



The Impact of Language of Instruction on Teachers' Learning Practices in Primary Schools and Secondary Schools in Dili, Timor-Leste, and Its Implications in Preparing Human Resources

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Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of using Portuguese and Tetun as languages of instruction in primary and secondary schools in Dili, Timor Leste, and its implications for human resource development. While Tetun facilitates students' understanding in local contexts, its limited global relevance presents a challenge. Conversely, Portuguese, though internationally recognized, is not fluently spoken by most teachers and students, reducing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. This qualitative research involved 68 informants, including education officials, principals, teachers, and students across Dili. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that language barriers, particularly in Portuguese, negatively affect classroom interaction, leading to poor student comprehension and low academic achievement. This situation may hinder the development of quality human resources capable of competing globally. The study recommends that the Timor Leste government and Ministry of Education intensify Portuguese training for both teachers and students, allocate funds for Tetun development, offer incentives to high-performing teachers, and encourage the consistent use of the instructional Language at home and in school, drawing from practices in Cuba and Venezuela. Strengthening language proficiency among educators and learners is essential to improving education quality and supporting Timor-Leste's broader socio-economic advancement.

Keywords: Language of Instruction in Primary and Secondary Education; Teaching Practices and Impact on Human Resources; Timor-Leste

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INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Timor-Leste established a national education policy to improve the nation's lives through quality education and skills for citizens (Timor-Leste, 2011). To achieve this goal, the Timor-Leste government chose and established Portuguese as the Language of instruction and teaching media at all levels of education. Through Portuguese, it is hoped that it can facilitate the teaching and learning process between teachers and students to achieve quality education. Joao, in his article, explains that Portuguese is a European language that is grammatically and lexically rich in scientific treasures, making it easier for teachers and students to access various literature both through libraries and through electronic media (Joao Cancio Freitas, 2015).

The Portuguese policy is intended to bridge teachers and students to achieve national education goals and to prepare quality human resources to compete in the global job market, which is the vision of Timor-Leste's national development 2011-2030. The vision of National Development is to create an

educated and learned society so that a mindset is embedded that inspires sustainable development and can encourage improvements in economic conditions and reduce poverty levels (Timor-Leste, 2011). Concerning the quality of education, Widiansyah wrote in his book that individuals who have quality education find it easier to get opportunities to get quality jobs and get more ideal salaries compared to individuals with low-quality education (Widiansyah, 2017). The relationship between the Language of instruction and the academic performance of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process has attracted the attention of various academics (Prinsloo et al., 2018). In general, it is explained that Language is an important instrument in transferring knowledge and skills. Teachers and students will achieve practical learning goals if both teachers and students are fluent in the Language of instruction. Language is a communication tool that can help and facilitate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process between teachers and students. Teachers who are fluent in the Language of instruction find it easier to master the material and easily convey the material to students. Likewise, students who are fluent in the Language of instruction will find it easier to understand the material presented by the teacher and easily interact with the teacher and fellow students. (Rudd, M., & Honkiss, 2020).

According to Prinsloo, quality education can only be achieved if teachers and students are equally fluent in the Language of instruction (Prinsloo et al., 2018). The same perspective was conveyed that the higher the level of English proficiency of students, the higher the GPA of each student at Bangkok Private University. Similar results were reported by Rafiu J. & Nwalo (2016) on student performance in English courses in Nigeria. The higher the level of English proficiency, the higher the students' understanding of the material presented by the teacher. In addition, Prinsloo also explained that the frequency of use of formal languages at home and in the environment is closely related to the achievement of science results of primary and secondary school students in South Africa.

Based on the theory and research results described above, Language is a crucial communication instrument in teaching and learning activities. Because of the importance of Language in communication in teaching and learning activities, in 2002, the Timor-Leste government determined Portuguese as the Language of instruction in education, replacing Indonesian, which had been used as the Language of instruction for 24 years. Based on the RDTL Constitution, Article 13, paragraph 1, the country's official languages are Portuguese and Tetun. Since then, Portuguese has been used by teachers and students as the Language of instruction in education. Education Law No. 14/2008 explicitly stipulates that in 2009/2010, all levels of education must use Portuguese as the sole Language of instruction. However, the reality in the field deviates from what is mandated by the RDTL Constitution and Law No. 14/2008. It is because the majority of Timor-Leste teachers, consisting of 13,857 people, only 204 people or 1% of teachers have a Portuguese language proficiency level that meets the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning (CEFR, 2018) for teaching using Portuguese.

Meanwhile, 2948 teachers, or 21%, stated that their Portuguese language skills were not guaranteed good quality when teaching students using Portuguese. Furthermore, 10705 teachers, or 78% of their Portuguese language skills, only reached A1 and A2. At this level, according to CEFRL, the quality of Portuguese language skills for teaching using Portuguese is not guaranteed at all (INFORDEFE, 2016).

Since the majority of teachers are not fluent in Portuguese, since 2011, the use of multilingualism in teaching and learning activities in schools has been enforced, namely Portuguese and Tetun or a mixture of both languages, both for elementary schools (SD), junior high schools (SMP) and senior high schools (SMA). In his article, Borges stated that Timor Leste is undergoing a process of rebuilding itself together with the Portuguese, but this has not happened in practice. Furthermore, Borges explained that Portuguese had lost its foothold very sharply, meaning that for 24 years, the use of Portuguese has been prohibited by the Indonesian government, so Portuguese speakers are very few compared to Tetun speakers. So what happens in education is a "language war." Borges further explained that the existence of Tetun also confuses its speakers because Tetun has three different versions, and there is no consensus on them. The Tetun version of the Catholic Church, the Tetun version of INL, and the Tetun version of DIT. The three versions are reflected in learning practices, meaning that some follow the Tetun version of the Catholic Church, and some follow the INL and DIT versions in the teaching and learning process. There is no

uniformity in the Tetun language. In the results of David's study, he stated that Timor Leste has a variety of Tetun languages, making it difficult for teachers and students to teach and learning activities (Albuquerque, 2013).

According to Kirui, teachers who are not fluent in the Language of instruction will result in ineffective delivery of material. The ineffectiveness of the teacher's material will decrease students' enthusiasm for following the subject. The inactivity of students in following the material will result in a poor understanding of the material. An example of inadequate teacher competence in English as a medium of instruction in 26 high schools in the Arusha region of Tanzania contributed to poor student academic performance. Students cannot understand the material and cannot answer the teacher's questions appropriately. Even the thinking process to answer the teacher's questions takes time. So, from the study results, it is recommended that English proficiency among teachers be improved to improve student academic performance (Cekiso, M., Tshotsho, B., & Masha, 2015).

The problem of implementing multilingualism in the education system has occurred in several African countries, such as Tanzania, Nigeria, and Kenya. It has a significant impact on the ineffectiveness of the teaching and learning process between teachers and students in the classroom, as documented by Komba and Bosco in their research results that teachers and students who use English as a medium of instruction at the primary school level have better achievements in exams, both class promotion exams and national exams, compared to teachers and students who use Kiswahili as a medium of instruction at primary schools who have poor achievements in exams in the Mbeya region, Tanzania (Komba SC & Bosco, 2015). If reviewed theoretically, multilingualism in the Timor-Leste education system can lead to ineffective teaching and learning processes between teachers and students. The ineffectiveness of the teaching and learning process can cause poor academic performance of students and impact the quality of education in preparing Timor-Leste's human resources.

Vice Minister of Education, Mrs. Dulce de Jesus Soares, in her press conference on Tuesday, May 16, 2017, said that only 0.3% of students can speak Portuguese. From various pieces of literature traced, various studies have been conducted by Timorese and foreigners. However, their research focuses more on the history and context of the Portuguese Language, Portuguese language training and courses for native teachers, the level of Portuguese language proficiency by native teachers and lecturers, and the challenges of teachers and lecturers in taking courses and practicing in teaching and learning activities. However, no one has researched the impact of the Language of instruction on teacher learning practices in elementary and secondary schools and its implications in preparing Timor-Leste's human resources, and no one has researched. That is the gap in this research.

According to Qorro, quality education will only be achieved if teachers and students understand the Language of instruction correctly and adequately. (Qorro, 2006). Similarly, McCoy, in his research, found that the learning process using English as a medium of instruction for teachers and students who are not proficient in Portuguese negatively impacts the learning process between teachers and students in primary and secondary schools in Kenya. The difficulties experienced by teachers in explaining scientific concepts also affect students' poor understanding. (McCoy, 2017). Likewise, the results of Brock Utne's Research in different places obtained almost similar results. This study compared the results of the control and experimental groups taught with the same subjects, the same topics by the same teacher, and the same class, then taught in different languages, namely English and Kiswahili. However, the results found from the learning process were very different. Thus, it is concluded that because of the poor mastery of English by most teachers in Tanzania, it also worsens students' academic performance, for example, teachers give the same questions in different languages. The results of the questions answered in Kiswahili are correct, and the answers follow the questions, while the answers written in English do not answer the substance of the teacher's questions. It can be concluded that the use of multilingualism as a teaching medium has an impact on students' poor understanding of the material taught by teachers in teaching and learning activities and decreases the critical and creative thinking performance of students in schools (Brock-Utne and Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002).

The problems studied in this study are as follows: (1) How does the Language of instruction used

in learning in primary and secondary schools in Dili affect the effectiveness of learning by teachers? (2) What challenges do teachers face in using the Language of instruction in learning in primary and secondary schools in Dili, Timor-Leste? (3) How does the Language of instruction play a role in facilitating students' understanding of the material at the primary and secondary education levels in Dili? (4) What is the impact of using the Language of instruction on developing students' critical thinking skills in primary and secondary schools in Dili? (5) To what extent does the use of the Language of instruction in learning affect students' communication skills in primary and secondary schools in the context of human resource preparation in Timor-Leste?

The contribution of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding to decision-makers that the use of multilingualism in the teaching and learning process harms the quality of education, so in the future, more pragmatic language planning is needed so that it can facilitate an ideal learning process in order to achieve the quality of education expected by the country.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method section outlines the systematic approach used to conduct this study, which includes the type of research, research setting and duration, objectives and subjects, procedures, data collection instruments and techniques, as well as data analysis strategies. This section is essential to provide a clear understanding of how the research was designed and implemented, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. By using a qualitative ethnographic approach, the study seeks to explore and describe in depth the social and cultural practices surrounding the use of the Portuguese Language in educational settings in Dili, Timor-Leste.

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research method with an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is chosen for its ability to provide deep insights into human behavior within its social and cultural context. As a qualitative approach, ethnography emphasizes participatory observation, enabling the researcher to become directly involved in the daily lives of research subjects. This method allows for a holistic and contextual understanding of the phenomena being studied, particularly the use and practice of the Portuguese Language in educational settings at both primary and secondary school levels in Timor-Leste.

Research Target/Subject

The research targets 68 key informants selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. These informants include 1 national director of primary and secondary education, 2 national directors of teacher education and training, 5 primary school principals, 5 junior high school principals, and 5 senior high school principals. Additionally, the study involves 10 primary school teachers, 10 junior high school teachers, and 10 senior high school teachers, as well as 10 junior high school students and 10 senior high school students. All informants are located in Dili District, the capital city of Timor-Leste, which serves as a strategic location for exploring the use of Portuguese in the teaching and learning process.

Research Procedure

The research was conducted over one year, from July 17, 2018, to July 16, 2019. During this time, the researcher engaged in participatory observation by directly interacting with and observing teachers and students in their natural learning environments. The choice of Dili District as the research location was based on several methodological considerations: its proximity and accessibility from the researcher's residence (only 18 kilometers away), its status as an educational hub, and its potential to provide a rich setting for observing the use of Portuguese in classroom interactions. The use of purposive sampling ensured that informants were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives, while snowball sampling helped identify additional informants through referrals.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The instruments used in this study included in-depth interview guides, participatory observation protocols, and document analysis checklists. Data collection was carried out using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews with key informants to explore their experiences and perceptions; participatory observation to capture real-time practices and behaviors; and document analysis to examine educational policies, curricula, and other relevant materials. These methods are designed to complement each other and provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter within the ethnographic framework.

Data analysis technique

Data analysis in this study follows the interactive model proposed by Huberman (1992) and Sugiyono (2007), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involves selecting and focusing on relevant information from the raw data. Data display organizes this information into formats that facilitate analysis and interpretation. The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, identifies patterns and insights while continuously validating findings throughout the research process. To ensure data validity, the study employs triangulation by comparing data across different sources and collection methods (Gunawan, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research on the impact of Language of instruction on teacher learning practices in elementary schools (SD), junior high schools (SMP), and senior high schools (SMA) located in the capital city of Dili, Timor-Leste. The results of this study do not cover all aspects, but the results are grouped into two subtopics, namely (1) Findings and (2) Discussion. The findings will be divided into three subtopics, namely (1) Elementary School Teacher Teaching Practices (SD), (2) Junior High School Teacher Teaching Practices (SMP), and (3) Senior High School Teacher Teaching Practices (SMA).

Result

Primary School Teachers' Teaching Practices

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with all key informants, information was obtained that teachers' teaching practice in the teaching and learning process at the elementary school level consisted of two groups of teachers. The first group was native teachers educated in Portuguese between 1960-1973, totaling 678 teachers or 51%, and the second group was native teachers who were educated in Indonesia between 1976-1999, with as many as 651 teachers or 49%. In their learning practices, the first group of teachers tends to use Portuguese as the Language of instruction in teaching and learning activities. In contrast, the second group of teachers tends to use Tetun as the Language of instruction in teaching and learning activities because the teachers in the second group are not fluent in Portuguese. According to several key informants, elementary school teachers sometimes use a mixture of Portuguese and Tetun in teaching and learning activities. The mixing of the two languages, Portuguese and Tetun, in teaching and learning activities occurs when teachers and students have difficulty finding scientific terminology in both Portuguese and Tetun. To overcome this problem, two languages are mixed, namely Portuguese and Tetun, or with a more precise term, a creole language.

One of the key informants specifically stated that both teaching and learning activities carried out by teachers in Portuguese and Tetun experienced difficulties in conveying material to students because teachers did not master both languages correctly, according to grammar, both Portuguese and Tetun. Portuguese is a language that grammatically and lexically meets international grammatical standards and can be used as a medium of instruction. However, native teachers educated in Indonesia cannot use Portuguese as a medium of instruction because these teachers are not fluent in Portuguese. While teachers and students are very familiar with Tetun and can be used as a medium of instruction in teaching and

learning activities, Tetun, which has been recognized as one of the official languages of Timor-Leste, still has weaknesses, especially in not meeting grammatical standards both grammatically and lexically. The findings show that the Language of instruction in education is a serious problem faced by the world of education and has not been resolved to date. The following is an excerpt from the results of an in-depth interview with key informants from the second group of Indigenous teachers or Indonesian-educated teachers who are not fluent in Portuguese, as stated in excerpt 1:

Portuguese language courses provided by the Ministry of Education, with a duration of 120-240 hours, are not enough. Because this course is conducted discontinuously, meaning the first course for three months is said to be 120 hours, then the Portuguese language course stops for 1 year or even 2 years before starting the course again. Portuguese language courses are intermittent. The 120-240 hours duration is only basic learning, so Portuguese language skills are still elementary. At this level, teachers cannot teach using Portuguese, so Tetun, which is legally recognized as an official language, is used as the Language of instruction in the teaching and learning process. Teachers feel more confident and sure that if we teach using Tetun, then Tetun will also be more familiar to students, so the interaction process and student participation will be more active.

Based on the results of field observations, elementary school teachers have carried out their duties and obligations to come to school on time and carry out teaching and learning activities according to the schedule as it should be in various countries. However, in the teaching and learning process, there is a serious problem; namely, if teachers who are fluent in Portuguese teach using Portuguese, students prefer to be silent rather than interact. So, the teacher speaks alone in teaching and learning activities, and the class situation becomes passive. If the teacher switches from Portuguese to Tetun, student interaction in the class becomes active. However, the material delivery contains translations from Portuguese to Tetun because the teacher's textbook or module is in Portuguese.

Based on the document review at the research location, it was obtained that all elementary school teachers had taken a Portuguese language course with a duration of 120-240 hours to learn Portuguese. However, in practice, elementary school teachers use Tetun more than Portuguese. The document review found that Portuguese is the only Language of instruction in education, which is regulated in the Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 3/2007. The fourth part of the Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 3/2007 states that Tetun functions as a didactic auxiliary language (Auxiliario Didatico). Based on the document review, conflicting regulations were also found regarding the use of Language in teaching. In Resolution No. 3/2007, Tetun functions as a didactic auxiliary. At the same time, in the Basic Education Curriculum Law No. 4/2015, article 11, paragraph regulates that the Language of instruction for teaching and learning activities for students in grades 1, 2, and 3 of elementary school is Tetun.

Furthermore, for students in grades 4, 5, and 6 of elementary school, the Language of instruction for teaching and learning activities changes from Tetun to Portuguese. In the results of participatory observations, it was found that in both native teachers who were educated in Portuguese and native teachers who were educated in Indonesia, in teaching and learning practices, almost all materials were carried out in Tetun. Only Portuguese language material was taught by teachers in Portuguese. This fact shows that teachers who are fluent in Portuguese also have problems carrying out teaching and learning activities because students are not fluent in Portuguese. In order for the material to be conveyed to students, teachers who are fluent in Portuguese must deliver the material in Tetun.

Meanwhile, teachers who are educated in Indonesia cannot teach in Portuguese for two reasons: (1) the level of Portuguese language proficiency is still elementary, (2) Students also do not have Portuguese language skills. The level of Portuguese language proficiency of native teachers who are educated in Indonesia is low because the language courses provided by the Ministry of Education only last 120-240 hours. According to The Foreign Service Institute (2024), the adequate time to learn Portuguese is 575 to 2,200 hours. According to the FSI provisions, it can be concluded that the 120 hours allocated for teachers to learn Portuguese are not yet sufficient to teach students using Portuguese. Florindo, a public elementary school teacher, said in his interview, as stated in Quote 2.

I am a former Portuguese Army officer and am currently recruited as an elementary school teacher. I am fluent in Portuguese and Tetun. In my teaching practice, I use Tetun because students do not understand Portuguese. If I force them to use Portuguese in teaching and learning activities, students will be more silent, decreasing their participation in the teaching and learning process. There are even students who sit still until the lesson is finished. Based on that experience, I use Tetun in teaching practices at school.

From the teaching practices of teachers at the elementary school level in Dili District, it can be concluded that the use of two official languages, namely Tetun and Portuguese, dramatically affects the level of understanding and ability of students in following learning, especially for students who are more familiar with Tetun than Portuguese. Although teachers and students are familiar with using Tetun as the Language of instruction in teaching and learning activities, it still affects the low level of student understanding because the material delivered by the teacher to students has an incomplete meaning. After all, the Language of instruction is a mixture of Portuguese and Tetun. That is the importance of Language in teaching and learning activities in education (Qorro, 2006).

Teaching Practices Of Junior High School Teachers (Smp)

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with all key informants, it was found that teachers placed in junior high schools (SMP) were mostly DII, DIII, and S1 graduates in the Indonesian education system. Most of these teachers do not have basic knowledge of Portuguese because these teachers were born and raised in the Indonesian education system during the Indonesian military occupation between 1975-1999, as many as 246 teachers or 74%, while those who are educated in Portuguese are 85 teachers or 26%. According to several key informants, they said that all junior high school teachers had taken Portuguese language courses, which last 120-240 hours, and these Portuguese language courses are conducted during school holidays. The following is an excerpt from an in-depth interview with key informants, as stated in quote 3:

We (teachers) have attended Portuguese language courses organized by the Ministry of Education of Timor-Leste through cooperation with the Ministries of Education of Portugal and Brazil. However, these Portuguese language courses are not continuous but intermittent, meaning that after completing 120 hours of Portuguese language courses, teachers have to wait a year, or even more than a year, before continuing their Portuguese language courses. That is the reality of Portuguese language courses in Timor-Leste that teachers have faced so far.

Based on the observation results, information was obtained that teachers in junior high schools (SMP) teaching practices tend to use Tetun rather than Portuguese. The tendency to use Tetun in teaching and learning activities in junior high schools is caused by two reasons, namely (1) Teachers are not fluent in Portuguese, and (2) Students are also not fluent in Portuguese. Due to teachers' and students' lack of fluency in Portuguese, Tetun has become a choice in teaching and learning activities. With the use of Tetun as a medium in teaching and learning activities, the interaction situation between teachers and students in the classroom becomes more active through questions and answers. In the observation, data was obtained that teachers who are not fluent in Portuguese, when teaching using Portuguese, only read the textbook without explanation or in-depth study of the material. This fact shows that teachers and students both experience difficulties in using Portuguese as a teaching medium in schools. About the above facts, the Principal of SMP Negeri Vila Mau Meta, Attauro Island, Mariano de A. Soares, explained in his interview that the teachers do not master Portuguese, as stated in quote 4:

The majority of teachers placed by the Ministry of Education at SMPN Vila Mau Meta are graduates of SPG, SGO, PGSD, IPI, PGSMTP, and UNTL. In general, these teachers master the science and knowledge according to their respective professions, but these teachers do not master Portuguese, so they have difficulty teaching using Portuguese. With these difficulties, Tetun became a choice even though academics questioned its scientific nature. In the Indonesian proverb, the roots will do if there is no rattan.

A document review found that the 2014 national education planning data reported that more than 75% of teachers did not meet the requirements required by the national curriculum (Suzani, 2016). 75% of teachers who are not fluent in Portuguese are from Portuguese language courses conducted by the Ministry of Education, which are conducted in a short and intermittent time. Short time because it is only 120-240 hours, while intermittent because, after 3 months of the course, the teacher stops the course for 9 months to 1 year, and then continues. Meanwhile, according to The Foreign Service Institute, the adequate time to learn Portuguese is 575 to 2,200 hours. According to the FSI provisions, the 120-240 hours allocated for teachers to learn Portuguese are insufficient to become fluent in Portuguese. From various document reviews related to teacher learning practices in schools, it was found that only teachers have taken Portuguese courses. At the same time, students have never been given Portuguese courses by the Ministry of Education of Timor-Leste. From these facts, it can be concluded that teachers who take Portuguese courses for 120-240 hours are not fluent in Portuguese, which automatically affects students' ability to speak Portuguese.

Based on in-depth interviews with supporting informants (students), data was obtained that teachers had difficulties teaching in Portuguese. Evidence of the difficulties teachers experience in teaching using Portuguese can be seen from the activities of teachers carried out by reading textbooks. Furthermore, the material was deepened by subject teachers through Tetun, a textbook translation. If students have difficulties and ask for an explanation from the subject teacher, then the teacher re-reads the textbook, translates it into Tetun, and so on until the student graduates. Students who do not have basic knowledge of Portuguese have difficulties when they read books printed in the Portuguese version. In this situation, teachers are the main hope for students to find a way out. However, in the Timor-Leste education system, teachers are a problem for students in teaching and learning activities. Although the reality in the field shows that teachers and students have difficulties using Portuguese as a medium of instruction, exams for class promotion or graduation exams are conducted in Portuguese. In this case, the Ministry of Education of Timor-Leste prioritizes regulation. In this case, the Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 3/2007 in the fourth part, that at the junior high school level (SMP), Tetun is recognized as a didactic auxiliary language (Auxiliary Didatico) and not as the primary Language of instruction in the teaching and learning process in schools. Furthermore, it is strengthened by the National Curriculum Law No. 4/2015, dated January 14, that the Language of instruction in learning practices in junior high schools (SMP) is Portuguese, while Tetun is a didactic auxiliary (Auxiliario Didatico).

Based on the above facts, it can be concluded that the Language of instruction in education is a serious problem in the learning practices of teachers and students in junior high schools (SMP). However, the problem continues, and there is no way to help the Ministry of Education in this turmoil. Teachers' and students' lack of fluency in Portuguese significantly affects the level of teacher understanding in delivering material and the level of student understanding in receiving material sourced from teachers and books. On the other hand, teachers and students are familiar with Tetun in teaching and learning activities. However, Tetun, which does not meet scientific rules, also affects the teacher and students' understanding of the knowledge and meaning contained in the material studied by teachers and students. This condition will significantly affect the low academic performance of students. As a result, it will lead to low-quality education and have implications for the quality of human resources, which cannot compete in education at the next level.

Teaching Practices Of High School Teachers (SMA)

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with all key informants, information was obtained that high school teachers spread across 10 public high schools, 8 Catholic high schools, and 12 private high schools tend to use a mixture of Portuguese and Tetun in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. It occurs because high school teachers are less fluent in Portuguese than elementary and junior high school teachers. The document review found that of 612 (SMA) teachers in 30 senior high schools in the capital city of Dili, only 142 teachers, or 23%, have a Portuguese educational background. In comparison, 470 teachers, or 77%, have an Indonesian educational background. Meanwhile, the INFORDEPE report found that 13,857 Indigenous teachers in elementary, junior, and senior high schools have taken Portuguese

language courses and training (INFORDEPE, 2016). In April 2016, the Research, Development, Monitoring, and Evaluation cabinet of the Ministry of Education conducted a diagnostic test on 13,857 native teachers who had attended Portuguese language courses and training. The diagnostic test results showed that only 204 teachers, or 1%, were declared to have Portuguese language proficiency levels reaching C1 and C2, and according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, are guaranteed to teach students using Portuguese.

Meanwhile, 2948 teachers, or 21%, were declared to have Portuguese language proficiency levels, only reaching B1 and B2. According to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, this level is guaranteed to be able to teach students in elementary and junior high schools. Furthermore, 10705, or 78% of teachers' Portuguese language proficiency levels, only reached A1 and A2. Levels A1 and A2, according to the provisions of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, are still very elementary, and their quality is not guaranteed to teach using Portuguese (INFORDEPE, 2016).

Based on the reality and situation of the teachers above, various regulations have been made and enforced by the government, such as the Ministry of Education Resolution No. 3/2007, National Curriculum Law No. 47/2011, Article 18 paragraph 1 stipulates that the Language of instruction for senior high schools (SMA) is Portuguese. Although both regulations above implicitly force teachers to use Portuguese in learning activities, data obtained from observations show that Tetun dominates teaching and learning activities between teachers and students in 10 state senior high schools, 8 Catholic senior high schools, and 12 private senior high schools in the capital city of Dili, Timor-Leste. The following is an excerpt from an in-depth interview with key informants, as stated in quote 5:

We (teachers) need to carry out our duties as teachers. We (teachers) come to school on time and carry out teaching and learning activities in the classroom as they should. In teaching and learning activities, we (teachers) use a language familiar to the conditions of teachers and students, namely Tetun, or at least a mixture of Tetun and Portuguese, often called by many Tetungues. Why do we use Tetungues? Because the time to learn Portuguese is very short, only 120-240 hours. This duration of time for native teachers is not enough because in the morning, we teach, and in the afternoon, we take Portuguese courses to learn Portuguese. Two activities are carried out on the same day; we are not concentrated or focused. How can we be proficient in Portuguese in a short time? That is the challenge we face, and as an alternative, we use Tetun in the teaching and learning process.

From the results of in-depth interviews with supporting informants (students), it was obtained that for 6 years in elementary school, 3 years in junior high school, and 3 years in senior high school, the Language of instruction for teaching and learning activities was Tetun or a mixture of Tetun and Portuguese, which is often called Tetungues. The following is an excerpt from the results of in-depth interviews with all supporting informants, as stated in quote 6:

So far, the Language used by teachers as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning activities is Tetun, or a mixture of Tetun and Portuguese. Because all subjects are printed in Portuguese, teachers require students to take notes in textbooks. When students finish taking notes, the teacher explains the material in Tetun, a Portuguese translation. The Portuguese that students often hear from native teachers are "fecha a boca" shut up, "já acabou" is finished, "ainda não" not yet, and "depressed" fast. That is the Portuguese Language from native teachers that students often hear from elementary, junior high, and high school today. This problem occurs because most teachers who teach in high school are educated in Indonesia and are not fluent in Portuguese. There are even teachers who get angry if students ask questions in Portuguese.

Discussion

Based on the research results, it is known that the RDTL Constitution, Article 13, and Education Law No. 14/2008, Article 8 stipulate that starting from 2002 to 2012, all levels of elementary, junior high,

and senior high schools must use Portuguese as the sole Language of instruction, without exception. Then, the RDTL Constitution and Education Law No. 14/2008 were further emphasized in the National Curriculum Law No. 47/2011 and No. 32/2024, which require all teachers at elementary and senior high school levels to conduct learning using Portuguese. However, the reality in the field deviates from what is mandated by the RDTL Constitution and other laws. The deviation between reality and expectations is caused by most teachers not being fluent in Portuguese. According to the report (INFORDEFE, 2016), there are still 78% of teachers, both elementary, middle, and high school teachers, whose Portuguese language proficiency level is inadequate to carry out the learning process in Portuguese.

Meanwhile, the Tetun language also confuses teachers and students because the Tetun language has three different versions, and there is no consensus on them. The three versions are (1) the Tetun version of the Catholic Church, (2) the Tetun version of the Instituto Nacional da Língua (INL), and (3) the Tetun version of the Dili Institute of Technology (DIT). The three versions are reflected in learning practices, meaning that some follow the Tetun version of the Catholic Church, some follow the INL version, and also follow the DIT version in the teaching and learning process. There is no uniformity in the Tetun language. In the results of David's study, he stated that Timor-Leste has a variety of Tetun languages, making it difficult for teachers and students to teach and learning activities (Albuquerque, 2013). Based on the above reality, using a mixed language between Tetun and Portuguese is a choice in the schools' teaching and learning process.

In Mari's study in Tanzania, it was also found that something similar to Timor-Leste, where the majority of teachers do not have English language skills, Kiswahili is a choice because Kiswahili is very familiar to teachers and students in interacting in class. In his study, Mari stated that since the beginning of Tanzania's independence in 1961, Kiswahili has been established as the Language of instruction in the teaching and learning process in elementary and secondary schools. (Yogi, 2017). Similarly, the results of the Kinyaduka study in the Morogoro region, Tanzania, reported that 78.9% of teachers' English proficiency levels were inadequate, making the learning process ineffective, and teachers considered the use of English in primary and secondary schools in the region as a factor inhibiting the quality of education. (Kinyaduka, BD, & Kiwara, 2013).

Likewise, in his research, McCoy found that the learning process using English as a medium of instruction for teachers and students who are not proficient in English negatively impacts the learning process between teachers and students in primary and secondary schools in Kenya. Teachers' lack of English language proficiency in Kenya is a challenge in carrying out teaching and learning activities, especially in deepening the material, so this experience affects poor student understanding (McCoy, 2017). Another study by Brock-Utne reported that the use of multilingualism in the learning process in Tanzania negatively impacts students' academic performance. For example, teachers give the same questions in different languages. The results of the questions given by the teacher to students in Kiswahili and all the answers given by students in Kiswahili are correct according to the questions. In contrast, the answers written by students in English do not answer the substance of the teacher's questions. The conclusion is that using multilingualism as a teaching medium impacts students' poor understanding of the material taught by teachers in teaching and learning activities at school, and a decrease in critical and creative thinking performance. (Brock-Utne and Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002). Kirui's study revealed that inadequate teacher competence in English as a medium of instruction contributed to poor academic performance in 26 secondary schools in the Arusha region of Tanzania. Students were unable to understand and answer the teacher's questions appropriately. From the findings, the researcher recommends that the Tanzanian government improve language proficiency among teachers to improve students' academic performance in the Arusha region (Cekiso, M. Tshotsho B., & Masha, 2018).

The theory of nativism explains that learning is a collaborative process with complex investigation and discovery. It can only happen if the learning process is facilitated with Language understood correctly and appropriately by teachers and students. The function of Language in the teaching and learning process is to connect interpersonal relationships to understand social situations through subjects, which in turn can expand experiences and reflect thoughts and actions that can later contribute to the development of society. Language is the main instrument of all communication carried out between humans (Noam Chomsky, 2006).

According to Martha Qorro, the quality of education will only be achieved if teachers and students understand the Language of instruction well and correctly (Qorro, 2006). According to behaviorism theory, the language barriers experienced by teachers and students will make it difficult for the teacher to get the right stimulus and for the student to respond appropriately (Patton, 2021).

Teachers and students who are not fluent in Portuguese have difficulty delivering material to students, and students have difficulty understanding the material the teacher delivers through teaching and learning activities. The difficulties experienced by teachers have implications for the quality of teaching, which is low, and also hinder students' academic development. Teachers who are not fluent in Portuguese may be unable to explain the material clearly and systematically and cause students to have difficulty understanding the topics studied in class. Meanwhile, on the student side, there is a decrease in motivation to learn. The decrease in student learning motivation will affect the tendency not to actively participate in teacher learning activities (Francisca, 2024).

Compared with previous studies conducted by various academic circles in Timor-Leste and other countries, such as Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania, multilingualism in teacher-learning practices has similarities and differences. The similarity between the results of the study conducted in Timor-Leste and previous studies in Africa, such as Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania, is that they are all former European colonies. When these countries became independent from European colonies, the colonial Language was used as the official state language and the Language of instruction. The second similarity is that these colonial languages did not mix during the colonial period and were not integrated with the indigenous people. However, when countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Timor-Leste became independent, the government used a colonial language that was not familiar to the indigenous people as the Language of instruction. The third similarity is that most Indigenous teachers are not fluent in the colonial Language, such as English in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Portuguese in Timor-Leste. Most, or 78.9% of teachers in Tanzania, are not fluent in English, but they are fluent in Kiswahili. In Timor-Leste, 78% of indigenous teachers are not fluent in Portuguese but are fluent in Tetun. The fourth similarity is that Timor-Leste indigenous teachers who are not fluent in Portuguese take Portuguese language training and courses for 120 to 240 hours. Indigenous teachers in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania also receive English language training and courses. However, the research results do not mention the duration of the English language training and courses. The fifth similarity is that in Timor-Leste, teachers and students are not fluent in Portuguese and are not familiar with Portuguese, while in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania, teachers and students are not fluent in English and are not familiar with English.

The differences found in the study are both in Timor-Leste and with the results of previous studies, especially in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania. First, at the beginning of independence in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania, the national Language, Kiswahili, was immediately established as the Language of instruction from elementary school to secondary school. While English is also the Language of instruction, its function is as a didactic auxiliary. While in Timor-Leste, at the beginning of the restoration of independence, Portuguese was immediately established as the primary Language of instruction, while Tetun was the didactic auxiliary Language. The second difference is that in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania, the national Language, Kiswahili, is uniform nationally and accepted by all parties. While in Timor-Leste, Tetun consists of three versions: the government version or the Instituto Nacional da Linguística (INL), the Catholic Church version, and the Dili Institute of Technology (DIT) version. Of the three versions, until now, there has been no consensus, so there is no uniformity. The third difference, in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania, the class promotion exams and graduation exams are conducted in two languages, namely English and Kiswahili. In contrast, in Timor-Leste, the class promotion exams and graduation exams are conducted in only one Language, namely Portuguese.

Comparison between the results of the study with the results of previous studies, both the results of research conducted in Timor-Leste and Research conducted outside Timor-Leste, such as Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania that discuss multilingualism in the learning process, shows a match. When the results of the study are compared with the theories and regulations applicable in the Timor-Leste

education system, they are very contradictory or deviate between reality and expectations. Because the learning theory put forward by Dewey, Qorro, Prinsloo, and Noam Chomsky, the Language of instruction is the main key in achieving the success of the learning process for teachers and students, as well as guaranteeing the quality of education. Due to the importance of Language in the learning process, Qorro emphasized that the Language of instruction is a means of delivering education. The role of the Language of instruction is likened to a pipe in flowing water from one place to another, or like a copper cable in flowing electricity from one station to another. Just as pipes are an important medium for flowing water, and copper wires are an important medium for flowing electricity, the Language of instruction is a very necessary medium for flowing, or transmitting education from teachers to students and between students (Babaci-Wilhite, 2010).

In connection with the importance of the Language of instruction in the learning process. Learning theory, Dewey stated that Language is a very important instrument and functions to convey messages of knowledge to students. If the teacher is not proficient in the Language of instruction used as a teaching medium, then the teacher is certain not to master the material that will be taught to students. Students who are not proficient in the Language of instruction will find it difficult to understand the material presented by the teacher. In this situation, the learning objectives contained in the curriculum cannot be realized (Williams, 2017). Jean Piaget's cognitive theory explains that Language is an important means in facilitating teachers and students in communicating and interacting to transfer knowledge and science from teachers to students. Interaction between teachers and students can only be done through a stimulus and response model with the help of Language. Suppose teachers and students cannot communicate well. In that case, the implication is that the content delivered by the teacher through the stimulus is not conveyed completely, and students, as the recipients of the content, are also not complete, so that in turn it has an impact on incomplete understanding (Dilshad, 2017).

Social cognitive theory is strengthened by constructivist learning theory that activation and understanding of knowledge will only occur if the teacher conveys the knowledge in a language that the students understand (Nainggolan and Daeli, 2021). Constructivism theory explains that learning means building in the context of constructivism educational philosophy is interpreted as an effort to build a modern, cultured life structure. Constructivism is the basis for thinking (philosophy) of contextual learning, namely that knowledge is built by humans little by little, the results of which are expanded through a limited context and not suddenly. Knowledge is not a set of facts, concepts, or rules that are ready to be taken and remembered. Humans must construct that knowledge and give it meaning through real experience (Nurhidayati, 2021).

From the research results that have been described above, when connected or associated with the social cognitive theory and constructivist learning theory put forward by Dewey, Qorro, Prinsloo, and Noam Chomsky, it can be concluded that the research results are very contradictory. The research results are contrary to what is put forward by the theory. Where the social cognitive theory and constructivist learning theory explain that the Language of instruction has a very important role in facilitating teaching and learning activities between teachers and students, which places more emphasized on the process of transferring knowledge from teachers to students, if both parties, namely teachers and students do not have the skills in the Language of instruction, then the process of transferring knowledge from teacher to student does not occur, because the means of distributing knowledge does not function properly. It is the reality that is happening in the Timor-Leste education system, because the Language of instruction, which is a means of distributing information, is not properly understood by teachers and students in teaching and learning activities. While what is put forward by the theories above, the Language of instruction plays a very important role in facilitating teaching and learning activities, so teachers and students are required to understand the Language of instruction properly and correctly. In the research data, the conditions stated by the theory were not found; what was found was an understanding of the Language of instruction by teachers and students, which grammatically could not be justified scientifically. So, at this point, it can be concluded that the research results contradict the theories previously mentioned.

The results of the study show that the reality of the use of Portuguese as the main Language of instruction in teaching and learning activities in elementary schools and schools in the capital city of Dili,

actually deviates from what is mandated by the RDTL Constitution, article 13 paragraph 1, and other regulations directly related to the use of Portuguese as the main Language of instruction, such as (1) Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 3/2007, (2) Education Law No. 14/2008 article 8, (3) National Curriculum Law No. 47/2011 article 18 paragraphs 1 and 2, and (4) National Curriculum Law No. 4/2015. Because the facts show that Tetun and a mixture of Tetun and Portuguese dominate all teaching and learning activities from elementary schools to high schools in the capital city of Dili.

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the Language of instruction, namely Portuguese, which is used as a medium of instruction in elementary and secondary schools in the capital city of Dili, is facing serious problems. These problems include teachers and students who are not proficient in Portuguese, but the government unilaterally forces them to use Portuguese as a medium of instruction. With teachers who are not proficient in Portuguese, it has an impact on the mastery of the material. If teachers do not master the material, then teaching and learning activities become ineffective. If teaching and learning activities are not effective, it automatically has an impact on poor student understanding. Because the quality of education will only be achieved if the learning process is carried out effectively through a language that can be understood by teachers and students who are interacting in the teaching and learning process, the quality of human resources will only be obtained through quality education. The problem of the Language of instruction that is specifically faced by teachers and students in elementary and secondary schools in the capital city of Dili is a fact that the quality of education is at a crossroads. Suppose the reality and conditions faced by the world of education in Timor-Leste today are allowed to continue, and pragmatic steps are not taken to overcome them. In that case, the quality of education will worsen in the future. Poor quality education will produce low-quality human resources, difficult access to jobs, and difficulty competing in the global labor market, resulting in unemployment and poverty.

Due to the problems regarding the policy and use of the Language of instruction, in the world of education, as is currently felt by Timor-Leste and by several countries in the African continent, such as Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania. Latin American countries, such as Cuba, Bolivia, Honduras, Peru, and Venezuela, once felt the same thing. However, in the course of history, Cuba and Venezuela have succeeded in blending or internalizing Spanish to their citizens through educational institutions. In Patricia Nichols' Research, it is stated that alternatives or solutions that can help Cuba and Venezuela succeed in implementing Spanish as the Language of instruction in Cuba and Venezuela, with several strategies as follows: (1) Every family is required to use Spanish as the Language of communication at home, (2) Teachers receive continuous Spanish language training and are supervised by supervisors, (3) Involve community support in the implementation of language policies, (4) Students are supported by teachers and parents and every student who succeeds is given incentives by the school, (5) Teachers are required to teach using Spanish as a medium of instruction, and (6) Teachers who succeed in using Spanish in their teaching are given incentives and awards. With these alternatives, Cuba and Venezuela have succeeded in using Spanish as a medium of instruction in the world of education. (Patricia C. Nichols, 2018).

From the results of the discussion above, it can be concluded that primary and secondary education institutions are seen as places to develop knowledge. In the eyes of the general public, the task of educational institutions is to develop the potential of school children through comprehensive knowledge so that children in the future can contribute to social, cultural, intellectual, economic, and political life in the community and state. However, the world of primary and secondary education in the capital city of Dili faces problems in carrying out teaching and learning activities because teachers are not proficient in Portuguese. At the same time, Tetun has not yet developed. The question is what kind of knowledge is developed and delivered by primary and secondary education institutions to their students when the teachers themselves do not have the competence and proficiency in Portuguese required to teach? How can students, as the next generation, obtain adequate knowledge and skills to guarantee their rights as citizens to participate in the development process? Based on these two questions, this article would like to recommend several important points to the government and the Ministry of Education. The recommendation points include: (1) Increasing continuous Portuguese language training, and the duration of language training needs to be adjusted to the provisions of The Foreign Service Institute, namely 575 to 2200 hours. (2) The

government needs to allocate a special budget for Portuguese language training and the development of the Tetun language, which has so far been very dependent on aid funds from the Brazilian and Portuguese governments. (3) Portuguese language courses and training are also needed for school children, which the Ministry of Education has never carried out. (4) Providing incentives to teachers whose Portuguese language proficiency level meets the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (5) Involving parents of students and the community, as Cuba and Venezuela have done in addressing the issue of Language of instruction policy in the world of education, and (6) Providing space for English and Indonesian which have been designated as working languages in Article 159 of the RDTL Constitution. Thus providing opportunities and chances for the young generation of Timor-Leste to move and synergize freely in the ASEAN region.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the use of the Language of instruction in learning practices at the school and secondary school levels in the capital city of Dili has not been fully implemented in accordance with the mandate of the RDTL Constitution article 13 paragraph 1, Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 3/2007, Education Law No. 14/2008 article 8, National Curriculum Law No. 47/2011 article 18 paragraphs 1 and 2, and National Curriculum Law No. 4/2015, which requires Portuguese as the main Language of instruction in teaching and learning activities. Learning practices have not been in accordance with what is required by the regulations above because nationally, 78% of native teachers are not fluent in Portuguese. So that Tetun and a mixture of Tetun and Portuguese are alternatives used as teaching media in elementary and secondary schools in the capital city of Dili. Native teachers placed in the city of Dili, both elementary, junior high, and high school teachers, are 903 teachers, or 40%, who are educated in Portuguese. Meanwhile, 1367 teachers, or 60%, are educated in Indonesia, so these teachers are not fluent in Portuguese. Portuguese language training organized by the Ministry of Education of Timor-Leste, together with the governments of Portugal and Brazil, with a period of 120-240 hours, after a diagnostic test by INFORDEPE in 2016, did not change because nationally, 78% of 13,857 teachers are not yet fluent in Portuguese. Suppose the language conditions and situations are allowed to continue. In that case, it will have an impact on the low academic performance of students and will have implications for the low quality of human resources in the future. Based on these findings, this study would like to recommend the following: (1) Increase more intensive Portuguese language training and strict supervision is needed, (2) The duration of Portuguese language training needs to be adjusted to the provisions of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), (3) The Timor-Leste government needs to allocate special funds for Portuguese language training, because so far Portuguese language training has been very dependent on aid from Brazil and Portugal, (4) Allocate a special budget to develop the Tetun language which has been very slow, (5) It is necessary to involve parents and the community in implementing Portuguese, (6) Provide incentives for teachers who are successful in Portuguese language training, so that there is motivation for the teacher concerned and for fellow teachers, (7) Students are also given Portuguese language training, because so far students have never received Portuguese language training and finally this study recommends to parties who care about the field of education to conduct further studies in the future.

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