Inaugural professorial address

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Dili Institute of Technology.

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Opening

Thank you, Master of Ceremonies.

My respects to

- the director general of Higher Education,
- the director of ANAAA (the National Agency for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation)
- the honourable rectors of the other universities in Timor-Leste,
- and distinguished guests from other organisations.

I also express my respects to

- the president and members of the Board of Trustees of DIT, the president of the Permanent Committee, the president of the Fiscal Committee,
- the honourable rector and deputy rectors,
- the DIT council of doctors,
- deans and unit directors,
- the DIT chaplain,
- and the entire academic body.

A warm hug to all the graduands and their families.

Finally, I give my respects to someone who is not present today: the Jesuit priest Prof. Dr Dr João Inocêncio da Piedade. He is the first Timorese to have become full professor, at the Gregoriana University in Rome. Higher education is indeed an international sector.

Congratulations to the graduands

Graduands whom I respect, first of all I would like to congratulate you all: the 14 who are graduating with a master's degree, and the 477 who are graduating with an undergraduate degree. Congratulations! You have studied for many years and overcome many challenges to reach this graduation ceremony. It's time to celebrate!

To the families of the graduating students too, I express my congratulations, because their success is also your success.

To all of you, good morning!

Thanks to the DIT leadership

Fellow lecturers whom I love and respect, thank you. I appreciate your love and collaboration throughout this long period. I especially give my sincere thanks to the leaders of Dili Institute of Technology. I am able to stand before you as full professor because of your leadership throughout these twenty years. And I am able to accept this promotion with pride because you carried out the promotion process with rigour.

My thanks also go to the lecturers of the Centre for Language Studies, and to Ms Olinda Lucas and the lecturers from the faculties and other units who have worked with me during these seventeen years, in the areas of teaching, research and publication. I have learned much from you, and am happy to be part of this extended DIT family.

Introduction

Distinguished guests whom I respect, allow me to move on to the content of this professorial address.

I'll start with a question. Many of feel that writing Tetun is difficult, and reading it is hard too. How can this be? We speak Tetun every day. How then can it be hard to write, and can reading it often not make sense?

I have followed the development of Tetun for twenty years. And I would like to tell a bit about some of Tetun's riches, and some of the challenges which we face when we communicate in formal contexts. Finally I will briefly give my ideas on how we can face these challenges.

One type of riches which all languages have is their various styles of language. A trainer shouting on the football field is not like a mother comforting her child, and a speech is different again. The styles of language which we use in different contexts each have their own characteristics: their vocabulary, their structure, and sometimes their intonation. These styles of language are in Portuguese called "registers". (That's not the "list of names" register, but a style of language with its context.) We all use various registers. We adapt our language according to our purpose, for instance whether we want to share information, or be funny. It also depends on our relationship: Talking with your children is not the same as talking with the President of the Republic. And it depends on the situation: We don't use the same language for writing a report as for writing an SMS.

Over these last twenty years, the registers of Tetun have increased markedly. Before the popular consultation in 1999, people didn't give speeches like this in Tetun, and didn't use Tetun for writing news reports or for debating the general state budget. Facebook didn't exist then. But now Tetun is used for all these functions. And Tetun has grown richer for it.

I'd now like to mention four registers: two informal, and two formal. I'll go into most detail on the register that is used for education and work.

Everyday oral Tetun

The first register is Tetun which we speak every day. This register is oral, and it doesn't feel difficult to speak or to understand. We mix it with other languages, but not very much. In Dili, if we're just talking normally, 5-15% of the word tokens are from Portuguese; in other districts it's sometimes less than 5%. We used to also mix in Indonesian. According to my data from 2006, at that time about 5-10% of word tokens were from Indonesian. Now that percentage has reduced. In everyday conversation, Tetun Terik and English words are hardly used.

With regards to structure, we usually speak according to Tetun grammar, with almost no influence from other languages. There is influence from Mambae, but that is an influence from long ago.[1]

Slang

The second informal register I would like to mention is slang. Two DIT lecturers have done research on this topic: our deputy rector Justino da Silva and language teacher Cesaltina Tilman.[2] Slang is used mostly by young people when they are chatting, or writing in Facebook.

The major characteristics of slang are creativity, massive mixing of languages, and humour. Such as, "When baldie comes, we'll go out." ("baldie" is *a-botak*, a mixture of Portuguese and Indonesian, i.e. a $100 note, based on the picture on the US currency. "go out" is *lego-lego* from English "let's go".) Who can think creatively enough to invent such words?! Slang emerges quickly, and often disappears quickly too.

With regard to structure, slang doesn't just use Tetun grammar, but also takes structures from other languages, especially Indonesian. For further information, you can read their article.

Liturgical register

Now we'll move from informal to formal contexts. We will look at two very different formal registers.

The first is used mainly in the liturgy, in the missal, in some sermons, and in some poetry. This style of language started developing a long time ago. We can see some aspects in Padre Sebastião da Silva's catechism, published in 1885, over a hundred years ago.[3] The characteristic which we immediately notice in this register is its vocabulary. Liturgical texts have some 5% of word tokens from Tetun Terik. There is not a high proportion of Portuguese, about 10%. Indonesian and English words are never used.

Tetun for education and work

The second formal register is very different. This one is used in school and work: in newspapers, television news and reports, in conferences and parliament. Those of you who have just written your final-year projects may also have written in this style. This register is used with serious intentions, mainly to inform or to influence others. Before 1999, Tetun was not used in these contexts, so this education and work register has only developed over the last 20 years.

With regard to style of language, there are two characteristics which are stand out strongly. Firstly, a lot of vocabulary is taken from Portuguese. And secondly, there are many grammatical structures that follow the structures of other languages. We'll look at these characteristics in turn.

In the vocabulary which we use in the context of education and work, Tetun Terik hardly occurs, and only some people mix Indonesian and English. But the percentage of Portuguese can get very high. When we counted words in various texts in this register, 15% to 55% were from Portuguese. When we counted only the open classes of nouns, verbs and adjectives, the proportion of Portuguese was higher, up to 80%. Translations tend to be even more extreme. We counted one translation, and found 86% of nouns, verbs and adjectives were Portuguese! This means that in some texts, Tetun is used mainly for linkage, such as *iha* "in", *nee* "this" or *bainhira* "when", with the other words being almost all Portuguese.

However, the register of Tetun that we use in education and work doesn't just adopt words from other languages, it also adopts grammar. One example is passives, of two types. In normal Tetun, we say, "They abandoned this land", but in this formal register of Tetun, many people write, "This land is abandoned from its owner", following Portuguese grammar. As another example, according to usual Tetun rules, we say, "The director announced a new program", but many authors write, "This new program (was) announced from the director." So far we have noted 16 new constructions which Tetun has adopted from the grammar of other languages, mainly Portuguese and Indonesian.[4] Most of these are not used in everyday Tetun. In this way, this formal version of Tetun is growing further and further from original Tetun Dili grammar, and moving closer and closer to the grammar of European languages.

New words are noticed by everyone. New structures are observed by some. But there is another change which is sometimes hidden. This is using Tetun grammar with new meanings, adopting the meaning of that construction in another language. One example is relative clauses. In normal Tetun, if we say, "the Prime Minister who followed Xanana Gusmão", we are recognising that Timor-Leste has already had a number of prime ministers, and are identifying which one we mean. But now, many writers use relative clauses in another way, following Indonesian and Portuguese. An example is "the Prime Minister, who is also Minister of Defence." Here the writer is using a relative clause not to identify, but to give additional information about this person. Traditional Tetun Dili is not like this.[5] If we write in this way, then we use Tetun structures, but with functions following another language. You could say the skin is Tetun, but the flesh is not. There are five constructions which we have identified with new functions like this.

The final change is that some Tetun structures are almost lost from this formal register. An example is two verbs in a row, such as "throw ascend" (throw up) or "run exit" (run out). There are four constructions which we have noted in this category. These are all Tetun construction which are not found in Portuguese, Indonesian or English, and which writers hardly use in Tetun. In this way, Tetun is losing its unique flavour.

There are arguments for and against using new words and new structures from other languages. I can see three advantages. Firstly, it's very easy to write. This is because all writers in Timor-Leste were educated in another language, not in Tetun, so we are used to writing according to the structure of these other languages. It's easier to write Tetun the same way.[6] Secondly, these constructions offer flexibility, so that we can present information in various ways, according to our needs. And thirdly, technical terms help us to present specific meanings so that we can mention exactly those ideas that we want to mention, provided the readers also know these terms. These three advantages provide greater benefits for writers than for readers.

However these new constructions and new words also have disadvantages. I will mention three. Firstly, many people haven't mastered them. So it's difficult for them to understand what we want to tell them, let alone if we write full of technical terms or other words which they don't know. A second disadvantage is this: Language like this makes communication across specialisations difficult, even when the other person is well educated. According to our experience in Timor,[7] and also experience overseas,[8] when people in one area of work write using language like this, often their colleagues in other areas of work don't understand, or even worse, understand incorrectly. In this way we hinder interdisciplinary cooperation. Yet these days the world really needs people from different areas of knowledge to work together. A third disadvantage is that even when people understand such language, based on my observation, it never touches their hearts. That's one reason why poetry is never written in this register.

An alternative

Distinguished guests, in my opinion, we need a register for education and work which is different. We can speak or write Tetun in a formal style, but respect the structure of Tetun, and use mainly vocabulary which the listeners or readers understand.

It is this style of language which we have tried to use in the manuals produced by the Centre for Language Studies, and also in Bible translation. From this lengthy experience I can say clearly: Translating or writing using genuine Tetun constructions is sometimes very difficult. It is much easier to translate literally (or as we say in Tetun "go straight, come straight"). But in the end, when we check the Bible translation with young people, they understand it. Even some of St Paul's words which are really difficult, they can explain back. When however we use constructions which are not Tetun, or use Tetun constructions with the function of other languages, these are like empty words to them.

Closing messages

Fellow lecturers, graduands, and other distinguished guests, we have seen four registers of Tetun, and some of its challenges. We have also seen in passing that Tetun is developing because people like you are using it creatively. Based on these points, I have two recommendations about Tetun.

The first is for educators. Whether we like it or not, this education and work register which is inclined towards the grammar of other languages, is here to stay. My guess is that bit by bit, further new constructions will be adopted from other languages. Therefore, we should teach students at school how to properly understand this style of Tetun, even though we don't teach them to write like that. Because this register has a full 16 constructions which students don't master, and five which are used with new meanings. How can students understand it?! According to research overseas, if students master the language of education, this assists them to successfully complete their schooling.[9]

My second recommendation is for all of us who write or speak in formal settings. The various registers of Tetun which I have mentioned show that Timorese are creative in using language. Keep being creative! But if you want to reach people's hearts, or change their behaviour, or increase their knowledge, it is better to use Tetun which really follows the grammar of Tetun, language which has a Timorese "flavour". Timor has many communicators who understand this. Politicians who want to influence people speak Tetun according to Tetun structure, and weigh up their words. So do many religious leaders and teachers. But we need more, especially for written Tetun. In this way we will strengthen national identity, and we will also be able to communicate in language which is beautiful and touches people's hearts.

Graduands whom I respect and love, my final message is for you, with help from a DIT author, Mrs Anabela Maia Santos.

Star, you are so beautiful and shiny,
who wouldn't want to obtain you?
In hope, people chase you and chase you.
I also chase you, beloved star.
    You are light for my life,
    you illuminate our way.
But... it is very hard to get you.
We reach out our hands, get only your shadow.
We chase you, don't catch you.
    Because your place is high,
    we must seek, not wait,
    wrack our brains together, not alone.
We must be curious, seek to know,
be educated to serve
this beloved land.

Closing

To close, I take some words from my first teachers in Betun (in Tetun Terik): These my words have reached the edge, have reached the end. That's all.

Thank you.

Appendix 1: Changes in Tetun Dili grammar influenced by other languages

New constructions

This list does not include grammatical words taken from Portuguese, such as prepositions and conjunctions, even though some of these words do influence structure. For example, the construction "for one year" (using Portuguese *durante* "for") is not the same as the traditional equivalent "in one year's inside".

Morphology and noun phrases:

1. Nouns and adjectives can agree in number and gender when both are from Portuguese: e.g. feminine *primeira faze* "first phase"; plural *distintus konvidadus* "distinguished guests". This started before 1999. (Hajek & Williams-van Klinken, 2019).
2. Portuguese nouns can take a Portuguese plural form: e.g. *estudantes* "students". This started before 1999. (Williams-van Klinken, Hajek, & Nordlinger, 2002, 30)
3. The Portuguese suffix *–dor* has been adapted for use with Tetun roots: e.g. *hemu door* "drink-er"; *baku door ema* "bash-er (of) people". This has been adopted by all speakers in many registers. (Hajek & Williams-van Klinken, 2003; Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2020).
4. Portuguese numbers and some adjectives precede a Portuguese head noun, following Portuguese rules: e.g. *trezi pesoas* "thirteen people", *terseira idade* "third age", *ultima posibilidade* "final possibility" (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 9). Only *kada* "each" is used with Tetun nouns: e.g. *kada ema ida* (lit. each person one) "each person". (Not yet mentioned in a publication.)

New word sub-classes (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 10-11):

5. Adjectives based on nouns: e.g. *agrikola* "agricultural", *Aziatiku* "Asian".
6. Adjectives from Portuguese participles: e.g. *aprovadu* "approved".
7. Adverbs with *-mente*: e.g. *infelizmente* "unfortunately". Before 2006, the only common adverb in this category was *diretamente* "directly; now many such adverbs are used in the media.

Clause and sentence structure:

8. Passive: Subject + Transitive verb + *hosi* "from" + Actor: e.g. *Ekipa nee lidera hosi Dr José.* "This team (was) led by Dr José." (Williams-van Klinken, 2010b, 182-184).
9. Passive: Subject + Transitive verb + *-adu hosi* Actor, using Portuguese participles: e.g. *Prosedimentu nee aprovadu hosi CNE.* "These procedures were approved by CNE." (Williams-van Klinken, 2010b, 183-184).
10. Passive replacement: Subject + *hetan* + Transitive verb: e.g. *Nia hetan baku* (lit. he got bash) "He was bashed." (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 15-16). This has been adopted by many speakers.
11. Quote + Speaker, whereas traditional Tetun strictly has the order Speaker + Quote (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 16-17):
    a. "Quote" + *he said* (47% of quotes in newspapers),
    b. "Quote" + *said he* (37% in newspapers).
12. Prepositional phrase before the verb: e.g. *Dr Maria to journalists said ...* (Not yet mentioned in a publication.)
13. Verb + Subject. (This appeared before 1999.) e.g. *Then arose war.* (Williams-van Klinken et al., 2002, 57).
14. New ways to refer back to something (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 18):
    a. *iha fatin/tempu nebee hanesan* "at place/time which same"
    b. *(nebee) refere* "(which) refer"
15. *hafoin* with two opposite meanings: 1. *A then B*. (A happens first. This is the traditional meaning.) 2. *A after B*. (B happens first. This is a new meaning.): e.g. *Polisia serku fatin nee hafoin simu despaixu tribunal.* "Police surrounded the place after/before receiving a court order." (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 18-19).

16. *Klaru katak ...*: e.g. *Klaru katak, nia mai iha nee atu buka justisa.* (lit. clear that, s/he come here to seek justice) "It's clear that s/he came here to seek justice." (Not yet mentioned in a publication.)

Discourse structures

This is not mentioned in the oratio, because it is above the level of the sentence. But media Tetun shows many changes here too, for instance telling events out of chronological order, using very different styles of introductions and conclusions (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 20), and not introducing participants in traditional ways (Williams-van Klinken & Lucas, 2014).

Old constructions with new meanings

1. *sira* is a definite plural marker, but gets used for plural regardless of definiteness: e.g. *etapa sira* "steps". (Williams-van Klinken & Lucas, 2019, 15).
2. Relative clauses have various new functions following Portuguese and Indonesian (Williams-van Klinken & Lucas, 2018; 2020, 47).
3. Adjectives modifying nouns are used to give evaluation of the referent: e.g. *Maromak boot* "great God"; *oan doben* "beloved child" (Williams-van Klinken & Lucas, 2020, 49-50).
4. *hanesan* is used as a copula "be": e.g. *Ida nee hanesan krimi.* (lit. one this like crime) "This is a crime." (Williams-van Klinken, 2010a, 7). Even though *hanesan* has been used like this in newspapers for years, Tetun lecturers interviewed by another researcher didn't recognise this copula use, and felt it to be strange (Greksakova, 2018, 229).
5. Questions with initial question words. Usually fronting of a question word makes the question non-neutral (e.g. expressing frustration), but now it is used in the education and work register for neutral questions too: e.g. *Saida mak nia dehan?* "What (did) he say?" (Not yet mentioned in a publication.)

Tetun constructions that are little used

These constructions don't exist in Portuguese, English and Indonesian, and are little used in written Tetun (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 19).

1. Consecutive verbs: e.g. *tuun mai* (lit. descend come) "come down"*; lao sees* "walk turn.aside". However when two verbs together can translate a single word in Portuguese, then the expression is used in the education and work register: e.g. *foo hatene* (lit. give know) "inform", *foo sai* (lit. give exit) "announce".
2. Negation using *la ... ida*: e.g. *Hau la hatene ida.* (lit. I not know one) "I don't know."
3. Subject + Object + Verb: e.g. *Pedro Tetun la hatene* (lit. Pedro Tetun not know) "Pedro doesn't know Tetun.")
4. Tail-head constructions: e.g. *Tiago baa hariis. Hariis tiha, nia ....* "James went to bathe. Having bathed, he ..." This structure is in other languages too often oral only, because people feel it to be too repetitive in writing.

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[1] Hajek (2006), Williams-van Klinken (2010a).

[2] J. da Silva and Tilman (2018, 2020).

[3] S. M. A. da Silva (1885). This is the first religious publication that I have found for Tetun. Tetunn Terik terms which are still used in the liturgical Tetun today include *ba saa* (lit. for what) to mean "why, because", and *katak* to mean "say". Some which are not used now include conjugation (e.g. *ha'u k-fiar* "I 1s-believe") and possessives using *nia* (e.g. *hau nia ulun* lit. I possessive head, "my head"), despite the latter being standard Tetun Dili.

[4] See Appendix 1.

[5] Williams-van Klinken and Lucas (2018).

[6] Matras and Sakel (2007, 835) also talk about this. They say, if we adopt constructions from another langugae, then we only need one construction for the two languages, thus facilitating production of language.

[7] In 2002, I asked university graduates to mark words which they didn't know in newspaper articles. Sometimes there were 3-4 words which they didn't know in a single paragraph (Williams-van Klinken, 2002, 6). In 2009 I did a similar test, and the number had decreased significantly. The graduates failed to recognise approximately two words per five paragraphs. In 2016, the results were approximately the same (Williams-van Klinken & Hajek, 2018, 12).

[8] e.g. Wallace (2017).

[9] There are various studies which show that students who master the language used in school have a greater chance of being successful at school, starting from the first year of primary school (Uccelli, Galloway, Barr, Meneses, & Dobbs, 2015) through to university (Stigger, 2019).