Planning for Assessment in Language Programs: A Practical Tool
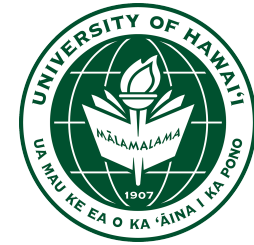
Melody Ann Ross

University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

Mahalo, Obrigada, Thank You

The University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa,
Department of Linguistics

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste,
Ministry of Education

US Department of State,
Institute of International Education,
The Fulbright-Clinton Public Policy
Fellowship

Key Points

- Language Programs don't plan for assessment.

- Language Programs should plan for assessment.

- Assessments should attempt to nourish the body of linguistic knowledge.

- How do you do this?

- If it's too late, what can you do?

Lack of Planning

- Emphasis on implementation
  - Successful implementation = successful program?
- CEFL and ACFTL proficiencies, but no provisions for assessment
- UNESCO
- Malone, Susan. 2010. *Planning Mother Tongue Based Education Programs in Minority Language Communities*. SIL. Dallas.

Lack of Planning: Dangers

- Cessation of funding:
  - Evaluations are increasingly required by nonprofit funders as verification that the nonprofits are indeed helping their constituents.
- You might not be doing what you think you're doing:
  - Evaluations can identify program strengths and weaknesses to improve the program.
- Waning community support:
  - Produce data or verify results that can be used for public relations and promoting services in the community.
- Hurts legitimacy.

Lack of Planning: East Timor

- 2012 – MTB-MLE (UNESCO)
  - Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education
  - 3 languages, 12 pilot schools
  - no formal assessment in ToR
- 2013 – first call for assessor
- 2014 – second call for assessor
- 2015 – problems with consistency, legitimacy, and politics

Linguistic Theory

- Assessments are often not linguistically or theoretically sound.
    - Move Forward (NGO)
- They could be a tool to add to the existing body of language literature.
- Track age and level appropriate development.
    - Must be appropriate to the goals of the program (literacy, acquisition, etc.)

The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- Multi-level community assessment
- Multi-level linguistic assessment

The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- Multi-level community assessment
- Multi-level linguistic assessment

Multi-level program assessment

- 1. Context:
  - define the situation before the program begins,
  - identify the goals and assess the needs of the community,
  - attempt to diagnose the problems underlying the needs, and
  - identify the external factors that will affect the program

Multi-level program assessment

- 1. Context
- 2. Input
  - ◦ discover potential resources,
  - ◦ learn about other programs/activities in the community that might collaborate
  - ◦ identify and describe potential stakeholders in the program

Multi-level program assessment

- 1. Context
- 2. Input
- 3. Process:
  - identify strengths and weaknesses of the program plan and implementation,
  - provide information to stakeholders and
  - keep a record of the implementation process and its impact on the community

Multi-level program assessment

- 1. Context
- 2. Input
- 3. Process
- 4. Impact:
  - relate the outcomes of the program to the original situation,
  - the goals and needs identifies by the community,
  - the objectives described in the program plan,
  - and the resources that were available to the program

Multi-level program assessment

- 1. Context
- 2. Input
- 3. Process
- 4. Impact
- Where do you get this data?
  - Interviews, surveys, meeting notes, proposals, budgets, anything from which you can glean intent

The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- **Multi-level community assessment**
- Multi-level linguistic assessment

Multi-level community assessment

- Community member attitudes
  - Above all, they deserve to know how the program is going.
- Outsider attitudes
  - Decision-makers sometimes come from outside and it is important to keep track of their perceptions.
- Teachers' performance
  - Teachers need to feel supported and looked-after.

The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- Multi-level community assessment
- Multi-level linguistic assessment

Learners' knowledge

- Traditional Benchmarks: listening, speaking, reading, writing
- Linguistic/Acquisition Benchmarks
  - Phonological development
  - Morphological development
  - Grammatical stuff: Relationships, hypotheses, passives
  - Discourse competence and constructing dialogues

Learners' knowledge

- Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
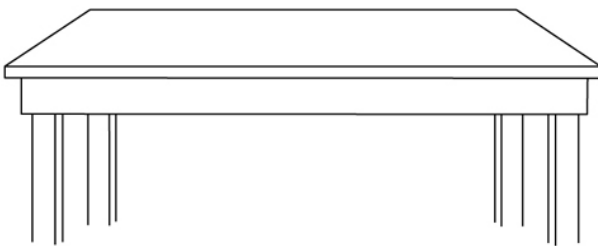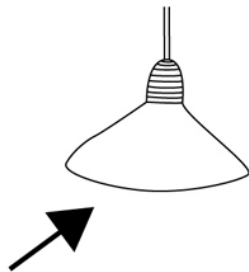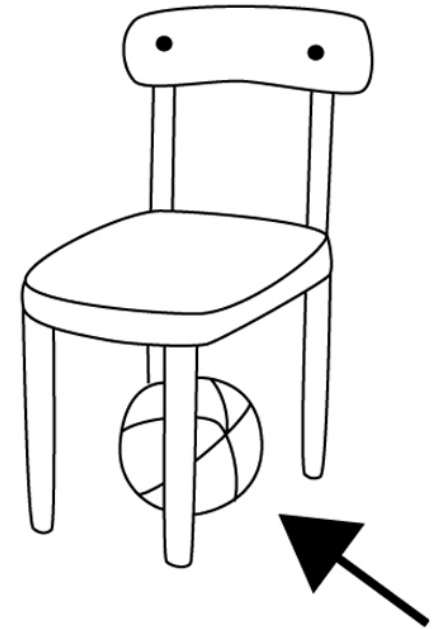 - Phonological development: Pronunciation and lexical recall
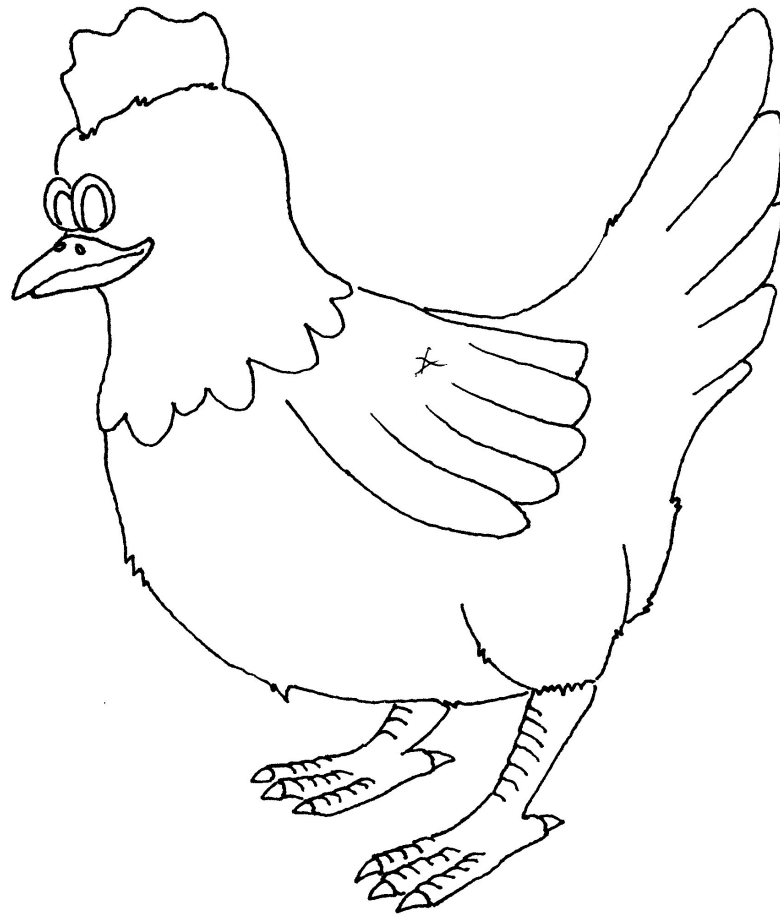
Learners' knowledge

- Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
  - Phonological development
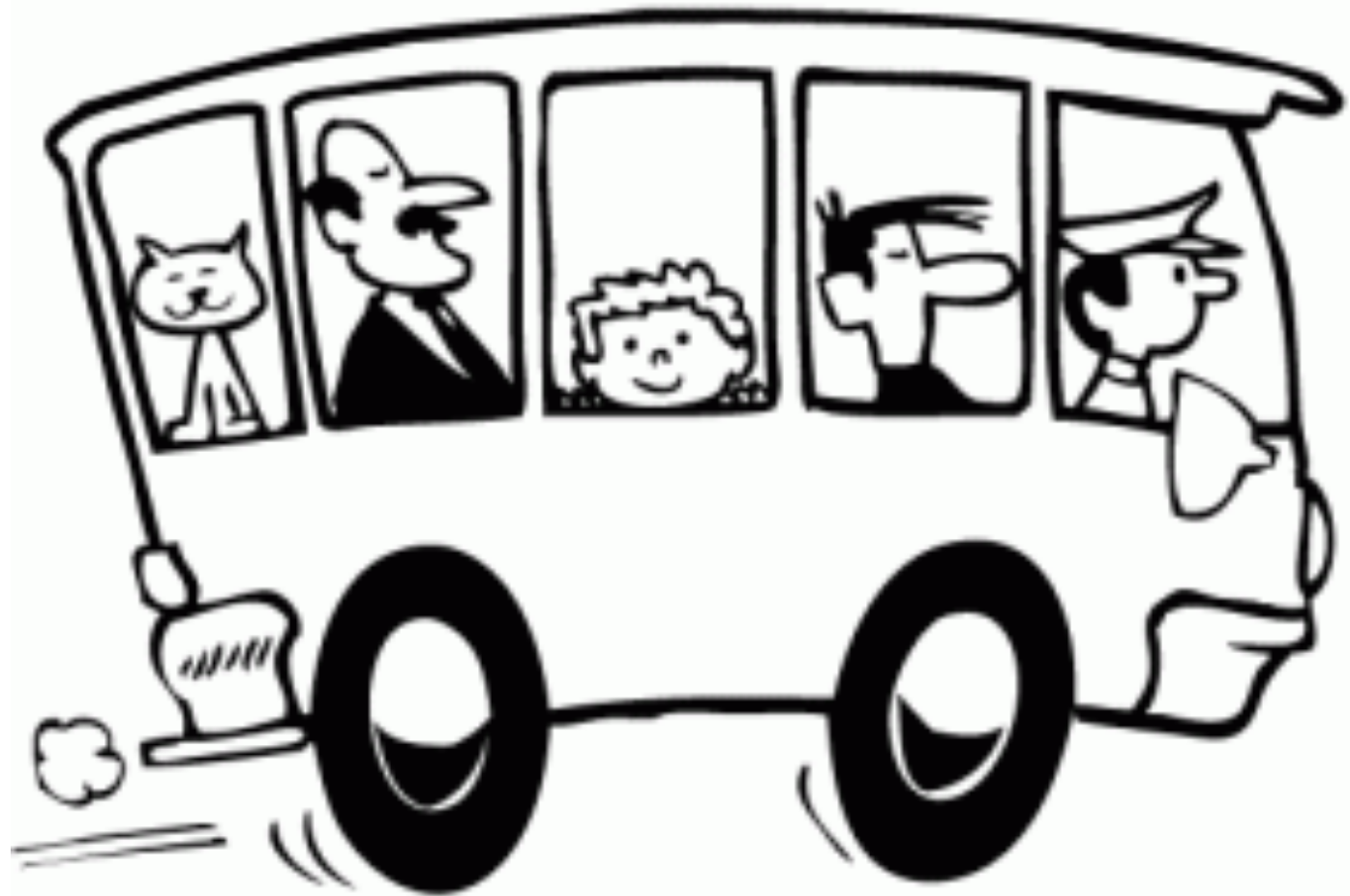 - Morphological development: Ownership, location, plurals/classifiers

- *Can you tell me where the ball is?*

- *Can you tell me where the lamp is?*

- *Can you tell me how many people are on the bus?*

Learners' knowledge

- ## Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
  - ◦ Phonological development
  - ◦ Morphological development
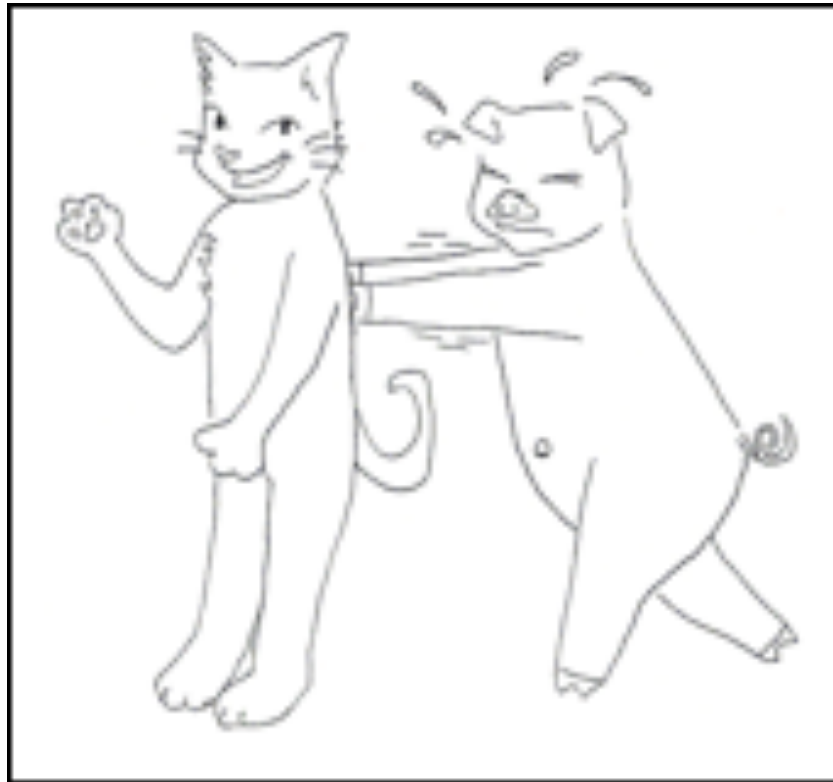 - ◦ Grammatical stuff: Relationships, hypotheses, passives

- *Can you tell me what's happening in this picture?*

- *Cinto got a new ball today. What do you think he will do tomorrow?*

- *Can you tell me what's happening to the cat in this picture?*
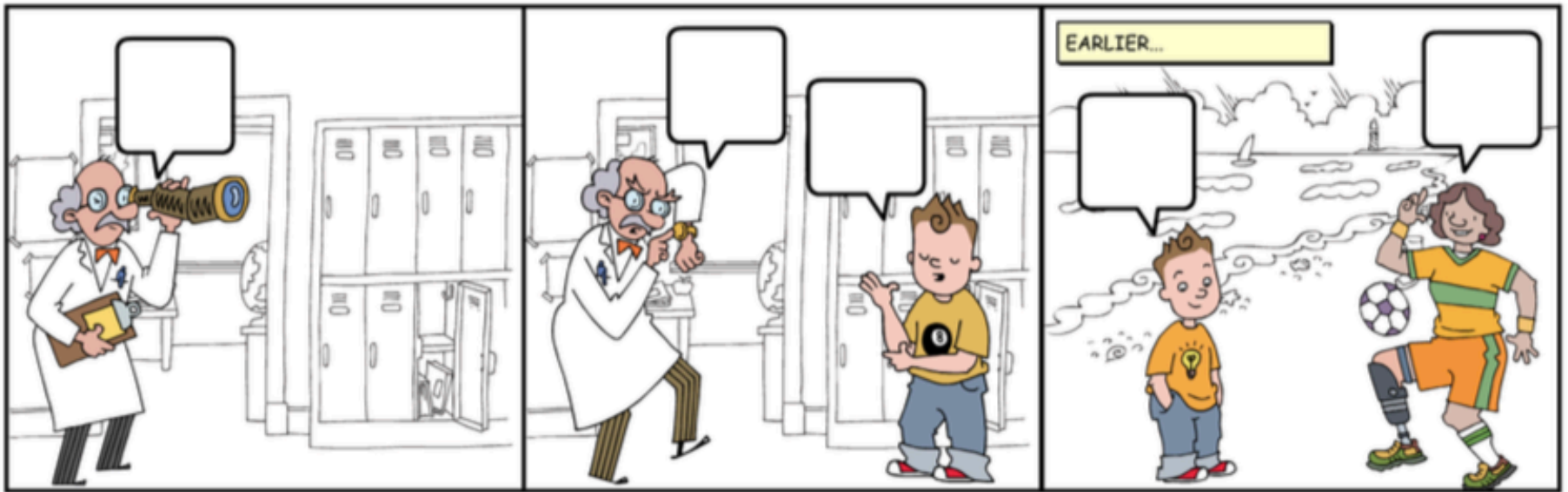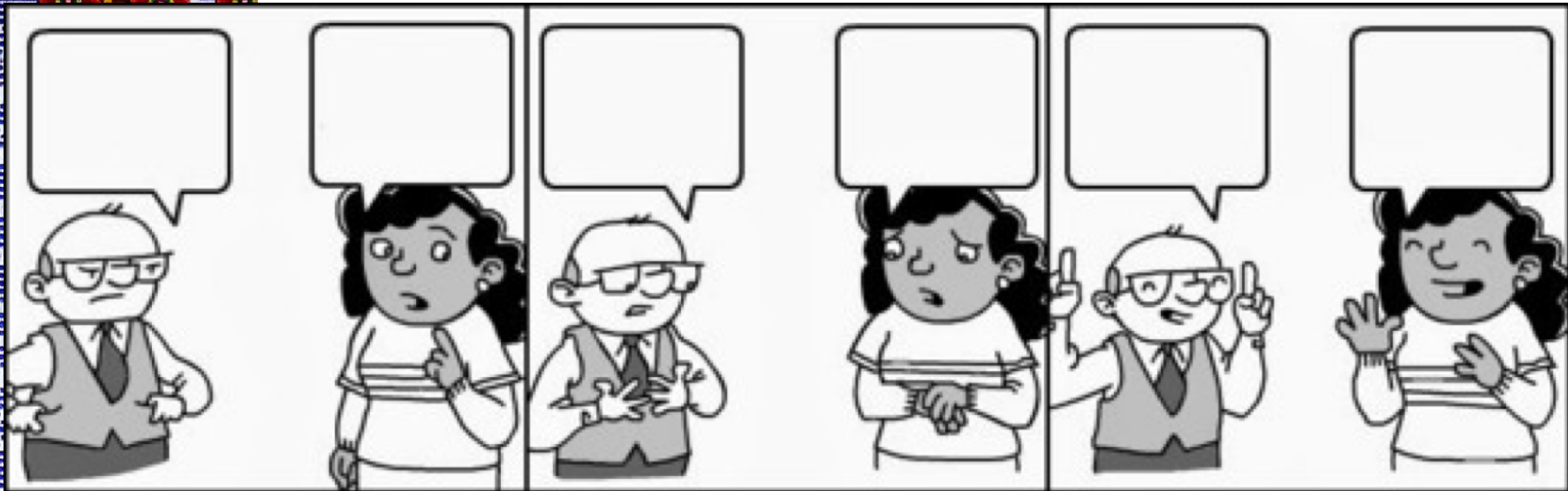
Learners' knowledge

- Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
    - Phonological/pronunciation
    - Morphological/ownership, location,
    - Grammatical stuff/relationships, hypotheses, passives
    - Discourse competence and constructing dialogues

Can you tell me what these people are saying to each other?

Other Toolkit Components

- ## What do you need to do assessment?
  - Getting started and setting goals

- ## What do you do with the data?
  - Organizational tips for spreadsheets, basic analysis tools, basic statistics

- ## How do you make recommendations?
  - Really carefully!

The Importance of Context!

- Each part of the assessment ought to be considered for use, but varied to fit context.
  - Scoring - to grade or not to grade?
  - Level-appropriate tasks
  - Culturally-appropriate tasks

Conclusion

- Program assessments can be fun! Really!
- They can also be useful to the broader linguistic community.
- (Free, non-copyrighted) Assessment materials are scarce, but I'm working on that.
- Eventually everything will be hosted on my website. (Interview materials are ready now)
  - melodyannross.me

- **References, Works Cited and Sources:**
- Alidou, H., A. Boly, et al. 2006. Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – The Language Factor. Association for the Development of Education in Africa. Paris.
- Bender, P., Dutcher, N., Klaus, D., Shore, J., and C. Tesar. 2005. Education Notes: In their own language… Education for all. The World Bank.
- Benson, Carole. 2004. The Importance of Mother Tongue-Based Schooling for Educational Quality. Paper commissioned for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, The Quality Imperative.* International Bureau of Education, UNESCO, Geneva.
- Benson, Carole. 2005. Girls, Educational Equity, and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching. Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, UNESCO, Bangkok.
- Bowden, John and Tatiana Romanovsky. 2004. Assessing the degree of language endangerment using Rapid Rural Appraisal techniques. Proceedings:
- Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. 2010. Highlights of the 2010 Census Main Results in Timor-Leste. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Dili.
- Dutcher, Nadine. 2004. Expanding Educational Opportunity in Linguistically Diverse Societies. Prepare for the Center for Applied Linguistics. Washington.
- Leach, M. 2007a. History Teaching: Challenges and Alternatives. In Kingsbury, D., Leach, M. (eds). East Timor: Beyond Independence. Monash University Press. Clayton, VIC.
- Leach M. 2007b. Surveying East Timorese Tertiary Students Attitudes to National Identity: 2002-2007. *South East Asia Research*. Vol. 16, No. 3: 405-431.
- Lewis, Paul and Gary Simons. 2009. Assessing Endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. SIL. Dallas.
- Lopez, Jose. 2012. Development of Mother-Tongue-Based Early Literacy Assessment Tools for Ilokano Children.
- Malone, Susan. 2010. Planning Mother Tongue Based Education Programs in Minority Language Communities. SIL. Dallas.
- Ministry of Education. 2007. National Education Policy 2007-2012: Building Our Nation Through Quality Education. Ministry of Education, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Dili.

- **References, Works Cited and Sources:**
- MoE. 2010a. MTB-MLE for Timor-Leste, National Policy. Ministry of Education, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Dili.
- MoE. 2010b. National Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030, 2nd Draft. Ministry of Education, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Dili.
- MoE. 2011. First Languages First: Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education for Timor-Leste Implementation Plan. Ministry of Education, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Dili.
- MTB-MLE Network. (cite this website somehow)
- Panda, M., Mohanty, A., Nag, S. & Biswabandan, B. Does MLE Work in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha? A Longitudinal Study. *NMRC Newsletter Swara*. Vol. 1, No. 6-7: 2-23.
- Pinnock, Helen. 2009. Language and Education: The Missing Link; How the Language Used in Schools Threatens the Achievement of Education for All. CfBT Education Trust and Save the Children Alliance.
- Quinn, M. 2007. The Challenge of Realising Language and Literacy Goals in East Timor's Schools. . In: Kingsbury, D., Leach, M. (eds). *East Timor: Beyond Independence*. Monash University Press. Clayton, VIC.
- Quinn, M. 2008. Choosing Languages for Teaching in Primary School Classrooms. In: Earnest, J., Beck, M. and L. Connell (eds). *Education and Health Rebuilding in Post-Conflict Transitional Society: Case Studies from Timor-Leste*. Curtin University Press. Perth.
- Quinn, M. 2010. Using Talk in Classrooms: Constructing Meaning. In: Leach, M., Mendes, N.C., da Silva, A.B., Ximenes, A.D.C., and B. Boughton (eds). *Understanding Timor-Leste*. Timor-Leste Studies Association. Melbourne. 235-241.
- Shah, Ritesh. 2012. Goodbye Conflict, Hello Development? Curriculum Reform in Timor-Leste. *International Journal of Educational Development*. Vol. 32: 31-38.
- UNESCO. 2003. Education in a Multilingual World. International Bureau of Education, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Paris.
- UNESCO. 2005. First Language First: Community-based literacy programmes for minority languages contexts in Asia. International Bureau of Education, UNESCO, Geneva.
- Walter, S. L. & Trammell, K. 2010. The Kom Experimental Mother Tongue Education Project Report for 2010.
- World Bank, 2010. Progress Made, But Still A Long Way To Go. Babadok: Newsletter of the World Bank in Timor-Leste.

Obrigada ba tempu!