

Multilingualism and Mother Tongues in Dili, Timor-Leste

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Dili Introduction

- 1400's – Portuguese Colony
- 1975 – Power shifts to Indonesia
- 1999 – Power shifts to UN
- 2002 – Independence
- 2006 – Crisis
- 2013 – UN ends mission

Dili Introduction

- Dili Demographics
 - large youth population
 - highest dropout rates in the country
 - highest literacy rates
 - wealthiest citizens
 - 74% of all migrants in the country settle in Dili
 - 51% of this group is under the age of 30
- Linguistically Diverse

2013 Language Attitude Survey

- *What's going on with people in regards to the mother tongue program?*
- What factor(s) motivate mother tongue choice in children of bilingual backgrounds?

Methods

- Distribution
 - Student Training
 - Problems
 - group mentality
 - infrastructure
- Metadata entered in Excel for qualitative analysis in R

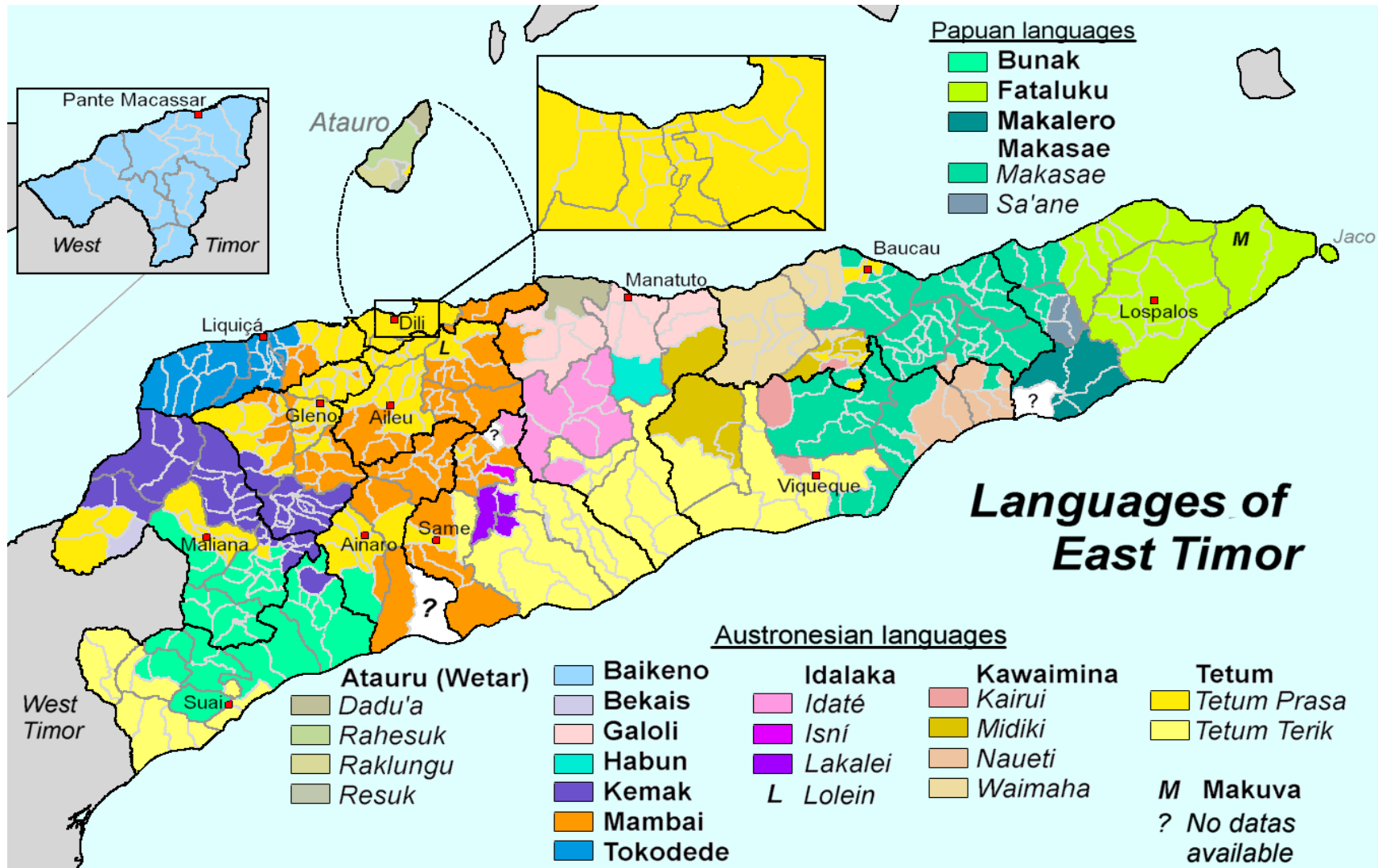
Participants

- 200 total
- 98 Female, 102 Male
- Time in Dili ranged from 1 year to 40 years
 - Mean: 24 / Median: 23
- Age range 18-49
 - Mean: 24 / Median: 23
 - Age in Timor: 41% under 25 (2010 census)
- From all 13 districts

Participants

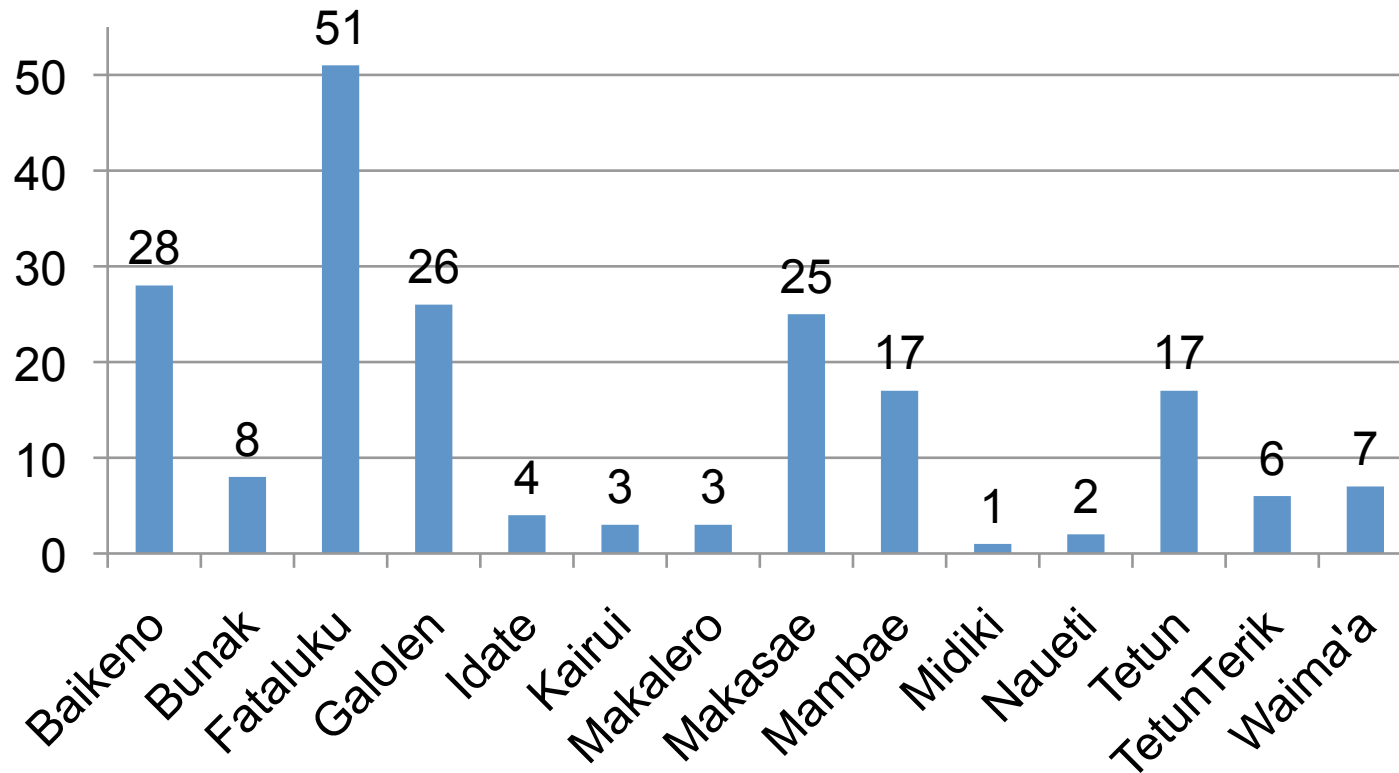


Linguistic Diversity



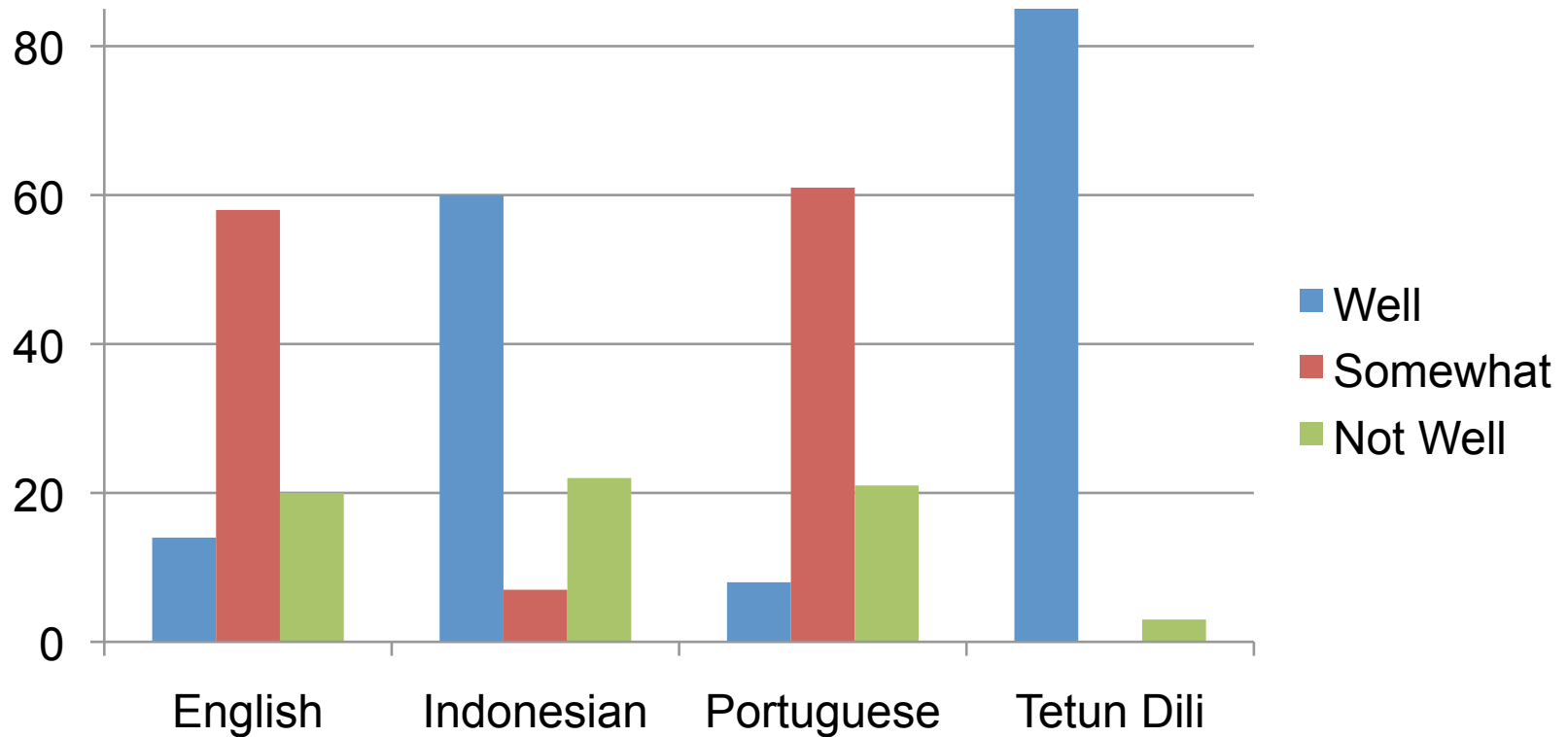
Linguistic Diversity

Fig 1. Mother Tongues



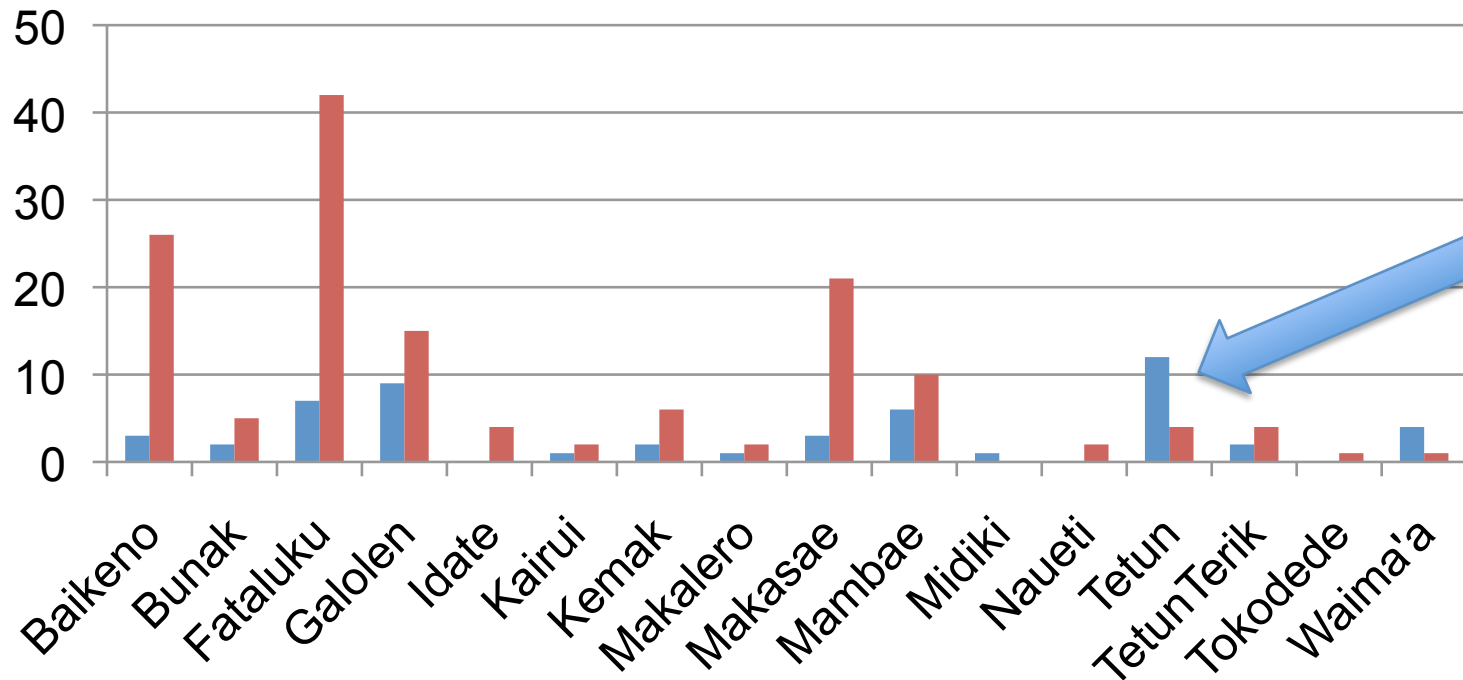
Linguistic Diversity

Fig 2. Self-Assessment of Language Knowledge



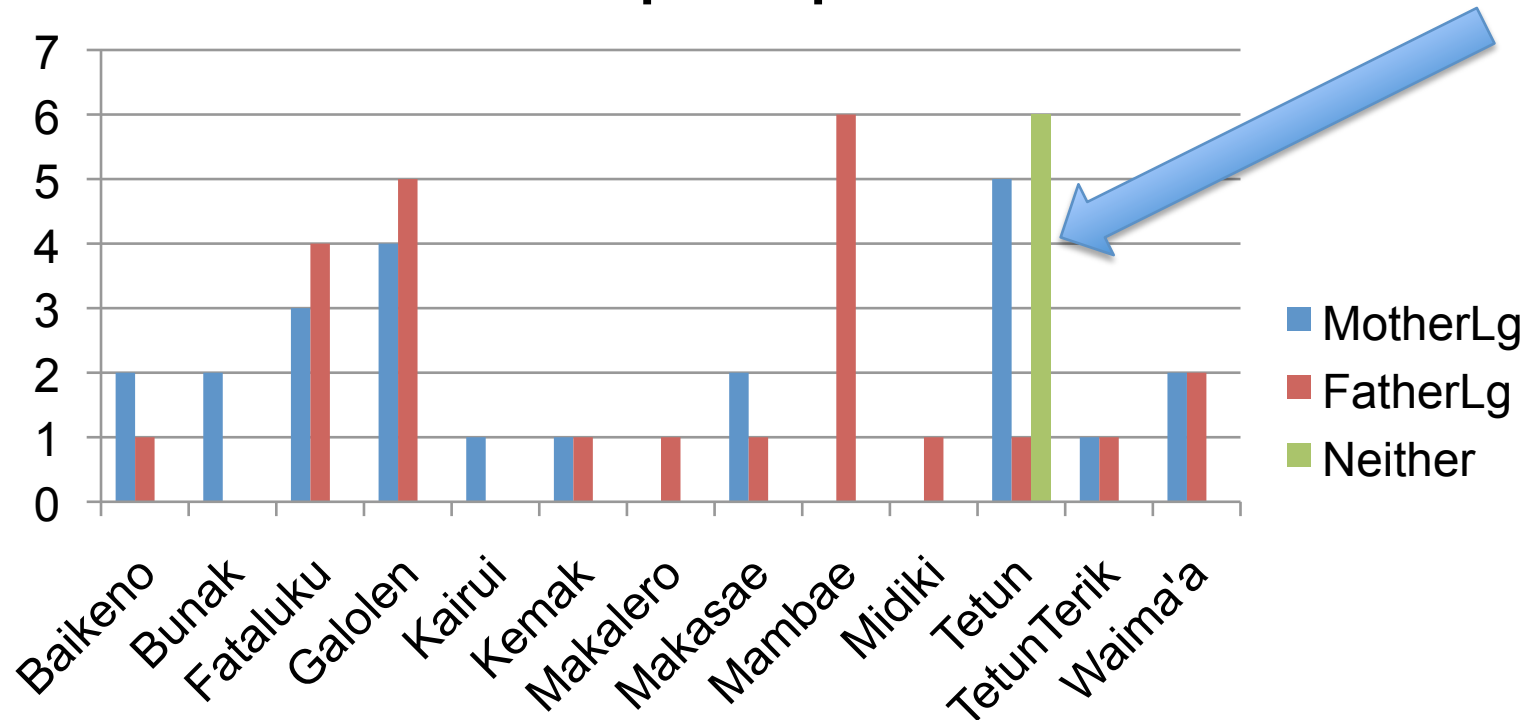
Monolingual and Bilingual Parents

Fig 3. Bilingual and Monolingual Household Languages



Monolingual and Bilingual Parents

Fig. 4: Which language do the bilingual household participants choose?



Why?

- Not significant:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Attitudes about Language
 - Fluency in Languages of Wider Communication
- Significant
 - Time lived in Dili

Time Lived in Dili

| | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | Pr(> t) | |
|----------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|-----|
| (Intercept) | 13.583 | 1.868 | 7.274 | 2.24E-09 | *** |
| which.lg.samem | -3.801 | 2.67 | -1.424 | 0.1607 | |
| which.lg.samen | 9.75 | 4.176 | 2.335 | 0.0236 | * |

The longer you live in Dili, the more likely you are to speak *neither* of your parent's languages.

Why does it matter?

- Beginning of ongoing migration
- Target potential heritage languages
- Support heritage language efforts early
- Importance of heritage languages as index of social identity
- Language endangerment in East Timor

Conclusions

- A heritage language is lost within a family
- The longer an individual spends in Dili seems to speed up this process
- Endangered languages in Timor can't afford to be ignored

References

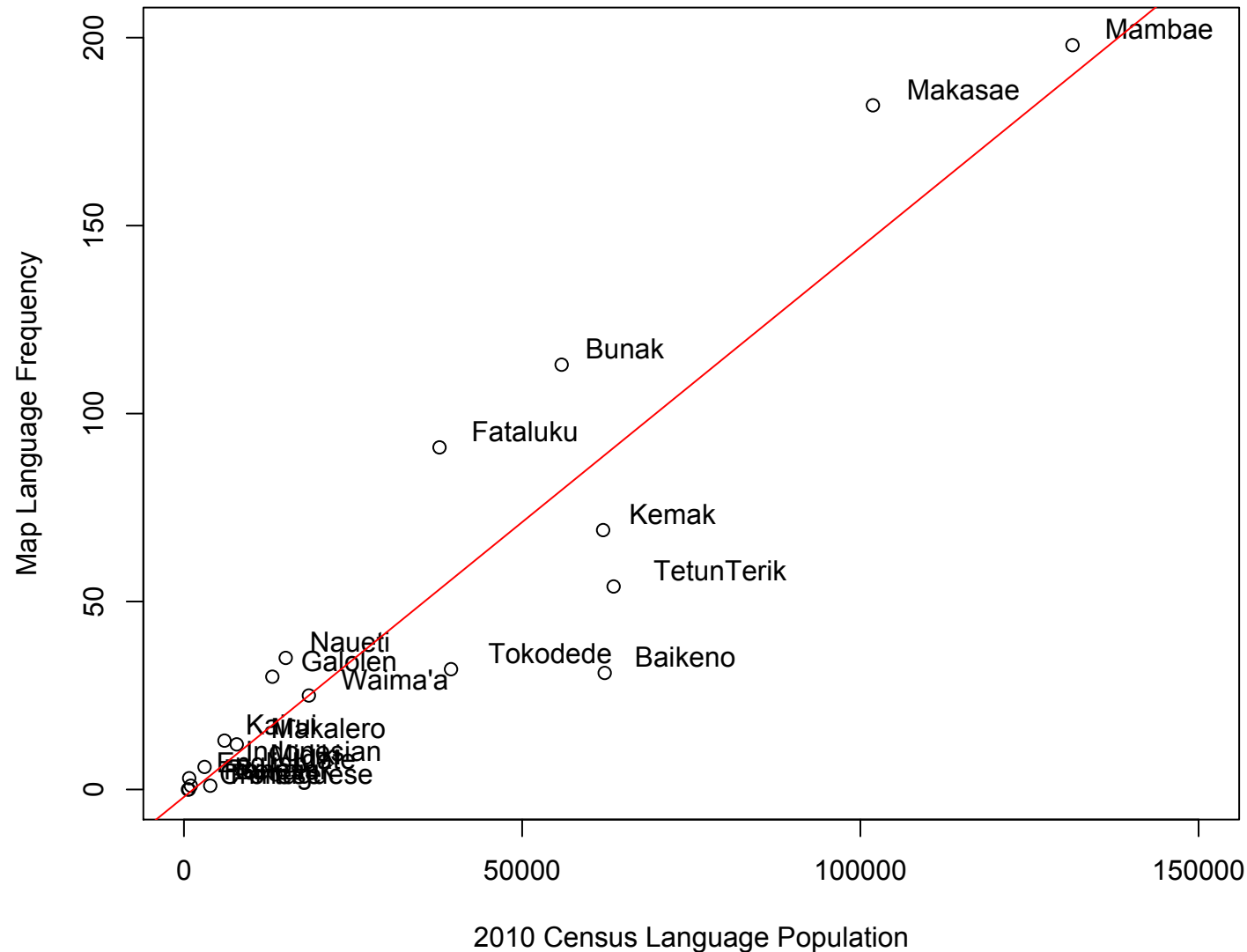
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Obrigada Barak!
Mahalo Nui!

Thank you very much!

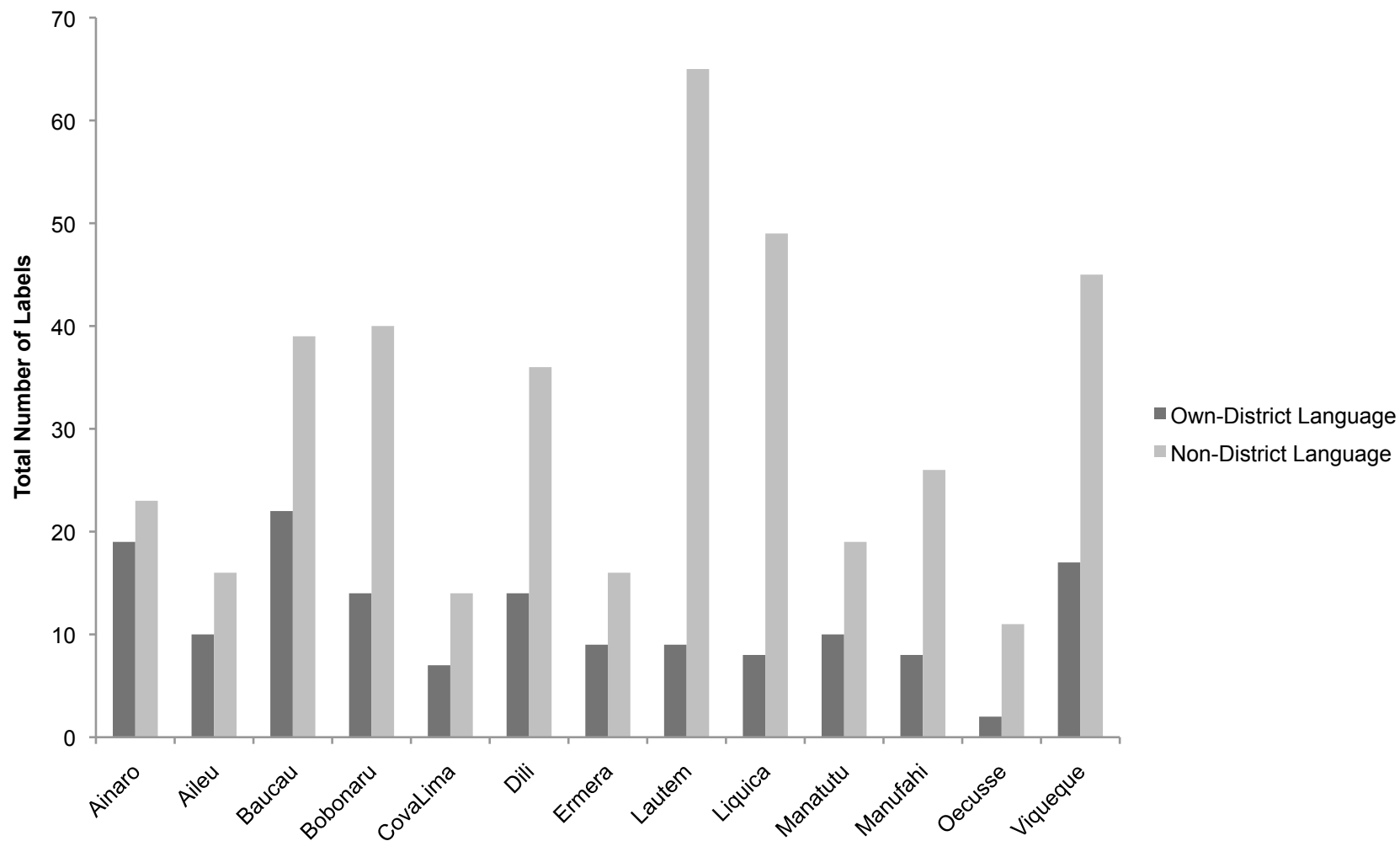
Population ($p=0.9$)

Actual Speaker Populations and Perceived Populations in Dili



Languages of One's Own District

Own-District and Non-District Languages by District



Districts and bilingual/monolingual parents

