

*Lusophone pluricentrality: what do IFFluminense Languages
Licenciateship students know about Portuguese in East Timor? /
Pluricentralidade lusófona: o que sabem os alunos do curso de
Licenciatura em Letras do IFFluminense¹ sobre o português em
Timor-Leste?*

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ABSTRACT

The Portuguese language is the official language in nine countries, a factor that contributes to the pluricentricity of the language, considering that, within each territory, Portuguese is transfigured in a different way. With this, this work makes brief notes on the Portuguese language, as a pluricentric language, focusing on investigating the level of knowledge of the students of the Languages (Portuguese and Literatures) course at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology Fluminense Campus Campos Centro, regarding the historical relation between the Portuguese language and East Timor. For this reason, a bibliographic research was initially adopted, carrying out a compilation of theoretical data, with the aid of the filing technique. Afterwards, field research was used, with the application of a questionnaire, for data collection. As obtained results, there is an indication that most of the students of the IFFluminense Languages Course are aware that the Portuguese language is pluricentric, but are unaware of the relationship between the language and East Timor, specifically. In addition, the results indicate that the students consider the approach of the subject in the course syllabus of the Languages Course relevant.

KEYWORDS: Language policy; Pluricentric language; Portuguese language; East Timor.

RESUMO

A língua portuguesa é idioma oficial em nove países, fator que contribui para a pluricentricidade do idioma, tendo em vista que, dentro de cada território, o português se transfigura de forma distinta. Com isso, este trabalho realiza apontamentos sobre a língua portuguesa, como língua pluricêntrica, concentrando-se em investigar o nível de conhecimento dos discentes do curso de Letras (Português e Literaturas) do Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia Fluminense Campus Campos Centro, a respeito da relação histórica entre a língua portuguesa e Timor-Leste. Para isso, adotou-se inicialmente a pesquisa bibliográfica, realizando uma compilação de dados teóricos, com o auxílio da técnica do fichamento. Após, utilizou-se a pesquisa de campo, com aplicação de questionário, para coleta de dados. Como resultados obtidos, tem-se o indicativo de que grande parte dos discentes do curso de Letras do IFFluminense têm conhecimento de que a língua portuguesa é pluricêntrica, mas desconhecem a relação entre o idioma e Timor-Leste, especificamente. Além disso, os resultados apontam que os discentes julgam relevante a abordagem sobre o assunto na matriz curricular do Curso de Letras.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Política linguística; Língua pluricêntrica; Língua portuguesa; Timor-leste.

1 Introduction

Language is a social, cultural and identity institution subject to variations, which are also responsible for justifying some characteristics that revolve it in its character of pluricentricity, such as the Portuguese language, official in nine countries which comprise the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). Starting from the comprehension that pluricentric languages present themselves in a variety of forms, differing in each nationality and regionality due to linguistic interaction,

the contact between different peoples and ethnies, it is relevant to investigate whether students enrolled in a higher education course of Languages have proximity with this topic (it is a specific learning itinerary), mainly with the existence and the use of the Portuguese language in East Timor.

Thus, this work aims to answer the following research problem: what is the level of knowledge of the students of the Languages (Portuguese and Literatures) Course of Federal Institute Fluminense, *Campus Campos Centro*, regarding the pluricentricity of the Portuguese language, with focus on East Timor? As a hypothesis, it is believed that most of the students of the Languages Course know that the Portuguese language is pluricentric, but a great part does not have any knowledge on the historical relations between said language and East Timor specifically, due to not only the inexistence of any express preview of approach of the topic in the course syllabus², but because the focus of the discussions on Portuguese lingers, almost always, on the Brazil-Portugal axis.

Thereby, this research aims on investigating what the level of knowledge of the students of the course of Languages (Portuguese and Literatures) of Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology Fluminense *Campus Campos Centro* is, in regards to the historical relationship between the Portuguese language and East Timor. For better comprehension and organization, this study structures itself into: I) Initial considerations; II) Presentation on the lusophone pluricentricity, above all regarding East Timor; III) Detailing of the used methodology; IV) Results and discussions on the perception of the students of the Languages Course of IFFluminense about Portuguese in East Timor; and V) Final considerations. By the end, the bibliographic references which were used as theoretical grounding to sustain the arguments stated in the research are presented.

The research is developed from the consideration of the existent relationship among the keywords “Portuguese language”, “linguistic pluricentricity”, “East Timor” and “Languages Licenciateship”, keeping in sight the investigation regarding the knowledge of the students of the Languages Course of IFFluminense on the topic. To justify the relevance of this work, a search was carried out on 09/07/22, at 9:56 a.m., on the platform ScieElo.org and Portal of Journals of the

² A previous analysis of the Pedagogical Project of the Languages Licenciateship Course of IFFluminense, available on the website of the Direction of Higher Education of the Licenciateship Courses – DIRLIC (BRASIL, 2019).

Coordination of Improvement of Personnel of Higher Education (CAPES)³, in which were found no results in the manner proposed here. As search procedure, the boolean expression “língua portuguesa” (OR “português”) AND “língua pluricêntrica” (OR “pluricentralidade linguística”) AND “Timor-Leste”⁴ AND “Licenciatura em Letras” was used.

In light of this, it is important to remark that there is no intention of exhausting the possibilities of analysis from which the pluricentrality of the Portuguese language can be scrutinized, but to leave contributions so that, later on, new research is done from different perceptions. The objective is the acknowledgement of the importance of understanding that there are several connections between the Portuguese language and the countries that are located on different continents, in addition to evidence of the approach of this topic in the selected Higher Education course.

2 Portuguese as a pluricentric language and East Timor

The Portuguese language is the official language in nine countries, be they: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Portugal, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor, which comprise the board of member countries of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). The officiality in many nations, among other reasons, demonstrates that “the Portuguese language is considered a pluricentric language because it presents different national rules, some already established, others still in progress, presenting, thus, different rules and linguistic centers” (ALBUQUERQUE, 2022, p. 327). Even though there are nine member countries of the CPLP, the scientific focus is in the region of East Timor and its historical elements. Wilson (2021, p. 19) emphasizes that

Portuguese, language that was formed from Latin in the territory of Entre Douro e Minho and Galicia, was quickly spread to Latin America, Africa, Orient, Oceania and, also, some European Portuguese-speaking communities were formed, due to the imperialist history and the migratory dynamics of their people. This situation

³ The Portal of Journals of CAPES was chosen as search platform due to the collection of over 38 thousand titles with complete text. The platform SciELO was chosen because it is the electronic library whose access policy covers all the complete texts of well qualified articles..

⁴ Filters were not applied (so as to broaden the search).

implied changes, sometimes deep, in the way of a same language developing itself in different spaces and situations.

In effect, Bagno (2011, p. 35) understands that, although the Portuguese language has a connection with Latin, one can't "erase the true origin of Portuguese, its true genealogy, which is of being a derived language, not of Classic Latin, nor even Vulgar Latin, but a language derived of Galician". It matters to emphasize that Portuguese originated from Galician, which, on the other hand, arises from Vulgar Latin, which was formed in the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, the Portuguese language is, in fact, a continuation of Galician (BAGNO, 2011). Even though the expression "Portuguese language" is used to point diverse manifestations of this language, it is important to take into account its multiple specificities and ramifications, which turn it pluricentric, since many nations have Portuguese as official language and speakers, due to the colonial past of conquest of new territories. Furthermore, "one should not talk about Portuguese space, but, at most, about spaces (multiple), that can be measured, inventoried, compared, but not added" (CASTRO, 2020, p. 15). On Map 1, there can be observed the multiple spaces occupied by the countries of Portuguese language (as official):

Map 1- Countries that comprise the CPLP



Source: CPLP (Community of Portuguese Language Countries)

Available on: https://www.cplp.org/Files/Billeder/cplp/bandeiras/Mapa2021_bq.jpg. Access on: Sep. 28, 2022.

As can be noticed, the Portuguese language countries can be found in different parts of the world. Due to the geographical distance between these nations, the language presents itself in different

manners, because of the extralinguistic influences present in each country. Silva (2018, p. 112) explains that “pluricentrism is a special case of intralinguistic variation, marked by questions of identity and national power”. In other words, Portuguese depends, above all, on the linguistic identity of each country and the diverse variants settled because of the contact with the original languages, of the colonized. In that regard, it is worth to remember that “the territorial expansion originated from the expeditions of the commonly called Discoveries made it possible for the Portuguese language to take root in many continents” (MARÇALO, 2020, p. 154).

When one makes an allusion to the pluricentricity of the Portuguese with focus on East Timor, one can't ignore that said country adopts the Portuguese language as official language by constitutional (and historical) power. Furthermore, Portuguese coexists with a diversity of native languages, aside from dividing space with Tetum (also an official language in the country) and two working languages (English and Indonesian). Thereby, it is understood that the definition of pluricentric language comprises the regional and international varieties, adopting the variations that might result in linguistic change. As a matter of fact, “a language changes because it works. A language varies in time, in space and also depending on social and situational elements” (MARÇALO, 2020, p. 154).

Taking into consideration that the Brazilian norm is a particularity of Brazil, while the Portuguese norm rules the other spaces, such as Asia and Africa (SILVA, 2018), the second case includes the norm from East Timor, justifiable due to the more than 400 years of Portuguese presence in the country. It points to the fact that

The concept of pluricentric language is not static, well defined, nor does it necessarily identify with a national variety. It is a prototypical concept, in the sense that some languages are more prototypically pluricentric than others and the limits between the different centers and between the centers and the peripheries are diffuse and prone to change. Consequently, a pluricentric language presents a network of contiguous varieties with many centers, more or less prototypical and, on the other hand, any language is, to a certain extent, pluricentric, inasmuch as it inevitably contains internal variation and different norms. (SILVA, 2018, p. 113).

Thus, to think about the Portuguese language in East Timor (one of the newer countries in the CPLP), located in the southeast of the Asian continent, comprised of thirteen municipalities⁵, one of them being the capital, Díli (TIMOR-LESTE, 2019), it is necessary to take an important historical factor into account: the country had contact with the Portuguese in the early XVI century, namely, in 1512, when there was previous linguistic diversity in the Timorese territory. With the arrival of the European colonizer and the occurrence of lexical exchanges, there was the diffusion of the new language in the island due to the contact between the peoples, which motivated a variational and mutational process. In effect, “the human languages do not constitute static realities; on the contrary, their structural configurations continuously alter in time” (FARACO, 2017, p. 14), allowing Timor to become a plurilingual country in the sense that the Portuguese language became one more of its languages. In fact, the country was originally plurilingual. It is necessary, for this reason, to understand the history of the Portuguese language teaching in the country.

In a recent work, Antunes (2022, p. 62) emphasizes that “the teaching system was introduced by the missionaries, given continuity by the Portuguese administration, redesigned by the Indonesian administration and, nowadays, is maintained by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of East Timor (MEJD)”. It is worth highlighting that the Portuguese language was the foreign language used for the longest time in the island, due to the Portuguese occupation period, which lasted more than 400 years. However, Portuguese was not a language used ordinarily and still is not, according to Brito (2013), so much so that the first people interested in learning the language, still in the colonial period, were the merchants, with the purpose of negotiating their products and developing trade relations. Without the understanding of the Lusitanian language, negotiations became more challenging, because the communication happened by means of gestures (ANTUNES, 2022).

Moreover, the “introduction of the Portuguese language, above all in the case of the island of Timor, was a spontaneous phenomenon, admirable sometimes (since the number of speakers was very reduced), but not planned” (ANTUNES, 2022, p. 64), because the Lusitanian language was presented to the Timorese natives in a passive and friendly manner, although with commercial

⁵ Aileu, Ainaro, Baucau, Bobonaro, Cavalima, Ermera, Lautem, Liquiça, Manatuto, Manufahi, Oecusse, Viqueque e Díli (the capital).

intentions. So that the natives could learn the language, the missionaries stood ready in the intention of promoting the language in the country. However, what can be said is that, even facing a passive presence, not everyone wielded the language with mastery, for there were other native languages in the island, such as Tetum, which was spoken for ordinary and regular use.

The Portuguese language resisted in the Timorese territory until it climbed to the position of officiality, even going through a period in which it was considered “asleep”, due to the dictatorship of the Indonesian, which began in 1975, spanning until 1999, time in which the use of Portuguese was aggressively forbidden. After this period, the language of Camões starts to be considered one of the official languages of the territory, in 2002. In the process of reintroduction of the Portuguese language in the Timorese territory, the country relied on the support of Brazil and Portugal, fact which makes it impossible to ignore the influence of both countries in the Portuguese Community and the development of the language in East Timor.

It is worth pointing out the relevance of Brazil regarding the teaching in Timor, in the face of a linguistic complexity that includes the Portuguese language, because of the presence of two foreign idiomatic varieties in the island (Brazilian Portuguese and Lusitanian Portuguese), in addition to the presence of more than 16 local languages and others considered as working languages (Indonesian and English). However, “despite the work performed by the Portuguese and Brazilian cooperation on the production of educational material for the teaching of children and young people, it is still rare in Higher Education” (LAMIM-GUEDES; ROSA, 2020, p. 176), hampering, thus, the learning in and of the Portuguese language.

Even with the support of the lusophone countries⁶, there is still great preoccupation regarding the teaching of the Portuguese language in the country, because it is not very used in the daily life of the natives, even in education institutions, as is the case of the courtyards of the National Timor Lorosa’e University, where students do not have the habit of using the language (LAMIM-GUEDES; ROSA, 2020). Of all that, “what surprises the most, however, is that the students know much of the grammar of the language, but, in general, are not able to, satisfactorily, interpret what they read or communicate a more elaborate thought” (LAMIM-GUEDES; ROSA, 2020, p. 175).

⁶ Brasil and Portugal, specifically.

According to Paulino (2022), Timor faces problems related to the language of instruction and the lack of teachers in the country. As a matter of fact, the teaching of the Portuguese language still proves itself insufficient for satisfactory use in the territory, with the need of support of other languages regarding the educational scenery, such as the Tetum language and the working languages (English and *Bahasa Indonesia*), or even the native languages to try and simplify the learning process. Furthermore, it is necessary to think the Portuguese language beyond the Brazilian and European variants (and also beyond normative grammar), for they are a specific glimpse of what the language is, due to the fact that it has many centers of use. Thereby, Wilson (2021, p. 22) says that

It is here that the role of the Portuguese language teacher operates, whatever their nationality is, in any country where they teach the language. The contact with the maximum possible number of varieties of Portuguese will make the student aware of what happens beyond the reference variant, resolving eventual misunderstandings arising from the daily contact with “intruder forms” of the same language.

Aiming on overcoming the understanding of the Portuguese language as an isolated unit, taking into account its multiplicity, Wilson (2021) emphasizes that it falls (mainly) to the scholars of the area to know the varieties of the language, so that there can be a base variety, but above all without ignoring the others. Besides that, Paulino (2022) identifies education as a possibility of development for the nation, in other words, adequately using the official language of the country and knowing other linguistic centers of the language benefits not only the individuals, but impacts the development of the country. One cannot ignore, still, that the discussions “on language, curriculum and teacher training bring us to the comprehension of the greater problems of education which have not been solved so far” (PAULINO, 2022, p. 3). According to Paulino (2022) there is a school, academic and scientific gap transcending generations. Thus, the section “Results and discussion” seeks to find out, after the presentation of the adopted methodological procedures, the knowledge of the students of the Languages Course of IFFluminense about the pluricentricity of Portuguese, taking into account the postulates by Paulino (2022) and Wilson (2021).

3 Methodological procedures

According to Kauark, Manhães e Medeiros (2010), methodology comprises the course and every step performed in a research. In other words, it is the detailing of the whole research, presenting, also, the employed techniques. Moreover, the goal of this research is a crucial factor to define the best methodology to be adopted, being it “composed of parts that describe the place, the subjects, the study object, the methods and techniques, which many times are described as research procedures, the limitations of the research, the treatment of data” (KAUARK; MANHÃES; MEDEIROS, 2010, p. 54).

Regarding the approach, this research is primarily qualitative and secondarily quantitative, since it focuses on finding answers to the research problem based on the perceptions of the students of the Languages Course of IFFluminense. Thus, the goal is not to measure the quantitative dimension of the *corpus* composed of the answers to the questionnaire, but to qualitatively evaluate the obtained information in order to understand the level of knowledge of the students on the topic. In this regard, the quantitative analysis is necessary, even if in a secondary manner, for it generates numeric data which lead to an answer to the research problem.

As to the objectives, an exploratory work is developed inasmuch as greater proximity to the topic is aimed, allowing, thus, the raising of a hypothesis. It is so because this research aims on surveying the level of knowledge on the lusophone pluricentricity of the chosen subjects. Since no researches in this respect have been found at IFFluminense, the information about the specificity here proposed can be used (in the future) as object of investigative deepening.

Regarding the nature, it is an applied study, taking into account the necessity of practical application (field research), aiming on acquiring new knowledge, specifically in the area of Language Policy. Moreover, truths and interests are involved, which are not restricted to the scholars of the Portuguese language only, but to every speaker of the language and whoever takes interest in linguistic studies. Hence, the applied research aims on finding solutions to the raised questions, forging a connection with the proposition here developed (considering the academic reality of the *corpus*).

As to the procedures, the research is initially bibliographic, aiming on tabulating necessary information regarding the pluricentricity of the Portuguese language. Filing was the technique which was used, because it is a mechanism that allows greater organization of research data. According to

Kauark, Manhães e Medeiros (2010, p. 54), this technique “allows easy access to the fundamental data to the conclusion of the research”. In sequence, a field research is done, in order to reach the intended objective. To this end, the questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection, due to the necessity of verifying the knowledge of the Languages students, subjects of the research, on the pluricentricity of the Portuguese language. The link to answer the questionnaire was made available to the students by means of WhatsApp groups of the Languages Licenciateship Course of IFFluminense, institution chosen as *locus* of the research because it is the only public institution to offer an on-site Languages Course in the interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro.

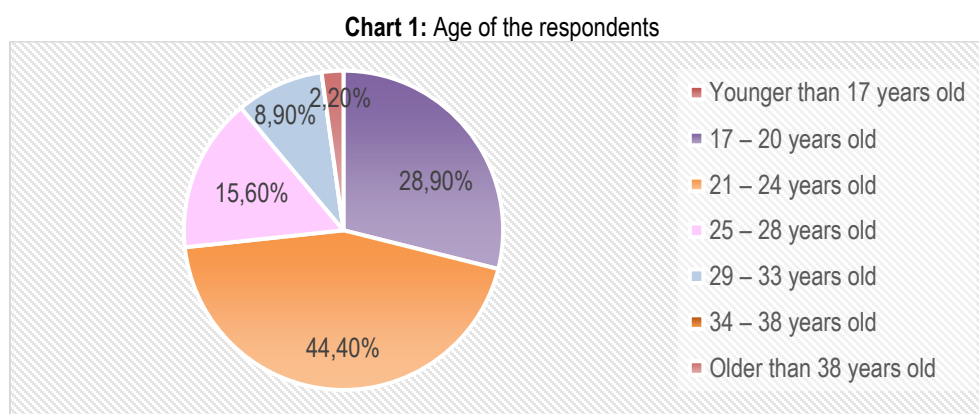
In the questionnaire, after the phase of determining the base profile of the respondents (age, gender, base semester of the course), specific and perception questions were asked. They are:

- Are you aware that the Portuguese language is used by other countries other than Brazil and Portugal, as official language?
- During your time in Basic Education, did you have access to any knowledge on the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)?
- How many member countries of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries do you know? Are you aware that East Timor is a member of the CPLP?
- How important do you consider the approach, in the Languages Licenciateship Course, regarding the other countries whose official language is Portuguese?
- In case you have any knowledge about the Portuguese language in East Timor, where did you acquire it?
- Have you had any contact, in the Languages Licenciateship Course of IFFluminense with information about the Portuguese language in East Timor? (If so, in how many courses?).
- How relevant is it for you to learn about the history of the Portuguese language in the member countries of the CPLP?
- Do you consider the approach of the Portuguese language in the member countries of the CPLP, in the Languages Licenciateship Course (Portuguese and Literatures) of IFFluminense *Campus Campos Centro* relevant?

It matters to highlight that the instrument of data collection (questionnaire) went through a pre-test phase and was available to the students for a period of eleven days, starting on September 19, 2022, and ending on September 30, 2022, so that the students had time to answer it (voluntarily).

4 Results and discussion

The questionnaire was applied to students of the Languages Licenciateship Course (Portuguese and Literatures), comprised of a total of 275 enrolled students in the academic semester of 2022.1, being them: 40 students of the 1st semester, 18 of the 2nd, 21 of the 3rd, 26 of the 4th, 36 of the 5th, 25 of the 6th, 22 of the 7th and, at last, 18 students of the 8th semester⁷. Of 275 students, 45 answered the questionnaire. The initial questions had the objective of knowing the profile of the respondents, starting by age, as Chart 1 shows:

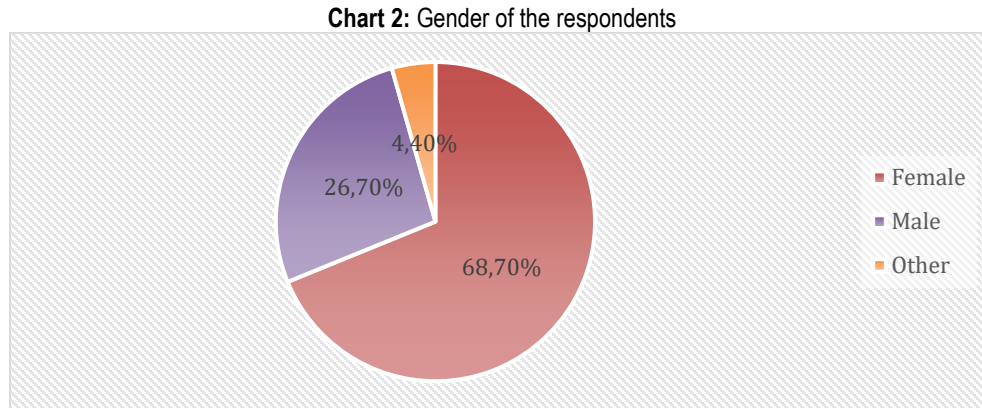


Source: Developed by the authors

Chart 1 shows that great part of the respondents are placed in the age range between 21 and 24 years old, representing 44,4% (20 respondents) of the sample. In second place, respondents affirmed being between 17 and 20 years old, representing 28,9% (13 respondents). Still, 15,6% (5 respondents) affirmed to be between 25 and 28 years old, and 8,9% (4 respondents) declared being between 29 and 33 years old. At last, 2,2% (1 respondent) affirmed being over 38 years old. The

⁷ Information obtained from the Academic Coordination by means of consultation on 09/19/22, at 9:28 p.m.

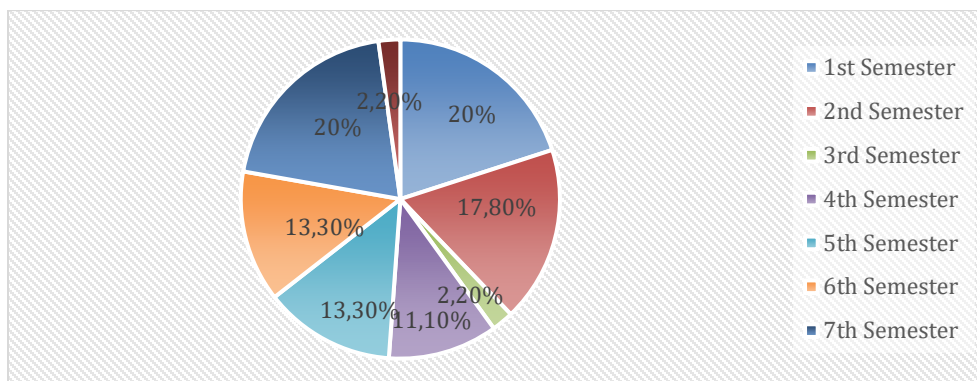
previous information attests for a heterogeneous *corpus*, varying in range from 17 to over 38 years old. Following the same idea, the second question was also of personal and survey nature. The gender of the respondents was asked. The answers varied, as shown in Chart 2:



Source: Developed by the authors

In Chart 2, it is possible to see that there is a meaningful percentage difference between the respondents who consider themselves female and the ones who consider themselves male. 68,9% (32 respondents) of the sample identify themselves as belonging to the female gender, while 26,7% (12 respondents) consider themselves belonging to the male gender. Only 4,4% (2 respondents) consider themselves as a different gender. In general, the significant percentage of respondents of the female gender can represent indications that women, beyond possibly being majority in the Course, also take interest in scientific research. The base semester of the respondents was also asked, as shown in Chart 3:

Chart 3: Base semester of the students of the Languages Course

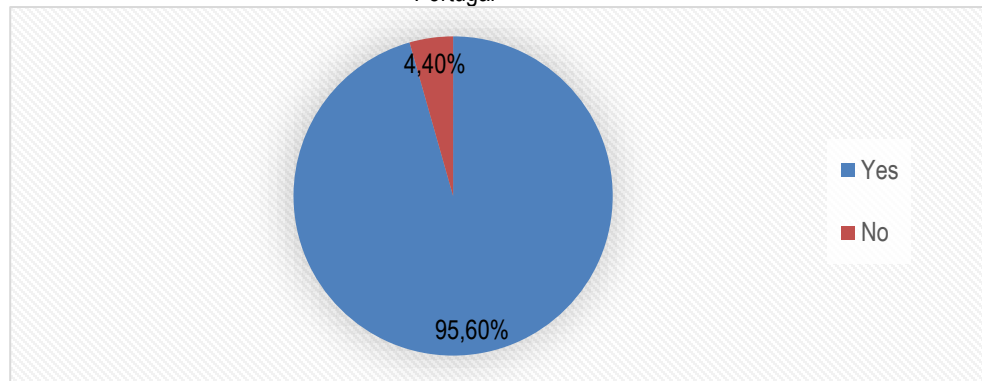


Fonte: Developed by the authors

It is possible to see, in Chart 3, that there were respondents in every group, at a minimum of five students, except for the 3rd and 8th semesters, which had only one respondent each. The 1st and the 7th semesters had greater percentage of respondents, both at 20% (9 respondents). The percentage can be interpreted in various ways, but it is believed that the 1st semester group hadn't gone through dropout yet, which justifies the number of active student registers. Despite the 7th semester group having the same percentage of respondents of the 1st semester group, acceptance of the questionnaire was greater in percentage, taking into consideration the number of enrolled students (22). Then, 17,8% of the respondents were enrolled in the 2nd semester, a relevant percentage, keeping in mind that the group had only 18 students.

Again, two groups presented the same percentage, the 6th and the 5th, both at 13,3% (6 people). It can be justified due to the proximity between them. The 4th semester group presents the percentage of 11,1% (5 respondents). Last, at 2,2% (2 people), are the students of the 3rd and 8th semesters. It is evident that the percentage of respondents in the 4th, 5th and 6th semester groups is close, which can suggest acceptance of the students regarding the questionnaire.

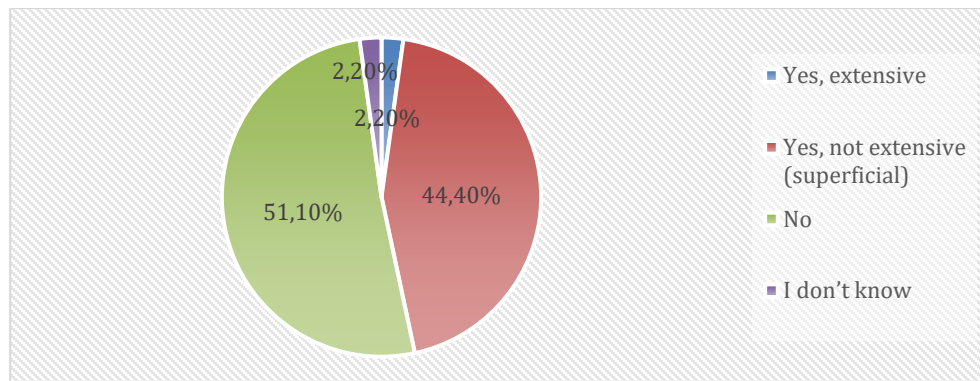
In light of this, after getting to know the profile of the subjects, the students were asked if they were aware that the Portuguese language is used by other countries other than Brazil and Portugal, also as an official language. In other words, it was assumed that the students are aware that the Portuguese language is the official language in Brazil and in Portugal. Chart 4, organizes in percentage the level of knowledge of the respondents on the presence of the Portuguese language in countries other than the two aforementioned ones.

Chart 4: Level of knowledge of the students on the officiality of the Portuguese language beyond Brazil and Portugal

Source: Developed by the authors

As shown in Chart 4, 95,6% (44 people) claimed being aware that the Portuguese language is official in countries other than Brazil and Portugal, which was expected, due to the “Discoveries” that contributed to the Portuguese language’s occupation of space in many territories, thus expanding to various continents (MARÇALO, 2020). Besides that, in the course syllabus of the Languages Course of IFFluminense, there are classes of African Literatures, in the 7th and 8th semesters. Only 4,4% (2 people) answered that they were not aware of the officiality of the Portuguese language in other countries. One of the respondents is enrolled in the 1st semester; the other, the 7th. It is necessary, above all, to take into consideration that the course syllabus is flexible. So, even if the student is enrolled in the 7th base semester, they might not have had contact with the African Literatures classes, offered in other moments. Consequently, the students were asked whether they acquired any knowledge on the CPLP during Basic Education. About this, vide Chart 5:

Chart 5: Knowledge about the CPLP during Basic Education

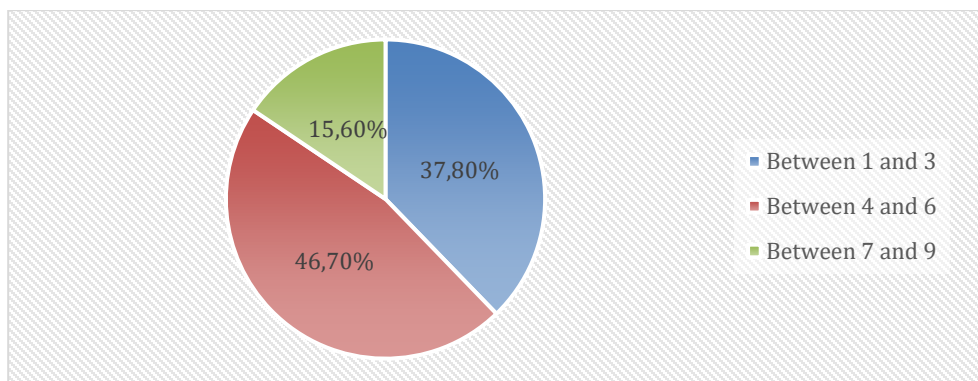


Source: Developed by the authors

Chart 5 shows that 51,1% (23 respondents) claim not having acquired knowledge on the CPLP during Basic Education. It can suggest that the teachers of these students also had no access to this knowledge, which reinforces the thoughts of Wilson (2021), according to which it is necessary for the professionals of the language area to have knowledge of the dimension of the Portuguese language in the world. Thus, with a gap in Basic Education, students start Higher Education without previous knowledge on the matter. In light of this, it is worth emphasizing that, as does Wilson (2021), Castro (2020) also highlights the importance of the approach of the multiple spaces occupied by the Portuguese language.

Following this line of thought, 44,4% (21 students) claimed having acquired such knowledge in a superficial way, fact that represents a small development regarding the educational scenery. And, only 2,2% (1 respondent) claimed not to know how to answer, possibly because the subject had concluded Basic Education a longer time before. Finally, 2,2% (1 student) claimed having acquired knowledge in an extensive manner, which diverges from the other respondents. It can be observed that a very small percentage of students answered that they acquired extensive knowledge about the CPLP, which can suggest that the approach of the topic has not been considered relevant or that the professionals of education are not well prepared to do so. For that matter, the next question regards the number of member countries of the CPLP known by the students, as shown in Chart 6.

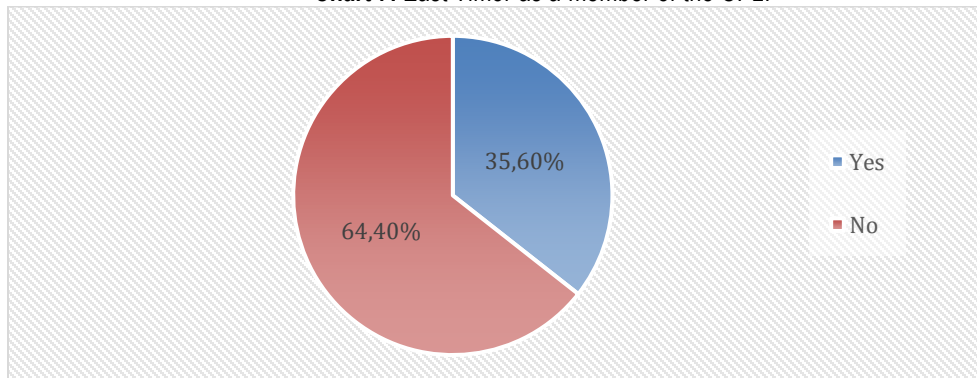
Chart 6: How many member countries of the CPLP the students know



Source: Developed by the authors

In the face of the data presented in Chart 6, one can confirm that 46,7% (21 people) claim to know between 4 and 6 countries; 37,8% (17 respondents) between 1 and 3 countries. Only 15,6% (8 students) affirm to know from 7 to 9 countries. In this case, it is possible that the respondents have considered Brazil and Portugal when answering the questions. It is important to highlight, at this point, that knowing that the Portuguese language is spoken in other countries is acknowledging its dimension and complexity and, above all, that it may vary in an intralinguistic manner, according to Silva (2018). Thus, to affirm that the Portuguese language is pluricentric, it is necessary to acknowledge its dimension in different nations, as official language also. Thereby, although 15,6% have answered that they were aware of 7 to 9 countries, it does not mean the awareness that East Timor is a member of the CPLP. That is the reason why the next question verified the awareness of East Timor as a member of the CPLP, as shown in Chart 7:

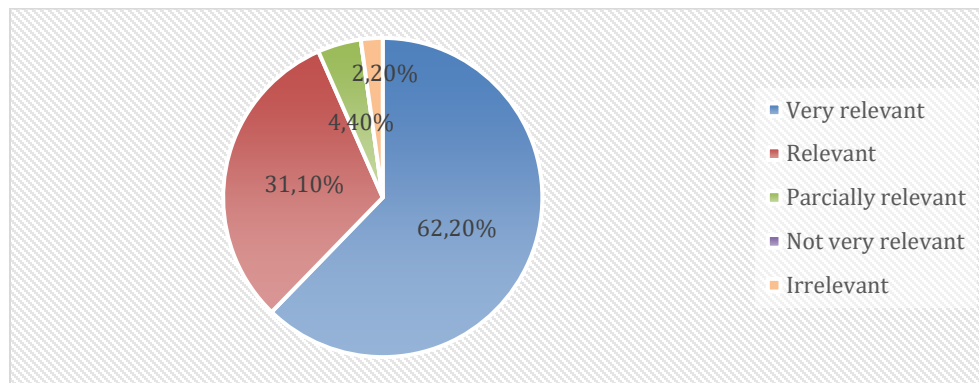
Chart 7: East Timor as a member of the CPLP



Source: Developed by the authors

As it can be seen in Chart 7, 64,4% (29 respondents) are unaware of the fact that East Timor is a member of the CPLP, while 35,6% (17 people) affirm already having this information. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account that the restoration of its independence occurred recently, in 2002, and the country soon after became a member of the CPLP. Even so, Brito (2013) points out that the Portuguese language is not used in daily conversations, which makes its use purely restricted in the Timorese territory. Thus, it is possible that other nations end up not knowing that the Portuguese language is one of the official languages in Timor. Afterwards, students were asked about the relevance of the approach of the Portuguese language countries in the Languages Course of IFFluminense. Chart 8 presents the detailing of the answers.

Chart 8: Relevance of the approach of the Portuguese language countries in the Languages Course

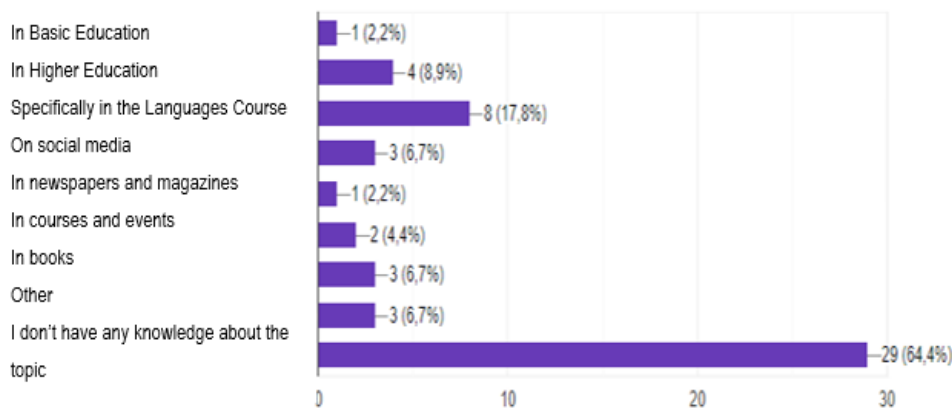


Source: Developed by the authors

Chart 8 shows that 62,2% (29 students) find the approach of the Portuguese language countries in the Languages Course of IFFluminense very relevant, 31,1% (14 respondents) consider it relevant, 4,4% (2 people) consider it partially relevant and only 2,2% (1 student) considers it irrelevant. As it can be seen, almost all respondents find the approach of the topic in the Languages Course relevant, keeping in mind that the course trains professionals of the language area. Thus, it is possible to make a comparison with Chart 7, which presents the knowledge of the students regarding the Portuguese language in the Timorese territory, in which one can verify that 64,4% of the subjects affirmed being unaware that East Timor is a member of the CPLP, while 35,6% claimed that they were aware of the fact. Hence, it is possible that, due to great lack of knowledge, high rates of consideration

of the relevance on the approach of the topic have been caused. Moving on to the specificities of East Timor, the students answered where they acquired knowledge about the Portuguese language in the country, as can be seen in Chart 9.

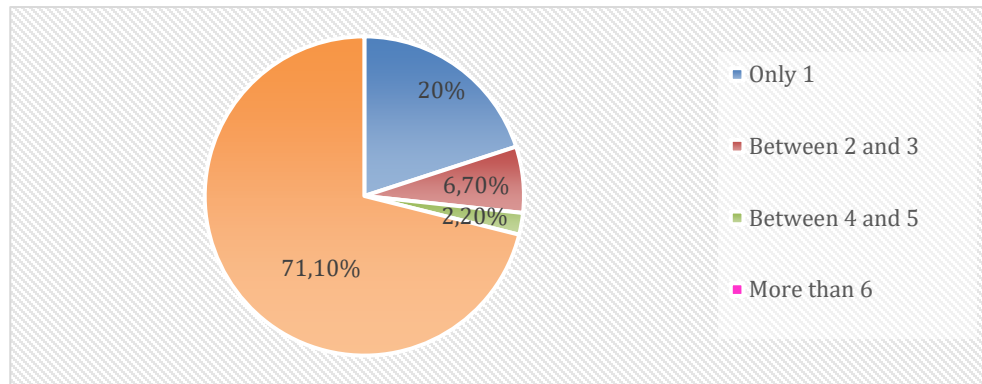
Chart 9: Acquisition of knowledge about the Portuguese language in East Timor



Source: Developed by the authors

It is possible to verify, in Chart 9, that 64,4% (29 people) don't have any knowledge about the Portuguese language in East Timor; 17,8% (8 students) claim having acquired such knowledge specifically in the Languages Course; 8,9% (4 people), in Higher Education; 6,7% (3 respondents), on social media; 6,7% (3 students), in books; 6,7% (3 students), somewhere else; 4,4% (2 people), in courses and events; 2,2% (1 person), in newspapers or magazines; 2,2% (1 respondent), in Basic Education. Thus, it is possible to verify that only a very select group has learned about the Portuguese language in East Timor in the Languages Course, a not very significant number when compared to those who claimed not having any knowledge about it. According to Lamim-Guedes and Rosa (2020) the Portuguese language is seldom used in the region of East Timor, even in the courtyard of the only public university in the country (UNTL). Thereby, the dissemination of the language out of the borders of the country is not very recurrent. Another point deserving of reference is that, due to the explicit inexistence of the topic in the course syllabus of the Languages Course of IFFluminense, it is possible that many professors do not approach the subject. In order to verify this questioning, Chart 10 presents the approach of the topic in different classes. As seen:

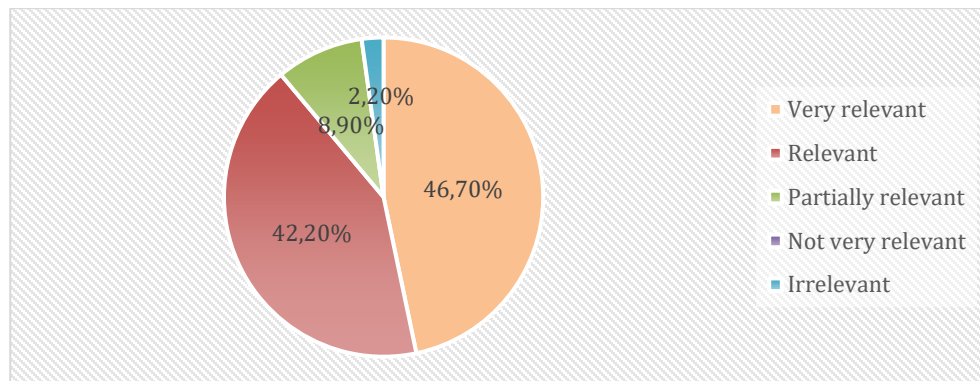
Chart 10: Classes that allow the contact with the topic of the Portuguese language in East Timor



Source: Developed by the authors

By analyzing Chart 10, it is possible to verify the significant number of students who didn't have contact with the topic of the Portuguese language in East Timor in the Languages Course (71,1%, which represents 32 people). 20% (10 people) answer they had contact with it in only one class; 6,7% (3 students) answered that the knowledge was acquired between 2 or 3 classes, while 2,2% (1 student) claimed to have learned about the Portuguese language in the Timorese territory between 4 and 5 classes. This means that the matter has been poorly approached in the Languages Licenciateship Course, keeping in mind that the majority of the students are not acquainted with the topic. Furthermore, so that the approach can occur in a more usual way, the following question examines the level of relevance of learning the history of the Portuguese language in the member countries of the CPLP. Chart 11 presents the perception of the students.

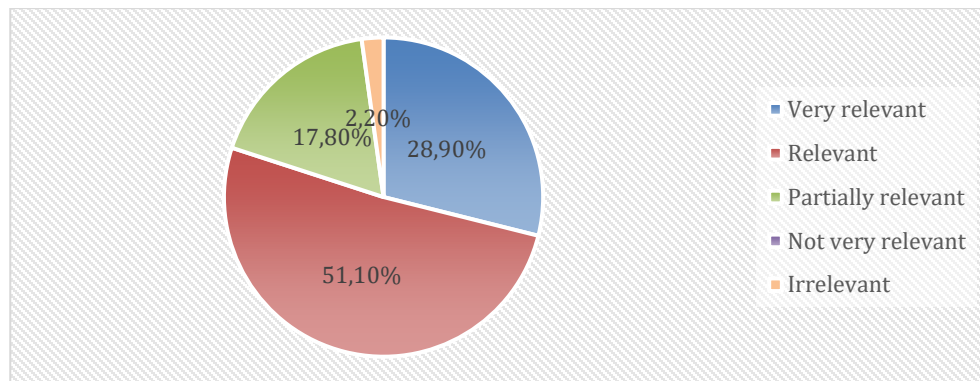
Chart 11: Relevance of learning the history of the Portuguese language in the member countries of the CPLP



Source: Developed by the authors

As points out Chart 11, 46,7% (22 students) find it very relevant to learn about the history of the Portuguese language in the countries of the CPLP; 42,2% (19 people) consider it relevant; 8,9% (4 people) deem it partially relevant; 2,2%, 1 respondent, considers it irrelevant. It is evident that, even the students who do not possess knowledge about the history of the Portuguese language in the member countries of the CPLP wish to acquire it, but, in order to make it happen, it is necessary for the professors to be immersed in the same objective, because, according to Wilson (2021), it is necessary for the teacher of the area of Languages to be aware of the other variants of the Portuguese language so that they are able to bring knowledge of these variants to the students. Furthermore, in Chart 8, as in Chart 11, only 1 student considers the approach of the Portuguese language countries in the Languages course irrelevant, possibly the same respondent. Following this line of thought, the next question in the questionnaire was about the relevance of learning about the history of the Portuguese language in East Timor, keeping in mind that Timor is part of the CPLP, as shown in Chart 12:

Chart 12: Relevance of learning about the history of the Portuguese language in East Timor



Source: Developed by the authors

Chart 12 presents the perception of the students on the relevance of learning about the history of the Timorese Portuguese language. 51,1% (23 people) consider it relevant to learn about, 28,9% (14 respondents) deem it very relevant, 17,8% (8 students) say it is partially relevant and 2,2% (1 respondent) finds it irrelevant. No respondents considered the approach of the topic of little relevance. In light of this, it is possible to highlight, in comparison with Chart 11, that the respondent students consider it more relevant to learn about the member countries in general rather than specifically about East Timor, although the data suggest the necessity of insertion of the topic in the academic environment. Regarding the only respondent who understands, according to Chart 12, that learning about the history of the Portuguese language in East Timor is irrelevant, there seems to be coherence in the answers, as can be seen in Charts 8 and 11.

Final considerations

This article aimed on investigating, by means of a questionnaire, the level of knowledge of the students of the Languages Course (Portuguese and Literatures) of IFFluminense, regarding the historical relationship between the Portuguese language and East Timor. As a hypothesis, it was concluded that most of the students of the Languages Course acknowledge the pluricentricity of the Portuguese language, but are unaware of the historical relation between the Portuguese language and East Timor, due to not only the inexistence of an express preview of approach of the topic in the course syllabus, but also because the discussions, almost always, focus on the Brazil-Portugal axis.

As it was possible to verify, the Portuguese language presents varied forms, in other words, the language presents a norm in each territory, due to economic, cultural and linguistic factors of each country. Moreover, geographic distance between the countries whose official language is Portuguese contributes to the varied presentations of the language inside each territory. Following this line of thought, the first section of this work brought brief notes on the historical trajectory of the Portuguese language, focusing on the Timorese variant, due to the cooperations of two countries whose norms are already established, Brazil and Portugal.

In the face of the collected and analyzed data, there is the following indicative: the vast majority of students of the Languages Course of IFFluminense are aware of the pluricentricity of the Portuguese language, however, great part do not know about the relation between the language and East Timor, possibly because in the course syllabus there is no explicit acknowledgement of the necessity of approaching the topic. However, a relevant percentage of the respondents deem it relevant to learn about the history of the Portuguese language in East Timor, keeping in mind that the country is part of the CPLP. Thereby, the data points that the raised hypothesis was confirmed in its totality.

All things considered, after investigating the level of knowledge of the students of the Languages Licenciateship Course of IFFluminense regarding Portuguese in the Portuguese language countries, with emphasis on East Timor, it is essential to highlight the necessity of development of future research with different approaches and points of view, not only regarding the Portuguese language in East Timor, but in the Lusophone Community as a whole.

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