

Teaching of the Portuguese Language in Timor-Leste School Multilingual Context to harmonization in future (2025)

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Abstract

Introduction: This study will aim to analyze the process of teaching the Portuguese language in the context of the Educational System in Timor-Leste from its presence in the introduction by the Missionaries through Evangelization and, above all, from its embryonic initially in the Timorese educational system for articulation with various support services for national languages, in order to allow the consolidation of the linguistic and sociocultural identity of Timor-Leste, through better knowledge of the Portuguese language and multilingual traditions. It is also our intention to analyze the didactic approaches to bet on communication practice in the aforementioned sustainability education system in the country.

Research objectives: Initially to enable educators to train training who acquire the slightest difference between studying and learning the Portuguese language to be able to teach at the said levels of basic education, as combined to grow in their development of teaching success depends largely on their linguistic, social and cultural competence.

Theoretical Framework: To answer their questions and take into consideration, not only the national language policy, but also with the project of multilingual education based on mother tongues, they introduced it at the beginning of basic schooling. This program was funded by UNESCO and is in operation in three municipalities of the country designated as experimental, under the designation of Pilot Education. At a time when the resistance marked a unique identity in defense, integrating the country's most critical period of 24-year Indonesian military occupation, being among being a language hidden the reality of resistance of the people of Timor-Leste. The Portuguese language in the educational system of the period of total independence and in the training of technical teaching and learning staff, as well as new programs of different perspectives of language policy and educational policy, cited by (Fonseca, S. & Tilman, CB., 2025).

Research Methodology: *This study in which we sought to explore and explain the mechanisms used to answer our research questions and doubts, then proceeding to analyze in the discussion the relative availability of the Portuguese language in Timor-Leste.*

Result of Discussion: *In the context of multilingual in Timor-Leste, the main reasons for the entry on the existence of the Island of Timor are that the Insularity of Timor is the most important part of the Insularity Island of Timor. From the perspective of the older literature, with regard to the sandalwood trade, the texts were repeated almost verbatim in each other, until the end of the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese presence on the Island of Timor, alias Timor-Leste, began to be reported. Timor was not isolated from the world, by the opposites in Southeast Asia and the Pacific between two gigantic countries Indonesia and Australia in socio-economic terms according to (Durand, 2015; cited by Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).*

Conclusion: *We have finally reached the end of the trajectory that I have outlined around the study of the Portuguese language in the education system of Timor-Leste from its introduction in the fifteenth century by the missionaries to the present day cited by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).*

Keyword: Timor-Leste Education System-Multilingual Education- Portuguese Language Curriculum.

Introduction

This study aims to analyze the process of teaching the Portuguese language in the Educational System of Timor-Leste since its introduction by the missionaries through Evangelization and, above all, its reintroduction in the Timorese educational system, articulating it with the various national languages, in order to allow the consolidation of the linguistic and sociocultural identity of the people of Timor-Leste, through a better knowledge of their languages, cultures and traditions. In this sense, and based on the long history of the Portuguese language as a language of instruction in Timor-Leste and its interruption by the Indonesian occupation, which, considered responsible for the various linguistic problems that have arisen since its reintroduction, it is necessary to take appropriate measures to resume its normal functioning through the training and qualification of teachers. especially for pre-school and for the 1st and 2nd cycles as well as for the following levels, in order to achieve

the goals stipulated in the Education Development Plan (PDE 2011-2030) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on the basis of study the Portuguese language is a good way to teach and learn from new generations in terms of the language and culture cited by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

The initial objective was above all to train teachers in order to acquire the minimum proficiency in the Portuguese language to be able to teach at these levels of basic education, aware that the success of teaching depends, to a large extent, on their linguistic-cultural competence. In 2000, Portuguese teachers who were part of the Portuguese Language Reintroduction Plan (PRLP) were still teaching the subject of Portuguese language in the 3rd cycle and in secondary schools, in order to provide support to Timorese teachers, as long as it is considered necessary. To this end, we have established the following criteria of education will guide our work of

education cited by (Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025).

Research Objectives:

1. To identify the way in which the contact between the Portuguese language and the Timorese national languages has been established and the contribution of all of them to the construction of the Timorese identity.
2. To characterize different didactic perspectives (1999-2012) proposed by language programs and Portuguese language manuals for the 1st and 2nd cycles.
3. Reflect on the results found.

These aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

- a. How has the reintroduction of the Portuguese language been carried out after the referendum of September 1999?
- b. What relationship has been established between the Portuguese language and the national languages and how have they contributed to the consolidation of the Timorese (linguistic and cultural) identity?
- c. What didactic perspectives have been used in the reintroduction of the Portuguese language in Timor-Leste, in the 1st and 2nd cycles?

Theoretical Framework

To answer these questions, it is necessary to take into account not only the national language policy, but also the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Project, to be introduced at the beginning of basic schooling. This UNESCO-funded project is already operating in three districts of the country, on an experimental basis, under the name of "Pilot Education". However, another issue arises that is related to the lack of trained teachers and

materials/manuals for the teaching of these languages. With regard to data collection, this was mainly done from documentary research to different types of documents of the works of various authors, in addition to other documents, namely theses, magazines, articles and newspapers, among others, in the Library of the New University of Lisbon, the National Library of Portugal and in other relevant libraries and institutions. Information will also be collected through oral and written interviews with Portuguese language directors and trainers and also through the collection of information in the form of a questionnaire from teachers and students of the 2nd cycle of basic education during the academic part systems of educational mentioned by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

In the first chapter, we propose to describe the sociolinguistic landscape, that is, the plural/multilingual panorama of Timor-Leste and, thus, contextualize ourselves about the space of secular linguistic and cultural crossroads that was the scene of several historical-political events. The second chapter aims to describe the path for the construction of the educational system of Timor-Leste from the arrival of the missionaries to the independence of the country, integrating the period in which the Portuguese language ceased to be the language of schooling to appear only as a language of resistance and a mark of Timorese identity and, finally, how it is presented in a new framework of the educational system of Timor-Leste as an independent country, that is, «The Portuguese Language in the Educational System in the Post-Referendum Period and in the Training of Language Teachers» and, as such, with new programs and different perspectives of language policy and educational language policy (Gov.Timor-Leste, 2022).

The realization of any work or study usually has a motivation at the base. My father never knew the school benches. In order not to subject him to the physical punishment applied at school, my grandfather never accepted that he went to study, because the school was very far from the house. My mother and her classmates also had to leave the school where they had only been for a few weeks, because at the time female schooling was associated with a very negative connotation. The school was closed in 1962, a municipal school for boys began to operate in Tutuala and, from 1964, a municipal school for both sexes began to operate. However, my father always tried to learn to read and write and, for that, he had the support of a cousin who had done his military service and who taught him to read and write his name.

To fill this gap, she put me to study at a school of the Canossian nuns in Ossu, District of Viqueque, contrary to the mentality of the time, in which a daughter, instead of going to school, should be at home weaving and doing housework, preparing herself to be a good housewife. On the initiative of the Mother Superior, Maria Farina, my great protector and benefactress, after finishing primary school, in the school year of 1964/65, I entered the Teacher Training Course (at the time, the School of Catechist Teachers), which initially operated at the school of the Canossians in Balide, today Collegium de S. José. In the following years, the course began to operate at the Central Primary School of Dili, under the designation of School for the Qualification of Teachers of the Engenheiro Canto Resende School Post, also integrating the boys. I was part of the first group of teachers, prepared to teach in primary schools. In July 1968, we received the diploma that recognized this function, having been placed in primary schools. At the time, the

placement of teachers was almost always outside the area of residence, depending on the classification obtained in the course and at the request of the interested parties, through a request submitted at the end of each academic year and before the beginning of the new one, this is a reality that works for me training in Timor-Leste quoted is very fundamental to take moreover in the practical use of communications by (Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025).

The primary school in Manatuto was my first place of work, still without experience in teaching, only with the tools acquired in the course. The classes were in Portuguese, of course, but I was entrusted with two initiation classes, one from pre-primary and the other from the 1st grade. The students were very funny. However, it was difficult to make myself understood and also to understand them because most of them only spoke Galolen. I took this opportunity to learn a new language. At the same time that he taught Portuguese to his students, he also learned the galolen. Today I speak and understand this language, although I do not speak it fluently.

From Manatuto I was transferred to the district of Lautém, first to the school in Tutuala, then to the school in Mehara and, finally, to the school in Lospalos, in 1974/1975. There was then an interruption due to the flight to the mountains. In 1977, when I came down from the mountains, I started teaching again, but in Indonesian Malay, because Portuguese had been banned and, in these classes, we were accompanied by an Indonesian soldier and two police officers, plus the (Timorese) translator. This was for a short time. In Dili, in order to have equivalence as a teacher, she needed to attend a two-year course in Indonesian. After this training, in

addition to teaching in public primary schools in the Indonesian language, he also taught at the Externato de S. José, at the same time that he finished his high school studies. In chapter II a more detailed reference will be made to this school. Thus, I have always collaborated in the maintenance of the Portuguese language, not only in the Externato de S. José, but also in the 3rd cycle of S. José, under the tutelage of the Paul VI Foundation, whose president was, at the time, the Jesuit priest, Filomeno Jacob, whose role in the defense of the Portuguese language in the period of Indonesian occupation is noteworthy.

The Externato de S. José was closed in June 1992. However, we continued with the Portuguese language classes at the Jesuit residence in Lahane, in the shade of the trees and on the balcony of the residence, with only a tiny black board where the words were written and then copied by the students. In these classes, the booklets of the Holy Day were also used, in addition to the old grammar of Ulysses Machado and other materials that we could get. It is important to mention that, in this task, my colleague Áurea Celina was also a great fighter in the defense of the Portuguese language. I consider it appropriate to mention here a sad and worrying episode: One afternoon, I don't remember exactly what day, we hadn't finished class when we heard shots that got closer and closer and left us all in panic. It was due to the fact that an Indonesian soldier was shot dead by a guerrilla and was transported to the military hospital that is above the priests' residence. The shooting began at the place where the corpse had been removed, in the sub-district of Vemasse, Baucau district, and transported to the hospital. The streets were all blocked. We then had to spend the night at the residence of the Jesuits, teachers and students.

Education means training, the action of acquiring knowledge, developing skills, forming and enriching the spirit, instructing oneself and, in line with Plato's thought, it is the process that aims at the harmonious development of Man in his intellectual, moral and physical aspects, thus contributing to his insertion in society, for which he also needs knowledge and practice of rules of courtesy. In this sense, we can assume that teaching and education, although without the same etymological sense, converge in the same objectives, for which the school is chosen as the privileged place and the teacher, the mediator. Therefore, it is possible to admit that the concept of teaching and educating converge, in certain contexts, in the idea of imparting knowledge about a science or art, giving lessons to someone, indoctrinating, instructing about something, transmitting or acquiring knowledge or scientific, professional, social or moral training of teaching and monitoring cited by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

In this sense, we can assume that teaching and education, although without the same etymological sense, converge in the same objectives, for which the school is chosen as the privileged place and the teacher, the mediator. Therefore, it is possible to admit that the concept of teaching and educating converge, in certain contexts, in the idea of imparting knowledge about a science or art, giving lessons to someone, indoctrinating, instructing about something, transmitting or acquiring knowledge or scientific, professional, social or moral training. individual achieves a high degree of intellectual and spiritual development, cultivating and improving himself more and more, thus affirming that «education makes us what we are» (Helvetius, n.d., *apud* Rebooul, 2010:18). Based on these assumptions, we can consider Education, in its essence, as an act of liber-

ation from the inside out, presupposing the relationship between educator and student, in a free and autonomous environment, responsible for the formation and transformation of Man, providing him with the appropriate means to exercise his freedom, autonomy and humanity. Through it, the individual frees himself from the state of 'ignorance', broadening the horizon of his knowledge through the acquisition of knowledge, so it cannot be presented as a fixed and unalterable system of contents, because in this way, it would eliminate the external aspect and the constant rapprochement with the surrounding reality human being cited by (Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025).

Access to education is a universal right of every human being. Comenius, in his *Didactical Magna* later translated by Ferreira Gomes (2016:139), urged that young people of both sexes be sent to schools, regardless of their condition and social status or the environment in which they live, since they are all equal before God and created in His image and likeness. This exhortation is present in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), proclaimed by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, which also recognizes the right of all people to education, with basic education being compulsory and free. The same document proposes generalized technical and vocational education and equal access to higher education, depending on the merit of each one. This position is also reinforced by UNESCO (2007:5), which advocates the expansion of early childhood education and care, as well as ensuring access 12 for all school-age children to complete, free and good quality primary education, eliminating the gender gap.

It then becomes evident that the intention of educa-

tion is the transformation of the individual of each new generation that appears as a blank slate, on which it is necessary to build and imprint values, to transmit specific attributes that distinguish the human being from other living beings (cf. Durkheim, 2011: 15-17; Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025). Therefore, the purpose of education is, on the one hand, to make each individual a unique, individual being, constituted by mental states related to the individual and to the events of each one's personal life, and on the other hand, to make him a social being constituted by the system of ideas, feelings, habits, identifiers not of the individual personality, but of their groups, such as religious beliefs, moral beliefs and practices, national or professional traditions, collective opinions of any kind.

The theme of identity represents a permanent inquiry of philosophical discourse. The search for the definition of what makes a thing what it is and not something else, raising the question about the essence of things and the difference in relation to others, has occupied the attention of philosophers, when "the world has been divided into superficial and essential phenomena and the regime of arbitrary mythical powers has been dismantled" (Habermas, apud Niznik & Sanders, 2010: 15-16). It is therefore important to discover what gives a thing or person its essential nature. From a theoretical point of view, the concepts of identity and difference appear intimately linked.

The Timorese national identity is a set formed of "patches" that are at the basis of individual origins and clans, manifested in all ethnolinguistic groups. With regard to issues related to collective identities, in national dimensions, it is a fact that there can be more than one cultural identity, within a political space encompassed by a national identity, as we

have been shown by the ethnolinguistic and cultural context of Timor-Leste. In order to reduce the terminological imprecision regarding the notion of identity, especially regarding collective identities, as he has observed with the application of almost all philosophical terms to political rhetoric, Arroyo (2010: 195) emphasizes that the term identity has become one of those keywords that articulate the characteristic gear of philosophical-anthropological thought with political discourse, for its confused conceptual air and imprecise content, it will gain the trust of the general population of academics cited by (Fonseca, S. & Tilman, CB., 2025).

Methodology

We present the methodology of the study in which we tried to explain the procedures used to answer our research questions, then proceeding to the analysis and discussion of the results regarding the re-introduction of the Portuguese language in the post-referendum period, in the contact established between Portuguese and the indigenous Timorese languages and how this contributed to the consolidation of linguistic and cultural identity and finally what are the didactic perspectives used in the re-introduction of Portuguese in Timor-Leste that's reality.

Result And Discussion

Our expectation is that there will be a better management of multi/plurilingualism in Timor-Leste, thus contributing to the reconfiguration of the Education System, to Teacher Training and to the elaboration of materials more appropriate to the context and the public for which they are intended, with a view to promoting the academic success of students and, consequently, the eradication of illiteracy, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2015). The acquisition of this abstract tool

enables communication and interaction at the level of ideas between people from different social strata. It is through language that the feelings and values mentioned above are transmitted. The need for communication arises from childhood, always increasing in importance as the child also develops and becomes an active member of society, that is, of broader social groups cited by (Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025).

Thus, the ability to communicate develops as mental processes are acquired, with verbal language initially taking place, "since man, primarily, seeks to communicate by means of a code of verbal signs and has other codes, through which he is given in the same way, not only the power to manifest himself, but also the power to know" (Rousseau, 2001: 4). The notion of language has taken on different meanings depending on different linguistic perspectives. It is a complex concept that concerns the code used by a group of individuals to express themselves. Thinking about language also means thinking about the processes of speech and writing, thinking about language in its use. To carry out our work, we propose to identify points of contact between Portuguese and the Timorese national languages, as well as how this contact has contributed to the construction of the Timorese identity.

According to Andrade et al. (2007:159-161), some languages have the privilege of serving the noblest causes and discourses such as science, philosophy, poetry, while others are confined to day-to-day communication. In the first case, regarding the languages of Timor-Leste, the official languages, Portuguese and Tetum, recognized as such by the country's Constitution and, consequently, languages of schooling, are included, adding English and Indonesian Malay as working languages as

long as necessary. Indonesian Malay is spoken and understood by the majority of the young population, as it was the only language of compulsory schooling during the period of Indonesian occupation is the memory cited by (Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025).

In the case of languages that are confined to day-to-day communication, indigenous languages with the status of national languages are included. Being still mostly written languages, these languages serve only to maintain communication with family members and are usually used in communication at cultural events and rituals (weddings, funerals, invocation of ancestors, among others). Thus, languages are also inhabited, allowing us to perceive ways for subjects to apprehend and relate to those who use them, in metonymic relations that do not dissociate the object from its speaker and that refer to very complex and intertwined concepts of language, subject, identity and culture and, as Passante (2013: 164; Fonseca S., 2023) said, «There are subjects in languages, but these guys don't always have the same face». The images of languages also concern various dimensions of their existence and functioning.

Language, according to the definition of Gallison & Coste's *Dictionary of Language Didactics* (1983), is "a specific system of articulated signs, which serve to transmit human messages". In this way, it is shared by a community that, little by little, modifies the conventions used so that they have an 'evolutionary character' and a set of universally valid primary norms and conducts, as it allows the speaker, as an intelligent and social being, to build a certain vision of the world, summoning complex factors of a given community, a reference that allows the gradual construction of knowledge, being

in permanent renewal and updating through its discursive plurality. It is also the means through which the individual builds his relationships with others around him. It can then be said that language has a wide range of references, from political and institutional aspects to the personal and abstract representation of a given object, constituting an organized and structured system, through which the individual grows, transforms and interrelates with others.

Rodrigues (1999) refers to language as an *interlocutrice process* where the relationship between the subject of the *self* and the *other* evolves, firstly, in the dialectical of the mother tongue, later extending to other languages, as new instruments in search of knowledge and communication. It is the foundation of human communication, par excellence, indispensable for the constitution of a communicative and integrating society. For human beings, language is of special importance, as it gives them the ability to produce the meaning of things through a series of discourses, which can be seen as devices for the constitution of meaning and interlocutrice relations not only the communication of ideas, thoughts and feelings, but also the persuasion and convincing of interlocutors this the key point second (Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025).

The same author (1996:15; cited by Bardin I., 2014) also argues that language performs functions of signification, expressive functions and is at the origin of the elaboration of the meaning of the world for Man, because the world is a construction and the result of Man's own linguistic elaboration. It is, therefore, a cultural element and, at the same time, a verbal expression of culture, which in turn expresses the idea of customs and beliefs of a community that uses a distinct language as a means of communication and also to designate or name

things. In this sense, language is the instrument of communication and transmission of knowledge and values, indispensable in the teaching-learning process. We are dealing with the official language (OL), the one that is recognized by each State, as well as the language used in interaction with other States. Each State recognizes and assigns the status of OL to the language(s) in which the official texts issued by it are written. In the case of Timor-Leste, the country chose Tetum and Portuguese as official languages, in accordance with Article 13 of its Constitution, which gives the remaining indigenous languages the status of national languages, to be treated in the course of our daily work and are fundamental cited by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

The first news about the existence of the island of Timor is contained in succinct references in Chinese, Arabic and Javanese literature. From the perspective of Chinese literature, the oldest reference concerns the sandalwood trade, with the texts being repeated almost verbatim in each other, until the end of the century. XVI, when the Portuguese presence on the island began to be reported. More extensive allusions are from the reign of the Yuan dynasty, in the middle of the century. XIII, with reference to sandalwood in almost all documents, as

being abundant in the mountains of Timor and in great demand by the Chinese, according to the account of Roderich Ptak (cf. Fernandes, 1992: 9). There are Javanese chronicles referring to Timor since the fourteenth century, still quite laconic, limiting themselves to specifically mentioning the name of the island in the list of those that sent tribute to the King of Majapahit, in East Java, who dominated that area from the end of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth century (Durand, 2010: 39; cited by Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025). The author also adds that, from the end

of the twelfth century and the middle of the thirteenth century, the island would have been regularly visited by traders from China, the Middle East and Java in search of beeswax and sandalwood that was traded on the west coast of the island (2010: 35-41). Through the Portuguese documentation, we know that, in relation to the social and political organization of Timor, the Timorese, like most of the Austronesian peoples, were organized in hierarchical chiefdoms, and that their hierarchy comprised four levels: liurai, dátos, immunogens and the people. In this regard, based on Thomaz (2001:39-52), the historian José Mattoso (2001: 11) also mentions that Timorese society «took as its model the traditional autochthonous nobility, divided into three levels: that of the liurais or king, that of the datos and that of the timings». In fact, Timor had already been reported in an official document, dated 1516, where some Portuguese navigators or traders reported not only on the existence of sandalwood and the commercial exchanges carried out on the island of Timor, but also reported on the existence of an administrative structure at the local level (Correia, 1994: 11; cited by Fonseca S., 2024).

In 1514, Afonso de Albuquerque, through the letter of Rui de Brito Patulin (cf. Matos, 1974: 36), informed the King of Portugal, D. Manuel I, of the abundance of honey and wax, although it was not possible to get there due to lack of boats (junks)³. And, since the interest of the Portuguese navigators in Timor was included in Rui Brito Patulin's plan, it was supposed that they had tried to sail to the island with the intention of acquiring sandalwood in large quantities. However, according to the report of the then new captain of Malacca, Jorge de Albuquerque, to the King of Portugal on January 8, 1515,

sandalwood from Timor was not taken by Portuguese merchants, but was trade made by people from Malacca. It can then be said that it was the fragrance of Timorese sandalwood that opened the western light to the direction of the island of Timor, as shown in the description by Artur Basílio de Sá references are important points (undated: 1568-79, in Fernandes 1992: 9 cited by Fonseca S & Tilman CB., 2025).

Timor-Leste is a country that has been born in the 21st century, a country that, after the Portuguese colonial domination of more than four centuries, during which it still suffered the harmful effects of the Japanese occupation, during the Second World War, when it finally seemed to be able to breathe a new atmosphere of freedom and hope with the 'carnation revolution' in Portugal, that put an end to the New Regime of State (Regime Novo de Estado), dreaming of a new space where the Timorese could decide their future, similar to the other Portuguese territories in Africa, was a victim of Indonesian invasion and occupation over a period of two decades (December 1975 – August 1999). It was a hard and bloody period, marked not only by the massive destruction of human lives and material goods, but also by the gradual recharacterization of the Timorese culture, in fact, Luso-Timorese, which exist in the country cited by (Amado B.J., 2016; Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

It was in the face of this catastrophic situation that the various ethnolinguistic groups that make up East Timorese society manifested themselves, determined to converge on a single platform that could be called 'national consciousness', making Timor-Leste a culturally plural country, insofar as the deep feeling of its people is allied to a growing

rationalized perception of the existence of a single national identity and a firm will to form an independent and sovereign State, able to freely choose their own destiny. It should also be noted the existence of a strong relationship between the individual and the collective in the construction of Timor-Leste's national identity (Castro A., 2016; Sabina F & Tilman CB., 2025).

From a historical point of view, Timor-Leste today has a cultural identity composed of several cycles of influences and acculturation, so it is believed that its culture is in a privileged position to react in an affirmative way, thanks to the situation of its historical legacy of sharing the "collective memory". Regarding the delicate compromise between 'personal' and 'collective' identity in the construction of 'national identity', in the opinion of Maria Regina Marchetta (2002a: 31), the feeling of national identity must have emerged simultaneously with the social consciousness itself, insofar as an identity inherent to human thought is highlighted with the awareness of elements of singularization of the personal and collective "I". The complex linguistic panorama that Timor-Leste presents can be summarized in the following words by Cardoso: linguistic diversity is the hallmark of the identity of the Timorese people" (1997: 49). It is a fact that superficial studies will never be able to provide and/or obtain the information that is well clarified, in order to arrive at a true understanding. In this regard, stressing that the linguistic groups do not strictly correspond to defined ethnicities, since from group to group there are only small differences, in a footnote, Thomaz (2002: 166) points out that «The fataluco of the municipality of Lautém have, however, a more pronounced ethnic personality».

The Portuguese maritime expansion contributed to

the dissemination of the language and, consequently, its change and variation in space, by accompanying sailors and missionaries who set out to discover the unknown. This is how the Portuguese language crossed seas to the lands of Africa, Asia and America where it is now the national language in Brazil (Mateus & Cardeira, 2007: 55), the official language and language of schooling in Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor-Leste. It is also spoken and learned as LNM in Goa and in countries with strong Portuguese emigration in America and Europe or in Asia and Oceania (Mateus & Cardeira: 55; Mateus et al.: 2021). However, most of the transformations of the language take place unconsciously, due to the evolution of the language itself, such as Tetum-Praça, which is now standardized Tetum, one of the official languages of Timor-Leste.

Portuguese is the official language (OL) of Timor-Leste, and it is also evident that the current linguistic situation clearly reflects the coexistence and complicity between this language and the national languages of the country. Its use as a language of communication by Timorese belonging to different linguistic groups has favored their learning and contributed to the enrichment of these languages, especially in terms of lexicon. The change of language over time, that is, at a given time, follows the pace of change in the concepts of life in a society, as well as in the arts, philosophy and science. The Portuguese, which arrived in these parts in the sixteenth century, is the product of transformations undergone in previous centuries. During the period of Indonesian occupation, however, Timor-Leste ceased to have contact with the Portuguese language and, as such, did not follow the subsequent changes of 1999, there was a need to accelerate the

process of adaptation and transformation the more adaptation so that Timor-Leste would be on an equal footing with the other CPLP countries, but they are willing to learn more communication in local level cited by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

Conclusion

Regarding the languages existing in Timor in the nineteenth century, an account by the naturalist Henry Forbes (1885: 426; 1984, vol. 13: 405) confirms that there were sixteen of them, declaring, however, that he was not prepared to say whether they were, in fact, languages⁸. In this short note, Forbes omitted or simply did not mention the other two languages: Bunak and Fatuluku, a fact that is probably due, according to Paulino (2011: 6), to his "lack of preparation" or his "short stay" on the island. The studies carried out by the *Anthropological Mission of Timor* concluded that there are at least 31 ethnolinguistic groups, 28 existing on the island of Timor and 3 on the island of Ataúro, as defended by António de Almeida in the various works on Portuguese Timor (1975/1994: 303-18; 310; 1976/1977: 121-147), stating that only seven are the main languages most spoken in the territory of Timor. without, however, identifying them.

Thomaz (2002:163-169) groups the Timorese languages into Papuan languages and Austronesian (or Malayo-Polynesian) languages, and the former, according to the author, «although Papuan, show more or less marked traces of the influence of the Austronesian superstratum and, more recently, of Portuguese» (p.164). Faced with the complex linguistic framework presented, Thomaz (p.164) admits that «the majority of the inhabitants of Timor are bilingual or multilingual» and still with a tendency towards trilingual, that is, using, in day-to-

day communication, a local/mother tongue, Tetum and Portuguese. According to the Australian linguist Geoffrey Hull (1996: xi–xvii & Revised 9.2.2002: 1–2) the Austronesian languages belong to the Western Malay-Polynesian branch and the Neo-Butonic/Bhutanese sub-branch, and can be further subdivided into two groups: Fabronic and Rame laic, and the languages of Papuan/Papuan origin can be classified with the other Papuan languages, as belonging to the "Trans-New Guinea phylum" or Trans-New Guinea-Guinea phylum (2002: 2), which consists of a broader classification, but has a good reference to being an academic work in the future linguistic jobs need more contributions cited by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

From the Rame laic group we have Mambae, considered as one of the languages of Timor-Leste with the most native speakers. Tokodede is the language spoken in the district of Liquiçá and in some neighboring regions and also presents strong traces of creolization with a completely isolating morphology and a Papuan lexicon. Kemak is spoken in the regions near the border with Indonesia and, in addition to having a Papuan lexicon, it is distinct from the other languages of the group, Mambae, Tokodede and Idalaka, as it is also heavily influenced by Malay, as it is spoken in the border area with Indonesia. Idalaka is a terminology used to refer to the dialectal complex formed by the dialects: idaté, lakalei and isni, as in the case of Kawai mina, already mentioned. These dialects have some archaic features and share certain characteristics with some languages of the Fabronian group, which makes the probability of proto-languages of the Rame laic group admitted (Albuquerque D.B., 2018).

Hull (2000: 2) admits that the designation Neo-

Bomback is due to the fact that these Papuan languages have a single common ancestor and origin from the Bomber peninsula. There is a total of four. The fataluku has a great dialectical variation, more precisely regional varieties, such as the mambae. It is spoken in the far east of the country, in the district of Lautém. As we have also mentioned, the speakers of Fataluku are culturally distinct from the speakers of other languages of East Timor. Makasae is spoken in the districts of Baucau and Viqueque, and is also one of the languages with the most native speakers. Makalero is spoken in the sub-districts of Luro and Iliomar, Lautém district and is similar to Makasae, i.e. it is in an intermediate position between Fataluku and Makasae (but closer to it), so it could be a Papuan dialectal continuum located in the east of the country. Bunak is spoken in practically the same region as Kemak, with slight distinctions of some spaces.

Tetum, one of the national languages of Timor-Leste of Malayo-Polynesian origin, with deep influence from the Portuguese language, shares with it the status of official language (OL), recognized by the Constitution of the RDTL, which also recognizes and attributes the status of national languages to other indigenous languages. The Indonesian and English languages are only recognized as "working languages, in use in the public administration alongside the official languages, for as long as necessary", in accordance with Article 159 of the aforementioned Constitution. There are also the three variants of Chinese: Mandarin, Cantonese and, mainly, Hakka, spoken by the small Chinese communities residing in the national territory of Timor-Leste cited by (Fonseca S. & Tilman CB., 2025).

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