired detail, most studies are conducted with small samples" (p. 17). Following data collection, I include content analysis (Quivy and Campenhoudt 2008; Vala 2007) of the interviewee's comments (Indart 2017, pp. 377-382).

In this paper, I only focus on the official myth genesis and revitalization of the Portuguese language – one of the categories defined in the expanded search - through speech analysis of political figures that strongly influencing the large-scale aspects of the management of post-independence language

policies in Timor-Leste. I observe that in view of the pressures to change the language in education and the inconsistency in the policy of implementation of the Portuguese language, the education managers interviewed continue to insist on the importance of the Portuguese language to Timor-Leste. These educators maintain a very optimistic view of the dissemination of the language and of the progress of ideologies associated with the language by post-independence generations. In this paper I quote below the statements of the interviewees that are directly linked to the optimistic view of the implementation of the Portuguese language in the education system and its importance in Timorese society. Thus, the registration units of the content analysis for the category of revitalization of the Portuguese language were expressions found in the interviewees' own speeches, such as: good standard, good fluency, good speaking, good acquisition; ensure language policy; increased interest in the new generation; conviction, hope, spirit, feeling; battle won, persevering struggle, march forward; evolution, nature, development, time; revive, be alive, resurrect.

The analysis finds that the use of the Portuguese language correlates significantly with the governing myth of origin and its relevance to the construction of Timorese national identity and hence to the establishment of the state. Despite the negative prognosis made by international organizations in relation to the reintroduction of the Portuguese language, almost all the interviewees convey a significant optimism toward the dissemination of Portuguese and the growth in importance in the unity of the nation. This confidence in the future of the language and in the future through the language exhibits the inclusion of several layers. Some of the more pragmatic interviewed seek evidence in progress of the implementation of the Portuguese language at the educational system. Other more idealistic individuals see advances, however small, as a journey towards progress. There are also the mystics who bind the Portuguese language to the invisible and miraculous forces that can even revive a unified national ideal.

The advances of the Portuguese language presented by the interviewed include the effective use, albeit partial, of the Portuguese language in the education system and Parliament, the Reference Schools and respective teachers of the CPLP, and the assimilation of the policy of reintroduction of the Portuguese language by post-independence generations. The biggest challenge for the Ministry of Education, however, is in the Reference Schools³, which ensure the learning and implementation of the Portuguese language in the municipalities of Timor-Leste. These schools also predict progress in the Portuguese language in the short term. It is hoped by the interviewed that the Timorese teachers being trained in these schools and the new generation of students will disseminate the language in the future. This program impacts on the reintroduction of the Portuguese Language in the education system, providing rural populations with access to the official language.

In the words of the interviewees:

Now there are also the Reference Schools. (...) So here are the strategies that we can say that we will go with time ... the Portuguese will be spoken fluently in TL. (I1, p.6).

We are more advanced. I would say even today that most teachers are already acquiring a level of Portuguese that allows them to operate in the classroom in their respective disciplines (I3, p. 3).

By 2015 all 13 districts already have at least one reference school. (...) And so, if this works out, five or 10 years from now we will not need Portuguese or Brazilian teachers. The Timorese teachers themselves will ensure teaching in the context of the Portuguese language (I7, p. 6).

I believe that the majority of teachers are serious in their desire to acquire a good standard of Portuguese for the purpose of both teaching effectively in schools and also promoting and developing language in their daily lives (E8, p. 3).

But unfortunately, sometimes the students already know more than the teachers. This feeling is born and grows and forces teachers to learn, with all the activities that we have created (E13, p. 2).

I identified some interviews that use military and warfare language to describe the advances of the Portuguese reintroduction policy in the education system. They and the nation are fighting in battle, marching for the victory of the official language amidst the enemy's attempts to defeat it. Opponents can be powerful, the march may be slow, soldiers may be weak, however, the Timorese will persevere in this fight because the battle is already won. I believe that this metaphor of war indicates that the struggle for liberation includes all elements idealized for the Timorese homeland. Just as they won the unlikely fight against a great enemy and their powerful allies for independence, these interviewees are convinced that the Portuguese language will do so on Timorese soil.

In the words of the interviewees:

But fortunately, I believe that the battle is already won, [...] for example, it should be mandatory for public officials to learn the Portuguese language (I2, p.6).

Conspiracy could still try to prevent the advance of the Portuguese. Even if not openly, it might not facilitate its rapid reacquisition by the Timorese population. It is also something that our opponents think they learned as a lesson, because their struggle was not easy either. Because the Timorese will persevere in this struggle (I3, p.3).

They are also striving to learn the Portuguese language to teach their students. So, I think we're marching forward... not backward ... That's how it is! (I10, p.2).

Even though we have limitations, we have weaknesses, but we continue forward. Not backward... (I10, p.4).

We have enough indicators. Even though progress is slow, but we are sure, we are moving forward! It is not slow, but backwards ... (I12, p.6).

I also find expressions that evoke feelings such as hope and conviction that the policy of reintroduction of Portuguese will prevail. These interviews show that the language is 'destined by fate': the fate of

Timor-Leste is linked to the Portuguese language and therefore, language is bound to survive despite opposing pressures. In addition, I interpret the idea of spirit in the interview of a manager as Hegelian *Zeitgeist*, in which the young university students precede and transform society, as well as actively participate in the spirit of their own age - a new era in which they shape the way Timorese society conceives itself.

In the words of the interviewees:

But as a Timorese national, I have the firm conviction that this will not happen. Things will continue as we expect (I3, p. 12).

We can say that the Portuguese language itself is our official language. So, we can say it is undeniable. You can never deny it because it is our language, our identity. As for the language, I can say it is indisputable. I do not like to talk about it because the decision has already been made. And now it depends on every citizen. And to answer your question, I have this hope (I5, p.3).

So, then this spirit was imbued into the students... (I13, p. 2).

In contrast, other interviewees use the power of natural forces to describe the development of the reintroduction of the Portuguese Language. Time and nature ensure the spontaneous and authentic evolution of the language in Timor. Therefore, development must not be forced nor accelerated, for the natural course must be respected, just as a seed needs to germinate and grow hidden and silent, to follow its cycle and to bear fruit. Therefore, regardless of political inconsistency, the Portuguese language is destined to prevail in Timor naturally through the evolution of time.

In the words of the interviewees:

The evolution of time will change, and they will not remain. They have to follow... the evolution of time (I6, p. 6).

Our situation is in the process of change. Therefore, nature will select. Sometimes the instructions may not change, but nature will bring about change. We believe that. There are already many facts (I12, p. 6).

As time changes, ideas change. It always changes to fulfill and to meet basic needs (I13, p. 5).

Finally, some interviews personify the Portuguese language and give it a life of its own through the expressions of life, reviving, and resurrecting. It should also be noted that, in a Christian country, reviving and resurrecting are words charged with sacred meaning. Thus, the element of fantasy, magic, and miracle is found in the discourse of these interviewees in reference to the Portuguese Language, because in the natural and secular realm something that is dead does not come back to life. It has already

completed its cycle of existence in this world or in that context. However, this is not the case of the Portuguese language, which after being dead, returns and is reborn in Timor.

In the words of the interviewees:

Driven by the spirit of nationalism, it revived not only the Portuguese, which is an international language and language of official connection, but it also revived Tetum. (I2, p. 2).

They have already felt that politics are still alive. But now the question is the politicians have to motivate again. They have to fill with motivation again. (...) New strength with the meeting of the CPLP [Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries] Summit. (I4, p. 4).

Then you have to revive the motivations from 2000 backwards. Before the establishment of the official language (I4, p. 4).

But if we look at the Tetum language that is spoken, that is written, then it means that the reception of the Portuguese vocabulary in the Tetum language already shows that the Portuguese language is being resurrected in Timor-Leste. Because both languages will have to develop simultaneously to carry on. One reinforces the other. Now, that is why I say that this Tetum-Portuguese symbiosis is what really is the common denominator for the affirmation of the new Timorese identity (I11, p. 2).

Independence and nationalism not only revived the dying Portuguese language at the time of the occupation, but also the dormant Tetum as a national language, which is also for the first time official. In the same way, the reinforcement and the new status of Tetum also resurrected the use of the Portuguese language. By symbiosis, it is believed that one language saves the other from extinction in Timor, because during Indonesian occupation, both were in decline along with a "pure" Timorese identity. However, the plan to reintroduce the Portuguese language was stronger before its real officialization, because there was a consistent promotion by the political leadership. The new reassurances of cooperation by the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries bring new spirit and revived the hopes of applying the policy of reintroduction.

Conclusion

I conclude that the interviews I have analyzed confirm the existence of a 'destined by fate' view of the future of the Portuguese language in the country, given that they show great optimism regarding its permanence and dissemination by the population in the future of Timor-Leste. This optimism is notable, since the interviewees live in a context of increasing criticism of the fulfilment of linguistic policies, either due to material and human deficiencies within the education system or to competition from other non-hegemonic (subaltern) myths in which Portuguese has no significant role. The current context bears witness to a broad, diverse, and complex 'mythscape' in Timor-Leste. I find that the revitalization

of the Portuguese language is charged with nationalist ideology and that the ‘Motherland’ conceived by its founders views the language as a mother who gathers her children under her wide arms in the narrative of the nation's myth of origin, just as the grandfather crocodile gave birth to the territory.

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Endnotes

- ¹ According to Thomaz (2002), Tetum is the most known and most important language in Timor-Leste. The importance of this language lies in the fact that it was spread, as a second language, over almost the entire territory of Timor-Leste, even before the Indonesian invasion. In fact, the author argues that Tetum was already a vernacular language before Portuguese colonization in the eastern half of the island of Timor. The native language has evolved to become a Creole today with more than 50% of its vocabulary adopted from the Portuguese language. In 2002 it also became co-official.
- ¹ Sacred, concept of transcendental force that governs Timorese society.
- ² The legend of the origin of the island of Timor tells that one day a crocodile from Makasar befriended a boy. The two ventured on a long sea voyage, the boy traveling on the crocodile's back. Already tired the crocodile stopped swimming and became a huge island. This island was called Timor by the boy who became its first inhabitant. For more details on the island's legend of origin and its regional variants see Legends and the oral literature of Timor (Paulino, 2017, <https://journals.openedition.org/aa/2175>).
- ³ The Reference Schools were created in 2013 with the aim of being model schools in the teaching and learning of the Portuguese language. Despite the Curriculum implemented in these schools was the National Curriculum of Timor-Leste, the managers and teachers were Portuguese. In 2015 the Reference Schools were renamed by Learning and Training Centers (CAFE - Centros de Aprendizagem e Formação Escolar), maintaining the original assignments but extending them to the training of East Timorese teachers both in the proficiency of the Portuguese language and in the competence of the subjects.