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Proposal for an individual paper

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Topic: Sociolinguistics/Language Planning and Policy  
Title of paper: Language and identity in Timor-Leste

Proposal:

In this paper I draw upon my doctoral research into language policy and planning as identity-construction in ‘the world’s newest nation’, Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste has experienced two distinct periods in which colonial hegemonies have left deep and enduring influences and fractures in indigenous cultures and identities.

I consider four key sites where language policy and planning discourse is being used as a strategy for reconfiguring national identity:

- The National Constitution of 2002
- The Language Decree of 2004
- The Language Directive of 2004
- The Medium of Instruction policy.

I report on my findings from a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants, student focus groups and selected individuals conducted in 2004, considering the extent to which these findings concur with the dominant discourses of identity.

I consider whether the current trajectory can successfully integrate contemporary multiple and hybridized identities. I conclude by discussing how language policy and planning can be used to manage this highly diverse language ecology into which English is a recent but influential arrival. (169 words)

Summary:

In this paper I present key findings from my doctoral study of language policy and planning as identity-construction in Timor-Leste. I consider the dislocation of traditional identities by two hegemonic occupying powers and discuss whether current language policy and planning trajectories can successfully reconstruct an inclusive East Timorese national identity. (50 words)

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