

THE GLOBAL VERSUS THE LOCAL IN EAST TIMORESE LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING

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The contemporary language ecology in East Timor is the product of local versus regional and global tensions. These tensions exploded with the civil war and declaration of independence from Portugal in 1974, followed by the country's immediate annexation by Indonesia, culminating in the devastating violence of 1999. Since the arrival of the United Nations in the country, tensions between the local and the global have increased with the entry of English into the linguistic ecology.

Global versus local tensions prevail across all sectors from the economy and agriculture to aid and reconciliation, as the country struggles to come to terms with its past, establish a national identity and hold its own in the era of globalisation. Education, the judiciary and the media are three sites for discourses and counter discourses concerning language and identity in this highly multilingual society.

In this paper I discuss whether East Timor can succeed in resolving these tensions, achieve the standardisation of its co-official language, Tetum and reverse language shift from Indonesian to Portuguese, the other co-official language, in the face of pressure from global and regional languages.

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