

Marie Quinn

Languages of research in Timor-Leste: a first look, 1999 - 2019

This paper explores languages of scholarship and the risk to knowledge-building involved in self-citation. It investigates how languages are used to both undertake and report research through a citation analysis of scholarly publications – journal articles, conference papers and higher education degree theses – from language and education research in Timor-Leste between 1999 and 2020, to identify how local and international scholars worked within or between languages. Implications emerge for researching in multilingual settings including the use of translation, the importance of multilingual journals and conferences, in local and international languages.

Research languages. Citations. Scholarship. Timor-Leste. Language and education.

Línguas de investigação em Timor-Leste: um primeiro olhar, 1999 - 2019

Este artigo explora as línguas utilizadas na investigação académica e o risco da auto-citação para a construção de conhecimento. Através da análise de citações de publicações académicas — artigos de revistas, artigos de conferências e dissertações do ensino superior — sobre línguas e educação em Timor-Leste, realizadas entre 1999 e 2020, identifica-se a forma as línguas são utilizadas na realização e relato da investigação, e como os académicos locais e internacionais trabalham com as línguas ou entre elas. Levantam-se questões sobre as implicações da investigação em contextos multilingues, incluindo o recurso à tradução, e aborda-se a importância de conferências e revistas multilingues que integrem as línguas locais e internacionais.

Línguas de investigação. Citações. Investigação. Timor-Leste. Língua e educação.

Língua hodi hala’o investigasaun iha Timor-Leste: haree ba dala uluk, 1999 - 2019

Artigu ida-ne’e buka haree-hetan língua hirak peskiza nian no problema ne’ebé hale’u harii matenek ho liuhosi nia sitasaun rasik. Nomós investiga oinsá mak uza língua hirak hotu hodi hala’o no fó-sai rezultadu investigasaun nian liuhosi lehat sitasaun iha publikasaun akadémika – artigu hosi revista, artigu hosi konferénsia no disertasaun hosi “ensinu superiór” – tatur investigasaun kona-ba língua no edukasaun iha Timor-Leste entre 1999

no 2020, atubele identifika oinsá mak akadémiku sira, lokál no internasionál, hala'o knaar ho língua ida mesak ka iha língua hirak nia leet. Tanba hamosu implikasaun hodi bele hala'o investigasaun ho língua barabarak, ka hetan informasaun liuhosi tradusaun fali, hafolin revista ka konferénsia *multilingue*, ho língua lokál ka internasionál.

Língua investigasaun sira. Sitasaun sira. Investigasaun. Timor-Leste. Língua no edukasaun.

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Introduction: studying the languages of research

Citation studies as a way of understanding patterns of scholarship have been used in various disciplines for some time, often finding a high level of self-citation, namely drawing on sources from the same country or same language (e.g. Bookstein & Yitzhaki, 1999; Diekhoff, Schlattmann & Dewey, 2013; Van Leeuwen et al, 2001; Yitzhaki, 1998). Garfield & Welljams-Dorof (1990), for example, in investigating Science articles between 1984 and 1988 found that most articles by native and non-native speakers appear in, and draw on other articles in, English and that scholars from most countries tend to self-cite from their own country. Li, Qiao, Li & Jin (2014) and Shu & Larivière (2015) debated the use of Chinese² and English in China-based articles, finding self-citation of language and location to varying degrees. In investigating studies of those who wrote about multilingualism, Liddicoat (2016) pointed out the irony that most writers, in fact, were writing and reading monolingually, not “discursively consistent” (p. 10) with their subject matter.

The rise of English is particularly prevalent in academia, across science and humanities (Ammon & McConnell, 2002; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Ferguson, 2007; Sheldon, 2020). The prestige and rankings that English-language publications attract globally creates tensions for researchers, directing valuable resources of time and money to learn English to a level suitable for academic discourse. Yet, many researchers who want their findings to be available to a local audience use further time and opportunity to work back into an accessible language, with “opportunity” perhaps being the greatest hurdle when journals are single-language. In looking at a North-South divide, the Portuguese thinker, Boaventura de Souza Santos and colleagues warn that privileging particular ways of seeing the world is “obliterando outras formas de conhecimento [obliterating other forms of knowledge]” (Santos, Menses & Nunes, 2006, p. 20). In the case of language, self-citing may “obliterate” other knowledge from the research context.

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² None of the authors identified whether they meant Mandarin or Cantonese, only “Chinese-language”.

Impetus for this study

The obliteration – or the substitution – of facts is the impetus for undertaking this study, exploratory at this stage and confined to a small section of research endeavour. In 2019, a Portuguese friend gave me a link to an item recently digitised by the Museu da Resistencia (Resistance Museum) in Dili, the 1975 report of the activities of the Grupo Coordenador para a Reformulação do Ensino em Timor [GCRET, Coordinating Group for the Reformation of Education in Timor], a group tasked with reforming/decolonising the Timorese school curriculum. Data in this Portuguese-language document included figures for school provision that differed vastly from those found in the English-medium 2000 United Nations [UN] document, *Building blocks for a nation*, “accepted” by most researchers in Timor-Leste and promulgated in papers and conferences. The UN figures for 1975 note that only 10,500 children attended 47 primary schools, suggesting that the Portuguese system was derelict in its duty to the education of the local population. However, the 1975 document notes that 94689 children - about 77% of the school age population – were enrolled in 626 primary schools, a substantially different number and a substantially different view of education of the time. Contemporaneous figures appear Thomaz (1975/2002) in Portuguese – a source used by many Portuguese-language scholars – supporting the GCRET figures (p. 139). Closer analysis of the footnotes to the UN data shows the source as the Indonesian *Timor Timur Dalam Angka 1993* [*East Timor in numbers 1993*] for 1976/77, a period of heavy social dislocation and violence in the wake of armed occupation, the period Justino, Leone and Salardi (2014) note was “the most intense in terms of killings and destruction” (p. 323). Indeed, it is perhaps surprising that 10,500 students even attended school at this time. It was also certainly not part of the Portuguese colonial period. Thus, the perpetration of the UN figures by writers about education has repeatedly characterised Portuguese education in Timor-Leste as a site of neglect.

In considering the shock of having used this incorrect information in my own writing – due to my own isolation within English-medium writing – I sought to look at how confined scholars also might be to a language of research. My questions, then, were: *What are the patterns of language use in scholarship within my own areas of interest, namely, language and education?* and, *What are the risks in not reading across languages?*

Language in multilingual Timor

It is first worth looking at how language is seen in the Timorese context by researchers and commentators. The small half-island nation is home to over 25 languages (Simons & Fennig, 2018) with the local, widely-spoken language, Tetum, being official along with Portuguese, the European language with 500 years of history in the country. The constitution (RDTL, 2002) identifies Portuguese and Tetum as official languages, with English and Indonesian as “working languages”. However, the characterisation of languages and language policy has been – and continue to be – lively and pointed. The decision to adopt Portuguese was seen by English-language writers as “turning back the clock” (Brummitt, May 12-18, 2002) and its use in school, a “tragicomedy” (*The Jakarta Post*, May 29, 2002). However, Portuguese-language writers have maintained the place of Portuguese in the ex-colony, even suggesting the harmful effects of English:

O inglês é uma poderosa língua que não se preocupa com a sobrevivência de outras línguas no mundo; ao passo que o português é uma língua que sustenta a preservação e manutenção das línguas de outros povos [*English is a powerful language that does not care about the survival of other languages in the world; whereas Portuguese is a language that sustains the preservation and maintenance of the languages of other people*] (Paulino, 2011, p. 86)

Moreover, Tetum, however, has been often characterised as “not ready” for use as an academic language, as exemplified by the following comment by de Jesus *et al.* (2018, p. 38)

o tetum ser ainda uma língua incipiente que não dispõe de léxico especializado em determinadas áreas d conhecimento [*Tetum is still a fledgling language that does not have lexicon specialized in certain areas of knowledge*]

Such views exist despite Tetum being used increasingly for formal and academic writing. The primary school National Curriculum, for example, is written almost completely in Tetum (MoE, 2014) and the national university’s academic journal *Dialogos* contains articles on theoretical content such as “Michel Foucault nia hanoin: Podér, seksualidade, normal no jenealojia sabér nian [*Michel Foucault’s thinking: power, sexuality, anormal and genealogy of knowledge*]” (Boarcceach, 2018).

Despite some language-related animosity, local academic research and writing has had a number of multilingual opportunities. Since its inception in 2005, the Timor-Leste Studies Association (TLSA) has held multilingual strands within its conferences with the opportunity to publish in the proceedings in any of the four languages of the constitution. Local conferences at universities in-country, such as Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e [UNTL: National University of East Timor] have had papers in various languages. The two conferences "A Produção do conhecimento Científico em Timor-Leste [The production of scientific knowledge in Timor-Leste]" in 2015 and 2017 contained a range of papers in either Portuguese or English and UNTL's academic journal, *Diálogos*, edited by Alessandro Boarccaech, maintains a mix of both of these languages as well as Tetum-medium articles. However, while these academic avenues make multiple language visible for research, few articles have appeared in more than one language, meaning that despite social multilingualism, the academic field could be said to be "multi – monolingual"- many languages, but one at a time – and scholars need make the effort to be personally multilingual to access a range of knowledge.

Methodology

- Corpus choices

Exploring how language and education are researched in relation to Timor-Leste, a quantitative methodology was used to collect and count instances of language use across citations, comparing variables such as the language-medium of the academic writing, the country of origin of the writer and the type of academic writing. In this case, "academic writing" was understood as peer-reviewed – as far as could be ascertained – and using citations. The sample items consisted of journal articles, conference papers and post-graduate theses, at Masters or Doctorate level, published within the first 20 years of independence, 1999 – 2019, excluding reference texts, opinion pieces, magazine articles or media interviews. Books and book chapters were not included as these are not widely available to all scholars, particularly in Timor-Leste itself. In looking at what scholars *used* in their research, it was important to look at what was *available* to most scholars. Thus, most sources of academic writing were accessed using a publicly-available web-based search engine, using "Timor" in combination with terms in English, Portuguese and Tetum, e. g. "education/ educação/ edukasaun"; "language/ lingua/ lian"; "school/ escola/ eskola";

linguistics/ linguística/ linguistika” as well as other languages that might have yielded articles, such as Indonesian, German, French. Non-Roman script was not used in this instance, admittedly leaving a gap in the research.

The corpus parameters were defined in the following way:

- Education: Timorese formal schooling (Years 1 – 12); teacher training for the sector (excluding pre-school, vocational, university lecturer preparation)
- Language: sociolinguistic uses of language in Timor-Leste, including language policy
- Linguistics: description and comparison of languages of Timor-Leste

In the process of analysing citation lists, it was possible then to identify further articles, a form of sample “snowballing” (e.g. Streeton, Cooke and Campbell, 2004). In this way, 301 items were located on-line.

- Citation coding

Citations were categorised by language, to understand what language the scholar used to access knowledge. Many sources appear in translation, such as, Freire’s book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970): coding was based according to the language the scholar used in the citation. Similarly, documents such as the constitution is available in Portuguese and English, but coding indicated the scholar’s choice.

Further categorisation noted how scholars were drawing on knowledge about Timor-Leste, using TL to indicate a Timorese-related sources (for example, the constitution, or research on Timorese issues) or general texts for reference, comparison or theoretical bases. To illustrate the analytic approach, the article “Talking to learn in Timorese classrooms” (Quinn, 2013) has 70 citations, with 65 in English (E), 2 in Portuguese (P) and 3 in Tetum (T). Of these, 32 of the English-language citations are general (Gen/E), while all the rest are about Timor-Leste: 33 x TL/E, 2 x TL/P, 3 x TL/T. This shows that overwhelmingly, this research draws on English sources, including the background theory to understand the issue of language and learning in classrooms.

As an exploratory study of the area, this first collection and analysis within sampled disciplines provided the chance to discover “something new and interesting” (Swenberg, 2017, p. 17) in regard to scholarship in Timor-Leste. To that end, the analysis did not use the statistically rigorous calculations seen in studies such as Bookstein & Yitzhaki (1999)

or Li, Qiao, Li & Jin (2014), but used the categories to generate percentages provides an overview of what is occurring across the area.

Findings

The findings consist largely of tables generated through a spreadsheet function. This first table provides a profile of the sample of the 301 sources.

Constitutional languages	English	Portuguese	Tetum	Indonesian	TOTAL
Item types					
Articles	59	64	5	-	127
Conference papers	16	80	-	-	96
Theses	13	63	-	1	77
TOTAL	88	207	5	1	301
Citations per item (Average)	57	35.5	7	28	43/item

Table 1: Sample characteristics

Table 2 presents how languages appeared across the citations within the sample, including those that were specifically concerned with Timorese content.

Constitutional languages	English	Portuguese	Tetum	Indonesian	Others	TOTAL
All citations	5928	5901	62	109	397	12397
	47.8%	47.6%	0.5%	0.9%	3.2%	
Citations about T-L	40.5%	55.8%	1.3%	0.8%	1.9%	

Table 2: Citation language and topic, whole sample

Other languages that were the mostly commonly used were French (184 citations; 1.5%), Spanish (128; 1%) and Dutch (37; 0.3%).

To understand how scholars use sources, the following data shows the pattern of citations for scholars (first named author) from particular countries, organised around language. Thus, scholars from Anglophone countries where English is the official language (Australia-Britain-New Zealand-USA) are compared with those from Lusophone countries where Portuguese is the official language (Brazil-Portugal, excluding Timor-Leste) and finally, Timorese scholars. This comparison is shown in Table 3. Note that there were 12

papers from writers who were from countries not Anglophone, Lusophone or Timor-Leste (The Netherlands, Germany, Senegal and Korea), not shown here.

Anglophone country of origin						
	English	Portuguese	Tetum	Indonesian	Other	TOTALS
Articles	39	3	0	-	-	
Conference papers	9	1	3	-	-	
Theses	5	0	0	-	-	
TOTAL items (% of sample)	53 (88%)	4 (7%)	3 (5%)			60
Citations, all (% of sample)	3096 (90.5%)	165 (5%)	31 (1%)	32 (1%)	16 (2.5%)	3380
Citations, TL (% of TL)	1035 (80%)	151 (12%)	28 (2%)	12 (1%)	63 (5%)	1260 (38% of sample)
Lusophone country of origin						
	English	Portuguese	Tetum	Indonesian	Other	TOTALS
Articles	8	49	1	-	-	
Conference papers	1	43	0	-	-	
Theses	0	25	0	-	-	
TOTAL items (% of sample)	9 (7%)	117 (93%)	1 (-)			127
Citations, all (% of sample)	1107 (24.5%)	3254 (71%)	9 (0.2%)	8 (0.2%)	190 (4%)	4568
Citations, TL (% of TL)	354 (18%)	1563 (80.5%)	11 (0.6%)	4 (0.2%)	7 (0.7%)	1945 (42.5% of sample)
Timorese sample						
	English	Portuguese	Tetum	Indonesian	Other	TOTALS
Articles	5	11	0	0	-	
Conference papers	5	35	1	0	-	
Theses	8	37	0	1	-	
TOTAL items (% of sample)	18 (17%)	83 (81%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)		102
Citations, all (% of sample)	1575 (38%)	2408 (58%)	21 (0.5%)	60 (1.5%)	77 (2%)	4141
Citations, TL (% of TL)	374 (31.5%)	784 (66%)	21 (1.8%)	16 (1.4%)	2 (-)	1189 (29% of sample)

Table 3: Comparison of scholars use of citations, by country of origin

Discussion

Before discussing the findings shown in these tables, two issues in particular are acknowledged: one is that using a country of origin is an imprecise measure of language use, particularly in considering the multilingual nature of a countries such as Brazil, Australia and most other countries in the sample, and two, that numbers can provide a blunt

instrument with which to look at behaviour. Indeed, in the analysis, a number of more qualitative observations were made about the habits of particular writers and groups of writers, but in space available, some comments can be made and avenues for further research – already being undertaken – will be outlined.

Firstly, much of the scholarship on education and language in Timor-Leste – besides books – in the last 20 years has been made in Portuguese, constituting a substantial body of work, particularly in the case of Timorese scholars and higher degree study in Brazil and Portugal. Moreover, an emerging language for academic writing is Tetum, with scholars from Australia (Catharina Williams-van Klinken) and Brazil (Alessandro Boarccaech) modelling academic discourse. It is noted that Tetum-language papers are appearing in other disciplines in conferences and local journals.

In terms of language self-citing, English-medium items have a higher rate in this sample than Portuguese-medium items. In using other languages for general reading, Portuguese researchers draw on French and Spanish sources and Brazilians draw on Spanish of the greater South American context. Timorese scholars are apprenticed into similar research patterns when they are located in a Portuguese or Brazilian university. What English-speaker scholars draw on, even more than even Timorese scholars, are Tetum sources: Timorese scholars use very little local material, many with no reference to Timor-based research or documents.

Since Timorese scholars are largely writing in Portuguese, the counts for Portuguese sources would be expected to be higher, and despite the gaps in Tetum sources, Timorese scholars in this sample have the most diverse language use. They are able to draw on Indonesian as well as the languages of their study setting and the beyond. It appears that their multilingual resources provide an advantage in accessing sources.

Lusophone and Timorese writers working in Portuguese draw readily on Timorese sources, with a number of “core texts” – e.g. Hull, 2001; Thomaz, 1975/2002 – used by many of these scholars. However, it appears that neither English-medium nor Portuguese-medium scholars are drawing heavily on each other’s language to build the basis for further research.

A case in point was finding the thesis for a Portuguese scholar who, in 2017, had replicated the research I had undertaken for my own research (see Quinn, 2011 and Monteiro, 2017), both of us seeking to understand classroom discourse. The later study had

no English-medium sources that might have revealed the earlier study. In the academic pursuit of knowledge-building and connections between research, it seems that language barriers prevent a collaborative research setting that Timor-Leste might otherwise provide. The risk in such divisions is that we may be “reinventing the wheel” or not accessing all that is already known.

What solutions?

In terms of cross-language collaboration, the support of multilingual conferences and publications are instrumental in making the languages of research visible and valued, particularly in supporting local languages for research. As machine translation technology improves and on-line publication platforms remove the cost limits of hardcopy journals, there may be greater scope for providing research in multiple translations rather than just the original language. Garfield & Welljams-Dorof (1990) note that formal varieties are difficult to navigate through translation and Bennett (2010) points out that the discourse differences between Portuguese and Anglophone writing still give rise to an imperfect rendering across languages. Nevertheless, some translation facility of this kind would still provide the chance to become familiar with existing research findings and progress from this a point.

To assist all scholars in the Timorese context in building a picture of what is available and what has been achieved in research, the creation of a multilingual data base is worth exploring, perhaps where scholars undertake to provide their abstract in multiple languages – including Tetum. This service might also provide links to copies of papers, creating a multilingual in-house research hub, perhaps situated within an existing research service. Such a resource would be particularly useful for local Timorese scholars, who usually have some proficiency in different languages, to preview what is available and then seek further assistance to read in the published languages of publication.

What this study has not attempted to do is to assess the quality of the writing available: such a task is the role of the discerning academic reader. This study is concerned with access and information in the first place. This first survey has also not differentiated sources. It has not been concerned with whether what is being used is research or a non-academic source: this is the next step in further investigation of this area, to understand scholarly endeavour in the field. Of further interest would also be the patterns of

scholarship across the Timorese research arena, whether particular disciplines are more or less multilingual.

Concluding comments

It would seem to be common sense to most researchers that the sharing of work is not merely for the accumulation of university research credits, but to build on the knowledge that has gone before us. In resisting the hegemony of English in the research arena, it is important that researchers find ways to move across languages, particularly in settings where there are a number of languages used to understand the world. It is important, too, that being locked into a language might mean that we misunderstand aspects of that world or perpetrate particular versions through linguistic ignorance. It is perhaps unfortunate that Thomaz's seminal work (1975/2002) is entitled *Babel Loro Sa'e. O Problema Linguístico de Timor-Leste [Eastern Babel: The linguistic problem of Timor-Leste]*, instead, what could surely be, *uma oportunidade linguística!*

Author's note: I would be interested in adding any further items to my current spreadsheet, particularly items that are located in password protected repositories. Feel free to contact me if you think I have not included your work.

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