

Almost two decades of Portuguese language in the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste /

O português na República Democrática de Timor-Leste: quase duas décadas depois¹

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ABSTRACT

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste was the first nation of the 21st century. The island of Timor was a Portuguese colony in Southeast Asia from the 16th century until 1974. After that, it was under Indonesian domination which lasted until 1999. Timor-Leste became an independent nation in 2002. In this year, the country elected the Portuguese language as one of the official languages, together with Tetum, the national language spoken by most of the population. Since its independence, there has been broad international support and various cooperation actions in Timor-Leste, with education as one of the main areas. Portugal and Brazil also take part in this educational cooperation as leading actors. Thus, this article aims to reflect on the Portuguese language in Timor-Leste in order to verify the current state in which this language is found in the country, after almost twenty years' official existence. After the introduction in (1), we provide some social, historical and linguistic information about Timor island, in (2); we explain Portuguese cooperation in teaching and projects in Timor-Leste in (3); we describe the research and properties of the Portuguese spoken by Timorese, in (4); and this is followed by our final remarks.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese language; Timor-Leste; Language Teaching; Portuguese as Second Language; Portuguese in Asia.

RESUMO

A República Democrática de Timor-Leste foi a primeira nação se tornar independente no século XXI. Localizada no Sudeste Asiático, a ilha de Timor foi colônia portuguesa desde o século XVI até 1974. Após esse período, sofreu uma dominação indonésia que durou até 1999. Em 2002, tornou-se uma nação independente e elegeu a língua portuguesa como uma das línguas oficiais, sendo a outra a língua tétum, língua nacional falada pela maior parte da população. Desde que se tornou independente, foram várias as ações de apoio e cooperação internacionais, destacando-se, entre outras áreas, o Ensino, com a forte presença de Brasil e Portugal nesse processo. Dessa maneira, o presente artigo tem o objetivo de refletir sobre a língua portuguesa em Timor-Leste a fim de verificar o estado atual em que essa língua se encontra no país, após quase vinte anos de existência. Para tanto, após a introdução, em (1), fornecemos algumas informações sociais, históricas e linguísticas sobre a ilha de Timor, em (2); explicamos os projetos e as cooperações de ensino de português em Timor-Leste, em (3); descrevemos as pesquisas e as propriedades do português falado pelos leste-timorenses, em (4); e, por fim, apresentamos nossas considerações finais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Língua Portuguesa; Timor-Leste; Ensino; Português L2; Português na Ásia.

1 Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is a recent country located in Southeast Asia, close to northern Australia. Its territory consists of the eastern part of a small island, of which the western part is Indonesian, the only physical border being with Timor-Leste.

Timor was under Indonesian domination for two decades, which began in 1975 and ended in 1999, after a plebiscite decision. Between 1999 and 2002, the country was under provisional



administration by the United Nations (UN) within the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). The country only had its independence recognized internationally on May 20, 2002.

The title of this paper mentions almost twenty years in reference to Timor-Leste's independence and to the period in which the Portuguese language has been recognized as an official language, both dating from 2002.² If we count the Portuguese presence, the varieties spoken in Asia and the teaching of Portuguese in this former colony (BAXTER, 1996; BATORÉO, 2016), this language dates back more than four centuries on the island.

Our research question is: what is the impact of educational policies and linguistic research in promoting the Portuguese in Timor-Leste? We consider this an important question in order to verify the current situation of Portuguese language and the status of Portuguese spoken by Timorese.

Our hypothesis is that foreign cooperation actions are significant for Timor-Leste development, but it must be conducted together with Timorese government and citizens for local professional qualification. Regarding Portuguese spoken by Timorese, our work hypothesis is that this Portuguese is non-dominant variety (AFONSO; GOGLIA, 2015a; BATORÉO, 2016) in its initial stage, which can stabilize itself to become a national Timorese variety.

The objective of this article is to reflect on the current situation of Portuguese in Timor-Leste through the description of actions, policies and investigations that have already been carried out. Therefore, after this introduction, we discuss the history of peoples, their linguistic contacts, and the Portuguese language on the island of Timor in (2); then, we point out some actions of international cooperation and Portuguese teaching in Timor-Leste in (3); after that, we describe the Portuguese spoken by the Timorese and its specific features in (4); and finally, we present the final remarks.

2 Timor's socio-historical background: languages, people and languages in contact

² Although short and time-limited, the first Portuguese cooperative action in Timor-Leste was called '1.ª Ação de Cooperação da Fundação das Universidades Portuguesas' (FUP) in partnership with the 'Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorense'. This bilateral act occurred during the April to September, 2000, before Portuguese was chosen as the official language. The cooperation was formed by a few dozen Portuguese professors and other citizens, all of whom were volunteers coordinated by FUP.



The island of Timor presents archaeological and historical evidence of contact with different peoples during many centuries (THOMAZ, 2002; ALBUQUERQUE, 2009). Since the prehistoric period there have been migrations of Papuan people and, in one historical period, there were Austronesian invasions on the island (HULL, 2001). In the 13th and 14th centuries, Timor was in contact with Chinese traders, in the 14th and 15th centuries with the Malay people and, in the same period, with Arab navigators. This brief exposition is intended to emphasize that the island of Timor was already a mosaic of peoples and languages before the arrival of the Portuguese, which took place in the following century (THOMAZ, 2002)³.

The Portuguese made their first contact with the inhabitants of the island of Timor in 1515, when the armada sent by Afonso de Albuquerque reached it (FIGUEIREDO, 2004). Initially, the island was of secondary interest, since the domain of Malacca (1511) enabled the control of commercial routes in the area, and this city functioned as a warehouse for two islands of great importance due to the amount of white sandalwood they offered (Solor and Flores).

This situation did not change until 1702, when Lifau (currently located in Oecussi enclave, in the western part of the island) was founded. The order to build this capital came directly from the Portuguese administration of Macau, as a way to respond to the Dutch occupation of the island, that dates back from 1652 (FIGUEIREDO, 2004). Lifau was abandoned in August 1769, and the Portuguese capital of Timor was transferred to Dili in October of the same year, where it has remained until today (OLIVEIRA, 1948). Worthy of note is that the population of European origin speaking Portuguese as their L1 has always been limited and is very small in proportion to the local population (THOMAZ, 1976).

The expansion of the Portuguese language in Timor occurred in three different ways: the church, the administration and militarism (BAXTER, 1996). The church was carrying out its missionary activity as early as the 16th century, but initial attempts to convert the Timorese population were unsuccessful (HÄGERDAL, 2012). However, the priests continued their activities in the following centuries, spreading the Portuguese language through education and religion. Even with the expulsion of religious orders from the island in the first half of the 19th century, significant advances in Timorese

³ For Timor Island and Timor-Leste nation history, see the references in this text, especially Oliveira (1948), Thomaz (2002), Figueiredo (2004) and Hägerdal (2012).



education were achieved, with the foundation of several schools, the ‘Colégio de Soibada’ being prominent (THOMAZ, 1985). This was the only secondary school that existed at the time, which enabled teachers and officials for the colonial administration.

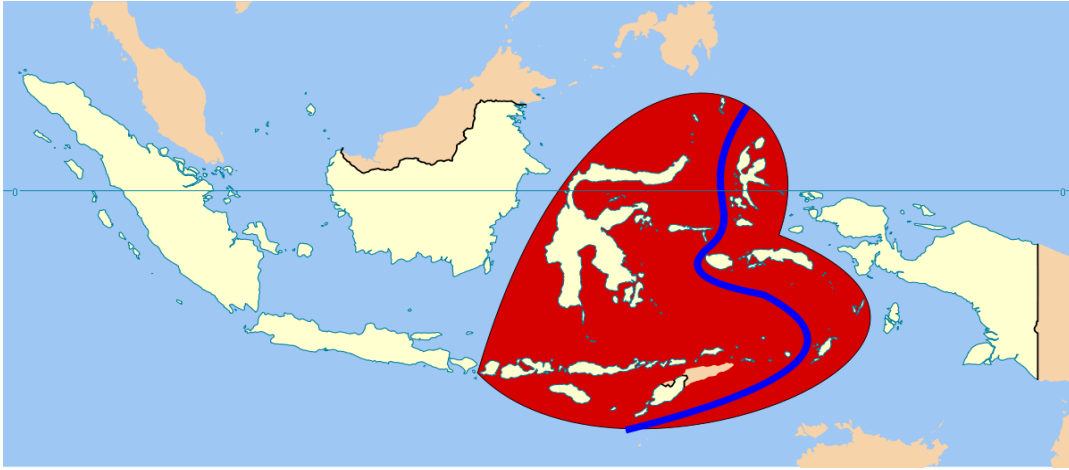
Portuguese citizens dominated the colonial administration in Timor in the early centuries, but this situation changed during the 19th century with the presence of mestizos and Macanese taking administrative positions. In addition, educated Timorese people also began to work for the colonial administration (THOMAZ, 1976), all using the Portuguese language for writing official documents.

As for militarism, the fact that native military leaders from different local regions ended up joining the colonial army, as well as other Portuguese administration locations, such as Flores, Macau, Mozambique and India, should be highlighted.

According to what was briefly described above, the Portuguese language had a complex propagation in Asia and consequently in Timor, with many factors influencing the formation of creoles and restructured varieties of this language. According to Baxter (1996) and Baxter & Cardoso (2017), in Timor, two creole varieties coexisted (Bidau and Macau) and different Portuguese L2 models. In many cases, the input of the following generations were not models of Portuguese L1, but some of these models of Portuguese L2 or creole varieties.

The framing of Timor-Leste in its geocultural context shows us that the territory is part of the so-called Wallacea (SCHAPPER, 2009), one of the scenarios with the greatest linguistic and cultural diversity in the world, a geographical area with more than 250 native languages, and whose limits can be seen in the following map:

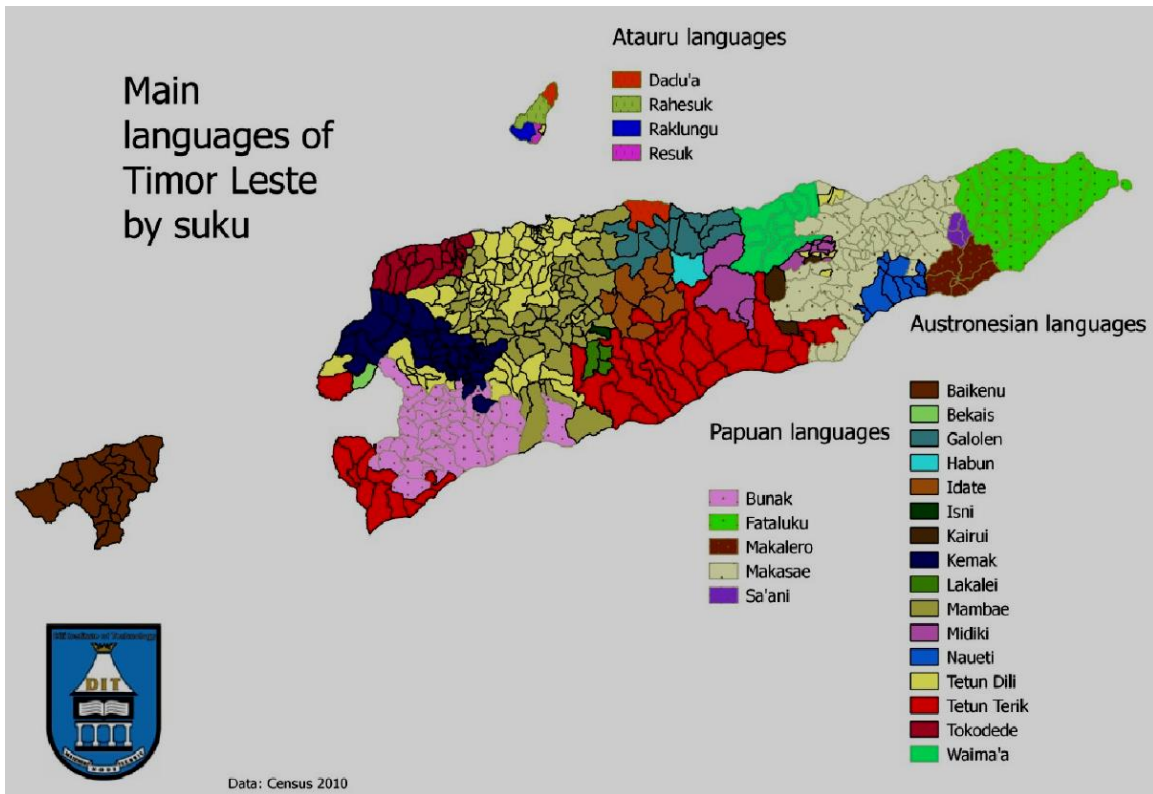
Fig. 1 – *Wallacea* region (Under GFDL license, via Wikimedia Commons)



(Retrievable at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indonesia_Wallacea.svg#/media/File:Indonesia_Wallacea.svg. August 26, 2020)

Timor-Leste local languages have Austronesian or Papuan origin and even nowadays are in the early stages of investigation. Even the number of languages spoken in the country is unknown, as there are linguists who consider some to be extinct or do not classify them as languages, but as part of a dialect chain. The most complete investigation based on linguistic studies was carried out by Hull (2001). Figure 2 is based on the 2010 census and taken from a recent study by Williams-van Klinken and Williams (2015). This map (Fig. 2) exemplifies the disparity of criteria in terms of the number of national languages, accounting for more than two dozen. Below is the distribution of local languages across the country on the map in Fig. 2, which also illustrates Timor-Leste's linguistic diversity:

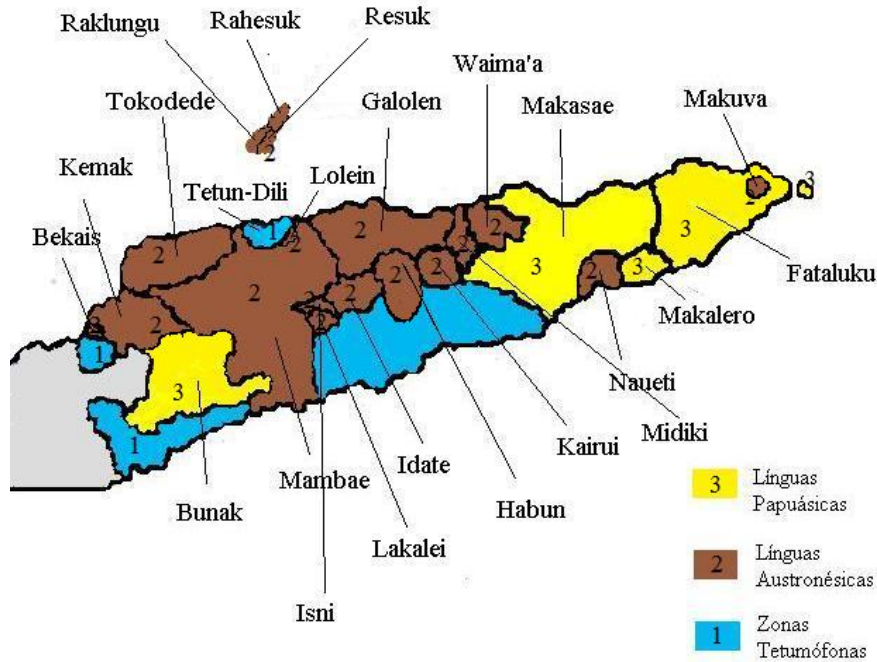
Fig. 2 – Timor-Leste local languages



Source: Williams-van Klinken & Rob Williams (2015, p. 2)

We also provide the reader by way of comparison with a 'leaner' map in Figure 3, taken from Albuquerque (2011), in which the author emphasizes the distribution of the Tetum language throughout Timor-Leste, as well as separating the other national languages according to their genetic affiliations. This map (Fig. 3) is based on the sixteen languages according to Hull's (2001) hypothesis:

Fig. 3 – Distribution and genetic affiliation of Timor-Leste languages



Source: Albuquerque (2011a, p. 66)

The fixed distribution of these local languages with each of them associated with a geographical area, can, however, be partly questioned, at least regarding the capital, Dili. In a case study carried out in 2015, Carmo (2015) identified the mother tongues of a class of students from a secondary school in Dili and found that the scenario of linear correspondence between geographic area and mother tongue did not apply. Despite the fact that all students mastered Tetum, everyone also mastered other languages to a greater or lesser extent and considered that they had more than one mother tongue, probably because in their family situation there was the daily presence of other languages.⁴

The observations made and the conclusions drawn from that study cannot be extrapolated to the entire territory uncritically, but they are yet another discrete contribution to the design of a complex linguistic reality.

⁴ For an updated and detailed study on this topic, see Ramos & Carmo (2020).

It is evident, from the previous maps, that the Tetum language is the most spoken language in Timor-Leste, dominating a large area as a mother tongue and having the function of L2 in other locations, where it is used as lingua franca for intercultural communication among Timorese with different L1. Furthermore, it is also noticed that there is a predominance of Austronesian languages, with the Papuan languages remaining in smaller numbers, concentrated in the Eastern part.

3 International cooperation for language: expansion and teaching

The expansion of the Portuguese language and its teaching in Timor-Leste has been the subject of multiple cooperation projects and programmes, mainly from Brazil and Portugal.⁵ Brazilian cooperation only worked in specific areas, with a reduced contingent and with projects that were not renewed or continued. In other words, these actions had some limitations, as will be explained later. Portuguese cooperation, on the other hand, had a greater focus on Portuguese language teaching and all related areas (e.g. at all levels of education, in politics and in various sectors of Timorese society, among others).

3.1 Brazilian cooperation

The Brazilian cooperation worked in three main areas: judiciary, technical education and teacher training.

In 1999, during the elections, the Brazilian government started its actions focused on electoral issues and intensified them again in 2005, in public defence. This area is linked with others, especially

⁵ There are other countries and NGOs organizing and taking parts in cooperation projects, but they are not mentioned in this work for several reasons, among which: some of them are only reduced assistance with low impact; some countries focus their cooperation using other languages, mainly English; and other NGOs have interests which diverge from our current research, such as religious cooperation. If we discussed these topics here, we would change our main issue: Portuguese language in Timor-Leste.



Portuguese teaching, in the case of Portuguese for specific purposes (e.g. electoral, judicial, legislative).⁶

In technical education, the main body responsible, and the most active, was the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC, in Portuguese). Within the scope of the Brazil/Timor-Leste cooperation actions, ABC stood out by helping rebuild the country since the initial period, between the years 1999 and 2000, sending observers to carry out a diagnosis. In the following years, several professional training centres were set up aimed at development and the local labour market. Thus, hundreds of Timorese students were trained in several technical areas, such as justice, national security, national culture and heritage, agriculture, education, governance and institutional support, sport and environment and health.⁷ These projects started to be completed in 2011 and ended in the following years. However, in 2019 and 2020, the Timor-Leste National Parliament renewed a series of projects and signed authorization for new ABC initiatives in the country.

Finally, training for Timorese teachers was under the responsibility of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES, in Portuguese), which, in 2005, started the activities of the Teacher Qualification and Portuguese Language Teaching Programme in Timor-Leste (PQLP, in Portuguese), which, despite the results obtained, was deactivated in 2013. This programme sent about 50 Brazilian teachers annually in different areas of teaching (languages, mathematics, humanities and nature) to work in different sectors (secondary education,⁸ higher education, training teachers and official bodies), as well as to prepare handouts, manuals and courses for Timorese professionals working in the government.

It is noteworthy that the PQLP also generated a series of researches and had their results and impacts evaluated in several scientific publications.⁹ These results showed the improvement of the

⁶ Information on international relations between Brazil and Timor-Leste, with the history between these two countries, official signed deals and cooperation, among other areas, is offered by the Brazilian government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and can be found at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/ficha-pais/5477-republica-democratica-de-timor-leste>.

⁷ A complete description of ABC projects and actions is available at the ABC website: <http://www.abc.gov.br/Projetos/CooperacaoSulSul/TimorLeste>.

⁸ Timor-Leste presents educational system terminology similar to Portuguese, but different from Brazil.

⁹ There is a wide bibliography on this theme in which we quote Reis' (2015) analysis focusing PQLP official documents and the actors involved in this programme, a thematic issue from *Revista Perspectiva*, entitled *Cooperações Educacionais entre países Sul-Sul: análises e perspectivas sobre o Timor-Leste e Moçambique*, in which there are several articles about continuing teacher education and Brazilian cooperation in Timor-Leste (CASSIANI; LISINGEN, 2016), and the recent book

performance of Timorese teachers in tests and in the classroom, the use and adaptation by Timorese professionals of educational materials made by Brazilian teachers, the improvement in proficiency in Portuguese (for Timorese professionals who already used it) and the use of Portuguese (for those Timorese who did not speak it), the interest in pursuing studies, whether in training, continuing education or in graduate school, and guidance from Brazilian teachers/professors in order to assist candidates/students of the Student Programme-Postgraduate Agreement (PEC-PG), which selected Timorese candidates interested in studying in Brazil.

Currently, bilateral agreements between Brazil and Timor-Leste no longer have the Portuguese language as their main focus, and it is only used in a secondary way. As pointed out, there is only active renewal of ABC initiatives, and a project to support the Timorese justice sector, from the MRE.

3.2 Portuguese cooperation

Since the 1999 referendum and the withdrawal of Indonesian occupying forces in the following months, the Portuguese cooperation was under the charge of entities within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, namely the 'Instituto Camões' (ICA) and the Portuguese Institute of Support to Development (IPAD). Currently, these two entities are merged into a single body, Camões – Institute for Cooperation and Language, I. P. (CICL). Over the years, these bodies have developed cooperation projects in different areas, from education to agriculture, from electoral administration to journalism, through justice and human rights. But other Portuguese organizations have also been involved in cooperation activities, namely universities.

Thus, the institutions responsible and their respective projects that we will address next are the work of the Portuguese Language Centre (CLP) and the Portuguese Language Institute (ILP); the actions of the Portuguese Language Reintroduction Project in Timor-Leste and the Portuguese Language Consolidation Project in Timor-Leste; the elaboration of the Curricular Reform of Basic and Secondary Education; the Initial and Continuing Teacher Training Project (PFICP) and the 'Formar

by Lamim-Guedes & Rosa (2020), in which the authors write about different topics on the teaching of science and the Brazilian cooperation in Timor-Leste.



Mais' project – Continuing Teacher Training in Timor-Leste; the construction of the Portuguese School of Díli Ruy Cinatti and the Reference Schools and Centres for Learning and School Training (CAFE). It is worthy of mention that some of these key projects on Portuguese language and teaching had substantial investment.

The following sections are divided to present a brief description of each of the above mentioned projects.

3.2.1 Portuguese Language Centre (CLP)/Portuguese Language Institute (ILP)

On November 17, 2001, the Portuguese Language Centre/'Instituto Camões' was inaugurated at the premises of the National University of Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL), the only public university in Timor-Leste. This centre has benefited from the work of several lectures over the years and remained operational until 2014, the year in which it gave rise to the 'Instituto da Língua Portuguesa'.

Among the objectives of the 'Instituto da Língua Portuguesa' were: to support the Department of Portuguese Language (namely, ensuring the teaching of Portuguese language subjects at UNTL) and the National Institute of Linguistics at UNTL; to offer extracurricular training courses and continuing education in Portuguese for different audiences; to publish periodicals in Portuguese; and to organize book fairs and regular, or occasional, events associated with the Portuguese language and Portuguese-speaking literature, as well as promoting them. Its material collection had a library, computers for students' use and audiovisual material.

On the same date, the UNTL graduation course in 'Portuguese Language and Lusophone Cultures' officially started. This course was initially ensured by ICA. Several professors in the Department of Portuguese Language at UNTL graduated during this period and in this course.

In 2014, CICL signed a protocol of understanding with UNTL for the creation of the Portuguese Language Institute (INL). This decision implied the end of operations of the CLP and its replacement by the new body. Thus, a CICL body (that is, a Portuguese cooperative effort), which operated in UNTL facilities and supported the institution, was replaced by a body with responsibilities shared between CICL and UNTL (that is, between Portugal and Timor-Leste). For its operation, UNTL hired ten Portuguese lecturers and CICL hired an associate scientific and pedagogical coordinator in order to



organize the team and work close to the ILP Director, to be appointed by UNTL. In this case, the rector of the university assumed this role.

At a conference in 2015, this coordinator summarized the mission of the ILP as follows, based on the protocol of understanding signed between the parties, labelling this project as ambitious and comprehensive:

The development of pedagogical and technological skills in Portuguese language for UNTL professors and other local universities; the development of UNTL students' skills in Portuguese language; the development of public servants and common citizens' skills in Portuguese language; the establishment of partnerships for Portuguese language formation for neighboring countries (RAMOS, 2016, p. 70)¹⁰.

Thus, once again, the main action consisted of supporting teaching at UNTL, not only in Portuguese, but in other disciplines and teaching for other audiences as well. The ambition was to develop the ILP so that it could fulfil its mission of being a hub for the dissemination of the Portuguese language in the Asia-Pacific region, responding especially to requests from Indonesia and Australia, in conjunction with the 'Instituto Português do Oriente', based in Macau, and with the efforts of the Lusophone community to consolidate the Portuguese language in the region.¹¹

One of the relevant tasks performed by the ILP in that period, at the request of the vice-rectory for academic affairs at UNTL, consisted of conducting a diagnostic evaluation of Portuguese language proficiency of the lecturers of the university, as part of the process of improving this proficiency. After the evaluation, each professor would be included in a level group and have adequate training so that they could progress and extend their knowledge. It should be remembered that, by law, teaching at university institutions must be carried out entirely in Portuguese (with the exception of teaching other languages, of course). However, it is common knowledge that many higher education teachers

¹⁰ Original text in Portuguese: "o desenvolvimento de competências didático-pedagógicas e tecnológicas de e em língua portuguesa do corpo docente da UNTL e de outras universidades locais; o desenvolvimento de competências em língua portuguesa dos alunos da UNTL; o desenvolvimento de competências em língua portuguesa de funcionários públicos e sociedade civil; o estabelecimento de parcerias para a formação em língua portuguesa em instituições universitárias dos países da região".

¹¹ Ramos (2016) presents a full description of ILP mission and actions in its first year.

insistently (or exclusively, in numerous cases) use Tetum and/or the Indonesian language in their activity.

The procedure for construction, validation and application of the proficiency test in question is described in Viegas, Ramos & Antunes (2015), as well as a summary of the results. It was a test with components of interpretation, grammatical knowledge, writing and conversation, which adopted the parameters of the Portuguese Language Proficiency Framework for Timor-Leste, adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This framework was still under construction by the ILP and sought to adapt the CEFR to the Timorese context, considering that the sociolinguistic reality of the Portuguese language in the country is not a foreign language (which is the scenario envisaged for the application of the CEFR), but a second language.

The results obtained from two hundred and two tests (from a universe of four hundred and twenty-nine national teachers), failed to fully reflect the level of proficiency of the faculty members, since they only covered 47% of the target universe. In the end, it was possible to ascertain that Portuguese language proficiency varies from college to college, but that the overall result is as follows:

Tab. 1 – Portuguese language proficiency global results

Total A0	17
Total A1	51
Total A2	67
Total B1	20
Total B2	35
Total C1	7
Total C2	5
Total	202

Source: Viegas, Ramos & Antunes (2015)



Viegas, Ramos & Antunes (2015) conclude:

(...) it seems clear that there is a significant number of UNTL professors that do not have the mandatory language skills to teach in Portuguese as a proficient speaker (and, as above mentioned, to read and to select references in this language, or to produce teaching materials or even interact with the students using this language) with the expertise to promote Portuguese language knowledge to their students. It is not reasonable to expect from these professors with Portuguese language skills lower than B2 that they would have qualification for supervise undergraduate monographs. Only 47 from 202 professors that were evaluated presented B2 level or higher, in other words 23,26% or less than a quarter. (VIEGAS, RAMOS & ANTUNES, 2015, p. 76-77)¹².

The study and its results are so much more relevant because, as the authors state, they focus on a socio-professional and cultural group of relevance in Timorese society, “with strong influence over national policies, (...) with unparalleled academic training and international contact, and that distinguishes itself from the rest of its citizens (...), a leadership group of Timorese society at various levels.” (VIEGAS, RAMOS & ANTUNES, 2015, p. 59-60). And, for this very reason, the evocation of these results from the recent past is justified, since they make an eloquent contribution to the design of the state of the Portuguese language in that country.

In 2016, the ILP changed its status: it returned to the designation of the Portuguese Language Centre and became part of the National Institute of Linguistics. Some of the Portuguese teachers were replaced by Timorese teachers who did postgraduate training in Portuguese. It maintains the initial objective, but no progress has been made in building a proficiency benchmark in Portuguese that is specific to Timor-Leste and accepted by the scientific community, public administration and society.

¹² Original text in Portuguese: “(...) parece óbvio que há um número significativo de docentes da UNTL que não possuem as competências linguísticas necessárias para lecionar em língua portuguesa de modo proficiente (e, como foi referido, ler e recomendar bibliografia nesta língua, ou produzir materiais didáticos com correção linguística, ou mesmo interagir verbalmente com os alunos com a necessária mestria em português), com capacidade para promover o domínio da língua portuguesa dos seus alunos. Claramente, não parece razoável esperar que docentes com um nível de proficiência em língua portuguesa inferior a B2 tenham condições para supervisionar a redação das monografias de final de curso dos seus orientandos. E só 47 dos 202 docentes que participaram neste processo avaliativo (ou seja, 23,26% dos avaliados, menos de um em cada quatro) possuem nível de proficiência B2 ou superior”.



3.2.2 Portuguese Language Reintroduction Project in Timor-Leste/Portuguese Language Consolidation Project in Timor-Leste

These projects under the responsibility of the Portuguese cooperation took place respectively between 2000 and 2009 and between 2010 and 2011, and required a budget of more than 50 million euros. They focused on the teaching activity of more than one hundred Portuguese teachers each year, who taught Portuguese (and other curricular areas), particularly, but not only, in teacher training. The evaluation report of the first (BARBEIRO et al., 2010) points out that, despite all the constraints, endogenous and exogenous, to which the project was subject, “the range of activities carried out in all domains (formal education is significant) and non-formal, public administration, libraries/toy libraries, media, population in general)” (BARBEIRO et al., 2010, p. 8). The report also does not fail to mention that the results were “below expectations, namely taking into account that, after a decade, only about 10% of teachers in service without a professional qualification obtained it, within the scope of programmes with PRLP intervention” (BARBEIRO et al., 2010, p. 8), among other evidence. This same report recognizes that the project “has already had visible effects and allows the continued production of positive effects to be projected in Timorese society” (BARBEIRO et al., 2010, p. 9), with regard to the professional competence of teachers and the dissemination of the Portuguese language in the territory, both in the school context and in the media, among other relevant factors.

Finally, the report emphasizes that the project was complementary to other initiatives, namely those with Brazilian cooperation, but without a planned and formal coordination between the efforts of the two Portuguese-speaking countries.

3.2.3 Curricular Reform of Basic and Secondary Education

Proposals for curricular guidelines for the first six years of schooling emerged after the year 2005, as a result of the cooperation that involved the Catholic University on the Portuguese side, at a time when there was still no Basic Education Law in Timor-Leste, which was enacted in 2008.



Between 2009 and 2010, the University of Minho and the Timorese Ministry of Education developed the Basic Education 3rd Cycle Curriculum Development (Timor-Leste), with UNICEF funding and the collaboration of ‘Instituto Camões’. This project led to the elaboration of curriculum and school programmes for the subjects and guides for teachers of the 3rd cycle of Timorese basic education. This curriculum was approved by Government Resolution No. 24/2011, of September 7.

Between 2010 and 2013, the ‘Falar Português’ project resulted from similar cooperation, but on the Portuguese side the partners were the Development Support Institute, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the University of Aveiro, and the aim was designing the curriculum, school programmes, manuals for students and guides for general secondary school teachers.¹³ The curricular plan for this level of education was approved by Decree-Law no. 47/2011, of October 19.

These above mentioned projects achieved a crucial phase in the process of transition from the Indonesian model to the modern model of Timorese education, as pointed out by Ramos & Teles (2012) and Oliveira (2019), as well as the concomitant transition from the use of the Indonesian language to the Portuguese language in teaching.

3.2.4 Initial and Continuing Teacher Training Project (PFICP) (2012-2014)/Formar Mais – Continuing Teacher Training in Timor-Leste (2016-2018)

The implementation of new curricula and school programmes made the need for teacher training more evident. Thus, the University of Minho and the University of Aveiro were called to assume the technical-scientific responsibility of training programmes with a view to consolidating the Timorese educational system, following protocols established between Timorese and Portuguese governments.

The training in and of Portuguese language was a fundamental data a priori in these programmes, as they were developed within the scope of the Initial and Continuous Teacher Training Project (PFICP), which took place from 2012 until 2014. After that, during 2016 and 2018, the PFICP was replaced by the ‘Formar Mais’ – Continuing Teacher Education project, which was under the technical-scientific responsibility of the University of Aveiro.

¹³ Oliveira (2019) offers a description and some thoughts on this project.



3.2.5 Dili Ruy Cinatti Portuguese School and Reference Schools/Learning and Training Centres (CAFE)

A final note for the multiple activities and projects of Portuguese cooperation with Timor-Leste in the context of Portuguese language teaching and expansion in this country must mention the quality of a project to highlight in the Timorese scenario: Escola Portuguesa de Díli – Centro de Ensino e Língua Portuguesa – Ruy Cinatti (EPRC).

This institution started its activities in 2002 in provisional arrangements, but it was only formally created in 2009 – Decree-Law No. 48/2009, February 23. It results from a cooperation agreement between Portugal and Timor-Leste in May 2002. Its teaching staff is mainly made up of Portuguese teachers. It welcomes more than a thousand national and international students, distributed from pre-school education to secondary education. The school adopts the Portuguese curriculum with slight adaptations. After completing the training course, students can apply to attend Portuguese universities in the general contingent or in a specially dedicated contingent. It is an institution of excellence within the Timorese scenario, and assumes the role of a model to be followed by other institutions.

The recognition of this high-quality school led to the signature between Timorese and Portuguese governments, on April 16, 2010, of a protocol for the constitution of EPRC hubs. Four of them started work in the 2010/2011 school year and one in the following year. A new protocol, signed on September 28, 2011, changed the status of these centres to the designated ‘Escola de Referência’ (Reference School), to be integrated into the Timorese education network on January 1, 2013, with the existence of one per district (thirteen in total). Contrary to what happens with the EPRC, the Timorese curriculum was adopted in these schools, but the language of instruction was guaranteed to be Portuguese. The teaching staff was made up almost exclusively of Portuguese teachers. These schools started to receive students from the 1st cycle of basic education, but expanded their scope of training to new cycles and levels of education as students progressed. They also hosted kindergarten/pre-school education rooms.

The reference schools also served as spaces for carrying out curricular internships for Timorese students on continuing teacher education courses and, progressively, some new graduates



were admitted to their teaching staff, providing professional integration under the tutelage of Portuguese teachers.

At the end of 2014, a new cooperation protocol embodied the transformation of these schools into Centres for Learning and School Training in Timor-Leste (CAFE), essentially maintaining the philosophy, objectives and practices of the previous model. These student and teacher training programmes remain active.

4 Portuguese spoken in Timor-Leste

The Portuguese language spoken by the Timorese has received little attention from researchers and remains understudied, therefore not much can be said about this theme. However, in this section, we discuss what is known so far, review the existing bibliography and present the main results and contributions achieved.

4.1 Research on the Portuguese spoken by the Timorese

The studies that had dealt with the Portuguese spoken by the Timorese before the independence of Timor, although pioneering, were few and brought only preliminary information. The analysis in Thomaz (1974) is brilliant, bringing historical, social and linguistic information on the extent to which the so-called “Dili square Portuguese” (a recurring term to refer to the Portuguese language spoken in Timor) referred to a creole variety of Portuguese or simply to the Portuguese spoken by the Timorese.¹⁴ Thomaz (1985) is dedicated to historical and sociolinguistic issues, and Thomaz (1995) is concerned with some notable aspects of the Portuguese lexicon spoken by Timorese. Costa (1995) produces a note which recognizes the Portuguese spoken in Timor as a distinct variety and differentiates it from European Portuguese, taught and spoken in Timor-Leste by the Portuguese. In Baxter (1996) there is an extensive study on the Portuguese language in Asia, with an entire section

¹⁴ The creole variety spoken in Timor is currently extinct and is known as Bidau Creole Portuguese, named after the neighborhood in Dili outskirts (Timor-Leste capital). Bidau was the location in which the creole was spoken. Baxter (1990) remains the most complete linguistic study on this creole variety.



dedicated to Portuguese in Timor, with analysis of both the creole and the Portuguese varieties and there is also some information on history, acquisition and teaching Portuguese on the island.

This scenario, however, has not improved much in the beginning of the 21st century. There are some authors, such as Brito & Bastos (2007) and Brito & Corte-Real (2006), who, despite commenting on some features of Portuguese spoken in Timor-Leste, end up considering them only as errors or norm deviations.

Carvalho (2002/2003) presents the first investigation of that period in which she sees linguistic data as a variety, as she dedicated herself to an investigation of the lexicon, producing a corpus on which she based her conclusions. She even points out common features with Asian Portuguese creoles (such as Malacca, Macao and Indo-Portuguese) and other restructured varieties of the Portuguese language in Asia, such as Portuguese from Singapore, Flores and Jakarta.

The next significant investigation came only with Busquets' dissertation (2007), in which the author analyses a series of structures found in different textual productions, separating them into lexical cohesion, grammatical cohesion and referencing. There is also conversation analysis based on a corpus produced by the author, in which she highlights characteristics such as hetero-repetition, self-repetition, hesitant repetition, filled pauses and unfilled pauses.

Santos (2009) dedicates a chapter in her dissertation to the study of the null subject parameter and verbal inflection in Portuguese in Timor-Leste. The author separated the data collected into two groups: group 1 (speakers between 18 and 20 years old who started learning Portuguese in their teens) and group 2 (speakers between 40 and 55 years old, who had been in contact with Portuguese since childhood). Thus, for group 1, the Portuguese language has the nature of a foreign language, while for group 2 it is characterized as L2. The results showed that, in group 1, the null subject was only 15% employed, while in group 2, the percentage is higher, reaching 31%.

In Albuquerque (2010), the author conducts an introductory study on the prosody of Portuguese spoken in Timor-Leste, but still considers certain aspects as 'peculiarities' spoken by the Timorese. Modifying his analysis in Albuquerque (2011), the author argued the hypothesis of the Portuguese spoken in Timor-Leste being an emerging variety of the Portuguese language. This author also has a series of descriptive studies, of which we will mention only the main ones: a study dedicated to the lexicon (ALBUQUERQUE, 2012a), in which he resumes the previous contributions from Thomaz



(1995) and Carvalho (2002/2003), a preliminary investigation of the morphosyntax (ALBUQUERQUE, 2012b); and an analysis of verbal markers in the light of language acquisition and languages in contact (ALBUQUERQUE, 2014).

Batoréo (2010, 2011), as the previous author, also carried out several studies, among which we will mention the most important ones. Applying cognitive and textual linguistics, the author approaches and analyses the use of 'already' (Pt. *já*) as a marker of perfective aspect by the influence of the L1 of Timorese speakers, who present such a structure, such as Tétum *tihá* 'already, perfective marker' (BATORÉO, 2010) and the construction 'é que' used in Timor-Leste Portuguese (TLP) in a different way from European Portuguese (EP), as a discursive marker of emphasis (BATORÉO, 2011), and also by the influence of local languages from Timor-Leste, in which the speaker has a local language as L1 and transfers its characteristics to Portuguese. Albuquerque's (2014) analysis was based on such results.

In recent years, most investigations into TLP have focused on discussing whether it is a variety of the Portuguese language, or has traits of the process of L2 acquisition/learning, or just deviations from standard EP. Afonso & Goglia (2015a, 2015b) study some sentences of Portuguese spoken by Timorese immigrants residing in Europe, attesting that these are innovations of a non-dominant variety still under construction, therefore unstable. Other authors, such as Holm, Greksakova & Albuquerque (2015) and Batoréo (2016), describe TLP linguistic structures and it as an emerging variety in the process of stabilization and presenting some variable structures as well.

Based on the results cited above, it is possible to attest that TLP is a new and specific variety that is still in formation, and therefore the character of certain structures is variable, as we point out below. Thus, the linguistic traits found, sometimes considered errors, peculiarities or aspects of the acquisition of L2, are actually properties of this recent variety, which some authors call 'Timor-Leste Portuguese' (TLP)¹⁵.

According to the results of Lusophone cooperation and of the linguistic researches carried out, what can be observed until the present is that there seems to be no dialogue between the different

¹⁵ Gonçalves (2004) argues the same for Mozambican Portuguese. The author affirms that such linguistic characteristics are specific and evidences from a new African Portuguese variety. This linguistic situation is also investigated in other languages in contact spaces for other former colonies, as Platt, Weber & Ho (1984) called 'the new Englishes'.

parties involved, even with all the material and human efforts. Linguists are centred on their object of study, disregarding educational issues. In addition, teachers and other professionals in teaching projects and cooperation also focus on teaching the Portuguese language, or they have pedagogical concerns, disregarding the advances and results from linguistic research.

In addition to being negative for both sides that would only benefit from working together, this lack of dialogue is even more harmful for linguistic research, because it is in an initial stage and depends on resources and qualified labour to move forward. This scenario must be different, since both sides have the common goals of acting on Portuguese language teaching and expansion.

4.2 Timor-Leste Portuguese: specific characteristics

TLP has specific properties, that is, characteristics that are remarkable for this variety. We highlight below the main ones at the different levels of linguistic analysis. At the phonetic-phonological level, TLP is characterized by variation in palatal segments (1) and a series of metric restrictions, mainly affecting accentuation and syllable (2)¹⁶:

1. Palatal consonants:

ʃ > s, sʃ

chegar [se.'ga.a] ~ ['sʃe.ga] 'to arrive'; chá [sʃa] 'tea'; bicho ['bi.su] 'pet';

ʎ > ɲ, l, lɲ

velho ['ve.lɲu] ~ ['be.lɲi] 'old'; olho ['o.liu] ~ ['oi.lu] 'eye'; espelho [es.'pe.lu] ~ [es.'pe.liu] 'mirror';

ɲ > ɲ, n, nɲ

vinho ['bi.niu] ~ ['vi.nɲu] 'wine'; rascunho [ras.'ku.niu] ~ [ras.'ku.nɲu] 'draft'; bonitinho [bo.ni.'ti.iu] ~ [bo.ni.'ti.nɲu] 'beauty';

ʒ > ʒ, z, dʒ, zʒ, d

¹⁶ TLP transcriptions and data are from Albuquerque (2010, 2011, 2012a). We have kept the author's phonetic interpretation and spelling.

ajuda [a.'zu.da] ~ [a.'dʒu.da] '[to] help'; João [zʒu.an] ~ ['du.an]; já [zʒa] ~ [dʒa] ~ [da]; hoje ['o.ze] ~ ['o.dʒi] 'today'.

2. alicate > [al.'ka.ti] 'pliers', telefone > ['tel.fon] 'telephone', chave de fenda > [xa.'fen.da] 'screwdriver', correr > corre ['kʁe] 'to run', fumar > fuma ['fu.ma] 'to smoke', dormir > dormi ['dʁi.mi] 'to sleep', distrital > [dis.tri.'ta.al] 'district', animal > [a.ni.'ma.al] 'animal', doutor > [do.'tʁ.ʁ] 'doctor', senhor > [se.'nʁ.ʁ] 'mister'.

TLP morphosyntax traces are variable in number and gender agreement (3), verbal paradigm reduction (4) and variable copula use (5):

3.
 - a) Muito pessoas que não pode fala português.
'**Very person** that could **not speaks** Portuguese'
 - b) Os cidadão português é também vivem em timor para ajudar os professor.
'Portuguese citizens **is also they live** in Timor to help teacher.'
4.
 - c) Agora colega pode sai.
'Now **colleague can leave**.'
 - d) Ele za sega muito sedu.
'He **already come very early**.'
5.
 - e) Eu também (é) muito contente
'I (**am**) also very happy'
 - f) A língua português é uma língua que (é) mais importante Timor

'Portuguese language is a language that (is) more important Timor.'

There are notable characteristics in TLP lexicon and semantics such as loans from local languages (6), Malay, Indonesian and Asia Creoles Portuguese (7), semantic changes (8) and 16th-century Portuguese retentions (9):

6. tais 'traditional vest'; liurai 'local chief'; suco 'hamlet'; tua 'palm wine'; dató 'noble'; bua 'chewing material';
7. saugate 'to give'; mainato 'domestic employee'; surat 'document, letter, paper sheet'; barlaque 'dowry'; katuas 'elder'; jambua 'grapefruit';
8. amo 'priest'; morador 'native militia'; topaz(es) 'mestizo'; serviço 'work, job'; estilo 'traditional ceremony for killing animals'; colega 'form of address among friends of the same age'; mestre 'teacher' and docente 'professor'; aluno(a) 'student in school', and estudante 'university student'; valor 'school exam results';
9. carreta 'car'; formosura 'beautiful'; gentio 'non-Catholic Timorese'; açafate 'a type of round basket'; chumaço 'pillow'; tacho 'Chinese pot'.

We emphasize that TLP, with its specific properties mentioned above, coexists with EP, mainly in teaching and daily contact¹⁷. Furthermore, the Portuguese language, as well as the local Portuguese variety is acquired as L2, since Timorese citizens have the native language spoken in the place where they are born as their mother tongue. Portuguese is acquired only with parents who speak that language or when taught in school.

¹⁷ This contact occurred in different ways, mainly between Portuguese and Timorese citizens and with Portuguese material culture (e.g. television shows, radio/ music, websites in Portuguese, books, newspaper).

This complex scenario of multilingualism with several languages belonging to different genetic affiliations on the island of Timor, the history of contact with different peoples and languages, and the different projects for teaching and expanding Portuguese language in Timorese territory have contributed both to the current linguistic situation in Timor-Leste and to the configuration in which the Portuguese is found.

In our view, further investigations should be conducted for a better evaluation of TLP, expanding the existing data, making more detailed descriptions, carrying out analyses about the acquisition processes of this variety, comparing it with other language acquisition processes already known and also with specific acquisition processes of Portuguese as L1, and verifying whether TLP is acquired as L2 or as L3 – this is an important task – in the same way that Timorese speakers acquire Portuguese in its European standard. Only with reliable data and scientific results can it be assessed whether the TLP variety is in conflict or presents any problem in the language acquisition process and/or Portuguese teaching for Timorese citizens. While we do not have such results, we have adopted a scientific and ecological attitude of preservation, seeing linguistic (and dialectal) diversity as positive.

Furthermore, only time will tell if certain properties will stabilize, if they appear as variable rules, thus leading to the two coexisting norms, or if there will be a convergence between them, with TLP approaching EP after years of contact and formal education.

The results of extensive investigations may help to configure cooperation actions in the context of Portuguese speaking. Scientific knowledge about the Portuguese L2 acquisition by the Timorese, language variation by these learners, the differentiation of ungrammatical constructions, variable rules or TLP stabilized features and the influence of the mother tongue, among other themes, would contribute greatly to teaching actions at different levels, and in Timorese continuing teacher education. In addition, linguists could also bring greater knowledge to such projects, especially those aimed at applied linguistics and Portuguese as a non-native language in order to formulate better materials, teaching tasks and assessments for teaching Portuguese in Timor-Leste.

Final remarks



As brief final notes, we highlight the very considerable investment since 2000 that Brazil and Portugal have made in the Timorese educational system and in the expansion of the Portuguese language. Despite the physical distance, the Timorese feeling of belonging to the same cultural and linguistic community is effective. The striking differences in terms of technological and social development make the urgency of cooperation more imperative in the eyes of those who have had the opportunity to visit or to live in Timor-Leste.

However, one should not ignore or fail to criticize the lack of consistency in Timor-Leste's language and educational policies, or the inability to move from good intentions to daily action. It is not enough to announce that one of the official languages is Portuguese for this language to be miraculously mastered by the population, or at least by political decision-makers and social elites.

Criticism should also be made regarding Brazilian and Portuguese cooperation agencies for the low level of articulation and integration of their projects. In fact, the two countries have turned their backs on this issue, ignoring each other. We are fully aware that there are different and even conflicting practices, projects and political interests which are not always aligned with each other and, eventually, lead to mistrust. But both sides, and especially Timor-Leste, would benefit from the pooling of material and human resources.

In Timor-Leste, these considerations are extended to other partners and donors, since projects and NGOs with the most diverse strategic orientations have been overflowing, not always respecting the sovereignty of the Timorese people. At least as far as language is concerned, there would be an advantage in creating an accessible repository that would collect information about all intervention projects and programmes, as well as scientific publications or popularization of science in Timor-Leste. In 2014, the 'Instituto da Língua Portuguesa' (now 'Centro de Língua Portuguesa') presented this intention in its provisional action programme, but it has not been possible to achieve this goal by this time.

On linguistic issues we can attest that the same situations mentioned above occur in linguistic research and cooperation agencies, which most often seem to ignore each other's significant advances and results. It should also be noted that in Timor-Leste the Portuguese language is not a mother tongue, but it is not a foreign language either. Thus, this L2 status should be considered for the construction of a proficiency benchmark, which would be effectively suited to that context, as mentioned



briefly in (4.2), replacing the loose appropriations of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, or serving as a guide for the multiple courses and tests that take place without a clear scientific, social and institutional basis.

Finally, still reflecting on linguistics, the Portuguese language spoken in Timorese daily life (how it is spoken, when, by whom, what are its characteristics, why it is not spoken, among others) should be thought about and research on these themes intensified in order to gain a better understanding of the situation of the Portuguese language in the country. Furthermore, such knowledge can serve as a guiding principle for the performance of Portuguese language teachers, both Portuguese and Brazilians, as well as Timorese. We know that this intensification of research and the use of these results in teaching practice in Timor-Leste will only occur if there is effective cooperative work with all the parties involved acting together, whether Brazilian or Portuguese, and also including Timorese government agencies.

There will be benefits for all actors involved only if they carry out all the activities as a team. When positive results could be achieved, more would be known about the Portuguese language in Timor-Leste, ties between Portuguese-speaking peoples and countries would be strengthened, and a fruitful future for Portuguese and its speakers will be guaranteed in Timor-Leste.

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