



**Adult literacy education  
in a multilingual  
context**

**Teaching, learning  
and using  
written language  
in Timor-Leste**

**Danielle Boon**



# **Adult literacy education in a multilingual context**

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For my parents



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## Preface

This book is about adults who learn to read and write in Timor-Leste, a small developing country in Southeast Asia. I became interested in the topic of adults learning to read and write during my master studies in 'language and minorities' at Tilburg University that I finished in 1993. In the years that followed my interest deepened. In 1994 I worked as an intern in a literacy class for adult immigrant learners learning Dutch as a second language; this internship was part of a post-graduate teacher training course for Adult Education. In my first job at the Language School for Refugees in Rotterdam in 1994-1995, I taught Dutch as a second language to adult refugees from all over the world, many of whom were low-literate. In my later jobs, there has always been a link with adult education and integration of ethnic minorities.

My first involvement in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste dates from late 2003, when I started to work at the Timor-Leste Ministry of Education as an adviser on adult literacy through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This work would become the starting point for the study reported on in this book. My task as a UNDP consultant was to advise the Minister of Education on adult literacy education policy and practice. As requested by the Minister of Education, my work focused on the development and implementation of a new national adult literacy programme. My work included: needs assessment and policy development, network building with NGOs and UN-organisations and the joint development of an adult literacy curriculum plus the development, piloting, revision and implementation of contextualised course materials for beginners and advanced learners in both Tetum and Portuguese (which later became the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* materials in Tetum and the *Passo em Frente* and *A Caminho* materials in Portuguese, as described further on in this book). The delivery of teacher training and train-the-trainer courses, plus the capacity building of ministry staff with respect to monitoring and evaluation of adult literacy development were other important elements in my work. My activities at the Ministry included meetings, writing of documents, field visits and material develop-

ment, all of which took place in Portuguese and Tetum. Early 2004 I started to learn both these languages. My assignments with UNDP and my work at the Ministry of Education in Timor-Leste continued until the end of 2008. During those five years I spent 25 months in the country; the first year full time and the next four years at least three months per year.

Through this work, I learned how Timor-Leste's adult literacy education is affected by the country's history and its multilingual context. The language backgrounds of the people whom I worked with varied along their age: older people who had gone to school in Portuguese times spoke Portuguese, whereas younger generations who had gone to school during the Indonesian occupation, had learned Indonesian. Apart from Portuguese and/or Indonesian, people spoke their regional languages and the lingua franca Tetum. Although all literacy materials had been developed in Timor-Leste's two official languages, Tetum and Portuguese, the Tetum versions were used much more than the Portuguese ones. People's ideas on literacy education varied with their experience in this field. Some had built experience in literacy education provided by FRETILIN and NGOs since the early 1970s; others knew more recent literacy initiatives by NGOs such as GFFTL, OXFAM and Timor Aid. Some had participated in the Brazilian literacy programme *Alfabetização Solidária* that was provided in partnership with Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education in Timor-Leste in 2000-2002. Others had worked with UNICEF and UNESCO that have been supporting the Ministry of Education in providing adult literacy education in Timor-Leste since 2000 until today. Late 2005, in cooperation with the same Ministry, Cuban advisers started piloting the *Sim Eu Posso* literacy programme (the Brazilian-Portuguese version of *Yo sí Puedo*), that later on was adapted to the Timorese context in the *Los Hau Bele* programme in Tetum. All these different ideas on literacy education and acquisition, from the past and the present and from inside and outside Timor-Leste, had their influence on how adult literacy education took place. During my work in Timor-Leste, I became intrigued by the passionate discussions on adult literacy among all these different players in the adult education field. Our joint discussions and activities led to a number of questions about adult literacy learning, teaching and use in this specific setting: how adult people learned to read and write in a language other than their home language, how literacy was taught to them in classes, how they valued literacy, how they used literacy in their daily lives in this rapidly changing country, in what ways literacy made a difference to their lives and what impact that would have on the teaching and learning of literacy. In 2006, I discussed the subject with Jeanne Kurvers and Sjaak Kroon at Tilburg University, the Netherlands, who enthusiastically supported my idea of conducting research on adult literacy in Timor-Leste and suggested to place it in a broader context. Research partners were found at universities in Leiden,

Birmingham and in Dili, Timor-Leste's capital. Other interesting and relevant research questions were added: about the historical dimensions of adult literacy in Timor-Leste that still have their influence today, and about the position of regional languages in adult literacy education in this country, especially Fataluku. The available literature on theories and empirical research regarding adult literacy education did not seem to provide sufficient answers to these questions. One year later (in 2007-2008) we prepared a proposal to NWO-WOTRO in cooperation with the National Institute of Linguistics in Dili and in alignment with the Ministry of Education, NGOs and UN organisations in Timor-Leste. We were granted a four-year research project that started in 2009 and of which this book is one of many outcomes.

This project has been a fascinating journey, from the first discussions until today, and that very much has to do with the people involved in it. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors and to the other team members at the universities in Tilburg, Leiden, Birmingham and Timor-Leste. Jeanne, how can I ever thank you enough: from our first exploring talks in 2006 until our most recent discussions on bits of texts in articles and chapters in 2014, you have been the patient, wise and genuinely interested supervisor one can only dream of. I also feel lucky that we had the opportunity to travel to so many places together and I already miss our conversations about research and other important things in life. And Sjaak, from the very start of writing the proposal for this project until the last rounds of comments on my thesis you have been highly interested and committed; you were always there and you always made time. Thanks also for your many well-timed humorous remarks putting things in perspective at times when most needed. Your sometimes seemingly inappropriate Dutch directness turned out to be a valuable factor that has taken our team a long way. Marilyn, thank you for never giving up reviewing and correcting my work and for helping me to improve it and take it to a higher level in such a gentle and constructive way. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with you and learn from you. Estêvão, thank you for being a great and motivating colleague, for the many times you helped me out on language issues and explained Timor-Leste history and politics to me, and of course for sharing with us all those beautiful stories. Edegar, do you have any idea how much I admire your courage and perseverance; I take off my hat for you and make a deep bow. Thanks for being a wonderful fellow PhD candidate since 2009; I am happy that we walked this road together. Aone, thank you for your quick and useful reactions to my questions of the most diverse kind, and especially for your always witty and well-informed vision on anything we talked about regarding Timor-Leste, starting from our efforts to translate *Hakat ba Oin* into Fataluku, years before our research project,

to anything that came up in the last six years. I'm so happy you became part of our team. Benjamim, thank you so much for being co-applicant and indispensable partner in this research project, and especially for all those times you were there for me in Dili to help me out with Tetum translations of literacy materials, patiently explaining every little detail. I learned so much from you. To all: what a great team to travel with throughout these years. We met in places all over the world and each and every time I immensely enjoyed your company, be it during our joint visits to places such as Dili, Essen, Southampton, Oslo, Singapore or Brisbane.

To all colleagues who worked at the second floor of the Dante Building in 2009-2014, thanks enormously for over five years of motivating talks, chats at the coffee machine and in the doorway, for sharing jokes and for listening again and again to my never-ending stories about that tiny country on the other side of the world that became a sort of second home for me. You all made the second floor an inspiring place and it was always a joy to work there amongst you. Special thanks to my roommates for putting up with me and all my stuff brought from Timor-Leste, to Hans Verhulst for improving my English in the summary and on the cover of this book, and to Carine Zebedee for all the hours carefully spent on lay-out and all the other things needed to make this a readable book.

To the colleagues, fellow researchers, fellow Timor-Leste freaks and friends whom I met in Dili and districts, and who later on either stayed there or flew out in different directions over the world: thanks for all your motivating and encouraging messages reaching me by mail, Facebook or LinkedIn from Timor-Leste, Australia, Nepal, Malaysia, Sweden, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Angola, Belgium and many more countries. You are an inspiring bunch of people showing me every day that anything is possible.

To the LESLLA experts whom I have been stalking with 'Timor tales' at the yearly LESLLA conference ever since 2006: thank you for being such a motivating group of colleagues and friends. Keep on doing the great work of making connections between research, policy and practice in our field.

Dear family and dear long-time friends in the Netherlands (and France), thank you so much for the countless moments of showing your interest and encouraging me. I'm grateful for all the inspiring talks, the moments of laughter and for you all never blaming me when I was once again missing birthdays and other important moments because I had flown off again to that island somewhere far away. I feel so rich knowing you're standing around me. Pure wealth! Dear Paul, thank you so much for (twice!) checking the English in each chapter of this book (if any mistakes seen, it was me adding them later). I cherish the incredibly positive way you're always there for me, welcoming

whatever weird idea or crazy plan. Living with you means having a thousand reasons to launch corks in the cornfield and celebrate what we have.

I would like to end this acknowledgement by the most crucial: saying how deeply grateful I am to so many people involved in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste, who in some way or another contributed to this study. Thank you so much, all adult learners, literacy teachers, programme coordinators, ministry staff at the National Directorate of Recurrent Education, NGO staff at GFFTL, Fundação Cristal, Timor Aid, CRTA and many other NGOs; thank you so much, all other people involved: Cuban advisers and coordinators, colleagues at UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and World Bank for your enthusiastic participation and invaluable contributions and support to this study. I salute your generosity.

Working in Dili was already exiting, but for me the best part of this research project was going out into the districts, travelling by bus, *microlete*, *anguna*, or hitchhiking and ending up on the back of someone's pick-up truck (or being extremely lucky and get a 'lift' from the UN heli service). I will never forget the many rides on the back of motorbikes of district and subdistrict coordinators in all districts visited, and the kind and generous way they took me to their literacy groups up in the mountains or down by the sea. For every flat tyre in the middle of nowhere there was an *anguna* to pick me up and I was sure that somehow the coordinators arranged those too. Neither will I ever forget the numerous walks in the gorgeous mountains and valleys to visit literacy groups in villages that could not be reached by car or motorbike, the coordinators accompanying me: '*Dook, mana, la'o dook*', said with a big grin (Far, sister, walk far), and taking my hand to lead me through flooded riverbeds with waist high, fast running, muddy brown water, while reassuring me '*La iha lafaek, mana*' (There are no crocodiles, sister); some relief for the 'sister' busy trying not to drop her bag with valuable data in the muddy water stream. And happily concluding when arrived at the village that '*Malae tem força!*' (The foreigner has got strength!). It was your strength that made me arrive. I learned so much from all those conversations on the road and in the villages, with *chefes de suco*, *chefes de aldeia*, coordinators, teachers and learners, in a mixture of Tetum, Portuguese, regional languages, Indonesian and sometimes English. I truly admire the strength and wisdom of all these people I met, who were coping from day to day with all the challenges of this beautiful developing country, solving problems one by one, celebrating small steps forward and never losing hope and optimism. Most of all, I will always remember the smiles from the hundreds of literacy learners, women and men, old and young,

proudly showing me their reading and writing ability. Your smiles, I carry them with me, they light my path.

*Muito obrigada! Obrigadu barak!*

Danielle Boon  
Helvoirt, November 2014



## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

In this book I present my study of adult literacy education and acquisition in multilingual Timor-Leste. For centuries 'Timor-Leste', the eastern half of the island of Timor and a small enclave in the western half of the island, was a Portuguese colony. The Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 1974 led to a short period of independence and to the start-up of democratic parties. From 1975-1999, however, Timor-Leste was occupied by Indonesia, and many people lost their lives in those difficult years. By referendum in 1999, a vast majority of the population voted for independence from Indonesia. And finally, after decades of struggle for independence, Timor-Leste became an independent nation in May 2002.

The regime changes led to changes in language use in governmental institutions, for example in education provided by the government. In Portuguese colonial times, Portuguese was the language of education in Timor-Leste. During the Indonesian occupation from 1975 until 1999, Indonesian was to be used in education. By the new millennium, Timor-Leste started to use Tetum and Portuguese as languages of instruction while building up its new formal and non-formal education systems. Due to the country's complex history, many Timorese of (now) 15 years and older missed out on education. This explains why today adult literacy plays a key role in the government's non-formal education sector. Providing adult literacy education in this postcolonial, post-conflict, developing country, one of the poorest in Southeast Asia, turned out to be quite a challenge with insufficient budgets and weak infrastructure. Nonetheless, from 2000 the Timor-Leste government has been able to provide a range of adult literacy programmes and courses, often in collaboration with local and international NGOs,<sup>1</sup> governments from other countries and with UN organisations. Apart from recent adult literacy education programmes offered

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<sup>1</sup> For all abbreviations see the list of Abbreviations, p. 297.

by the government, adult literacy education in the popular education tradition was provided by FRETILIN<sup>2</sup> from the early seventies and by NGOs till today.

Adult literacy education in Timor-Leste is defined by the country's multilingual context. As written in the Constitution (República Democrática de Timor-Leste, RDTL, 2002), Portuguese and Tetum (the country's *lingua franca*) are the two official languages, a range of regional languages<sup>3</sup> are to be further developed by the state, and both Indonesian and English are accepted as working languages. Most people in Timor-Leste are multilingual: they often have a regional language as their first language, but also speak Tetum and possibly Portuguese and/or Indonesian, often depending on whether they went to school and if so, during which period they went to school. Since 2002, Timor-Leste's language-in-education policy has focused on the two official languages – Portuguese and Tetum – as the (main) languages to be used in primary and secondary education. For adult literacy education, the Ministry of Education had programmes and materials developed in these two languages. The programmes and materials in Tetum however, have been used much more than the ones in Portuguese. Many adults have been learning to read and write in a language that is not their first or home language or – in other words – not the main language of their primary socialisation.

## 1.1 Research project

The various adult literacy education initiatives that have been undertaken in Timor-Leste since the year 2000 have involved many different partners. The Ministry of Education has collaborated with other ministries, local NGOs, donor countries and international organisations. All have brought in different views on adult literacy education, and different approaches. These have led to very interesting discussions between all those partners. After I started to work as an adviser on adult literacy education in Timor-Leste<sup>4</sup> in 2003, I observed that these debates raised many fascinating questions to which there seemed no unambiguous answers. The questions touched on different aspects of adult literacy education: on acquisition processes and results, on teaching and methodologies, on people's literacy practices in daily life and on the impact of becoming literate in this new nation. To find answers to (some of) these questions, Tilburg University initiated an interdisciplinary research project, for

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<sup>2</sup> Frente Revolucionário do Timor-Leste Independente (The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor).

<sup>3</sup> See note on terminology below (in this introduction, Section 1.4).

<sup>4</sup> From November 2003 until December 2008, I worked for UNDP Timor-Leste as an adviser on adult literacy at Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education.

which in 2007-2008 a proposal was developed in collaboration with researchers from the Universities of Birmingham and Leiden and Timor-Leste's National Institute of Linguistics (INL, part of the country's national university UNTL), and in alignment with Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education, national NGOs and international (UN and other) organisations that were involved in adult literacy in Timor-Leste. After financial support had been obtained from NWO/WOTRO,<sup>5</sup> our research project on contemporary and historical dimensions of adult literacy in Timor-Leste started in April 2009 under the name: '*Becoming a nation of readers in Timor-Leste: Language policy and adult literacy development in a multilingual context*' (see De Araújo e Corte-Real & Kroon, 2012). The project comprised three studies on adult literacy education in Timor-Leste. The first study investigated adult literacy education in the past, focusing on the years 1974-2002 (by Estêvão Cabral; see Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2012). The second study, reported on in this book, investigated learning to read and write in more recent adult literacy programmes organised in the years after Independence (see also Boon, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, forthcoming 2015; Boon & Kurvers, 2012a, 2012b, forthcoming 2015). The third study focused on the language situation in the country's most eastern district Lautem, and investigated the position in adult literacy education of the regional language *Fataluku* (by Edegar da Conceição Savio; see Da Conceição Savio, Kurvers, Van Engelenhoven & Kroon, 2012).

## 1.2 This study

The study described in this book focuses on Timor-Leste's adult literacy education programmes as provided by the government in recent years; data were collected in the period 2009-2011. Valorisation activities were undertaken in the period 2012-2014. I investigated literacy acquisition by adult learners in literacy programmes and the factors influencing the development of their reading and writing abilities. I also investigated the pedagogies and methodologies used in class and the ideas that teachers and programme coordinators had about teaching literacy. I inquired into the different meanings that 'literacy' and 'literacy education' had for the adult learners and into the ways in which they used their newly acquired literacy ability in their daily lives.

Dealing with these aspects of literacy education, this book aims to add to the still limited knowledge about literacy education practice and impact in the non-formal education sector in multilingual developing countries. Much research on literacy teaching and acquisition has been carried out in highly lit-

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<sup>5</sup> The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Science for Global Development (file number W 01.65.315.00)

erate, western societies in the context of formal education and in institutional bureaucratic environments (Kurvers, 2002; Morais & Kolinsky, 1995; Purcell-Gates, 1999). Most research on learning to read and write has been done with children and often in their first language. Research on adults learning to read and write in a second language has mostly been done with immigrants in the literate environment of their new country (Van de Craats, Kurvers & Young-Scholten, 2006). This only partially covers the contexts in which many adults become readers and writers (Wagner, 2004). In many countries, adults acquire literacy in a second language in multilingual contexts and outside compulsory education (Van de Craats et al., 2006). This book on adult literacy education in Timor-Leste gives a general overview as well as a detailed account of how adults are becoming literate outside formal education, in a second language and in the not so literate and highly multilingual environment of their own country. It investigates how teachers and learners are working on different literacy goals in different programmes provided by the government in collaboration with different partners. It also investigates how they use the repertoire of linguistic resources available to them (Blommaert, 2013a) for communication in the classrooms while trying to reach those goals.

The research questions investigated in this study are:

- What are the results achieved in learning to read and write in Tetum in the available adult literacy programmes and what factors are the most important in the development of adults' literacy ability?
- What classroom-based literacy teaching practices are adult literacy learners confronted with, and what ideas guide teachers' practices?
- What literacy uses and values do adult literacy learners report with reference to different social domains?

To find answers to these questions, I used various perspectives and various approaches and techniques. 'Adult literacy' has turned out to be a multi-layered and multi-faceted concept that includes aspects of acquisition, education, uses, values, practices and language choices. In this study I made use of different research lenses to investigate adult literacy in the multilingual setting of Timor-Leste and to create the best possible understanding of its many aspects. In order to obtain general information about a large number of people involved in adult literacy education throughout Timor-Leste, I carried out a broad study in eight of the country's 13 districts, using questionnaires and literacy tasks. After that I carried out an in-depth study to obtain more detailed information on a smaller number of people. At different locations in the country, I observed adult literacy classes, conducted interviews with teachers,

learners and coordinators of literacy programmes, and I investigated the linguistic landscape in the vicinity of the classes visited. The data thus collected provide insights into the initial reading and writing ability that adult learners had been building up in different literacy programmes, insights into the teaching and learning processes that took place in those programmes and insights into the literacy uses and values in adult learners' daily lives.

### 1.3 Relevance

Although language and literacy policies of developing nations can have a profound influence on public life (e.g., on health, work, civil society), not much is known yet about how people value these policies and what the impact is on their readiness to get involved in literacy programmes (Hailemariam, 2002). This book investigates how teachers, learners and coordinators in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste deal with and talk about literacy, how they navigate through the country's rather new language and literacy policies and how they make them fit their own local contexts and needs.

Literacy teaching practices in many non-western countries are deeply rooted in local, ideological and religious traditions. Introducing western types of education here has not always proven to be adequate (Malan, 1996; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Asfaha, Kurvers & Kroon, 2008). This book investigates how in Timor-Leste adult literacy education formats and ideas from abroad were introduced and implemented and how these have been adopted along with local literacy ideas and traditions. In doing so, it contributes in several ways to the still limited knowledge on adult literacy in multilingual contexts in developing countries. It provides detailed information on adult literacy education in post-colonial, post-conflict, multilingual Timor-Leste in recent years, on learners and teachers in literacy programmes; it analyses the teaching and learning processes in classrooms and their results in terms of literacy ability; it discusses the ideas that people have about literacy and the use of literacy in daily life. This makes it a potentially useful resource for researchers, policy makers and practitioners involved in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste in the coming years. In addition, the findings in this study provide relevant information to researchers, policy makers and practitioners in other developing, post-colonial, multilingual countries that are involved in adult literacy education. The Timor-Leste experiences might be helpful to them in the development of their own adult literacy education system and in decision processes regarding policies, approaches, methodologies and classroom practices. What is learnt from recent developments in Timor-Leste can be relevant in other contexts where people are learning to read and write in a second language and

engage in multilingual literacy practices. The insights into adult literacy teaching and learning and into the uses and values of literacy can contribute to better informed decision-making and fine-tuning of language-in-education policies and to the further improvement of the quality of adult literacy education programmes.

Timor-Leste's low adult literacy rates do not make a unique case. According to UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report 2012, the global adult illiteracy rate was 16% in 2010, corresponding to about 775 million adults (of 15 years and older) who could not read and write, of whom about two-thirds were women (UNESCO, 2012:91). UNESCO (2011:65) stated that in 2008 around 17% of the world's adult population lacked basic literacy skills (corresponding to about one in six adults worldwide), and that Sub Saharan Africa and South and West Asia accounted for 73% of the 'global adult literacy deficit'. These are intriguing figures in a world where being able to read and write is a vital precondition to participate in the various social and institutional domains in life. This participatory aspect of literacy has been expressed in many definitions of literacy. UNESCO's definition of functional literacy, for instance, was adopted in 1978 by UNESCO's General Conference and is still in use today: 'A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development' (UNESCO 2005:154). In the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills in 33 countries, literacy is defined as 'the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential' (OECD, 2013:4). At the same time, people labelled 'illiterate' in reports like these, turn out to engage in various kinds of literacy and numeracy practices; if not alone, then often in the company of people who can help them reach their goals (see for example Nabi, Rogers & Street, 2009; Street & Lefstein, 2007:7).

On the one hand international programmes aim at significant increases of literacy rates in the near future, like UNESCO's 'Education For All' goal to halve the adult illiteracy rates of the year 2000 by 2015. On the other hand it is known from research that learning to read, write and calculate takes time, especially for older adults who never went to school before. This book investigates the tension between short-term goals and long-term literacy development and improvement in Timor-Leste.

Improving literacy rates and levels in developing countries is one of the main prerequisites for individual and societal development. Research has shown correlations between literacy levels and other social and economic development indicators such as health, nutrition and life expectancy (Nutbeam & Kickbusch, 2000) and employment, income and wellbeing (OECD, 1995; World

Bank, 1998). Wagner and Kozma (2003:35) mentioned intergenerational illiteracy as ‘a major and enduring phenomenon’ and pointed at secondary effects on child health and nutrition and children’s achievement and retention in school. Adult literacy contributes to achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (Archer, 2005; Oxenham, 2008:35-45), with outcomes across the development sector. Adult literacy is a key factor in many domains in many ways, which constitutes the main reason to investigate it thoroughly.

## 1.4 Outline of the book

### Note on terminology

Before detailing the outline of this book I would like to include a note on terminology.

Although the name ‘East Timor’ is broadly used internationally, in this book the country’s official name ‘Timor-Leste’ is used. This decision was taken in coordination with the National Institute of Linguistics (INL), partner in our research project.

Timor-Leste’s lingua franca and official language Tetum is also referred to as Tetun. In coordination with INL, I use the term Tetum in this book, as is done in many other international research publications on Timor-Leste and its languages.

To refer to the Indonesian language often called *Bahasa Indonesia* (‘Indonesian Language’), I use the term ‘Indonesian’ in this book, in line with the way I refer to other languages (e.g., Portuguese, English).

To refer to the many indigenous languages in Timor-Leste other than Tetum (e.g., Mambae, Makasae, Bunak, Baikenu), I use the term ‘regional languages’ since these languages are mainly spoken in certain regions of the country and not nation-wide, like Tetum. I will therefore not call them ‘national languages’, although this is the way they are referred to in the Constitution (RDTL, 2002a).

This book continues with seven more chapters. Chapter 2 summarises research on aspects of adult literacy that are relevant for the case of Timor-Leste: firstly on acquisition, secondly on teaching and on how literacy education is defined by the government’s policies regarding languages and education and thirdly on adult literacy uses, practices and values in daily life. Chapter 3 provides background information on Timor-Leste’s history, languages, adult literacy rates and its past and present literacy education for adults of 15 years and older. The research outlined in Chapter 2 and the specific case of Timor-Leste as described in Chapter 3 build up to my research questions on adult literacy in Timor-Leste that will be presented in Chapter 4, followed by a description of

the research design of my study. The next three chapters each deal with one of the research questions, providing the obtained results. Chapter 5 presents findings on teachers and learners in recent adult literacy programmes in Timor-Leste and on learners' initial reading and writing abilities after the first months of adult literacy acquisition, the phase in which 'getting access to the code' is an important element in all literacy programmes. Chapter 6 presents findings on the teaching practices in the adult literacy programmes and on the ideas people have on teaching literacy. Chapter 7 presents findings on the uses of literacy in daily life and the importance for adult learners of becoming literate. In Chapter 8, I present the main conclusions as well as a reflection on the added value of having combined different research approaches. This chapter also includes a discussion and recommendations for further research. In addition the study provides recommendations for adult literacy teaching practices in Timor-Leste, some of which have already been put into practice in a joint effort with the local stakeholders. These activities were part of the valorisation phase of the research project that took place in 2012-2014 and are summarised at the end of Chapter 8.



## CHAPTER 2

# Adult literacy acquisition, education and use

This chapter provides an overview of research that has been conducted on three aspects of adult literacy that are vital in my study on Timor-Leste: acquisition, education and use. The starting point of this overview is the adult literacy learner who is acquiring, being taught and using literacy. The following three sections outline research findings regarding situations adult learners might find themselves in: while learning to read and write, while being taught in adult literacy classes and being confronted with national policies regarding languages and education and while engaging in day-to-day literacy practices.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, many adults in Timor-Leste did not go to school during their childhood and learned – or still learn – to read and write at a later age. They generally did and do this in Tetum which for most of them is a second language. This explains why the first focus (Section 2.1) is on the adult literacy learner who is learning to ‘crack the code’: what do we know from research about literacy acquisition in a second language by low-educated adult learners?

The second focus (Section 2.2) is on literacy education provided to these adult learners. The literacy education that adult learners in government programmes in Timor-Leste receive is provided by teachers in literacy classes in their own or a neighbouring village. What do we know from research about teaching literacy in such situations? In Section 2.2.1, I describe research on a range of widely applied ways of teaching literacy and I summarise several ‘what works studies’ that investigate the effectiveness of educational interventions. In adult literacy classes in Timor-Leste, learners and their teachers are confronted with their government’s choices regarding the country’s language and language-in-education policies. In addition they are confronted with the provision of adult literacy education in national literacy programmes, organised in collaboration with international partners, one of which was within the framework of a national literacy campaign. Consequently, in Section 2.2.2, I describe research on how national policies regarding language and education

can affect education at the local level, and research on national literacy programmes and campaigns in a variety of countries.

When investigating adult literacy in Timor-Leste, education programmes are not the only domain of interest. When attending adult literacy classes the learners are in an acquisition process, but in their daily lives out of class (in their homes and neighbourhoods, during work or leisure) they most probably also engage in – and learn from – literacy (and numeracy) practices, most of which will take place in a multilingual context. Literacy can have different meanings for different people. There are many ways in which adults use and value literacy in their daily lives. Over the years they presumably have developed various ideas on adult literacy. That is why a third focus in this chapter (in Section 2.3) is on research about adults engaging in literacy practices embedded in the culture and social life of their communities, on adult literacy uses, meanings and values.

My study on adult literacy in Timor-Leste builds on a research tradition in which literacy is considered a human right (Lind, 1997) under the universal right to education and is seen as a means to achieve other human rights (UNESCO, 2005). It is also drawing on research in which literacy acquisition is seen as part of lifelong, lifewide and life-deep learning (Lind, 2008; Maclachlan & Osborne, 2009; Singh, 2007). According to Maclachlan and Osborne (2009: 575), lifelong learning refers to ‘structured, purposeful learning throughout the lifespan’ and lifewide learning includes learning that takes place in ‘all the activities, formal and informal, through work and through leisure, that adults are involved in on a day-to-day basis’. They see life-deep learning as complex learning that concerns ‘beliefs, values, ideologies and orientations to life’ (see also Banks et al., 2007). Literacy acquisition can have various sorts of impacts on peoples’ lives in both western and developing countries. Maddox (2010:220) discussed the concept of marginal educational returns in contexts of chronic poverty and signalled that their benefits ‘may be modest but can make a difference to the poor’.

To refer to the adults participating in literacy classes, I use ‘participants’ and ‘learners’. The term ‘learners’ intends to express the difference in age and context with ‘students’, a term often used to refer to younger people participating in formal (primary, pre-secondary, secondary and higher) education. I speak of learners and participants mostly using the plural form ‘they’ and ‘them’ to avoid having to use ‘he/she’ (while being aware that in Timor-Leste and worldwide two thirds of the low-literates are women).

## 2.1 Adult literacy acquisition in a second language

Since 2000, the government has been providing various literacy education opportunities to adults in Timor-Leste. In most cases they were not provided in their (often only spoken) first or home language but in the country's lingua franca Tetum, known by many Timorese as a second language. The provision of adult literacy education has been strongly affected by the fact that Timor-Leste is a developing country with a still weak infrastructure and a very limited education budget. Many other developing countries are in the same situation, displaying similar characteristics that affect their education systems. Interesting in this light is that although the majority of people without any schooling are living in developing countries, the bulk of studies on literacy acquisition has been carried out in western countries and with children (Wagner, 2004). Only recently have researchers started to focus on commonalities and differences with *adult* literacy acquisition in *developing* countries.

For a long time, reading research has been investigating the process by which beginning readers acquire the ability to identify a written word, i.e., word recognition. Most studies have been conducted in the context of learning to read and write in a Roman alphabetic script and most of the fundamental theory-building research has focused on children learning to read and write in their native language (Chall, 1999; Ehri & Wilce, 1985; Juel, 1991; Van de Craats et al., 2006; Wagner, 1999). In their resource book on literacy, Street and Lefstein (2007:62) explain the recent debate on how children learn to read, with 'a focus on "phonic" principles on the one hand and on "reading for meaning" on the other'. They show how the ideas and findings from both perspectives differ. Adams (1990) for example highlighted the importance of knowledge of spelling-sound correspondence depending on phonemic awareness. Adams (1993) explains how her view differs from Goodman's (1967) and Smith's (1971) who are, according to Street and Lefstein (2007:73), 'often cited as the "founding fathers" of the whole language movement'. Goodman (1967, 1996) saw reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game; he explained that reading and writing is making sense by transacting with text, using phonics, vocabulary and grammar simultaneously. Smith (1971) also saw meaning making as central in reading; in his view spellings of words were not so relevant to reading and learning to read. Both Goodman and Smith were convinced that learning to read was a natural, non-stage process. Meanwhile there is ample evidence that children do go through several stages during the process of learning to read and that phonics are crucial in the process (Adams, 1990; Juel, 1991). Both Juel (1991) and Ehri (1991) investigated the reading acquisition process in children and found that this appears to take place in three phases or stages. Ehri (1991) distinguishes a logographic, a transitional and an alphabetic

phase. Juel (1991:784) distinguishes a first stage in which the child relies upon environmental and visual cues, a second stage in which spelling-sound information is used and a third stage with 'automatic phonological recordings' or direct recognition on the basis of orthographic features. Word recognition during the first stage is direct and takes place on the basis of either visual or context bound cues such as length, a salient letter or an illustration.<sup>6</sup> During the second stage, the alphabetic stage, word recognition takes place indirectly, through the use of graphic instead of general visual cues. Beginning readers learn the alphabetic principle, i.e., they learn to decode a written word letter by letter and blend the successive pronunciations. The third stage, the orthographic stage, shows direct word recognition again but it is now based on automation of indirect word recognition. Both Juel's and Ehri's studies revealed that phonemic awareness and understanding grapheme-phoneme correspondence are crucial in the process of learning to read an alphabetic writing system and of eventually getting to automatic word recognition. Rayner and Pollatsek (1989) also described skills that appear to be crucial to the development of efficient reading, amongst which are recognition of letters (which involves being able to discriminate the distinguishing features of letters), word consciousness and, – most importantly – phonological awareness. They mention studies that 'make it clear that discovering the alphabetic principle is the key to successfully learning to read' (p. 343). They discuss four stages of reading: 'linguistic guessing, discrimination net guessing, sequential decoding and hierarchical decoding' (p. 391) and show that children use 'graphemic, orthographic and grapheme-phoneme correspondence cues' in learning to read (p. 371). Finally they argue that 'the ability to use higher-order rules and analogies to read new words represents the highest level of reading skill' (p. 377). In their study with children aged five to seven, Rieben, Saada-Robert and Moro (1997) found 'clear developmental trends from logographic to assembled alphabetic to alphabetic/orthographic addressed strategies'. They also found 'strong individual variability in strategy use at each observation period' and concluded that 'stages of word recognition should be defined by the predominance of one type of strategy and not by its exclusive use' (p. 137).

Acquiring the alphabetic principle is a crucial aspect in the acquisition of alphabetic scripts. Basically it refers to phonological recoding as 'the principal means by which the learner attains word recognition proficiency' (Share, 1995:155); in other words, relating letters to sounds and blending the sounds to independently generate a target pronunciation for a novel string of letters.

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<sup>6</sup> The term visual cues is used here to illustrate all kinds of visual features of written words, such as length, place on the page, lay-out or a specific visual feature of individual letters; graphic cues is used whenever the reader systematically uses the information that is covered by the order of graphemes.

Phonemic awareness (i.e., being able to identify different phonemes or sounds in a spoken word), letter or grapheme recognition, and understanding spelling-sound correspondences are critical in this respect (Adams, 1990; Bradley & Bryant, 1985; Byrne, 1998). Although phonemic awareness does not play a central role in word recognition of skilled readers, it does so for beginning readers and it functions (together with the feedback mechanisms of the lexicon) as a self-teaching device in connecting print to meaning (Share, 1995).

Nunes, Bryant and Barros (2012) analysed data from longitudinal research with over 7000 children in the United Kingdom, looking at two types of units used in decoding. They found that the children's 'use of larger graphophonic units and their use of morphemes in reading and spelling made independent contributions to predicting their reading comprehension and reading fluency. The use of morphemes was the stronger predictor in all analyses' (p. 959).

Not much is known yet about the ways in which the learning processes discussed so far on the basis of research with children might differ for adults. Adult first time readers pass through more or less the same phases as children when learning to read and write (Kurvers, 2007; Kurvers & Ketelaars, 2011; Kurvers & Van der Zouw, 1990). As mentioned above, word recognition is assumed to be one of the basic skills to be developed by beginning readers (see Kurvers 2007 for an overview) and can be defined as determining the identification of a written word, i.e., the pronunciation and meaning of a word encountered in print or writing. Kurvers (2007) discussed stage and non-stage models in reading development and her review of studies revealed much evidence in favour of the described sequence of rather uniform stages in reading development. However, these stage models of beginning reading were based on research with young children during the first year of formal reading instruction in their native language. Since all stage models are crucially based on the mediation of spoken language (of which neither the sounds nor the word meanings might be known) it made sense to investigate whether these stage models could also explain the development of word recognition skills of adults learning to read and write in a second language. The results of Kurvers and Van der Zouw (1990; see also Kurvers, 2007) revealed they do. Kurvers and Van der Zouw (1990) studied the initial reading abilities of illiterate adult migrants learning to read and write in Dutch as a second language. Their study revealed that these adults passed through the same phases as children in word recognition but progressed more slowly due to difficulties in distinguishing Dutch phonemes and a lack of vocabulary in the second language. Building phonological knowledge and phonemic awareness is more difficult in a second language and not knowing word meanings complicates the development of the self-teaching device and word recognition. The adults showed large individual differences in learning pace and success. Illiterate learners and learners who

had already learned to read in another script showed differences in the use of reading strategies. Adult learners in intensive courses showed much more progress in a short period than adult learners in a non-intensive course over a longer period; they also made better use of word recognition strategies. Most learners in the non-intensive courses needed more than a year to spell simple one-syllable words and to independently read simple short texts with simple words.

Analysing these participants' reactions on word-reading tasks, Kurvers (2007) classified the following five strategies for word recognition: (1) visual recognition/guessing based on visual or contextual cues, (2) letter naming using the names or the sounds of individual letters without any blending, (3) decoding letter by letter and blending, (4) partial decoding by groups of letters, and (5) direct word recognition without any spelling out. Her study revealed that adults who used the latter strategies were more successful in word recognition than students who mainly used the first strategies – outcomes that more or less confirmed the applicability of the word recognition model presented before. Only learners who used the strategy of relying on graphic (instead of visual) cues demonstrated substantial progress. During the lessons a change in word recognition skills developed from logographic to alphabetic word recognition, from guessing to sequential decoding. Three learners who did not receive any phonics instructions failed to make that change. Phonics instruction and vocabulary in a second language seemed to be major determinants of reading development in that language.

This outcome is supported by Kruidenier (2012) who summarised the findings from a review of adult education reading assessment and instruction research done by the Adult Literacy Research Working Group (see also Kruidenier, MacArthur & Wrigley, 2010). Included in the review were experimental, non-experimental and assessment studies, related to low-literate adults in adult basic and secondary education programmes and in 'English for speakers of other languages' programmes, and to adults with learning or reading disabilities. In his 2012 summary, Kruidenier reported that the working group selected as the major topics for study the following four components of reading as essential to the reading process (and to reading instruction): alphabets (including phonemic awareness and word analysis skills), fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. He explained the reading process as having comprehension as the ultimate goal, depending on understanding vocabulary and on word recognition and fluency in reading. Findings revealed that adults can have difficulties with any of these four crucial aspects of reading and that 'reading profiles, or patterns of scores across components, gave teachers much more instructionally relevant information than a test of a single component could' (p. 186).

Kurvers (2002) looked at what adult non-readers know about language. She did her research with new readers as key informants, and children and literate adults as reference groups. She found that neither phonemes nor words were the first to be recognised as independent entities by new readers: if they were asked to segment sentences they divided them in parts that formed conceptual or semantic entities (*in the shop*, or *the old man*), not in words; if they segmented words they did it in syllables, not in phonemes. Phonemes and words turned out to be linguistic entities that new readers are not primarily aware of. Learning to read in any alphabetic script and a script that marks word boundaries by spaces, like the Roman script, makes the learners aware of (the existence of) phonemes and words, as many studies in different languages revealed (Kurvers, 2002).

Like reading, emergent writing is thought to also take place in phases. Gibson and Levin (1975) categorised emergent writing showing (1) 'directionality', scribbles that clearly go in one direction, (2) 'linearity', scribbles that appear along a line, (3) 'variability', scribbles that show variation, and (4) 'recognizable patterns' consisting of letter-like shapes or letters. Gentry (1982, 2000), in his developmental spelling classification system, distinguished five stages of invented spelling: (1) 'pre-communicative' (with random letters), (2) 'semi phonetic' (with some letters that match the sound of the word), (3) 'phonetic' (all the sounds are represented, not necessarily in the right spelling), (4) 'transitional' (visual and morphologically based strategy, still with small spelling mistakes), and (5) 'conventional' (according to spelling rules). He stated that invented spelling is directly connected to other aspects of literacy development (i.e., phonemic awareness). Tolchinsky (2004) found that children's ideas of writing developed from 'drawing' to a first phase (undifferentiated), a second phase (conform to constraints of number and variety), a third phase (letter-sound correspondence) and finally transition to the alphabetic principle. Kurvers and Ketelaars (2011) investigated emergent writing by adults learning to write in Dutch as a second language and mentioned five categories of strategy use: (1) pre-phonetic: not yet understanding that writing represents spoken language, (2) semi-phonetic: beginning to grasp the notion that spoken language is represented in writing (often words are represented with two or three letters), (3) phonetic: full representation of words on a phonetic basis (often not including unstressed vowels), (4) phonemic: writing down all phonemes but not always with the right graphemes in the right order, and (5) conventional: correct spelling according to the conventions of orthography.

Most studies on adult literacy deal with adults learning to read in a second language in a migration context in western countries. Success in beginning reading in those contexts was found to be related to proficiency in the second

language, to the use of the first language as an instructional aid and to contextualising literacy learning into the needs and daily practices of the adult learners (Condelli, Wrigley, Yoon, Seburn & Cronen, 2003; Kurvers, Stockmann & Van de Craats, 2010). Beginning readers and spellers in a second language experienced problems with phonemes that did not exist in their first language (Kurvers & Ketelaars, 2011; Kurvers & Van der Zouw, 1990). The well-known impact of educational background on adult language learning was also revealed in adult literacy studies: students that had been attending primary school were more successful in reading and writing. Sebastián and Moretti (2012:595) studied growth and learning curves in reading acquisition of a sample of 63 Chilean adult participants in a literacy campaign. They stated that ‘the research about the type of experiences that affect individuals’ performance in these measurements should go beyond their instructional history and expand the notion of learning environments to formal and non-formal social settings’. The concept of critical age, often discussed in second language learning, has been another topic of dispute on adult first time readers. Although no clear evidence can be found about a critical age, several studies found significant differences between younger and older students learning to read in a second language (Condelli et al., 2003; Kurvers et al., 2010).

## 2.2 Adult literacy education

### 2.2.1 Teaching adult literacy<sup>7</sup>

Adult learners in Timor-Leste attend literacy education in which many parties are involved: ministries, local and international NGOs, donor countries and UN organisations. The diverse experience of all these players in the field and their different ideas about the ‘best’ ways to teach literacy to adults have resulted in the use of a variety of approaches and methods. This is not a unique situation. All over the world, many different methods have been used in teaching adults and children to read and write. These methods often follow from ideas and knowledge on literacy acquisition as presented in Section 2.1. For many decades, there have been passionate debates among researchers on the teaching of reading and writing (see also Boon & Kurvers, 2012b, on which the following is partly based).

Gray and colleagues’ seminal worldwide survey of methods for early reading instruction for children and adults distinguished two broad groups of methods: ‘those which developed early and were originally very specialized; and those which are recent and are more or less eclectic’ (Gray 1969:76). The

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<sup>7</sup> Section 2.2.1 is based on Boon and Kurvers (2012b).



early specialised methods can be divided into methods with initial emphasis on the *code*. The *alphabetic* or spelling methods are the oldest and have been (and still are) used all over the world for centuries. The basic idea is that learners start with learning the names of the letters in alphabetical order and then learn to combine these letter names into syllables (bee-a ba; i-ef if) and words (bee-a-gee bag). The *phonic* (letter sound) method came into being when it was realised that not the names of the letters, but the sounds of the letters produce the word when uttered rapidly (buh-a-guh bag). The main advantage was thought to be the development of the ability to sound out the letters of a new word and to pronounce (and recognise) the word by blending them. The *syllabic* method uses the syllable as the key unit in teaching reading, because many consonants can only be pronounced accurately by adding a vowel. In teaching reading with this method, students start with learning the vowels (which can be single syllables as well) and after that they practice learning all the possible syllables of the language in syllable strings like 'fa, fe, fi, fo, fu' or 'ba, be, bi, bo, bu'. These three methods often are referred to as *synthetic* methods because they guide the learner from small meaningless linguistic units (letters, sounds, syllables) to larger, meaningful units like words and sentences.

The methods that from the very beginning emphasise *meaning*, were partly developed as a reaction to the previous group focusing on the code and are based on the assumption that meaningful language units should be the point of departure in early reading instruction. *Word* methods, for instance, start with whole meaningful words, often accompanied by pictures, *phrase* methods start with several words combined into a phrase and *story* methods start with short but complete stories. The words, phrases or stories have to be learned by heart and recognised as wholes until, at a certain point in time, they are broken down into smaller units. These methods are often called *analytic* methods (from the bigger unit to the smaller pieces). Methods that do not break down words into smaller units (or do that only after a long period of sight word learning) are called *global* methods or *look-say* methods. The 'whole language' approach to reading (Goodman, 1986) is a global method that encourages readers to memorise meaningful words and then use context-cues to identify (or 'guess') and understand new words.

According to Gray (1969), the early specialised methods (i.e., the methods that emphasise either code or meaning) diverged sharply in the nature of the language units used in the first reading lessons and the basic mental processes involved (synthesis, analysis or rote learning). Changes made over time were meant to overcome weaknesses of each of the approaches leading to more and more diversification. Gray and colleagues observed greater learner changes in what they called more recent trends: the *eclectic* trend and the *learner-centred* trend,

which according to them were not mutually exclusive. The methods they called *eclectic* combined the best of the analytic and synthetic methods. These methods take carefully selected meaningful units (whole words that cover all the graphemes of the script or small stories that are centred on key words) which are analysed (broken down into smaller units), compared and synthesised (built up again) more or less simultaneously right from the beginning. The best of these methods combined encouraging reading for comprehension and a thoughtful reading attitude with methods of paying attention to the code and developing word recognition skills. The *learner-centred* trend was based on the idea that the interests, concerns, previous experiences and special aptitudes of the learner should be given first consideration, both in content and in the methods of teaching. These learner-centred methods are classified by Gray according to the reading matter. The content in *author-prepared* primers for children often consists of simple stories about the same character; the primers for adult learners often deal with adults' experiences and needs. The *learner-teacher prepared* reading matter is based on the immediate interests of the learners and is prepared by themselves with guidance from the teacher. In adult literacy classes this often starts with discussions and raising awareness and on the basis of these developing reading material. Paolo Freire (1970) became one of the most famous proponents of this approach. (Note that Freire himself was always very careful in investigating and developing key concepts (codifications) that guided both the cultural and political awareness of the learners, and their introduction into the written code.) In the *integrated instructional methods*, teaching of reading and writing is integrated into other parts of the curriculum. The French educationalist Celestin Freinet with his 'centres of interest' and learning based on real experiences and enquiry (Legrand, 1993) is one of the most famous representatives of this approach.

Like Gray, there were other scholars who distinguished methods that emphasise meaning and methods that emphasise code. Liberman and Liberman (1990) argued that methods that emphasise meaning (like the whole language approach) are based on the assumption that learning to read and write is as natural as learning to speak and that the only thing the beginning reader needs, is opportunities to engage with written language, varied input of writing and a print-rich environment. The code emphasis methods (which Liberman and Liberman support) on the contrary assume that learning to read and write is not natural at all, because pre-readers do not have conscious access to the phonological make-up of the language they can already use. Beginning readers therefore need to be made aware of this phonological make-up and need explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle (see also Kurvers, 2007). Rayner and Pollatsek (1989:358) concluded that 'code emphasis instruction (phonics) is effective in teaching beginning readers because it makes explicit the alphabetic

principle' and that 'meaning approaches are valuable, since they make the task of reading (and uncovering the alphabetic principle) more interesting'. They further argued that 'good teachers are eclectic and tend to combine the positive aspects of different methods of teaching reading'. Ehri (1991:401) expected that 'explicit phonics instruction is more effective than implicit phonics instruction'. Chall (1999) distinguished two major types of beginning reading instructions based on the models that had been used to explain how reading is first learned and how it develops. One model views beginning reading as 'one single process of getting meaning from print' while another views it as a two-stage process 'concerned first with letters and sounds and then with meaning' (Chall, 1999:163). Passionate debates between proponents of the two models have taken place. If one holds to the one-stage model, one tends to see learning to read as a natural process (as natural as learning to speak) so there is no need to pay explicit attention to letters and sounds. The two-stage model assumes that learning to read is not natural, that it needs explicit instruction, particularly in the relationship between letters and sounds.

The above classifications do not inform us on effectiveness of the various methods. Evidence of effectiveness has to be based on empirical research. In recent years, several studies have presented empirical research on evidence for instructional practice, of which four are dealt with here. In the field of second language and literacy acquisition, August and Shanahan (2006) and Goldenberg (2008) looked at research done with children and youth. August and Shanahan (2006) reported on a research review on educating English learners by the National Literacy Panel (NLP). It included 300 empirical documents of qualitative and quantitative research conducted worldwide with participants aged 3-18 from language minority populations. The NLP looked at influences on literacy development and aspects of oral language that are closely related to literacy, such as phonological awareness and vocabulary. Goldenberg (2008) contains a summary of two major reviews of research on educating English learners: the one mentioned above by the NLP and another one by the Centre for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence. The latter included 200 articles and reports on language minority students from preschool to high school, dealing with quantitative research conducted in the US. Condelli and Wrigley (2004a, 2004b, 2006) looked at research done with adult learners. Condelli and Wrigley (2004a, 2004b) conducted a literature review that included 17 studies: 15 on Adult Basic Education and two on English as a second language (ESL) literacy. Condelli and Wrigley (2006) report on a study conducted with adult ESL literacy students and present key findings related to instruction, programme practices and student factors (see also Condelli et al., 2003). These four studies all refer to strategies related to phonemic awareness (phonics) as one of the key predictors of success. This would support Liberman

and Liberman's (1990) code emphasis methods and Chall's (1999) two-stage model. The studies with adult learners also stressed the importance of meaningfulness from the very beginning as a key to success, like using native languages for clarification and connecting the teaching of literacy to the outside world.

Like Condelli et al. (2003) in their study on what works for adult ESL literacy students (see also Condelli & Wrigley, 2006), Kurvers and Stockmann (2009) also investigated potential (educational) success factors in adult literacy education in a second language. Both studies showed that instructional use of the learners' mother tongue positively influenced the development of literacy abilities. In addition, progress correlated negatively with the learners' age (older learners progressed more slowly) and positively with years of prior education (students with some primary education were more successful). Apart from those factors, Condelli et al. (2003) showed that two other factors positively affected learning to read: making connections between class and the outside world and varied practice and interaction. They also found that longer scheduled classes resulted in more growth in reading comprehension but less growth in basic reading skills, suggesting that it might be better not to 'over-emphasize basic reading skills for too long of a time but move on to higher level reading skills or other language skills' (p. 142). Kurvers and Stockmann (2009) found large individual differences among adult learners. In addition to the factors already mentioned above, they found a few other factors that turned out to positively affect learning to read: L2 language contact, attendance rate, use of computers (programmes that provide a lot of practice in learning to decode) and less frontal, whole group teaching. Most initially non-literate learners needed more than 1,000 hours to reach a basic functional literacy level.

Like the studies on literacy acquisition, also most of the above mentioned studies on literacy teaching were carried out in highly literate environments in host countries with highly educated teachers with many resources to build on (Van de Craats et al., 2006). The situation in developing countries, like Timor-Leste, generally is different: literacy teachers are less well trained for their job, literacy programmes are organised in rural areas where there is considerable poverty and where access to printed and written media is limited.

### **2.2.2 Language, literacy and education policies**

The linguistic situations that learners and teachers in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste deal with on a daily basis, are defined by the country's multilingual setting and the choices the government has made in its national language and language-in-education policies. These choices, that affect literacy education, are reflected in various sorts of definitions used to refer to languages and their position or function. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) distinguish

political, social, educational and popular definitions and stress that terms can have several possible meanings depending on their contextual usage (compare for instance the terms native language, mother tongue and first language). People in adult literacy education will have to translate these policies and definitions developed at a national level to their local contexts, each with their specific linguistic features. The way teachers and learners approach multilingualism in adult literacy education is shaped by the different functions and status that different languages seem to have in that setting. Finally, multilingualism in literacy education to adults is influenced by ideas on languages and education that international partners in education bring in.

Ample of research has been done on how people deal with language policies in multilingual educational situations. Spolsky (2004) has distinguished practices, beliefs and management as three components of language policy and stated that the way languages are used might be different from how people think they should be used or how authorities had originally planned their use. Ricento and Hornberger (1996:419) called for research which foregrounds the agency of language education practitioners in deciding on language policies and which throws light on the complexity of language planning and policy (LPP) processes. They argued that LPP 'is a multi-layered construct, wherein essential LPP components – agents, levels and processes of LPP – permeate and interact with each other in multiple and complex ways as they enact various types, approaches and goals of LPP'. They also showed how ideology, culture and ethnicity thoroughly infuse the LPP layers, goals, approaches and types. The publication of Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) seminal article coincided with the development of a distinct tradition of critical interpretive research on multilingual talk in classrooms where teachers and learners had to navigate the constraints of particular language policies. At the forefront of this tradition were studies conducted in contexts where a former colonial language was used as a medium of primary schooling, e.g., in South America (Hornberger, 1988), in Asia (Lin, 1996) and in Africa (Arthur, 2001); for recent reviews of this research, see Martin-Jones (2007, 2011), Lin and Martin (2005), Lin (2008) and Chimbutane (2012). This research was also extended and developed in educational contexts in western countries (e.g., Heller, 2006; Martin-Jones & Saxena, 2003; Johnson, 2009, and Menken & Garcia, 2010). The focus of this empirical work has varied and researchers have employed different conceptual frameworks in interpreting and analysing audio recordings of multilingual classroom talk.

In her classroom interaction research in primary schools in Botswana, Arthur (2001) used the terms 'onstage' and 'backstage' language (drawing on the work of Goffman, 1967) to capture the dynamics involved in the teachers' use of English and Setswana. The juxtapositioning of the two languages was

used as a means to distinguish between 'doing lessons' and 'talking about them'. At the same time, Arthur (2001:67-68) showed how this juxtapositioning of the languages 'was imbued with social meanings that reverberated beyond the classroom' and how these bilingual interactional practices contributed to the construction of English as the only legitimate language of onstage performance in the classroom. Other research highlighted the ways in which the daily rituals of communicative life in classrooms were realised multilingually and what consequences this had. In a comparative study of classrooms in Peru and South Africa, Hornberger and Chick (2001:43) showed how the linguistic challenges imposed on teachers and learners by particular language policies led them to co-construct 'school safe time' and engage in interactional practices characterised as 'safetalk', that is, ritual exchanges of teacher prompts and student choral responses that contribute to building an appearance of doing the lesson. In more recent empirical work in multilingual settings, the focus is shifting away from the detail of the specific local meanings generated by codeswitching in classroom talk to a focus on polylinguaging (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen & Møller, 2011) or languaging (Juffermans, 2010). Juffermans, in his work in The Gambia, adopted this concept because it enabled him to highlight the fluid and dynamic ways in which linguistic resources are employed in multilingual settings, often without any particular communicative intent, and because it avoided the problem of representing languages as discrete, countable entities. In adopting this term, Juffermans drew on theory building by Mignolo (1996) and Jørgensen (2008).

Muehlmann and Duchêne (2007) investigated new discursive sites of multilingualism. They pointed at a shift in sites from nation-state institutions towards international organisations (i.e., UN and NGOs), resulting in a more global focus on languages in terms of universal human rights (versus constitutional rights) and on biolinguistic diversity. They note however that the nationalist perspective remains dominant, the mechanism of exclusion is being reproduced and underlying language ideologies have endured (p. 106-107).

Governments do not only define language and language-in-education policies, they also define how literacy education takes place in their country. The governments of many countries, including Timor-Leste in the last decades, opted for providing national literacy programmes and/or national literacy campaigns in order to reduce illiteracy. This happened for many different reasons and in many different ways. Below, research is discussed that has been done on national literacy programmes and campaigns in countries all over the world. A number of reviews of national programmes and campaigns have been published in recent years (Abadzi, 1994; Archer, 2005; Arnove & Graff, 1987; Lind, 1997, 2008; Lind & Johnston, 1990; Oxenham, 2008; Rogers, 1997, 2005;

Torres, 2009; Wagner, 1999, 2000). The main findings of these reviews relate to four themes: the rationales for literacy programmes and campaigns, the debate on quality and quantity, the often disappointing results and the challenge to meet a continuing variety of learning needs.

Wagner (1999) listed four rationales for literacy development: the development, economic, social and political rationale. Related to the political rationale, he observed a tradition of using literacy programmes and campaigns as a way to achieve political goals and national solidarity. He mentioned socialist literacy efforts in Nicaragua, Cuba or Ethiopia, but also literacy work done in Europe, Asia and (other parts of) Africa. He noted that sometimes governments need to show they do something good for marginalised communities in their country. Sometimes they try to achieve national solidarity through the use of a national language in the literacy campaigns. Rogers (1997:165-166) observed that many national campaigns for learning literacy could best be characterised as political activities, since governments see them as 'essential to their international image'. He also noticed that, in developing countries, national campaigns were launched with less frequency, because many international donors saw them as 'expensive and fruitless'. He adds that often the main effect of a national campaign is that it creates 'a climate in which local adult literacy programmes can become more effective'.

Wagner (1999) discussed literacy debates, amongst which the one on quality versus quantity. Related to this debate he stated that mass campaigns would seem to be a good strategy if persons can be made literate very easily, but that 'campaigns have been found to deliver far less than their proclamations' (p. 6), leading to a serious concern that quality has been sacrificed due to the strong focus on quantity. Rogers (1997:165-166) saw governments and major international donors organising and supporting campaigns, due to a main concern with national literacy statistics, despite the fact that locally developed initiatives have been shown to be more effective. He observed a still strong belief that 'time-bound one-off' learning programmes can eradicate illiteracy, 'despite the experience of failure in the last fifty years or more'. In their book on national literacy campaigns, Arnove and Graff (1987:21-22) distinguished quantitative and qualitative studies on outcomes of national literacy campaigns, referring to numbers of people reached by a campaign or numbers of people who achieved literacy and move on to post-literacy or continued education. They observed that these figures were often impressive but said little about 'the levels of literacy achieved or the uses and implications of literacy acquisition'. They showed relations between quantity and quality in campaigns, and observed 'that mass literacy campaigns almost invariably (...) aim at quantitative rather than qualitative goals', while 'The contrasting strategy of emphasis on the quality of literacy skills (...) takes the individual as the target'.

Archer (2005:19) also signalled how tempting it is to interest politicians for literacy with the prospect of big gains and the conception of a magic line to cross from illiteracy to literacy. He set out international benchmarks on adult literacy based on responses to a global survey of effective programmes, and wrote rather critically about literacy campaigns. He observed that 'literacy gains are often not secure over time unless there are sustained opportunities'. He underlined that adults need time to learn to read and write and that the learning needs to be linked to their daily lives, so they can use their skills and develop 'literate habits'. He pointed at the continuity of learning as an important ingredient of success and he stated that 'almost all the effective literacy work now going on around the world is designed as a programme, not as a campaign. Yet there remains pressure on some governments, especially from donors, to run short-term, quick-return programmes (...) where for a fixed sum you can get a fixed and (apparently) clear return'.

Worries about the often low outcome of large scale literacy education initiatives are broadly felt. Lind and Johnston (1990) looked into campaigns and large-scale general literacy programmes, and signalled that targeted literacy levels in campaigns generally were low and that regression to illiteracy occurred if no follow-ups or post-literacy options were made available. A risk of large scale general literacy programmes that they pointed at was a high enrolment in the beginning and large drop-out later on. The authors noted that both 'declining' campaign series and large-scale general literacy programmes often ended up with high bureaucracy and costs, indefinite aims and unsatisfactory results. Abadzi (1994:35-36) also pointed at the ineffectiveness and disappointing results of adult literacy programmes. She analysed two literacy reviews in a World Bank discussion paper and described problems that occurred in each stage of a programme: low enrolment, extensive drop-out, failure to achieve mastery and relapse into illiteracy. More effective than teaching literacy as an end in itself in large-scale programmes, according to Abadzi, were smaller scale programmes that taught literacy as a means to carry out other activities. Smaller programmes however, will not eradicate illiteracy, she stated, so the challenge is to develop 'large as well as efficient programmes'. Lind (2008:103, 135-136) also observed the very limited impact of most campaigns and programmes on literacy rates. She discussed the challenges of achieving literacy for all, based on reviews of literature and research and on her own experience in various countries. Strategic factors in literacy education mentioned by Lind were: political will in a context of broader educational and socio-economic development interventions, community support and commitment of local leaders, adequate language policies (e.g., responding to national needs, human rights and pedagogical principles of literacy acquisition) and creating literate environments in relevant languages. Torres (2009:51) reviewed adult literacy



education reports and studies of 25 countries in (mainly) Latin America and the Caribbean and found that many countries are not able 'to deal with literacy/basic education in a sustained and integral manner'. She noted how in this region activism has been characteristic of the literacy education field, 'often related to weak planning and coordination, one-shot and isolated activities lacking continuity, monitoring, systematisation, evaluation and feedback'. She signalled that 'literacy achievements are rarely sustained and complemented with policies and strategies aimed at making reading and writing accessible to the entire population, paying attention to their specific needs, languages and cultures'.

The need for longer-term literacy education addressing diversity is confirmed by many researchers. Arnové and Graff (1987:21-22) called for literacy not to be seen in a dichotomous way but along a continuum: 'a set of skills that may become more complex over time in response to changing social contexts, shifting demands on individuals' communication skills, or individuals' own efforts at advancement'. Lind (1997:4) in her review of trends in adult literacy in developing countries also stressed that 'Literacy is a continuum, and the provision of multiple levels and programmes satisfying a diversity of continuing needs remains a major challenge to all adult literacy programmes'. Abadzi (1994) opted for large but locally focused campaigns with finite time limits coupled with instructional improvements, and to target programmes to specific population segments. She stressed the importance of goals and activities that beneficiaries find meaningful, connection of information to what they already know, early demonstration of the immediate utility of literacy, and reinforcement with texts on familiar issues. Also Wagner (2000:35), in an Education For All thematic study on literacy and adult education called for innovative ways of meeting learner needs and enhancing learner motivation (signalling the low motivation, poor outcomes and high dropout rates in adult literacy education). To increase motivation, he stated that programmes need to be 'tailored to address diverse needs, and have direct, discernible outcomes and incentive-rich experiences'. He also stressed the importance of knowledge-based programme design with greater emphasis on what works and what doesn't, as well as openness to new approaches, and to 'diversity in learners and in the contexts in which they reside'. Rogers (2005:303) signalled the need for flexibility in adult literacy education as well. He observed that often traditional literacy programmes did not meet their goal because adults do not learn according to motivations imputed or imposed by others, but according to their own motivations. He stressed that adult learning theory indicates that 'adults will learn best both what they immediately need and at the time when they most immediately need it, not a pre-determined curriculum provided at a time determined by the literacy programmes agencies'. And Lind (2008:103,

135-136) listed critical programme design factors, amongst which were: reconciling learner objectives with programme objectives, meeting the diversity of learner motivations by providing a variety of optional programmes/courses/levels, careful choice of language of instruction and attention to the transition from first to second languages, adapting materials to learner interests and skills, relevant contents, participatory learner-centred teaching methods. Lind observed that many literacy programmes were a mixture of various approaches and saw international confirmation of this need for eclectic use of teaching-learning methods, next to (among others) the need for flexibility and learner-centeredness. The need for an eclectic approach was also stressed by Oxenham (2008), who analysed studies on literacy education from 22 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin-America. As characteristics of effective literacy programmes (as options for policy makers) he also mentioned: learner-centred and participatory methods, decentralised diversity, development of phonological awareness, attention for literacy functionality and income generation, and literacy as a component of a wider training programme. He pointed at the importance of options for the choice of language.

The above-mentioned reviews show differences and commonalities in findings on national programmes and campaigns. Most researchers stressed the low impact of short one-off campaigns or programmes on literacy rates and levels and advocated longer-term literacy training meeting a diversity of needs, preferably linked to daily activities and followed by a range of relevant post-literacy and continued education options. As was shown in this section, research on adult literacy in developing countries often stressed aspects that are specific for a development context and that go beyond the actual teaching of reading and writing.

### **2.3 Literacy uses, practices and values**

Many adults in Timor-Leste who are learning to read and write in national literacy programmes, might not be completely 'illiterate'. Apart from the basic literacy they are acquiring in their classes, they probably sometimes engage in multilingual literacy or numeracy practices in their communities. The literacy ability they draw on at such occasions might be different from what they learn in their reading and writing classes. Their engaging in community literacy practices possibly influences their ideas on literacy and the ways they value literacy, which might have an impact on their learning in the programmes. This means that only investigating the educational setting (or: the classes) would leave our image of adult literacy incomplete. To fully understand all aspects of

adult literacy development, I will in this section also deal with research that goes beyond what happens in adult literacy classes and looks at learners' literacy uses, practices and values in daily life domains outside the class context. Understanding the everyday contexts in which people use literacy becomes even more important when we realise that 'contextualisation' in literacy classes is a predictor of success in literacy learning (see Section 2.2 and Condelli et al., 2003).

Literacy has been the subject of a decades-long debate. Reder and Davila (2005) give an overview of the developments in this debate, starting with the Great Divide theories of literacy, that were popular in the 1960s and 70s. They explain how these theories focussed on differences between non-literate and literate societies and cognitive differences between low- and high-literate people. They show how by the early 1980s critics pointed at the false dichotomies those theories created, and questioned the assumed consequences of literacy and its direct effects on social and economic development. They point at Scribner and Cole's (1981) work that introduced literacy as socially organised practices that people engage in, rather than as a set of decontextualised skills that people apply. Then they describe the approach of the New Literacy Studies, and observe how the focus shifted to local uses of literacy, putting context and the interrelatedness of speech and text at the centre of attention.

Brian Street, leading theoretician in the New Literacy Studies, distinguished between an autonomous and an ideological model of literacy. According to Street (1984, 2003, 2011:61), in the autonomous model literacy is assumed as – in itself – having effects on social and cognitive practices, while in the ideological model literacy practices are seen as varying from one context to another. He stressed that literacy is not a technical, neutral skill but a social practice 'embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles'. The New Literacy Studies (Heath, 1983; Gee, 1991; Street, 1993, 1995; Barton & Hamilton, 1998) have emphasised that literacy practices are to be understood in their social and cultural contexts. Street and Street (1991:143) further challenged the dominant emphasis on decontextualised skills and stated that 'the meanings and uses of literacy are deeply embedded in community values and practices'. Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (2000) used the term 'situated literacies' to capture the culturally embedded nature of literacy practices that, according to Barton and Hamilton (1998:6-7), include 'people's awareness, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy' and of 'literacy events' ('activities where literacy plays a role'). From a socio-cultural perspective literacy can be conceptualised as social practice, embedded in historically situated and continuously changing religious and socio-cultural traditions (Barton, 2001). The socio-cultural perspective emphasises that literacy can have different meanings, functions and

uses for members of different groups in different social and cultural contexts (Heath, 1986; Street, 2003; Rogers, 2005).

In their overview, Reder and Davila (2005) also point at the tensions in the literacy debate regarding the extensive attention given to literacy in its local context by the New Literacy Studies. They quote Brandt and Clinton (2002), who found the local context insufficient to explain the uses and forms of literacy, and who argued for more attention for connections with more remote contexts and globalisation. They show how Street (2003) responded by stressing that the concept of literacy practice does accommodate 'distant' influences on local literacy events, 'through reference to the larger socio-cultural background participants bring to a literacy event' (Reder & Davila, 2005:175).

Another tension in the debate is related to the elaborate focus on literacy use and learning out of school versus little attention for literacy learning in school settings. By the early 2000s, a shift can be observed towards more balanced approaches in which the local and the more remote context and the home/community and in-school settings get attention. Recent studies describe literacy as deriving its meaning from the context as much as from the act of reading and writing itself (Banda, 2003; Street, 2001). Research in multilingual societies with diverse literacy traditions shows different meanings of literacy and an interplay of literacy in languages with local and (inter)national status (Fasold, 1997; Herbert & Robinson, 2001; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). A recent study on literacy acquisition in multilingual Eritrea clearly reveals that literacy practices, values and teaching are also influenced by ethnic, religious and linguistic affiliations (Asfaha, Kurvers & Kroon, 2008).

In the literacy classroom, the cognitive-linguistic perspective on literacy (looking at how people 'crack the code') and the socio-cultural perspective on literacy meet, since learning to read and write in a group of learners is at the same time a cognitive and a social process. Barton and Hamilton (2000:14) pointed at the immediate links between literacy practices and education: 'Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making as well as formal education and training'. Furthermore they stated that 'people's understanding of literacy is an important aspect of their learning and that people's theories guide their actions'. Baynham (2004:289) identified the above described shift in attention for teaching and learning literacy to uses of literacy in context and outside the classroom since the early 1980s. He argued for a re-engagement with 'the question of instruction, understood as situated teaching and learning, using the fine-tuned resources of critical ethnography to understand and re-imagine the literacies of schooling'. In a collection of papers edited by Street (2005), principles entailed in viewing literacy as a social practice are applied to diverse educational contexts, with a focus on the uses and meanings of literacy across

those contexts. Street explains in the introduction that he sees the differences 'between supported education and everyday learning and between literacy in education and literacy in use, as on a continuum rather than as binary oppositions' (p. 1). Other scholars have underlined the links between literacy practices and education. Rogers and Uddin (2005) show how and analyse why traditional school-based literacy programmes with a one-size-fits-all approach ignore what has for a long time been well-known about how adults learn. They advocate individualised learning programmes combined with collaborative learning, using the motivations of the adult learners and putting them in control of the learning, in their own pace, in their own spaces and building on their individual experiences (p. 242). Also Wagner (1999:7) pointed at the 'need to move away from a "one size fits all" approach to literacy work', stressing the complexity of literacy 'and its relative levels of achievement, practices, beliefs and consequences'. Rogers (2005:302) points at the difference in text-richness in different contexts and calls for literacy programmes 'to match the particular contexts of the literacy learners'. Street and Lefstein (2007) note that literacy learning and learners' ideas on literacy are affected by the ways in which they interact with their teachers. They signalled how people labelled illiterate, may be seen to make use of literacy practices. Along this line, Gebre, Rogers, Street and Openjuru (2009) and Nabi, Rogers and Street (2009) show how adults in Ethiopia and Pakistan respectively, who are called or call themselves illiterate daily engage in literacy and numeracy practices, and how the content of earlier literacy classes provided them with nothing relevant. Rogers and Street (2012:166) explain that they see literacy 'as part of daily life activities which can be learned formally in class and informally through experience'.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The above sections discussed research on literacy acquisition, literacy teaching and literacy use in daily life. From this research, in this section for each of the three topics the points are listed that are essential for my study and that will be central to my research questions.

Research on literacy *acquisition* has shown which elements are crucial in the process of learning to read an alphabetic writing system and of eventually getting to automatic word recognition: (1) phonemic awareness (i.e., being able to identify different phonemes or sounds in a spoken word), (2) recognition of letters or graphemes, (3) understanding grapheme-phoneme correspondence (or: spelling-sound correspondence, being able to relate letters to sounds), and (4) blending the sounds to independently generate a target pronunciation for a

novel string of letters. In short: understanding the alphabetic principle is critical to successfully learning to read. From research on literacy acquisition in a second language by low-educated adult learners it is known that building knowledge of the sounds and phonemic awareness is more difficult in a second language and that not knowing word meanings complicates the development of the self-teaching device for word recognition (because the learner cannot get feedback from his own lexicon). In order to see if this research finding is also true in the specific context of Timor-Leste, my study investigated whether learners developed (or: were developing) the crucial abilities mentioned above and whether proficiency in the second language made a difference. And since age and previous education have shown to be important factors of influence, my study will investigate whether that was also the case in the Timor-Leste context.

Research on learning to read has also shown that this takes place in stages, from visual recognition through letter naming, letter naming and blending, partial decoding to direct word recognition based on automatic application of the alphabetic principle. It is known that learning to write takes place in stages as well, from pre-phonetic to semi-phonetic, to phonetic, phonemic and eventually conventional spelling. Research has shown that in both processes, understanding of the alphabetic principle is key for learners to over time move from lower to higher order word recognition and spelling strategies, and that using more higher order strategies leads to more fluent and successful reading and writing. My study will investigate whether adult literacy learners in Timor-Leste show the same patterns in their development of reading and writing skills.

From research on literacy *teaching* it is known that various methods have been used worldwide. Some methods put initial emphasis on the code (e.g., the three synthetic methods: the alphabetic, phonic and syllabic method), while other methods put initial emphasis on meaning (the analytic methods: the word, phrase and story method). Eclectic methods combine the best of the analytic and synthetic methods. Besides the methods that break down words into smaller units, there are the global methods, applying the whole language approach. Learner-centred methods give learners' interests first consideration, by using either author-prepared or learner-teacher prepared reading materials. Good teachers are eclectic teachers that combine positive aspects of several methods and at any case give explicit phonics instruction to develop learners' phonemic awareness.

Other factors that have shown to positively influence the development of literacy abilities were instructional use of the learners' mother tongue, making connections between class and the outside world (contextualisation), varied

practice and interaction (or: less frontal whole group teaching) and the number of hours taught (mainly affects reading comprehension). Individual variation tends to be large and many learners need at least 1000 hours to reach basic functional literacy.

My study will investigate what methods are used in adult literacy classes in government programmes in Timor-Leste and whether factors that are generally known to positively affect literacy development also do so in the Timor-Leste context.

Several studies have shown that governments' choices regarding national language and language-in-education *policies* affect adult literacy education. In multilingual contexts, and within the given frameworks of language and language-in-education policies, teachers and learners have to take decisions about the use of languages in classroom interaction, which can lead to patterns of language use in teaching and learning that deviate from the way authorities had planned the use of languages or from how people think languages should be used. My study will investigate how in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste is dealt with governmentally decided national language and language-in-education policies and whether there is indeed a difference between what national policies prescribe and what is the actual situation in literacy classes. I will also explore whether in classroom interaction in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste people engage in 'codeswitching' or '(poly)linguaging' and whether some languages are used 'onstage' and others 'backstage'.

In addition to national policies regarding languages, teachers and learners are also confronted with governments' decisions regarding literacy, often concerning literacy education being provided in national (large-scale) programmes and campaigns. These decisions might be taken on the basis of political, short-term goals and a main concern with statistics than on longer-term goals regarding the achievement of sustainable higher-level literacy skills. Various literacy education reviews signalled the relatively low impact of short national literacy programmes and campaigns, and showed the need for more flexible, longer term literacy education addressing a diversity of learning needs. I will investigate whether the aspects and tensions have shown to be crucial in Timor-Leste too: political versus educational objectives, quantity goals (literacy rates) versus quality goals (literacy levels), a one-size-fits-all approach versus meeting diverse learner needs, and issues like low motivation, high drop-out, lack of well-organised continued literacy and post-literacy options, relapse into illiteracy.

In addition to governmental (and NGO) influence, in many countries there is the influence of international organisations on literacy and language. So finally I will investigate whether besides the Timor-Leste government, also

supranational bodies, international organisations and countries involved in bilateral collaboration with Timor-Leste have influenced discourses on multilingualism and literacy.

Many studies have shown that adult learners do not only acquire literacy in class, but also *out of class* in their daily lives. They do not acquire literacy ability as a set of decontextualised skills, but they engage in literacy practices that are embedded in social and cultural contexts. From these contexts (i.e., their communities), learners bring ideas and values regarding literacy and literacy use to class, which influence their literacy acquisition there. Research has also shown that acquiring literacy in class is positively influenced when links are made between lesson content and daily life out of class (contextualisation). In my study on adult literacy in Timor-Leste, I chose to combine the exploration of educational settings with the investigation of whether and how adult learners in literacy programmes use their reading and writing ability outside the classrooms, in their daily lives. Besides learners' literacy uses, my study will investigate the meanings literacy has for them, how they value literacy and what difference 'becoming literate' makes to their lives. In addition to that I will see whether there are links between learners' literacy uses, ideas and values on the one hand and what happens in literacy classes on the other.



## CHAPTER 3

# Timor-Leste: history, languages and literacy

This chapter provides information on Timor-Leste's history, languages and adult literacy rates. It also describes the country's past and present adult literacy education. Section 3.1 shows how Timor-Leste's current language situation is related to its history. Section 3.2 summarises language use in formal education since Portuguese colonial times until today. Section 3.3 shows how the aims and actions of the country's government and civil society to increase literacy rates among adults have led to a diversity of adult literacy education initiatives.

### 3.1 History and languages

What today is Timor-Leste was a Portuguese colony from the sixteenth century till late twentieth century. The 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal also brought change for Portugal's colonies. The decolonisation process led to the emergence of new political parties in Timor-Leste. After a civil war between supporters of the two main political parties, UDT and FRETILIN, including a coup initiated, on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1975 by UDT and a counter-coup, on 15<sup>th</sup> August, by FRETILIN's military wing FALINTIL, Timor-Leste declared itself independent on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1975. Nine days later it was invaded by Indonesia. The Indonesian occupation lasted for 24 years. In 1976 Timor-Leste was declared a province of Indonesia. During the long years of Indonesian military rule, large numbers of inhabitants of Timor-Leste lost their lives. At a referendum on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1999, a vast majority of Timor-Leste's population voted for independence from Indonesia. In the weeks after the referendum around 1,400 people were killed by anti-independence Timorese militias organised and supported by the Indonesian military (CIA, 2012) and some 80% of the inhabitants of Timor-Leste were displaced from their homes (Hajek, 2006) of whom thousands fled into the western part of the island (around 300,000 people, according to CIA, 2012). Also most of Timor-Leste's infrastructure was destroyed (homes, schools, electricity, water supply and irrigation

systems), until Australian-led peacekeeping troops (INTERFET) brought the violence to an end. Timor-Leste had a UN-led interim government (UNTAET) for a few years, with parliamentary elections in 2001 and presidential elections in 2002, until it restored its independence on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2002. In 2006, internal tensions led to a crisis during which an estimated 150,000 people had to flee their houses into IDP-camps (UNDP, 2011b:17). In 2007, the second round of parliamentary and presidential elections took place in a relatively calm atmosphere. In 2008 the president and prime minister were attacked. The president was shot, but he recovered in the months afterwards, and since then Timor-Leste has known a period of relative stability, with a third and again calm round of elections in 2012.

The new nation's 2002 Constitution shows an explicit choice for multilingualism, with Tetum and Portuguese as the two official languages, a number of regional languages to be further developed by the state, and Indonesian and English accepted as working languages (RDTL, 2002a). The estimates based on demographic data relating to language vary, as is shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1:** Estimates of population percentages with proficiency in official and working languages (percentages)

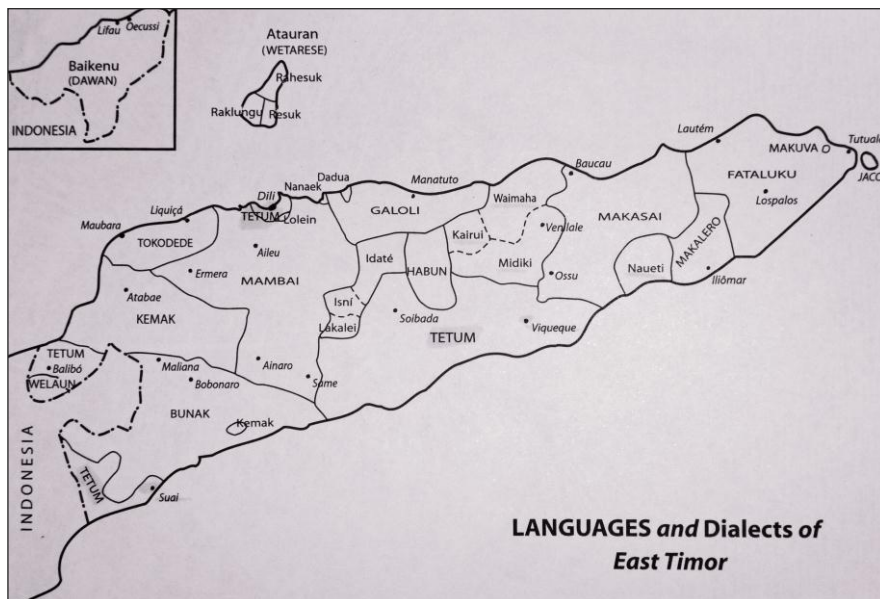
	Hajek 2000 (speak)	DNE 2004 census (speak)	DNE 2004 census (speak, read <i>or</i> write)	DNE 2010 census (speak)	DNE 2010 census (speak, read <i>or</i> write)	DNE 2010 census (speak, read <i>and</i> write)
Tetum	60-80	46	86	85	87	53
Portuguese	5-20	14	37	30	51	24
Indonesian	40-50	43	59	44	55	36
English	1	6	22	15	31	12

Table 3.1 shows percentages of the population reported as speaking different languages by Hajek (2000:409) in the first column and by Timor-Leste's National Directorate of Statistics (DNE, 2006b:69) in the second column. The third column shows percentages of the population of six years and older who can either speak, read or write in different languages (DNE, 2006a:82; see also Taylor-Leech, 2009:15). The fourth until sixth column shows percentages of the population of five years and older who can speak (fourth column), speak, read *or* write (fifth column) and speak, read *and* write (sixth column) in languages according to the census 2010 data (NSD & UNFPA, 2012:VII, 41).

All sources in Table 3.1 agree that a majority of the population reports knowledge of Tetum (the lingua franca) and that a much smaller number of

people report knowledge of Portuguese. The number of Portuguese speakers is growing because since 2002 a new generation has been learning Portuguese in formal education. Portuguese is also spoken by older people who went to school before 1975 during Portuguese colonial times, and by people who came back after independence, having lived in Portugal during Indonesian military rule. Many people in Timor-Leste know Indonesian due to the 24 years of Indonesian occupation. People who went to school during those years acquired it as the language of schooling, but it was also used in many other domains. The figures in Table 3.1 show that it is still rather widely used. More and more people are also learning English through their contacts with international development organisations.

It is safe to say that many people in Timor-Leste are multilingual. Most inhabitants speak two or more languages and they engage in various multilingual practices on a daily basis (Van Engelenhoven, 2006). Most people have one of the regional languages as their first language. There are different views about the number of regional languages spoken in Timor-Leste. Ethnologue counts 20 languages, of which 19 are living and one is extinct (Lewis et al., 2013). Hull (2003) lists 16 languages and a number of dialects as shown in Figure 3.1. He divides the languages into two groups: the Austronesian group (12 languages: Tetum, Habun, Galoli, Atauran, Kawaimina, Welaun, Idalaka, Mambai, Kemak, Tokodede, Baikenu, Makuva) and the Papuan group (four languages: Bunak, Makasai, Makalero, and Fataluku).



**Figure 3.1:** Languages (in capitals) and dialects of Timor-Leste (source: Hull, 2003:X)

Next to a regional language, a majority of the population also speaks and understands Tetum, be it often as a second language. Although Tetum is often referred to as one language, it has several varieties, including Tetum-Praça (also called Tetum-Dili), an urban variety with a strong Portuguese influence, and Tetum-Terik, a prestigious regional variety that is spoken in the south and southwest of the country (Hajek, 2000; Taylor-Leech, 2009). Speakers of the two varieties understand each other's Tetum reasonably well. When I refer to Tetum in this book, I'm referring to Tetum-Praça, that has – over the years – become the lingua franca in most of the country. Like the other languages of Timor-Leste, Tetum uses the Latin script. It does not inflect verb roots for person, number or time. On Tetum nouns the plural is not marked, but expressed by the word *sira* (they) behind the noun. Ethnologue classifies Tetum as a creole (Lewis et al., 2013). It has many loanwords from Portuguese, and is also influenced by Indonesian and Mambae. The standardised spelling of Tetum as disseminated by Timor-Leste's National Institute of Linguistics was acknowledged in 2004 by government decree (RDTL, 2004) as the official orthography for Tetum (Van Engelenhoven, 2006). It uses the 26 letters of the Latin alphabet (of which the three letters *c*, *q* and *y* only for the spelling of non-Tetum names), plus three extra consonants: *ll* (like in *Jullu* (July), for the 'lli'-sound in English, e.g., in 'million' or the 'lh'-sound in Portuguese, e.g., in *filho* and *filha* (son, daughter)); *ñ* (like in *kampaña* (campaign), for the ny-sound in English, e.g., in canyon, or the nh-sound in Portuguese, e.g., in *vinho* (wine) or *linha* (line)); *rr* (for a strongly trilled 'r', e.g., like in *karreta* (car)). It also uses the apostrophe (called *kapa-tatolan*) for a glottal stop, like in *ha'u* (I/me) or *ki'ik* (small). Following Seymour's (2005) classification, Tetum could be characterised as having a simple syllabic structure and its orthography could be characterised as shallow.

### 3.2 Languages in formal education

During the Portuguese colonial period the language to be used in schools was Portuguese. During the Indonesian occupation the Portuguese language was forbidden and schools had to use Indonesian, although private schools run by the church insisted on using Tetum (Boughton, 2011). In 1980 the Vatican acknowledged Tetum as the liturgical language of the Roman Catholic Church in Timor-Leste instead of Indonesian (Van Engelenhoven, 2006).

Since 2002 Timor-Leste's policy on the use of languages in formal education has gone through several changes, mainly regarding the proportion of time devoted to Tetum and Portuguese as languages of instruction. In legislation, policy documents and strategic plans for education, one can find various dif-

ferent formulations. The choices made are reflected in various definitions used (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997): the political definitions of the national language policy ('official languages', 'national languages', 'working languages') used in the Constitution, and the social and educational definitions of the language-in-education policy as described in national education policy documents. Quinn (2013) noted how in Timor-Leste's 2004 Education Policy, for instance, precedence was given to Portuguese and Tetum was referred to as 'pedagogic aide'; in later policies, the use of Tetum was given greater emphasis (Quinn, 2013: 182). The Education System Framework Law states that 'the instruction (teaching) languages of the Timor-Leste education system are Tetum and Portuguese' (RDTL, 2008, article 8). Under 'Objectives of basic education' (article 12) one can read under (d) 'to guarantee the dominance of the languages Tetum and Portuguese' and under (e) 'to provide the learning of a first foreign language'. The Organic Law of the Ministry of Education states that one of the tasks assigned to the Ministry of Education is to 'consolidate the use of the official languages in the education system, in terms as defined in the Education System Framework law' (RDTL, 2010, article 1). Teachers should 'acquire proficiency in the languages Tetum and Portuguese' (article 14).

Since 2008, discussions have been taking place about the use of regional languages (in the debate often called 'mother tongues' or 'first languages') in pre-primary and early primary education, to teach beginning literacy and curricular content (Cabral, 2013). In February 2011 the Ministry of Education launched new policy guidelines on this topic, recommending the use of children's mother tongues as languages of teaching and learning in the two years of pre-primary education and as languages for initial literacy in grade 1 (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Reactions were mixed: some valued the recognition of the regional languages, others saw it as a threat to national unity or feared unequal access to the official languages (Cabral, 2013; Taylor-Leech, 2013). Expressed concerns led to a parliamentary debate in February 2012. In the same month, a pilot project started in three districts (Oecusse, Lautem and Manatuto) of which the mid-term evaluation was taking place at the time of writing of this book.

### 3.3 Adult literacy rates and education

In the post-conflict developing country that Timor-Leste is, many people missed out on education in the past. Adult literacy rates in Timor-Leste are low: according to the results of the population census carried out in 2004, 46% of its adult population of 15 years and older were illiterate in that year (DNE, 2006:133). The 2010 population census (DNE, 2011a) shows literacy rates per

language per age group: of young people aged 15-24, 78% were literate in Tetum and 39% in Portuguese (compared to 68% and 17% in 2004). Their percentage, of 79.1% in general (80.0% for men and 78.2% for women), was lower in the rural areas (71%) and higher in the urban areas (92%) (DNE, 2011b). For the population of five years and older, the percentages by level of literacy in the two official languages (Tetum and Portuguese) and the two working languages (Indonesian and English) were as follows (see also Table 3.1): 53% could speak, read and write Tetum, 24% could speak, read and write Portuguese, 36% could speak read and write Indonesian and 12% could speak read and write English. The differences in literacy rates per district, however, were huge: in the district of Dili, 78.9% of the population of five years and over was literate in Tetum, but in the district of Ermera that was only 36.8% and in Oecussi even lower: 29.7%. The overall literacy rates among women were 3 to 6% lower for all languages than those among men.

The 2011 Human Development Index showed a 50.6% adult literacy rate for Timor-Leste (period 2005-2010; UNDP, 2011a:160). The Timor-Leste Human Development Report 2011 noticed that adult literacy in Timor-Leste increased from 36% in 2000 to 47% in 2004 and 58% in 2007 (UNDP, 2011b:47). The Timor-Leste Labour Force Survey in 2010 showed that almost 40% of the population aged 15 and older had not had any education at all (45% females, 34% males). It is safe to say that between 40% and 50% of the population aged 15 years or older cannot read and write.

The goal to substantially increase literacy rates among adults in Timor-Leste has been high on the country's agenda. Timor-Leste's 2002 National Development Plan formulated as a goal to have a 100% literate population by 2020 (RDTL, 2002b), and its Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 speaks of the target to substantially reduce illiteracy by 2015 in all age groups of the population (RDTL, 2011:26, 33). Currently thousands of adults are learning to read and write in adult literacy programmes (which often have a numeracy component as well) and tens of thousands have been doing so since 2000. The National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2008) describes achievements and plans of adult and non-formal education and emphasises the continuation of 'the alphabetization programs in the areas of language, literacy and arithmetic' (p. 17). In the Education System Framework Law (RDTL, 2008), article 5 lists the fundamental objectives of education, and one of them is: 'To ensure a second opportunity for schooling for those who were unable to obtain it at the proper age (...)'. Article 7 explains the organisation of the educational system; it distinguishes pre-school, school and out-of-school education and professional instruction. Activities of literacy education are categorised under out-of-school education. It is stated in the same article that out-of school education 'is conducted in an open framework of multiple, diverse and complementary ini-

tiatives'. In article 33 it is made clear that 'it is the responsibility of the State to promote the social relevance of out-of-school education'. Out-of-school education is to be promoted and supported by the State. The same article also lists the fundamental objectives of out-of-school education; the first objective mentioned is 'to eliminate illiteracy, literal and functional'. This objective is repeated in the Organic Law of the Ministry of Education (RDTL, 2010a), as one of the tasks of the National Directorate for Recurrent Education (article 33, 2a). In article 2, this law also describes as a task assigned (amongst others) to the Ministry of Education: 'to promote a recurrent education policy that guarantees the eradication of illiteracy and the development of literacy (...)'. And in the National Education Strategic Plan 2011-2030 (Ministry of Education, 2011a) this is formulated as a short-term goal, to be achieved by 2015: 'completely eradicate illiteracy in all age groups of the population (...) (p. 116).

Timor-Leste has known adult literacy education at least since 1974, when a literacy campaign in Tetum was initiated and then sustained by FRETILIN and UNETIM during the Indonesian occupation (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008; Da Silva, 2012). Cabral and Martin-Jones's account of the ways in which literacy was embedded in the Timorese struggle against the Indonesian invasion and subsequent occupation is relevant to understand ideas and approaches in literacy education today. Da Silva (2012) discusses FRETILIN adult popular education (1973-1978) and also shows how it is still relevant today. During the Indonesian occupation (1975-1999), the Indonesian government provided literacy education in Indonesian (the '*Pemberantasan Butahuruf*' programme, also called '*Paket A*'). After 1999 NGOs and other national and international organisations provided adult literacy education (or: continued to do so, e.g., the literacy work by the women's organisation GFFTL; see Da Silva, 2012:285). From 2000 onwards governmental national adult literacy programmes in Tetum and Portuguese were provided, for example the *Alfabetização Solidária* programme (2000-2002), by the Ministry of Education with support from the 'Brazilian Cooperation Agency' (see also Taylor-Leech, 2009:22-23). From 2003 onwards, Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education has collaborated with UNDP (until 2009) and UNICEF (until today) to develop, implement and monitor a national one year literacy programme (see below). From 2005 until 2012, the ministry also collaborated with the Cuban government, to roll out a national literacy campaign including a three month literacy programme of Cuban origin (see below). Most current adult literacy programmes in Timor-Leste are in Tetum.

Adult literacy programmes in Timor-Leste have been described in several recent studies. Boughton and Durnan (2007) described the multiplicity of adult education programmes and providers in Timor-Leste, exhibiting a great diversity of objectives, curricula and methodologies. Taylor-Leech (2009) described post-independence literacy projects. She mentioned that lessons can be learned

with regard to the need for local engagement and she expressed her concern that literacy needs and goals of the learners have not sufficiently been taken into account. Boughton (2010a) listed recent achievements in the field of adult and popular education since 2002, one of the major concerns being the lack of post-literacy activities for people who have finished basic literacy programmes, a concern that was also expressed in Boughton (2010b, 2012b) and Boon (2014).

A lot of questions on adult literacy in Timor-Leste have not been answered yet in previous research. Not much is known about literacy teaching and learning processes in the classrooms, nor about ideas that guide teachers' practices or about results or outcomes of adult literacy programmes in terms of reading and writing ability and about literacy practices and values that adult learners draw on in their daily lives.

### **Adult literacy programmes**

In the next pages I describe the adult literacy education programmes that were in use in Timor-Leste in the years in which I carried out my research. These programmes are: (1) *Los Hau Bele*, (2) *Alfanamor*, consisting of the programmes *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*, (3) the *Compasis* literacy programme provided by a collaboration of six UN organisations, (4) the *YEP literacy and numeracy* programme, and (5) literacy programmes by NGOs. The description is based on interviews with representatives of adult literacy education providers in Timor-Leste and on documents produced by them.

The *Los Hau Bele* ('Yes I Can') programme is the Tetum version of the Cuban programme *Yo, sí puedo*.<sup>8</sup> This audio-visual adult literacy programme was developed in Cuba in the late 1990s and has been used in mass literacy campaigns in many countries (Boughton, 2010b:62). It was adapted to the Timorese reality and sociolinguistic situation, resulting first in *Sim Eu Posso* in Portuguese and later *Los Hau Bele* in Tetum. This programme, initially in its Portuguese version and later mainly in its Tetum version, has been used within the framework of the national adult literacy campaign that the Ministry of Education started in 2007 (Boughton, 2010b). The implementation took place in 2007 after a pilot phase in 2005-2006, in collaboration with Cuban advisers. Cuban advisers trained facilitators from Timor-Leste to deliver the programme to adult learners. By mid-2009 the programme was available in all municipalities, in Oecusse district and on Atauro island even in every village.<sup>9</sup> In the first years of the campaign (2006-2008), the above mentioned version in (Brazilian) Portuguese turned out to be too difficult for many learners and teachers who did not master Portuguese well. Therefore, in 2007, the development of the

<sup>8</sup> In 2006 UNESCO awarded a Literacy Prize to the institute IPLAC for its literacy work in more than 15 countries using this programme.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with the coordinator of the Cuban advisers on 16-06-2009.



Tetum version started. It became available in autumn 2008 and was used at almost all sites by mid-2009.<sup>10</sup> *Los Hau Bele* provides the learner with three months of basic literacy training (Boon, 2011). The programme consists of 65 lessons on DVDs, a 16-page learner workbook and a 20-page teacher manual. The campaign finished late 2012.

The Ministry of Education also provided the one-year national literacy programme *Alfanamor*, consisting of two adult literacy programmes in Tetum. The first takes six months, provides literacy for beginners and is called *Hakat ba Oin* ('Step Forward'). The second also takes six months. It is for advanced literacy learners and is called *Iha Dalan* ('On the Way'). Both programmes use manuals in Tetum with relevant contents for adult learners in today's Timor-Leste, covering themes like food, health, transport, work, free time, human rights, history and geography of Timor-Leste, and local culture (Boon, 2011). The manuals (four learner books and a teacher manual for *Hakat ba Oin* and two learner books and a teacher manual for *Iha Dalan*) were developed and provided with support of UNDP and UNICEF. On the request of the Ministry of Education, that wanted to have all literacy education materials available in both official languages, all materials were also made available in Portuguese (called *Passo em Frente* and *A Caminho*), but the Tetum version was most widely used in all 13 districts (e.g., over 5,500 participants by May 2009).<sup>11</sup> The curriculum and the first version were developed in 2004-2005 in collaboration with NGOs involved in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste. *Hakat ba Oin* was piloted in 2006; the revised version was implemented across the country in 2007. *Iha Dalan* was piloted in 2007 and implemented in 2008. From 2004-2008, over 250 teachers participated in annual training sessions. The pilot sessions, the training and the printing of books were financed by UNICEF and were coordinated by UNDP and the Ministry.<sup>12</sup> Since the implementation of *Hakat ba Oin* in 2007 and *Iha Dalan* in 2008, both programmes have been used in the ministry's literacy programme in all 13 districts of the country and still were in use in 2014, at the time this thesis was being written.

*Compasis*, a collaboration of six UN organisations (UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, ILO, UNFPA, and WFP), provided extra literacy programmes in districts in Timor-Leste with the highest illiteracy rates. For these programmes, *Compasis* printed thousands of extra *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals, paid the training and salaries of many teachers and organised literacy groups in Ermera and

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with the coordinator of the Cuban advisers on 16-06-2009.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Monitoring report May 2009 provided by Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education (its National Directorate of Non-Formal Education).

<sup>12</sup> In the years 2004-2008, I was involved in the development of the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals and in teacher training and capacity building related to the new programme, while working at Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education as an adult literacy adviser paid by UNDP.

Oecusse (e.g., 46 groups of 20 persons each, per June 2011), all in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. By April 2013, 2,240 participants had taken part in the *Compasis* programmes.<sup>13</sup>

The *YEP Literacy & Numeracy* courses were part of the Youth Employment Promotion (YEP) programme that was conducted by the Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment and coordinated by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and with local NGOs. For these courses, the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals were summarised into more compact books, *YEP Livru 1* and *YEP Livru 2*. The development took place in 2008<sup>14</sup> and UNICEF supported the printing of the books. In 2009, ILO coordinated a first round of three-month courses and local NGOs organised the courses in eight districts with 2,223 participants.<sup>15</sup> In 2010, the second round of YEP courses (four-month courses this time) took place, and in 2011 the third round, in two other districts. In total almost 3,500 participants from ten districts finished a YEP literacy and numeracy course.<sup>16</sup>

Many NGOs in Timor-Leste provided smaller scale adult literacy programmes with different objectives, content and duration. Some developed their own manuals, many used the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals (as over 20 NGOs have done in recent years) and some used a combination of both. Most NGO literacy programmes were in Tetum, although occasionally regional languages were also used. OXFAM Hong Kong, for example, organised literacy activities linked to its livelihood programme (Quitoriano, 2008) and developed literacy manuals together with the adult learners and related to their daily community practices. These were printed in Tetum and the regional language, e.g., in Tokodede for communities in Liquiçá district. Like OXFAM, the women's organisation GFFTL developed manuals with adult learners about daily activities in the communities. They used these in combination with the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* books. Over 1,800 people participated in their programmes between 2000 and 2006.<sup>17</sup> In 2005-2007 USAID supported eight NGOs of which seven used the *Hakat ba Oin* books in their literacy and numeracy programmes (see Anis, 2007). In 2008-2010 the NGO Timor Aid organised literacy and income generation courses using *Hakat ba Oin*, *Iha Dalan* combined with other materials for 18 to 24 months with 720 participants.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Information received on 24-04-2013 from the *Compasis*-coordinator at UNDP, Timor-Leste.

<sup>14</sup> The compact versions of the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals, called '*YEP Livru 1*' and '*YEP Livru 2*', were developed with my involvement.

<sup>15</sup> ILO presentation on YEP Literacy courses (22-06-2009).

<sup>16</sup> ILO YEP Literacy/Numeracy Excel sheet cumulative 2009-2010-2011, in total 3,471 participants (information received from ILO on 13-12-2011).

<sup>17</sup> GFFTL fact sheet presented on 6 July 2009 at the 'Transforming Timor-Leste' conference in Dili.

<sup>18</sup> Information from NGO Timor Aid (16-11-2009).

A future perspective for adult literacy is given in the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030, referring to 'Recurrent education' and 'Life long learning' (RDTL, 2011:26). Recurrent education is described as incorporating literacy and post-literacy programmes and equivalency programmes for basic education. According to this document, as of May 2011, over 120,000 people had graduated from the national literacy campaign (the first three months of basic literacy of the *Los Hau Bele* programme). It is stated that 'Timor-Leste's target to substantially reduce illiteracy by 2015 can be achieved by increasing the present capacity of our existing national literacy programs'. It also notices a 'need to increase the number and quality of classes under the post-literacy program so that gains in literacy are sustained'.

Summarising the three sections above, my study has been carried out in a developing country that went through phases of colonisation, occupation, resistance, conflict and eventually independence, with an infrastructure that only 14 years ago was destroyed for the greater part. Timor-Leste's fabric of languages in contemporary times is closely related to its history. One way to create unity (or: unity in diversity) chosen by the government is through its language policy, declaring two languages as official languages, but also valuing and developing regional languages and accepting working-languages. The national language policy is reflected in the language-in-education policy, which recently went through several changes. In a setting like this, research on adult literacy has to be done both at a survey level as well as a detailed level, in order to understand the language situation in all its complexity. For this reason, within my research a broad study as well as an in-depth study were carried out, as described in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

# Research questions and design

In the previous chapters I introduced adult literacy education in multilingual Timor-Leste. In this chapter I present the research questions (Section 4.1) and the research design (Section 4.2), consisting of a broad, survey-like study and an in-depth case study.

### 4.1 Research questions

In recent years research on adult literacy education in Timor-Leste has mainly focussed on the variety of programmes provided and the numbers of participants reached (see Chapter 3). Not much research has been done yet on the actual literacy ability that adult learners in Timor-Leste build up in the first few months of literacy education in these programmes. Not much is known yet about teaching practices and communication in literacy classrooms, about the ideas that guide teachers' practices or about how these are shaped by national language and language-in-education policies. There is limited knowledge about local literacy practices that adult learners engage in when they are outside their reading and writing classes, and whether they make use of their newly built reading and writing abilities in those practices. Their views and discourses on literacy and literacy education have not yet been investigated in much detail.

This study addresses adult literacy education in Timor-Leste and tries to fill some of the gaps that exist in adult literacy research in general (see Chapter 2) and in Timor-Leste in particular (see Chapter 3). In doing so, it raises the following research questions:

- What are the results achieved in learning to read and write in Tetum in the available adult literacy programmes and what factors are the most important in the development of adults' literacy ability?
- What classroom-based literacy teaching practices are adult literacy learners confronted with, and what ideas guide teachers' practices?

- What literacy uses and values do adult literacy learners report with reference to different social domains?

The first question focuses on whether the adult learners have acquired the skills that are known from research to be crucial to get to automatic word recognition and fluent word writing: phonemic awareness, grapheme recognition, understanding grapheme-phoneme correspondence and blending the sounds or graphemes to words. Apart from whether they understand the alphabetic principle, it will be investigated whether their proficiency in Tetum affects their learning to read and write in Tetum, how their reading and writing develops, what learner and educational variables are related to success, how the processes of their learning to recognise and spell words take place.

The second question focuses on the teaching methods applied in adult literacy classes in Timor-Leste and whether these contribute to developing learners' understanding of the alphabetic principle and to achieving fluency in reading and writing. It will also focus on other factors that have shown to positively influence the development of literacy abilities, like instructional use of the learners' mother tongue, making connections between class and the outside world (contextualisation), varied practice and interaction, and number of hours taught. In addition it will focus on how national language, language-in-education and literacy policies and scholarly ideas on literacy shape the teaching and learning in literacy classes and what choices teachers and learners make in classroom interaction.

The third question takes into account the research finding that literacy acquisition not only takes place by learning decontextualised skills in literacy classes, but also by engaging in socially and culturally embedded literacy practices in daily life. For that reason it focuses on learners' literacy uses, practices and values in daily life domains outside the class context, such as at work (e.g., in shop-keeping or selling crops at the market), during leisure time (e.g., in formal and informal written communication), in church or at home. Knowledge about these literacy uses, practices and values out of class will eventually be used to see whether what happens in literacy classes matches with learners' particular contexts and learning needs.

## 4.2 Research design

To find answers to the research questions, two studies were carried out: a broad study and an in-depth study. The broad study aimed at answering the first research question and provides rather general information about a large number of teachers and learners in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste. It

provides information on teachers' languages and education backgrounds, on their experiences in and ideas on adult literacy education, and information on learners' languages and backgrounds and on their reading and writing abilities. The in-depth study aimed at answering the second and third research questions and provides detailed information about a more limited number of teachers and learners at different research sites in the country: information about teaching practices, about ideas that teachers, learners and literacy coordinators have on literacy education and information about literacy use in out-of-class settings. Combining survey research (in the broad study) and ethnographic methods (in the in-depth study) made it possible to feed back outcomes of statistical generalisation 'to the empirical on-the-ground realities from which they emerged' (Blommaert & Van de Vijver, 2013:8).

#### 4.2.1 Broad study

The broad study's main goals were to investigate the results of learning to read and write in Tetum in three of the available adult literacy programmes and to find out what factors were most important in the development of literacy ability. For the latter I also focussed on characteristics of teachers and learners in adult literacy education.

#### Participants

The broad study was carried out in eight of the thirteen districts of Timor-Leste. Participants were adult learners and their teachers. Background data of the participants are given in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1:** Background data of participants in the broad study

	Learners	Teachers
Total number	756	100
Sex	68% women, 32% men	54% women, 46% men
Age	Mean 37.83 (SD 15.33) Range: from 15 to 78 years	Mean 33.80 (SD 10.74) Range: from 19 to 66 years
Education	69.4% never attended formal education 85% never attended a literacy course before 57.7% never attended formal education nor a literacy course before	Mean 10.65 years (SD 2.33) 68% attended 12 years of formal education

In total 73 literacy groups were visited and 756 learners participated in the study. Over two thirds of them were women and one third men, which mirrors global illiteracy rates in which two thirds are women (UNESCO, 2011). The

participants' ages varied from 15 to 78 years, resulting in classes with a mixture of young and old learners. Over two thirds had never attended formal education, due to poverty and conflict. The majority had never attended a literacy course before, although literacy education had been provided in the past. Besides the learners, also 100 teachers participated in the broad study, of whom 46 men and 54 women. Their ages varied from 19 to 66 years. The number of years of education they had attended varied from four to 13 years; 68% had attended 12 years of education, which for most meant six years of primary, three years of pre-secondary and three years of secondary education. Some of the older teachers had attended four years of primary education during Portuguese times.

Informed consent for doing my research and using the data that would be collected in lectures and publications was obtained in advance at all levels (including ministerial, directorate and coordination level), and during each class visit it was secured at an individual level in face to face interaction with the adult learners, with translations in their regional language or local dialect.

### **Instruments**

Instruments used in the broad study were: a teacher questionnaire, a form for collecting learner background data, and a set of four reading and writing tasks. Before using the instruments in the actual study, they were tried out in a pilot phase (see below).

The teacher questionnaire (see Appendix 2) contained 34 questions in Tetum through which the teachers were asked about their education and language background, their language use both in the classroom and in other domains, their work experience and training, the teaching circumstances in adult literacy education, their preferred languages for literacy education, their view on learners' motivations for learning, and the literacy practices in which they sometimes assisted people in their communities. Most questions were open questions, some were multiple-choice questions, but these always had extra (lined) writing space below to provide additional information. Teachers were asked to fill out the questionnaire themselves.

For the study among the learners, I used a brief learner background data form in Tetum (see Appendix 3, upper part), on which I recorded their name, sex, age, name of their village, subdistrict and district, information about their language background, prior education and literacy programmes attended before, and the number of months they attended the current literacy course. These data were obtained in short conversations with each learner, during which coordinators and teachers assisted and translated.

To gain insight into their (beginning) literacy abilities, each learner was asked to participate in four reading and writing tasks in Tetum. All tasks used



the standard Tetum orthography as defined by the National Institute of Linguistics (INL) in Dili. The tasks were based on the common content of the (beginners') literacy programmes in use (*Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin* and *YEP*), to make sure that the task items were familiar to the learners. The tasks were developed in order to mirror instructional and learning practices in all programmes, focusing on crucial elements in the process of getting access to the written code: grapheme recognition, word reading, word writing, and filling out a basic form.

For the grapheme recognition task (see Appendix 3, lower part), each learner was given a page with 30 graphemes and was asked to name the graphemes he or she could recognise/identify (letter names like 'emi' as well as sound indications like 'm' were considered correct). The first 23 graphemes on the page are used in Tetum as well as Portuguese. Of these, the first 15 were letters randomly chosen from the alphabet (e.g., *m* or *o*), the next four were vowel-graphemes with diacritics (e.g., *í* or *ú*) and the last four were digraphs (e.g., *ei* or *ou*). Of the remaining seven graphemes, three are only used in Portuguese and not in Tetum (*ç*, *ã*, *q*), three are only used in Tetum and not in Portuguese (*ñ*, *oo*, *k*) and one is used neither in Portuguese nor in Tetum, but a lot in Indonesian (*y*). The grapheme score was the number of correctly identified graphemes (ranging from 0 to 30).

For the word-reading task (see Appendix 4), each learner was given a paper sheet with a list of 80 Tetum words and was asked to read the words on the list, beginning with the first word. The first ten words on the list appeared in all three literacy programmes for beginners (*Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin* and *YEP*), like *uma* (house) and *manu* (chicken). The words 11-70 were frequently used Tetum words, selected randomly from five articles in four different newspapers published in Timor-Leste and from the widely read children's magazine *Lafaek* (Crocodile). The last ten were loanwords from Portuguese frequently used in Tetum, like *prezidente* (president), also taken from newspaper articles. The words 11-80 were arranged according to their length (from one to five syllables) and to whether they contained one consonant/one vowel syllables (*fahi*, pig) or syllables with consonant clusters and/or digraphs (*lakleur*, soon). The learners were asked to read aloud words from the list during a three minute interval, which was audio recorded. The score was the number of words correctly decoded in three minutes (ranging from 0 to 80).

The form filling task (see Appendix 5) consisted of a one page form in Tetum on which the following data needed to be filled out: name, date of birth, name of the village, subdistrict and district, first and second language and signature. Tetum words like *naran* (name) and *suku* (village) were printed, with a line next to them to write on. At the bottom of the paper, participants could complete the sentence: *Hau hakarak aprende lee no hakerek, tanba ...* (I want to

learn to read and write, because ...). The form filling score was the number of correctly completed items (eight in all) plus two points for correctly completed sentences or one point for incomplete sentences that contained words that made sense (the total ranging from 0 to 10). The completed sentences provided interesting information on why learners thought learning to read and write to be important; this information is presented in Chapter 7 as part of the description of adult learners' literacy ideas and values.

The word-writing task (see Appendix 6) consisted of ten words to be written on dictation. On the backside of the form mentioned above, the numbers 1 to 10 were printed, with after each number a line to write on. Ten Tetum words were read aloud in front of the group one by one, and the participants were asked to write them down. The words were chosen from the first 50 words of the word reading task (two words chosen randomly from the first ten words, two from the words 11 to 20, and so on). The words were ordered from simple and short, e.g., *paun* (bread), to longer and more complex, e.g., *hanoin* (think) and *bainhira* (when). The writing score was the number of correctly written words (ranging from 0 to 10).

Reliability of the four reading and writing tasks was high: Cronbach's alpha for grapheme recognition was .96, for word reading .99, for form filling .90 and for word writing .91 (N=434, 423, 414, and 357 resp.). Correlations between the four tasks were high and significant (all between .63 and .75,  $p=.000$ ). Together the scores on the four tasks give a good picture of 'beginning literacy'.

### **Pilot study**

During the pilot phase of my study, in June and July 2009, I tested draft versions of the instruments described above in five different districts in Timor-Leste. With the support of translators, I interviewed 17 teachers in adult literacy education while making use of the questionnaire, which at the time was still in English, and I filled out their answers. Of the teachers who participated in the pilot, two came from Liquiçá, two from Aileu, four from Manatuto, seven from Oecusse, and two from Dili. A total of 29 learners participated in the reading and writing tasks: six from Aileu, three from Manatuto, 13 from Oecusse, and seven from Dili. They all carried out the grapheme recognition task and the word-reading task, and filled out the form. The word-writing task was not available yet in the pilot study. With the support of translators, I asked nine learners about their background data (for which the form then still contained 21 questions).

Piloting the instruments lead to adaptations in content and language. In the teacher questionnaire, I made some minor changes: I added a question on years of pre-secondary education to avoid confusion about the total number of years; I dropped questions on the use of the teacher manual (which turned out to be

too detailed) and questions on the way the teachers would teach literacy (which turned out to be too difficult to answer since it seemed that most teachers were not used to talk on a meta-level about their literacy teaching). After these adaptations, the teacher questionnaire was translated into Tetum. I closely worked together with the Tetum translator at the Ministry of Education in Dili on the translation to make sure that the content and meaning of the questions would not change due to translation issues. We used the standard Tetum orthography as defined by INL. The changes in the learner data form were more fundamental: I decided to shorten the learner questions form from 21 to seven items only, in order not to put learners off before they even participated in the literacy tasks. I dropped questions about learners' language use in different domains in daily life, about the number of hours per week of literacy learning, their starting literacy level, the language of the literacy manuals, their reason(s) for wanting to learn to read and write, their expected use of new reading and writing skills, and their preferred language(s) for the literacy course. It turned out that these questions took too much time and made shy learners even more reluctant and nervous, which would potentially hamper their performance doing the reading and writing tasks. Most of the questions deleted here were later included in the interview guidelines for interviews with learner groups during the in-depth study.

After the pilot, I also made some changes in the reading and writing tasks. In the grapheme recognition task (of then 27 graphemes), I added three more graphemes that are used in only one of the languages (Tetum, Portuguese, Indonesian), since during the pilot most mistakes were made with this sort of graphemes. I added one more grapheme used in Portuguese and not in Tetum (q), one more grapheme used in Tetum and not in Portuguese (k) and one grapheme not used in either Tetum or Portuguese but frequently used in Indonesian (y). That way, the task would reveal more information on whether learners who did not speak one of these languages still could recognise graphemes used in that language. For practical reasons, I also split up the one page combining learner data and graphemes into two pages: one with the 30 graphemes to show to the learner, and one with the learner data and grapheme scores to be filled in by me. This enabled me to write down scores without distracting the learners in their task.

The word-reading task that I used in the pilot contained 60 words. Since quite a few learners were able to read the 60 words within the three-minute time slot (which I had not expected from beginning literacy learners) I added another 20 words. I also deleted a number of words that turned out to be Portuguese loans and replaced them by Tetum words instead, so that the first 70 words would mainly be Tetum words and only the last ten would be Portuguese loanwords. My reason for doing so was to avoid putting non-

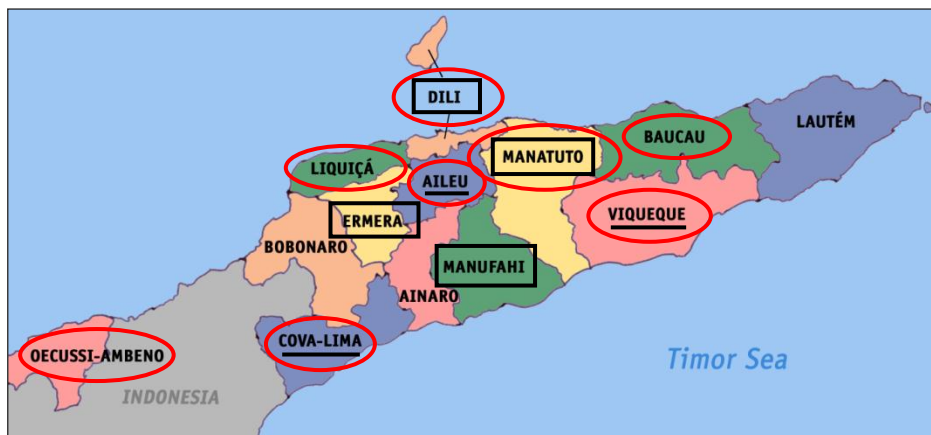
Portuguese speakers (most of the learners in the broad study, as it turned out) at a disadvantage.

In the form filling task I did not make any pilot-induced changes. The fourth task, the word-writing task, was added after the pilot in order to find out more about learners' writing ability and spelling strategies. In the form filling task it turned out that learners could score points by filling out strings of symbols that they might have learned by heart (like their names and signatures) without being able to spell them out. In the word-writing task the learners would also have to spell out words they had not written (and learnt by heart) before.

### **Data collection and analysis**

To collect the data, I carried out field visits to 73 adult literacy groups in eight districts (with different language contexts) in three literacy programmes (with different didactic approaches to adult literacy). The field trips took place from November 2009 until March 2011. The eight districts visited were: Aileu, Baucau, Covalima, Dili, Liquiçá, Manatuto, Oecusse and Viqueque (see Figure 4.1). The selection of districts that I visited was made by the national literacy coordinators at the Ministry of Education in Dili. It depended on weather and road conditions and on the situation of literacy education in the districts. During the field visits I was always accompanied by subdistrict or district coordinators and often also by national ministry or NGO staff. The local coordinators decided which groups I could visit in their districts and sub-districts, again depending on accessibility by road and on work related to the wet and dry season (i.e., harvest time). They accompanied me on the road (which often meant taking me to the literacy groups either on the back of their motorbikes or accompanying me on several hour long walks along trails in the mountains, occasionally crossing dry or flooded riverbeds). They assisted during the group visits and provided background information on what was happening in the literacy programmes. The many conversations we had provided me with useful information about adult literacy education at the local level. That is why I often took field notes of what coordinators said to me before, during and after the classes we visited.

From the coordinators' information I learned how the reality in the field did not always match with the research design on paper: local schedules differed from each other, the start and end dates of programmes varied per village. The original idea, which was to investigate achieved results in learning to read and write in the literacy programmes by collecting data twice (once at the beginning and once after three months of attending classes), had to be adapted to the situation on the ground. The adaptation implied that data were collected in all the groups that we were able to visit during our field trips.



**Figure 4.1:** The districts in which the broad study (circles) and the in-depth study took place (lines: only class observations; rectangulars: class observations and interviews) (source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Timor-Leste\\_districts\\_map.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Timor-Leste_districts_map.png))

The three Tetum literacy programmes the groups worked with were *Los Hau Bele* (23 groups), *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* (18 groups), and *YEP Literacy and Numeracy* (32 groups). Though *Los Hau Bele* differs from the other programmes in content and method (see the short description in Chapter 3), all three focus in the beginning on the acquisition of the alphabetic principle, the reading and writing of words and phrases and the filling out of forms, all in Tetum. In general six to nine hours of literacy classes were provided per week in all three programmes.

During the field visits each time we generally followed the same procedure. First we would speak with the local leader of the village. In most cases the leader had already been informed about our visit by the district or subdistrict coordinator. In each literacy group that we then visited, I first thanked the teacher and participants for allowing me to be there. Then I explained about the research project and the reason for this visit. I asked the teacher and learners whether they wanted to participate in this research project, making sure that everyone realised that participation was on a voluntary basis and the data would be used anonymously. In all cases I got informed consent for doing my research. The teachers were first asked to fill out the teacher questionnaire. If they needed help with understanding the written Tetum in the form, or extra explanations about some of the questions, the coordinator present would mostly help, often by giving extra explanations in the regional language. Afterwards I would sit together with each teacher and have a short interview with him/her that would allow me to complete the questions in the teacher questionnaire that had not been filled out yet.

With the learners we started with the two writing tasks that were done group-wise. Each learner received a handout with a pre-printed form on the front side and the numbers 1 to 10 plus lined spaces printed on the back side. After an explanation in Tetum, often translated in their own regional language, they were asked to fill out the blanks on the front page. After 15 to 20 minutes, the participants were asked to turn the page for the word-writing task, writing ten words on dictation. I would read each word out loud first after which the teacher or the coordinator would repeat each word a few times (thus making sure that my Tetum pronunciation would not confuse learners who were asked to write the words down). At the end we would repeat the list of ten words in one go to enable the learners to check their writing. Then I would collect all the papers and call the learners one by one to sit with me and a translator (often either the coordinator or the teacher). With each learner I had a brief conversation to collect background data which I then filled out on the background data form. After that I would guide each learner individually through the grapheme recognition task and the word reading task. During the interviews and reading and writing tasks, which all took place in Tetum, local teachers or coordinators explained and translated things in regional languages when needed. In the evenings I marked all the collected pages with date and location. I also made field notes of things that had attracted my attention or that I had come to know. All field notes were typed out and stored during or after the field visits. All the teacher questionnaires were stored in (paper) files. All forms with background data and reading and writing results of learners were stored in (paper) files as well.

The background information collected from learners and teachers (e.g., their age, sex, language, and education background) was entered into SPSS data files. The same was done with the learners' task results: the scores per item of the four reading and writing tasks were entered into SPSS data files and totals were calculated. Various sorts of analyses were carried out. Descriptive statistics were used to describe informants and their literacy abilities in frequency tables. T-tests and analysis of variance were used to compare groups and test moments, and correlational analysis and regression analysis to find out what learner and educational factors had an influence on (the development of) reading and writing abilities. The data analysis took place in three steps. The first focus was on the task scores of all 756 learners, with and without education and with or without previous adult literacy course attended. The second focus was only on the task scores of those learners without any prior education or literacy course attended (N=436). Those learners differed largely in the number of hours they had been provided with in their current literacy course. For that reason the third focus was on the task scores of those learners who had attended three to four months of literacy education (N=228). The choice for

looking at reading and writing ability after three to four months of literacy education attendance is related to the government's policy to provide an initial three months of literacy education within the national adult literacy campaign and three to four months of basic literacy within the Youth Employment Promotion programme. Findings of the broad study are presented in Chapter 5.

#### 4.2.2 In-depth study

In 2010-2011, I conducted a multiple case study on adult literacy education at different sites in Timor-Leste (for an overview see Appendix 7). Information was collected using methods of an ethnographic nature, resulting in a qualitative database. First, from November 2010 until February 2011, I observed a literacy class in three different districts: Viqueque, Aileu, and Covalima (see underlined district names on the map; Figure 4.1). I sat in the back of the class, observed and audio recorded the lessons. I took field notes of everything that happened in the classroom and I made pictures of the writing on the blackboard. This all enabled me to analyse the lessons in more detail later on. From July until November 2011, after these first three class observations, I carried out a case study in four other districts: Dili, Ermera, Manufahi, and Manatuto (see rectangles around district names on the map; Figure 4.1). In each district I stayed a week in a village or town to again observe and audio record literacy classes and, in addition, interview learners, teachers and literacy programme coordinators. To capture the local linguistic landscape, I took pictures of the uses of written language in public places (e.g., streets, squares, markets) near the lesson sites.

The districts that I visited were selected in consultation with national coordinators of adult literacy programmes at the Ministry of Education in Dili, making sure that the three different programmes that I focused upon in the broad study were included: *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin*, and *Iha Dalan* (the YEP programme was not running in the second half of 2011). Again, decisions on which districts could be visited were partly influenced by weather and road conditions determining accessibility of education sites. The same goes for the locations that I visited in the districts: these were selected after my arrival in the district capitals, in coordination with the district and subdistrict coordinators who knew the specific areas and local circumstances. Visiting education sites in the districts again involved motorbike rides and mountain trail walks, and the (sub)district coordinators always accompanied me.

The classes I observed in the district Viqueque (*aldeia* (= hamlet) Siralari, *suco* (= village) Carau-balo, subdistrict Viqueque) and in the district Covalima (*suco* Debos, subdistrict Suai) were *Los Hau Bele* classes, the class I observed in the district Aileu (*aldeia* Sarlala, *suco* Selo Kraik, subdistrict Aileu-Vila) was a *Hakat ba Oin* class. After these I observed three classes in one week in Dili

district (in *aldeia* Metin, *suco* Nain-Feto, subdistrict Lahane Oriental), all three of the same teacher and group. These classes were doing the *Los Hau Bele* literacy programme. I stayed one week in the district capital Gleno of Ermera district and from there I visited three classes of the same teacher and group in *aldeia* Tahobate, *suco* Tocoluli, subdistrict Railaku. These classes were also part of the *Los Hau Bele* literacy programme. In addition I visited one class in another village (*aldeia* Poeana, *suco* Humboe, subdistrict Ermera) that was part of the *Hakat ba Oin* programme. In the district Manufahi, I stayed one week in the district capital Same. From there I visited eight classes of five different groups, all in the subdistrict also named Same, all part of the *Iha Dalan* literacy programme (in *aldeia* Camilaran, *suco* Letefoho; *aldeia* Lapuro, *suco* Babulo; *aldeia* Sea-rema, *suco* Babulo; *aldeia* Bemetan, *suco* Betano; Rai-ubu, Letefoho). The coordinators in Same explained to me that in this period in this region, literacy classes took place only once a week because it was harvest time which meant that on the other days of the week as many people as possible had to work in the fields. In Manatuto district I visited two classes of the same teacher and group in *aldeia* Carlilo, *suco* Aiteas, subdistrict Manatuto-Vila, and another group in *aldeia* Rembor, *suco* Aiteas, subdistrict Manatuto-Vila. Both groups were part of the *Hakat ba Oin* programme.

The seven districts in which I observed literacy classes differ in various aspects, e.g., their location, number of inhabitants, and languages spoken. Each of the districts has its own multilingual context with different regional languages and more extensive or more limited use of Tetum, Portuguese and Indonesian. In the description below, I use figures from the 2010 Population Census and from Hull (2003; see the language map in Chapter 3). Viqueque district is located in the southeast of the country. It has 70,036 inhabitants. The main languages spoken in the district are Tetum-Terik, Makasae, Makalero, Midiki, Kairui, and Nauweti. Aileu district is located in the midwest of the country. It has 44,325 inhabitants. The main languages spoken in the district are Tetum and Mambai. Covalima district is located in the southwest of the country. It has 59,455 inhabitants. The main languages spoken in the district are Bunak, Tetum-Terik, and Kemak. Dili district is located in the north of the country. It has 234,026 inhabitants (almost 22% of Timor-Leste's total population of 1,066,409), of whom the majority live in the capital, also called Dili. The main language spoken in the district is Tetum, but because many people from other parts of the country have moved to the capital, also many other regional languages are spoken there (e.g., Mambae, Makasae, and Tokodede). Ermera district is located in the west of the country. It counts 117,064 inhabitants, many of whom are involved in coffee agriculture. Ermera's capital is called Gleno. Main languages spoken in Ermera are Mambae, Tetum, and Kemak. Manufahi district is located in the south of the country. It has 48,628 inhabitants. Its



capital is Same. Main languages spoken in Manufahi are Mambae, Tetum, Tetum-Terik, Lakalai, and Isni. Manatuto district is located in the middle of the country. It has 42,742 inhabitants. Its capital is also called Manatuto. The main languages spoken in this district are Galolen, Habun, Idaté, Tetum-Terik, and Midiki.

### **Participants**

The participants in the in-depth study were adult literacy learners, teachers and coordinators. In total I observed and audio recorded 20 classes of 12 different groups (see Appendix 7 for an overview). In the first three groups that I visited, I only observed and audio recorded one literacy class. In the other nine groups, apart from observing and audio recording classes, I also conducted interviews with learners, teachers, and coordinators. In total I interviewed nine groups of literacy learners. I collected background data and some information about their reading and writing ability (occasionally using the reading and writing tasks from the broad study) from 75 learners. Ten teachers filled out the teacher questionnaire that was also used in the broad study and were interviewed afterwards, not only about the questionnaire, but about a range of other things related to their teaching (see below). As a final step, I interviewed six district or subdistrict coordinators of adult literacy programmes.

### **Data collection and analysis**

To each group that I visited, I first explained the reason for my visit and the research that I was doing (my Tetum and Portuguese was then most of the times translated into a regional language by the coordinator or the teacher). I always asked the teacher's and participants' permission to observe their class that day (although my being there had already been arranged and approved beforehand through the local coordinator). After the learners and the teacher had confirmed that I was welcome in their class, I sat in the back of their classroom. From there I observed and audio recorded classes and took field notes based on my observations. I used still photography to capture texts written on the blackboard and the layout of the class. The choice of still photography was made because using video recording seemed too intruding. During the class observations I used an observation checklist (see Appendix 8) to make sure that all aspects of the classes visited would be described. The checklist contained key words regarding classroom layout, presence of furniture, electricity, black or whiteboard, posters on the walls, availability of books, notebooks, pencils, classroom surroundings, and languages used during the lesson. While observing, attention was paid to how the teacher taught the learners to read and write, e.g., how he/she explained new lesson content, how he/she interacted

with the group, what languages teacher and learners used, how they used the literacy manuals, the blackboard and the notebooks.

After the class observations, I interviewed learners, teachers and coordinators. In total 25 interviews were conducted as part of the in-depth study: nine with learner groups (of 7 to 15 learners), ten with teachers and six with coordinators (see Appendix 7). The interviews were semi-structured oral interviews in which the interviewees could freely talk about the topics addressed; interview guidelines were used to be sure that all relevant topics would be covered. Different interview guidelines were used for learner groups, for the teachers and for the coordinators of literacy programmes related to the interviewees' specific activities and roles (see Appendix 9).

The interview guideline for learner groups included topics like the kind of things they learned during the literacy classes, whether these were difficult or easy to learn and why, what more or other kind of things they would like to learn in their literacy course, whether they used what they had learned in the classes in their daily life or work in the community outside the classes. It also included mediation as a topic: whether they sometimes asked people to help them when they had to read or write things (outside the classroom), who they would ask and what for exactly. The guideline also included questions on opinions, values and future learning needs like for example their opinion about the literacy course they attended, the teaching, the materials used, whether and why being able to read and write was important for them, whether it was important to receive a certificate afterwards, about what they would like to learn in continued education after this literacy course, and about the things they would like to be able to do (in terms of reading and writing) but could not do yet (e.g., reading newspapers, the Bible, letters; writing letters, prayers, product names and prices) and their reasons for wanting to be able to do so.

The guideline for teachers included topics like language use in the classes, lesson content, didactics, qualities of a good literacy teacher, their opinions on the literacy programmes and materials, teacher training, and their wishes about future teaching. The guideline also included questions about the motivation, participation and learning needs of their learners.

Many of the topics in the teacher interview guideline were also included in the guideline for interviews with coordinators, but here topics were added that specifically addressed their coordination work: the tasks and responsibilities of a coordinator, the problems they encountered in their work, their role in improving learner motivation and participation, their role in monitoring and evaluating literacy programmes and the provision of continued education options after having acquired literacy.

During the interviews with teachers, I also used the questionnaires that they had completed on my request. These were the same questionnaires as were

used in the broad study. Sometimes teachers had not answered all the questions, so during the interviews I tried to see whether it was possible to fill the gaps. The interviews with teachers and coordinators were done individually. The learners, however, I mostly interviewed in groups, because I had the impression that this made them feel more comfortable than being interviewed individually. The interviews provided me with information on the language backgrounds of the teacher and the learners, the teaching/learning routines that they were involved in and the literacy practices they engaged in in their daily lives. All interviews were audio-recorded.

To capture the linguistic landscape and the local literacy environment of the four sites, still photography was used: I took pictures of visibly displayed language (printed, written or otherwise) and of literacy practices in several domains of daily life, e.g., on streets, at markets and in shops. I photographed street signs, government messages, printed and handwritten shop signs, written language on the packaging of products sold at local markets, letters taped next to church entrances (often announcing meetings, festivities, ceremonies), election posters and instructions, graffiti on walls. In short, 'anything readable' was photographed, resulting in a collection of photographs that were coded on location, type of sign and languages used. When spotted, I also took pictures of people who were reading or writing something (after asking their permission).

The data collected during class observations, interviews and walks in the surroundings were put together in a synopsis: a detailed account of the teaching and learning observed, the subjects discussed and the local literacy environment. From the accounts of the observed classes, episodes or 'key incidents' were selected, explained by Kroon and Sturm (2007:109) as 'reduced representation(s) of reality offering a key to open up reality, to gain insight into micro-processes that would otherwise remain unnoticed'. These key incidents, showing glimpses of classroom interaction and teaching practices in adult literacy classes, are presented in Chapter 6. Topics discussed in interviews were coded, counted and summarised. Findings related to teaching/learning processes are presented in Chapter 6 as well. Findings related to literacy practices in daily life (out of class) are presented in Chapter 7.

### 4.2.3 Database

In 2010-2011, the research design of the two studies and the data collection as described above resulted in a quantitative and a qualitative database. The quantitative database contained data on all participants from the broad study: 100 teachers (including the 17 from the pilot, because the teacher questionnaire was only slightly adapted after the pilot) and 756 learners (none from the pilot, because of the four reading and writing tasks two were adapted after the pilot and one was not used at all during the pilot). These data were entered in SPSS

files, using the information filled out in teacher questionnaires (originals were kept in file) and in learner background data forms and using the results of the four reading and writing tasks done by learners (of which audio recordings and original filled out forms were kept). In addition to these quantitative data, original field notes made during group visits and conversations with coordinators and teachers were kept and typed out. The qualitative database consisted of two parts: (1) detailed accounts of class observations, based on audio-recordings, field notes and still photography; (2) detailed accounts of interviews with learner groups and their teachers and coordinators, based on audio-recordings. In another SPSS file all coded data of the linguistic landscape study were entered, based on the collection of still photographs of signs in the public sphere.

## CHAPTER 5

# Results of learning in adult literacy programmes

This chapter deals with the results achieved in learning to read and write in Tetum in the available adult literacy programmes and with factors that are important in the development of adults' literacy ability. It presents the results of the broad study that I carried out in eight different districts among 73 different literacy groups in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste from 2009 until 2011. Section 5.1 presents the research questions and method. Section 5.2 describes the adult literacy education provided by the government in Timor-Leste in 2009-2011. Section 5.3 focuses on the literacy levels acquired by the learners who participated in the literacy programmes and on the learner and educational variables that influenced their achievements. Section 5.4 zooms in on processes in initial reading and writing by adult literacy learners. The main conclusions of this chapter will be presented in Section 5.5.

### 5.1 Research questions and method

As indicated in the previous chapters, adult literacy rates are low in Timor-Leste and after independence in 2002, the new Ministry of Education put much effort into the development and implementation of national adult literacy programmes and a national adult literacy campaign. The literacy materials of those programmes were developed in the two official languages of the country, Tetum and Portuguese. At the start of the broad study in 2009, however, it became clear that the national adult literacy programmes in most cases were carried out in Tetum and that no more programmes in Portuguese were being implemented since not many learners were proficient (and not many teachers proficient enough) in Portuguese. This explains why the focus in this chapter will be on adult literacy acquisition in Tetum, the lingua franca of the country in which a majority of Timorese adults is more or less proficient (Taylor-Leech, 2009). The aim of the broad study was to offer a description of adult literacy education in Timor-Leste in the years 2009-2011, to investigate the development of the basic literacy ability that learners achieved in adult literacy classes and to

investigate 'what worked' in these classes, i.e., what factors promoted growth in adults' reading and writing abilities. The main research question of the broad study, *What are the results achieved in learning to read and write in Tetum in the available adult literacy programmes and what factors are the most important in the development of adults' literacy ability?*, was broken down into three more specific questions:

- 1 What did adult literacy education look like in national programmes in Timor-Leste in 2009-2011:
  - a What were the main characteristics of the programmes that were used;
  - b Who were the teachers, to what extent did they differ in teacher experience and expertise and what instructional practices did they apply;
  - c Who were the adult literacy learners participating in the adult literacy programmes?
- 2 What basic literacy skills did the learners acquire in the adult literacy programmes and what were the most important predictors of success in achieving basic literacy ability?
- 3 What were developmental processes in the learners' literacy acquisition and to what extent did those processes differ in the different programmes?

The adult literacy education provided by the government in Timor-Leste in 2009-2011 included three literacy programmes that were implemented in recent years. In Section 5.2 these programmes are described, as well as the literacy teachers (of the visited groups) who were providing the adult literacy classes using these programmes and the adult learners who were attending these classes during the research period. Information about the programmes was retrieved from an analysis of the course materials for learners and teachers and from interviews with national coordinators of the programmes. Information about the teachers was retrieved from a questionnaire that had been completed by 100 teachers. Information about the learners was retrieved from the brief conversations that we had had before they took part in reading and writing tasks.

The literacy ability of these learners and factors that influenced their achievements are reported on in Section 5.3. Learner variables that might influence literacy development are age, prior education and proficiency in the target language. Educational variables that might influence literacy development can be related to the programmes used, the characteristics of the teachers involved, the instructions given or the circumstances in which the education takes place.

It was clear from the beginning that learners in the literacy classes in my study might differ in previous literacy education experiences, but the expectation was that most of them would have started their literacy education as

adults and that for all of them, literacy teaching in Tetum would probably be new. For this reason a basic literacy assessment was conducted with all learners (N=756) in the groups that were visited in the eight districts. It turned out, however, that a large part (31%) of the participants in these groups already had attended some form of education, mostly primary school and some even a few years of secondary school. Some had attended adult literacy classes before in different programmes. The three programmes however, were not intended for participants with previous education. Therefore, the main part of Section 5.3 will focus on the acquisition of literacy in Tetum of those learners that had no previous (literacy) education (N=436) and could be considered real beginners in reading and writing.

The three programmes differed in duration: one had an intended duration of three months, one of four months and one of six months for beginners plus six months for more advanced learners. After having conducted the three-month programme in a certain region with all members of its target group, the Timor-Leste government would declare that region 'free from illiteracy'. From literature, however, we know that adults generally take significantly more time to learn to read and write (Kurvers et al., 2010). To investigate whether a three to four month period might suffice for adult literacy learners in Timor-Leste, special attention is given to the basic literacy skills of those learners (of the 436) who only attended the classes for about three to four months (N=228).

Apart from the above mentioned learner variables (prior education, previously attended literacy courses and the number of months of current literacy education attended), other variables might influence the development of basic literacy skills by adults in Timor-Leste as well. Some additional education characteristics that I will look at are related to the programmes used, to the teachers involved and to the target language of literacy education. First, the three programmes provided differed in approach of the teaching of beginning reading and writing. Whereas two of the programmes more or less combined the phonics approach with attention to connecting instruction to the daily life experiences of the learners, the other programme introduced numbers as an additional didactic principle. Secondly, teaching traditions, teacher qualifications and teaching resources might differ from what is known in adult literacy education in western countries. Teachers for example, will most probably not have attended a three or four year teacher training programme. Some aspects of the traditional (Portuguese) way of teaching literacy (as was broadly adopted in Timor-Leste) might differ from what is common in many western countries, such as a strong focus on the syllable as an important unit in reading and writing, or the use of Portuguese letter names. In addition less (material) resources are available. What's more, Tetum, the target language in adult literacy classes, is not everyone's mother tongue and probably even not known by everyone. In those

cases teachers might need to use other languages as (additional) languages of instruction or explanation. In an analysis of the main predictors of success in developing literacy ability, special focus will therefore be put on the impact of these variables.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the core principles in learning to read and write in an alphabetic script is getting a grip on the alphabetic principle. Results from previous studies in adult (second language) literacy acquisition revealed that, like children, also adults seem to go through stages that pass from guessing and letter naming via applying the alphabetic principle through in the end direct word recognition. In Section 5.4 I will zoom in on the developmental features of initial reading and writing by adult literacy learners, by looking at word recognition strategies of beginning readers and the spelling stages that beginning writers go through. For that analysis, I will use the data of a group of participants that was assessed twice, with about three months between the two measurement moments (N=64). So in short, the groups that will be dealt with in Chapter 5 are presented in Table 5.1:

**Table 5.1:** Groups of participants dealt with in Chapter 5

Group	N
All participants	756
The participants without prior primary/literacy education	436
The participants without prior primary/literacy education, who attended the literacy course for three to four months	228
The participants without prior primary/literacy education, who attended the literacy course for three to four months and did the reading and writing tasks twice, the second time after three months	64

## 5.2 Adult literacy education in Timor-Leste: programmes, teachers and learners

### 5.2.1 Programmes

This section describes the three adult literacy programmes that were provided by the government at the time this research was conducted, i.e., *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin/Iha Dalan*, and *YEP*. In Chapter 3 these programmes have already briefly been introduced; here I will describe materials (see Appendix 1 for a list), approaches to literacy teaching and learning and organisational aspects of these programmes in more detail.



### Los Hau Bele<sup>19</sup>

The *Los Hau Bele* programme was piloted in Timor-Leste in 2005-2006 and launched as part of the national adult literacy campaign in 2007. It was based on the *Yo, sí puedo* programme that was developed in Cuba in the late 1990s and has since been used in many other countries around the world. After a first phase of using the programme in its Portuguese version (*Sim Eu Posso*), it was decided to adapt the materials more to the local circumstances and the language situation in Timor-Leste, and to redevelop them in Tetum.

The *Los Hau Bele* programme materials consist of a 20-page teacher manual, a 16-page learner manual and 65 video lessons on DVD. The teacher manual provides information about the programme and general guidelines on how to teach adults, how to structure a lesson, how to organise a 13-week programme with five one and a half hour lessons a week. It also explains the content and use of the student manual, which is based on connections between letters and numbers which should, in the words of the teacher manual ‘facilitate the learning process’. In the Tetum version of the teacher manual the formulation is as follows (*Los Hau Bele, Manual treinador*, p. 11):

Original text in Tetum	English translation
<i>‘Kartila nebe prepara ona simples teb-tebes. Hatudu figuras sira ho letra riska iha okos ho número, letras nian. Atu fo hanoin ba partisipantes sira bele hanoin hetan número ho letra. Usa numerasaun hanesan meu ida atu partisipantes sira bele hatene prosesu oinsa, aprende le no hakerek.’</i>	The manual that was prepared is very simple. It shows figures with underlined letters and numbers, of these letters. In order to remind the participants that they can remember numbers with a letter. Use numbering like this is a means/way so that the participants can know the process how, learn to read and write.

In the Portuguese version of the teacher manual (*Sim Eu Posso: Manual do monitor*, p. 13) that was used before the Tetum version was available, it was formulated slightly differently:

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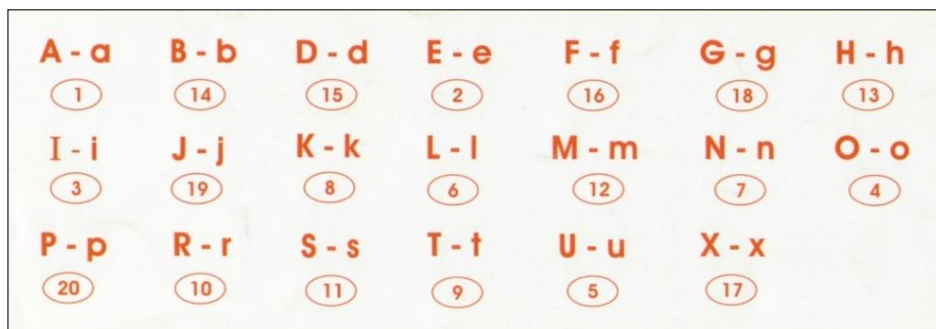
<sup>19</sup> This section is partly based on Boon and Kurvers (2012b).

Original text in Portuguese	English translation
<p>'A Cartilha que foi preparada é muito simples. Apresenta o mesmo formato em todas as páginas, e foi concebida estabelecendo um vínculo entre os números e as letras, de maneira que o alfabetizando realize um processo de associação entre o conhecido (os números) e o desconhecido (as letras). A utilização da numeração é um meio para facilitar o processo de aprendizagem da escrita.'</p>	<p>The manual that was prepared is very simple. It presents the same format on all the pages, and was designed establishing a bond between the numbers and the letters, so that the literacy learner realises an association process between the known (the numbers) and the unknown (the letters). The use of the numbering is a way to facilitate the learning process of the writing.</p>

According to the further explanation in the teacher manual (Tetum version), the numbers 1 to 20 are connected to 20 letters as follows: First the five vowels are connected to the numbers 1 to 5: A is connected to 1, E to 2, I to 3, O to 4 and U to 5. Then, 15 consonants are connected to the numbers 6 to 20, in the order that they are dealt with in the programme: L is connected to 6, N to 7, K to 8, T to 9, R to 10, S to 11, M to 12, H to 13, B to 14, D to 15, F to 16, X to 17, G to 18, J to 19, and P to 20 (see also Figure 5.1). After these connections of letters to numbers, the teacher manual pays attention to combinations of consonants, like *bl*, *pl*, *kr* (combined with vowels to build syllables: *bla ble bli blo blu, pla ple pli plo plu*, etc.) and other letter combinations, like *au*, *ai*, *se*, *je*, and *ze*.

Then the manual explains the three phases of teaching in the 65 lessons. The first phase contains an explanation of the programme (lesson 1), of the student manual, the (teaching of the) use of a pencil and how to make exercises in the student manual (lesson 2), the numbers 0-30 (lessons 3-5) and the vowels a, e, i, o, and u (lessons 6-10). The second phase contains the study of the consonants (lessons 11-30) and the above mentioned frequent combinations of letters (lessons 31-47). The teacher is recommended to each and every time combine letters with numbers and then combine them with drawings for key words containing that letter, like it is done in the learner manual (see below). With every key word a sentence should be made, e.g., *Sira han ha'as tasak* (They eat ripe mangos). The key word (here: *sira*, they) is then taken out and divided into syllables (*si-ra*), then other possible syllables should be practiced (*sa, se, si, so, su*, and *as, es, is, os, us*), new words added and new sentences made. The third phase is for consolidation and the teacher is recommended to present the learners with a lot of repetition and exercises. In the lesson plan we can see that the third phase also contains some math: the four operations addition, subtraction, multiplication and division (lessons 48-57). Lessons 58-64 are dedicated to repetition and in lesson 65 the final test is taken.

The learner manual starts with four pages on which the 20 letters to be learned are presented: five letters per page, always in capital and lower case, each combined with a number, a key word and a drawing, some words divided in syllables and some used in phrases (see Figure 5.3). Each of these four pages on the left is combined with a page on the right with lined spaces to practice writing. The next page presents combinations of consonants (*bl, pr, kr*) with their syllables (*bla, ble, bli*, etc.), diphthongs (*ai, au*) or combinations of consonants and vowels (*je, se, ze*). After that, three more pages provide lined spaces to practice writing. Then there is a page with exercises for numeracy, the four numeracy operations, and one page with a three-line statement in Tetum about being able to read and the importance of daily training. The last page presents the final test that learners have to do at the end of the programme, i.e., a form on which they can fill out their name, sex, country, the date, some phrases about themselves or their lives, and a signature.



**Figure 5.1:** The letters and numbers as printed on the back cover of the *Los Hau Bele* learner manual

The DVDs contain the 65 lessons that are the heart of the programme. In most of the lessons a new letter or letter combination is introduced: one sees a teacher explaining the new lesson content and exercises to a group of adult learners, each time following more or less the same order (slightly different from the recommendations in the teacher manual) like in lesson 18 (see Figure 5.2, that presents my summary of the lesson after having watched it on DVD). After a certain number of lessons (often four) in which new letters or letter combinations are introduced, there is a repetition lesson.

1	Phrase	<i>Sanan mo'os.</i> (The pan is clean)
2	Key word	<i>sanan</i> (pan)
3	Syllables	<i>sa-nan</i>
4	Letter and number	<u>s</u> <u>S</u> and how to form <i>s</i> and <i>S</i> 11 11
5	Syllables	<i>s + a = sa, etc. sa, se, si, so, su.</i>
6	Syllables and numbers	<u>a</u> <u>s</u> <u>e</u> <u>s</u> <u>i</u> <u>s</u> <u>o</u> <u>s</u> <u>u</u> <u>s</u> 1 11    2 11    3 11    4 11    5 11
7	Phrase and numbers	<u>S</u> <u>a</u> <u>a</u> <u>a</u> <u>m</u> <u>o</u> ' <u>o</u> <u>s</u> 11 1 7 1 7    ... 4 4 11
8	Repetition syllables and numbers	<i>s + a = sa, etc. sa se si so su</i> <u>a</u> <u>s</u> <u>e</u> <u>s</u> <u>i</u> <u>s</u> <u>o</u> <u>s</u> <u>u</u> <u>s</u> 1 11    2 11    3 11    4 11    5 11
9	Write letters	Write <i>s</i> and <i>S</i> on dotted lines
10	More words with <i>s</i>	<i>sosa</i> (to buy), <i>sunu</i> (to burn), etc.

**Figure 5.2:** My summary of *Los Hau Bele* lesson number 18 after having watched it on DVD

Teachers who worked in the *Los Hau Bele* programme could attend a one-day training session every two weeks. Here they learned about the didactic order in *Los Hau Bele*, how to use the DVDs in the classroom and how to follow-up on the DVD lessons with their own explanations and exercises for the learners in their classes.

Learners who passed the final test after 65 lessons received a certificate. The Ministry of Education aimed at having *Los Hau Bele* classes in each of the 442 villages in the country, and kept track of the number of learners who (successfully) finished *Los Hau Bele*: 25,000 by July 2009,<sup>20</sup> 40,000 by November 2009,<sup>21</sup> 121,000 by June 2011,<sup>22</sup> 162,000 by April 2012<sup>23</sup> and 204,463 by January 2013.<sup>24</sup> As mentioned, part of the campaign strategy was to declare regions 'free from

<sup>20</sup> Presentation by Minister of Education J. Cândia Freitas on 06-07-2009 at the 'Transforming Timor-Leste Conference' in Dili.

<sup>21</sup> Information dd. 17-11-2009 from the Cuban coordinator for Dili district, at the Ministry of Education.

<sup>22</sup> Information dd. 27-06-2011 from the coordinator of the Cuban advisers, at the Ministry of Education.

<sup>23</sup> Information dd. 23-04-2012 from one of the Cuban coordinators.

<sup>24</sup> Information dd. 18-04-2013 from the Director of Recurrent Education, at the Ministry of Education.

illiteracy' after all participants in that region had finished the three-month programme: Atauro island (which is part of Dili district) was the first region to be declared 'free from illiteracy' by the government in December 2009, Oecusse district followed in September 2010. The districts of Manatuto, Manufahi, and Lautem were declared 'free from illiteracy' in June 2011; Aileu and Covalima followed in November 2011. The districts Liquiçá, Baucau, and Ermera finished the programme in the first half of 2012,<sup>25</sup> and Bobonaro, Viqueque, Ainaro, and lastly Dili in the second half of 2012.<sup>26</sup> By December 2012 the programme had been completed in all 13 districts.


































1 - a - A  umã	2 - e - E  rei	3 - i - I  familia	4 - o - O  loron	5 - u - U  fulan	16 - f - F  faru	17 - x - X  xalis	18 - g - G  goiaba	19 - j - J  janela	20 - p - P  paun
		 1  4  5  2  3					 16  19  20  17		
Uma Timor loro sae.	Uma Timor loro sae.	a - A o - O u - U e - E i - I			m _ T _ m _ r l _ r _ s _ .	Nia hatsis faru.	Nia hatsis faru. fa - ru	J - J p - P x - X g - G	Paun ida besik iha janela.
									
umã o - A	Mama rei nia oan.	Mama rei nia oan.	rei e - I i - I	Fulan naroman. u - U u - U	faru f - F	Hau han goiaba.	Hau han goiaba. goiaba	ja - ne - la j - J g - G	pa - pa - oi po - oi p - P

Figure 5.3: *Los Hau Bele* – learner book, p. 2 and p. 8

### Hakat ba Oin and Iha Dalan<sup>27</sup>

The literacy programme *Hakat ba Oin* aims at beginning literacy learners, *Iha Dalan* is for learners with an already more advanced literacy level. Both programmes are in Tetum and were designed to each take about six months, although the actual duration depends on the number of lessons per week, the learners' level and speed. The curriculum for the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* programmes was developed in 2004-2005 in a collaboration between Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education, local and international NGOs, and multilateral organisations that had built experience in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste.<sup>28</sup> The first materials were piloted in 2006-2007 and revised versions were

<sup>25</sup> Information dd. 30-04-2012 from the coordinator of the Cuban advisers, at the Ministry of Education.

<sup>26</sup> Information dd. 18-04-2013 from the Director of Recurrent Education, at the Ministry of Education.

<sup>27</sup> In the years 2004-2008, I was involved in the development of the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals, and in teacher training and capacity building related to the new programme, while working at Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education as an adult literacy adviser paid by UNDP.

<sup>28</sup> In the development of the curriculum were involved: the National Directorate of Non-Formal Education, *Belun*, *Dai Popular*, *GFFTL*, *GOMUTIL*, *Naroma Group Bucoli*, *OPMT*, *Sahe* Institute for Liberation, Timor Aid, OXFAM GB, Care International, UNDP TL, UNESCO TL, and UNICEF TL.

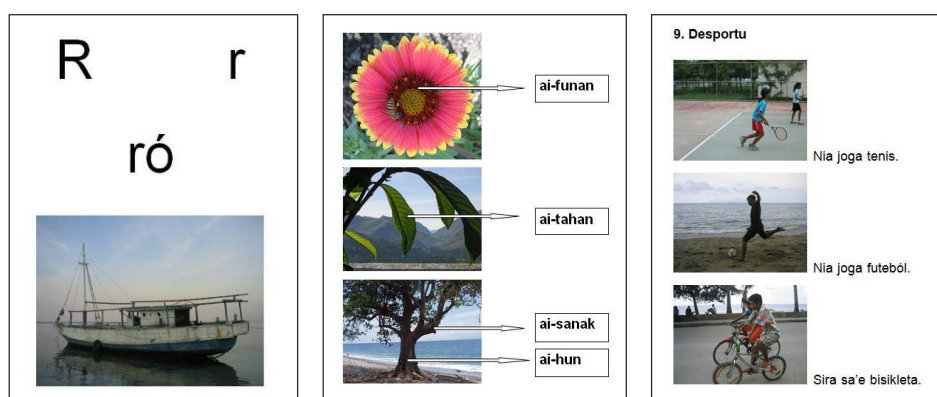
implemented nationwide in 2007 (*Hakat ba Oin*) and 2008 (*Iha Dalan*). Portuguese versions of all materials, called *Passo em Frente* and *A Caminho*, have been developed alongside the development of the Tetum versions, so to have all materials available in the country's two official languages. From their implementation until today, both programmes have been used (mainly in their Tetum version) in the ministry's literacy programme *Alfanamor* in all 13 districts of the country and by various NGOs.<sup>29</sup> Since the start of the development of this programme in 2004 until 2013, the Ministry has each year been providing several teacher training weeks for the almost 300 teachers using this programme (of whom about 260 contracted by the ministry and the rest by NGOs). In 2013-2014, the programme was scaled up to 442 teachers, one in each village (*suco*), mainly for *Iha Dalan*, but where relevant also for *Hakat ba Oin*.

The *Hakat ba Oin* programme materials consist of four learner books of 100 pages each and a 46-page teacher manual. In the learner books, pictures from Timor-Leste on subjects relevant for adult learners are combined with texts and exercises. Book 1 deals with the 26 letters of the alphabet, key words for each letter, the numbers 1 to 10, and the writing of names and signatures. Book 2, 3, and 4 are each built around the same ten themes: 'in the street', 'in and around the house', 'food', 'family', 'nature', 'body and health', 'work', 'free time', 'reading and writing', and 'sites and culture in Timor-Leste'. Book 2 provides content at word level, book 3 at phrase level and book 4 at (short) text level. The first two books emphasise analysis and synthesis of phoneme-grapheme correspondence: dividing words into letters/sounds (decoding) and combining letters/sounds into words again. With the exercises the learner can train grapheme recognition and the reading and writing of letters, syllables and words. Book 2 provides pictures and exercises with around 130 words, then practices the writing of the names of the learner's village and district, and finishes with exercises on the numbers 1 to 20 and bank notes until 20 dollar. The third book provides pictures and exercises on 40 phrases. The exercises focus on the reading and writing of words, word groups and complete phrases. After each fourth phrase, the learners are invited to make phrases about their own lives (by answering questions about the same themes). The book also provides training in reading and writing the names of the days and months, how to write birth dates, the names of the numbers until 20 in Tetum and the use of a year calendar. The fourth book provides the learner with 25 short texts with pictures and exercises. After every two or three texts, the learner is invited to write a short text about

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<sup>29</sup> Some of the NGOs that have used *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* materials in their literacy programmes are: *Fundação Cristál*, *Fundação Buka Matenek*, *Fundação Xanana Gusmão*, *GFFTL*, *Timor Aid*, *Juvep* (Atauro), *World Vision*, *Maryknoll Community & CRTA* (Aileu), *Hera Medical Center*, *Fokupers*, *Forum WPO* (Oecusse), *Moris Foun* (Maliana), *Fundasaun Comunidade ba Futuru* (Covalima), and *Vida Mais* (Dili).

his/her own life, by answering a few questions about the same themes. Then there are exercises on writing your sex, nationality and telephone number on a form, and the filling out of complete simple forms is repeated. To end with, the book provides training with the numbers until 100. After finishing the four *Hakat ba Oin* books the learners are familiar with the reading and writing of letters, words, phrases and short texts, with the numbers until 100, written as numbers and as words in Tetum, basic calculations and filling out basic forms. The *Hakat ba Oin* teacher manual contains instructions and suggestions for teachers to work with each book, tests to be used after each book and at the end of the course plus a tentative schedule for a six-month *Hakat ba Oin* course.



**Figure 5.4:** *Hakat ba Oin* – book 1, p. 40; book 2, p. 38; book 4, p. 25

The *Iha Dalan* programme provides literacy learners in Timor-Leste who just finished a beginners' course (e.g., *Hakat ba Oin*) with extensive training in the reading and writing of short texts with longer, more complex words on a variety of themes. The programme materials consist of two learner books of 150 pages each, and a 28-page teacher manual. The two learner books contain in total 14 modules on themes that are relevant to adult learners in Timor-Leste. The seven modules in learner book 1 are: 'history', 'human rights', 'education', 'mathematics', 'health', 'reproductive health', and 'the environment', all in Timor-Leste's context. The seven modules in learner book 2 are: 'geography', 'languages and communication', 'state administration', (basic) 'science', 'agriculture', 'economy', and 'local culture', again all in Timor-Leste's context. Texts and pictures of places, products and cultural or daily practices in Timor-Leste are combined with reading and writing exercises. The reading exercises focus on text comprehension but also on the reading of the various longer or more complex words (dividing them up in syllables and putting these together to whole words again). The writing exercises train the writing of these more complex words, but also the writing of phrases using the newly learnt words and of

statements and short texts related to the themes mentioned above. The *Iha Dalan* teacher manual provides instructions and suggestions for teachers, a final test to use after each book, and a tentative six-month schedule to work through the two *Iha Dalan* learner books.

Adult learners were tested by the Ministry after each course and those who successfully finished the courses received *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* certificates. According to the Ministry, until 2013 each year around 5,500 participants could take part in these programmes (about 260 teachers), and after up scaling to one group per *suco* (442 teachers) the capacity was increased to around 8,800 participants per year.<sup>30</sup>



**Figure 5.5:** *Iha Dalan* – book 1, p. 122 (about the importance of skilled birth attendance); book 2, p. 109 (about agriculture and the wet season)

### YEP Literacy & Numeracy

*YEP Literacy & Numeracy* courses were part of the *Youth Employment Promotion (YEP)* programme that was carried out by the Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment in 2009-2011 and that was coordinated by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and with local NGOs.<sup>31</sup> Although the target group for *YEP Literacy and Numeracy* courses were people from 15 until 29 years, in most places that I visited during my study, also people older than 29 were taking part in the courses. In many cases, especially in the more remote rural areas, the *YEP* courses were the only literacy courses organised in the village, so it was decided locally that as many low-literate inhabitants as possible should benefit from them. For these courses, which were supposed to take four months, the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals were summarised in the more compact books *YEP*

<sup>30</sup> Information dd. 25-02-2014 from the head of the literacy department of The National Directorate of Recurrent Education (Ministry of Education).

<sup>31</sup> NGOs: *GFFTL, Fundação Cristal, Fundasaun Buka Matenek*, and Timor Aid.



*Livru 1* and *YEP Livru 2*, each of about 150 pages.<sup>32</sup> No teacher manual was developed; teachers would receive didactic guidelines during the training sessions they attended before teaching in a *YEP* course. Learner book 1 contains a selection of *Hakat ba Oin* content and exercises, focusing first on the recognition and writing of graphemes and words. After that, work continues with the recognition of numbers and how to say and write them in Tetum. Then the book provides training on writing names and signatures and filling out basic forms. The last part of the book focuses on the reading and writing of phrases and texts. Learner book 2 contains a selection of *Iha Dalan* content and exercises. Selected were the seven modules with at the same time the easiest texts and the highest relevance for this target group of young people. The seven modules selected were 'human rights', 'health', 'mathematics', 'environment', 'languages and communication', 'economy', and 'reproductive health'.



**Figure 5.6:** *YEP Literacy & Numeracy* – book 1, p. 139 (about working at the market); book 2, p. 22 (about the importance of breastfeeding)

The data on the programmes presented above are summarised in Table 5.2.

<sup>32</sup> The compact versions of the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* manuals, called '*YEP Livru 1*' and '*YEP Livru 2*', were developed with my involvement.

**Table 5.2:** Overview of adult literacy programmes where data were collected for this study

Programme	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	<i>Hakat ba Oin</i> and <i>Iha Dalan</i> ( <i>Alfanamor</i> )	YEP literacy & numeracy
Provider	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education	Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment
Context	Within the National Literacy Campaign	One-year National Literacy Programme <i>Alfanamor</i>	Youth Employment Promotion programme
Duration	3 months	6 months plus 6 months	4 months
Location	All 13 districts All 442 <i>sucos</i>	All 13 districts, 2008-2013: about 260 teachers 2013-today: all 442 <i>sucos</i>	10 districts
Package	65 lessons on DVD Teacher manual 20p Learner booklet 16p	<i>Hakat ba Oin</i> : 4 learner books (100p each) and 1 teacher manual <i>Iha Dalan</i> : 2 learner books (150p each) and 1 teacher manual	YEP book 1, 150p (based on <i>Hakat ba Oin</i> ) YEP book 2, 150p (based on <i>Iha Dalan</i> )
Time	2007-2012 (pilot in 2005-2006)	<i>Hakat ba Oin</i> : 2007-today (pilot in 2006) <i>Iha Dalan</i> : 2008-today (pilot in 2007)	2009-2011
Number of participants	204,463	2008-2013: capacity about 5,500 per year 2013-today: capacity about 8,800 per year	3,471

As the table shows, in the years 2007-2012 the Ministry of Education was responsible for the implementation, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of two national literacy programmes in all 13 districts at the same time: *Los Hau Bele* in 442 *sucos* and *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* at about 260 sites. Providing services to both programmes in all 13 districts at the same time turned out to be very difficult, due to insufficient human and financial resources. Prioritisation of the *Los Hau Bele* programme by the Ministry led to an inevitable lack of resources for the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* programmes; district visits to these classes (for coordination, distribution of materials, monitoring and evaluation activities) were reduced to a minimum, which most probably had a negative impact on the programme execution.

### 5.2.2 Teachers

Of the 100 teachers participating in the broad study, 76 were teaching the groups that I visited. The other 24 were teaching groups (in the three programmes

described above) that were not included in my study. The teachers' ages varied from 19 to 66 years (mean=33.80, SD=10.74), but 74% were 40 or younger. Only 25% had more than one year of experience as a teacher in adult literacy. 31% were teaching in the *Los Hau Bele* programme, 22% in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*, and 47% in *YEP*.

Almost two thirds of the teachers (64%) taught only one group and over one third (35%) taught two groups. A majority (58%) had 13 to 20 learners in their group, 32% had 12 or less learners, and 9% had large groups of more than 20 learners. This regarded the number of names they had on their lists. When asked how many of their learners actually participated actively in the lessons, many teachers mentioned lower numbers of learners per group: e.g., a majority of 73% mentioned five to 15 active learners in their groups. According to 67% of the teachers, their groups had more female than male learners.

Most of the teachers (79%) had a regional language as their mother tongue: 9% had Tetum and 12% had Tetum-Terik as their mother tongue. As their second language, 68% mentioned either Tetum (65%) or Tetum-Terik (3%). And 11% mentioned Tetum as their third language. Regarding the total number of languages that they spoke, 4% mentioned two languages, 14% three languages, 54% four languages, 26% five languages, and 2% more than five languages. All teachers filled out a table with information about which language(s) they used outside school in several social or institutional domains (with their parents, partners, children, other family members, neighbours, friends, at the market, at district administration offices, at national government offices, in church). This information is reported on in detail in Chapter 6, where the focus is on language use in and outside classes.

The teachers' educational backgrounds varied as well: 68% had attended 12 years of education, most of the others four to 11 years (mean=10.65, SD=2.33). A minority (30%) had attended additional education, like courses in Portuguese, computer use or English. Only 26% had attended training other than literacy, for example in health, peace building, population census issues or politics.

77% of the teachers said they taught six to nine hours per week (mean 8.16 hours, SD=2.23). 83% said they taught on three days per week. When asked what languages they used during the literacy classes, 28% mentioned only Tetum (or Tetum-Terik), and 55% said that alongside Tetum they also used a regional language. When asked what language(s) they preferred for literacy education, 67% mentioned Tetum only, 10% mentioned Tetum and Portuguese, 9% Tetum and their regional language.

Many teachers worked in rather poor circumstances: only 22% taught in a real classroom, the rest outside at a veranda (61%), at the community centre (6%), or under a roof (8%) or a tree (3%). At 66% of the sites there was no electricity, at 40% there were no chairs, and at 82% of the sites there were no tables for the

participants. 14% of the teachers had to teach without blackboard or whiteboard and some did not have enough chalk or markers (12%), pencils (10%) and notebooks (12%).

The teachers were also asked about the materials they used while teaching. Almost all of them (99%) used the learner books belonging to their programme, and it seemed like the majority also used the teacher manual (34 of 53) if their programme had one (*YEP* did not) and if they had received it (five teachers said they did not). Only one programme, *Los Hau Bele*, also had DVDs. Of the 31 *Los Hau Bele* teachers involved in the study, only eight explicitly said they did use the DVDs; ten teachers said they did not use them because there was no electricity or no money for gasoline for the generator. The other 13 did not answer the question, but six of them said they had no electricity at their lesson site. The *YEP*-teachers said that, since the *YEP* courses lasted only four months, most of their groups spent the largest amount of time on book 1, and some groups only a bit of time on (parts of) book 2. Of the 100 teachers, 49 said that they sometimes also used additional materials during their lessons (like coins, newspapers or the children's magazine *Lafaek*).

Most of the teachers said they had attended teacher training related to their literacy programme(s), only 5% said they had not been able to do so yet.

There were some differences in the teacher population in the different programmes. In the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* programme the percentage of female teachers was higher (68%) than in the other two programmes (48% in *Los Hau Bele* and 51% in *YEP*). The *YEP* programme had on average the youngest teachers (30.62 years, compared to 34.35 in *Los Hau Bele*, and 39.82 in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*) with the most years of education (11.34 years, compared to 10.14 in *Los Hau Bele*, and 9.91 in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*) and the least experience as literacy teachers (0.51 year, compared to 0.97 in *Los Hau Bele*, and 2.42 in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*). The *YEP* teachers on average taught most hours per week (9.46 hours, compared to 6.68 in *Los Hau Bele*, and 7.46 in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*) and among them was the highest percentage of teachers using additional materials next to the standard course materials (70%, compared to 16% in *Los Hau Bele*, and 50% in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*).

### 5.2.3 Learners

In total 756 adult learners participated in the study, of whom 68.1% were women. The learners' average age was 37.83 years (SD=15.33), ranging from 15 to 78 years of age. Their age and gender distribution is shown in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3:** Learners' age and gender (percentages; N=756)

Age group	Female	Male	Total
15-25 years	16.7	11.8	28.5
26-40 years	20.9	8.1	29.0
41-55 years	20.3	6.0	26.2
>56 years	10.2	6.1	16.3
Total	68.1	31.9	100.0

Table 5.3 shows that learners from various age groups participated; 57.5% of the learners were 40 years or younger and 42.5% were older than 40. Most of the male learners were part of the first two age groups (15 to 25 years and 26 to 40 years). Most of the female learners were part of the second and third age group (26 to 40 years and 41 to 55 years).

On average, the participants had attended prior (formal) education for somewhat less than a year (mean=0.88, SD=1.66), ranging from no education at all (69%) to nine years of previous education (one learner). From the 31% with prior education, half attended one or two years of primary school, and half more than two years, mostly three to six years. Most of the learners (84%) never attended an adult literacy course before; of the 16% who did, 87 learners had only attended an adult literacy course, the others had attended some primary education as well.

On average this group of 756 participants had been attending the adult literacy course (in which I visited them) for 4.08 months (SD=4.01), ranging from less than a month to 38 months, as shown in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4:** Learners' attendance in months (percentages; N=756)

	Total	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	<i>Hakat ba Oin &amp; Iha Dalan</i>	YEP
Less than 1 month	9.7	8.8	9.0	0.0
1-2 months	12.5	6.4	3.3	2.8
3-4 months	56.2	11.1	3.1	42.0
More than 4 months <sup>33</sup>	21.6	7.7	13.9	0.0
	100.0	34.0	21.2	44.8

<sup>33</sup> Of the learners who attended the literacy course for more than four months, 12.8% attended five to nine months and 8.0% attended ten to 15.25 months; as exceptions 0.4% attended 26 months and 0.4% attended 38 months of literacy education.

Table 5.4 shows that 56.2% of the learners attended three to four months of literacy education, 22.2% less than three months and 21.6% more than four months. The percentage of learners attending more than four months was highest among the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* learners because these combine into a twelve month programme.

The majority of the learners (78%) said they were multilingual; 22% said they only used one language. Of all learners, 12% said that Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) was their first language; 88% had a regional language as their mother tongue (35% mentioned Mambae, 18% Makasae, 14% Baikenu, 5% Bunak, 4% Mdiki, and 12% other languages). Of the multilingual learners, the majority (90%) reported Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) as their second language, 4% said Mambae was their second language, and 6% mentioned other languages as their second language. Of the 756 learners, 27.2% reported a third language. Indonesian was mentioned most often, by 64%. Another 6% of all learners reported a fourth language, of whom 50% mentioned Portuguese. In total 83% reported they could speak and understand Tetum; and only 9% said they could speak and understand Portuguese.

The variety in the total learner population in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste was reflected in the learner groups I visited; the groups generally were very heterogeneous and consisted of female and male participants in their teens until their seventies, with and without prior formal education and with and without prior literacy course participation.

Of the 756 learners whose groups were visited, 34% were participating in *Los Hau Bele*, 21% in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*, and 45% in *YEP* (as seen above). These percentages do not reflect nationwide participation in literacy programmes; they result from the places we have been able to visit during the months of research. The *Los Hau Bele* learners came from six districts (Viqueque, Oecusse, Dili, Covalima, Liquiçá, and Manatuto), the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* learners from three districts (Dili, Viqueque, and Oecusse) and the *YEP* learners also from three districts (Baucau, Aileu, and Dili). The *Los Hau Bele* programme had the highest percentage of female participants (79%, compared to 69% in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*, and 60% in *YEP*), relatively more older learners (59% older than 40, compared to 43% in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*, and 30% in *YEP*), and the highest percentages of learners without prior education (85%) and a prior literacy course (94%). The *YEP* programme targeted youth in remote areas, and for that reason had relatively more younger learners and lower percentages of people without prior education. *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* had the lowest percentages of people who had never done a literacy course before (67%); this is because *Iha Dalan* is an advanced level course and *Hakat ba Oin* is sometimes provided as a follow-up after *Los Hau Bele*. As for Tetum speakers, *Los Hau Bele* had the lowest percentage (80%, compared to 86% and 83% in the other

programmes), but *YEP* had the lowest percentage of participants with Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) as their first language (6%, compared to 18% in *Los Hau Bele* and 16% in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*).

Summarising the above, adult literacy education provided by the Timor-Leste government during the years of this study took place in three programmes that differed in length, approach and content. The teachers in those programmes who participated in my study (N=100), were relatively young (range 19-66 years, 74% younger than 41) and inexperienced (range 0-7 years, 75% one year or less). The learners participating in my study (N=756) showed high heterogeneity in terms of age (15-78 years), prior primary education (mean=0.88 years, ranging from no education at all, 69%, to nine years, one student) and previous literacy education (16% of the participants). Most learners (78%) were multilingual and only some (12%) had Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) as their first language, but the majority (83%) said they could speak and understand Tetum.

### 5.3 Basic literacy ability

In this section we will look at basic reading and writing abilities of the learners in my study. I make a distinction between the group of all learners (N=756), the learners without any prior education or literacy course attended (N=436) and the learners who had attended three to four months of literacy education in their current programme (N=228). We will look at the impact of learner and educational variables on their development of literacy ability. Learner variables are for example their prior education, age and language proficiency. Educational variables are for example the literacy programme used, the number of hours provided, the number of years of experience of teachers and the use of other materials alongside literacy manuals.

#### 5.3.1 Basic literacy ability of all learners

As mentioned in Section 5.2, it turned out that the 756 learners who participated in this study were not all absolute beginners in reading and writing: 31% had attended some primary education and 16% had attended previous (adult) literacy classes. Since the programmes included in my study were designed for beginners in reading and writing, I will mainly focus on those learners that had not been attending any prior primary education or literacy course. For several reasons, however, it might be interesting to first look at the basic literacy ability of the whole group of 756 participants, before focusing on those without any prior experience with literacy education. A first reason is that reading and writing in Tetum was probably new to all participants. It can be expected (since

Tetum has an alphabetic writing system like Indonesian and Portuguese, which participants might have learned) that adult learners with prior education are doing much better in basic literacy. It is worthwhile to check whether this is also true for literacy skills in a new (or until then for them only spoken) language and to what extent learners with previous education differ from those who only started their literacy acquisition in the newly developed programmes. A second reason is that, since according to quite some studies one of the main predictors of achievement in adult literacy learning turns out to be prior education (see Condelli et al., 2003; Kurvers et al., 2010), it is relevant to see how much variance is explained by this factor, compared to the other learner and instructional factors.

To investigate beginning reading and writing skills, participants were asked to take part in four tasks: a grapheme recognition task, a word reading task, a task in which the participants had to fill in a form, and a spelling task (see Chapter 4 for details, and Appendices 3 to 6 for the tasks). As the broad study aimed at providing an overall picture of literacy education throughout the country and across different language groups, data were collected in eight of the country's 13 districts. As described in Section 5.2.3, participants differed in nearly all aspects that might be relevant in explaining beginning reading and writing proficiency. They differed in both learner related data (age, first language, previous education, previous adult literacy courses, months already attended) as well as in education related factors (programme attended, number of hours per week, experience of the teacher). That is why firstly data of all 756 participants will be presented, to give an impression of the overall skills in beginning reading and writing in Tetum. In the next sections a closer look will be taken at those participants for whom the current adult literacy course was the first opportunity to learn to read and write and for whom the programmes *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin* and *YEP* were actually designed. After the presentation of these results, the large survey group (N=756) will be reintroduced for an overall analysis of predictors of success in adult reading and writing.

Table 5.5 presents the scores for the four basic literacy tasks of the whole group of learners, split up by previous education, and the outcomes of an analysis of variance to compare the groups with different educational backgrounds. The total number of hours they had been provided with in this course was on average 132 (SD=163) and this did not differ much for three of the four groups (those with no previous education, one to two years of primary school and more than two years; 105, 124, and 117 hours respectively). Only the group that had attended a previous literacy course had been provided with on average significantly more hours in the current course than the other three groups (296). The reason for looking at the number of hours of literacy education *provided* is



that there are no attendance data of all individuals but only general attendance estimations given by the teachers about their groups.

**Table 5.5:** Basic literacy skills of all learners (N=719)

		Total (N=719)	No prim/ lit ed. (N=425)	Lit course only (N=83)	1-2y ed. (N=127)	>2y ed. (N=84)	F <sub>3,715</sub>	$\eta^2$
Grapheme recognition (30 graph.)	Mean	17.47	13.01	19.36	24.96	26.86	106.89***	.31
	SD	(10.24)	(9.50)	(9.68)	(6.02)	(4.16)		
Word reading (80 words)	Mean	25.53	10.67	27.34	49.91	62.11	159.56***	.40
	SD	(31.30)	(20.62)	(31.62)	(28.61)	(25.95)		
Form filling (10 items)	Mean	4.86	3.34	5.71	7.21	8.15	103.80***	.30
	SD	(3.49)	(3.03)	(3.06)	(2.73)	(2.47)		
Word writing (10 words)	Mean	4.42	2.85	5.08	7.05	7.69	87.82***	.27
	SD	(3.84)	(3.27)	(3.89)	(3.24)	(2.80)		

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

Taken together, the whole group (i.e., the 719 participants of whom all scores and education background data were available) could recognise on average 17.47 graphemes (SD=10.24), ranging from 0 (9% of the learners) to the maximum score of 30 (8% of the learners); they could read on average 25.53 words (SD=31.30) with a range from 0 (42%) to 80 (8% of the learners), they had an average score on the form-filling task of 4.86 (SD=3.49), ranging from 0 (11%) to 10 (12% of the learners) and they could correctly spell on average 4.42 words (SD=3.84), ranging from 0 (26% of the learners) to the maximum of 10 (13%). This range from 0 to the maximum score was found in each of the groups for all four tasks, except for grapheme knowledge in two groups (a minimum of four graphemes recognised in the group with one to two years of primary school, and a minimum of eight graphemes recognised in the group with more than two years). This variation indicates that at the moment of testing, in all four groups some of the learners had hardly built any reading and writing ability at all, while others were more or less fluent in beginning reading and writing. The scores do not only demonstrate considerable differences, but also show that on average the beginning reading and writing ability in Tetum is quite low for the majority of the students, even for those who had been attending primary school in the past. An average of 62 words in three minutes is still a rather slow reading pace (21 words read correctly per minute). The benchmarks for oral reading fluency of connected text is considered around 35-60 words correct per minute at the end of grade 1, and about 60-90 words correct per minute at the end of grade 2 in

primary school (Good, Simmons & Kame'enui, 2001; Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006; Oxenham, 2008; Krom, Jongen, Verhelst, Kamphuis & Kleintjes, 2010).

Table 5.5 also shows that previous education matters: the average scores on each of the tasks are the lowest for the group without any previous education, and the highest for the learners with more than two years of primary education. Analysis of variance revealed that on all four tasks the groups differ significantly ( $p < .001$ ). Pairwise comparison of groups in a post hoc analysis (Tukey) shows that all groups differ significantly from each other on all tasks ( $p < .001$  in all cases), except for the two groups with primary education, who only differ significantly in word reading ( $p < .01$ ).

### **5.3.2 Learning to read and write for the first time: the impact of learner and educational variables**

This section focuses on the group of learners without any elementary education and without any previous adult literacy course ( $N=436$ ). Learners in this group, however, still differ in many respects, like for example their age, or whether they could speak and understand Tetum, the language used in all programmes, or the total number of hours of literacy education provided to them. Since one of the aims of this study was to compare the different adult literacy programmes, and another to compare speakers with or without proficiency in Tetum, as a first step the possible differences between the three programme groups and two language groups are investigated. Table 5.6 presents the background data of the group of 436 students, divided on the basis of literacy programme and self-reported proficiency in the language of instruction and literacy, Tetum.

**Table 5.6:** Learners' age, total number of hours of adult literacy provided and teacher experience, by programme and proficiency in Tetum (N=436)

		Total (N=436)	LHB (N=204)	HBO-ID (N=67*)	YEP (N=165)	Non- Tetum speakers (N=108)	Tetum speakers (N=328)
Age	Mean	41.00	45.62	36.67	37.06	40.19	41.27
	SD	(15.38)	(14.21)	(13.99)	(15.79)	(16.31)	(15.08)
	Range	15-76	15-75	16-64	15-76	15-76	15-75
Total hours provided	Mean	105.56	70.00	223.68	101.57	82.06	113.30
	SD	(102.42)	(63.63)	(194.30)	(18.13)	(54.98)	(112.79)
	Range	0-732	2-320	25-732	45-119	2-252	2-732
Nr of years of teacher experience	Mean	.82	.70	2.34	.34	0.97	0.77
	SD	(1.01)	(.70)	(1.46)	(.21)	(1.35)	(0.87)
	Range	.00-5	.00-3	.33-5	.10-1.10	.10-5.0	0-5.0

\* Of these 67 learners, only five were participating in the *Iha Dalan* programme, the rest in the *Hakat ba Oin* programme. From now this group of 67 will be referred to as *Hakat ba Oin* learners, since the five that were participating in *Iha Dalan* had not done any other literacy course before; they were beginners but there was no other programme than *Iha Dalan* available in their area.

On average (see column 'Total'), the learners are 41 years old (ranging from 15 to 76 years of age). On average they have been attending the course for about 3.5 months (ranging from less than a month to 15.25 months or from a few hours to more than 700 hours); on average the teachers had less than one year of experience as a literacy teacher (ranging from no experience yet to five years of experience). 75% of the learners reported to speak and understand Tetum.

The mean age of the learners differed significantly for the three programmes ( $F_{2,433}=18.66$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The students in the *Los Hau Bele* programme were on average significantly older than the students in the other two programmes ( $p<.05$ ) that do not differ from each other. The total number of hours provided to the learners differed significantly for the three programmes ( $F_{2,433}=76.86$ ,  $p=.000$ ), with the learners in the *Hakat ba Oin* programme having been provided significantly more hours than learners in the *YEP* programme ( $p<.05$ ), who had been provided significantly more hours than the learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme ( $p<.05$ ).

The number of years of teacher experience differed significantly for the three programmes ( $F_{2,433}=170.77$ ,  $p=.000$ ), with *Los Hau Bele* differing significantly from *Hakat ba Oin* ( $p=.000$ ) and *YEP* differing significantly from *Hakat ba Oin* ( $p=.000$ ).

In the analyses and presentation of the results, we will take these differences into account.

The proportion of Tetum speakers in the *Los Hau Bele* programme is 77%, in *Hakat ba Oin* 84%, and in *YEP* 70% (not in the table). This difference does not reach significance ( $\chi^2_{(2)}=5.55$ ,  $p=.06$ ). Tetum and non-Tetum speakers did not differ significantly in age and in number of years of teacher experience, but they did differ significantly in the total number of hours provided to them ( $t=-3.83$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

Table 5.7 presents the results of the reading and writing tasks of the group of 436 learners, divided on the basis of literacy programme and proficiency in Tetum.

**Table 5.7:** Learners' average scores on beginning literacy skills, by programme and proficiency in Tetum (N=436)

		Total (N=436)	LHB (N=204)	HBO (N=67)	YEP (N=165)	Non- Tetum speakers (N=108)	Tetum speakers (N=328)
Grapheme Recognition (30 graphemes)	Mean	13.01	10.34	14.95	15.69	11.03	13.95
	SD	(9.50)	(8.87)	(9.40)	(9.43)	(10.11)	(9.21)
	Range	0-30	0-30	0-30	0-30	0-29	0-30
Word reading (80 words)	Mean	10.67	6.10	14.83	14.91	11.07	10.60
	SD	(20.62)	(15.45)	(23.87)	(23.71)	(21.00)	(20.53)
	Range	0-80	0-80	0-79	0-80	0-80	0-80
Form filling (10 items)	Mean	3.34	2.37	3.64	4.50	3.43	3.39
	SD	(3.03)	(2.49)	(2.97)	(3.27)	(3.29)	(2.98)
	Range	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10
Word writing (10 words)	Mean	2.85	1.79	3.00	4.19	2.50	3.05
	SD	(3.27)	(2.51)	(3.20)	(3.69)	(3.22)	(3.32)
	Range	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10

Of the 30 graphemes in the grapheme task, the learners on average (see column 'Total') recognised 13 graphemes, ranging from no grapheme recognised (14% of the learners) to all graphemes recognised (2%). Participants in the *Los Hau Bele* programme could recognise on average ten graphemes, participants in the *Hakat ba Oin* programme on average 15, and participants in the *YEP* programme on average 16 graphemes, but in all programmes the variation was large ranging from a score of 0 to the maximal score of 30. From the *Los Hau Bele* participants

20% scored 0 and 0.5% scored 30, from the *Hakat ba Oin* participants 9% scored 0 and 3% scored 30, and from the *YEP* participants 10% scored 0 and 4% scored 30.

Of the 80 words in the word-reading task on average 11 words were read correctly within three minutes, ranging from no words read (59% of the learners) to all words read (1%). Participants in the *Los Hau Bele* programme could read on average six words correctly within three minutes, and participants in the other two programmes on average 15 words, again in all programmes with maximum ranges. Of the *Los Hau Bele* participants 72% scored 0 and 0.5% scored 80, of the *Hakat ba Oin* participants 48% scored 0 and 1.5% scored 79, and of the *YEP* participants 48% scored 0 and 2% scored 80.

In the form filling task on average around three items were filled in correctly (mostly including name and signature), ranging from 0 (17% of the learners) to the maximum of 10 (3%). Participants from *Los Hau Bele* could fill in on average two items and participants in the other two programmes around four, the range again being maximally in all three programmes. Of the *Los Hau Bele* participants 28% scored 0 and 0.5% scored 10, of the *Hakat ba Oin* participants 10% scored 0 and 5% scored 10, and of the *YEP* participants 7% scored 0 and 5% scored 10.

The average number of words written correctly in the writing task for the whole group was around three, ranging from no word written correctly at all (38% of the learners) to ten words written correctly (4%). The average score was 2 for the *Los Hau Bele* participants, 3 for the *Hakat ba Oin* participants and 4 for the *YEP* participants. In all programmes the scores ranged from 0 to 10. Of the *Los Hau Bele* participants 50% scored 0 and 0.5% scored 10. Of the *Hakat ba Oin* participants 33% scored 0 and 3% scored 10. And of the *YEP* participants 27% scored 0 and 10% scored 10.

The differences in the average scores of Tetum and non-Tetum speakers on beginning literacy skills were small. Of the 30 graphemes in the grapheme recognition task, non-Tetum speakers could recognise on average 11 graphemes with scores ranging from 0 (23%) to 29 (2%) and Tetum speakers could recognise on average 14 graphemes, with scores ranging from 0 (11%) to the maximum 30 (3%). Of the 80 words in the word reading task both non-Tetum and Tetum speakers could read on average 11 words correctly, again with maximum ranges from 0 (63% of the non-Tetum speakers and 58% of the Tetum speakers) to 80 (1% of the non-Tetum speakers and 1% of the Tetum speakers). On the form, both non-Tetum and Tetum speakers could fill in on average three items, the range again being maximally, from 0 (21% of the non-Tetum speakers and 16% of the Tetum speakers) to 10 (4% of the non-Tetum speakers and 2% of the Tetum speakers). The average number of words written correctly in the writing task was three for both non-Tetum and Tetum speakers, ranging from 0 (47% of the

non-Tetum speakers and 36% of the Tetum speakers) to 10 (5% of the non-Tetum speakers and 4% of the Tetum speakers).

To compare the programmes with respect to the beginning reading and writing skills acquired by the learners as measured by our tasks and to compare the Tetum speakers with the non-Tetum speakers, also the differences in background data of the participants and the educational context (see Table 5.6) have to be taken into account. The data on the four tests were analysed, using a multivariate analysis of covariance, with grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling and word writing as dependent variables, with literacy programme and language background (Tetum speaker or not) as independent factors and age of the learners, the total number of hours provided and the number of years of experience of the teacher as covariates. Table 5.8 presents the outcomes of the analysis of co-variance.

**Table 5.8:** Results Mancova: F-values, p-values and effect-size of co-variates (age, number of hours and experience teacher) and factors (programme and Tetum proficiency)

Source	Dependent Variable	F <sub>1,416</sub>	η <sup>2</sup>
Age Student	Grapheme recognition	48.93***	.11
	Word reading	12.34***	.03
	Form filling	26.59***	.06
	Word writing	29.78***	.07
Total hours of adult literacy provided	Grapheme recognition	7.87**	.02
	Word reading	.04	.00
	Form filling	8.32**	.02
	Word writing	3.85*	.01
Years of teacher experience	Grapheme recognition	.72	.002
	Word reading	6.66*	.02
	Form filling	.11	.00
	Word writing	1.31	.003
Literacy programme	Grapheme recognition	9.26***	.04
	Word reading	5.38**	.03
	Form filling	13.51***	.06
	Word writing	18.24***	.08

Tetum speaker	Grapheme recognition	4.12*	.01
	Word reading	.75	.002
	Form filling	.002	.00
	Word writing	3.67	.01
(interaction) Literacy programme x Tetum speaker	Grapheme recognition	1.76	.01
	Word reading	.20	.001
	Form filling	.99	.01
	Word writing	1.33	.01

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

On all four tasks there was a significant main effect of learner's age ( $p = .000$  on all tasks). The older the learners were, the lower on average their scores on all four tasks. The effect sizes range from small (in word reading and the two writing tasks) to medium (in grapheme recognition).

The total number of hours that was provided to the learner showed no significant main effect on word reading, but did show a significant main effect on the other three tasks. This means that learners that had been provided more hours were not necessarily better at word reading. Apparently for word reading ability, something else was making more of a difference (see below, Section 5.5). All effect sizes are low.

The teachers' number of years of experience showed a main effect on the learners' scores on the word-reading task, but did not show any main effect on the three other tasks.

Having controlled for age, the number of hours provided and the years of teacher experience, the literacy programme that learners took part in showed a significant main effect on all four reading and writing abilities. On all four tasks the mean scores of the programmes differed significantly. The effect sizes are low (for grapheme recognition, word reading and form filling) to medium (for word writing). The pairwise comparison of the three programmes reveals that *Los Hau Bele* differs significantly from the *YEP* programme on all four tasks ( $p < .01$ ,  $< .01$ ,  $< .001$  and  $< .001$  for grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling and word writing respectively), but not from *Hakat ba Oin*. *YEP* differs significantly from *Hakat ba Oin* in the form fill task ( $p < .05$ ) and the word writing task ( $p < .01$ ) but not on grapheme recognition and word reading.

The analysis revealed a significant main effect of being a Tetum speaker only for grapheme recognition ( $p < .05$ ), not for the three other tasks. There were no significant interactions between proficiency in Tetum and programme; this indicates that there was no advantage or disadvantage for being a Tetum speaker in a specific programme.

Summarising the above, younger learners on average did much better on the four literacy tasks than older learners, learners with more hours provided scored higher on grapheme recognition and form filling, and learners in the *YEP* programme scored significantly higher on all tasks than learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme, even when corrected for age of the learners, for the number of hours provided and for the years of teacher experience; *Hakat ba Oin* learners scored in between, their scores not being significantly different from *Los Hau Bele* and from *YEP* only for the two writing tasks. Tetum speakers generally speaking had little advantage in these beginning reading and writing abilities.

### **Factors of influence on literacy acquisition**

In the above, only those background variables in which the programmes differed significantly, were included as co-variables in the analysis of variance. The goal of this study, however, was not merely to compare the differences between the programmes and to investigate the impact of knowing Tetum, but also to identify what other educational characteristics might influence success in adult literacy acquisition in Timor-Leste. For this reason a correlational analysis that included a number of educational variables was conducted. Partial correlations between task scores and education characteristics were calculated, corrected for learner age and total number of hours provided. The educational characteristics taken into account were: the education background of the teachers (in number of years), whether they had attended teacher training, the number of literacy class hours provided per week, the group size (on paper), the teaching circumstances (number of positive answers on eight questions like 'do you teach in a classroom?', 'is there electricity?', 'are there enough tables?', etc.; see question 23 in the teacher questionnaire, Appendix 2). It was also taken into account whether the teachers used other materials in the literacy classes (in addition to the course materials they had been provided with) and how many languages they used in class (only Tetum, Tetum and the regional language or more languages). The correlations between task scores (grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling, word writing) and learner characteristics were for age  $-.37$ ,  $-.23$ ,  $-.31$ , and  $-.32$  (all  $p < .01$ ) and for total number of hours provided:  $.20$  ( $p < .01$ ),  $.08$ ,  $.18$  ( $p < .01$ ), and  $.14$  ( $p < .01$ ). These correlations first of all confirm the findings from my earlier analysis: the reading and writing ability of the learners shows a significant and negative correlation with age: the older the learners, the more difficulties they had with the reading and writing tasks. The scores on three of the four tasks (grapheme recognition, form filling and word writing) showed a significant and positive correlation with the total number of hours provided to the learners; the number of hours did not seem to affect word reading scores. Table 5.9 shows the partial correlations between task scores and



education characteristics, corrected for learner age and total number of hours provided.

**Table 5.9:** Partial correlations between task scores and education characteristics, corrected for learner age and total number of hours provided

<i>Partial correlations with</i>	Grapheme recognition	Word reading	Form filling	Word writing
Nr of literacy class hours per week	.13*	.09	.16**	.17**
Group: nr of participants on the list	.12*	.06	.14**	.22***
Teaching circumstances	.02	.10*	-.06	-.03
Nr of years education teacher	.02	-.005	.06	.01
Teacher did teacher training	.02	-.04	-.04	.02
Teacher used other materials	.16**	.22***	.28***	.19***
Nr of languages used by teacher in class	-.05	-.03	.15**	.07

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Corrected for age and total numbers of hours provided, the reading and writing ability of the learners correlated significantly and positively with the intensity of the course (number of hours per week): the more hours per week, the higher the scores on three of the four tasks, i.e., grapheme recognition, form filling and word-writing (although this could also be a programme effect since in the *YEP* programme learners were provided with significantly more hours, mostly nine per week, than in *Los Hau Bele*, mostly six per week, while in *Hakat ba Oin* the number of hours per week varied from four to twelve).

The scores on three tasks (again grapheme recognition, form filling and word-writing) showed a significant and positive correlation with the number of participants in a group: the larger the group, the higher the scores turned out to be. For three of the four tasks there were no significant correlations with teaching circumstances, only with the word reading task there was a significant correlation: better teaching conditions like furniture or electricity correlated with higher word reading scores. There were no correlations with the teachers' education background and whether the teacher had attended teacher training or not. The *Los Hau Bele* teachers all said they attended teacher training sessions and the majority of teachers in the other programmes also said they did.

The scores on four tasks correlated significantly and positively with teachers using other materials in class in addition to the course materials. It seemed that

teachers who used extra materials in class positively affected the reading and writing ability of their learners. The (self-reported) number of languages used by the teacher in class (e.g., Tetum, the regional language, Portuguese, Indonesian) did not seem to affect task scores very much, only the form filling scores showed a significant positive correlation with languages used in class by the teacher, which might have to do with the fact that this was the task that the teacher could explain best (for the other three tasks there was not so much to explain additionally: it was a matter of being able to recognise graphemes and read or write words or not).

Although the research literature discussed in Chapter 2 did not reveal clear gender differences in adult literacy acquisition. I decided to check whether these existed in beginning adult literacy abilities in Timor-Leste. An analysis of variance (comparable to the one presented in Table 5.6) was carried out, now including gender. On three of the four tasks the analysis revealed no main effect of gender, only on form filling the male participants had significantly higher scores than the females ( $F_{1,415}=4.83$ ,  $p=.03$ ), probably because form filling might be a more common literacy activity of men and therefore the male participant might be more familiar with this specific task.

In summary: the analysis of beginning reading and writing skills of 436 adults that had started literacy learning for the first time in their lives, using different programmes, revealed a difference between the programmes, when corrected for age and total hours provided: learners in the *YEP* programme had significantly higher reading and writing skills than learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme. Whether or not learners were proficient in Tetum, did not make much difference. The analysis also revealed that of the total learner variables, the learners' age matters most and of the educational variables the most profitable in reaching higher literacy skills seem to be the intensity of the programme (i.e., the number of hours provided per week), the group size and in particular, the teacher using materials that are connected to the daily life of the learners.

### **'Becoming literate' in three months?**

As indicated in Section 5.2, the three programmes differed in duration: *Hakat ba Oin* was designed as a six-month literacy programme with *Iha Dalan* as a six-month follow-up; *YEP* was designed as a four-month literacy programme and *Los Hau Bele* as a three-month programme. Learners who had attended the three months of *Los Hau Bele* classes and passed the test at the end of the programme, received a certificate and were declared 'literate' by the government.

To get a better understanding of what real beginners had accomplished in terms of reading and writing after taking part in a literacy course for three or four months, I zoomed in on a group of 228 learners that had attended literacy

classes for three to four months. Again I investigated whether the programmes differed in what they had achieved in terms of basic reading and writing ability after on average 96 hours of teaching (SD=16). Here *Los Hau Bele* participants on the one hand were compared with participants in *Hakat ba Oin* and *YEP* on the other. Since *YEP* was essentially based on *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* (same didactic approach, *YEP* being a shortened version of the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* programme), and now only the first three to four months of the courses were included, the participants of these programmes (*YEP* and *Hakat ba Oin*) were taken together (considered as one group).<sup>34</sup> The programmes still differed significantly for the age of the learners ( $t=4.77$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and for the total number of hours provided ( $t=-10.09$ ,  $p=.000$ ), but not for the teachers' experience ( $t=1.91$ ,  $p=.06$ ). Table 5.10 presents the results on the four tasks.

**Table 5.10:** Learners' average scores on beginning literacy skills after three to four months in a literacy programme, by didactic approach

		Total (N=228)	LHB (N=72)	HBO-YEP (N=156)
Grapheme recognition (30 graphemes)	Mean	14.53	12.07	15.67
	SD	(9.70)	(9.08)	(9.79)
	Range	0-30	0-30	0-30
Word reading (80 words)	Mean	13.51	6.96	16.55
	SD	(23.22)	(16.30)	(25.28)
	Range	0-80	0-80	0-80
Form filling (10 items)	Mean	4.02	2.75	4.58
	SD	(3.24)	(2.48)	(3.39)
	Range	0-10	0-10	0-10
Word writing (10 words)	Mean	3.65	2.54	4.14
	SD	(3.64)	(2.93)	(3.83)
	Range	0-10	0-10	0-10

Of the 30 graphemes in the grapheme task, the learners on average (see column total) recognised 15 graphemes, ranging from no grapheme recognised (10% of the learners) to all graphemes recognised (4%). Participants in the *Los Hau Bele* programme could recognise on average 12 graphemes, participants in the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* programmes on average 16 graphemes, but in both programmes the

<sup>34</sup> In the four-month *YEP* programme, groups mainly focused on the *Hakat ba Oin* part, not on the *Iha Dalan* part.

variation was large, ranging from a score of 0 to the maximal score of 30. From the *Los Hau Bele* participants 7% scored 0 and 1% scored 30, and from the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* participants 12% scored 0 and 6% scored 30.

Of the 80 words in the word reading task on average 14 words were read correctly within three minutes, ranging from no words read correctly (54% of the learners) to all words read correctly (2%). Participants in the *Los Hau Bele* programme could read correctly on average seven words, and participants in the other programmes on average 17 words, again in all programmes with maximum ranges. From the *Los Hau Bele* participants 65% scored 0 and 1% scored 80, and from the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* participants 48% scored 0 and 2% scored 80.

In the form filling task, on average around four items were filled in correctly, ranging from 0 (13% of the learners) to the maximum of ten (5%). Participants from *Los Hau Bele* could fill in on average three items, and participants in the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* programmes around five, the range again being maximally in all programmes. From the *Los Hau Bele* participants 22% scored 0 and 1% scored 10, and from the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* participants 8% scored 0 and 6% scored 10.

The average number of words written correctly in the writing task for the whole group was around four, ranging from no word written correctly at all (34% of the learners) to ten words written correctly (8%). The average score was 3 for the *Los Hau Bele* participants, and 4 for the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* participants, in all programmes ranging from 0-10. From the *Los Hau Bele* participants 38% scored 0 and 1% scored 10, and from the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* participants 32% scored 0 and 10% scored 10.

The data on the four tasks were analysed, using a multivariate analysis of covariance, with grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling and word writing as dependent variables, with literacy programme (*Los Hau Bele* and *Hakat ba Oin/YEP*) as an independent factor and age of the students and teachers' years of experience as covariate. Table 5.11 presents the outcomes of the analysis of variance.

**Table 5.11:** F-values, p-values and effect-size of covariates age and teachers' years of experience, and factor literacy programme

Factor	Test	F <sub>1,223</sub>	$\eta^2$
Age learner	Grapheme rec.	45.71***	.17
	Word reading	13.00***	.06
	Form filling	38.45***	.15
	Word writing	36.55***	.14
Teachers' years of experience	Grapheme rec.	1.51	.01
	Word reading	5.04*	.02
	Form filling	.69	.00
	Word writing	.05	.00
Literacy programme	Grapheme rec.	.71	.00
	Word reading	4.28*	.02
	Form filling	6.23*	.03
	Word writing	2.09	.01

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

As the table illustrates, the learners' age again showed a significant main effect for all four tasks: younger learners had higher scores than older learners. The teachers' years of experience only showed a significant main effect on word reading: more experienced teachers were more successful in teaching the alphabetic principle. The literacy programme learners participated in showed a significant main effect on word reading and form filling, not on the other two tasks: corrected for age and teacher experience, *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* students scored significantly higher on these tasks than *Los Hau Bele* students. The effect sizes were medium to high for the learner's age, but low for programme.

Also in this group of 228 learners (who participated three to four months in the different literacy programmes), reading and writing ability correlated significantly and negatively with age:  $r=-.44$ ,  $-.28$ ,  $-.43$ , and  $-.41$  respectively for grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling, and word writing ( $p<.001$ ). The scores on grapheme recognition, form filling and word writing correlated significantly and positively with the number of participants in a group ( $r=.14$ ,  $.14$ , and  $.25$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $p<.001$  respectively). The larger the group the higher these scores, it seemed.

The scores on word reading, form filling and word writing also correlated significantly and positively with teachers using other materials in class in addition to the course materials ( $r=.18$ ,  $.24$ , and  $.14$  respectively, with  $p<.01$ ,

$p < .001$ , and  $p < .05$ ). There were no significant correlations with the number of languages teachers said they used in class.

Summarising the above, after having attended literacy classes for three to four months, many learners were still struggling with decoding (54% could not read any word on the list yet) and with writing (34% could not write any of the words dictated). This and the rather low average scores for the four tasks indicate that three months for most learners is not enough to 'become literate'. Although the correlations for this group of 228 learners are not very high, the factors that already made a difference in the larger group of 436 learners (next to age and prior education) again showed stable relationships with beginning literacy skills.

### Growth in literacy abilities after three months

Of the group of 228 participants, 64 (28%) carried out the four tasks for a second time three months after I first visited them. That allowed me to look at growth, by comparing participants' scores for the four tasks at the first measurement moment with the scores for the four tasks at the second measurement moment, three months later, using a paired t-test. Table 5.12 shows mean scores on the two measurement moments and growth scores, on each of the four tasks.

**Table 5.12:** Mean scores on two measurement moments and growth scores on the four tasks

Task		Mm 1	Mm 2	Growth score	T
Grapheme recognition (N=64)	Mean	8.64	12.45	3.81	-6.48***
	SD	(8.68)	(9.40)	(4.71)	
	Range	0-28	0-30	-6 until 21	
Word reading (N=64)	Mean	5.22	7.73	2.52	-2.62*
	SD	(13.09)	(17.10)	(7.69)	
	Range	0-78	0-80	-7 until 53	
Form filling (N=63)	Mean	1.28	2.94	1.67	-6.44***
	SD	(1.92)	(2.74)	(2.06)	
	Range	0-8	0-10	-1 until 8	
Word writing (N=62)	Mean	1.27	2.61	1.31	-3.34**
	SD	(2.53)	(3.16)	(3.08)	
	Range	0-9	0-10	-8 until 9	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The means and growth scores in Table 5.12 show that the learners on average showed progress on all four tasks between the first and the second measurement. For grapheme recognition the mean scores on average increased from nine to 12 graphemes recognised (of 30 graphemes). But this only indicated the mean growth, the individual growth scores ranged from -six to +21 graphemes more recognised during the second measurement (meaning that although many learners showed progress, some had worse scores at the second measurement moment compared to their scores at the first measurement moment). For word reading the mean scores increased from five to eight words read correctly within three minutes (of 80 words), growth scores ranging from -seven to +53. For form filling, the mean scores increased from one to three items filled out correctly (of ten items) ranging from -one until +eight items. And for word writing the mean scores increased from one to three words written correctly (of ten words), ranging from -eight to +nine words.

The paired t-test revealed that on average the progress the learners made was significant on all four tasks. But the fact that learners on average showed significant progress on all four tasks does not mean that each individual learner showed progress. The percentages of participants that made (some) progress were respectively 77% for grapheme recognition, 33% for word reading, 67% for form filling and 45% for word writing, which indicates that for word reading two thirds of the learners and for spelling more than half of them did not progress at all. This might have to do with more attention paid to grapheme recognition and form filling during the lessons, than to the reading and writing of new words (see also Chapter 6).

The growth scores again correlated significantly and negatively with the learners' age ( $r=-.30$ ,  $-.34$ , and  $-.31$  for grapheme recognition, word reading, and form filling,  $p<.05$ ,  $p<.01$ , and  $p<.05$  respectively). The growth in grapheme recognition correlated significantly and negatively with the teaching circumstances ( $r=-.26$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The growth in word reading correlated significantly and positively with teacher experience ( $r=.25$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and negatively with the number of languages used in class ( $r=-.29$ ,  $p<.05$ ), indicating that more teacher experience positively influenced word reading ability, whereas using more languages in class negatively influenced it. No other correlations reached significance.

Summarising the above, these data indicate that overall progress in three to four months of literacy education was limited; a majority of learners did benefit from the literacy education provided, showing growth in grapheme recognition and form filling, but a minority of learners showed growth in word reading and word writing, both essential for learning to read and write. Learners cannot be declared literate (nor can whole districts), when after three months they – on

average – still only recognise about 12 graphemes (out of 30) and read about eight words in three minutes.

### 5.3.3 Predictors of success

In this section the group of all participants (N=756) and after that the group of participants without prior primary or literacy education (N=436) will be re-introduced for an overall analysis of predictors of success in adult reading and writing. A linear multiple regression analysis (stepwise) was used to determine which of the learner and educational variables significantly predicted the outcomes of the beginning reading and writing tasks of the total group of 756 learners. The dependent variables were grapheme recognition, word reading, word writing, and form filling. The independent learner variables were the participant's age, years of prior education, attendance of another earlier adult literacy course, total hours of literacy education provided in the current course, being a Tetum speaker or not, and the literacy programme the participant attended (either *Los Hau Bele* or *Hakat ba Oim/YEP*).<sup>35</sup> The independent teacher variables were the years of teaching experience, having attended teacher training, and the number of languages used in teaching. Other independent educational variables were material class condition (e.g., availability of electricity, chairs, tables, blackboard etc.) and group size (as registered). The independent variables were entered simultaneously and were evaluated for inclusion by a stepwise technique. For each of the dependent variables the regression analysis revealed a significant model with four to seven predictors included. For grapheme recognition the analysis revealed a significant model with six predictors ( $F_{6,738}=75.59$ ,  $p=.000$ ), that explained 38% of the variance, for word reading a model with four predictors ( $F_{4,713}=135.67$ ,  $p=.000$ ) that explained 43% of the variance, for form filling a model with five predictors ( $F_{5,739}=81.51$ ,  $p=.000$ ) that explained 36% of the variance and for word writing a model with seven predictors ( $F_{7,733}=62.00$ ,  $p=.000$ ) that explained 37% of the variance. Table 5.13 presents the results of the regression analysis (beta and  $R^2$  change, and significance level) for each of the dependent variables.

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<sup>35</sup> Two predictors were not included, because they showed covariation with other predictors. The factor 'hours of literacy education per week' was left out because it overlaps with 'Literacy programme' (learners of *Los Hau Bele* were provided six hours a week and of *Hakat ba Oim/YEP* nine hours) but 'total hours provided' was kept as a potential predictor. And because 'having Tetum as L1' (which was a very small group) overlaps with 'Tetum speaker' (a larger group that also included participants who had learned Tetum as a second or third language), only the last predictor was included.



**Table 5.13:** Results of stepwise multiple regression analysis for grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling and word writing (N=756)

	Grapheme recognition		Word reading		Form filling		Word writing	
	R <sup>2</sup> change	β	R <sup>2</sup> change	β	R <sup>2</sup> change	β	R <sup>2</sup> change	β
Prior education as a child	.209	.31***	.325	.48***	.199	.33***	.199	.30***
Age participants	.087	-.30***	.031	-.21***	.040	-.25***	.052	-.27***
(Adult) Literacy course done before	.043	.15***	.021	.15***	.026	.17***	.021	.15***
Literacy programme	.026	.13***			.074	.11**	.084	.19***
Tetum speaker	.011	.12***					.005	.07*
Teacher uses additional materials	.004	.08*	.055	.21***	.018	.16***		
Nr years experience teacher							.007	-.08**
Group size							.004	.07*
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.381		.432		.355		.372	

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

Significant predictors of all reading and writing tasks were years of prior education, age of the participant (negative predictor), and literacy course done before. The literacy programme attended was a significant predictor of grapheme recognition, form filling and word writing. The teacher using additional materials significantly predicted grapheme recognition, word reading and form filling. Being a Tetum speaker significantly predicted grapheme recognition and word writing. The number of years of experience of the teacher and the group size only significantly predicted word writing. The total number of hours provided, the classroom conditions, the teacher training, and the number of languages the teacher was using in class did not significantly contribute to the success of any of the reading and writing skills.

Having been at school as a child, as one might have expected, turned out to be the most important predictor of success in beginning reading and writing. The beta's are by far the highest and the variance explained by this predictor is about 20% for grapheme recognition, form filling and word writing, and even more than 30% for word reading. The age of a learner was, like in many other studies on adult literacy, a second important predictor of success: the older the learner, the lower on average the scores on the reading and writing tasks.

Attending earlier literacy education as a predictor of success is related to previous formal education: participants who had been attending an adult literacy course earlier, on average had higher scores on all four tasks. Which literacy programme the learners had been attending (either *Los Hau Bele* or *Hakat ba Oin/YEP*) predicted how well they performed on the grapheme recognition task, the form filling and the word writing task. In all cases this outcome means that on average the learners that had been attending *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* performed better on these tasks than the *Los Hau Bele* learners. Being a Tetum speaker turned out to be an advantage for grapheme recognition and word writing, but was not significantly related to word reading and form filling.

Most of the teacher characteristics (the use of more languages in class, having attended teacher training or the number of years of experience) did not make a difference in predicting the learners' reading and writing scores; teachers' years of experience actually turned out to be a negative predictor of word writing (more experienced teachers seemed to yield lower spelling scores). This might be due to the fact that the variation among teachers was less than among learners (for example, more than 80% had attended teacher training). One teacher characteristic, however, that did significantly predict three of the four scores on reading and writing was whether or not the teacher used other materials alongside the required learner book. This factor refers to teachers making use of stones or wooden sticks, fruits or beans, coins or bank notes, newspapers or (children's) magazines in explaining word or phrase meanings, exercises, or numbers and sums. This factor seems to indicate a quality of the teacher, for example in contextualising teaching by linking lesson content and exercises to authentic materials known by his/her learners from their daily life experience, which apparently leads to higher scores.

To get a clearer picture of the predictors of success for the participants who were learning to read and write for the first time, another linear multiple regression analysis (stepwise) was used for the group of 436 participants who never went to school as a child and never attended any other literacy course before. For grapheme recognition the analysis revealed a significant model with four predictors ( $F_{4,426}=27.60$ ,  $p=.000$ ), that explained 21% of the variance, for word reading a model with three predictors ( $F_{3,418}=15.21$ ,  $p=.000$ ) that explained 10% of the variance, for form filling a model with four predictors ( $F_{4,427}=22.13$ ,  $p=.000$ ) that explained 17% of the variance and for word writing a model with three predictors ( $F_{3,427}=29.56$ ,  $p=.000$ ) that explained 17% of the variance. Table 5.14 presents the results of the regression analysis for each of the dependent variables (beta,  $R^2$  change and significance level).

**Table 5.14:** Results of stepwise multiple regression analysis for grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling and word writing (N=436)

Factors:	Tasks:							
	Grapheme recognition		Word reading		Form filling		Word writing	
	R <sup>2</sup>	β	R <sup>2</sup>	β	R <sup>2</sup>	β	R <sup>2</sup>	β
	change		change		change		change	
Age Participant	.139	-.32***	.053	-.20***	.051	-.25***	.104	-.25***
Literacy programme (2)	.035	.17**			.101	.12	.057	.20***
Tetum speaker	.022	.14**						
Total hours attended	.009	.10*			.012	.12*		
Teacher uses other material			.032	.18***	.008	.15*		
Nr of years of Exp teacher			.013	.11*				
Group size (on paper)							.010	.12*
R <sup>2</sup> total:	.206		.098		.172		.172	

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

Overall, less variance was explained in this regression analysis than in the larger group that included previous education as predictor, but the learner and educational variables that significantly predicted success on reading and writing tasks, are comparable. The age of the learner had significant negative impact on the achievements on all four literacy tasks: older learners seemed to perform less well than younger learners. Grapheme recognition was further significantly influenced by the literacy programme attended (*Hakat ba Oin/YEP* learners recognised more graphemes than *Los Hau Bele* learners), by proficiency in Tetum and by total hours of literacy education provided in the current programme. Compared to the larger group, teacher characteristics were more influential in predicting the success of the learners: the teacher using additional material and the experience of the teacher both contributed significantly to success in word reading. Form filling was positively influenced by the programme attended (*Hakat ba Oin/YEP* learners did better), by the total number of hours attended (the more hours, the better learners did in form filling), and again by the fact that the teacher seemed to be able to contextualise teaching by using or referring to authentic forms the learners came across in their daily lives. Word writing was also significantly predicted by programme (*Hakat ba Oin/YEP* had higher scores

on word writing). More unexpectedly, group size also significantly predicted performance in word writing: larger groups revealed higher scores on the spelling task than did smaller groups. This might indicate that in larger groups writing was practised more than in smaller groups, either because of time management or because smaller groups seemed to put less pressure on teaching and learning.

The material classroom conditions, the number of languages the teacher used in teaching and the teacher having attended the teacher training did not predict any of the outcomes on the reading and writing task.

### 5.3.4 Development of adults' literacy ability

Section 5.3 provides insight in 'what works' in adult literacy education in Timor-Leste, or, in other words, what factors positively and negatively influenced the development of literacy ability of adults. The learners' results on the reading and writing tasks revealed a large individual variety in literacy ability, whether looking at the total of 756 participants, or at the group of 436 'real beginners' who had had no prior education and had not attended a literacy course before, or at the group of 228 participants who all had attended literacy education for about three months. In the total group of 756 participants, a positive relationship was found between task scores and learners' school attendance as a child. In all three groups, a negative relationship was found with age. These findings confirm what we know from other research (Kurvers et al., 2010): learners' characteristics age and prior education are very important predictors of learning success.

Although showing large individual variety, the task results of the 436 real beginners revealed that many learners were still struggling with decoding and spelling (e.g., 59% of the learners could not read any word on the list and 38% could not write any word of the ten dictated). Differently from what was found in other research (Condelli et al., 2003), proficiency in the language of the literacy programme, i.e., Tetum, turned out not to make such a big difference in the development of literacy ability in Tetum. This might have to do with the fact that many learners were struggling with the first steps in the learning process: the reading and writing of graphemes and syllables of words in Tetum that are familiar even to self-reported non-Tetum speakers. Probably their proficiency in Tetum will become more crucial the higher their level in reading and writing ability gets: for text comprehension it is very important that a certain amount of words in a text is part of the learner's vocabulary in that language.

In the group of 436 real beginners, positive correlations were found between the number of hours of literacy education provided and the scores on three of the four tasks (not the word reading task), and between the number of hours per week and the scores on all four tasks. Larger group sizes also correlated

positively with the scores on three of the four tasks (again not with the word reading task). Teacher experience in adult literacy education only correlated positively with scores on the word reading task. Several times word reading scores seemed to behave differently than scores for the other three tasks. But the scores on all four tasks showed positive correlations with teachers using other materials in class than only the literacy manuals going with the programme. Furthermore, it did seem to matter in what literacy programme people were participating. Taking into account age, the number of hours provided and teacher experience, the literacy programme used showed a significant main effect for all four reading and writing tasks.

When the group of participants was narrowed down to the 228 participants who had attended the literacy course for about three months, the literacy programme still showed a main effect on word reading and form filling, not on the other two tasks. And also in this smaller group the scores on three of the four tasks correlated positively with group size and with teachers bringing additional materials into the class. Another clear finding related to this group was that for 54% of the learners, attending literacy education for about three months apparently had not been enough to learn to read words independently, and 34% could not yet write words independently. These learners were still struggling with the first phases of the learning process: analysing words into syllables and graphemes, or writing graphemes and putting them together to syllables and words. Many others still lacked the necessary speed and fluency. Scores from 64 learners who carried out the four tasks twice, the second time after three months, showed that on average they had reached significant but limited growth in their reading and writing abilities (although for the four tasks respectively 23%, 67%, 33%, and 55% of the learners did not show any progress or even did worse).

#### **5.4 Processes in initial reading and writing acquisition**

Until now, this chapter focused on what the data revealed about the reading and writing abilities of adult learners in Timor-Leste. It turned out that not all adult literacy learners could recognise written words easily and fast: of the absolute beginners, the average word reading score after about three to four months of literacy education was 13.51 words in three minutes, while 54% of the participants could not recognise a single word. The same applied to initial word writing: on average the learners could write about 3.65 out of ten words correctly, with 34% of the learners not being able to spell a single word correctly. The variation among learners however, was huge, ranging from 0 words read or written correctly to the maximum possible score. It is therefore worthwhile to take a closer look at the strategies learners use when they try to recognise or

write a word and to investigate individual differences and development. As explained in Chapter 2, the development of word recognition skills is considered crucial in beginning reading. Two developmental models were presented: stage models and non-stage models. Stage models propose qualitatively different stages in the development of word recognition skills moving from direct-word recognition on the basis of either visual or context-bound cues, via indirect mediated word-recognition through the use of grapheme-phoneme correspondences to automatic and fluent direct word-recognition. Non-stage models suggest a direct route from print to meaning, without any intervention of the alphabetic code. Literature shows some evidence confirming the stage model theory also for adults (Kurvers, 2007). For beginning writing comparable models were presented in which the emergent writer at first does not use the systematic relationship between letter and sound, later uses it when trying to spell a word and eventually moves on to the advanced conventional spelling of words.

The next two sections will focus on these processes of developing word reading and word spelling skills in adult literacy acquisition in Timor-Leste, by taking a closer look at the word reading (or word recognition) strategies (Section 5.4.1) and the word spelling (or word writing) strategies that learners used (Section 5.4.2). The following questions will be dealt with in the two sections: (1) What word reading (word spelling) strategies do beginning literacy learners use? (2) Is there a difference between the literacy programmes in the word reading (word spelling) strategies that learners use? (3) Is there any development in word reading (word spelling) strategies and if there is, does it look similar to what the stage models revealed? (4) Does use of word reading (word spelling) strategies relate to reading (writing) scores?

#### **5.4.1 Initial reading: word recognition strategies**

This section focuses on the word reading task. The learners who participated in this task were asked to read out loud words from a list of 80 words in Tetum (see Appendix 4) during three minutes. The words were ranked from simple, monosyllabic words to longer words with four or five syllables at the end of the list. The first ten words on the list were simple words that were dealt with in all literacy programmes. The learners' reading out loud was audio-recorded.

Some learners did the word reading task twice, the second time three months after the first time. Comparing strategy use and results of the first and second word reading task enabled me to not only look at scores at a certain moment, but also to look at processes in the development of word recognition. For that reason, word recognition strategies that participants applied in the word-reading task, were analysed (using the audio-recordings). For each word they had read aloud, a word recognition strategy was noted, choosing from:

- 1 'Visual recognition' (this category also includes guessing): a word is recognised based on visual cues, like for example the dot on the letter j, a stroke sticking out below the line, the length of the word, or the first letter of the word, e.g., saying the word *bero* (= boat) when recognising the *b* of the word *bola* (= ball), or saying the word *Tetum* when recognising the *T* of the word *Timor*. Common to all these visual cues is that the learner does not use all the alphabetic information available to recognise the word.
- 2 'Letter naming': the learner mentions some or all of the letters of a word (mostly using the letter names), without any attempt to blend these into a word, e.g., saying *emi o esi* for the letters *m*, *o*, and *s* when trying to read the word *mós* (= also);
- 3 Letter by letter decoding plus synthesis ('letters and synthesis'): in using this strategy, the learner applies the letter-sound relationships, by decoding the word letter by letter, using either the letter names or the sound of the letters and blending the different sounds into a word, e.g., saying *emi a en u ma-nu manu* when trying to read the word *manu* (= chicken);
- 4 'Partial decoding': the learner does not decode letter by letter anymore, but takes bigger parts of the words as a starting point, such as syllables (*ma-nu manu*) or onset and rime (*str-eet, street*), e.g., saying *di, di - ak, di'ak* when trying to read the word *di'ak* (= good);
- 5 Automatic decoding or 'direct word recognition': like with the first strategy, the learner reacts directly with a whole word (correct or not completely correct), but different from the first strategy this strategy reflects automatic decoding, without any audible decoding of parts, e.g., saying *paun* when trying to read the word *paun* (= bread) (or: saying *hatene* when reading *hateten*, or saying *filafila* when reading *filafali*, or saying *dadaku* when reading *dadauk*). In practice this might also indicate silent decoding, after which the whole word is mentioned.

In coding the strategies 3, 4 and 5, it did not matter whether a word was read correctly or not.

Crucial is that the strategies can indicate whether a learner mastered the alphabetic principle not yet, a little or fluently. After noting per word the word recognition strategy that was used, for each learner the percentages of the different strategies that he/she used was calculated, dividing the number of times a strategy was used by the total number of words read within three minutes.

Of the group of 436 adult literacy learners without previous primary or literacy education, who had done the word reading test, 252 (59%) had a word reading score of 0. Of these learners hardly any word reading strategies could be scored. Of the remaining learners, word reading strategies could be coded for

150 learners (of the other 24 no audio-recording was available). Of these 150 learners, however, the period of lessons provided ranged from less than a month (seven students) to more than 14 months. Because the investigation of word reading strategies is about beginning reading, this analysis is focusing on the group that had been provided adult literacy education for at least two months and at highest five months, of whom word reading strategies could be coded (N=94; mean=3.20 months, SD=0.47; mean=100.43 hours, SD=17.89).

The first question was: what word reading (or word recognition) strategies do beginning literacy learners use? Table 5.15 presents first the outcomes of the division of word reading strategies for the whole group.

**Table 5.15:** Use of word recognition strategies after about 100 hours of literacy education (N=94; percentages)

	Visual recognition	Letter naming	Letters plus synthesis	Partial decoding	Direct word recognition
Mean	1.01	14.78	16.11	10.26	57.84
SD	(4.77)	(24.45)	(24.26)	(11.85)	(36.43)

Overall, the word reading strategy that these learners used most (on average) is the most advanced direct word recognition or automatic decoding strategy. This, however, could also mean that the learners are still spelling out words silently. The reading speed (see Section 5.3) that is not very high would suggest this, but still it can be considered more advanced than spelling out loudly as in letter by letter decoding, or in decoding syllable by syllable (partial decoding). It suggests that these learners hardly ever applied the first strategy, using visual cues like a letter at the beginning. At this point it is important to remember that learners who could not read any word correctly are not included: they would probably have used visual cues much more. On average in 15% of the coded strategies (about one in seven), the learners use a not very successful strategy of just naming the letters. On average, the slower decoding strategies are used in 26% of the cases (letter by letter decoding 16%, and partly decoding 10%). The standard deviations however are high. For direct word recognition (automatic recoding) this means that there are learners who use these strategies nearly all the time, while there are others who use this strategy hardly or not at all. The same can be said about the strategy of letter naming.

Learners can have a dominant strategy for word recognition, that is sometimes combined with a less-used strategy. Figure 5.7 gives some examples of learners who combine a dominant strategy with a lesser-used strategy.



*Participant 376* is a learner who mainly uses visual cues: she says 'uluk' (first/in the past) when looking at the word *uma* (house), 'bola' (ball) when looking at the word *boot* (big), 'bele' (can) for *di'ak* (good), 'fahe' (share, divide) for *foti* (raise/lift up), and 'jornal' (newspaper) for *joven* (young/ youth).

*Participant 709* is a learner who mainly guesses: he says 'rei' (kiss) when looking at the word *lee* (read), says 'timor' when looking at the word *manu* (chicken), and says nothing when looking at other words, like *haas* (mango), *ida* (one), *uma* (house).

*Participant 225* is a learner with a dominant letter-naming strategy (for eight of ten words read): she says 'te efi a ha i, ha i' when looking at the word *fahi* (pig), and 'o a eni o a eni' when looking at the word *oan* (child). But when looking at the word *manu* (chicken), she says: 'emi a eni u emi a eni u manu' (letters plus synthesis).

*Participant 624* is a learner with a dominant slow decoding strategy (letters plus synthesis, for 36 of 38 words read): she says 'efi o fo te i ti foti' when looking at the word *foti* (raise/lift up), and 'es i si er a ra sira' when looking at the word *sira* (they). But when looking at the word *boot* (big) she says 'be o bo te' and stops (no synthesis to the whole word).

*Participant 1* is a learner who mainly uses the partial decoding strategy: he says 'fa hi fahi' when looking at the word *fahi* (pig), 'ti-mor' for the word *Timor*, 'mai mai-be maibe' for the word *maibe* (but), and 'ha hanoin' for the word *hanoin* (think). But other words he recognises in one go, like *uma* (house), *bola* (ball), and *oan* (child).

*Participant 620* is a learner who mainly uses the automatic decoding strategy (or: direct word recognition). Of 70 words read, she recognises most words (64) directly, like the words *oinsá* (how), *hanoin* (think), and *labarik* (child), but when looking at the word *serve* (useful) she says 'se ser ser serve servi servi', and when looking at the word *nakfakar* (spill/be spilled) she says 'hakfo hak nak nakfakar' (first partial decoding).

**Figure 5.7:** Examples of learners with a dominant and a lesser-used strategy

The second question was: is there a difference between the literacy programmes in the word reading strategies that learners use? Of the 94 learners investigated, 24 attended the *Los Hau Bele* programme and 70 attended *Hakat ba Oin/YEP*. The average number of hours the students had been provided with was 89 for the *Los Hau Bele* programme (SD=19.53) and 104 (SD=15.88) for the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* programme. The average age of the students was 39.96 for the *Los Hau Bele*

programme (SD=12.20) and 33.11 (SD=14.41) for the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* programme (T age=2.08,  $p=.04$ ; T hours=-3.55,  $p=.001$ ).

Table 5.16 presents the relative use of the word reading strategies of the same beginning readers, divided on the basis of the programme they attended. As the programmes differed in the average age of students and in the total hours provided, an analysis of covariance was carried out with 'age' and 'total hours' as covariates. As for the covariates, the analysis reveals one significant main effect of age for partial decoding ( $F=5.73$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $\eta^2=.06$ ) and no main effect of total hours provided.

**Table 5.16:** Word recognition strategies after about three months (100 hours) by programme (N=94; percentages)

	Literacy programme reduced	N	Mean	SD	F (1,90)	Partial $\eta^2$																																									
Visual recognition	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	.23	(1.13)	.31	.003																																									
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	1.28	(5.47)			Letter naming	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	20.34	(28.52)	1.48	.02	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	12.87	(22.81)	Letters plus synthesis	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	24.98	(26.12)	3.14 <sup>#</sup>	.03	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	13.07	(23.00)	Partial decoding	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	9.03	(13.67)	1.58	.02	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	10.68	(11.23)	Direct word recognition	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	45.41	(39.03)	2.35	.03	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>
Letter naming	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	20.34	(28.52)	1.48	.02																																									
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	12.87	(22.81)			Letters plus synthesis	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	24.98	(26.12)	3.14 <sup>#</sup>	.03	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	13.07	(23.00)	Partial decoding	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	9.03	(13.67)	1.58	.02	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	10.68	(11.23)	Direct word recognition	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	45.41	(39.03)	2.35	.03	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	62.10	(34.76)								
Letters plus synthesis	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	24.98	(26.12)	3.14 <sup>#</sup>	.03																																									
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	13.07	(23.00)			Partial decoding	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	9.03	(13.67)	1.58	.02	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	10.68	(11.23)	Direct word recognition	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	45.41	(39.03)	2.35	.03	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	62.10	(34.76)																			
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Direct word recognition	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	24	45.41	(39.03)	2.35	.03																																									
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	70	62.10	(34.76)																																											

<sup>#</sup>  $p<.10$ , \*  $p<.05$ , \*\*  $p<.01$ , \*\*\*  $p<.001$

As Table 5.16 shows, the *Los Hau Bele* learners on average used the strategies letter naming and decoding letter by letter plus blending more often than the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* learners, while the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* learners more often used automatic decoding. Corrected for age and hours provided, these differences however are not significant, although there is a trend for letter by letter decoding ( $p=.08$ )

The third question was: is there any development in word reading strategies and if there is, does it look similar to what the stage models revealed? Some of the learners participated in the reading task twice with an interval of three months. Comparing the task scores and percentages of word recognition strategy use in the first and second measurement provides information about the growth that participants show in word recognition strategies.

In total 24 learners, who had been attending the literacy class for at most five months, did the word reading test twice, the first time after about three to four weeks (mean 21 hours of literacy education provided) the second after about four months (mean 79 hours of literacy education provided). Of 15 of these learners the word reading strategies could be noted at both times. Table 5.17 presents the use of word recognition strategies the first and the second time these 15 learners did the task, and the outcome of the paired t-test for related samples.

**Table 5.17:** Word reading strategies used after about one month and about four months (N=15)

		After 1 month	After 4 months	T-pairs
Visual recognition	Mean	7.27	0.37	1.04
	SD	(25.76)	(1.43)	
Letter naming	Mean	16.72	16.43	.03
	SD	(33.18)	(28.04)	
Letters plus synthesis	Mean	8.45	23.23	-1.97* (p=.07)
	SD	(14.76)	(27.63)	
Partial decoding	Mean	13.88	9.68	1.30
	SD	(15.65)	(14.46)	
Direct word recognition	Mean	53.68	50.28	.68
	SD	(37.15)	(39.27)	

# p<.10, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

Although the difference does not reach significance (p=.07), it is clear that the use of the less advanced strategy visual recognition declines and that alphabetic decoding is used more frequently three months later. For the other strategies, no clear changes could be detected. If there is growth on average, it occurs in decoding plus synthesis. But individual variation is considerable.

Another 19 learners were assessed for the first time after about four months of attending the literacy course and a second time after about seven months of attending. Of 14 of those the reading strategies could be coded at both assessment times. Table 5.18 presents the outcomes.

**Table 5.18:** Word reading strategies used after about 4 months and 7 months (N=14)

		After 4 months	After 7 months	T-pairs
Visual recognition	Mean	0.00	0.00	
	SD	(0.00)	(0.00)	
Letter naming	Mean	26.78	19.32	1.37
	SD	(29.50)	(27.88)	
Letters plus synthesis	Mean	37.62	28.89	1.04
	SD	(31.38)	(31.11)	
Partial decoding	Mean	8.46	8.67	-0.06
	SD	(13.81)	(11.16)	
Direct word recognition	Mean	27.15	43.12	-2.81*
	SD	(35.19)	(40.92)	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5.18 shows that the less advanced strategy visual recognition was not used at all by these learners (any more), that on average letter naming and slow letter by letter decoding declined, while these 14 learners used the most advanced strategy direct word recognition significantly more after seven months than after four months ( $p < .05$ ), although again the standard deviations show huge individual differences at both measurement moments.

The changes in strategy use seem to confirm the stage models presented before: the use of the less advanced strategy (visual recognition or guessing) decreases, the use of letter by letter decoding increases first, while the use of the most advanced strategy direct word recognition seems to increase later on in time.

The fourth question was: does use of word reading strategies relate to reading scores? The stage model predicts that people who can read many words in three minutes use higher order word recognition strategies than people who struggle to read only a few words within three minutes, and that people who show considerable growth in word reading ability show a shift from using lower order strategies to using higher order strategies in word recognition.

To see how strategy use and task scores were related, correlations between percentages of strategy use and task scores were calculated. Table 5.19 shows the five strategies used at the first and second measurement moment, and the correlations with the total number of words read correctly the first and second time the word reading task was done, and with the growth scores (between the first and second measurement moment).

**Table 5.19:** Correlations between percentages of strategy use and scores and growth scores for the word reading task

	Total correctly read words at mm1	Total correctly read words at mm2	Growth
Strategies at mm1:	(N=144)	(N=42)	(N=42)
1 Visual recognition	-.186*	-.176	-.062
2 Letter naming	-.574***	-.508**	-.115
3 Letters plus synthesis	-.462***	-.316*	-.092
4 Partial decoding	.151	.195	-.162
5 Direct word recognition	.718***	.692***	.267
Strategies at mm2:		(N=48)	(N=48)
1 Visual recognition		-.091	-.018
2 Letter naming		-.572***	-.235
3 Letters plus synthesis		-.515***	-.231
4 Partial decoding		.209	.112
5 Direct word recognition		.768***	.323*

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5.19 shows that high percentages of the use of lower order strategies (strategies 1, 2, and 3) correlate negatively with task and growth scores for word reading, while high percentages of the use of higher order strategies (strategies 4 and 5) show positive correlations with task and growth scores for word reading. Correlations are significant for strategies 1, 2, 3, and 5 at time 1, for strategy 2, 3, and 5 at time 2, and for strategy 2, 3, and 5 for the time-lagged correlations at time 2. Correlations with the growth scores are not significant, except for growth with direct word recognition at time 2.

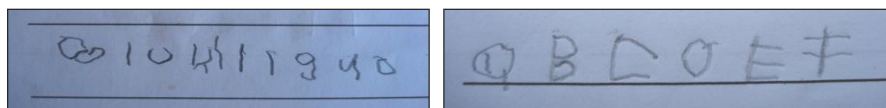
The *negative* correlations at time 1 with percentages of use of strategies 1, 2, and 3 mean that the more a learner mentioned each letter/letter name of a word (strategy 2), or tried to put single letters (letter names) together (synthesis, strategy 3), the lower his/her word recognition scores were. Participants who used these strategies a lot did not master well the alphabetic principle; they took too long to get to complete word recognition. The highest and mostly significant *positive* correlations both at the same time and three months later occurred with percentages of use of strategy 5; so the better a learner was at direct word recognition, the higher his/her word recognition scores were. Here the participants did master the alphabetic principle well. Apparently the reversal from negative to positive correlations with scores, indicates the ability to accelerate the use of the alphabetic principle.

Summarising the above, the results show large individual variation in the use of word recognition strategies. After about three to four months of literacy education, some beginning readers predominantly used the less advanced strategy of naming letters without any attempt of assembling them into words, while others mainly used the strategy of automatic (or silent) decoding. Most beginning readers showed a preference for one or two of the strategies, but only a few used one strategy exclusively. Comparison of the use of strategies for those learners who had been assessed twice with about three months in between showed that in general the less advanced strategies were used less, while the more advanced strategies were used more, although only direct word recognition revealed significance. This and the correlations with the reading scores indicate some evidence for a developmental trend from logographic to slow decoding (applying the alphabetic principle) to automatic decoding and direct word recognition.

#### 5.4.2 Initial writing: spelling stages and strategies

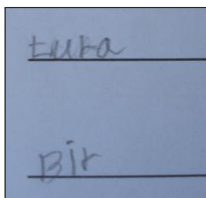
This section focuses on the word-writing task. The learners who participated in this task were asked to write ten Tetum words that were read out loud to them one by one (see Appendix 6). The words were ordered from simple, monosyllabic words to longer words containing three syllables. Based on the data and on literature (Kurvers & Ketelaars, 2011), I could distinguish the following word spelling (or word writing) strategies:

- 1 Pre-phonetic: the learner wrote some scribbles or letter-like forms (see Figure 5.8), or some letters that were not related at all to the word dictated (like the letters *a b c* when they were supposed to write the word *uma* (house) as in Figure 5.9. This category also includes those instances where the learner did not write anything at all.



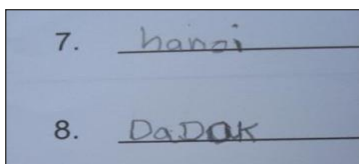
Figures 5.8 and 5.9: Pre-phonetic writing

- 2 Semi-phonetic: the learners wrote just a few letters of the word they had to write that are related to the sound of the word, but not in a systematic alphabetic way. Examples are *tura* or *Bir* (see Figure 5.10), where they were asked to write the words *tarutu* (noise) and *bainhira* (when).



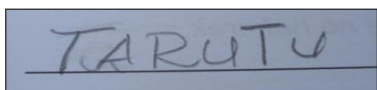
**Figure 5.10:** Semi-phonetic: writing

- 3 Phonetic: the learners wrote a word on a phonetic base, i.e., a letter for each sound that they heard, although they might have used a grapheme that was not conventionally right, missed a hardly articulated phoneme, or put some graphemes in the wrong order (see Figure 5.11); for example they wrote *hanoi* or *dadak* when asked to write the words *hanoin* (think) and *dadauk* (still/at this moment).



**Figure 5.11:** Phonetic writing

- 4 Conventional: writing the word according to orthographic conventions, like *tarutu* (noise) in Figure 5.12.



**Figure 5.12:** Conventional writing

For each learner the percentages of the different strategies that were used were calculated.

As to the first research question, ‘What word spelling (or word writing) strategies do learners use?’, this analysis focuses on the group of 240 learners that had been provided with literacy education between two and five months. Of this group, the word-writing strategies of 228 learners are available. On average they had been provided with education for a period of 3.26 months ( $SD=0.48$ ) and 97.6 hours ( $SD=21.39$ ). Table 5.20 presents the outcomes of the whole group ( $N=228$ )

**Table 5.20:** Use of word spelling strategies after about 100 hours of literacy education (percentages; N=228)

	Pre-phonetic	Semi-phonetic	Phonetic	Conventional
Mean	43.99	12.59	6.58	36.45
SD	(43.23)	(19.07)	(9.42)	(35.98)

Overall, the most used strategy is the pre-phonetic strategy: after about 100 hours of literacy education, many learners still do not know how to write a word dictated to them, they don't write anything, or they write some letters not related to the sounds of the word. The second most used strategy is conventional (correct) writing. On average 3.6 out of ten words are written conventionally (correct). But the standard deviation shows that the variation is large: several learners write nearly all words in a conventional way, while others hardly write any word correct.

Less used strategies are semi-phonetic writing (13% on average) that indicates some relationship with the word sound, and phonetic writing (7% on average) that indicates that each sound of the spoken word is represented by a grapheme.

The second question was: 'Is there a difference between the two programmes in the use of word spelling strategies?' Before looking at the difference between the programmes in the use of word writing strategies, I checked whether the programmes differed in the number of hours provided and the age of the learners. The 78 *Los Hau Bele* learners on average had been provided with 88.57 hours, (SD=25.49), the 162 *Hakat ba Oin/Yep* learners with 101.94 hours (SD=17.60). This difference is significant ( $T=-4.73$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The *Los Hau Bele* learners were on average 47.32 years old (SD=13.62), the *Hakat ba Oin/Yep* learners 37.45 years (SD=15.69). This difference was also significant ( $T=4.76$ ,  $p=.000$ ). To compare the programmes, a multivariate analysis of variance was carried out with the programmes as factor, the different writing strategies as dependent factor and age and hours provided as covariate. For three of the four strategies a significant main effect of age was revealed, respectively  $F=31.22$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $\eta^2=.12$  for pre-phonetic,  $F=13.12$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $\eta^2=.06$  for phonetic, and  $F=23.55$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $\eta^2=.10$  for conventional spelling, but there was no significant main effect of total hours ( $p>.05$ ). Table 5.21 presents the outcomes of the analysis of the programme effects, corrected for age and total hours.



**Table 5.21:** Word-writing strategies after about three months (100 hours) split up by programme (N=228)

	Literacy programme	N	Mean	SD	F <sub>1,101</sub>	η <sup>2</sup>
Pre-phonetic	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	73	55.75	(42.42)	.41	.002
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	155	38.45	(42.63)		
Semi-phonetic	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	73	13.42	(19.95)	1.93	.001
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	155	12.19	(18.70)		
Phonetic	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	73	5.75	(9.27)	.12	.001
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	155	6.97	(9.49)		
Conventional	<i>Los Hau Bele</i>	73	25.07	(29.07)	2.17	.01
	<i>Hakat ba Oin/YEP</i>	155	41.81	(37.72)		

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

The learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme more often used the less advanced pre-phonetic strategy, while the *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* learners more often used the conventional strategy, but corrected for age these differences are not significant.

The third question was: 'Is there any development in word spelling strategies and if there is, does it look similar to what the stage models revealed?' As mentioned, some of the learners had participated in the writing task twice; the second time took place three months after the first time. Of the learners who had been attending literacy education for at most five months, in total 37 had done the word-writing task twice, the first time after about three to four weeks, the second after about four months (see Table 5.22).

**Table 5.22:** Word-writing strategies used after about one month and about four months (N=37)

		After 1 month	After 4 months	T-pairs
Pre-phonetic	Mean	68.65	56.49	2.81**
	SD	(40.56)	(44.05)	
Semi-phonetic	Mean	12.16	15.68	-1.07
	SD	(17.02)	(22.55)	
Phonetic	Mean	2.16	3.24	-1.00
	SD	(6.30)	(6.69)	
Conventional	Mean	17.03	24.59	-1.69
	SD	(25.91)	(31.14)	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The use of the least advanced strategy declines significantly, the use of the other three strategies increases during the course, although the differences do not reach significance. This means that for some of the learners the insight grows that the letters on the paper somehow have to be related to the sounds of the words that are dictated.

The fourth question was: 'Does use of word spelling strategies relate to writing ability?'. To see how strategy use and task scores were related, correlations between percentages of strategy use and task scores were calculated. Table 5.23 shows the correlations between the word-writing strategies used at the first and second measurement moment, and the total number of words spelled correctly and the total form filling score the first and second time, and the growth scores (between the first and second measurement moment). For the calculation of these correlations, all learners were included, irrespective of the total hours provided.

**Table 5.23:** Spelling strategies used and correlations with spelling scores and growth scores

	Total nr of words written correctly mm1	Total nr of items correctly filled out on form mm1	Total nr of words written correctly mm2	Total nr of items correctly filled out on form mm2	Growth word writing	Growth form filling
Strategies at mm1:	N=383	N=383	N=95	N=103	N=95	N=103
Pre-phonetic	-.841***	-.698***	-.495***	-.612***	.353***	-.089
Semi-phonetic	.030	.062	.310**	.204*	.118	.107
Phonetic	.316***	.409**	.136	.286**	-.219*	-.092
Conventional <sup>36</sup>		.762**	.469***	.630***	-.503***	.091
Strategies at mm2:			N=120	N=120	N=115	N=120
Pre-phonetic			-.829***	-.704***	-.321***	.334***
Semi-phonetic			.092	.422***	-.194*	.221*
Phonetic			.326***	.289**	.061	.170
Conventional				.617***	.567***	.269**

The table shows that high percentages of the use of the lower order pre-phonetic strategy correlate negatively and significantly with task scores at both measurement moments and also across time (the strategy used at the first measurement moment with the writing scores at the second measurement moment) (column 1 to 4). The use of the higher order strategy conventional spelling (which correlates of course close to 1 with the word-writing score at the same measurement moment) correlates significantly and positively with the word-writing score at the second measurement moment, and with the form filling scores at both measurement moments. The same pattern can be found for the use of the lowest order strategy and the highest order strategy at the second measurement moment, and the growth scores for word writing and form filling. This pattern however differs for the correlation between the strategy use at the first measurement moment and the growth scores (column 5 and 6), showing a positive and significant correlation between the lowest order strategy at the first measurement moment and the growth score for word writing, and a significant negative correlation between the use of the two highest order strategies at the first measurement moment and the growth scores for word writing. This

<sup>36</sup> Correlations between the 4<sup>th</sup> strategy of conventional spelling and the total number of words written correctly are not presented here because these two coincide.

indicates that those learners who already showed the highest word-writing strategies at the first measurement moment could not grow much anymore, while those who had low scores at the first measurement moment, were the learners who clearly increased their spelling abilities.

## 5.5 Conclusions

My first research question focused on results achieved in learning to read and write in Tetum through the recently available adult literacy programmes in Timor-Leste. It also looked into factors of influence on the development of adult literacy and into processes in reading and writing acquisition.

Before summarising the findings and presenting the conclusions, it should be noted that the reality in the field did not always match with the research design on paper, which complicated investigating the results achieved in learning to read and write in the literacy programmes. The start and end dates of programmes varied per village, participants were joining groups well after the start date or dropped out before the end or the second measurement moment, exact data on participants' presence were lacking, people were repeating programmes by lack of progress or lack of possibilities to continue learning, participants were not only the expected beginners, but also adults with some years of primary education. In addition to these issues, also practical, infrastructural issues like flooded rivers and roads prevented us from visiting several groups for the second time after three months, and sometimes weather conditions and lack of time or travel money prevented learners from showing up in the classes we visited. Another complicating issue is the high level of heterogeneity in the groups and the complete absence of information on starting levels. (Needless to say that many of the factors mentioned here in general also have an impact on the results of literacy acquisition in the programmes.)

Although the adult literacy programmes *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin*, and *YEP* all targeted beginning readers and writers, the learner population in the adult literacy groups (N=756) turned out to be very heterogeneous, including young and old learners, learners with and without prior primary or literacy education. 22% of the learners were monolingual, the rest multilingual, the majority having a regional language as their first language and Tetum as their second language (17% of the learners said they did not speak Tetum). The 100 teachers who participated in the broad study were all multilingual and most had Tetum as their second or third language. The teachers had attended on average 10.65 years of education, and were relatively inexperienced in adult literacy education; 75% only had up to one year of experience in teaching adult literacy.

### Results and factors of influence

The learners' results on the reading and writing tasks revealed considerable variation in literacy ability in all three groups investigated: the whole group of 756 participants, the group of 436 'real beginners' (without prior primary or literacy education) and the group of 228 participants who all had attended literacy education for about three months.

The task results of the 436 real beginners revealed that many learners were still struggling with decoding and spelling. Similar results were found when the group was narrowed down to those learners who all had been attending about three months of classes. The proportion of adults who had hardly built any literacy ability was rather high (in both groups more than half of the learners could not read one word on the list and more than one third could not write one word of the ten dictated after three to four months).

Like in other research (Condelli et al., 2003; Kurvers et al., 2010), the learner characteristics age and prior education turned out to be very important predictors of literacy learning success. In the whole group (N=756), a significant positive relationship was found between all literacy scores and learners' previous years of schooling. A significant negative relationship was found with age, also in the group of true beginners: the older the learners, the less successful they were on average. Unlike what was found in earlier research, proficiency in the language of the literacy programme (Tetum) turned out not to make much of a difference in the development of Tetum literacy ability. This might have to do with the fact that in these first phases of the learning process, the reading and writing of graphemes and syllables of words in Tetum might be familiar even to self-reported non-Tetum speakers.

Regarding the educational variables, a multivariate analysis of covariance in the group of real beginners (N=436) revealed a significant main effect (next to age) of total hours of literacy education provided and the scores on three of the four tasks (not word reading), of teacher experience on word reading only and of the programme attended on all four tasks. Significant positive correlations were found with the number of hours provided per week and the scores on all four tasks (although the programmes also differed in this respect) and group size also correlated positively with the scores on three of the four tasks (again not with word reading). The scores on all four tasks showed positive correlations with teachers using other materials (from the learners' daily lives) in class than only the programme's literacy manuals. This matches with other research in which success in adult beginning reading was found to be related to contextualising literacy learning into daily needs and daily practices (Condelli et al., 2003; Kurvers et al., 2010). Teacher experience in adult literacy education only correlated positively with word-reading scores. Several times word-reading

scores seemed to behave differently from scores for the other three tasks: apparently for word-reading ability, teacher experience was making more of a difference than the number of hours provided and the group size. More experienced teachers might be better at explaining the alphabetic code which is crucial for word reading. Furthermore, it did seem to matter in what literacy programme people were participating. Taking into account age, the number of hours provided and teacher experience, the literacy programme showed a significant main effect for all four reading and writing tasks. On all four tasks the mean scores of the programmes differed significantly. The effect sizes were medium (for word writing) to low (for the other three tasks). Learners in the *YEP* programme scored significantly higher on all tasks than learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme (when corrected for age of the learners, the number of hours provided, and the years of teacher experience); *Hakat ba Oin* learners scored in between, their scores not being significantly different from *Los Hau Bele* and from *YEP* only for the two writing tasks.

The analyses of the results of the 228 participants who had attended the literacy course for about three months, showed comparable results: corrected for age the literacy programme still showed a main effect on word reading and form filling; *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* students scored significantly higher on these tasks than *Los Hau Bele* students. Teacher experience again only had a significant main effect on word reading. The effect sizes were low again. Also in this smaller group the scores on three of the four tasks correlated positively with group size, and with teachers bringing other materials into the class. After attending three months of literacy classes, many learners still were struggling with decoding and spelling; 54% could not read words and 34% could not write words independently.

Possible explanations for the differences in results between programmes are the following. Firstly it could be that *YEP* learners had higher scores than the learners in the other programmes because they had benefitted from the fact that for them the whole *Hakat ba Oin* content (planned for six months) was summarised into one book that started with single letters and key words but also dealt with phrases and short texts (and complete forms as well as basic numeracy in Tetum); this meant that learners who could handle more complex content in larger units (larger than letters, syllables or words) could learn more from this summarised version than when they only were given the first of the four *Hakat ba Oin* books, as happens in *Hakat ba Oin* courses. (In many *Hakat ba Oin* courses learner groups jointly deal with book 1 first (letters, syllables, key words), until everyone grasps the content, and then all together they switch to book 2 (words about ten themes) and later in the same way to book 3 (phrases on the ten themes) and four (texts on the same themes); this way learners, who would have been able to learn faster than the rest of the group, are held back.)

Another reason for the higher scores in the *YEP* programme, could be the fact that the organisers (a collaboration of the Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment, ILO, and local NGOs) were not aiming at providing this programme in all 13 districts at the same time, but in each round only targeted several districts at the same time. That might have resulted in a better monitoring and evaluation system, compared to that of the Ministry of Education that was providing *Los Hau Bele* as well as a follow up of *Iha Dalan* (and where needed *Hakat ba Oin*) in all 13 districts.

In line with this, one would expect that because of the prioritisation of *Los Hau Bele* in the years 2007-2012, the results of learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme would be higher than those of learners in *Hakat ba Oin*, the other programme for beginning literacy learners. As noticed in Chapter 3, prioritisation of *Los Hau Bele* as the programme used within the framework of the national adult literacy campaign implied a much stronger monitoring and evaluation system than was set up for the other programmes (*Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*), with many more advisers and Timorese staff involved in the capital as well as in the 13 districts, mobilisation of more resources, and the organisation of festive graduation ceremonies during which participants received certificates and districts were declared 'free from illiteracy'. But despite more attention and better organisation, the results of *Los Hau Bele* learners were not higher than the ones of learners in the *Hakat ba Oin* programme that suffered from insufficient resources for monitoring and evaluation.

Finding explanations for the differences in results between programmes is important, but at the same time, and maybe more importantly, it can be concluded that the overall results of all programmes were not very high despite the efforts made. Although under the given circumstances learners had been able to make some achievements in learning to read and write, from a perspective of 'becoming literate', the achievements were not very high. Apparently there were issues that exceeded the level of separate programmes, apparently there were things not going too well in all the programmes. On the other hand, based on what is known from research, one cannot expect that three to four months of literacy education is enough to become independent readers and writers (Kurvers et al., 2010). My findings confirmed that the provision of three to four months of literacy education is generally insufficient for adult learners to acquire basic reading and writing skills. Some findings were definitely worrying: many learners after three months were still struggling to recognise graphemes and syllables, and were not capable of decoding or spelling any word at all, not even the key words of their programme. In any case, declaring districts 'free from illiteracy' after providing three months of literacy education does not appear to accord with reality. Three months of literacy education can be a good first step in the process of reading and writing acquisition, but becoming really and

functionally literate implies a longer process that takes follow-up, continuity in literacy and post-literacy education. This is not only the case for adult learners; an analysis of early grade reading acquisition in Timor-Leste (World Bank, 2009:2) showed that of the more than 900 children tested in grade 1, 2, and 3, more than 70% could not read a single word yet at the end of grade 1, 40% could not read a word yet at the end of grade 2, and this dropped to about 20% at the end of grade 3. About one third of the tested students in grade 3, however, were able to read about 60 words per minute, a reading fluency which, according to the report, 'would be considered low for grade 3 students in high income countries', but is 'considered by many childhood reading experts as a minimum standard for reading fluency, which has been shown internationally to be associated with reading comprehension'.

Predictors of success did not turn out to be very different in my study than in other studies (Condelli & Wrigley 2006; Kurvers et al., 2010). The learner characteristics age and prior education have shown to be main predictors of success, but these cannot be influenced. Other factors that proved to be of importance and that can be influenced were: the total number of hours of literacy education provided, the number of hours provided per week, the group size, the literacy programme, the amount of teacher experience and the teacher's ability to contextualise lesson content.

### **Growth and strategies**

The results of learners who did the four tasks twice (N=64), the second time after three months, showed that on average they had reached significant, but limited, growth in their reading and writing abilities. The investigation of word recognition and spelling strategies revealed relatively much use of the lower-order strategies in the beginning and use of more advanced strategies later on. The development they showed in use of word reading and word spelling strategies, matches with the stage theories (Ehri, 1991; Juel, 1991) stating that people move from using visual cues at first, to using graphic cues in the alphabetic stage, gradually into the orthographic stage of automatic and fast direct word recognition. Learning the alphabetic principle (phonemic awareness and understanding grapheme-phoneme correspondence), as was found in other research, is crucial in the process, to eventually get to automatic word recognition (Adams, 1990, 1993; Bradley & Bryant, 1985; Byrne, 1998; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989; Rieben et al., 1997; Share, 1995). Although the differences over time (three months) were small and could only be investigated on a small scale, my findings do support the stage theories. They also confirm the findings about people using higher order word recognition and spelling strategies being able to better read and write, i.e., with more speed and accuracy (Gentry, 1982, 2000; Gibson & Levin, 1976; Kurvers, 2007; Kurvers & Ketelaars, 2011; Kurvers & Van der Zouw,



1990; Tolchinsky; 2004). Teacher expertise mattered more in this respect than other educational factors, which might confirm again that this is a key step. My findings show the need for increasing pace in first getting acquainted with an alphabetic code and as a second step reaching and developing fluency in decoding and spelling, to get from the second, alphabetic, stage to the third, orthographic stage of direct word recognition and word writing, and not get stuck in the use of lower order word recognition and spelling strategies.



## CHAPTER 6

# Adult literacy teaching: practices and ideas

This chapter focuses on what happens in adult literacy classrooms in Timor-Leste. The main focus is on the actual teaching and learning that is going on during the literacy classes, the literacy pedagogy in the different programmes used and the classroom interaction. It includes the underlying ideas on literacy and literacy education that guide teachers' practices. I use findings from class observations and interviews with learners, teachers and coordinators of literacy groups of three different adult literacy programmes that were provided by the Timorese government. In Chapter 5, I zoomed in on what participants in these programmes had learned after several months in terms of reading and writing abilities, and how they made progress in the literacy acquisition process. In this chapter, I investigate the teaching practices that they were confronted with when in class.

In Section 6.1 I describe the main research question dealt with in this chapter and the research methods used to find answers to this question. Based on a selection of literacy groups, Section 6.2 provides purely descriptive information about classroom-based literacy teaching practices that adult learners are confronted with in the three different programmes under investigation. I selected two groups in each programme to describe in detail the classes that I observed and to illustrate how literacy classes in the different programmes took place. The two groups per programme are also selected to show how different groups within one and the same programme had different classes. As described in Chapter 4, I observed a total of 20 classes of 12 adult literacy groups in these three programmes (see Appendix 7 for an overview). The data collected in all 20 classes will be analysed in Section 6.3 where I summarise similarities and differences in the teaching practices observed in the classes. First I discuss some central topics that emerge from observations of the teaching of reading and writing in general in all three programmes (6.3.1). Secondly, I zoom in on one programme-specific feature of teaching literacy, i.e., the connection of numbers to letters in the *Los Hau Bele* programme (6.3.2). Thirdly, I discuss a phenomenon observed in almost every adult literacy class

that I visited: multilingual classroom talk (6.3.3). Section 6.4 focuses on the ideas of learners and (mainly) their teachers and coordinators on teaching and learning adult literacy. The main goal is to describe their discourses and ideas as retrieved from the interviews conducted with them (see also Appendix 7 for an overview of the interviews) and see how these might guide teachers' practices in literacy classes. Section 6.5 briefly presents the main conclusions regarding the research question of this chapter.

## 6.1 Research question and method

In literacy education all over the world various methods are used, some of which were described in Chapter 2. Synthetic methods initially emphasise elements of the code, e.g., letters or syllables; analytic methods from the beginning emphasise meaning, starting with words or phrases (Gray, 1969). Learner-centred methods give learners' interests and experiences first consideration (Freire, 1970; Legrand, 1993). It is commonly accepted that in all cases and circumstances, beginning readers acquiring alphabetic systems need to be made aware of the phonological make-up of the language they use and to build phonemic awareness; they need explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle (Lieberman & Lieberman, 1990; Chall, 1999).

In multilingual countries, people in literacy education have to deal with national language and language-in-education policies. Through multilingual talk in classrooms, teachers and learners navigate in and between the constraints of particular language policies (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Research has shown that success in literacy teaching in a second language is related to instructional use of the learners' mother tongue (Condelli & Wrigley, 2006). Apart from language policies, people in literacy education also have to deal with consequences of national education policies. Many governments opt for literacy education in national programmes and campaigns, often based on a political rationale (Wagner, 1999; Rogers, 1997), this despite the often disappointing results of national programmes and campaigns (Abadzi, 1994; Lind, 2008). A lot of the research on literacy teaching has been carried out in highly literate environments with high-educated teachers (Van de Craats et al., 2006).

In Timor-Leste, not much research has been done yet on the actual teaching of adult literacy today. Cabral and Martin-Jones (2008, 2012) and Da Silva (2012) investigated FRETILIN's literacy education since the early 1970s and how it is still relevant today. Boughton and Durnan (2007) and Taylor-Leech (2009) discussed more recent adult education programmes, projects and providers in Timor-Leste. Boughton (2010a) listed achievements of adult and popular education since 2002. But there has been virtually no research on what

exactly happens in adult literacy classes in Timor-Leste and we know rather little about how teachers in contemporary programmes think that adult literacy education should take place. The complex setting of Timor-Leste, with its history of colonialism, occupation and then independence, its choices regarding national language and education policies and its recent collaboration with various international partners in development, makes it relevant to investigate what teaching methods are being used here in adult literacy education, how teachers take up their task and how their ideas on literacy education might influence their teaching. The main question that will be answered in this chapter therefore is: *What classroom-based literacy teaching practices are adult literacy learners confronted with, and what ideas guide teachers' practices?*

To answer this question, the data collected during the in-depth study of 2010-2011, which are mainly qualitative, will be used. As described in Chapter 4, I observed 20 classes in 12 different adult literacy groups in seven districts (see Figure 4.1). In four of those districts, I also conducted interviews with groups of learners and with teachers and coordinators of the classes that I observed. While observing the literacy classes, I paid attention to what was being taught, how it was being taught, how learners were involved in the lessons, what languages teachers and learners used in their classroom interaction, and how they made use of the materials available in their classes (see Appendix 8 for the class observation checklist that I used). During the class observations, I made audio recordings, took pictures and wrote field notes. In the interviews after the classes, I asked the teachers, learners, and coordinators about their ideas on the teaching, learning and use of literacy.

The classes that I visited were part of three different adult literacy programmes, *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*, all described in Chapter 5. My data collection for the in-depth study started with visiting one literacy class in Viqueque district, one in Aileu district, and one in Covalima district, in November and December 2010 and in February 2011 respectively. Through these first three class observations, I was able to decide what kind of topics and questions should become part of the guidelines for the interviews with learners, teachers and coordinators that I was going to use later-on in four other districts. In each of those four districts, I stayed one week: in Dili and Ermera in July 2011, in Manufahi and Manatuto in November 2011. I stayed in a guest house in the district capital and together with the district or subdistrict coordinator for adult literacy education I travelled from there to the classes, which were often up in the mountains or in other more or less remote areas. There I observed 17 more literacy classes and interviewed the learners, teachers and coordinators. As described in Chapter 4, I conducted a total of 25 interviews as part of the in-depth study: nine with learner groups, ten with teachers, and six with coordinators (see Appendix 7 for an overview). The interviews were semi-

structured oral interviews in which the interviewees could freely talk about the topics addressed; I used interview guidelines to be sure that all relevant topics would be covered. Different interview guidelines (see Appendix 9) were used for learner groups, for the teachers and for the coordinators of literacy programmes, to be able to relate the questions to the interviewees' specific activities and roles. All interviews were audio-recorded.

After the class visits, I wrote detailed accounts of all class observations and interviews. Summarised accounts of a selection of the literacy classes observed are presented in the next section and an overview of all 20 classes observed is included in Appendix 10.

## 6.2 Class observations

This section describes classes observed in two different groups in each of the three literacy programmes *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan*. My objective here is to present some of the data as retrieved through class observations only as descriptions, i.e., without analysing them yet, to give the reader an idea of the actual teaching and learning in those classes. Guiding principle for the description was a series of questions I asked myself each time: 'What was the teacher teaching? How was it being taught? How were learners involved in this? What languages did teachers and learners use in classroom interaction? And how did they make use of the materials available in their classes?' For reasons of space not all observed classes will be described in detail here; selecting and describing two different groups in each of the three programmes might reveal whether in one and the same programme, the classes of different teachers took place in different ways, with different contents and different didactics.

### 6.2.1 Two *Los Hau Bele* groups

#### **A *Los Hau Bele* group in Dili district**

Within one week in July 2011, I observed three Tetum literacy classes of the same teacher and group in the outskirts of Dili capital (group number 4 in Appendix 7). The classes of this group took place on the veranda of the teacher's house, on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 16.00-18.00 hours, or earlier if the participants came in earlier. They had started the programme on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2011. The first class that I attended on Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of July had already started when the coordinator and I arrived at 15.50 hours. Nine female participants were present. As there were no tables and just chairs, they held their notebooks and literacy manuals on their laps. The teacher was explaining the sound and writing of the letters *k* and *r* combined

(lesson number 36 according to the *Los Hau Bele* teacher manual). On the blackboard she had written syllables with *kr* (*kra, kre, kri, kro, kru*) and some words starting with *kr*, namely *krakat, kredito, kroat, krut* (...<sup>37</sup>, credit, sharp/weapon, frizzy). Next to these letters, syllables and words, the teacher also wrote a short phrase on the blackboard: *Ema kaer kroat* (the person holds a weapon). She also repeated the letter combination that the class apparently had done last time: *p* and *r*. The letters and syllables were combined with the numbers that belong to each letter according to the *Los Hau Bele* programme: under each letter a short horizontal line was drawn and the corresponding number was written underneath that line, as shown in Figure 6.1:

<u>p</u> <u>r</u>	<u>k</u> <u>r</u>	<u>a</u> <u>e</u> <u>i</u> <u>o</u> <u>u</u>	<u>k</u> <u>r</u> <u>a</u>	<u>k</u> <u>r</u> <u>e</u>	<u>k</u> <u>r</u> <u>i</u>
20 10	8 10	1 2 3 4 5	8 10 1	8 10 2	8 10 3

**Figure 6.1:** Writing numbers under letters and syllables in Dili district

The participants were called to the blackboard by the teacher, to write numbers under the letters. The class chanted the numbers in Tetum: *walu* (8), *sanulu* (10), *ida* (1), etc. Then they practiced reading out loud the syllables *kra, kre, kri, kro, kru*, repeating them for a while, after which they went on practising the reading of the words starting with *kr* as mentioned above. No DVD was shown during this lesson. The teacher used Tetum as a language of instruction, and would occasionally speak Mambae with the learners (e.g., while walking around and checking notebooks, and while making a joke at the end of the lesson); Mambae seemed to be the main language of communication among the learners, although I heard them speak Tetum as well.

At 16.15 hours the teacher cleaned the blackboard and started to invite participants one by one to step forward and write their first and family names, teaching them about capital and lower case letters. Some participants could write their name rather quickly, others had difficulties getting their name on the blackboard; the teacher then deleted wrong letters with her brush and helped to get the right letters in the right place. She also explained about how to form letters and about the difference between for example the letters *b* and *d*. After the lesson had finished, around 16.40 hours, I talked a bit with the learners. When I asked how old they were, they answered by referring to their ages in Indonesian. Their ages varied from 37 until 61 years. Eight of the nine

<sup>37</sup> Despite the fact that (through Facebook and with the kind help of E. Cabral) considerable numbers of people from Timor-Leste were consulted about the meaning of the word *krakat*, it has not been possible to provide an English translation for this word.

women present had never gone to school before. Two of them had attended another literacy course in the past.



**Figure 6.2:** Teacher checking notebooks and helping learners in Dili district

After the weekend, I attended the second class of this group. This lesson started just after 16.00 hours. On that day there were again nine participants, two of whom had not been there last time. Later three more participants walked in that I had not seen last time. Like in the previous class, no DVD was shown. The day's lesson subject was the combination of the letters *t* and *r*, which is lesson number 42 in the *Los Hau Bele* teacher manual (later the teacher explained to me that she had chosen to skip lessons 37-41 about the syllables *gue*, *gui*, *ai*, *se*, and *ze*, because although these letter combinations are mentioned in the teacher manual they are not dealt with on the DVDs). Following the same steps as in the previous lesson, the teacher explained the writing and the sounds of the letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, and the syllables *tra*, *tre*, *tri*, *tro*, *tru*. On the blackboard she also wrote some words starting with *tr*: *trata*, *trigu*, *troka* (to treat, flour, change). The participants repeated after the teacher: *te eri a tra*, *te eri e tre*, etc. Then they wrote numbers under the letters of *tra*, *tre*, *tri*, *tro*, *tru* (the numbers 9, 10, 1 under *tra*; 9, 10, 2 under *tre*, and so on). The teacher invited learners to the blackboard to write the numbers; some could write them quickly but most learners had difficulties writing them and the teacher would give extra explanations and wipe off wrong numbers.

After that, the teacher used her hand to cover parts of each syllable and ask what was left ('If of *tru* the letters *tr* are covered: what is left?' '*u!*'). The teacher made the participants also practise the syllables backwards (*tru*, *tro*, *tri*, *tre*, *tra*), and again letter by letter (*te eri i tri*, *te eri o tro*, etc.). The next thing the participants were asked to do was to write in their notebooks that day's date, plus the five syllables and corresponding numbers. When I took a closer look at their writing, I saw that the letters with lines and numbers underneath often



looked more like drawings than like writing; it seemed very difficult for most of the learners to carry out this task. The next part of the lesson was used to practice writing names, sex, country, birth date and signature (things they had to be able to write in the final literacy test of the *Los Hau Bele* programme).

The next day I attended the third lesson of this group. It started at 16.15 hours and that day the subject was the combination of letters *g* and *r* into *gr*, which is lesson 43 according to the *Los Hau Bele* teacher manual. The teacher explained about the capital *G* and small *g*, and wrote the syllables *gra*, *gre*, *gri*, *gro*, *gru*. They practised the reading of the syllables and the teacher then used her hand to cover parts of the syllables again: first she covered the *g* and asked what was left, then she covered *g* and *r* and asked which letter was left. Soon they started practising putting the numbers under the letters again: 18 under *g*, 10 under *r* and 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 under *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*. Participants (on this day there were seven) were invited to come to the blackboard and write letters and numbers. And after that they wrote *gra*, *gre*, *gri*, *gro*, *gru* plus the numbers in their notebooks. This lesson, the teacher did not give words with *gr*. But she did explain about writing the capital *G* in names, like *Guterres*. The learners said they were still not sure about writing this letter and then the teacher took time to explain once again how to form the capital *G* and the lower case *g*. In the second part of the lesson the learners practised writing the name of their village, subdistrict and district. Most participants were coached letter-by-letter by the teacher.

### **A *Los Hau Bele* group in Ermera district**

In the same programme I observed lessons of a different adult literacy group in a different district: Ermera. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2011, I visited three classes of this group (group number 5 in Appendix 7). When the subdistrict coordinator and I arrived at the literacy group after a 20 minute motor trip into the mountains, I first talked a bit with the teacher. She told me that she had had five years of primary education during Portuguese times and that she had been working as an adult literacy teacher since March 2010. When teaching, she used the *Los Hau Bele* teacher manual and learner's booklet, but not the DVDs, since (as she explained) there was no electricity in the village. The lessons took place at the veranda of the house of the local leader, where there were chairs, but no tables, for the learners, as shown in Figures 6.3 and 6.4.



**Figure 6.3 and 6.4:** The veranda where the lessons took place and some of the learners in Ermera district

The teacher did not have enough pencils and notebooks. I gave her some that I had brought and she passed them on to her learners. She told me her group consisted of 28 learners, divided in two subgroups with 14 learners each, but that on a daily basis, only seven to eleven learners (of the 28) showed up and participated actively. When the lesson started, apart from the (Timorese) sub-district coordinator and me, also a Cuban adviser came to observe. The teacher started writing the number 9 on the blackboard, the lower case *t* and capital letter *T* (lesson number 16 according to the *Los Hau Bele* teacher manual). She then added the word *tinta* (ink), underlined, with the numbers 9, 3, 7, 9, and 1 underneath. She explained this by saying: ‘*t* is connected to 9’, ‘*i* is connected to 3’, ‘*n* is connected to 7’, ‘*t* is connected to 9’, and ‘*a* is connected to 1’. She used Tetum as language of instruction but referred to the numbers in Portuguese. Learners occasionally also used Indonesian to refer to numbers.

The teacher then invited learners to come to the blackboard one by one and write the word *tinta* plus the five numbers underneath. After that the teacher seemed not sure what to do next; the Timorese subdistrict coordinator saw this and coached her a bit, suggesting to practise the vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, and the syllables *ta*, *te*, *ti*, *to*, *tu*, with the participants. The coordinator used Tetum but also frequently spoke to the learners in Mambae to give extra explanations and to encourage them to take part in exercises. The teacher occasionally spoke Mambae to her learners as well; Mambae seemed to be the main language of communication among the learners. After having practised the five vowels and syllables a few times (the participants repeating after the teacher: ‘*t* connected to *a* is *ta*’, ‘*t* connected to *e* is *te*’, etc.), the teacher was helped a bit more by the coordinator who asked everyone to think of words with *t*: *tempo* (time), *Timor*, *tomate* (tomato) and explained about the capital *T* and the small *t*. They repeated the vowels again, the syllables *ta*, *te*, *ti*, *to*, *tu*, and some more words with *t*: *talento* (talent), *termina* (end, finish), *Tomas* (name), *tuir* (follow), *tur* (sit), and later *terus* (suffer), *tersa* (third, also Tuesday). The teacher invited learners

to the blackboard to write *ta, te, ti, to, tu*, and to practise writing names. Then the Cuban adviser, who was also observing the lesson, stepped in: he explained that they now should write numbers under the letters of the words starting with *t* as shown in Figure 6.5:

<u>T</u> <u>e</u> <u>r</u> <u>e</u> <u>s</u> <u>a</u>	<u>t</u> <u>o</u> <u>m</u> <u>a</u> <u>t</u> <u>o</u>	<u>t</u> <u>e</u> <u>m</u> <u>p</u> <u>o</u>
9 2 2 1	9 4 1 9 4	9 2 4

**Figure 6.5:** Writing numbers under letters in words starting with *t* in Ermera district

He explained that if they didn't know the number of a new letter yet, then they could leave a space open. After that intermezzo, the teacher helped participants one by one to put their names on the blackboard and write the corresponding numbers under each letter of the names. They practised this by repeating after the teacher: '*m* is connected to 12', '*i* is connected to 3', '*s* is connected to 11', etc. Around 16.00 hours the lesson (of a bit more than an hour) was finished.

Two days later, I observed the second class of this literacy group. Like the first time, the learners (at first seven, but later there were 11) did not bring notebooks and pencils, so the new ones that I brought that day came in handy. Only few of the participants brought their *Los Hau Bele* booklet. This lesson was about the letter *r* and the corresponding number 10 (lesson number 17 according to the *Los Hau Bele* teacher manual). The teacher wrote the capital *R* and lower case *r* on the blackboard and added the number 10 underneath. She also wrote the *vogais* (vowels) *a, e, i, o, u*, with the numbers 1 to 5 underneath. Then all learners were invited one by one to come to the blackboard and write rows of syllables *ra, re, ri, ro, ru*. This time it was only me and the Timorese coordinator observing. The teacher acted with more confidence than the previous time; the participants laughed more while they were carrying out the reading and writing activities. Writing of rows of *ra, re, ri, ro, ru* by each learner took quite some time. The teacher continued by writing the key word for this lesson on the blackboard: *railakan* (lightning), divided in three syllables and with the numbers (10, 1, 3, 6, 1, etc.) written under the letters. The participants were invited to the blackboard to write the numbers under the letters and to read the syllables and the whole word. For some very old learners the teacher made an easier exercise: write *r* and *R* and the number 10 underneath. Then the lesson finished.

Three days after, I observed the third lesson of the same group. This lesson was about the letter *s*, the syllables *sa, se, si, so, su*, and the key word *sanán* (pan). Again all the participants, one by one, wrote rows of syllables (*sa, se, si, so, su*) on the blackboard, which again took quite a lot of time (57 minutes).

After that they practised writing *sanan* (pan), with the numbers (11, 1, 7, 1, 7) underneath (see Figure 6.4 below). Then the teacher wrote other words with *s* on the blackboard: *sapatu* (shoe), *Sara* (name), *sinelos* (sandals), *sino* (bell), and *serefin* (seraph). That day eight learners took part in the lesson.



**Figure 6.6:** Teacher writing numbers under the letters of the word *sanan* (pan) in Ermera district

## 6.2.2 Two *Hakat ba Oin* groups

### **A *Hakat ba Oin* group in Manatuto district**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, I visited a *Hakat ba Oin* literacy group in Manatuto (group number 12 in Appendix 7). When the district coordinator and I arrived at 16.10 hours, the class had already started. A female participant was writing the alphabet on the whiteboard, the capitals *A, B, C, D, E, F, G*, etc. Some Tetum words had been written on the whiteboard already: *nuu, manu, kuda, fahi, bibi, asu, surat, paun* (coconut, chicken, horse, pig, goat, dog, letter, bread). Then another participant was invited to come to the whiteboard and write the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc. (not connected to any letters, only to practise the numbers). After that, the teacher wrote several letters on the whiteboard (*a, b, k, f, m, n, s, p*) and the learners each time had to mention words that started with that letter, after which the teacher would write those words: *asu, bibi, kuda, fahi, manu, nuu, surat, paun* (dog, goat, horse, pig, chicken, coconut, letter, bread). After that, another participant was invited to the whiteboard to write the alphabet. At that moment there were seven participants present. One more participant was asked to write words on the board that the teacher mentioned: *nuu, bibi, kuda, surat, paun, jornal* (coconut, goat, horse, letter, bread, newspaper). The teacher explained the difference between *b* and *p* and between Portuguese *pão* (bread) and Tetum *paun* (bread). The language of instruction used by the teacher was Tetum. The main language of communication among the learners was Galolen. Apart from Tetum, the teacher and coordinator used Galolen to address the participants. Numbers

were referred to by learners mostly in Portuguese but sometimes in Tetum and also occasionally in Indonesian.

The teacher then explained to the learners the different literacy and post-literacy programmes: first one can do *Hakat ba Oin*, then *Iha Dalan* and after that *Equivalencia* (it turned out that in this *aldeia* (hamlet) no *Los Hau Bele* classes were provided). The group had three two-and-a-half-hour lessons per week: on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, always starting at 18.00 hours. The teacher and coordinator explained to me that they would like to have a schedule with *Hakat ba Oin* in the morning and *Iha Dalan* in the afternoon. Materials were lacking here. It turned out that for some reason they only had received *Hakat ba Oin* book 3 and 4, not book 1 and 2. Since no blackboard had been made available by the government, they borrowed a whiteboard from another project. Meanwhile another participant had come in, so now they were eight. The teacher and coordinator told me that the previous *Hakat ba Oin* group had consisted of 17 persons of whom eleven passed the final test and six did not. The ones that had not passed the final test were now participating again. The participant who had just come in was asked to write the numbers 1 to 20 on the board. He had trouble with 6, 9, 14, 19, and 20. Someone helped by saying *dois zero*, referring to the numbers two and zero in Portuguese. The same participant then had to write the alphabet in capitals: *B* became *P*, *D* he didn't know. The teacher helped him by writing examples, then he took over and finished the alphabet, after which the participant had to try again, first writing all the 26 letters, then reading them out loud while pointing at them. Then they started to practise writing their names, each participant was invited to the board to do so. After the lesson, the teacher told me he already had taught literacy in 2000, in the *Alfabetização Solidária* programme that was brought to Timor-Leste by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency.



**Figure 6.7:** Literacy class in Manatuto district

Three days later I observed the second lesson of this group. In the afternoon, the coordinator and I brought the *Hakat ba Oin* books 1 and 2 for the teacher and learners, in boxes and bags on the coordinator's motorbike. We agreed to come back in the evening for the lesson. In the evening at 18.30 hours, when we arrived at the literacy group at the agreed time, we first had to wait for the electricity to be switched on. Normally that would happen at 18.30 hours, but that night we had to wait in the dark, with one candle, until 19.10 hours. When the lamp finally worked, the whiteboard was put right under it so that participants could read what was written on it. Eight learners were present, sitting around the board close enough to be able to read the letters of the whiteboard markers in the weak light.



**Figures 6.8 and 6.9:** Evening class in Manatuto district

The teacher went through a number of words in book 1, asked the participants to read them, then wrote them on the board: *asu*, *bero*, *Carlos*, *dalan* (dog, boat, Carlos, road). After that he used words from book 2, page 6, about animals: *busa*, *bibi*, *kuda*, *karau-baka* (cat, goat, horse, bull). He wrote the words on the board several times, each time leaving a letter out, and the participants had to say which letter should be added to complete the word. He repeated the words, writing them several times, each time with more letters missing, for the participants to fill in. Then the participants were invited to the board one by one, to write the words. The first participant copied *karau-baka* (bull) letter by letter from the book, the second didn't copy, but he wrote *bia* instead of *busa* (cat). Most of the other participants then copied the word they had to write from the book, letter by letter. After this exercise, and on the request of the coordinator, the participants (there were now nine) filled out the basic form that I brought, so I could see more of their writing skills. They moved closer and closer to the weak light of the lamp or they shared each other's lamps (four participants brought one). They seemed to enjoy the task of filling out the form. Sometimes the teacher wrote examples on the board to help them. From the

nine participants, three filled out eight items of the form rather fluently, three others did so while struggling with the letters and making more mistakes, two only filled out the first few items with a lot of erasing and starting again, one could not fill in any blank on the form and had trouble to write his name. By 20.30 hours the coordinator and I had to leave, while the group continued the lesson.

### **A *Hakat ba Oin* group in Aileu district**

Almost a year earlier, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2010, I observed another *Hakat ba Oin* class from a group in Aileu district (group number 2 in Appendix 7), together with their coordinator. It was formed by participants in a '*grupo basico*' that had started with the beginners' programme *Hakat ba Oin* in July 2010 and by a few more advanced learners coming from a '*grupo avançado*' who had all started in 2008 with *Hakat ba oin*, had their '*graduação*' (graduation) in 2009 and were now following the advanced level literacy programme *Iha Dalan*. When the participants entered the classroom they spoke Mambae with each other. The female teacher also spoke with them in Mambae, encouraging them to come and sit down. This group had lessons on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9.00 to 11.00 hours. The lessons took place in a building made of mainly natural materials, except for the corrugated iron roof. Here the chairs were put around a big table. The class started at 9.20 hours with a prayer (spoken by the teacher in Tetum). Nine participants were present. The group repeated what they had learned last time: the word *feto* (woman), the syllables *fa, fe, fi, fo, fu*, other words with *f*: *fahi, fulan* (pig, moon/month), and the letter *T, Tuna*. This new lesson started with more words with *f*: *fahi, foho, foun, faan* (pig, mountain, new, sell). Together they made sentences, with the teacher using suggestions from the participants: *Hau ba foho* (I go to the mountains), *Hau ba faan* (I go sell), *Hau ba foti* (I go to pick-up/take). The teacher used Tetum as language of instruction. She wrote the sentences on the blackboard. Then she asked for words with the letter *t*. A participant wrote a word with *t*, and after that they made short sentences: *Hau ba tein* (I go cook), *Hau ba tasi* (I go to the sea), *Hau ba toos* (I go to the field). At 9.35 hours another participant arrived. Now there were ten, plus the coordinator and the teacher. They made more sentences. Several participants came to the blackboard to write.



**Figure 6.10:** The literacy class in Aileu district

When there was no more space left on the blackboard, they moved to the whiteboard next to it and went on writing: *Hau fahe toos* (I divide the field), *Hau foin mai* (I just came, I just arrived), *Hau fui bee* (I pour water). The majority of the participants got a turn to write on the blackboard. I saw one participant writing in her notebook. The teacher did not stimulate writing in the notebooks. She was busy at the blackboard helping the participants. At 9.43 hours an 11<sup>th</sup> participant entered. There were also a few young children present. The atmosphere was peaceful and joyful. A participant wrote *hau batar fini* (I sow corn), the teacher helped letter by letter. The teacher then encouraged the participants to write in their notebooks, which some of them did. On the blackboard was now written *Hau iha fiu ida* (I have a thread), *Hau ba tau ahi* (I go make fire), *Hau ba kuu kafe* (I go pick coffee).

The differences in literacy level within this group were very large. One participant was struggling writing single letters, the other rather quickly wrote a sentence on the blackboard, a few others easily copied short texts from their books. Next, a participant with a higher level was asked to write two longer sentences. The letters *f*, *k*, and *h* received a lot of attention, together with the vowels. The teacher asked the participants to make more words and phrases with *f*. Participants came up with *Hau iha fahi ida* (I have a pig), *Hau fahe sasan ba hau nia kolega* (I divide things/goods among my friends, I share things with my friend). Then they made sentences with *fahe* (divide) and *fase* (to wash). The coordinator helped with new words and phrases: *fulan* (month), *fitun* (star), *Fitun nabilan iha kalan* (The star shines in the night). First they wrote on the board and then they read out while pointing at the words.

Most of the teaching took place in Tetum but occasionally the teacher used Mambae, e.g., when she called an older participant to the blackboard to encourage her to get out of her chair and participate in writing. Another participant wrote his sentence: *Hau iha oan feto ida* (I have a daughter). After this the



word to write was *fuma* (smoke). When a female participant was struggling to write this word, everyone helped by saying: *fuma*, *fu-ma*, *fu em aa*. After this they wrote the word *tabaku*. They continued with *foti* (pick up/take) and *futu* (tie together). The sentence written next was: *Hau futu ai* (I tie the wood together). The coordinator helped to make up new words by asking: What do you do on the market? *Faan* (sell). *Hau faan malus* (I sell betel pepper). They then switched to the letter *t*. The coordinator asked for the key word (in *Hakat ba Oin* book 1) that the participants had learned for *t*. The group answered *tasi* (beach). A sentence was written on the blackboard: *Hau ba tasi* (I go to the beach). The next word that came up was *toba* (sleep). They made the sentence *Hau ba toba* (I go to sleep). Then they wrote the word *tunu* (bake). At 11.05 hours the lesson finished. The group said another prayer together, in Tetum.

### 6.2.3 Two *Iha Dalan* groups

#### **An *Iha Dalan* group in the village of Babulo, district of Manufahi**

In the third programme, *Iha Dalan*, I visited a group on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 in Manufahi (group number 9 in Appendix 7). Eight participants showed up, from the 15 on the list. The teacher started by reading out loud the text (in Tetum) about the wet season in the chapter on agriculture in *Iha Dalan* book 2. Six of the eight participants present brought their books and the participants read along with the teacher. Each time the teacher read one sentence and then he explained. The participants gave additional words for products to the ones in the text: *fehuk*, *hudi* (potato, banana), etc. They read out loud the complete text together. Then the teacher wrote the word *agricultura* (agriculture) on the blackboard and then wrote it again, divided into syllables. He erased the syllables and called one of the participants to the blackboard to write them again. A few other participants were also asked to write the same word in syllables on the blackboard. The teacher was a bit unsure how to continue, so the coordinator encouraged him. Another participant walked in, so by now there were nine learners. The teacher wrote new words on the blackboard, related to the text: *bailoron*, *colleita*, *produtu*, *ai-farina*, *halibur*, *tempu udan* (dry season, harvest, product, cassava, gather/collect, wet season) and the learners were invited to come to the blackboard to write the words again, divided into syllables. Then the teacher asked the participants to mention product names that they could write down. They came up with *batar*, *hudi*, *talas*, *combili*, *hare*, *coto*, *fore* (corn, banana, taro/edible tuber, tuber, rice plant/unhusked rice, red bean, bean), and the participants were invited to the blackboard again to divide these words into syllables (see Figure 6.11). They discussed whether it was *coto* or *koto*, whether *hare* needed an accent on *e* or not. The teacher used Tetum as language of instruction. The learners spoke Mambae with each other, and also the coordinator frequently used Mambae when he addressed the learners.

Now the participants came up with new words for fruits and other products from their fields, and the teacher wrote them on the blackboard: *nuu, ai-dila, haas, kulu, ainanas, sabraka, tomate, kafe, aiata, derok* (coconut, papaya, mango, breadfruit/jackfruit, pineapple, orange, tomato, coffee, custard apple, lemon/lime). And the participants divided them into syllables.



**Figures 6.11 and 6.12:** Dividing words in syllables and reading words on the blackboard in Manufahi district

After that they switched to names of animals, following the same procedure: *karau, kuda, bibi, fahi, manu, asu, busa, leki, rusa, loriko* (buffalo, horse, goat, pig, chicken, dog, cat, monkey, deer, lorikeet). After dividing all these words into syllables and sometimes discussing their spelling (*loriko* or *loriku*), they switched to mathematics. On the blackboard they wrote these phrases: *Antonia iha sabraka ... Maria iha sabraka ... Sira nain rua tau hamutuk hira?* (Antonio has ... oranges. Maria has ... oranges. Together how many oranges do they have?). They first filled in numbers on the dots. Then they wrote the sums, like  $3 + 5 = 8$ , or  $20 + 25 = 45$ . When they got to  $60 + 70$ , one of the participants used the calculator on her mobile phone. They practised subtraction in the same way: *Maubere iha rebusadu 10. Fo tia 5 ba Buimau. Maubere hela ho rebusadu hira?* (Maubere has ten sweets. He gives auntie five for Buimau. How many sweets does Maubere have left?). I saw that the teacher gave easier tasks to participants with a lower literacy/numeracy level. Numbers were referred to in Tetum, Indonesian and Portuguese; not only the teacher and coordinator were doing this in three languages, but the learners as well. After the lesson I asked the participants about their ages. They initially answered while referring to the numbers in Indonesian, later they translated them into Portuguese for me.

In the afternoon, the teacher started the lesson (with the same group) by reading out loud another text from the chapter on agriculture, this time about the dry season. After his explanation, the group read out loud the whole text together. Now seven participants showed up, six of whom brought their *Iha Dalan* book. The teacher wrote the words printed on page 105 on the black-

board: *bailoron, kolleita, produtu, habai, haloot, fa'an, hamos, prepara, bainhira, rejiaun* (dry season, harvest, product, dry in the sun, tidy up/put away, sell, clean, prepare, when, region) and asked the participants again to come to the blackboard and write the same words divided into syllables.

After this they made a list of instruments they use in the field: *katana, taha, baliu, insada, taha tur, kraudikur, ai suak, sabit, kanuru, garfu* (machete, machete, axe, hoe, grindstone, pick/pickaxe, crowbar, trimmer/cutter, shovel/spade, fork). The participants went to the blackboard again to divide the words into syllables. They named the materials *materialu to'os* (field materials, materials to work in the field). After that, they did mathematics for 15 minutes. This time, the text they made was: *Ohin dader Artur ba hola paun fuan 10. Fahe ba ema nain 5. Ema ida han Paun fuan hira?* (This morning Artur went to get ten fruit buns. He divided them over five people. One person eats how many fruit buns?). Again the numbers were referred to in three languages (Tetum, Indonesian and Portuguese).

### **An *Iha Dalan* group in the village of Letefoho, district of Manufahi**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, I visited another *Iha Dalan* literacy group in a different village in Manufahi (group number 11 in Appendix 7). This group had started with *Iha Dalan* in November 2010. The lesson started at 9.10 hours. Seventeen participants showed up: 11 men and six women. The teacher wrote the day and the date on the blackboard. Then she started with Text 1 from the first chapter of *Iha Dalan* book 1, a repetition she said. She first read out loud the text while the participants were reading silently in their books. After this, they read out loud the text together. The text was about the time when Timor-Leste was still a Portuguese colony.



**Figure 6.13:** Teacher reading a text to the group in Manufahi district

The teacher wrote words on the blackboard that she divided into syllables: *kolonia*, *famozu*, *tempu*, *maizumenos* (colony, famous, time, more or less). The participants read the syllables out loud with her. One of the participants was asked to read the text again, for the rest of the group. He could do it very well. Another participant was asked to come to the blackboard and write *ai kameli* (sandalwood), first complete, then in syllables. Then the teacher wrote the words *tinan* (year) and *sekulu* (century), and participants wrote the syllables. The teacher then wrote the word *mundial* (global) and asked the participants how many syllables the word had, and they answered all together: *Tolu* (three, in Tetum): *mun - di - al!* The same was done with *japones* (Japanese). The teacher used Tetum as the language of instruction and when she referred to dates or chapter numbers, she did that in Portuguese. Learners talked with each other in Tetum as well as in Mambae, their regional language. They moved on to the second text in the book, about the Indonesian occupation, and read it out loud together. Then the coordinator gave a suggestion: to list products from colonial times. The group answered together, chanting: *kafe*, *ai kameli*, *aiteka*, *minarai*, *gas*, *marmar*, *kami*, *nuu* (coffee, sandalwood, teak tree, kerosene, gas, marmer, candlenut, coconut). Participants came to the blackboard one by one to write those words divided into syllables. They decided themselves whose turn it was. When the word *gas* was divided in two syllables (*ga-s*), the teacher corrected it. The word *nuu* was divided into two syllables with an apostrophe in-between (*nu'u*), following standard Tetum orthography.

Then the coordinator asked the group to mention other words. They came up with: *fatuk*, *raihenek*, *simente*, *kanela*, *senke*, *ai na*, *ai lele*, *kabas* (rock/stone, sand, cement, cinnamon, clove, rose wood, kapok tree, cotton). There was a lively discussion among the participants about these words. Again they came to the blackboard one by one to divide words into syllables. It went fast. Learners participated very seriously. At 9.55 hours they switched to mathematics. First they used the page with the numbers up to 100 in the *Iha Dalan* book and they counted to 100 in Tetum, everyone together, to practice the numbers in Tetum. Then they practiced writing a list of numbers in Tetum: 1, *ida*; 23, *rua nulu resin tolu*; 500, *atus lima*. They also wrote important years in Timor-Leste's history: 1975, in Tetum *rihun ida atus sia hitunulu resin lima*; 1999, in Tetum *rihun ida atus sia sianulu resin sia*; and 2002, in Tetum *rihun rua-rua*. The teacher explained that today they did this in Tetum because it was a lesson in Tetum, but in other lessons they also practiced it in Portuguese. During the lesson I also heard learners use Indonesian, on occasion, to refer to numbers. Then they did some sums, using phrases like: *Lidia iha mantolun ruanulu* (Lidia has 20 eggs), *Fahe ba ema nain haat* (She divides them over four people), *Ema ida simu hira?* (Each person receives how many?). They also practised the writing of sums only in numbers and symbols:  $20 : 4 = 5$  and  $5 \times 4 = 20$ . And to end

with, they discussed the two ways of writing sums like  $30 + 30 = 60$ , horizontally and vertically.

### **6.3 Teaching practices and classroom interaction**

In this section I present findings from all 20 class observations in my study (i.e., the ones described above and the ones not described here but included in Appendix 10). I will first discuss characteristics of the teaching of reading and writing in general, as observed in all the programmes. Then I will go into a few programme-specific findings regarding the teaching of literacy. I will conclude this section by zooming in on language use in classroom interaction in adult literacy education.

#### **6.3.1 The teaching of reading and writing**

The teaching in the adult literacy classes that I observed showed differences and similarities. Some similarities were related to 'traditional teaching'. In 17 of the 20 classes observed, all the time – and in the remaining three classes most of the time – whole-class teaching took place, with the teacher in front of the class, allocating turns by nominating particular participants. There was a strong focus on the text on the blackboard and often learners were invited to the blackboard one by one to copy or write answers. Teachers were very active, talking a lot during the whole lesson, whereas participants seemed more passive, occasionally actively involved and often waiting until one learner at the blackboard had finished a writing task. The blackboard was at the centre of attention all the time; in three of the 20 classes the teacher walked around the classroom once or twice to check the writing in the learners' notebooks. And in one class, the teacher sat aside with one of the learners to practise something at this learner's specific level.

Other observed similarities were related to the didactic steps in the teaching of reading and writing. Most teaching, i.e., in 17 of the 20 lessons, closely followed the specific literacy programme in use. Table 6.1 presents a summarised overview of linguistic units and topics dealt with in the 20 classes observed (for more detailed information about the exact content taught per lesson, see Appendix 10).

**Table 6.1:** Units and topics taught in the 20 classes observed

	Letters	Syllables	Words	Phrases	Texts	Form filling	Numeracy
LHB (8 classes)	8	8	8	2	–	5	1
HBO (4 classes)	4	2	4	2	–	3	1
ID (8 classes)	–	8	8	1	8	–	7
Total (20 classes)	12	18	20	5	8	8	9

As shown in Table 6.1, all classes for beginners (i.e., eight *Los Hau Bele* classes and four *Hakat ba Oin* classes) focused on reading and writing on the letter-syllable-word level, and all eight *Iha Dalan* classes on the syllable-word level. The reading and writing of phrases was only practised in five of the 20 classes. The reading of short texts was practised in all eight *Iha Dalan* classes, but not in any of the 12 beginners' classes. In all classes there was a strong focus on technical literacy (spelling and decoding skills). In all 12 beginners' classes much time was spent on conditional skills for reading: grapheme recognition, letter writing, syllable reading and writing, acquiring the alphabetic principle. To refer to letters, letter names (not their sounds) were used, often Portuguese-Tetum letter names like /ʒi'gɛ/ for 'g', /'ʒɔtɐ/ for 'j', and /ɛmi/ for 'm'. In seven of the eight *Los Hau Bele* classes, letters and syllables were often initially practised as single meaningless units (e.g., *sa, se, si, so, su*), without any meaningful context; only after the practising of the letters and syllables, some words were given that contained these syllables. In the *Hakat ba Oin* classes, the starting point for practising syllables and letters most of the time was a key word or key phrase; in all *Iha Dalan* classes, the starting point for practising words and syllables was a short text from which words were taken and divided into syllables.

Observations also revealed a stronger focus on writing (i.e., copying from the textbook or the blackboard) than on decoding, reading, and understanding written text. A significant part of all lessons was spent on writing exercises on the blackboard. First the teacher would demonstrate how to do an exercise, then the learners would imitate, either on the blackboard or in their notebooks. Reading exercises were done less frequently and in most cases targeted the syllable-word level, only occasionally the level of short phrases. Not much attention was paid to developing speed and fluency in reading and writing, or to comprehension of longer phrases or short texts, except when texts in *Iha*

*Dalan* books were used as a starting point for reading and writing lessons (e.g., the texts on Timor-Leste's agriculture or colonial years).

The class observations revealed that several methods to teach reading as distinguished by Gray (1969; see also Chapter 2), were used widely in Timor-Leste. First of all the use of synthetic methods was observed, which emphasise small, meaningless linguistic units and guide the learners from those to larger, meaningful units. Examples of synthetic methods observed are the alphabetic and the syllabic methods. Often these two were combined, as part of an eclectic trend, with the more analytic word method, starting with whole, meaningful words (and pictures), emphasising their meaning, and later breaking them down into smaller units. The extensive attention paid to the development of grapheme, syllable and word recognition and writing skills seemed to be at the expense of encouraging reading for comprehension.

As Table 6.1 also shows, eight teachers in beginners' programmes (five in *Los Hau Bele* and three in *Hakat ba Oin*) included the teaching of some basic functional literacy in their lessons, mainly that of writing names, signatures, and a few other items of personal data that have to be filled out on forms (birth date, name of village, subdistrict, district). Often this concerned strings of letters that could be learned by heart, without a real understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences; when I checked occasionally, not every learner proved to be capable of mentioning each letter and reading the syllables and words produced by him/herself. In nine other classes, the teachers dedicated part of the lesson time to numeracy: in eight classes (i.e., seven *Iha Dalan* and one *Los Hau Bele* class) by practising calculations and in one class (a *Hakat ba Oin* class) by practising the numbers 1-20.

Most teachers used in their teaching the literacy manuals belonging to the programmes. Apart from these, the teachers in the in-depth study did not use any other, more authentic, materials in their classes. This might have to do with the absence of reading materials in most of the communities where I observed literacy classes.

Tailor-made teaching was hardly observed. My class observations revealed that all 12 groups were very heterogeneous, consisting of young and older learners with and without prior education. The learners in all classes seemed to have rather different levels of language and literacy proficiency. Most teachers, however, did not adapt their lessons to the variety of their participants' literacy levels and learning needs, but were merely teaching according to a one-size-fits-all approach, with almost no differentiation. That resulted in a form of teaching that often seemed to be too difficult for some participants, too easy for others and at an appropriate level only for a minority. Very occasionally, however, teachers would give easier tasks (shorter words or phrases) to participants with lower reading and writing ability, and more difficult tasks (longer

words, more complex phrases) to participants with higher literacy ability. This happened during writing exercises in which participants were invited to the blackboard one by one.

### **Efficiency, presence and circumstances**

In addition to the above findings on teaching practices, class observations revealed a few other things that probably affected the teaching and learning in the classrooms. In the first place, often the available lesson time was not used efficiently. All lessons were planned to take two to three hours, but most lessons started later than planned, stopped before the end time, or both. Of the lessons that I was able to observe from the beginning till the end (16 of the 20), only one lasted longer than two hours (two hours and 15 minutes), the rest took less than two hours (eight lessons took between one-and-a-half and two hours, six lessons between one and one-and-a-half hours, one lesson less than one hour). As mentioned above, in eight classes parts of the lesson time intended for literacy education were (apparently in another broadly felt learning need) spent on mathematics. During the classes, often only one participant at a time was actively involved in a task (often a writing task on the blackboard), while others were watching and waiting for the task to be finished. Writing assignments, either on the blackboard or in the notebooks, generally took a long time and usually everyone waited until the last (slowest) participant had finished the task as well. Waiting time was not filled up with extra activities for the learners who had already finished the writing tasks.

In the second place, most classes (19 of the 20) showed many more participants on the attendance list than had actually showed up. Of the 20 classes, the average number of participants per class on paper was 19.3, the average number of participants per class that actually turned up was 9.7. Reasons that were given for their absence often had to do with work: people could not come to the classes because they had to work in the fields or sell and buy food at the markets. Other reasons often mentioned had to do with illness, or with family happenings like birth and death and ceremonies related to these. Lack of motivation was also mentioned. Many participants had dropped out, for various reasons. In ten of the 20 lessons, participants came walking in during the first hour after the start of the lesson, usually for the same reasons as mentioned above.

In the third place, teaching circumstances generally were poor. In most observed classes (16 of the 20) there were chairs but no tables for the participants, so they had to write in their notebooks while holding them on their laps. The position of chairs and blackboard was not always optimal: in many cases participants were sitting too far away from the blackboard to be able to see well what was going on there (in four classes this was the case for



all participants, in the other 16 classes this was the case for at least half of the participants sitting in the back rows). Most classes took place on verandas (11) or community buildings (three) where it was hot, noisy, and sometimes too dark. Most places did not have electricity (as a consequence no DVDs could be played in the eight *Los Hau Bele* classes observed) and there often was a lack of materials, i.e., not enough student manuals (eight times), no teacher manual in use (16 times), or in some cases a lack of either notebooks or pencils, erasers, chalk or board markers.

### **Programme-specific activities**

Apart from these general findings in all classes (regardless of what literacy programme they used), there were findings specifically related to certain programme features. Differences in methods used in the different programmes led to different types of teaching activities. Specific for all eight *Los Hau Bele* classes, for instance, was that a significant part of lesson time was spent on the teaching and practicing the connections of numbers and letters, and on rote association (learning by heart) these connections. For a further analysis of this, see Section 6.3.2.

A specific element in four *Iha Dalan* classes and one *Hakat ba Oin* class was the way links between lesson content and the outside world were established during writing exercises on the blackboard. This concerns the writing of long lists of words, and sometimes short phrases, linked to participants' daily work or life in the communities (see also Appendix 10): names of agricultural products and natural resources from their region, names of tools they use in the field, phrases on their daily activities in the house and garden. On the one hand, this activity clearly made sense to the participants, since they were obviously reading and writing in relation to their own world. This probably explains their active and enthusiastic participation, especially when they were asked to come up with their own words and phrases to add to the ones given in the books (linked to the pictures). On the other hand, here the focus also often did not go beyond word level and it seemed that learners for part of the time were repeating words they already could read and write. When the words were not used as stepping-stones to improve decoding skills, this activity did not seem to contribute much to better applying the alphabetic principle, nor to moving up to a higher level of fluent reading and writing of longer phrases and text comprehension.

Another difference between programmes had to do with whether the standard Tetum orthography was used or not. The *Los Hau Bele* materials were not written in standard Tetum orthography (e.g., *Los* should, according to standard spelling rules, be written with double *o*; *hau* should be written with an apostrophe between *a* and *u*). The materials used in the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha*

*Dalan* (and *YEP*) programmes were written according to standard Tetum orthography rules and all materials had been checked and corrected by Timor-Leste's National Institute of Linguistics before they were implemented in 2007-2008. The teachers and coordinators in all programmes generally were aware that there was a standard Tetum orthography and knew some of the spelling rules, but most of them did not attend any instruction on standard Tetum orthography and had no dictionaries or reference books available to look things up, so in many cases they were not exactly sure about the correct spelling of the Tetum words they used in the lessons.

### 6.3.2 Connecting letters and numbers in *Los Hau Bele*<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned, in all *Los Hau Bele* classes observed, a significant part of lesson time was spent on connections of numbers and letters and rote association of these combinations, e.g., a-1, b-14, d-15, etc. (see Appendix 10, lesson 1 and 3-9). The idea behind this method of connecting a number to each new letter to be learnt, is the assumption that numbers are already familiar to many adult literacy learners (Boughton, 2010b), and that combining something familiar (a number) to something new (a letter) makes learning the letters easier (Relys Díaz, 2013; Bancroft, 2008; Filho, 2011). The *Los Hau Bele* classes included a lot of repetition and reading aloud to practise the pronunciation of the alphabet, the combinations of letters and numbers (learning them by heart), different combinations of letters to make syllables (e.g., *ba-be-bi*, *pra-pre-pri*) and whole words. Often numbers were written below the letters of those syllables and words.

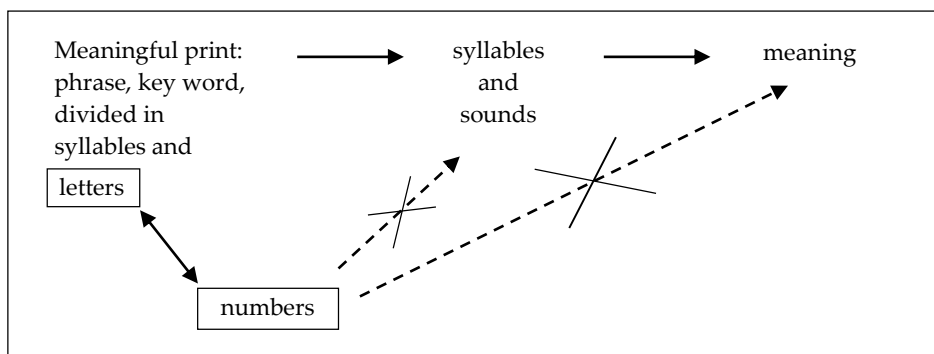
As described in Chapter 5, the teaching steps in the *Los Hau Bele* programme according to the lessons on DVDs, start with a phrase and then take a key word from that phrase, which is first divided into syllables and then into single letters. Under each letter a number is then written. The numbers are also written under the syllables, words and phrases in the next teaching steps. This connection of a number to each letter of the twenty letters that are supposed to be learned, is a central aspect of the *Los Hau Bele* programme, and is supposed to be done in each lesson. It is something specific for this literacy programme which is not being used in any other literacy programme that I know of.

In this section, I will take a closer look at this programme (see also Boon & Kurvers, 2012b) and focus on how the teaching practice of connecting numbers to letters is part of the broader literacy teaching in *Los Hau Bele*. First, I will show how *Los Hau Bele* can be placed in Gray's (1969) classifications and how the method including the specific teaching practice with the numbers can be placed in Chall's (1999) model as presented in Chapter 2. In terms of Gray's

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<sup>38</sup> This section is partly based on Boon and Kurvers (2012b).

survey, *Los Hau Bele* could be called eclectic: it is analytic because its DVDs tend to start with a larger meaningful unit (phrase/word), that is then broken into smaller units and analysed, basically according to the alphabetic/syllabic method, and it is synthetic because it then builds up the units to the key-word again, as shown in Chapter 5. The connection of numbers to letters is a 'mnemonic aid', an extra step when dealing with letters (and syllables, words and phrases). In terms of Chall's (1999) two-stage model, the *Los Hau Bele* method would be a two-stage method with a side-path (see Figure 6.14).



**Figure 6.14:** From meaningful print (letters, with a side-path to numbers) via sound to meaning

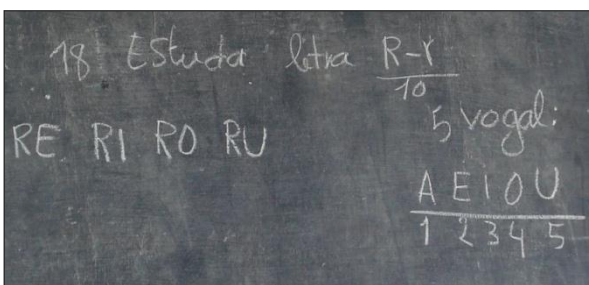
In Chall's two-stage model beginning reading is seen as a process that starts with print and from there goes to sound (speech), which helps to get to meaning.<sup>39</sup> But as shown in Figure 6.14, the numbers do not help the learners to move from print to sound or from sound to meaning; the activities with the numbers keep them stuck at the level of print, where they have to connect numbers to written letters, syllables, words and phrases. The numbers are neither related to the sound of the printed letters, nor to the meaning of the printed word that might become clear when the word is sounded out. Through the activities with the numbers, learners are directed to a side-path that does not bring them to the next stages in the reading process.

To find out how the teaching steps in *Los Hau Bele* classes are organised and how the connection of numbers to letters is part of – and embedded in – the programme's actual literacy teaching, I looked at how four teachers in different districts were teaching reading and writing to their adult learners within the *Los Hau Bele* programme. On the basis of these observations I will answer the following three questions: (1) How did they use the *Los Hau Bele* method and

<sup>39</sup> Contrary to the one-stage model in which beginning reading is seen as a single process of getting from print directly to meaning (as explained by Chall, 1999).

which steps did they take in their instructions?; (2) How did they help their learners to acquire the alphabetic principle in the process of learning to read?; (3) How did they use the *Los Hau Bele*-specific letter-number combinations in their lessons to contribute to that literacy acquisition process? I analysed one observed lesson of each of the four teachers: lesson number 17 (according to the *Los Hau Bele* teacher manual) given in Ermera on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 (see also Section 6.2.1), lesson number 34 given in Covalima on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2011, lesson number 42 given in Dili on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 (see also Section 6.2.1), and lesson number 48 given in Viqueque on 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2010. All four lessons (class numbers 1, 3, 5 and 8 in Appendix 7) took place on verandas where the learners were seated on plastic chairs with their manuals and notebooks on their laps. All teachers used a blackboard in front of the group; none of them used the DVDs in the lessons observed, in two cases due to lack of electricity and of money for gasoline for the generator, in one case because of a power cut in the street due to local construction work, and in one case because a vital cable was missing. So the teachers filled the lesson with their own interpretation of what was supposed to be done, depending on the DVDs that they had watched earlier, the suggestions in the teacher manual and the suggestions from the two-weekly *Los Hau Bele* teacher training sessions that they had attended.

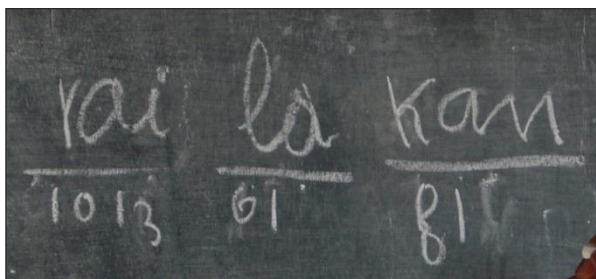
The first teacher (in Ermera district) started the lesson with the letters R-r (the 17<sup>th</sup> lesson of the programme). On the blackboard she connected the R and r to the number 10, she repeated the five vowels connected to the numbers 1 to 5 and then explained the reading and writing of the syllables *ra, re, ri, ro, ru*, like in Figure 6.15.



**Figure 6.15:** Letter *r* and five vowels connected to numbers, and syllables with *r*

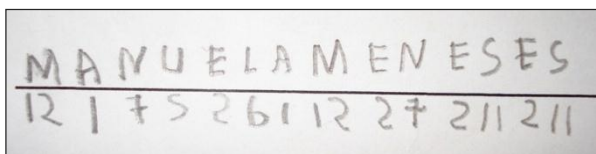
All learners were invited to the blackboard one by one, to write and then read a series of syllables (*ra, re, ri, ro, ru*). Next, the teacher put the key word for *r*, *railakan* (lightning) divided into syllables on the blackboard and invited learners to step forward and add the numbers under each letter of the word, like in

Figure 6.16 and then read the word, from letters to syllables (using the letter names *eri-a-i rai*, *eli-a la*, *ka-a-eni kan*) to the whole word (*rai-la-kan*, *railakan*).



**Figure 6.16:** Numbers written under the key word *railakan* (lightning)

As a next step the learners practised writing their names and the ones who were able to do so, wrote the corresponding number under each letter of their name (see Figure 6.17).



**Figure 6.17:** Name written by one of the learners, with each letter combined to a number

The second teacher (in Covalima district) had started the (34<sup>th</sup>) lesson with writing a text on the blackboard as shown in Figure 6.18: the letters *p* and *r* (referred to as *pe* and *eri*) combined with the numbers 20 and 10, followed by a phrase containing the key word *prepara* (prepare), which was then divided into syllables. Next, all possible syllables with *pr* were practised: *pra*, *pre*, *pri*, *pro*, *pru*, and other words with *pr* and phrases containing words with *pr* were given. Several times the learners repeated this complete text after the teacher and then they were asked to copy it in their notebooks.

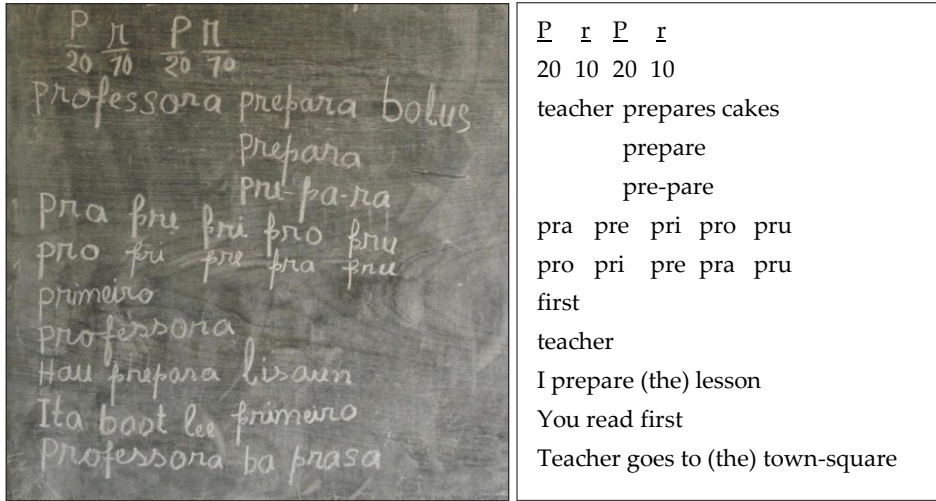


Figure 6.18: Text on the blackboard about letter combination *pr*

In the meantime the teacher sat aside with an older learner who needed extra attention because of his bad eye sight and helped him practise several times the 20 letters of *Los Hau Bele* and the letter-number combinations (by reading them out loud, using letter names like /'ɛfi/ for *f*, /ʒi'gɛ/ for *g*, /'hɛgɛ/ for *h*, /'ʒɔtɛ/ for *j*). They used a self-written paper with large size letters and numbers, as shown in Figure 6.19.

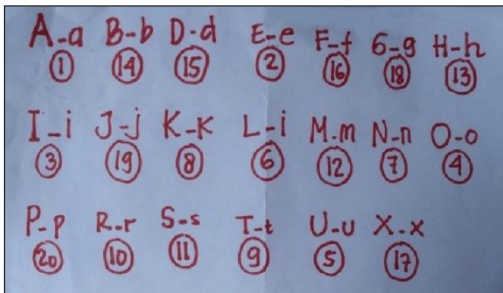
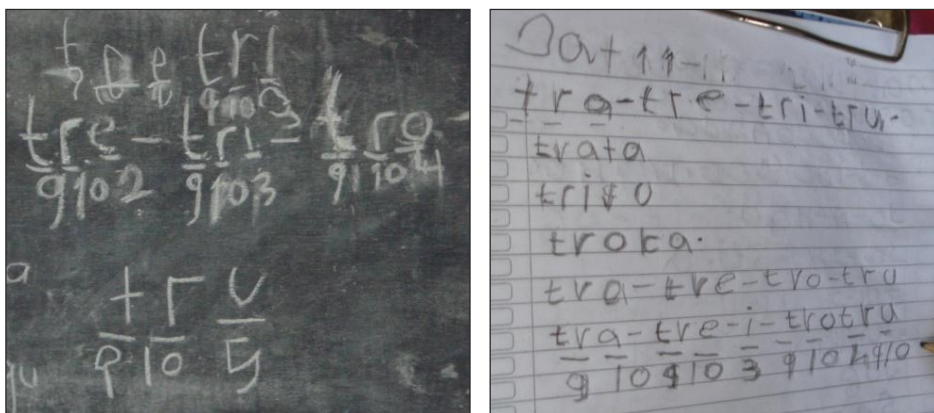


Figure 6.19: Self-written paper with the 20 letters and numbers of *Los Hau Bele*

The teacher then continued with a few additional words with *pr*: *presidente* (president), *preto* (black, in Portuguese), and a phrase with a word with *br*: *branco* (white, in Portuguese). Next, the teacher invited learners to the blackboard to practise writing their names and also the names of the village, sub-district and district. He then sat aside again with the older learner to repeat the 20 letters and numbers and practise the spelling of his name, and the other

learners joined in repeating letters and numbers. The lesson ended with a repetition of the names of their village, subdistrict and district.

The third teacher (in Dili district) started with the letter combination *tr* (the 42<sup>nd</sup> lesson), explained how to write both letters and how to form syllables with them (*te-eri-a tra, te-eri-e tre, etc.*). She wrote the syllables *tra, tre, tri, tro, tru* on the blackboard and repeated their build up and pronunciation, also backwards (*tru, tro, tri, etc.*). The learners repeated the syllables several times after her and wrote them in their notebooks. The teacher also gave a few words with *tr*, like: *trata* (treat/arrange), *trigu* (flour, wheat) and *troka* ((ex)change), which the learners also copied in their notebooks. She then reminded the learners of the numbers 1-5 linked to each vowel, and they discussed which other numbers had to be added under the syllables. Learners were invited to come to the blackboard and add the numbers under the letters of each syllable, as shown in Figure 6.20. After this, learners wrote the syllables and numbers in their notebooks (see Figure 6.21).

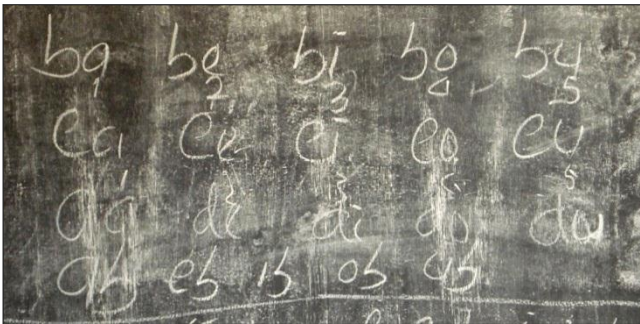


**Figure 6.20 and 6.21:** The writing of syllables and numbers on the blackboard and in a notebook

Next, the teacher explained about the build-up of the syllables by using her hand to cover letters ("If you take out *a* from *tra*, what is left? If you take out *r* from *tru*, what do you have left?"). Then they practised the series *tra, tre, tri, tro, tru* again several times by reading them out loud. The next part of the lesson was spent on practising writing names and other personal data (sex, country, birth date).

The fourth teacher (in Viqueque district) was teaching lesson number 48, in the teacher manual referred to as a numeracy lesson. His lesson consisted of two parts: one hour for numeracy and one hour for literacy. In the literacy part described here, the teacher started with the five vowels connected to the numbers 1 to 5, and then gave an explanation about the 20 letters and numbers in

*Los Hau Bele*. The learners had to say each letter (using letter names like /'ɛfi/ for *f*, /ʒi'gɛ/ for *g*, /'hɛgɛ/ for *h*, /'ʒɔtɛ/ for *'j*'), and corresponding number several times. Then the teacher explained the complete Roman alphabet with six more letters, of which some are not used in Tetum but are frequently used in other languages that people in this multilingual setting often encounter (like *c* and *q* in Portuguese and *y* in Indonesian). The 20 letters of *Los Hau Bele* and the complete Roman alphabet were repeated several times (read out loud by the learners). Next, the teacher explained about syllables with consonant-vowel order, like *ba, be, bi, bo, bu; ca, ce, ci, co, cu*, and *da, de, di, do, du*, and vowel-consonant order: *ab, eb, ib, ob, ub*, etc. (see Figure 6.22).

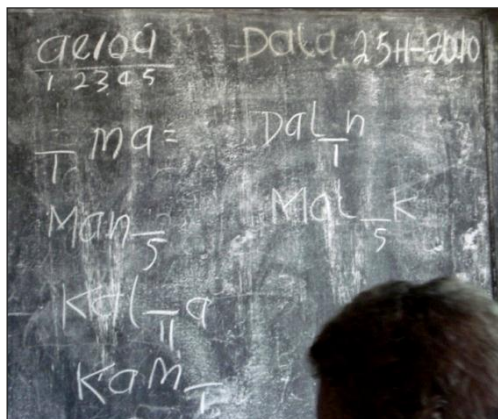


**Figure 6.22:** Syllables with *b, c, d* and the five vowels

The syllables were also repeated after the teacher in a top-to-bottom order (*ba, ca, da; be, ce, de*, etc.). After that, the teacher put words on the blackboard in which letters were missing. Of the missing letters the numbers were given below a short horizontal line and some learners were invited to the blackboard to fill out the missing letter that corresponded to the number, to complete the words like in Figure 6.23, i.e., *uma*,<sup>40</sup> *dalan*, *manu*, *maluk*, *kalsa*, and *kama* (house, road, chicken, friend, trousers, and bed).

<sup>40</sup> The teacher later changed the 1 (that can be seen in the picture before the letters *ma*) into a 5, when he realised that he had made a mistake.





**Figure 6.23:** Words with letters missing but numbers given

As a last step, the teacher showed how to read these words by spelling and blending: *u emi a uma, emi a eni u manu*, etc.

Summarising, the four lessons described provided an impression of the various kinds of instructional practices in adult literacy classes within the *Los Hau Bele* programme. We have seen that teachers applied what they had learned about the methodology in different ways. The DVDs show series of steps that start with larger meaningful units (phrases) being broken down into smaller units and the teacher manual recommends teachers to do so as well (the analytic method). All four teachers in the lessons observed, however, chose to start with letters first, and go from there to larger (syllables) and meaningful units like words and phrases (the synthetic method). Only the second teacher, after introducing the letters *p* and *r* and the numbers 20 and 10, followed (in his writing on the blackboard) the steps more or less as suggested in the teacher manual and on the DVDs.

Regarding the teaching of the alphabetic principle, it can be concluded that all four teachers paid attention to the sounds of consonants and vowels and to the pronunciation of these when combined in syllables and words. The third and fourth teacher showed slightly more variation in this than the other two teachers, by changing the order of the syllables being practiced (*tru, tro, tri; ba, ca, da*) and of the letters (*ab, eb, ib*), or by covering parts of syllables and asking what was left.

Regarding the connection of numbers to letters, the teachers also took different approaches, while all four of them spent a significant amount of lesson time on this (e.g. 19, 25, and 39 minutes in three of the four lessons in which I was able to make an exact calculation). Teacher 1 had the learners combine numbers with vowels, with letters of a key word (*railakan*) and with letters of

their names. Teacher 2 used numbers combined to the letter combination *pr* to be learned on that day and (with the older learner) to the 20 letters of *Los Hau Bele*, in the repeating of which the other learners joined in. Teacher 3 used numbers combined with letters of syllables (*tra, tre, tri, tro, tru*). And teacher 4 combined numbers with the five vowels and the 15 consonants of *Los Hau Bele*, made the learners repeat the letter-number combination several times and did a word game in which missing letters were represented by numbers.

Although the data are limited (these were only four lessons observed, and only one per teacher), it seems that one method has led to different interpretations concerning (a) the steps followed in terms of meaningfulness and size of units first dealt with, (b) the teaching of the alphabetic principle, and (c) the use of the mnemonic 'numbers connected to letters' as part of the literacy teaching in (a) and (b). Different interpretations lead to different instructional practices, as presented here.

From the data it is clear that the *Los Hau Bele* method aims at contributing to the acquisition of the alphabetic principle by paying attention to phonics (letter-sound correspondence, analysing words and syllables into letters/sounds and blending letters/sounds to syllables and words). Although that probably does help learners to learn to read (see also August & Shanahan, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Condelli, Wrigley & Yoon, 2009), observations indicate that the connection of numbers to letters does not contribute to achieving this goal. The numbers did not turn out to be an aid to beginning literacy learners, they did not seem to help them to remember the letters and, what is more important, the sound of the letters.

Trying to add the extra feature of the mnemonic aid 'numbers connected to letters' in Chall's (1999) model already showed that it diverts learners from the shortest route to reading comprehension (i.e., go from written letters via syllables and sound to meaning). It provides learners with an extra burden that 'gets in the way', distracting them from taking the pivotal steps in the learning-to-read process. The class observations confirmed this. They revealed that in the four lessons presented here, the teachers differed in the positioning of the letter-number combinations in their teaching methodology. They tried to teach according to the *Los Hau Bele* method, but they were clearly struggling to make this element of the method work for their learners. This resulted in a way of teaching in which the main exercise for the learners seemed to be (next to writing or copying) rote association of letters and numbers, while the teachers were doing (or: modelling) the main part of the real literacy work: analysing syllables and words, and blending sounds and syllables. Learners were asked to write numbers under single letters and also under (letters in) syllables, words, phrases and, occasionally, names. Writing, or in some cases drawing, those numbers did not seem to help them build a deeper understanding of

phoneme-grapheme correspondence, but put them to an extra task of which the usefulness in authentic reading and writing was not clear. This might have to do with the (for reading) arbitrary relationship between the chosen numbers and letters, while the alphabetic principle applies a – for reading – systematic relationship between letters and sounds. Observations indicated that, for new writers, the writing of letters with a line below and the (according to *Los Hau Bele*) corresponding number underneath seemed too difficult, resulting in drawings that somehow copied what was seen on the blackboard without understanding what or why.

Based on these observations, the conclusion has to be that, when teaching adults to read and write, the letter-number combinations are not likely to be a useful aid but are an extra item to learn, still leaving the teacher to proceed with the letter-sound associations to teach word recognition. Little research has been done on this, either in Timor-Leste or in other countries where other locally adapted versions of the Cuban method *Yo, sí puedo* are being used comparable to *Los Hau Bele*. Lind (2008:91) refers to a case study done in Mozambique that found ‘that the introduction of letters combined with numbers appeared to be too much at the same time and in too short a time for non-literate persons’. In Timor-Leste, Anis (2007:29) had noted that the letter-number combinations were found ‘confusing’. My findings point in the same direction and add an urgent question: why learn these letter-number combinations at all, when this does not seem to support literacy acquisition? My class observations in Timor-Leste revealed that learning this seemed a waste of time, it made things needlessly complex, it was in the way of the actual teaching and learning of literacy and it hampered the teaching and acquisition of the phoneme-grapheme correspondences crucial to learn to read and write. When I asked coordinators and teachers about this element in the method, most would simply say that ‘this is the Cuban method’, some would add that the numbers were supposed to make the learning of the letters easier (despite the fact that learners clearly had problems learning this). None of the interviewees seemed to know the actual rationale behind the connection of numbers to letters; they simply accepted it as part of a method that they were provided with. Since learning to read and write is a cognitively complex process, more research is needed into the usefulness of adding numbers connected to letters for adults in this process, not only in Timor-Leste but also in the 27 other countries<sup>41</sup> where the Cuban method *Yo, sí puedo* is deployed.

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<sup>41</sup> According to <http://www.iplac.rimed.cu/> on 17-1-2014, the Cuban adult literacy programme *Yo, Sí Puedo!* (Yes I can!) had been implemented in 28 countries.

### 6.3.3 Multilingual classroom talk

Classroom talk and language use in adult literacy classrooms show, among other things, how people deal with the country's language and language-in-education policies at a local level, how these are reflected in their local situation. The way languages are used on the ground might be different from how authorities had originally planned their use or how people think they should be used, as Spolsky (2004) indicated. As said before, adult literacy education in Timor-Leste takes place in a very multilingual setting. All teachers involved in my study, 100 from the broad study (see also Chapter 5) and ten from the in-depth study were asked in a questionnaire about their language proficiency and language use in their daily lives. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 reveal a high level of multilingualism among these teachers. Table 6.2 shows how many languages those literacy teachers said they knew.

**Table 6.2:** Teachers' self-reported knowledge of languages as first, second, third, fourth, and fifth language (percentages; N=110)

	Regional language	Tetum (Terik)	Portuguese	Indonesian	English	Total
L1	80	20	–	–	–	100
L2	6.3	70	6.4	17.3	–	100
L3	4.5	10	25.5	55.5	0.9	96.4
L4	1.8	1.8	53.6	20	5.5	82.7
L5	0.9	–	3.6	0.9	20.9	26.4

All teachers reported to be multilingual; all mentioned a first and second language and nearly all mentioned a third language as well. 82.7% mentioned a fourth language and 26.4% even mentioned a fifth language. 80% had a regional language as their first language and 70% said that Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) was their second language; 55.5% said they learned Indonesian as a third language, and 53.6% Portuguese as a fourth language. Of the 26.4% who said they knew a fifth language, the majority mentioned English.

Table 6.3 shows which languages literacy teachers said they used in various domains in their daily lives.

**Table 6.3:** Teachers' language use in daily life (percentages; N = 110)

	Regional language	Tetum (Terik)	Tetum / TT & Reg. lang.	Portuguese	Indonesian	Combinations	Total
Parents	49.1	21.8	28.2	–	–	0.9	100
Husband/wife	30	27.3	19.1	–	–	2.7	79.1*
Children	12.7	47.3	23.6	–	–	4.5	88.1**
Family	14.5	33.6	49.9	–	–	1.8	100
Neighbours	24.5	33.6	40.9	–	–	0.9	100
Friends	11.8	41.8	28.1	–	–	18.1	100
Market	4.5	60.9	26.3	–	–	8.1	100
District admin	0.9	93.6	0.9	–	–	4.5	100
Government	0.9	85.4	–	2.7	–	10.9	100
Church	–	92.7	3.6	–	–	3.6	100

\* 20.9% of the teachers had no spouse, \*\* 11.9% of the teachers had no children

Table 6.3 shows high percentages of Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) use across all domains (social and more institutional). It also shows high percentages of the use of regional languages at home with parents and partners, while with children regional languages are used less and Tetum is used more. The communication with family and neighbours shows high percentages of the use of a combination of Tetum and regional languages. Notable is the absence of Portuguese and Indonesian as the only language used in any domain; apparently both Portuguese and Indonesian are mostly used in combination with other languages, and not as main languages. Some teachers mentioned Portuguese and/or Indonesian as being used in combination with Tetum/Tetum-Terik and/or regional languages, like when they were in contact with the government (combinations including Portuguese) or with friends (mainly combinations including Indonesian, only occasionally including Portuguese).

The language backgrounds of the learners revealed a partly different picture than did those of the teachers, as shown in Table 6.4. This table presents the outcomes on learners' self-reported language proficiency and the order in which they said they learned the languages.

**Table 6.4:** Learners' answers about their language knowledge (percentages; N=756)

	Regional language	Tetum (Terik)	Portuguese	Indonesian	English	Total
L1	87.7	12.3	–	–	–	100.0
L2	4.4	70.3	0.9	2.0	–	77.8
L3	1.9	2.9	5.0	17.3	–	27.2
L4	0.5	0.1	2.9	2.1	0.1	5.8

The majority of the 756 adult learners who participated in the broad study (77.8%) said they knew more than one language; 22.2% said they only knew one language (mainly people from Oecusse and remote areas of Baucau district). Of all learners, 12.3% said that Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) was their first language; 87.7% had a regional language as their mother tongue. Of the 77.8% learners who knew more than one language, the majority reported Tetum as their second language. Of the 756 learners, 27.2% reported a third language, mainly Indonesian. Portuguese was rarely mentioned.

Summarising the above, the majority of both learners and teachers have a regional language as their first and Tetum as their second language (in general, teachers and learners shared knowledge of the same regional languages, since most teachers came from the same region as their learners). But the linguistic repertoires, here measured by the number of languages known, differ for the two groups: nearly all teachers knew at least three languages (and many four), while the majority of the adult learners were bilingual and 22% monolingual. Besides Tetum, the regional languages play a much more important role than Portuguese in the language knowledge and use of both teachers and learners. Below we will explore how this relates to classroom interaction in adult literacy education.

### Classroom data

The teachers' and learners' linguistic repertoires and the teachers' language use in daily life, as shown in the above tables, illustrate the reality of multilingualism in these communities. This multilingualism is also reflected in the adult literacy classrooms: there teaching and learning to read and write takes place in Tetum, but class observations revealed that Tetum was definitely not the only language used. To find out how and when different languages were being used, I made a detailed analysis of my observations in two classes: one in Viqueque in the southeast and one in Covalima in the southwest (see also Boon, 2013). These two classes were already partly described in Section 6.3.2. I have looked at how multilingual classroom-talk in these classes was, what languages were being used when, by whom, whether different languages were

used for different communicative functions, and how the multilingual classroom-talk in adult literacy classes related to Timor-Leste's national language policy. My analysis draws on excerpts of audio-recorded interaction in these classes, on field notes and on pictures taken during the lessons to capture texts written on the blackboard and the layout of the class. A few episodes or 'key incidents' (Kroon & Sturm, 2007), in which several languages were used, were selected for closer analysis. I will first focus on a numeracy episode in the Viqueque class where the teacher was explaining sums (i.e., addition, subtraction, etc.), and a literacy episode where the group was practising the alphabet (following the *Los Hau Bele* programme, i.e., with 20 letters combined to 20 numbers). After that two literacy episodes in the Covalima lesson will be described. Also in this class, letters were combined with numbers, in accordance with the *Los Hau Bele* approach. In both classes Tetum was used as language of instruction and as target language for literacy.

### The Viqueque class

In the numeracy part of the lesson, the teacher explained in Tetum about the four arithmetic operations: adding, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and for the arithmetic terms he used Portuguese words, i.e., *mais* (more), *menos* (less), *umenta* (add), and *divisaun* (division). He also used Tetum words for these operations, i.e., *hasai* (remove/take out), *fahe* (divide/share) and sometimes Indonesian words, i.e., *kali* (multiply) and *bagi* (divide). When he explained how to do the sums (4 plus 3 is ..., 7 minus 4 is ...) he referred to the numbers first in Tetum (*haat* for 4, *tolu* for 3, *hitu* for 7), but later also in Indonesian (*dua belas dolar* for 12 dollar, *lima belas dolar* for 20 dollar) and in Portuguese (*tres vezes tres* for 3 times 3, *vinte et um menos onze* for 21 minus 11). Sometimes he referred to numbers in Portuguese (P) or Indonesian (I) or Tetum (T) in the same utterance, as in the following three excerpts:

#### Excerpt 1

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: <i>Doze</i> (P) <i>dolar ita fahe</i> (T) <i>ba ema nain</i>	Twelve dollars you divide between four
2	<i>haat</i> (T).	people.
3	L: <i>Tiga</i> (I) <i>dolar</i> .	Three dollar.
4	T: <i>Tiga</i> (I) <i>dolar</i> .	Three dollar.

In Excerpt 1, line 1, the teacher referred to 12 in Portuguese (*doze*) and in line 2 he referred to four (*haat*) in Tetum: he used two languages within the same utterance. In line 3, a learner answered while referring to 'three' (*tiga*) in Indo-

nesian. This was repeated in line 4 by the teacher as he provided feedback to the learner's response.

### Excerpt 2

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: <i>Dua belas</i> (I) dolar ita <i>fahe</i> (T) ba ema	Twelve dollars you divide between three people.
2	<i>nain tolu</i> (T).	
3	L: <i>Empat</i> (I) dolar.	Four dollar.
4	T: <i>Empat</i> (I) dolar.	Four dollar.

In Excerpt 2, line 1, the teacher referred to 12 in Indonesian, while in line 2 he referred to three in Tetum, again using two languages within the same utterance. In line 3, a learner answered while referring to four in Indonesian. This was repeated in line 4 by the teacher.

### Excerpt 3

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: Agora <i>tres</i> (P) dolar, <i>loron tolu</i> (T),	Now three dollars, three days, how much?
2	<i>hira</i> ?	
3	<i>Ita kalkula</i> (P) <i>loron loron, hira</i> ?	You count every day, how much?
4	L: <i>Sembilan</i> (I) dolar.	Nine dollar.
5	T: <i>Sembilan</i> (I) dolar.	Nine dollar.

In the first line of Excerpt 3, the teacher referred to three first in Portuguese and later in Tetum. In line 4 a learner answered him while referring to nine in Indonesian. This was repeated by the teacher in line 5. The teacher also used subject-related language, a Tetum word for divide (*fahe*) in excerpts 1 and 2, and a Portuguese word for calculate (*kalkula*) in excerpt 3.

In Excerpt 4 the teacher was explaining about the sums  $4 \times 3 = 12$ ,  $12 : 3 = 4$ , and  $5 \times 4 = 20$ , and he was inviting the participants to react and give answers.



## Excerpt 4

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: <i>Agora mai fali iha-ne'e, ne'e <u>kalj</u> (I) ona.</i>	Now here again, this is multiplied.
2	<i><u>Empat</u> (I), <u>repete</u> (P) <u>dalan tolu</u> (T), <u>hira</u>?</i>	Four, repeat three times, how much?
3	<i>Hamutuk hira? He? ... .. <u>Repete</u> (P) ...</i>	Together how much? He? ... .. Repeat ...
4	<i><u>Repete</u> (P) <u>dalan tolu</u> (T), <u>Haat repetete</u></i>	Repeat three times, Four repeat
5	<i><u>dalan tolu</u> (T)</i>	three times
6	L: <i><u>Sembilan</u> (I)</i>	Nine
7	L: <i><u>dalan tolu</u> (T) <u>dua belas</u> (I)!</i>	three times twelve!
8	Ls: <i><u>Dua belas</u> (I)!</i>	Twelve!
9	T: <i><u>Dua belas</u> (I). Agora <u>dua belas</u> (I), <u>dua</u></i>	Twelve. Now twelve,
10	<i><u>belas</u> (I) <u>bagi</u> (I) <u>tiga</u> (I), eh?</i>	twelve divided by three, eh?
11	L: <i><u>Empat</u> (I)</i>	Four
12	T: <i><u>Dua belas</u> (I), <u>doze</u> (P) <u>divisãun</u> (P) <u>três</u> (P),</i>	Twelve, twelve divided by three,
13	<i><u>hira</u>?</i>	how much?
14	L: <i><u>tolu</u> (T), <u>tolu</u> (T)</i>	three, three
15	T: <i>He? Ne'e <u>dua belas</u> (I) ita <u>fahê</u> ba <u>tolu</u> (T).</i>	He? This/Here twelve you divide by three.
16	<i>Hira? Hetan hira?</i>	How much? How much do you get?
17	L: <i>Hetan <u>empat</u> (I), <u>empat</u> (I).</i>	You get four, four.
18	T: <i>Ah, <u>empat</u> (I), <u>rasik</u> ona. Ne'e <u>mós</u> ...</i>	Ah, four, of course. This is also ...
19	<i><u>nafatin</u> deit. Ne'e. Ona. Ona. Agora, <u>cinco</u> (P),</i>	The same. Here. Already. Already. Now, five,
20	<i><u>repete</u> (P) <u>dalan</u> .. <u>lima</u> (T/I). ... <u>cinco</u> (P)</i>	repeat times .. five. ...
21	<i><u>repete</u> (P)</i>	... five repeat
22	<i><u>dalan haat</u> (T), <u>hira</u>?</i>	four times, how much?

In line 2 the teacher introduced the sum four times three, referring to four in Indonesian (I) and to three in Tetum, using two languages in the same utterance and in the same sum. Also in lines 4 and 5 he referred to three in Tetum. In line 6 a learner answered him referring to nine in Indonesian, and in line 7 another learner reacted to this wrong answer by referring to three in Tetum and 12 in Indonesian, also using two languages within the same utterance. In line 8 other learners showed their agreement with this learner, again referring to 12 in Indonesian. And in line 9 the teacher agreed, referring to 12 in Indonesian as well. In the same line he started a new question about 12 divided by three, referring to 12 in Indonesian, as he did again in line 10, where he then referred to three in Indonesian as well. In line 11 a learner answered four in Indonesian. The teacher ignored this answer for the time being, probably because he wanted more learners to think about the question, so in line 12 he started repeating the question, referring to 12 in Indonesian, then suddenly switched to Portuguese while referring to 12 and three (line 12). He asked the learners

'how much' in Tetum, in line 13. One of them answered wrongly in line 14, referring to three in Tetum. In line 15 the teacher repeated the question in Indonesian and Tetum, asking (in Tetum) for an answer in line 16, receiving it in line 17 in Indonesian and reacting to it in the same way, referring to four in Indonesian in line 18. In line 19-20 he introduced five times five, referring to five in Portuguese and after that using the word *lima* for five, which can be either Tetum or Indonesian. In line 20-22 he repeated the question, referring to five in Portuguese and four in Tetum. The teacher also used subject-related language: a Portuguese word in his Tetum for 'multiply' (*repete*, lines 2, 4, 20, 21), Indonesian words for 'multiply' (*kali*, line 1) and 'divide' (*bagi*, line 10) and a Portuguese word for 'division' (*divisaun*, line 12).

In the following excerpt, the teacher was reviewing with the learners which number belongs to which letter (according to the *Los Hau Bele* method); they were talking about the combinations f-16, g-18, h-13, j-19, k-8, l-6, m-12, n-7, o-4, p-20, and r-10.

### Excerpt 5

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: ... F /ɛf/*	... F /ɛf/
2	L: F /ɛf/	F /ɛf/
3	L: <i>enam belas</i> (I)	sixteen
4	T: <i>enam belas</i> (I), <i>dezaseis</i> (P).	sixteen, sixteen.
5	G /ʒi'gɛ/, G /gɛ/, G /ʒi'gɛ/? Hira?	G /ʒi'gɛ/, G /gɛ/, G /ʒi'gɛ/? How much?
6	Ls: <i>delapan belas</i> (I)	eighteen
7	T: H /'hɛgɛ/? H /hɛ/?	H /'hɛgɛ/? H /hɛ/?
8	L: <i>Tiga belas</i> (I)	Thirteen
9	L: <i>Tiga belas</i> (I)	Thirteen
10	T: J /'ʒɔtɐ/?	J /'ʒɔtɐ/?
11	L: J /'ʒɔtɐ/ ...	J /'ʒɔtɐ/ ...
12	L: <i>Tiga</i> (I)	Three
13	Ls: <i>Sembilan belas</i> (I)	Nineteen
14	T: <i>Sembilan belas</i> (I). /kɛpɐ/?	Nineteen. /kɛpɐ/?
15	Ls: <i>Delapan</i> (I).	Eight.
16	T: L ? /ɛl/	L? /ɛl/
17	Ls: <i>Dao</i> (M)	Six
18	T: L! /ɛl/	L! /ɛl/
19	Ls: <i>enam</i> (I)	six
20	T: M /ɛm/?	M /ɛm/?
21	Ls: <i>dua belas</i> (I)	twelve
22	T: N /ɛn/?	N /ɛn/?

23	L: <i>tujuh</i> (I)	seven
24	T: O /o/?	O /o/?
25	L: <i>empat</i> (I)	four
26	T: P /pə/?	P /pə/?
27	Ls: <i>dua puluh</i> (I) ( <i>ruanulu</i> (T))	twenty (twenty)
28	T: R /ɛr/?	R /ɛr/?
29	Ls: <i>sepuluh</i> (I)	ten

\*After every alphabet letter that was practised, I have added a representation of the letter name that was used, with the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet between slashes.

In line 3 a learner referred to 16 (the number which, in *Los Hau Bele*, is linked to the letter *f*) in Indonesian, which was repeated in line 4 by the teacher, who then said the number again but this time in Portuguese. In lines 6-15, the numbers 18, 13, 19, and eight (in *Los Hau Bele* linked to the letters *g*, *h*, *j*, and *k*) were referred to in Indonesian, but in line 17 the number six (for the letter *l*) was referred to in Makasae. This answer, although correct, was ignored by the teacher: he repeated the letter again in line 18, which led to the same answer (six), but now in Indonesian, in line 19. From here they continued referring to numbers in Indonesian until line 29, although in line 27 the number 20 was referred to in Indonesian and (by another learner at the same time) in Tetum. So in this part, the numbers were referred to mostly in Indonesian, and occasionally in Portuguese, Tetum and (once) Makasae.

In the *Los Hau Bele* method, the vowels are connected to the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The teacher first referred to the numbers in Tetum (*ida, rua, tolu, haat, lima* for '1, 2, 3, 4, 5'), repeating in Indonesian (*satu, dua, tiga, empat, lima* for '1, 2, 3, 4, 5') but later, in another exercise, in Portuguese (*a, e, i, o, u; um, dois, tres, quatro, cinco*).

### The Covalima class

This class I observed together with the Cuban coordinator in the Covalima district. The teacher of this class had started the lesson by writing a text on the blackboard (as was shown in Figure 6.18 in the previous section). The text included the letters *p* and *r* combined with the numbers 20 and 10, a phrase containing the key word *prepara* (prepare), this word divided into syllables, the syllables *pra, pre, pri, pro, pru*, and some words and phrases with *pr*. This text was repeated several times after the teacher by the learners. Excerpt 6 shows that here the numbers were referred to in Portuguese (*trinta e quatro* for 'thirty-four' in lines 3-4, *vinte* for 'twenty' in lines 13-14, *dez* for 'ten' in lines 17-18):

## Excerpt 6

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: <i>Klase</i>	Class
2	Ls: <i>Klase</i>	Class
3	T: <i>Trinta e quatro</i> (P)	Thirty-four
4	Ls: <i>Trinta e quatro</i> (P)	Thirty-four
5	T: <i>Estuda</i>	Study
6	Ls: <i>Estuda</i>	Study
7	T: <i>Letra</i>	Letters
8	Ls: <i>Letra</i>	Letters
9	T: P /pə/ R /ɛri/	P /pə/ R /ɛri/
10	Ls: P /pə/ R /ɛri/	P /pə/ R /ɛri/
11	T: <i>Letra P</i> /pə/	Letter P /pə/
12	Ls: <i>Letra P</i> /pə/	Letter P /pə/
13	T: <i>Númeru vinte</i> (P)	Number twenty
14	Ls: <i>Númeru vinte</i> (P)	Number twenty
15	T: <i>Letra R</i> /ɛri/	Letter R /ɛri/
16	Ls: <i>Letra R</i> /ɛri/	Letter R /ɛri/
17	T: <i>Númeru dez</i> (P)	Number ten
18	Ls: <i>Númeru dez</i> (P)	Number ten

The participants recited this and the rest of the text on the blackboard several times for ten minutes. Now and then the teacher explained in Tetum specific aspects of the spelling and pronunciation of the words written on the blackboard, about the division of words into syllables, and about the use of upper and lower case in names. After reciting, the participants were asked to copy the text from the blackboard into their notebooks. While doing so, they chatted with each other in the regional language Bunak. The teacher walked around the classroom and also talked with them in Bunak. When the Cuban coordinator talked to the teacher in Portuguese, he responded in Portuguese. While the learners were still copying the text, the teacher took one of the participants aside, an older man, who explained to me that he had an eye problem and could not see very well. The teacher and this learner started practising the letter and number combinations of the *Los Hau Bele* programme, using a paper sheet (see Figure 6.24 below; see also Figure 6.19 in the previous section):



**Figure 6.24:** Teacher and older learner practising letter and number combinations

Excerpt 7 shows how the teacher and the learner practised the letter-number combinations o-4, p-20 and r-10:

#### Excerpt 7

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: O /o/	O /o/
2	L: O /o/	O /o/
3	T: <i>númeru quatro</i> (P)	number four
4	L: <i>númeru quatro</i> (P)	number four
5	T: P /pə/	P /pə/
6	L: P /pə/	P /pə/
7	T: <i>númeru dua pu-</i> (I), <i>número vinte</i> (P)	number twen-, number twenty
8	L: <i>númeru vinte</i> (P)	number twenty
9	T: R /ɛri/	R /ɛri/
10	L: R /ɛri/	R /ɛri/
11	T: <i>númeru dez</i> (P)	number ten
12	L: <i>númeru dez</i> (P)	number ten

Most of the time the teacher referred to the numbers in Portuguese (*quatro* for ‘four’ in line 3, *dez* for ‘ten’ in line 11) but sometimes he started to say a number in Indonesian, like in line 7 (*dua puluh* for ‘twenty’), and then quickly corrected himself, switching to Portuguese again (*vinte*).

During the lesson, someone who was selling goods walked by outside. One of the participants called him. They talked in Bunak and after this, several participants mentioned the price of one of the products that was sold, see Excerpt 8 below:

## Excerpt 8

	Transcript	English translation
1	L1: <i>Evan! Oi Evan!</i>	Evan! Hey Evan!
2	Ls: ...( <i>Bunak</i> ) ...	...(Bunak) ... ( <i>they are speaking with someone who is walking by and selling goods</i> )
3	L2: <i>Lima puluh</i> (I) <i>sen</i>	Fifty cents
4	L1: <i>Lima puluh</i> (I) <i>sen</i>	Fifty cents
5	L3: <i>Lima puluh</i> (I) <i>sen</i>	Fifty cents
6	L1: <i>Lima puluh</i> (I) <i>sen</i>	Fifty cents

In the last four lines we see that participants mentioned to each other the price of the goods: 50 cents. Here they all referred to the number 'fifty' in Indonesian. Further on in the lesson, the teacher and the older learner repeated again the letter-number combinations, using the paper sheet. Excerpt 9 shows how they switched from Portuguese to Indonesian, to Portuguese again, while practising the combinations k-8, l-6, m-12, n-7, o-4, p-20, and r-10:

## Excerpt 9

	Transcript	English translation
1	T: K /kɐ/ <i>número oito</i> (P)	K /kɐ/ number eight
2	L: K /kɐ/ <i>número oito</i> (P)	K /kɐ/ number eight
3	T: L /ɛli/ <i>número seis</i> (P)	L /ɛli/ number six
4	L: L /ɛli/ <i>número seis</i> (P)	L /ɛli/ number six
5	T: M /ɛmi/ <i>número doze</i> (P)	M /ɛmi/ number twelve
6	L: M /ɛmi/ <i>número doze</i> (P)	M /ɛmi/ number twelve
7	T: N /ɛni/ <i>número sete</i> (P)	N /ɛni/ number seven
8	L: N /ɛni/ <i>número sete</i> (P)	N /ɛni/ number seven
9	T: O /o/ <i>número empat</i> (I)	O /o/ number four
10	L: O /o/ <i>número empat</i> (I)	O /o/ number four
11	T: P /pə/	P /pə/
12	L: K /kə/	K /kə/
13	T: P /pə/, P /pə/	P /pə/, P /pə/
14	L: P /pə/	P /pə/
15	T: <i>número dua puluh</i> (I)	number twenty
16	L: <i>dua puluh</i> (I)	twenty
17	T: R /ɛri/	R /ɛri/
18	L: R /ɛri/	R /ɛri/
19	T: <i>número s-</i> (I/T), <i>dez</i> (P)	number s-, ten
20	L: <i>número dez</i> (P)	number ten

In lines 1-8 the teacher and the learner referred to the numbers in Portuguese, but in line 9-10 they suddenly started using Indonesian and kept doing so when referring to 'twenty' in line 15-16. In line 19 the teacher first started to refer to 'ten' with an 's', which can either be the first letter of *sepuluh* (= 'ten' in Indonesian) or *sanulu* (= 'ten' in Tetum) but then quickly switched to Portuguese: *dez*. This suggests that in rote activities such as these the numbers in Indonesian came to mind more easily for the teacher and the learners than the numbers in Portuguese.

### Analysis

The class observations provide a picture of how languages were used in classroom interaction. Firstly, classroom talk in these adult literacy classes was indeed multilingual. In these two classrooms four different languages were being used: Tetum, the regional language (Makasae in Viqueque and Bunak in Covalima), Portuguese, and Indonesian. Second, it became clear which languages were being used when and by whom. In both lessons, literacy teaching took place primarily in Tetum. Tetum was used as the target language for literacy and as the main language of teaching. Regional languages, Makasae in Viqueque and Bunak in Covalima, were used for extra explanations, repetitions of teaching points, translations, and small talk. This applied to the small talk before, after and during the lesson, and between teacher and learners as well as among the learners themselves. Tetum and words from Portuguese, and occasionally from Indonesian, were used in subject-related language to talk about literacy and numeracy. The use of letter names like /ʒi'gɛ/ for 'g', /'ʒɔtɛ/ for 'j', /hɛgɛ/ for 'h', and /ɛli/, /ɛmi/, /ɛni/ for 'l', 'm', and 'n' probably has its origins in the years (until 1975) when Portuguese was used in the colonial education system. In the Viqueque class there was more subject-related language (about the numeracy operations, about the different alphabets) than in the Covalima class. When walking around the classroom, the teacher of the Covalima class used more Bunak than Tetum to communicate with his learners. He explained to me that in this village there were only few participants who spoke Tetum, most participants spoke Bunak. When the Cuban coordinator talked to the teacher in Portuguese, he responded in Portuguese.

The excerpts revealed that when numbers were referred to in the Viqueque class, the teacher in most cases used Tetum and Indonesian and sometimes Portuguese, and the participants mostly answered referring to numbers in Indonesian and sometimes Tetum (and once in Makasae). Amounts of money mostly got referred to in Indonesian. In the Covalima class, however, this mainly happened in Portuguese, occasionally in Indonesian and not in Tetum (although Tetum was the main language of instruction). It seemed that in this class everyone was trying their best to use Portuguese, while in daily life they

were probably more used to employing Indonesian when referring to numbers, or at least to refer to prices. An explanation for teacher and learners avoiding the use of Indonesian in the classroom might be that they thought they could not use this language there because it is not one of the official languages of the country. That they used Portuguese and not Tetum for the numbers might have to do with the fact that both the teacher and most of the learners were older and probably more used to Portuguese as a 'school language' than to Tetum.

The contrast between different languages on some occasions was used as a meaning-making resource. Analysis of the recorded classroom talk revealed that in some cases there were switches that distinguished different kinds of talk: from small talk in the regional language to lesson content in Tetum, from explanation in Tetum to extra explanation in the regional language. But it turned out that there were also occasions when people simply drew on the communicative resources available to them without attributing particular meanings to the use of specific languages. Take, for example, the moment when the teacher from Viqueque was explaining numeracy operations while referring to the numbers in three different languages. In some cases, learners were also referring to numbers drawing from several languages at the same time. Throughout the two lessons and particularly in the parts where a lot of references to numbers occurred, teachers and learners were moving smoothly in and out of different languages, i.e., they practised 'polylinguaging' (which is, according to Jørgensen et al., 2011:27, 'the use of resources associated with different "languages" even when the speaker knows very little of these') drawing on the different linguistic resources in their repertoires. The overall impression was that people were just getting things done multilingually, blending different languages, sometimes using different languages to distinguish different kinds of talk, sometimes not.

The multilingual classroom talk in these classes did reflect the national language policy as written in the Constitution: the two official languages Tetum and Portuguese were used, although Tetum was used much more than Portuguese. Indonesian was also used as a working language and regional languages were valued and not at all banned from the classroom. In fact, the extensive use of regional languages and Tetum and the limited use of Portuguese in adult literacy classes actually deviates from the language-in-education policies for formal education in Timor-Leste, which show a strong focus on the use of the two official languages Tetum and (gradually more) Portuguese and not so much on regional languages. In the adult literacy classes in this study, regional languages appear to serve as key communicative resources. This might be specific to adult education, but it is not surprising, given that regional



languages and local dialects are widely used in local communication outside the classroom.

Following Arthur's (2001) approach, Tetum would be the 'on-stage' language in these adult literacy classes, and the regional languages Makasae and Bunak the 'backstage' languages, which were accepted for small talk and extra explanations/repetitions, but not as languages to be used in 'staged' question-and-answer performances. In Excerpt 5 we saw an example of this, when the teacher ignored an answer ('six') in Makasae given by a learner.

In the short episodes under study, it was possible to gain brief glimpses of the ways in which the teachers and learners were navigating through the (national) language policy as they participated in literacy education at this local level. The multilingual interactional practices observed in these two classes in the districts of Viqueque and Covalima resembled the practices investigated in the other 18 adult literacy classes that I observed in the districts of Aileu, Dili, Ermera, Manufahi, and Manatuto. In all 20 classes literacy teachers used several different languages while teaching. In all 20 classes Portuguese words were used frequently in subject-related language while using Tetum as language of instruction (Indonesian words were used as well, but less frequently). In 14 classes Portuguese letter names were used, in seven classes also Indonesian letter names. In 12 classes numbers were referred to in three different languages, and in six classes in two different languages. Regional languages were spoken in nearly all classes, in any case among the learners but often also between teacher and learners, and by the coordinators present. The audio recordings that I made of multilingual classroom talk in adult literacy classes in Timor-Leste reveal the multiple ways in which Timorese teachers and adult learners drew on the linguistic resources available to them as they tried to get things done in adult literacy classes, or tried to find 'local pragmatic solutions' (Lin, 2001) to the challenges involved in taking on what was – for most – a new language of teaching and learning. The multilingual classroom interaction reflects different phases in the country's history: teachers learned subject-related language either in Portuguese times or during the Indonesian occupation. My observations in adult education classes and my analysis of multilingual classroom talk have shown what is happening 'on the ground' where language and literacy policies are being implemented. The teachers and learners seem to use the full repertoires of linguistic resources available to them (Blommaert & Backus, 2013) to make meaning and to make sense of the things they teach and learn.

## 6.4 Discourses and ideas on literacy teaching/learning

In Timor-Leste, peoples' views on teaching and learning adult literacy are shaped by literacy experiences in the past (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008, 2012; Da Silva, 2012) and present, by ideas introduced by specialists from Timor-Leste and abroad, through bilateral collaboration on adult literacy (such as in 2000-2002 with Brazil and in 2006-2012 with Cuba), multilateral collaboration through UN organisations and joint development work with local and international non-governmental organisations.

As part of my study I collected various kinds of data on participants' discourses on adult literacy, especially in interviews that I held with learners, teachers and coordinators during the in-depth case study, and in questionnaires filled out by teachers during the broad study. These discourses reflect ideas of learners, teachers and coordinators about adult literacy. In this section I focus on ideas that teachers and coordinators expressed about the teaching and learning of literacy.

As indicated in Chapter 4, I conducted 25 interviews in the in-depth case study: nine with learner groups, ten with teachers and six with coordinators. All interviews were audio recorded. I wrote an account in English of each interview. For this section, I analysed these accounts highlighting all utterances on teaching literacy. A list was made of all examples and expressions related to teaching literacy, and then I counted how often each one occurred in the interview accounts. This counting of 'mentions' provided an indication of how important people would find certain things; the more often they were mentioned, the more important they probably were for the interviewees. Topics that were discussed during the interviews (and also during many informal conversations that I captured in field notes), were: 'what makes someone a good adult literacy teacher', motivation and absence of participants, language use during class, teachers' and coordinators' ideas about the literacy programmes, organisational issues, teacher training, teachers' and coordinators' motivation to work in adult literacy education and coordinators' roles and responsibilities.

### What makes a good literacy teacher

Interviewees made remarks on how they thought teachers should behave, what they should teach in a lesson and what qualities they should have. The variation in teachers' remarks was large: teachers should involve learners in reading and writing, e.g., of their name, country, (sub)district, village, sex and signature; teachers should 'teach ABC', explain and write on the blackboard and make drawings; they should show learners how to write and, if and when needed, hold their hand while writing; they should not only use the learner books but also use the teacher manual. Newspapers and the children's maga-

zine *Lafaek* were mentioned as extra materials that could be used. One teacher mentioned selecting easier parts from the literacy book for her participants. Apart from literacy, it was argued that teachers should teach basic mathematics as well. Teaching about agricultural products and instruments used in the field was also mentioned. In order to practise reading and writing, repetition and group games were seen as important. Qualities of a 'good teacher' were: to have good reading and writing capacities, be motivated and have patience. One teacher said that the local leader thought she was a good teacher because she came to teach the lessons at the agreed time. Elaborating on the subject of being a good teacher, she added: 'After entering class, we start our lesson with a prayer, after that we greet our participants and ask how they are doing, then we continue the lesson'. She finished by expressing the importance of having 'patience', 'discipline' and 'a good motivation to teach'. More general things mentioned were that teachers share their knowledge and experience, they teach to help develop the community, they need to prepare for the future. One teacher said that he wanted to 'teach our companions so that they can live free'.

The coordinators mentioned many of the things that teachers had mentioned as well. Some things added by coordinators about what teachers should do were: teachers should talk a lot, so that learners understand; they should help their students, show consideration with them, take time to teach the letters, repeat a lot and give many examples. Most mentioned by coordinators was that teachers should teach according to the method of their programme and that they should master the methodology. In the case of *Los Hau Bele* for example, coordinators stressed that it was important to first show DVDs and then explain the same content again. Teacher qualities that coordinators considered to be important were sometimes linked to their own coordination task: teachers should have a plan, make a schedule, provide reports. Coordinators thought that experience was good, but that teacher quality was also related to education and capacities.

### **Motivation**

Teachers and coordinators expressed their worries about learners' motivation. They mentioned as an important factor for learner motivation the involvement of the local leader. A district coordinator explained that the decision about those in the community who would participate in the literacy programmes, was generally made by the local leaders. He confirmed that the participants themselves did not decide about this, their names were put on the list by the local leader. One local leader stressed the importance of receiving a certificate; the fact that some learners of a group in his village received one, proved to be a huge motivation for other participants to continue to learn to read and write.

Many coordinators were involved in work related to the strengthening of the motivation of the participants, described by one coordinator as: 'Explain everything well so the participants have the *consciência* (awareness) to participate in the programmes'. They also referred to this part of their work with terms like 'socialisation', 'mobilisation' or 'approximation' of the population, which according to them had to take place through the local leaders. One district coordinator explained that *socialização* and *mobilização* were needed because of the mentality (*mentalidade*) of the people, their idea is that '*Ler e escrever é perder tempo*' (Reading and writing is losing/wasting time). This coordinator also said: '*Eles não compreendem as vantagens*' (They don't understand the advantages). Coordinators explained that class schedules were usually made in coordination with the participants, so that classes would take place before or after the work in the field, and not on market days. 'Everything depends on the *vontade* (will) of the people', one coordinator stressed.

A general worry for many teachers and coordinators was the frequent absence of participants. Of groups of 20 or more participants on paper, only ten to 12, or less, would show up in class. Some teachers said that this is why they visited participants in their houses, to teach one-on-one. One teacher explained: 'With the participants it is like this: one day for example two or three show up, but on Wednesday they don't come anymore. The ones that come today already do not come any more on Wednesday. Then the others come, the others who don't come today. Yes, the people change like that.' I asked him how many names there were on the list. He answered that there were 28 names but that on that day only eight came, on Friday 11 and on Wednesday nine. Most coordinators referred to economic conditions as the main cause for absence, as well as family issues, cultural reasons, reasons that had to do with the climate (flooded roads and high rivers in the rainy season). About the harvest time one coordinator said: 'These three months, (they) need to benefit because there is a good harvest, to prepare the products to sell. After this they come back and participate normally.' Another coordinator said: 'The gardens are not here but far up in the mountains, so when they go there to work, they will stay there two, three, four days or longer, they sleep up there, so they cannot take part in the lessons.' One coordinator complained: 'There are many problems with the (in-class) presence, they don't give it importance.'

### Language use

Regarding their language use during literacy classes, many teachers said that they preferred Tetum for literacy, because, as one of them said: 'It is the language of Timor'. But most teachers said they also used regional languages regularly for extra explanation for those participants who had a weak proficiency in Tetum. Some teachers said that besides Tetum and regional lan-

guages, they sometimes used some Portuguese and Indonesian as well, the latter mainly for counting. A few teachers said they would also like to teach literacy in Portuguese as a target language, but then added that their learners did not speak or understand Portuguese. A teacher said that two of his students (school drop-outs) initially preferred to do literacy in Indonesian, but he had told them: 'We are now independent so we need to start learning in Tetum'.

The coordinators also expressed views on language use in the literacy classes. The fact that the programmes were in Tetum, seemed to be valued by all. One district coordinator mentioned that besides Tetum, the local language could be used to attract people, because 'with the local language one can tell culture and the majority of the population likes to involve in culture'. Another coordinator told about the time when *Los Hau Bele* was still done in Portuguese (before the Tetum version became available). He said that it was confusing for the learners because they didn't speak Portuguese and three months was too short to learn it. He had been afraid that they would 'end up with nothing' and said he was 'grateful that in 2007 we went forward with the Tetum language; that is much better for them, to learn'. Like the teachers, also a coordinator suggested to use Indonesian (next to Tetum) for the numbers. He said: 'Many people use Indonesian for the numbers in daily life, because it is easier and shorter'. In Oecusse, the possibility of literacy materials in Baikenu, their local language, was discussed. A coordinator said about this: 'Yes that would be much better and easier, but it is a regional language, the people want to learn in the official languages of the country.' He remembered that there used to be a bible in Baikenu, written in 1945/46 by two priests: 'That was much easier for us because it was in our language.'

### **Literacy programmes**

About the literacy programmes they were using, teachers would generally say that they were happy with the programme, and satisfied with the books and other materials. One teacher expressed that she was happy to have books because for her and her students it would be too difficult to do everything by heart (or: 'only think in the head' as she said literally). When talking about the literacy programmes, the teachers came up with a range of organisational issues. Some said they used a mixture of materials from different literacy programmes, because the participants in their groups had such different literacy levels. Many teachers expressed their worries about participants not showing much progress; often they mentioned the older learners in this respect. One teacher put it like this: 'With advanced age, they cannot write, cannot read, we do repetition but they don't put it in their heads, it is very difficult for them, the old ones'. Teachers explained that participants with bad results for the final

test would not receive a certificate and would have to do the same course again, while participants with good results would receive a certificate and could move on to the next course. Often though, participants had to wait a long time for the certificates to arrive in the village, and they had to wait for the next course to start, which sometimes took a long time too. Another problem mentioned several times, was that older learners often had bad eyesight.

The coordinators expressed their satisfaction and gratitude with the fact that the government was providing literacy programmes for adults now. Of course they expressed different views on the different programmes, but their main worry was about the connections between the different programmes and the possibilities for the learners to continue learning by finishing one programme and entering the next. Their general view, based on their experience in the field, was that three months of basic literacy was not enough to learn to read and write, and that if the participants stopped after three months they would 'fall back into illiteracy' soon. Much of the coordinators' discourse was about organisational worries related to the issue of how to provide all the consecutive programmes to make sure that people could continue learning. How to make sure that after the district had been declared 'free from illiteracy' (which the government would do after finishing the three-month programme *Los Hau Bele* in a district), there were enough advanced level literacy or post-literacy options for people to continue learning and not forget everything? And how to arrange this all with an incomplete infrastructure, salaries that are often paid months too late, lack of transport (not enough money for petrol for the motorbikes to visit classes and for gasoline for the generators to show the DVDs), flooded roads and rivers too high to cross during the rainy season. They reported many difficulties with distribution of materials and visiting classes, and said that sometimes teachers were not able to attend teacher training for the same reasons. All coordinators were worrying about these practical constraints and challenges. They felt responsible for 'creating the conditions' that enabled the participants to learn. They also worried about the certificates and their late arrival in the villages. 'Certificates are important,' one coordinator said, 'if they do not receive certificates they see it as not having passed. With the certificate they feel that their participation and good results for the final test are recognized, only then they can be sure they passed.' Some coordinators used metaphors to better explain their views. One coordinator talked about the importance of involving all participants in the learning process in the literacy class, also the older learners who take more time. He illustrated his view by saying: 'If we take seven soldiers to the war, they all seven must be able to shoot, what if one doesn't know how to pull the trigger...?' Another coordinator talked about the literacy manuals and said it was indeed important to provide new lesson content in small bits and pieces,

because adult learners in his view learn the alphabet the way chickens eat: taking little pieces one by one.

### **Teacher training and motivation**

Most teachers said that it was important to attend teacher training to 'increase' or 'strengthen' their 'capacities as a teacher' and to 'facilitate better' the learners. Teachers in the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* programme said they attended one-week teacher training sessions in Dili a few times a year. Teachers in the *Los Hau Bele* programme said they attended one-day training sessions every fortnight, organised by the '*assessores Cubanos*' (Cuban advisers), assisted by the (sub)district coordinators. One teacher said that if he was not attending the training he would not know how to teach. But when he went to the training he learned 'the ideas of the adviser', he would understand and teach better, 'for better quality'. He added that he also wanted to attend the training about *Iha Dalan*. This was confirmed by other teachers, wishing to not only teach in the first three-month basic literacy programme *Los Hau Bele* but also in the six-month *Hakat ba Oin* and the advanced level six-month *Iha Dalan* programme. All coordinators agreed on the importance of teacher training. They said things like: 'Training is to improve the capacity of the monitor' and 'New teachers have to know the methodology; if they don't know the methodology, how can they teach?', or 'Training is needed so that teachers know and at the same time they can practise, so they know the way'. Coordinators stressed the importance of regular, mandatory training. One of them talked about rights and duties of teachers contracted by the Ministry of Education. Like the teachers, some coordinators also mentioned continuity: in their view each teacher should be able to teach in all available literacy programmes at all different levels, not just in one programme, because learners who finish one programme want to be able to continue learning in the next, so the teacher should be able to provide them with the possibility, to help them continue.

About their own motivation to work in adult literacy, teachers mentioned: 'to share my knowledge and experience', and 'I want to help them when they cannot read or write, hold their hand, learn things, show how, which way, so that they can obtain, can know'. One teacher explained: 'Because in literacy we can teach our companions, uncles, brothers, so that they will also be able to read and write, so that in the future they can live free'. Some teachers said they also wanted to become teachers in the other programmes after basic literacy, so their participants could 'learn more things'. One of them said: 'Because I'm Timorese, I work for the nation, for the government'. Another coordinator added that it was a lot of work, but that they had to work hard to make the country 'free from illiteracy', that it was for the good of their nation.

### **Coordinators' responsibilities**

The coordinators explained about their roles and responsibilities: each of Timor-Leste's 13 districts had a district coordinator for adult literacy, who supervised some subdistrict coordinators (65 in total). Their task was to coordinate in their (sub)district the literacy programmes: *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin*, and *Iha Dalan*, plus the Equivalence programme for primary education. Some coordinators said they had been involved for many years in literacy education and also worked in the Brazilian *AlfaSol* programme in 2000-2002 and the government programme *Lee no Hakerek* in 2003-2004. Some remembered the literacy programme *Pemberantasan Butahuruf* or *Paket A* used during the Indonesian occupation. Some also mentioned the *FRETILIN* literacy campaign in 1974-1975 that continued underground during the years of Indonesian military rule. One of the coordinators had volunteered in that campaign. One coordinator explained his work as follows: 'The responsibility of the district coordinator is to obey all the guidelines that come from the National Directorate. And the duty of the monitoring in the region and at the same time systematic evaluation of the programmes that are given in each classroom'. Important to be able to do this work is 'to know the terrain', as was explained by many coordinators. The fact that they know the terrain of their district or subdistrict is vital when carrying out their work, they said. This was indeed what I experienced when they took me on numerous dirt roads to literacy groups in remote areas in the mountains. One district coordinator added: 'We have to coordinate well with the local administrators, subdistrict coordinators, village chiefs, regularly visit the local teachers so they can present the programme and the problems. They say they all want the programmes to be successful, but before we have good results we need to prepare the conditions'.

### **Concluding comments**

From the overview of the recorded reflections and discourses, it becomes clear that different roles and responsibilities bring different ideas, views and discourses on teaching adult literacy, within smaller or wider scopes. Strikingly, neither teachers nor coordinators (nor learners) expressed any explicit views on how literacy should be taught and learned: what to start with, how to introduce new content, how to practise new skills, how to expand emergent literacy. During the interviews I did ask questions about these topics, but in most cases it was very difficult or impossible to get answers. This surely has to do with the fact that most teachers and coordinators had not been provided with any long-term general professional education on working in the field of adult literacy education (besides the short-term training sessions related to specific literacy programmes). They had never learned (or were not equipped) to talk at a meta-level about teaching adult literacy. It was my impression that for the 'how' of



teaching and learning literacy, the teachers, learners and coordinators completely relied on the programmes and materials they had been provided with by the government (and were expected to do so). In general, literacy teachers are not asked how they think literacy should be taught. Usually they are simply sent to training sessions belonging to specific literacy programmes where they learn how to teach the content of those programmes and how to use the materials that belong to those programmes. The same goes for the learners: in general they are not asked what and how they want to learn to read and write (e.g., things they could apply in their daily activities), but their local leaders make them participate in programmes that are provided by the government and/or other parties, of which the content has already been decided on. The gap between what and how the participants would like to learn and what is offered to them in the classes may be wide, which might explain their low motivation and high absence which often came up in our conversations as an aspect that worried so many people. What is taught and learned in the literacy classes is mainly determined by the contents and focus of the literacy programme people are told to use.

Concerns expressed by teachers showed a tension between wanting to be a good teacher on the one hand (by helping learners and other people, and participating in teacher training), and the many practical constraints and challenges on the other. These constraints and challenges, mainly related to a lack of budget and an incomplete infrastructure, were also mentioned by the coordinators when discussing how to provide the whole range of programmes currently available. 'Give motivation' turned out to be an important element of the work of coordinators. Like the teachers, the coordinators showed a rather open mind to using different languages in adult literacy education, a pragmatic attitude in the multilingual setting they act in every day.

When taking a closer look at the ideas that learners, teachers and coordinators expressed on literacy, it became clear that they reflected past and present discourses on literacy in several ways. Terminology that had already been used in the past, and maybe therefore is still used today (mainly by teachers and coordinators), included words like 'campaign', 'training', and 'awareness'. Also the fact that the lesson schedules are made in coordination with the learners and are adapted to their work obligations, is something that already happened in the past (see Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2012). Learning literacy 'to live free' is most probably related to the 1974-1975 campaign discourse on literacy in Timor-Leste and to the following long years of Indonesian military rule during which literacy education was associated with freedom, self-determination and independence (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2012; Da Silva, 2012; Boughton, 2013). Some terminology that came up in the discourse might have been brought in more recently by other, international partners. 'Capacity

building' for example has been a buzz word in recent years, since it is often mentioned as the main goal of international aid organisations that have been active in Timor-Leste. Another phrase that was frequently mentioned was to make the country (or to 'declare' a district) 'free from illiteracy', a phrase that came with the Cuban programme provided within the framework of the national literacy campaign, together with the words 'mobilisation and socialisation'. When all so-called 'illiterate' persons in a district finished their three-month basic literacy programme *Los Hau Bele*, that district was declared 'free from illiteracy' by the government. Most teachers and coordinators expressed the view that after that declaration it was important to provide continued literacy and post-literacy education so that people would not 'fall back into illiteracy', a common worry currently for many in this sector.

Adopting different programmes and collaborating with different partners required the adult literacy coordinators, teachers and learners in Timor-Leste to become familiar with the use of a large variety of terminologies and ways of speaking on literacy. These were added to the discourses they already carried from their own culture and past.

## 6.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I dealt with the research question: *What classroom-based literacy teaching practices are adult literacy learners confronted with, and what ideas guide teachers' practices?* In doing so, I used data from 20 class observations and 25 interviews with learner groups, teachers and coordinators of literacy programmes. In Section 6.2 I described teaching practices that adult learners were confronted with in three programmes provided by the government in order to give the reader a picture of how literacy education is carried out in these programmes. The descriptions of classes of two different groups in each of the three programmes revealed that within one programme, groups can have different classes, probably depending on how the teachers took up their task and how they had interpreted what they learned from teacher manuals and training sessions. In Section 6.3 similarities and differences in the teaching practices in all 20 observed classes were presented. Section 6.3.1 dealt with a number of central topics emerging from the observations in all programmes. The teaching was rather traditional, with active teachers talking a lot and engaging in a lot of frontal teaching, allocating turns to individual learners and inviting them one by one to the blackboard. Despite the considerable heterogeneity within the groups, whole-group teaching was dominant and almost no tailor-made teaching took place. There was a strong focus on writing, less on reading; conditional skills for reading were practised but reading compre-

hension was not. Lesson time was not always used efficiently, on average 50% of the participants listed were absent, in half of the classes some participants came in late, and teaching circumstances were generally poor. These findings might partly explain the modest learning achievements that have been reported in Chapter 5. Although differences in literacy education could occur within one and the same programme, in general the teaching strictly followed the programmes' content and methodology, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching as if groups were highly homogeneous. In all programmes, attention was paid to building phonemic awareness as well as to an understanding of the alphabetic principle, which research shows to be crucial for successful literacy teaching (see e.g., Liberman & Liberman, 1990; Chall, 1999). Most literacy teaching observed, however, did not go beyond the letter-syllable-word level, resulting in learners spending a lot of time in class learning things that have no relation with the outside world (e.g., the decoding of meaningless units like *kra*, *kre*, *kri*, *kro*, *kru*, and the use of letter names that complicate word recognition, e.g., *efi u eli a eni* for *fulan*, moon/month).

A programme-specific teaching practice observed in *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* classes was the practice of writing exercises on the blackboard with input from learners' daily lives. These exercises could count on active participation by the learners and seemed to contribute to literacy acquisition. In other research, success in adult beginning reading was found to be related to contextualising literacy learning into daily practices (see e.g., Condelli et al., 2003). But since many of these exercises were limited to the word-level and learners seemed to keep practicing words they already knew, this practice did not guarantee enhancement of reading and writing ability.

In addition to that, different programmes showed different approaches towards Tetum orthography and teachers in all programmes seemed to have insufficient knowledge on how to write Tetum according to standard orthography. This struggle with the correct spelling of the target language might have an impact on learning achievement.

Section 6.3.2 dealt with another programme-specific teaching practice observed, connecting numbers to letters in the *Los Hau Bele* programme. This was meant to make learning of the letters easier (Relys Díaz, 2013), but class observations indicated that it was unsuitable for the teaching of reading and writing.

Section 6.3.3 covered a phenomenon observed in all adult literacy classes visited: multilingual classroom talk, illustrating the pragmatic solutions teachers and learners applied in literacy education in their highly multilingual contexts. These solutions featured a strong position for Tetum and the frequent use of regional languages in literacy education, as well as the less frequent use of Portuguese and Indonesian, and as such nuanced the national language and

language-in-education policies. Spolsky (2004) noticed that the way people use languages can be different from what national policies had in view, which was indeed what my findings showed. Of the two official languages, Portuguese occurred much less than Tetum in teachers' and learners' accounts of the languages in their communicative repertoires as well as in teaching and learning literacy. Regional languages had a stronger position than one would expect according to the language-in-education policy, and Indonesian, not mentioned in the language-in-education policy, was still in use for specific functions (thus Portuguese was mainly used in subject-related language and to refer to numbers). Using regional languages as extra languages of instruction alongside Tetum might well be contributing to success in literacy acquisition; from other research it is known that a key predictor of success is related to instructional use of the learners' mother tongue (Condelli & Wrigley, 2006; Kurvers & Stockmann, 2009). In the classes observed, Tetum was used as 'on-stage' language, and the regional languages as 'backstage' languages that were accepted for small talk and extra explanations or repetitions, but not as languages to be used in 'staged' question-and-answer performances (Arthur, 2001). On some occasions, switches distinguished different kinds of talk, on other occasions people simply drew on the multilingual communicative resources available to them without attributing particular meanings to the use of specific languages, i.e., they were 'polylinguaging' (Jørgensen et al., 2011).

Section 6.4 presented the ideas of teachers, learners and coordinators on teaching adult literacy (as retrieved from interviews). These shed light on the general struggle with practical, organisational issues in adult literacy education, the broad reliance on programme content and method and the lack of (programme-independent) professional training on adult literacy. Teachers apparently were not given much opportunity to build professionalism and expertise on adult literacy education in general, regardless of the literacy programmes in use in their country. Programmes seemed to be leading, while at the same time there were widely felt worries about motivation and participation. Learners and teachers in literacy education had to deal with consequences of national education policies; in this case with the provision of adult literacy education in fixed national programmes (one of which within the framework of a national campaign), which did not always match the diversity in learners, their literacy levels and learning needs. From research carried out in other countries, it is known that many governments opt for literacy education in national programmes and campaigns, often from a political rationale and a main concern with national literacy statistics (see e.g., Wagner, 1999; Rogers, 1997), this in spite of the often disappointing results (see e.g., Abadzi, 1994; Lind, 2008) of such national programmes and campaigns.

## CHAPTER 7

# Literacy uses, values and contexts

This chapter deals with (self-reported) literacy uses and values of adult literacy learners, teachers and coordinators related to the daily contexts in which they operate. In doing so, the focus moves away from the educational settings as explored in the two previous chapters, to literacy in out-of-class contexts. This relates to what is known about adult learning in general and adult literacy learning in particular. Rogers and Street (2012:32-34) stress that adults, 'rather than through artificially devised exercises in a classroom', learn by doing, through real life activities in their daily lives. They learn by and from their experiences, informally, and 'from time to time engage in purposeful and planned learning'. Rogers and Street also state that adult learning is mainly done for instrumental reasons related to tasks and opportunities as well as for reasons related to self-development. This is also the case in the settings where I conducted this study in Timor-Leste. Adult literacy acquisition is not limited to what takes place in literacy classes. This is why this chapter investigates literacy use in daily life in out-of-class contexts and explores learners', teachers', and coordinators' perspectives on literacy. It also analyses the written language encountered in the vicinity of their literacy classes, i.e., where they live and carry out their daily activities. The literacy uses and values of adult learners in out-of-class contexts are bound up with their learning in literacy classes (and vice versa).

In section 7.1, before presenting my research questions and method, I will briefly discuss some central concepts: literacy uses, values, and contexts. This section also deals with the research method and data analysis. Section 7.2 provides an analysis of what adult literacy learners, and their teachers and coordinators, said about literacy uses and values during the interviews that were conducted in the in-depth study. It includes the presentation of results from learners' written statements regarding their motivations for literacy acquisition. Section 7.3 contains the results of a linguistic landscape study conducted in the places where I visited literacy groups. In this section I explore the visible written language in the places where literacy learners live and work. In

Section 7.4 the findings of this chapter are summarised, conclusions are drawn and possible relationships between the different types of data are discussed.

## 7.1 Research questions and method

The research questions in this chapter are about literacy uses, values, and contexts.

*Literacy uses* refer to reading and writing skills being used in people's daily lives. Heath (1986) distinguished functions and uses of literacy, 'functions' referring to what literacy can do for individuals and 'uses' to what individuals can do with literacy skills. She distinguished seven different uses of literacy: instrumental use (e.g., the use of price tags, street signs), social interactional use (e.g., the use of letters, posters), news related use (e.g., the use of newspaper items, flyers), memory-supportive use (e.g., the use of messages on calendars), substitutes for oral messages (e.g., the use of informal notes, absence letters to school), provision of permanent record (e.g., the use of birth certificates, tax forms), and confirmation (e.g., the use of directions, the Bible). I questioned people about these uses during the interviews. Uses of literacy can be observed in 'literacy events' (Heath, 1982:93), explained by Street (2000:21) as events that involve 'reading and/or writing' and that can be observed and photographed.

*Literacy values* refers to how the informants in my study valued literacy, what literacy meant to them, why it was important to them, how becoming or being able to read and write affected their lives. Conversations about how people used and valued literacy, showed examples of what Street (2000:22, 23) calls 'literacy practices', referring to a 'broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts'. According to Street literacy is a 'set of social practices deeply associated with identity and social position' rather than 'simply a set of functional skills'. Street (2001) argues that to understand concepts and social models that people bring to a literacy event, it is not enough to observe the literacy event; it is only by talking and listening to people that we might find out what it is that gives meaning to the event. This might be 'something that is not in the first instance thought of in terms of literacy', but it might be about religion or status or social relations (Street, 2001:11). Barton and Hamilton (2000; referring to Street 1993:12) explained literacy practices as being 'what people do with literacy', also involving values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships. They pointed out that what people do with literacy 'includes people's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy, how people talk about and make sense of literacy' (Barton & Hamilton, 2000:7).

Dealing with the ethnography of writing, Basso (1974:431-432) already stressed the importance of investigating the social patterning of writing and the contributions this makes to the maintenance of social systems. He argued that it is of vital concern to find out what position writing occupies in the total communicative economy of a society under study and what is the range of cultural meanings of writing.

To investigate the *context* in which adult learners used literacy or engaged in literacy practices, I studied the linguistic landscape in the vicinity of their literacy classes. In recent years, more and more researchers have been studying 'visible linguistic phenomena in the public space' (Juffermans, 2010:49). According to Juffermans, 'the object of these studies can be identified as the linguistic landscape', a concept that was – according to many researchers – first coined by Landry and Bourhis (1997). Their study on ethnolinguistic vitality showed that language in the public space can be considered as a major indication of language attitudes. Shohamy and Gorter (2009:2) signalled that this is certainly the case in linguistically diverse and contested regions. Blommaert (2013b) sees linguistic landscaping as a useful way of detecting or diagnosing the major sociolinguistic features of an area, after which one can investigate forms and functions of literacy in local sociolinguistic regimes. He explicitly welcomes the fact that linguistic landscape studies compel sociolinguists 'to pay more attention to *literacy*, the different forms and shapes of literacy displayed in public places' (Blommaert, 2013b:2). The main research question that is answered in this chapter is: *What literacy uses and values do adult literacy learners report with reference to different social domains?*

This main question can be broken down into the following questions: (1) What do adult literacy learners, and their teachers and coordinators say about the use of reading and writing ability in their daily lives, and – linked to that – what motivations do they have for the acquisition of literacy? (2) What place does literacy take in their daily life, or –in other words – why is literacy important to them, to their lives? (3) What does the context in which they use literacy look like and what kind of literacy is observable in that context and in what languages?

Different research methods were applied to answer the research questions on literacy uses, values and contexts: interviewing learners, teachers and coordinators on various aspects of adult literacy, collecting written statements of learners about why they wanted to learn to read and write, and investigating written language exposure in the areas where the participants lived and worked.

The 25 interviews that were conducted as part of my in-depth study (see Appendix 7 for an overview) are used here to draw a picture of literacy uses,

values, and contexts. Nine interviews were conducted with learner groups (of 7 to 15 learners), ten with teachers and six with coordinators of literacy programmes. The interviews were semi-structured oral interviews, during which I used an interview guideline to be sure that all relevant topics would be covered. Different interview guidelines were used for learner groups, teachers, and coordinators, to be able to relate the questions to their specific activities and roles (see Appendix 9). Most interviews were audio recorded. I wrote an account of each interview, usually immediately after the interviews. All the accounts were then analysed on mentions of (a) literacy uses, and (b) literacy values, e.g., opinions on literacy and on the impact of becoming literate. Overviews were made of all examples and expressions related to literacy uses and values, and I counted how often these occurred in the interviews. This provided an indication of the importance of certain topics: the more often certain uses or values were mentioned, the more important they most probably were for the interviewees. In this way, first the interviews with the nine learner groups were analysed, because the research questions focused on their literacy uses and values. After that, the interviews with teachers and coordinators were analysed in the same way, to see whether they confirmed and/or added to what learners had already mentioned.

Apart from statements from interviews, I also collected statements written by adult learners who participated in the broad study. As described in Chapters 4 and 5, 756 learners had taken part in four reading and writing tasks, of which one was a form-filling task. The last item in this task asked the participants to complete a sentence about reasons why they wanted to become literate: 'I want to learn to read and write because ...' (see Appendix 5). It was explained to them that any reason they would come up with was fine and that, in other words, there was not one 'right' way of completing the sentence. Of the learners who participated in this task, 238 had (partly) completed (or had tried to complete) the sentence, resulting in 280 written statements (some learners completed the task twice, a second time after three months). Of the learners who had completed the sentence, 56% were women and 44% were men. Their ages varied from 15 to 64 years, with 78% aged 40 years or younger; the majority had attended some education in their childhood; 7% had attended the literacy programme for one to two months, 77% for three to four months and 16% for more than four months. Their writings varied from a few letters or words to full statements consisting of several longer, grammatically correct and faultlessly spelled phrases. The reactions were put in categories according to the reasons mentioned: practical reasons (things the learners wanted to be able to read or write), reasons related to future education, reasons related to self-development and social inclusion, and reasons about how being (more) literate would change their life.



When reporting about the interviews and the written statements, I use the term 'discourse' to refer to what informants said and wrote about literacy, whether it concerned literacy uses or values. Gee (2000:204) distinguished 'discourse' (little d), which stands for language in use, and 'Discourse' (capital D), referring to socioculturally meaningful 'recognizable coordinations of people, places, objects, tools, technologies, and ways of speaking, listening, writing, reading, feeling, valuing, believing, etc.'. Gee (1992:107) signalled how 'Discourses are always ways of displaying (through words, actions, values, and beliefs) *membership* in a particular social group or social network (...)'. In my study, I took a close look at participants' *discourse* or everyday talk, to find out more about (and try to reconstruct) their *Discourses* on literacy, because what people say about literacy might represent a broader view on how they are involved in literacy. In other words: how learners, teachers or coordinators expressed themselves about literacy or expressed their ideas about various aspects of literacy relates to the role literacy plays in their lives and in the communities and society to which they belong.

To get a good picture of the literacy and the languages that learners were exposed to, I studied the visibly displayed language in the areas around the literacy classes that I visited. As explained in Chapter 4, I used still photography to capture the linguistic landscape. I took pictures of, in Blommaert's (2013b) words, bits of visible written language in the public space, hereafter referred to as (semiotic) signs. The signs photographed were found in streets, at markets, and in shops. They were either permanent signs, like street signs and shop signs, or event-related signs, like government messages, letters taped next to church entrances, and election or instruction posters. In short, I photographed anything readable, i.e., all uses of written, printed, painted or carved language. These semiotic signs are the units of analysis in the linguistic landscape study. Out of the almost 500 pictures collected that way, a total of 322 were selected for analysis (leaving out the 'doubles': the signs photographed twice, once in close-up and once in its environment, or banners photographed several times because they were waving in the wind). Of each of the 322 pictures, I took notes of where it was taken, what type of sign it showed (e.g., a billboard, a poster, a banner) and how many and which languages were used. When counting the number of languages in a text and noting which languages were used, I included all languages in every bit of text that was displayed on the poster, billboard or sign. This also included the languages in the logos of organisations involved in activities that were explained in the text. Obviously not all those languages used were equally crucial for readers to be able to understand the sign's main message. If people for example did not understand a Spanish word in the AECID logo printed on the billboard in Figure 7.1, they probably could still understand the message in Tetum on that same billboard.



**Figure 7.1:** Billboard in Covalima (February, 2011); also seen in Viqueque

On the right side of the billboard there are three logos, the first two with Portuguese underneath and the third with a Spanish text underneath. The message at the bottom is in Tetum: 'Develop a vision and a strategy that is clear and involve the people in the consultation process about Development that is the way to Good Governance'. This is why I also indicated for each sign what was the language or language combination of the main message for the audience to be understood. In addition to that, when spotted, I also took pictures of people who were engaged in, in Heath's (1982:93) words, a 'literacy event'. I only did so after receiving their permission.

## 7.2 Discourse on literacy uses and values

As mentioned above, the term 'discourse' is used here to refer to everything that participants in my study said, or wrote, about literacy. By conducting interviews with learners, teachers, and coordinators, asking them questions about literacy and reacting to their answers to create more discussion, I elicited their ideas about a range of topics, e.g., how they saw literacy, what it meant to them, how they used it, why they wanted to acquire it, how important it was to them. During the interviews some of these ideas on literacy were discussed in my presence. Inviting learners to write down their motivations to learn to read and write also helped to elicit their understandings of literacy. In this section I will retell the stories of the participants in my research, by giving an account

of what they said about literacy in the interviews, and what they wrote in their statements. In doing so, specific perspectives of individuals who had something to say about literacy will be shown, thus providing an impression of how in local communities is thought about literacy. My aim is to give a representation of the kind of conversation about literacy that takes place in the communities that the learners, teachers and coordinators belong to. I will first focus on learners' accounts and then on what teachers and coordinators added to those.

The analysis of the interviews with the nine learner groups revealed in the first place that all groups lived in low-literate environments; inside and in the immediate vicinity of their houses there was hardly anything to read and write. Secondly it turned out that in all nine groups the learners did not have many opportunities in their daily lives to practise reading and writing, since they spent most of the day working at home, in the gardens and fields or selling products in the streets and markets, all of which according to the learners did not involve any reading or writing at all.

When looking at what learner groups had said about their uses of literacy and their motivations to acquire literacy, it turned out that mainly very practical and concrete uses and learning needs were mentioned. Regarding the use of literacy in daily life, one example stood out as most concrete and most often mentioned (by seven learner groups): writing one's name and signature. It was very clear that being able to do that was generally seen as a crucial skill. In four groups, 'signing' was related to elderly people receiving their monthly retirement payment. The government had decided that every elderly person should be able to sign for receipt, and apparently for many elderly people this had become their major goal of participating in a literacy course. In one group, signing was related to 'signing documents' in general and in another group to signing one's election card.

When learner groups were discussing what more they wanted to learn in their literacy classes, six groups mentioned specific items in their surroundings that they wanted to be able to read, like posters (mentioned by four groups), the children's magazine *Lafaek* (by four groups), newspapers (by three groups), calendars (by three), banners (by two). Books, letters, invitations, time schedules for ceremonies, and children's stories were all mentioned once. Teachers added texts in church (two teachers) and the birth certificates of their children (one teacher). Two learner groups mentioned specific things they sometimes had to write: shopping lists (one group) and names of bride and groom at weddings (another group). Three groups specifically mentioned reading and writing for communication, like sms texting (mentioned by two groups) and writing names on envelopes (one group).

In three learner groups, references were made to numeracy, in all cases regarding dealing with money, like counting and calculations needed for buying and selling, the mathematics related to prices of products in shops and at the market. One group specifically mentioned they needed literacy and numeracy skills to take part in microfinance projects organised by an NGO.

Two learner groups referred to their children in the context of literacy. In one group some of the adult learners explained that they now went to school because their children did too. Learners in this group also mentioned that as parents they needed to sign their children's school reports. In another group learners said they wanted to be able to teach their children and understand their (children's) education.

About the importance of literacy and its impact on people's lives, general remarks were made but also some very specific examples were mentioned. General expressions about the importance of literacy were related to getting access to continued education (this was mentioned by eight learner groups). The kinds of continued education mentioned were programmes following after basic literacy courses: programmes for advanced literacy, equivalence programmes for primary and pre-secondary education, but also Portuguese and English courses, and courses to learn to work with computers. Two learner groups said that literacy was important 'for the future', two other groups mentioned they needed it to 'increase their capacities'. Other things mentioned once were: 'we need literacy for life', 'literacy does good to our community', 'we need literacy because we have little knowledge', and 'we want to be able to read and write like them' (referring to literates in their community). Learners in one group expressed feelings of shame to participate in formal education, since they were already older than the regular students attending formal education. In another group, parents expressed they felt ashamed to ask their children for help with reading and writing.

One teacher said that she attached great importance to especially young people learning to read and write, because 'if they cannot read, write and sign their name, they will lose everything, they will not benefit from the time that comes'. Another teacher's opinion was that the parents should help the kids and young people in the community 'adapt their mentality' when it comes to reading and writing. Another general expression by a teacher about the impact of literacy education was: 'the young ones need it for their lives, to have a nice place and a good job'.

Concrete examples of the impact of becoming literate proposed by coordinators related to literacy as an entrance criterion for work and further studies. In one village, two men had found a job in the army after they had learned to read and write in a literacy programme. They had brought their literacy certificates with them when they went there to apply for a job. In another village, one

lady started to study agriculture with an international NGO in the capital Dili after she had learned to read and write in the literacy programme in her village. In another district, a teacher told me about her former work in literacy education and about her current work in the Equivalence programme in which adults can participate after literacy education and which will allow them to get certificates equivalent to primary and pre-secondary education. She had taught participants who first learned to read and write in her literacy classes and then participated in her equivalence group; they had passed the final test and were now going to continue in secondary education.

Due to learner groups' low-literate environments and their daily lives characterised by a lack of opportunities to practise reading and writing, the actual position of literacy in their lives obviously was small. For many learners, reading and writing was something they mainly did in literacy classes, since for the rest of the day they were busy doing work that did not require them to read and write. One group of learners explained that because of the hard work, they did not have much time to read and write during the day, but they assured me that they were sometimes reading and writing in the evenings. When I asked them what they were reading or writing on those occasions, they said they were using the literacy primers to practise reading and writing, because these were the only things to read or write that were available in their homes. This absence of reading materials at home was confirmed by most of the other learner groups as well.

Something stressed by four of the six coordinators I interviewed, and a thing generally endorsed by the learners and teachers that I interviewed, was the negative impact of only learning just the first bits of basic literacy during a few months and then having no opportunities to continue learning in other literacy, post-literacy or continued education options. There was a general concern that when literacy education stopped after a few months, people would quickly forget everything they had learned and – if they had built initial reading and writing abilities – would fall back into illiteracy after a while, which was exactly what some coordinators had actually already seen happening in their (sub)districts, as they had told me on other occasions.

Participants' written statements about why they wanted to learn to read and write partly mirrored the discourses that had emerged in the interviews. In 58 of the 280 written statements (21%), learners expressed concrete, practical motivations, like wanting to be able to read and write letters, read newspapers and books, write their name and signature, understand information, participate in courses, or 'for work'. In 48 statements (17%), learners mentioned more general reasons to learn to read and write, like 'for the future', 'it's important for our life', 'to find knowledge', and 'increase capacities'. Also mentioned was 'to later educate your family and community'. The written statements also con-

tained some other, more metaphorical reasons not heard in the interviews: 'I want to learn to read and write to go out of the dark', go 'into the light', 'to stop ignorance/stupidity'. Also reasons related to self-development were given: 'because it is important for my self/my soul' and 'I want to be a good person'. In 37 statements (13%), people referred to the past, explaining that they wanted to learn to read and write now because in the past they did not have any opportunity to do so. In 33 statements (12%), people gave as a reason that they wanted to learn, to learn more, to go to school, to continue education. And in 37 statements (13%), people wrote various phrases that can be summarised in 'because I like to' or 'I like to learn' (followed by, e.g., 'to read and write', 'many things', 'to read newspapers') or 'I like school'. One person added: 'because we learn together and get a certificate'. Six times (in 2% of the statements), people linked the learning of reading and writing to the learning of languages, specifically mentioning that they wanted to learn Tetum and Portuguese. In four cases (1.4% of the statements) people mentioned reasons of inclusion: 'I want to have the same knowledge as other people', 'I want to be the same as the people who can read and write'.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the interviewees, despite the lack of opportunities to use their reading and writing skills in their daily lives, mentioned quite a large variety of functions and uses of literacy: from the modest goal of being able to write their name and signature, to functional uses of literacy and numeracy in various social domains and in communication with various parties, to the use of literacy as a first step to continued education, work, and housing. In terms of Heath's (1986) uses of literacy, my informants mentioned instrumental uses (e.g., signing), socio-interactional uses (e.g., sms texting), news related uses (e.g., read newspapers), memory-supportive uses (e.g., make shopping lists), and provision-of-permanent-record uses (e.g., using birth certificate) of literacy. Less mentioned were two other uses that Heath had distinguished, i.e., the use of literacy as a substitute for oral messages and the use of literacy for confirmation. In the interviews, when we were talking about literacy uses and values, different languages or multilingualism in Timor-Leste were not mentioned explicitly. Like in the interviews, also in the written statements people had mentioned a variety of reasons for wanting to learn to read and write. Some were instrumental reasons related to reaching practical goals in life, to moving up in society through work and study. Also here, the participants' focus on the functions of literacy in Heath's terms, i.e., 'what literacy can do for you', became visible. Other, more general reasons were related to inclusion and self-development. My findings match those of Rogers and Street (2012) who stated that adult learning is mainly done for instrumental reasons as well as for reasons related to self-development. The metaphorical idea that acquiring literacy takes you 'out of the darkness into the

light' has been found in many other studies (Rogers & Street, 2012:9). Related to the idea of not being able to read and write seen as 'being in the dark', Kurvers and Van der Zouw (2000:8, 120) found adult learners referring to 'being blind'. The idea that becoming literate makes you 'a better person' was also found by Asfaha, Kurvers and Kroon (2008) in their study on literacy attitudes in Eritrea. My findings regarding literacy for inclusion, self-development, leaving the darkness and becoming a better person indicate that also in Timor-Leste literacy is seen not only as a set of functional skills, but also in Street's (2000:23) words, as a 'set of social practices deeply associated with identity and social position'; literacy is seen as something that enables you to improve your identity, to climb up the social ladder and to become included in groups you did not belong to before.

All in all, literacy was seen and talked about in a positive way; my study did not reveal any negative values or attitudes towards literacy or becoming literate. In the end, it was interesting to see that in this country's setting, where languages are always an issue and multilingualism is omnipresent, the issue of languages and multilingualism hardly occurred in people's accounts about literacy.

### **7.3 Linguistic landscapes in learners' communities**

This section focuses on the contexts in which learners acquire and use literacy. A linguistic landscape study was carried out in the environment of the learner groups in seven districts (i.e., Viqueque, Aileu, Covalima, Dili, Ermera, Manufahi, and Manatuto) where I observed literacy classes as part of the in-depth study. Most literacy groups visited during the in-depth study were located in rural or semi-rural areas, which meant that in the near environment of their houses there was hardly any written language visible, or none at all. In three districts (i.e., Viqueque, Covalima, and Manatuto), I took pictures in the streets and markets at a walking distance from the class site. By taking these pictures I was sure to cover places where the literacy learners would actually go on a daily basis to sell their crops and buy their food and groceries. In Aileu, I was only able to take one picture of a sign. I was taken to the site where the class was organised by people who insisted on also accompanying me back to the district capital, since they were concerned about my safety. In the immediate environment of the classroom, there was no written language displayed. Only at the spot where we waited for the bus back to town was there a sign that I photographed. The pictures in Ermera were taken in the district capital Gleno, since this was the place where the literacy class participants told me that they would go a few times a week for trading, (although this was at more than

a walking distance from the veranda where their classes took place). The class site was located high in the mountains and the participants lived on the surrounding slopes. Here, I did not see any written language being displayed at all. In Manufahi I visited five classes at different, mostly rural sites. I took a few pictures of the immediate environment of each class (in most cases with no written language displayed), and I also took pictures in the district capital Same, which for all classes was the place they went to regularly for shopping and to sell their crops. In Dili I took pictures in the streets where the participants lived and went to class (no written language displayed) and – from there – in the road to the nearest market and church (the road the participants told me they would walk a few times per week). Table 7.1 presents the distribution of selected pictures over the seven districts.

**Table 7.1:** Selected pictures from seven districts

District	N	Percentage
Viqueque	23	7.1
Aileu	1	0.3
Covalima	57	17.7
Dili	78	24.2
Ermera	55	17.1
Manufahi	94	29.2
Manatuto	14	4.3
Total	322	100.0

Fourteen different types of signs were distinguished, varying from small hand-written signs in front of local shops to large printed billboards with government information. Table 7.2 presents an overview of the different types of signs in my study. The categories are based on the signs found and ordered from permanent signs (in time and place) to more temporary signs and signs that move with the people using them. Most of the categories used here have also been used in other linguistic landscape studies, e.g., Asfaha's (2009) study on Eritrea, Juffermans' (2010) study on The Gambia, and Da Conceição Savio's (2014) study on Lautem, the eastern-most district of Timor-Leste.



**Table 7.2:** Overview of the different sign types

Type of sign	N	Percentages
Billboard	43	13.4
Notice board	67	20.8
Commercial sign	37	11.5
Facade name	11	3.4
Facade text	12	3.7
Border sign	2	0.6
Poster	11	3.4
Paper copy on walls	22	6.8
Banner	17	5.3
Product information	66	20.5
Moving text	11	3.4
Graffiti	16	5.0
Numbers related to a game	4	1.2
Church book	3	0.9
Total	322	100.0

*Billboards* are in most cases industrially produced printed boards that give information to the general public about projects or activities carried out by the government, NGOs or private companies (see Figure 7.2). They can also contain commercial information. *Notice boards* are generally smaller than billboards and often contain brief information, like the name of an institution (located in a certain building) or a warning to the public. They can be professionally produced and printed, but also handwritten (see Figure 7.3).

**Figure 7.2:** Billboard on taxes in Manufahi, in Tetum**Figure 7.3:** Notice board in Viqueque, primary school, in Portuguese

*Commercial signs* are mainly shop signs advertising goods for sale on the spot. They can be professionally printed but also handwritten (see Figure 7.4). *Facade names* are names of organisations printed directly on the outside walls of buildings where they are located (see Figure 7.5).



**Figure 7.4:** Commercial sign in Covalima 'Here (we) sell cement', in Tetum



**Figure 7.5:** Facade name Manufahi, 'Parochial Centre Same', in Portuguese

*Facade texts* are informative texts painted or printed directly on outside building walls (see Figure 7.6). *Border signs* are little stone or concrete monuments, often placed during the Indonesian occupation to indicate borders of certain areas and municipalities (see Figure 7.7).

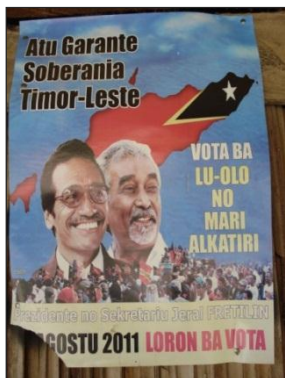


**Figure 7.6:** Facade text in Dili, plead for unity and peace, in Tetum

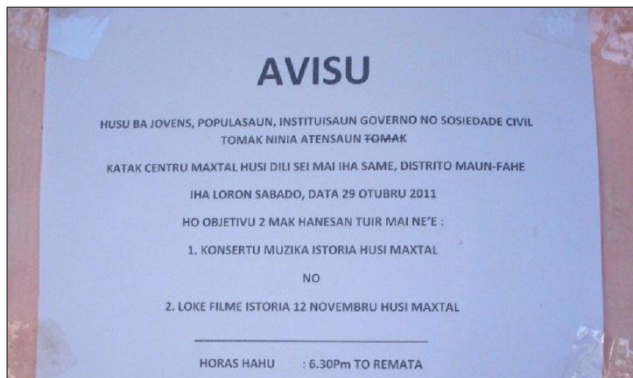


**Figure 7.7:** Border sign in Covalima, in Indonesian

*Posters* are in most cases printed on paper and give information on matters of public interest, like elections (see Figure 7.8) or health issues. They can be found in the open air and on public buildings. *Paper copies* are often stuck on notice boards in public places or on walls next to church entrances. They contain more detailed information on activities that will take place in the near future, like sports events, concerts or educational courses (see Figure 7.9).



**Figure 7.8:** Poster on elections in Manufahi, in Tetum



**Figure 7.9:** Paper copy in Manufahi, announcing a concert and a movie, in Tetum

*Banners* often contain information or news on matters of general interest like events, festivities, and gatherings (see Figure 7.10). *Product information* can include name, price, content, weight, composition and quality indications of displayed products (see Figure 7.11).



**Figure 7.10:** Banner in Viqueque, Institute inviting new students, in Tetum and English



**Figure 7.11:** Product information, soap in Ermera, in English and Indonesian

*Moving texts* are texts that are not permanently present, like texts on bags, clothes, busses or flags held by people (see Figure 7.12). *Graffiti* can be defined as informal grassroots writing used to express emotions or to inform, warn or activate people (see Figure 7.13).



**Figure 7.12:** Moving text, flag of a football club in Manufahi



**Figure 7.13:** Graffiti in Dili: 'Yes to life, no to drug', in Portuguese

*Numbers in games* can be seen on markets where people play games while waiting for customers or to gamble (see Figure 7.14). *Church books* are mostly small paperbacks that people take to church and that contain bible stories, prayers and religious texts or song texts (see Figure 7.15).



**Figure 7.14:** Numbers in a game in Ermera



**Figure 7.15:** Church book in Covalima, 'Good word for you', in Tetum

The number of languages used on the signs could be identified in 313 pictures. Of the other nine pictures, four were number games in which no language was used at all, and of the remaining five (three moving texts, one facade name and one graffiti) I was not able to identify which languages were used. Table 7.3 gives an overview of (the numbers of) languages and language combinations used in 313 signs.

**Table 7.3:** Languages or combinations of languages used in the signs

		Frequency	Percentage
One language	Tetum	31	9.9
	Portuguese	35	11.2
	Indonesian	35	11.2
	English	22	7.0
	Latin	1	0.3
	Chinese	1	0.3
<b>Subtotal one language</b>		<b>125</b>	<b>39.9</b>
Two languages	Tetum & Portuguese	41	13.1
	Tetum & Indonesian	3	1.0
	Tetum & English	16	5.1
	Indonesian & English	36	11.5
	Portuguese & English	8	2.6
	Chinese & English	4	1.3
	Portuguese & Indonesian	2	0.6
	Arabic & English	1	0.3
	Chinese & Indonesian	1	0.3
	Regional language & English	1	0.3
<b>Subtotal two languages</b>		<b>113</b>	<b>36.1</b>
Three languages	Tetum, Portuguese & English	50	16.0
	Tetum, Portuguese & Indonesian	3	1.0
	Portuguese, English & Indonesian	5	1.6
	Tetum, Portuguese & Spanish	3	1.0
	Tetum, English & Indonesian	3	1.0
<b>Subtotal three languages</b>		<b>64</b>	<b>20.4</b>
Four languages	Tetum, Portuguese, Indonesian & English	10	3.2
	Portuguese, Tetum, Spanish & English	1	0.3
<b>Subtotal four languages</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>313</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In total nine different languages were used in the 313 signs: Timor-Leste's two official languages Tetum and Portuguese, its two working languages Indonesian and English, and also occasionally other languages, i.e., Latin, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, and a regional language (in this case Makasae, used for the name of a place written in graffiti). The above table shows that 40% of the signs that were photographed were monolingual. In 60% of the signs, two or more languages were used. The language combination used most frequently on the signs that were photographed, was a combination of three languages: Tetum, Portuguese and English (16%). The most frequently seen combination of two languages was that of Tetum and Portuguese (13.1%).

Counted was how often each language occurred in signs, be it as the only language or in a combination with other languages. Tetum occurred in 161 signs (51.4%), Portuguese in 158 signs (50.0%), Indonesian in 98 signs (31.3%), and English in 157 signs (50.2%). Clearly, Indonesian occurred less frequently in the signs than Tetum, Portuguese and English. Some signs contained all four of these languages, see Figure 7.16:



**Figure 7.16:** Commercial sign using four languages

As explained in the method section, for each sign I indicated what was the main language, or the main language combination, crucial for readers to be able to understand the message. So now only those languages of which proficiency was needed to understand the main message of each sign were counted; languages that did occur in the sign but of which proficiency was not needed to understand the main message, were not counted (e.g., the Spanish text printed below one of the logos in Figure 7.1 was not included in the counting, since without understanding those Spanish words one could still understand the main message in Tetum in this sign). Table 7.4 presents an overview of those main languages and language combinations used in the signs of which proficiency was conditional for understanding the main message in the signs.

**Table 7.4:** Main languages and language combinations in the signs

Nr. of main languages	Main language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
One language	Tetum	87	27.8
	Portuguese	53	16.9
	English	51	16.3
	Indonesian	51	16.3
	Other (Latin, Chinese, Arabic)	3	1.0
Two languages	Tetum & Portuguese	17	5.4
	Indonesian & English	11	3.5
	Portuguese & English	7	2.2
	Tetum & English	6	1.9
	Chinese & English	4	1.3
	Portuguese & Indonesian	2	0.6
	Tetum & Indonesian	1	0.3
	Regional language & English	1	0.3
Three languages	Tetum & Portuguese & English	12	3.8
	Tetum & Portuguese & Indonesian	2	0.6
	Tetum & English & Indonesian	2	0.6
Four languages	Tetum & Portuguese & Indonesian & English	3	1.0
Total		313	100.0

The table shows that Tetum was the main language in most signs. Second came Portuguese. Also English and Indonesian occurred a lot as main languages. An analysis was made of how often each language occurred in signs, be it as a main language or as one of the main languages. Tetum occurred in 130 signs (41.5%), Portuguese in 96 signs (30.7%), Indonesian in 73 signs (23.3%), and English in 96 signs (30.7%). I also tried to ascertain whether the sign types differed in main language(s) used. Table 7.5 provides an overview of the sign types and distribution of main languages used.

**Table 7.5:** Main languages and types of signs (frequencies)

Type of signs	Tetum	Portuguese	Indonesian	English	Tetum & Portuguese	Tetum & Portuguese & English
Billboards	29	3	1	7	–	1
Notice boards	3	33	4	9	7	6
Commercial signs	10	–	4	5	3	4
Facade names	1	4	1	–	1	–
Facade texts	4	2	–	2	–	–
Border signs	–	–	2	–	–	–
Posters	10	–	–	1	–	–
Paper copies on walls	13	2	1	–	5	–
Banners	13	3	–	–	1	–
Product information	–	–	34	22	–	–
Moving texts	1	1	–	4	–	1
Graffiti	1	2	6	1	–	–
Church book	2	1	–	–	–	–
Total	87	51	53	51	17	12

Most billboards, commercial signs, posters, paper copies, and banners had Tetum as their main language. Apparently, most times Tetum was selected as the preferred language to send messages to the public, varying from information on government policies regarding health, elections, population counts (see Figure 7.17), to local information on ceremonies, courses or products for sale (see Figure 7.18). Portuguese was the main language on most notice boards which often indicated state institutions in public buildings (e.g., ministries, district offices; see Figure 7.19). Most product information was in either Indonesian or English. This mainly concerned package information on products imported from the neighbouring countries Indonesia and Australia (see Figure 7.20). Graffiti was often written (partly) in Indonesian.





**Figure 7.17:** Billboard in Manatuto about census results for the district, in Tetum



**Figure 7.18:** Commercial sign in Dili 'Here (we) sell petrol US\$ 0.50 / liter', in Tetum.



**Figure 7.19:** Notice board in Covalima indicating a building of the Ministry of Justice, in Portuguese



**Figure 7.20:** Product information in Manufahi, washing powder, in English and Indonesian

In conclusion, it can be said that the linguistic landscape surrounding the adult literacy classes visited can clearly be characterised as multilingual. A large number of languages were found being used in the public space and a large number of signs were identified in which more than one of those languages was used, resulting in bilingual, trilingual or quadrilingual signs. The languages or language combinations used, varied with the different types of signs. Government billboards often came with Tetum as their main language, government notice boards often showed Portuguese as a main language. In general it seemed that the more local the messages were (in terms of production and targeted audience), the more Tetum was used as their main language (like e.g., in banners, commercial signs, posters, and paper copies). Product information, however, showed different languages as main language, i.e., English and Indonesian, depending on the country where the product came from. Regional languages were hardly ever used.

The linguistic landscape study's focus is on visual language in specific spaces. These are spaces that are frequented by people who see and probably read and use (some of) the signs shown to them. Some people, however, read and write as part of their day-to-day business or activities. Although I did not see many people actively involved in reading or writing, some snapshots are presented below of people caught in the act of reading and writing. One lady was keeping record of the second-hand clothes she had sold (see Figure 7.21). Other people seen writing at markets were people engaged in card games, keeping track of scores and who was winning (see Figure 7.22 for an example). Sometimes people played other games, like bingo (Figure 7.23), or a gambling game (Figure 7.24).



**Figure 7.21:** Lady in Viqueque keeping record of income and expenses



**Figure 7.22:** Shopkeeper playing cards in Suai, Covalima



**Figure 7.23:** People playing bingo in Covalima (with the numbers picked one by one from the bottle by the girl and said in Indonesian)



**Figure 7.24:** People playing a (gambling) game at a market in Manufahi

The above pictures show that literacy often co-occurs with certain forms of numeracy, e.g., product names and their prices at commercial signs, people's names or initials and their scores in a game. In commercial signs this combination of literacy and numeracy occurred frequently.

An extra feature of handwritten commercial signs was that they often showed traces of grassroots literacy (Blommaert, 2008), like deviant letter forms and instable orthography. Although grassroots literacy is not the central focus of my linguistic landscape study, it is interesting to look at some examples of how sign makers in this country with its rather low adult literacy rates struggle with details and at the same time succeed in bringing their mes-

sage across. The following four signs (Figures 7.25-7.28) for example show features of ‘hetero-graphy’ (Blommaert 2008:7): words are spelled in different ways, writing sometimes reveals uncertainty about linguistic and stylistic rules, and at the same time some signs show visual aestheticisation or calligraphic writing. Compare for example the word *iha-ne’e* (here) in the four signs:



**Figure 7.25:** (mainly Tetum)  
Here (we) sell phone credit



**Figure 7.26:** (mainly Tetum)  
Here wait for photo copy day and night



**Figure 7.27:** (mainly Tetum)  
Here (we) sell phone credit



**Figure 7.28:** (mainly Tetum)  
Here (we) rent out chairs

According to the Orthographic Guide for Official Tetum (INL, 2002), the word *iha-ne’e* should be spelled with a hyphen between *iha* and *ne’e*. In the four signs above, three times the hyphen between *iha* and *ne’e* was not written (only in Figure 7.27 was it written). The orthographic guide also prescribes that *ne’e* is written with an apostrophe between the first and the second *e*, to mark a light glottal stop in this dissyllabic word (which many people pronounce as monosyllabic, without any glottal stop). In the four signs above, two times the apostrophe was put in the right place in the word *ne’e* (Figures 7.25 and 7.28), once it was put too low (7.26) and once *ne’e* was spelled with only one *e* (Figure 7.27). The word *fa’an* (sell) should, according to the orthographic guide, also be written with an apostrophe, again to mark it as a dissyllabic word, which is often pronounced as monosyllabic. Once the apostrophe in *fa’an* was put in the right place (Figure 7.25) and once too low (Figure 7.27). Other traces of grass-

roots writing are for example in Figure 7.25 the first A and the way the writer referred to US dollars (*U\$*, instead of either *USD* or *\$* or *US\$*); in Figure 7.27 the accent on the *i* of *iha*, which is not needed here, according to the orthographic guide.

The numerous signs like these that can be found in all districts in Timor-Leste are a reflection of the literacy situation in the country.

## 7.4 Conclusions

This chapter focused on literacy uses and values that adult literacy learners in Timor-Leste draw on in social domains such as home, work and leisure. It also studied the contexts in which literacy uses take place, i.e., the linguistic landscape in the vicinity of people's classrooms, markets and churches. I looked at what the learners, teachers, and coordinators said about the use of reading and writing ability in their daily lives and what motivations they had for the acquisition of literacy. It turned out that adult learners, although they are not frequent literacy users in their day-to-day activities, expressed a large variety of reasons why they wanted to be able to read and write. In the interviews and written statements they mentioned a large number of (often intended) literacy uses, varying from simple to more complex, whereas the issue of different languages or multilingualism did not come up in the discussions. I also looked at why literacy was important to them and at the position literacy had in their lives. Literacy was broadly seen as a means to get access to continued education, work and housing and as something related to moving upward in society through work and study. Other reasons mentioned were related to inclusion and self-development, to the metaphorical idea of leaving darkness and ignorance. Learners said that in their daily lives there was not much time to read and write, nor were there many opportunities to use their literacy ability in the low-literate environments of their homes and neighbourhoods. They were very much aware of a large range of possible functions and uses of literacy, but their actual uses of literacy were limited.

The linguistic landscape that surrounded the adult literacy classes in my study was definitely multilingual, with a large number of languages used in mono- and multilingual signs. The languages or language combinations used varied with the different types of signs, with Tetum taking an important if not central position. These findings are indeed likely to be indicative of language attitudes (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) in this linguistically diverse region (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009): they show the broadly accepted function of Tetum as the *lingua franca* and the main language of communication, the somewhat more formal use of Portuguese (e.g., in names of governmental institutions) but

also the pragmatic attitude towards using Indonesian or English whenever that contributes to specific goals (e.g., attracting customers' attention to goods on sale). Finally, in many signs photographed, the co-occurrence of literacy and certain forms of numeracy (e.g., prices, scores) stood out: often signs showed elements of both. And logically so in a country with low literacy rates, many signs showed traces of grassroots literacy (see also Da Conceição Savio, forthcoming).

The findings of this chapter shed light on seemingly contradicting realities: the literacy uses and reasons for literacy acquisition mentioned, versus the low-literate home environments with a lack of possibilities for practising reading and writing, versus the large variety of written language in the public space. The co-occurrence of these different realities reflects the lives of people in contemporary Timor-Leste and their rapidly changing society. In a country where until recently large parts of the population used to 'sign with their thumb', as they call it, it is self-evident that being able to write your name and signature is seen as a crucial skill that distinguishes you from the 'illiterates' and that confirms and underlines your identity. Since the Timor-Leste government had made the ability to write their name and signature conditional for receiving their retirement pay, many older participants had an instrumental reason to join a literacy group. Another important occasion to use this skill is during elections: registering and signing your election card gives access to the voting procedure. At election times, many billboards and posters in the public domain announce and explain the voting procedures. Another often frequently mentioned instrumental reason to acquire literacy is the wish of many participants to be able to read the written or printed texts in their surroundings. The linguistic landscape study shows that although often there is not much written language displayed near the homes of participants living in remote rural areas (at least not in the places where I visited literacy classes), many public spaces near shops and markets have over the years apparently changed into rather literate environments. This was illustrated by the many signs with written or printed language that I have been able to take pictures of. Of course people want to have access to the information addressed to them, be it by the government, NGOs, churches, shopkeepers, health centres, or course providers.

The news-related use of literacy, like reading newspapers and magazines, is not yet a widespread habit in Timor-Leste, at least not outside the capital Dili. In the remote, rural areas interviewees have little to read in their homes; occasionally they have a calendar or poster on the wall. Learners of only one of the nine groups interviewed could buy newspapers from a salesman on a motorbike. But all interviewees knew the popular children's magazine *Lafaek* that until recently was well distributed to all villages through the formal school system (and taken home by the school children). And finally, in a country like

Timor-Leste, where religion is such an important part of life, I was surprised not to find many motivations for literacy acquisition that were related to religion. The bible, church books or songbooks were not mentioned as what learners wanted to be able to read. Often the opposite is found, for example in Asfaha's study on literacy in Eritrea and Cheffy's study on literacy in Cameroon, where being able to read religious texts was a strong element in attitudes towards literacy and in the motivation to learn to read and write (Asfaha, Kroon & Kurvers, 2007; Cheffy, 2011).

In Timor-Leste, just like in other countries, more and more communication takes place through sms text messaging which is a rather recent social interactional use of literacy. Mobile phones and prepaid phone cards have become more affordable, even for the poorer population in the rural areas (according to the 2010 Population Census, 43.2% of households in rural areas had a mobile phone, versus 86.3% of households in urban areas; DNE, 2011a). The wish of many, also expressed in the interviews, to be able to take part in that way of communicating is obvious, it is a cheap and fast way to communicate with family, friends, and colleagues across the country and overseas. The large number of telecom billboards in the streets and commercial signs on mobile phones and prepaid phone cards in front of shops underline this development (see also Juffermans, 2010, in his study on The Gambia).

Findings showed that adult learners, when talking about literacy, often come up with issues regarding numeracy and mathematics. In a country where the large majority live in rural areas (70.4% according to the 2010 Population Census, DNE, 2011a), and work in agriculture, many people are regularly selling and buying products at the local markets, as were many of the literacy learners included in my study. Although people generally do not use written product or price tags at the markets, they are frequently involved in financial transactions. So apart from the need to learn to read and write words and texts, many learners expressed the need to be able to decipher amounts and prices and to calculate well and 'not get cheated on anymore' (as was explained to me on various occasions).

People's discourses on literacy revealed an interesting contradiction regarding the role that literacy plays in their lives. On the one hand it turned out that reading and writing did not take a strong position in learners' daily lives and that most of their literacy use was limited to literacy class hours. On the other hand, they attributed huge importance to literacy, relating 'becoming literate' to an improved personality, a higher social status, access to more education and stronger professional positions, and a better life and future in general. Part of this contradiction can be explained by the low literacy level of many learners and by them not being able (yet) to read and write independently. This, nor the

absence of a literate environment, stopped them from having high expectations about the impact of becoming literate.

The multilingual context did not seem to hamper people in keeping those expectations. Whenever informants were discussing educational options after having acquired literacy, Portuguese and English were mentioned as languages that they thought to be important to learn. But when discussing literacy uses and reasons for wanting to learn to read and write, informants did not explicitly refer to specific languages. Since Timor-Leste's omnipresent multilingual setting is a fact of life, adult learners probably want to be able to read information in whatever language it is presented to them. The linguistic landscape study revealed that this can be in any of the official languages Tetum and Portuguese or in one of the working languages Indonesian and English, occasionally in one of the regional languages or in another language not included in Timor-Leste's national language policy (e.g., Chinese, Arabic) and in the many combinations of all these.

Languages used in public space varied with the types of signs. Exploring this variation shows how, as Blommaert (2013b) pointed out, linguistic landscaping is a useful way of diagnosing major sociolinguistic features of the studied areas; it helps to shed light onto who (which groups) used what languages and for what purpose. My study revealed that Tetum was most often chosen for signs containing informative messages for the public. That includes information given by the government: although the government used Portuguese on most notice boards indicating functions of government buildings, it seemed that when they wanted the public to be able to understand certain information, they provided it in Tetum, as was shown on many posters and billboards in my study. Most commercial signs used Tetum, but a fair share used a variety of languages for the products on sale, i.e., those that were most likely to be understood by the people who need those products. Commercial signs displayed at local shops also often showed combinations of literacy and numeracy, with products for sale (e.g., petrol, phone credit or photo copies) and prices mentioned as well. Handwritten commercial signs showed features of grassroots writing (Blommaert, 2008), some of them revealing that their maker was not an experienced writer, many of them indicating that the orthographic rules for Tetum as published by INL (2002) are not known or used by everyone. Despite that, it can be concluded that since independence, there has been a shift towards the use of more Tetum in the public space. This might, however, be a snapshot in time, since what might follow in the future could be a shift to Portuguese, because of the new generations building more and more proficiency in Portuguese in primary, secondary and tertiary education. But for now Tetum has shown to be the language most relied on to make sure messages will be understood.



## CHAPTER 8

# Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter starts with a presentation and discussion of the main findings of my study, following the three research questions that were guiding my research (Section 8.1). Section 8.2 presents a discussion of a number of issues of a more general interest that go beyond my actual research questions. In Section 8.3, I propose some recommendations for further research, policy development, and practice regarding adult literacy education in Timor-Leste that might also be valuable for other multilingual developing countries. Section 8.4 provides an outline of how a selection of these recommendations for adult literacy education has recently been put into practice in Timor-Leste in a joint valorisation endeavour.

The starting point of this study was my work as an adult literacy adviser for UNDP (2003-2008) at Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education, collaborating with other organisations involved in adult literacy. My work included needs assessment and policy development regarding adult literacy education, joint curriculum and material development, teacher training and capacity building. Discussions and questions raised brought me to this research, which was framed in three types of literature explorations: on learning to read and write, on teaching reading and writing and dealing with national language-in-education policies and national programmes or campaigns, and on literacy uses and values. My experience in adult literacy education policy and practice in Timor-Leste, in combination with theoretical and empirical insights in adult literacy learning, teaching and use, led to three questions that were to become the central foci of my research:

- What are the results achieved in learning to read and write in Tetum in the available adult literacy programmes and what factors are the most important in the development of adults' literacy ability?
- What classroom-based literacy teaching practices are adult literacy learners confronted with, and what ideas guide teachers' practices?

- What literacy uses and values do adult literacy learners report with reference to different social domains?

To find answers to these questions, a combination of research methods was used. The research design (see Chapter 4) consisted of a broad, survey-like study to answer the first research question, and an in-depth study to answer the second and third research question. During the broad study, I visited 73 adult literacy groups in eight districts in three different programmes; 756 learners of those groups participated in four reading and writing tasks and 100 teachers filled out questionnaires. The data obtained were entered in SPSS-files for statistical analysis. During the in-depth study I observed and audio-recorded 20 classes of in total 12 groups in seven districts in three different adult literacy programmes; after the class observations, in four districts interviews were conducted with nine learner groups, ten teachers and six (sub)district coordinators. Transcripts of classroom interactions and detailed accounts of interviews were used for qualitative analyses. In addition, a linguistic landscape study was carried out in the vicinity of the literacy teaching sites; its data were entered in another SPSS-file. This combination of a more quantitative and a more qualitative approach enabled me to achieve a deeper understanding of adult literacy teaching and learning in Timor-Leste than would have been possible in just a survey or just a case study.

## 8.1 Conclusions

### **The acquisition of beginning reading and writing**

My first research question was in the field of literacy acquisition and focused on results of learning to read and write in Tetum in the recently available adult literacy programmes in Timor-Leste. It also looked into the factors of influence that are most important in the development of adults' literacy ability and it looked into processes in reading and writing acquisition. As described in Chapter 5, the reality in the field did not always match with the research design on paper, which caused some complications in the data collection and analysis.

Although three of the adult literacy programmes (i.e., *Los Hau Bele*, *Hakat ba Oin* and *YEP*) targeted beginning readers and writers, the learner population in the adult literacy groups (N=756) turned out to be very heterogeneous. Groups consisted of old and young learners, learners with and without prior (formal) education, and learners with and without prior participation in (other) literacy programmes. Of the learners 78% were multilingual, the majority having a regional language as their first language and Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) as their second language (17% of the learners said they did not speak Tetum). The 100

teachers participating in the broad study were all multilingual and the majority had Tetum (or Tetum-Terik) as their second or third language. The teachers had attended on average 10.65 years of education and were relatively inexperienced in adult literacy education; only 25% of them had more than one year of experience in teaching adult literacy.

The learners' results on the four reading and writing tasks (grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling and word writing) revealed considerable variation in literacy ability, not only – as could be expected – within the total group of 756 participants, but also in the group of 436 'real beginners' (who had had no prior education and had not attended a literacy course before) and in the group of 228 participants who all had attended literacy education for about three months.

The results for the 436 real beginners showed that many learners were still struggling with decoding and spelling: on average less than half of the 30 graphemes were recognised, about 11 words were read correctly in three minutes and about three words out of ten written correctly. But 14% of the learners did not know any of the letters, 59% could not read any word on the list and 38% could not write any of the ten words dictated. Similar results were found when the group was narrowed down to those learners who all had been attending literacy classes for about three months. Although a slow pace of learning of the real beginners has also been revealed in other studies (Kurvers & Stockmann, 2009; Kurvers et al., 2010), the proportion of adults in my study who hardly learned any literacy skills participating in a literacy programme was much higher than in the studies reported on in Chapter 2.

The analyses revealed several learner and educational variables that were significantly related to all or some literacy skills. Regarding the *learner variables*, in the whole group (N=756), a significant positive relationship was found between all literacy scores and learners' previous years of schooling as a child. In all three groups (N=756, N=436 and N=228), a significant negative relationship was found with age. As in other research by Condelli et al. (2003) and Kurvers et al. (2010), the learner characteristics age and prior education turned out to be very important predictors of literacy learning success. Unlike what was found in earlier research (Condelli et al., 2003; Kurvers et al., 2010), proficiency in Tetum, the language of the literacy programmes, turned out *not* to make a difference in the development of Tetum literacy ability. This might have to do with the fact that many learners were still struggling with the first phase of the learning process: the reading and writing of graphemes and syllables of words in Tetum that might be familiar even to self-reported non-Tetum speakers. The impact of attendance rates could not be investigated; in most cases attendance was not systematically registered.

Regarding the *educational variables*, the most important facilitating factors in the group of real beginners (N=436) turned out to be the total number of hours of literacy education provided (although not very strongly), the number of hours per week (although the programmes also differed in this respect), group size (larger groups revealing higher scores, probably because in larger groups more learning processes are realised), teacher experience (only in word reading), teachers using daily-life materials in class, and the type of programme attended.

Several of these facilitating educational factors were also revealed in other studies: success in adult beginning reading was found to be related to teacher experience, the number of hours provided per week, and the methodology used (Dalderop, 2008; Kurvers, 2007), and to contextualising literacy learning with respect to daily needs and daily practices (Condelli et al., 2003; Kurvers et al., 2010). Teacher experience in adult literacy education only correlated positively with word-reading scores. Several times word-reading scores seemed to behave differently from scores for the other three tasks: apparently for word-reading ability, teacher experience was making more of a difference than the number of hours provided and the group size. This might have to do with the fact that understanding the alphabetic code is crucial for word reading (Byrne, 1998; Kurvers & Van der Zouw, 1990; Share, 1995) and that more experienced teachers are better at explaining it. If the teacher cannot explain this principle well and does not make sure that the learners grasp it, more hours of teaching do not help to overcome this problem, nor will larger group sizes.

In addition to this, it did seem to matter in what literacy programme learners were participating. Taking into account age, the number of hours provided, and teacher experience, the literacy programme showed a significant main effect on all four reading and writing tasks. On all four tasks the mean scores of the programmes differed significantly. The effect sizes were medium (for word writing) to low (for the other three tasks). Learners in the *YEP* programme scored significantly higher on all tasks than learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme (when corrected for age of the learners, the number of hours provided, and the number of years of teacher experience); *Hakat ba Oin* learners scored in between, their scores not being significantly different from *Los Hau Bele* and from *YEP* only for the two writing tasks. The analyses of the results of the 228 participants who had attended the literacy course for about three months, showed comparable results: corrected for age the literacy programme still showed a main effect on word reading and form filling; *Hakat ba Oin/YEP* students scored significantly higher on these tasks than *Los Hau Bele* students. Again, teacher experience only had a significant main effect on word reading. The effect sizes were low again. Also in this smaller group the scores on three of the four tasks correlated positively with group size and with teachers bring-

ing other materials into the class. In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 possible explanations were given for the differences in results between programmes. But as discussed in Chapter 5, even more important than finding explanations for the differences in results between different programmes might be the observation that results overall were limited. All in all, literacy education in all three programmes showed rather disappointing results, which raises questions on programme-independent causes and shows the need for explanations that exceed the level of separate programmes (see below and the discussion in Section 8.2).

The four reading and writing tasks that were used measured only the learners' initial reading and writing skills. Despite that constraint, my findings showed that the provision of three to four months of literacy education is generally insufficient for adult learners to acquire basic reading and writing skills. That is not exclusively true for Timor-Leste or developing countries, it would be insufficient in any country: it is known that for adults to 'become literate', in the sense of becoming skilled, independent readers and writers, takes more than a few months (Kurvers et al., 2010). Some of the findings in this study, however, were definitely worrying: after three months many learners were still struggling to recognise graphemes and syllables, and were not capable of recognising, decoding or spelling any word at all, not even the key words of their programme. In any case, declaring districts 'free from illiteracy' after providing three months of literacy education (like the Timor-Leste government did after districts had finished the *Los Hau Bele* programme) is, to put it mildly, not consistent with reality. Three months of literacy education can be a good first step in the process of reading and writing acquisition, but becoming functionally literate implies a longer process that takes follow-up by continuity of literacy and post-literacy education. If no further education options are made available after the first three months of basic literacy education, people will quickly forget what they have learned (as was observed by coordinators), especially if they are not using what they learned in class in their daily lives (which was the case, as learner groups pointed out in the interviews).

Predictors of success in this study did not turn out to be very different from what was found in other studies (Condelli & Wrigley, 2006; Kurvers et al., 2010). The learner characteristics age and prior education have been shown to be the main predictors of success. These, however, are factors that cannot be influenced in adult education. Other factors that proved to be of importance can be influenced, like the total number of hours of literacy education provided, the number of hours per week, the group size, the literacy programme, the amount of teacher experience, and the teacher's ability to contextualise lesson content.

The results obtained by learners who did the four tasks twice (N=64), the second time after three months showed that on average they had reached significant, but limited, growth in their reading and writing abilities. The investigation of word recognition and spelling strategies revealed relatively substantial use of the lower-order strategies in the beginning and use of more advanced strategies later on. The development they showed in the use of reading and writing strategies, matched stage theories (Ehri, 1991; Juel, 1991) stating that people move from using visual cues at first, to using graphic cues in the alphabetic stage and then gradually move into the orthographic stage of automatic and fast direct word recognition. The stages that the adult learners in this study went through in the process of learning to read and write in a second language are comparable to the stages that children pass through when learning to read and write in their first language. This indicates that learning the alphabetic principle (phonemic awareness and understanding grapheme-phoneme correspondence) as was also found in other research, is crucial in the process of eventually getting to automatic word recognition (Adams, 1990, 1993; Byrne, 1998; Share, 1995). Although the differences over time (three months) were small and could only be investigated on a small scale, my findings do support the stage theories. They also confirm the stage theory findings about people using higher order word recognition and spelling strategies being able to better read and write, i.e., with more speed and accuracy (Gentry, 1982, 2000; Juel, 1991; Kurvers, 2007; Kurvers & Ketelaars, 2011). The fact that teacher expertise mattered more in this respect than other educational factors, might once more confirm that this is a key step. My findings show that to avoid getting stuck in the use of lower order word recognition and spelling strategies, there is a need for increasing pace in the process of first getting acquainted with an alphabetic code and then reaching and developing fluency in decoding and spelling to get from the second (alphabetic) stage to the third (orthographic) stage of direct word recognition and word writing.

### **Teaching practices and ideas**

The second research question was in the field of teaching adult literacy and focused on the classroom-based literacy teaching practices that adult learners in Timor-Leste were confronted with and the ideas that guided their teachers' practices. Class observations provided information on how literacy was being taught in 12 groups in 20 lessons in three adult literacy programmes: *Los Hau Bele* and *Hakat ba Oin* for beginners, and *Iha Dalan* for advanced literacy learners (Chapter 6).

The observations revealed that most of the teaching in all three programmes could be characterised by the teacher being very active, talking a lot, engaging mainly in frontal, whole-group teaching, allocating turns, and inviting partici-

pants one by one to the blackboard to do writing tasks. For much of the lesson time, the learners were listening to the teacher, copying things in their notebooks, only sometimes actively being involved and often waiting until everyone had finished a task. Most teaching closely followed the guidelines of the specific literacy programme in use. These teaching characteristics will be further discussed in Section 8.2.

There was a generally stronger focus on writing than on reading; a significant part of all lessons was spent on writing exercises, i.e., copying from the textbook or the blackboard according to the 'teacher demonstrates, learners imitate' principle. Reading exercises were done less frequently and most of the time concerned exercises at the letter, syllable and word level, also often repeating after the teacher. Letter names (not their sounds) were used to refer to letters. The class observations revealed the frequent use of 'synthetic' literacy teaching methods, initially emphasising small, meaningless linguistic units, e.g., letters or syllables, and guiding learners from those to larger, meaningful units. The 'alphabetic' and the 'syllabic' methods (both synthetic methods) were often seen combined with the more 'analytic' method of starting with whole words, emphasising their meaning and later breaking them up into smaller units. These are methods that have been applied for many years in many countries (Gray, 1969; Liberman & Liberman, 1990). An additional observation, however, is that in several classes this 'literacy work' was done more often by the teachers, while the learners were mostly copying what the teacher did. Little attention was paid to developing speed and fluency in reading and writing or to comprehension of longer phrases or short texts.

The observations also revealed that most of the lessons started later than planned, with participants coming in late and missing part of the instruction, and others not showing up at all. On average about half of the registered learners were attending the lessons. Teaching circumstances generally were poor, with in many cases no classroom, electricity or tables available, and a shortage of reading and writing materials. Nearly all classes had a blackboard or whiteboard and chairs for the learners.

All the programmes included in this study paid attention to what is known from research to be crucial for successful literacy teaching, like making beginning readers aware of the phonological make-up of the language and providing explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle (Chall, 1999; Kurvers, 2007; Liberman & Liberman, 1990; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989), yet several observations seemed to reveal that not all students really grasped this principle or could practice it independently. And more importantly, most literacy teaching observed did not go beyond the letter-syllable-word level. This resulted in learners spending a lot of time in class reciting things they probably do not always understand and cannot use in the outside world, for instance reading

aloud meaningless units (e.g., *tra, tre, tri, tro, tru*) and spelling words by using letter names without reaching word recognition (e.g., *kapa, a, eli, a, eni*, for *kalan*, night).

Eight classes (of the 20 classes that were observed) included some basic functional literacy, mainly the writing of names, signatures, and a few other personal data (often by learning strings of letters by heart, without having a real understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences). Eight other classes were partly dedicated to numeracy and practising calculations.

In all groups observed, the learners seemed to have rather different literacy levels, ranging from struggling to recognise and write single graphemes to showing fluency in reading and writing. Most teachers, however, were not equipped to adapt their lessons to the variety of their learners' literacy levels and learning needs. All learners were expected to focus on the same lesson content (i.e., a letter, syllable, or word) at the same time. Despite the high level of heterogeneity in all groups and the large differences in literacy levels and learning needs, tailor-made teaching was hardly applied. The teaching closely followed the programme that teachers had been provided with, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach with almost no differentiation. In that sense, the teaching methods they applied could not be called learner-centred (Freire, 1970; Legrand, 1993; but see the teachers' use of regional languages in the next section); the programme content and method were leading, not the learners and what they needed to learn. As a consequence, what was being taught often seemed too difficult for some participants, too easy for others, and at an appropriate level only for a minority of learners in each group. Teachers obviously had not been given the facilities or opportunity to build experience in organising differentiation within their classes to meet the variety of literacy levels and learning needs. Apparently, they had also not been given any opportunities and tools to assess the starting levels of the learners and to use this information to decide which learning needs and literacy levels should be addressed.

Apart from these findings observed in all programmes, some findings related to features of specific programmes. In *Iha Dalan* and *Hakat ba Oin* classes, for instance, most of the teachers were applying the guidelines to connect lesson content with the learners' world outside the classroom. Several observations revealed that this was established by jointly practising the writing (on the blackboard) of numerous words, and – in some cases – short phrases, related to participants' daily work in the fields and the community. This link with their real world and daily life clearly seemed to motivate learners; it might confirm that success in adult beginning reading is related to contextualising literacy learning into daily practices (Condelli et al., 2003; Dalderop, 2008; Kurvers et al., 2010). In this case, however, the exercises were often limited to the word-level and seemed to keep learners practising words they already knew, without



integrating them into the decoding exercises to improve word recognition or without practices that might contribute to reading comprehension of larger units.

In the *Los Hau Bele* classes observed, fewer connections were made between lesson content and the learners' daily lives (which could be related to the fact that in these classes there were no possibilities to watch the DVDs belonging to the programme, in which connections with daily life are made). In these classes a significant amount of lesson time was spent on learning by heart combinations of letters and numbers. Learners were confronted with the teaching practice of connecting a fixed number to each of the 20 letters to be learned. Letters, syllables and words were written with under each letter first a horizontal line and then the 'corresponding' number, e.g., the number 14 was written under the letter *b*, and in case of the word *faru* (shirt) learners had to write the number 16 under the letter *f*, 1 under the letter *a*, 10 under the letter *r*, and 5 under the letter *u*. The idea behind this practice is that, assuming that adult literacy learners are familiar with numbers, this would make the learning of the letters (and thus the learning of reading and writing) easier (Bancroft, 2008; Boughton, 2010b; Relys Díaz, 2013). Class observations, however, revealed that this activity did not seem to contribute to literacy acquisition; quite the contrary, it rather seemed to make things more complicated, because different from the systematic relationship between graphemes and sounds that facilitates learning the alphabetic principle (Byrne, 1998; Liberman & Liberman, 1990), there is no systematic relationship between letters and numbers, nor between numbers and sounds. That is probably why the teacher could often be observed doing the decoding work which the learners were supposed to do, while the learners were mainly struggling with finding the association between a letter and a number or the other way around. This resulted in a significant amount of class time spent on something that was not very helpful in learning to read and write and has no relation to literacy use in daily life.

Analysis of the interviews with ten teachers and six coordinators of the observed literacy classes revealed some of their ideas about teaching literacy. Often these ideas regarded the content that according to them should be taught, things that teachers should do, and materials that should be used. Nearly all interviewees had firm ideas about what it meant to be a 'good teacher', stressing the importance of having good reading and writing capacities, motivation, patience and discipline, and providing elaborate explanations, exercises, and repetition. Highly valued by all was mastering programme methodologies and guidelines, and teaching accordingly. Teaching practices observed in the classes matched what teachers and coordinators said in inter-

views about teaching: 'good teaching' was generally associated with teaching according to the specific programme in use and carrying out its methodology.

At the same time there were serious worries among the teachers and coordinators about the learners' limited progress, about a lack of motivation among the target group, about high levels of absence and dropout (this despite the fact that coordinators were actively engaged in 'giving motivation to the population'). Low motivation and high absence and drop-out rates were mostly attributed to the learners' hard, mainly agricultural work, their cultural and religious obligations, and to natural and economic circumstances. The cause of these reported motivation problems was never related to the programmes and whether they were suitable and matched learning needs, which might not be the case (see also Section 8.2 and 8.3).

When asked in the interviews, the teachers and coordinators expressed hardly any explicit views on how exactly literacy should be taught and learned, e.g., what to start with, how to introduce new content, how to practice new skills, how to expand emergent literacy. The interviews indicated that for the *how* of teaching and learning literacy, the teachers and coordinators (and the learners) fully relied on the programmes they had been provided with. It seems that literacy teachers generally are not used to being consulted about how they think literacy should be taught; according to their accounts they get sent to training sessions belonging to the specific literacy programmes and this is where they learn how to teach the content of those programmes and how to use the programme materials. In line with this, it also seems that learners are generally not used to being consulted about what and how they want to learn to read and write. Interviews with coordinators revealed that in many cases learners' names are put on a list of 'illiterates' and their local leaders will send them to participate in programmes that are provided by the government and/or other parties, programmes of which the content has already been decided on. My findings from class observations and interviews indicate possible gaps between what and how the participants would like to learn and what is offered to them in the classes, which might explain (and brings us back to) low motivation, an issue that often came up in conversations and worried so many people. Learners and teachers in literacy education have to deal with consequences of national education policies, in this case regarding the provision of adult literacy education in fixed national programmes, one of which within the framework of a national campaign. From research carried out in other countries, it is known that many governments opt for literacy education in national programmes and campaigns, often from a political rationale and a main concern with national literacy statistics (Wagner, 1999; Rogers, 1997), this in spite of the often disappointing results of such national programmes and campaigns (Abadzi, 1994; Lind, 2008). My findings seem to confirm that aiming at quanti-

tative goals through provision of short-term, large-scale programmes or campaigns in a one-size-fits-all approach, assuming homogeneous groups and ignoring the huge diversity in learner needs and literacy levels, leads to low outcomes in terms of literacy ability developed.

Classroom interaction mirrored Timor-Leste's ubiquitous multilingualism. The class observations revealed that generally four languages were being used in class, i.e., Tetum, the regional language, Indonesian, and Portuguese. Tetum was used most and was used as the main language of instruction and as the target language in which learners had to learn to read and write. The regional language often had an important function, being used for translation of instructions, extra explanations and small talk. This might be contributing to success in literacy acquisition, since teachers' use of regional languages might indicate that not all instruction was grasped from Tetum only (as further discussed in Section 8.2). From other research it is known that a key predictor of success is related to the use of the learners' mother tongue as an instructional aide (Condelli & Wrigley, 2006; Kurvers & Stockmann, 2009). Indonesian or Portuguese were mostly used to refer to numbers. Portuguese and sometimes Indonesian words were used frequently in subject-related language, to talk (in Tetum) about literacy and numeracy. Classroom communication generally turned out to be multilingual. On some occasions switches indicated different types of interaction (for example the switching from instruction in Tetum to additional explanation in the regional language) but there were also occasions when people simply drew on the communicative resources available to them without attributing particular meanings to the use of specific languages; they were getting things done multilingually or were polylinguaging (Jørgensen et al., 2011). In the classes observed, Tetum was used as the on-stage language, and the regional languages as backstage languages; the latter were accepted for small talk and extra explanations or repetitions, but not as languages to be used in staged question-and-answer performances (Arthur, 2001). My findings showed how people in literacy education dealt with the language choices and policies made by their government. Spolsky (2004) noticed that the way people use languages can be different from what national policies had in mind, which was indeed what my findings showed: of the two official languages to be used according to the national language-in-education policy, Tetum was used much more than Portuguese, and other languages were used as well. Tetum and regional languages were used most to teach literacy, but also Portuguese and Indonesian had specific functions in the class, i.e., in subject-related language and when referring to numbers. These two previous languages of education came shining through in academic vocabulary about literacy and numeracy (as shown in some of the excerpts of recorded classroom

interaction in Chapter 6). Through multilingual talk in classrooms, teachers and learners navigated the constraints of the national language and language-in-education policies, which was also found in other research carried out in multilingual countries (Hornberger, 1988; Lin, 1996; Menken & Garcia, 2010).

My findings on teaching in adult literacy education are in line with Quinn's (2013) findings from her research on teaching in formal education in Timor-Leste. Quinn also found a predominance of teacher talk, with students repeating known answers or displayed information. Teachers in her study also had difficulty in explaining the pedagogical steps they took to enable students to learn. Multilingual classroom interaction in her study looked different, with teachers formally presenting curriculum content in Portuguese, and moving into Tetum to further explain and elaborate this content. Shah (2012; based on for example Quinn, 2010) noticed that teachers in primary education struggled with both languages in different ways while teaching; not all teachers were fluent (enough) in Portuguese, and many knew Tetum mainly as a spoken and less as a written language, both of which caused complications in effectively teaching their students.

My findings on adult literacy teaching and multilingual classroom interaction show similarities and differences with Da Conceição Savio's (forthcoming, 2015) findings from his study on adult literacy education in the district of Lautem and on the position of the regional language Fataluku amongst the other languages being used. Similarities mainly regard the characteristics of the teaching of adult literacy and the nature of the multilingual classroom interaction; differences regard the stronger position of both Indonesian and the regional language Fataluku in classroom interaction in his study (which might have to do with the strong position of these two languages in many out-of-school contexts in Lautem as well, see Da Conceição Savio et al., 2012).

### **Literacy uses, values and contexts**

My third research question was in the field of literacy in out-of-class contexts. It focused on literacy uses and values that adult learners in Timor-Leste reported with reference to different social domains such as home, work, leisure, and church (Chapter 7).

Both the interviews with learner groups and with their teachers and coordinators, and the written statements by learners, showed that being able to write one's name and signature was seen as fundamental by nearly all. Another skill seen as very important by most learners and teachers was being able to read things in a personal context (e.g., letters, sms texts, birth certificates, magazines, calendars, books) and in public space (e.g., posters, invitations, newspapers). Writing was also seen as important, e.g., for sms texts, voting, sending letters, or for making shopping lists. Many references were made to

numeracy, e.g., dealing with money, doing calculations involved in buying and selling. Some learners wanted to acquire literacy to be able to help their children with their homework, to teach them, or to understand what the children were taught in school. Several participants also indicated that literacy ability was important for getting access to continued education, for being able to read and write at work, for the future in general and for inclusion (belonging to the literate, the educated). In addition to these practical and more general reasons, participants' written statements included some metaphors relating literacy acquisition to coming out of the dark into the light, or to bringing an end to ignorance.

The way in which literacy uses and functions were mentioned by my informants matches with how Heath (1983, 1986) distinguished functions and uses of literacy, 'functions' referring to what literacy can do for individuals (in this study, e.g., provide access to education, be included in groups of educated people), and 'uses' referring to what individuals can do with literacy skills (according to my informants, e.g., read a birth certificate or send an sms). In ways similar to what Heath's (1983) study revealed, my interviewees mainly referred to instrumental, news, official registration, and social-interaction related uses.

Many of the uses and functions of literacy mentioned during interviews depend on specific contexts, e.g., being able to write one's name and signature is needed to receive the monthly pension, sms texting is used in communication in the private sphere, invitations to be read often concern community events. This illustrates what the New Literacy Studies have emphasised: literacy should be seen as a set of social practices that are to be understood in their social and cultural contexts, rather than as a set of technical skills (see, e.g., Barton, 2001; Street, 1995).

Although learners mentioned a large number of (mainly instrumental) uses, they explained that there were not many occasions in their daily lives in which they would read or write, since their work in the field, at the market, or at home took most of their time and did not involve any reading or writing. Reading and writing was mainly done in the literacy classes, with some practice at home, using the literacy primers due to lack of other reading materials. This matches Torres's (2008) findings on literacy education in nine countries in Latin America and the Caribbean: little reading and writing took place outside the literacy centres and school textbooks remained 'the most important reading materials in schools and at homes' (Torres, 2008:558). Some learners in this study expressed feelings of shame about not being able to read and write. A general concern many interviewees mentioned, was the risk that learners might 'fall back into illiteracy' after finishing one short programme and having no opportunities to continued learning. (This will be further discussed in

Section 8.2.) All interviewees valued literacy as something positive, no negative reactions or opinions about literacy were expressed.

The ideas that learners, teachers, and coordinators expressed on literacy, turned out to reflect past and present discourses on literacy in Timor-Leste (see Boon, forthcoming 2015). Terms like 'mobilisation' and 'awareness-raising' had already been in use in the past, in the 1974-1975 literacy campaign (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2012; Da Silva, 2012). Also the fact that the timetables for literacy classes were made in coordination with the learners and the starting and finishing hours were adapted to the daily work obligations of the participants, was reminiscent of pedagogic discourses of the past (see Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2012). In addition, the idea of learning literacy 'to live free' evokes the discourse of the Freire-inspired 1974-1975 literacy campaign that had preceded the long years of Indonesian military rule. More examples of current expressions in this study show traces of the past, like the metaphors used for becoming literate ('coming out of the dark into the light') and for eradicating illiteracy ('putting an end to ignorance'). Other terms that came up in the interviews revealed discourses that have been circulating more recently in Timor-Leste. For example, the expression 'capacity building' has become a buzz word in recent years, since it has often been mentioned as the main goal of international aid organisations active in Timor-Leste. One concept that was frequently mentioned was that of making the country 'free from illiteracy', or at least 'declaring' individual districts to be 'free from illiteracy'. This discourse about combating or eradicating illiteracy came to Timor-Leste with the originally Cuban literacy programme *Sim Eu Posso* (in Portuguese; *Los Hau Bele* in Tetum) which was provided in 2007-2012 within the framework of the national literacy campaign. The words 'mobilisation' and 'socialisation' evoke the same discourse. Most teachers and coordinators expressed the broadly felt worry that if after such 'declarations' no continued literacy and post-literacy education would be provided, learners would quickly 'fall back into illiteracy'.

Adopting different programmes and collaborating with different partners had obviously required the literacy coordinators, teachers and learners that I interviewed, to become familiar with using a large variety of words and ways when talking about literacy. New terms and concepts had been encountered alongside the old wordings about emancipation and nation-building which had been associated with the literacy campaign of 1974-1975.

The linguistic landscape study revealed that in the immediate surroundings of the literacy classes that I visited, all in rural or semi-rural areas, no or hardly any written language was visible. The linguistic landscape in the streets to the nearest market and church, places where the participants regularly would go, could however clearly be characterised as multilingual. I found nine languages

being used in a total of 322 signs photographed in the public space: Tetum, Portuguese, Indonesian, English, Makasae, Latin, Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish. In 60% of the signs, more than one language was used, resulting in bilingual (36%), trilingual (20%) or quadrilingual signs (4%). Tetum occurred in 42% of the signs as the main language or one of the main languages (conditional for understanding the sign's message), Portuguese in 31% of the signs, English in 31% as well, and Indonesian in 22%. The languages or language combinations used varied with the different types of signs. Most billboards, banners, paper copies, posters, and commercial signs showed Tetum as their main language. Apparently, Tetum was the language chosen most often for informative messages to the public, varying from information on government policies regarding health, elections, population counts, to local information on ceremonies, courses or products on sale. Most notice boards used Portuguese as a main language, often indicating governmental institutions in public buildings. Most product packaging contained information in either Indonesian or English, since many products are imported from Indonesia and Australia. In general it seemed that the more local messages were (in terms of production and target audience), the more Tetum was used as a main language, like e.g., in banners, commercial signs, posters, and paper copies.

The findings from the interviews and the linguistic landscape study revealed contradicting realities. The interviewees mentioned a large variety of (often desired) uses of literacy, from the modest goal of being able to write their name and signature, to using literacy (and numeracy) in various situations of work and daily life, to eventually using it as a stepping stone to continued education. At the same time it became clear from the interviews with learner groups that many learners had little opportunity to use their reading and writing skills in their daily lives. This observation was underlined by the lack of reading materials in their houses and communities, and the total absence of written language in the streets where they lived and went to class. Although the immediate surroundings of the learners' homes and classrooms could generally be characterised as low-literate environments, the linguistic landscapes at the places where they went to the market and church did show a multitude of written language displayed, through a large variety of signs. In those places multilingualism was all around: four different languages were regularly used in the public space and many signs contained multiple languages. This might explain why in the interviews specific languages were not mentioned explicitly when learners, teachers or coordinators were talking about literacy uses and practices. Interviewees seemed to take Timor-Leste's multilingual setting as a fact of life, in which specific languages did not seem to be an issue when discussing literacy uses in daily life. My findings suggest that adult learners

wanted to (or: assumed to) be able to read information in whatever language it was presented to them. The linguistic landscape study showed that that could be any of the official languages Tetum and Portuguese, or the working languages Indonesian and English, or – occasionally – other languages (some even not included in Timor-Leste's national language policy) and the various combinations of all these.

## 8.2 Discussion

### **Adult literacy learned, taught and used**

This study explored learners' results of participating in literacy programmes, the teaching methodologies and lesson content they were confronted with, and the ways they used and valued literacy in their daily lives. These three topics turned out to be strongly interrelated. The rather limited results of many adult literacy learners in the broad study seem to be partly due to the way literacy was taught and the content that was presented and practised during the lessons. My findings indicate that this is mainly caused by: (1) the strict use of the programme being leading in teaching, (2) many learners not getting the education they need in terms of literacy level, and (3) teachers not being well prepared for the task to meet the diversity of learning needs and literacy levels of their learners. In addition to this, a discrepancy was observed between what learners wanted or needed to learn and the content of many lessons. One goal was definitely given extensive practice and was reached by many learners: being able to write one's name and signature. This use of literacy was most often mentioned, yet it is also the most limited in terms of reading and writing skills: it does not necessarily involve understanding of the alphabetic principle which is crucial to reach more functional reading and writing goals. Most of the other learning needs that were expressed in interviews were not met at all in class, i.e., to be able to read things in people's surroundings (like posters, letters and newspapers) or personal documents (like birth certificates) to be able to read and write sms text messages or understand time schedules in invitations to the community. None of these were seen being practised in the literacy classes visited during the in-depth study, which implies that the actual teaching practices did not take into account these practical and concrete learning needs, or that teachers supposed that teaching technical skills would suffice for this as well. Although not all of the public signs contain texts that adult literacy learners necessarily wanted to be able to read, many of those would make good material to practise literacy skills in class. They were however not used. Nonetheless, taking part in adult literacy classes for some of the learners definitely seemed to make a difference in their lives, opening up



possibilities for work or study, leading to more self-esteem (as was also found by Kotsapas, 2011), and giving access to the worlds of 'the literate' or 'the educated' from whom they were excluded before.

### **Multilingual learners, multilingual education and multilingual environment**

The ways in which multilingualism in Timor-Leste's context affects adult literacy education and acquisition became clear when all different data were seen in connection. Understanding the use of multiple languages in adult literacy classes, as revealed by the class observations in the in-depth study, was facilitated through the data collected in the broad study on teachers' and learners' language backgrounds showing their rich language repertoires, including regional languages, Tetum, Portuguese, and Indonesian. Non-Tetum speaking learners probably benefitted from the frequent use of their regional languages during the lesson and in that way could compensate for not being able to understand Tetum, which might partly explain why their scores for three of the four reading and writing tasks in Tetum were not significantly lower than those of Tetum speakers. Another explanation might be that language proficiency is based on self-reported data; the difference between non-Tetum and Tetum speakers might be small, in the sense that the first might know some Tetum anyway and the latter might have a rather limited Tetum proficiency.

The literacy programmes that were investigated all took place with Tetum as the target language and as the main language of instruction, and Tetum turned out to be the teachers' preferred language for literacy education as well. However, when educational options after literacy education were discussed, many times Portuguese and English were mentioned as languages that learners and teachers thought important to learn as well. Apparently, people who already spoke two or three languages (e.g., Tetum, their regional language, and Indonesian) believed that learning even more languages in the future is a perfectly normal thing to do. But the fact that Tetum was widely chosen as the target language for literacy education as well as the main language of instruction (and that by consequence the Portuguese versions of the literacy manuals often remained unused), is understandable because we know from the broad study that the majority of learners did not speak Portuguese at all and the majority of teachers did not speak enough Portuguese to feel comfortable teaching literacy in it. And what is more, Tetum also turned out to be dominant in the public sphere, as the linguistic landscape study has shown.

Tetum turned out to be dominant in teachers' and learners' language repertoires, in literacy education, and in the public sphere. Apparently, since independence when Portuguese and Tetum were proclaimed as the country's official languages, Tetum has become the most important language in many private and public domains, gradually gaining more importance than Indone-

sian and being still more important than Portuguese. The latter might quickly change in the future, when more and more members of the younger generations will speak Portuguese after having learned it in formal education. But for now, the dominance of Tetum in most domains – often as a result of pragmatic choices – is evident.

### **Rhetoric and practice**

In studies about literacy education in Timor-Leste, the learning and teaching of literacy is often related to the term ‘popular education’, which according to Boughton (2012a:315) can be defined as ‘mass education initiated by and in support of movements for social and political change’. Examples of popular education in Timor-Leste that are often referred to are the 1974-1975 literacy campaign (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2012; Da Silva, 2012), literacy education provided by a variety of local NGOs (Da Silva, 2012), and also the national adult literacy campaign within which the *Los Hau Bele* programme was used (Boughton, 2012a). Boughton (2012a:317) stated that this campaign can ‘be seen as an example of the popular education tradition even though it lacks the political education content associated with the earlier mass campaigns’. Boughton (2013:309) claims that in Timor-Leste ‘the adult literacy rate has nearly doubled’ as a result of this ‘popular-education-style national literacy campaign’.

Popular education implies empowerment of participants who actively engage in the organisation of their own learning that is linked to their interests, through dialogical and activating pedagogical models. Relys Díaz’s (2013) and Bancroft’s (2008) descriptions of *Yo, sí puedo*, the Cuban literacy programme on which *Los Hau Bele* is based, its intentions and its implementation in many countries all over the world, include terms and expressions like self-actualisation, agency, focus on the individual, encouraging critical thinking, participants making their own decisions, acknowledging diversity, empowering people, giving them tools to participate in politics.

The actual teaching and learning in the *Los Hau Bele* classes that I observed, however, did not show many explicit features of popular education; my observation rather revealed a reality that seemed to be at odds with these intentions: uni-level, whole-class, frontal teaching according to pre-fixed schedules and ‘teacher-demonstrates-learners-imitate’ patterns, without addressing individual literacy levels or learning needs. Participants were not engaged in organising their own learning, they did not seem to be involved in any decisions and were not stimulated to attain self-determination (or at least not more than in the observed classes in any of the other literacy programmes that are not explicitly associated with popular education). In addition, in the *Los Hau Bele* classes learners spent part of the time learning letter-number combinations they could

not use anywhere outside the classes and that did not help them in their literacy acquisition process.

Comparing popular education discourses with the outcome of class observations in *Los Hau Bele* showed discrepancies between rhetoric and programme intentions on the one hand, and realities in the observed literacy classes on the other. There are many reasons for this, and many of these observations were made in the other literacy programmes as well, also partly due to a strict sticking to programme content and methodology. But although the literacy education observed could not necessarily be classified as popular education, this does not mean that learners did not get empowered at all. Empowerment is probably already inherent in making small steps like having learnt to write one's name or to decode a simple key word. And as noted, participation in adult literacy classes (and receiving certificates) did seem to make a difference in learners' lives (e.g., related to work or study possibilities, self-esteem and inclusion).

### **Becoming literate**

My study showed that, like in the other programmes, the results of three months of learning to read and write in *Los Hau Bele* in many cases did not (yet) create 'literate learners'. For that reason, counting the number of learners who obtained *Los Hau Bele* certificates cannot directly be translated into increased literacy rates; becoming literate implies much more than mastering the skills needed to pass the *Los Hau Bele* final test. Declaring districts 'free from illiteracy' after the use of the three-month *Los Hau Bele* programme in those districts is not realistic. At best, attending *Los Hau Bele* means a first step on the longer road to becoming really literate and being able to use reading and writing skills in out-of-class contexts. As observed by programme coordinators, the fact that in districts declared 'free from illiteracy' no further literacy and post-literacy options were provided for longer periods of time (because the focus had moved and the resources were relocated to the districts not yet declared 'free from illiteracy'), seemed to hamper people in taking more steps on that road.

'Becoming literate' according to UNESCO's (2005) definition of functional literacy or the definition used in the PIAAC survey (OECD, 2013; see Chapter 1), implies being able to use literacy in various domains in the society. Being literate in any case and context involves fluency in terms of technical reading and comprehension of what is read. This study showed that attending even six months of *Los Hau Bele*, or *Hakat ba Oin* for that matter, did not guarantee that all participants had acquired these more advanced literacy skills. Being able to apply literacy skills in daily life has shown to take more time, possibly one or two years and sometimes even longer (Kurvers et al., 2010). Literacy learners, in my view, would benefit from a shift of attention from quick fixes and im-

pressive statistics to achieving more sustainable literacy abilities and higher literacy levels in long-term trajectories of well-connected literacy, post-literacy, and continued education programmes. As long as participants' individual learning needs are met and learners can co-direct, or co-determine their own learning process, supported by qualified experts, it doesn't matter whether it is called 'popular' or 'non-formal' or 'recurrent' education. It might be that large-scale short-term programmes in national campaigns are not the right way to establish literacy education that can be characterised as tailor-made, addressing a diversity of needs. It is more than likely that much can be learned from smaller scale education initiatives provided, e.g., by NGOs which do seem to succeed in meeting specific learner needs. In some places the best solution might even be to establish 'drop-in centres': 'flexible learning centres' where adult learners are assisted with individual questions about literacy and numeracy, and where immediate, individual learning needs are met on the spot (Rogers & Uddin, 2005:256). In all cases, teachers need to get multiple opportunities to build knowledge on what matters in learning to read and write and need to be trained in how to teach those crucial elements before they will be able to provide effective adult literacy education. Regarding the meeting of individual learning needs, however, it should be noted that my study's interviews showed that informants perceived literacy education as a group activity and a social event in their community, in which all participants were expected to be continuously involved and reach goals together so that they could move forward together (which does not always match with ideas on efficiency and individuality that many outsiders bring in). The above illustrates that there is not one way to address this issue; variety and flexibility are very much needed in the provision of literacy education.

### 8.3 Recommendations

#### **Recommendations for further research on adult literacy**

The findings of my study indicate that further research would be advisable in three areas.

By combining findings from a survey-like broad study in eight districts with findings from a case study of briefly visited sites in seven districts, my study revealed realities and created new knowledge on adult literacy acquisition, teaching and use in Timor-Leste. For practical (scheduling) reasons, the broad study was carried out first and the in-depth study later and therefore with different learners in different groups. For that reason the data on learners as obtained in class observations and interviews of the in-depth study could not be directly related to the learner data on literacy abilities obtained in the

broad study. For a more in-depth investigation of the relation between observations, interview data and literacy abilities, and of processes that lead to success in literacy acquisition, it would be necessary to carry out a longitudinal and really ethnographic case study, following a group of comparable beginning literacy learners from their first lesson to the end of the programme during at least a year. This would be a first recommended area for further research.

Secondly, the findings on learners' language backgrounds and on multilingual classroom talk revealed the important position of regional languages in learners' linguistic repertoires and in classroom interaction, although they were not used for reading and writing as such. This study's outcomes, however, indicate that it is worth investigating whether also using regional languages (for many learners their first language) as target languages for beginning literacy (alongside Tetum as a target language) would be a useful contribution to adult literacy acquisition in Timor-Leste. Starting with some literacy education in the regional language, e.g., with some literacy materials in Mambae, Baikenu or other regional languages, might indeed be useful to the many adult literacy learners who make use of these regional languages as their main language of communication in out-of-class contexts. On the one hand, research shows that literacy in the first language facilitates literacy in the second language (Benson, 2005; Bühmann & Trudell, 2008; UNESCO, 2007). On the other hand, building literacy ability in their first language is not always what learners would opt for, since they might see these languages as 'only of limited modern utility' or as leading to segregation (Coulmas, 1984:15). Learners might prefer to learn to read and write in the official languages of the country that in their eyes have more status and will provide better access to continued education and employment (Asfaha, Kurvers & Kroon, 2008). These arguments for and against literacy in regional languages were also heard in the discussion about using mother tongues in pre-school and early primary education in Timor-Leste (Cabral, 2013; Taylor-Leech, 2013), which is currently being piloted in three districts. This would be worth investigating for adult literacy education as well, not only in Timor-Leste but also in other multilingual developing countries.

A third recommendation for further research would be a thorough investigation of the usefulness and effect of connecting numbers to letters in the *Yo, sí Puedo* programme, since this programme is or has been deployed in about 30 countries worldwide. The rationale behind this element of the method has not been made clear. This was reflected by the explanations in Tetum and Portuguese in respectively the *Los Hau Bele* and the *Sim Eu Posso* teacher manuals, as I tried to show through their translations in Chapter 5; probably both ways of formulating did not provide full clarification to the teachers and their coordinators as to why or how these letter-number connections facilitate the learning

process. Relys Díaz (2013), Boughton (2010b), Bancroft (2008), and Filho (2011) each mention the same assumptions, i.e., (1) that adult literacy learners have an inherent knowledge of numbers, and (2) that for those learners it would make the learning of new letters easier if they are connected to numbers they are already familiar with. My findings show that although learners might understand the concept of numbers, this does not mean that they can write them. So if the written symbols for numbers are new to learners, and the written symbols for phonemes are new to them as well, the second assumption does not hold. Moreover, the numbers do not help the learners to move from print to sound or from sound to meaning, since they are neither systematically related to the sound of the printed letters, nor to the meaning of the printed word that might become clear when the word is sounded out. The activities with the numbers seem to direct learners to a side-path that does not bring them to the next stages in the reading process. Class observations in my study revealed that this element of the method was time-consuming but showed no evidence of being useful to the literacy acquisition process. Other scholars also expressed their doubt on this aspect of the *Yo, sí puedo* method, see Lind's (2008:91) remark (regarding a study done in Mozambique) that 'the introduction of letters combined with numbers appeared to be too much at the same time and in too short a time for non-literate persons'. Torres (2007:6, in an interview)<sup>42</sup> mentioned that in the classes that she observed in nine countries, this element '*confunde y complica, más que facilita*' (confuses and complicates, rather than facilitates) the literacy learning. In Timor-Leste also Anis (2007:29) had noted that 'the teaching methods of mixing numbers and letters' were found 'confusing'. If this is further investigated and if findings in other countries point in the same direction, this might lead to adaptations in the programme, hopefully resulting in more effective use of time and a larger focus on activities that do contribute to the acquisition of the alphabetic principle and to achieving reading fluency; adaptations that many learners worldwide would benefit from.

### **Recommendations for adult literacy education policy**

My research sheds some light on the complexity of adult literacy acquisition, teaching and use, and on the many ways in which learning, teaching, and using literacy are – or could be – interconnected. Large-scale, uniform programmes do not seem to address that complexity and interconnectedness.

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<sup>42</sup> 'No basta con enseñar a leer y escribir; hay que acercar la lectura y la escritura a la gente'; Entrevista con R.M. Torres por la Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE), 8 septiembre 2007. [Interview with R.M. Torres for the Latin-American Campaign for the Right to Education, 8<sup>th</sup> of September, 2007], retrieved at [www.fronesis.org](http://www.fronesis.org). (See also <http://aprendeonlinea.udea.edu.co/revistas/index.php/unip/article/viewFile/1318/1052>, page 5.)

Some recommendations to the Timor-Leste government that I would like to suggest, are (1) to avoid adopting a 'one-size-fits-all approach' or engaging in 'quick-fix thinking', but to make a long term policy plan aiming at gradually increasing literacy rates and improving literacy levels among the 15+ population in a sustainable way, while paying attention to learners' voices and listen to what they do (and don't) need in terms of literacy and numeracy. This would lead to (2) providing a stable, continuous variety of literacy programmes and tailor-made education options that do justice to the enormous diversity within the target groups and to the variety in literacy levels and learning needs. My study showed that for the adult learners in Timor-Leste the provision of a variety of well-connected literacy, post-literacy and continued education options is a condition that has to be met to avoid rapid loss of newly built basic literacy ability. This implies (3) the establishment of an improved monitoring and evaluation system, with useful tools for teachers and coordinators to capture learner progress. Further recommendations are (4) to create and facilitate a teacher population that is qualified for teaching adult literacy in any programme or any tailor-made education facility and that can deliver the broadly needed differentiation while teaching heterogeneous groups; to give the teachers the opportunity to constantly increase their teaching capacities by training, professional exchange and on-the-job coaching; to encourage them to find out what multilingual models of teaching practices and classroom interaction work best in their specific multilingual area. The multilingual setting in Timor-Leste is a classic example of language settings that can be found in many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Policy-makers and educators in these countries could benefit from new knowledge on the optimal use of multiple languages in adult literacy education that matches (and makes the most of) the variety of resources in people's linguistic repertoires. A final recommendation to the Timor-Leste government would be (5) to investigate what can be learned from smaller scale literacy education initiatives by NGOs that successfully combine literacy with local knowledge, livelihood and income generating activities. Future Community Learning Centres, planned in each of the 65 sub-districts, could maybe also function as a drop-in centre for people with immediate, individual literacy and numeracy questions that can be answered on the spot.

### **Recommendations for adult literacy education practice**

The study's findings and conclusions lead to a number of recommendations for adult literacy education practice. Firstly, my class observations revealed that teaching practices need to be improved to achieve better results. Teachers deserve to be given the tools in order to realise that improvement; they should be enabled to build more expertise on crucial aspects of literacy teaching to adults

(e.g., regarding the alphabetic principle, fluency, reading comprehension), so they can gradually deliver more effective literacy education. During my years as a literacy adviser and researcher in Timor-Leste, I noticed that teacher training on adult literacy tends to focus mainly on specific programme content and methodology. The effectiveness of any teacher training could be optimised by including general knowledge on the cognitively complex principles behind learning to read and write in general and doing this in an unfamiliar language in particular, and on 'what works in adult literacy education' regardless of what programme is used. Trainers and teachers should be given the opportunity to learn (a) what teaching activities at the letter-syllable-word level actually contribute to the acquisition of the alphabetic principle, to increasing pace and reaching automatic application of grapheme-phoneme correspondence, and (b) what kind of extensive practice beyond the word level, on phrases and texts, learners need in order to expand their initial literacy ability. After all, the focus in classes should not only be on technical reading and writing, but also on tempo needed to grasp the meaning of what is being read and get to reading comprehension. In addition to building the above expertise, teachers need to be given possibilities and materials to work with their learners on these goals. This would allow them to help learners to move from emergent literacy skills to fluent reading and writing. In order to do so, they need to be provided with a better insight into various literacy levels. They also need training on how to create more variation in didactics. In general, more in-depth training for teachers and coordinators on all these (programme-independent) topics is needed, in-service as well as on-the job. The development of a teacher qualification framework would also be useful as a basis for the recruitment and training of adult literacy teachers.

Secondly, if literacy groups in the future are as heterogeneous as the ones in my study (which is very likely), then there will be a need to adapt literacy education to that heterogeneity. My findings have shown that differentiation has not been established to any great extent yet. Learners would benefit considerably from teachers who have had the chance to learn how they can best meet the large diversity of literacy levels within their groups and lessons. Programmes, materials and schedules should provide possibilities to establish differentiation. Learner groups will benefit from teachers who have developed capacity in multi-level group teaching and from programmes, materials and schedules that take into account diverse learning needs. More tailor-made, learner-centred teaching is needed, with better assessments at the start, during and after the courses (and less whole-group, one-size-fits-all teaching).

Thirdly, teachers should be given opportunities to develop a variety of ways of making connections between lesson content and daily life literacy. My findings showed that contextualisation contributed to literacy acquisition.



More relevant lesson content might be realised by focusing less on 'classroom literacy' and more on 'daily life literacy practices' and doing so by using more authentic materials (e.g., newspapers, forms, brochures, posters, signs in the linguistic landscape), practising daily literacy tasks (e.g., reading invitations for ceremonies, and reading and writing sms texts, as mentioned several times in interviews), and making links to numeracy and financial literacy used in daily transactions. Given the low-literate environment in the rural areas, more reading, writing, and numeracy materials are needed that can be used during and after literacy courses. As Basso (1974:432) has already noted, knowledge of the values and attitudes that adult literacy learners bring in can be 'of significant value in the formulation and implementation of effective literacy programs'. In the same way I think this is absolutely true for Timor-Leste: new literacy education initiatives in this country should, more than before, be based on the values and attitudes towards literacy expressed by the adult learners themselves and by their teachers and coordinators. Future adult literacy programmes could try to better incorporate their ideas and opinions on literacy uses and functions.

#### 8.4 Valorisation

My study has already resulted in some practical follow-up activities, carried out in the years 2012-2014, all of which are related to the three recommendations for adult literacy education practice as discussed in the last part of Section 8.3. A range of suggestions, following these recommendations, have been put into practice at the request of and in collaboration with Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education, in coordination with several local NGOs (i.e., Fundação Cristal, Timor Aid, GFFTL) and with international organisations involved in adult literacy in Timor-Leste (e.g., with UNICEF and UNESCO). This joint valorisation endeavour included the development, piloting and in some cases implementation of new additional materials in Tetum for the adult literacy education sector. Tetum language support in developing these materials was provided by the National Institute of Linguistics in Dili.

In relation to the first two recommendations regarding professionalisation of adult literacy teachers, two new teacher manuals were developed: *Husi alfabetizasaun ba adultu sira to'o programa Ekivalénsia 1 nia nivel admisaun: Matadalan ba profesór sira* (From basic literacy to the entrance level of Equivalence 1: Teacher guideline) and *Husi alfabetizasaun ba adultu sira to'o Kursu Fundasaun nia nivel admisaun: Matadalan ba profesór sira* (From basic literacy to the entrance level of the Foundation Course: Teacher guideline). They both contain guidelines on steps to take when teaching a multilevel adult literacy

group: conversations with learners about their motivation to attend literacy education and their goals, assessment of the various starting levels with easy-to-use entrance tests, formulation of learning needs based on the conversations and test outcomes, making a lesson plan addressing the encountered variety of literacy levels and learning needs, carrying out the lesson plan in a more learner-centred way, while focussing not only on basic technical literacy but also on fluency and comprehension, and finally, assessment of achieved literacy and numeracy ability. These guidelines can be used, and in some cases have already been used<sup>43</sup>, as a basis for teacher training at the start of new literacy groups.

In each new literacy group there are learners who have already attended a few months of literacy education in the past but forgot part of what they have learned. For these learners we developed the *Manuál Revizaun: Letra, sílaba, liafuan, fraze, testu ho numerasaun* (Repetition manual: Letters, syllables, words, phrases, texts and numeracy), with which they can first repeat previously acquired basic literacy and numeracy, and then add new knowledge and skills.

In relation to the third recommendation, regarding the necessary connections between lesson content and daily life literacy use, a series of six new literacy and post-literacy books for adult learners have been developed: (1) *Lee no hakerek iha li'ur 1* (Reading on the streets 1), focusing on basic technical literacy, and (2) *Lee no hakerek iha li'ur 2* (Reading on the streets 2), focusing on reading and writing at a more advanced level; (3) *Lee, hakerek no kalkula iha merkadu* (Reading, writing and calculating at the market); (4) *Lee, hakerek no kalkula iha loja* (Reading, writing and calculating in the shop); (5) *Opsaun sira depoizde alfabetizasaun* (Options after literacy), and (6) *Persentajen* (Percentages). These new books can be used in addition to the learner books and teacher manuals belonging to adult literacy programmes already in use. With these new materials learners can expand and strengthen their reading, writing and numeracy ability with relevant content in larger units (i.e., also phrases, sentences, short and longer texts). The books are based on authentic materials, like posters and signs in the streets throughout Timor-Leste, and authentic settings, like the buying and selling at local markets and shops where the reading, writing and calculations involve a large variety of products and prices. The fifth book, *Opsaun sira depoizde alfabetizasaun* (Options after literacy), informs learners on the possibilities they have after finishing beginners' and more advanced literacy education, i.e., continued education in Equivalence programmes for primary and pre-secondary education, in vocational education, job orientation, and self-study. The sixth booklet, about the basics of calculating percentages,

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<sup>43</sup> In preparations with learners on location and in training sessions with teachers organised in 2013 in Dili by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNICEF for their *Compasis* literacy project in the district of Ermera.

was developed in answer to a request from the field. The reason for this had to do with the many low-literate people who are involved in financial transactions that imply discounts as well as in micro-finance projects in which they borrow money and have to pay it back with interest. Many participants, however, lack the basic knowledge on percentages, which therefore was included in the new *Persentajen* (Percentages) booklet.

These new materials provide teachers and learners in Timor-Leste with some contextualised examples and suggestions on how to expand learners' emergent literacy and numeracy ability, how to meet diverse learning needs, and how to establish more links between classroom and daily life literacy. In that way they constitute a small contribution to the more relevant, more learner-centred and more tailor-made teaching of literacy the adults in Timor-Leste will hopefully see in future.



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## APPENDIX 1

### List of literacy programme materials

#### Los Hau Bele

- *Los, Hau Bele; Programa ida atu halakon la hatene lee no hakerek*  
(Yes, I can; Programme to end not being able to read and write) (Learner manual)
- *Los, Hau Bele; Manual treinador*  
(Yes, I can; Trainer manual)
- *Los, Hau Bele; Klase 1-65*  
(Yes, I can; Class 1-65) (DVDs)

#### Sim Eu Posso

- *Sim, eu posso; Um programa para acabar com o analfabetismo*  
(Yes, I can; A programme to end illiteracy) (Learner manual)
- *Sim, eu posso; Manual do monitor*  
(Yes, I can; Monitor's manual)
- *Sim, eu posso; Caderno de exercícios do aluno, Alfabetização: Luz de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação, RDTL*  
(Yes, I can; Student's exercise book, Literacy: Light of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education, RDTL)
- *Programa: Sim, eu posso; Orientações ao monitor, Alfabetização: Luz de Timor-Leste, RDTL*  
(Programme: Yes, I can; Guidelines for the monitor, Literacy: Light of Timor-Leste, RDTL)
- *Sim, eu posso; Sala 1-65*  
(Yes, I can; Class 1-65) (DVDs)

#### Hakat ba Oin

- *Hakat ba Oin; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Livru 1. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 1. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)

- *Hakat ba Oin; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Livru 2. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 2. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Hakat ba Oin; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Livru 3. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 3. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Hakat ba Oin; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Livru 4. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 4. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Hakat ba Oin; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Manual profesór nian. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Teacher manual. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)

### **Passo em Frente**

- *Passo em Frente; Ler e escrever para adultos. Livro 1. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 1. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Passo em Frente; Ler e escrever para adultos. Livro 2. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 2. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Passo em Frente; Ler e escrever para adultos. Livro 3. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 3. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Passo em Frente; Ler e escrever para adultos. Livro 4. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Book 4. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Passo em Frente; Ler e escrever para adultos. Manual do professor. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(Step forward; Reading and writing for adults. Teacher manual. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)

## Iha Dalan

- *Iha Dalan; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Livru 1. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(On the way; Reading and writing for adults. Book 1. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Iha Dalan; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Livru 2. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(On the way; Reading and writing for adults. Book 2. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *Iha Dalan; Lee no hakerek ba adultu sira. Manual profesór nian. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(On the way; Reading and writing for adults. Teacher manual. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)

## A Caminho

- *A Caminho; Ler e escrever para adultos. Livro 1. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(On the way; Reading and writing for adults. Book 1. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *A Caminho; Ler e escrever para adultos. Livro 2. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(On the way; Reading and writing for adults. Book 2. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)
- *A Caminho; Ler e escrever para adultos. Manual do professor. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação.*  
(On the way; Reading and writing for adults. Teacher manual. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education.)

## YEP Literacy & Numeracy

- *YEP Alfabetizasaun & Kalkulasaun; Livru 1; Seleksaun Hakat ba Oin. República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação, Secretária de Estado da Formação Profissional e Emprego, Ministério da Saúde.*  
(YEP Literacy & Numeracy; Book 1; Selection Step Forward. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education, Secretary of State of Professional Training and Employment, Ministry of Health.)

- *YEP Alfabetizasaun & Kalkulasaun; Livru 2; Seleksaun Iha Dalan.*  
*República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Ministério da Educação, Secretária de Estado da Formação Profissional e Emprego, Ministério da Saúde.*  
(YEP Literacy & Numeracy; Book 2; Selection On the Way. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education, Secretary of State of Professional Training and Employment, Ministry of Health.)



## APPENDIX 2A

# Teacher questionnaire (in Tetum)<sup>44</sup>

### Kestionáriu ba profesór/monitór alfabetizasaun

Data: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I Dadus:

- 1 Naran: \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Aldeia: \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Suku: \_\_\_\_\_  
4 Subdistritu: \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Distritu: \_\_\_\_\_  
6 Seksu: Mane / Feto 7 Data moris nian: \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

#### II Edukasaun:

- 8 Tinan hira Edukasaun Primária: \_\_\_\_\_ Ramata iha tinan saida? \_\_\_\_\_  
9a Tinan hira Edukasaun Pre-Sekundária: \_\_\_\_\_ Ramata iha tinan saida? \_\_\_\_\_  
9b Tinan hira Edukasaun Sekundária: \_\_\_\_\_ Ramata iha tinan saida? \_\_\_\_\_  
10 Edukasaun seluk tan remata?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bainhira? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bainhira? \_\_\_\_\_  
11 Treinamente saida Ita partisipa tiha ona? (Iae alfabetizasaun maibé seluk):  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bainhira? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bainhira? \_\_\_\_\_

#### III Uza lian iha vida diáriu:

- 12 Lian saida mak Ita aprende uluk iha uma? (lian rasik / lian inan)?

Tuir mai, lian saida mak Ita aprende? (Orden saida?)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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<sup>44</sup> The original questionnaire was printed in Arial font, size 11, on eight pages, with more writing space than shown here.

13 Ita hatene lian saida? (X)

		<i>Komprende</i>	<i>Koalia</i>	<i>Lee</i>	<i>Hakerek</i>
Lian ofisiál sira	Tetum				
	Portugés				
Lian inter-nasionál sira	Bahasa Indonézia				
	Inglés				
Lian nasional sira	Habun				
	Galoli (Galolen)				
	Atauran (Wetarese)				
	Kawaimina				
	Welaun (Bekais)				
	Idalaka				
	Mambai (Manbae)				
	Kemak (Ema)				
	Tokodede				
	Baikenu (Dawan)				
	Makuva				
	Bunak (Gai')				
	Makassai (Makasae)				
	Makalero				
Fataluku (Fatalukunu)					
Dialeto sira:	_____				
	_____				

14 Lian saida mak Ita uza:

iha uma ho aman-inan: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ho kaben: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ho labarik sira: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ho família seluk: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ho viziñu sira: \_\_\_\_\_  
 iha tempu livre, ho maluk sira: \_\_\_\_\_  
 iha merkadu: \_\_\_\_\_  
 iha kontaktu ho administrasaun distritu: \_\_\_\_\_  
 iha kontaktu ho governu: \_\_\_\_\_  
 iha igreja: \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV Servisu:

##### a) Esperiência hanesan profesór alfabetizasaun nian

15 Esperiência hanorin alfabetizasaun iha edukasaun ba adultu sira:

tinan/fulan hira: \_\_\_\_\_



22 Ita hanorin alfabetizasaun iha ne'ebé?

Aldeia: \_\_\_\_\_ Suku: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subdistritu: \_\_\_\_\_ Distritu: \_\_\_\_\_

23 Ita hanorin iha sala laran? loos / lae

Karik lae: iha ne'ebé? \_\_\_\_\_

Iha fatin ne'ebé ita hanorin:

- Iha eletrisidade? loos / lae
- Iha kadeira sira? loos / lae
- Iha meja? loos / lae
- Iha kuadru metan / mutin? loos / lae
- Ita iha jís / espidol natoon? loos / lae
- Ita iha kadernu natoon? loos / lae
- Ita iha lapis/lapizeira natoon? loos / lae

24 Favor marka (X) lian sira Ita uza durante hanorin no durante ko'alia ho estudante sira:

- Tetun  
 Portugés  
 Bahasa Indonézia  
 Lian nasional: \_\_\_\_\_

1 Habun	6 Idalaka	11 Makuva
2 Galoli/Galolen	7 Mambai/Manbae	12 Bunak/Gai'
3 Atauran/Wetarese	8 Kemak/Ema	13 Makassar/Makasae
4 Kawaimina	9 Tokodede	14 Makalero
5 Welaun/Bekais	10 Baikenu/Dawan	15 Fataluku/Fatalukunu

Dialeto: \_\_\_\_\_

#### b) Kona-ba Ita-nia estudante sira

25 Dadaun ne'e Ita hanorin grupu hira? \_\_\_\_\_

Grupu ida-idak estudante hira? \_\_\_\_\_

Mane ka feto? Hira? \_\_\_\_\_

Idade Ita-nia estudante sira? \_\_\_\_\_

Sira nain hira mak marka prezensa ativu? \_\_\_\_\_

26 Ita hatene nivel hahú estudante nian? Hira:

\_\_\_\_\_ nivel 0 (la bele tiha lee no hakerek)

\_\_\_\_\_ nivel intermediáriu (bele tiha lee no hakerek oituan)

\_\_\_\_\_ nivel avansadu (bele tiha lee no hakerek maibé hakarak aprende liután)

27 Tansá mak Ita-nia estudante sira **hakarak** aprende lee no hakerek?

**Oinsá** ita-nia estudante hakarak **uza** sira-nia kapasidade lee no hakerek iha sira-nia moris loroloron?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

28 Ita-nia estudante sira husu Ita-nia tulun hodi lee ka hakerek buat ruma ne'ebé sira lori husi uma mai?

- loos, baibain
- loos, dalaruma
- lae, nunka

Karik loos: Horibainhira? Ita tulun sira halo saida?

---



---

29 Lian inan saida Ita-nia estudante sira iha?

Ko'alia barakliu: \_\_\_\_\_

Seluk tan: \_\_\_\_\_

Ita mós ko'alia lian sira-ne'e? \_\_\_\_\_

Ita uza lian sira-ne'e iha aula alfabetizasaun nian atu esplika kona-ba ezersisiu sira?

---

**c) Opiniaun sira**

30 Ita-nia opiniaun kona-ba programa alfabetizasaun nian Ita hanorin:

---

31 Ita-nia opiniaun kona-ba material alfabetizasaun nian Ita uza:

Ita kontente ho livru sira-ne'e?

---

Ita-nia opiniaun saida kona-ba métodu instrusaun nian, kona-ba konteúdu?

---

Parte saida husi livru ba estudante difisil ba estudante sira?

---

Falta buat ruma iha livru ba estudante? Ita hakarak aumenta saida?

---

Parte saida husi livru ne'e Ita nunka uza?

---

Parte ida-ne'ebé husi livru ne'e di'ak liu maka Ita hakarak aumenta liu tan?

---

32 Ita-nia opiniaun kona-ba treinamente alfabetizasaun ne'ebé Ita partisipa ona:

Treinamentu: Di'ak Sufisiente Ladi'ak  
Tansá?

---

Buat saida Ita uza husi ne'e Ita aprende husi treinamentu?

---

Saida maka Ita la aprende husi ne'e? (Falta saida iha treinamentu?)

---

Ba treinamente tuirmai:

Saida mak Ita hakarak aprende barakliu kona-ba hanorin alfabetizasaun?

---



---

Saida mak Ita hakarak pratika barakliu? (kona-ba hanorin alfabetizasaun)

---



---

33 Ita-nia opiniaun kona-ba lian sira ba aprende alfabetizasaun:

Ho lian saida mak Ita prefere liu atu hanorin alfabetizasaun?

Tetun

Portugés

Seluk tan: \_\_\_\_\_

Tanbasá?

---

Saida mak Ita-nia **estudante** prefere liu?

Aprende lee no hakerek iha:

Tetun

Portugés

Seluk tan: \_\_\_\_\_

Tanbasá?

---

**d) Ita-nia papél hanesan profesór alfabetizasaun iha comunidade**

34 Iha ema seluk dalaruma husu ita-nia tulun kona-ba lee ka hakerek?

loos, baibain

loos, dalaruma

lae, nunka

Karik loos: Horibainhira? Ita tulun sira ho saida?

---



---

APPENDIX 2B

# Teacher questionnaire (in English)

## Questionnaire for literacy teachers

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### I Personal Data:

- 1 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Hamlet: \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Village: \_\_\_\_\_  
4 Subdistrict: \_\_\_\_\_ 5 District: \_\_\_\_\_  
6 Sex: Male / Female 7 Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

### II Education:

- 8 Nr. of years primary education: \_\_\_\_\_ Finished in what year? \_\_\_\_\_  
9a Nr. of years pre-secondary education: \_\_\_\_\_ Finished in what year? \_\_\_\_\_  
9b Nr. of years secondary education: \_\_\_\_\_ Finished in what year? \_\_\_\_\_  
10 Did you do other education?  
\_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_  
11 Did you attend any trainings (not literacy but other):  
\_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

### III Language use in personal life:

- 12 What was your first language (mother tongue)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What language(s) did you learn later? In which order?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13 Which languages do you know? Tick: (with X)

		Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Official languages	Tetum				
	Portuguese				
International languages	Indonesian				
	English				
National languages	<i>Habun</i>				
	<i>Galoli (Galolen)</i>				
	<i>Atauran (Wetarese)</i>				
	<i>Kawaimina</i>				
	<i>Welaun (Bekais)</i>				
	<i>Idalaka</i>				
	<i>Mambai (Manbae)</i>				
	<i>Kemak (Ema)</i>				
	<i>Tokodede</i>				
	<i>Baikenu (Dawan)</i>				
	<i>Makuva</i>				
	<i>Bunak (Gai')</i>				
	<i>Makassai (Makasae)</i>				
<i>Makalero</i>					
<i>Fataluku (Fatalukunu)</i>					
Dialect(s):	_____				
	_____				
	_____				

14 What language do you use:

at home with parents: \_\_\_\_\_

with husband/wife: \_\_\_\_\_

with children: \_\_\_\_\_

with other family: \_\_\_\_\_

with neighbours: \_\_\_\_\_

in free time, with friends: \_\_\_\_\_

on the market: \_\_\_\_\_

in contact with district administration: \_\_\_\_\_

in contact with national government: \_\_\_\_\_

in church: \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV Work:

##### a) Experience as a literacy teacher

15 Month/years of literacy teaching experience in adult education: \_\_\_\_\_





22 Where do you teach literacy?

Hamlet: \_\_\_\_\_ Village: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subdistrict: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

23 Do you teach in a classroom? yes / no

If no: where else? \_\_\_\_\_

At the place where you teach:

- Is there electricity? yes / no
- Are there chairs? yes / no
- Are there tables? yes / no
- Is there a black/whiteboard? yes / no
- Do you have enough chalk? yes / no
- Do you have enough notebooks? yes / no
- Do you have enough pencils/pens? yes / no

24 Please tick (X) the languages that you use while teaching and while talking to your students:

- Tetum  
 Portuguese  
 Indonesian  
 National language: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                           |                         |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 <i>Habun</i>            | 6 <i>Idalaka</i>        | 11 <i>Makuva</i>              |
| 2 <i>Galoli/Galolen</i>   | 7 <i>Mambai/Manbae</i>  | 12 <i>Bunak/Gai'</i>          |
| 3 <i>Atauran/Wetarese</i> | 8 <i>Kemak/Em</i>       | 13 <i>Makassai/Makasae</i>    |
| 4 <i>Kawaimina</i>        | 9 <i>Tokodede</i>       | 14 <i>Makalero</i>            |
| 5 <i>Welaun/Bekais</i>    | 10 <i>Baikenu/Dawan</i> | 15 <i>Fataluku/Fatalukunu</i> |

Dialect: \_\_\_\_\_

### b) About your students

25 How many groups do you teach at the moment? \_\_\_\_\_

How many students per group? \_\_\_\_\_

Men or women? How many? \_\_\_\_\_

Average age of your students? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of them normally show up? \_\_\_\_\_

26 Do you know the starting level of your students? How many were:

- \_\_\_\_\_ beginners (could not read and write)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ intermediate (could read and write but little)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ advanced (could read and write ok but wanted to learn more)

27 Why do your students want to learn to read and write?

What do your literacy students want to use their reading and writing skills for in their daily life?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

28 Do your students ask your help with Reading or writing something that they bring from home?

- yes, often  
 yes, sometimes  
 no, never

If yes: when? What do you help them with?

---



---

29 What are the mother tongues of your students?

most spoken: \_\_\_\_\_

other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you speak those languages as well? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you use those languages in literacy class to explain about the tasks?

---

**c) Opinions**

30 Your opinion on the literacy programme you teach:

---

31 Your opinion on the literacy manuals you use:

Are you happy, satisfied with these books?

---

What is your opinion on the method of instruction, on the content?

---

What parts of the students' books are difficult for the students?

---

Are there things missing in the books? What would you like to add?

---

Which part(s) of the books do you never use?

---

Which part (s) of the books is so good that you would like to have more of it?

---

32 Your opinion on the literacy training(s) you attended:

The training(s) was/where: Good      Sufficient      Bad

Why?

---

What do you use from what you have learned in the training?

---

What did you miss in the training(s)?

---

For the next training:

What do you want to learn more about literacy teaching?

---



---

What would you like to practise more? (when it comes to teaching literacy)

---



---

33 Your opinion on the languages for literacy acquisition:

In which language do you prefer to teach literacy?

Tetum

Portuguese

other: \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

---

What do you think most of your students prefer?

Learning to read and write in:

Tetum

Portuguese

other: \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

---

**d) Your role (as a literacy teacher) in the community**

34 Do other people sometimes ask your help with reading or writing?

yes, often

yes, sometimes

no, never

If yes: when? What do you help them with?

---



---

## APPENDIX 3

# Learner data form and grapheme recognition task

### Learner data form<sup>45</sup>

Date: _____	Place: _____
Name: _____	
Sex: F / M	Age: _____
Languages: _____	
Did learner go to primary school? (If yes, when, for how long?): _____	
When did learner start in this literacy course? _____	
Did learner already do another literacy course before this one? (If yes, which one, for how long?) _____	

### Grapheme recognition task<sup>46</sup> (score form)

<i>letra:</i>	+ / -	<i>letra:</i>	+ / -	<i>letra:</i>	+ / -
v		e		eu	
d		m		oi	
b		i		ou	
h		r		ç	
o		x		ão	
n		í		q	
t		ú		ñ	
s		é		oo	
z		ó		k	
g		ei		y	

<sup>45</sup> The original learner data form was written in Portuguese, for me to have the right words available at the research site.

<sup>46</sup> The original grapheme recognition task was printed on one page, in Arial font, size 22, bold, without table lines, or space for scores.



## APPENDIX 4

### Word reading task<sup>47</sup>

1	<i>lee</i> (read)	41	<i>labarik</i> (child)
2	<i>haas</i> (mango)	42	<i>nakfakar</i> (spill, be spilled)
3	<i>ida</i> (one)	43	<i>hanorin</i> (teach)
4	<i>uma</i> (house)	44	<i>bainhira</i> (when)
5	<i>manu</i> (chicken)	45	<i>tarutu</i> (noise)
6	<i>bola</i> (ball)	46	<i>malirin</i> (cold/cool)
7	<i>fahi</i> (pig)	47	<i>raiseluk</i> (foreign)
8	<i>oan</i> (baby)	48	<i>badinas</i> (hard-working)
9	<i>paun</i> (bread)	49	<i>lakleur</i> (soon)
10	<i>Timor</i>	50	<i>nakukun</i> (dark, darkness)
11	<i>ba</i> (to/for)	51	<i>ikusmai</i> (finally)
12	<i>ka</i> (or)	52	<i>haruka</i> (send/order)
13	<i>la</i> (not, isn't)	53	<i>naroman</i> (light)
14	<i>ho</i> (and, with)	54	<i>lakohi</i> (refuse)
15	<i>no</i> (and)	55	<i>nafatin</i> (always)
16	<i>ne'e</i> (this, it)	56	<i>hakilar</i> (shout)
17	<i>sei</i> (will)	57	<i>hateten</i> (tell, say)
18	<i>mós</i> (also)	58	<i>matenek</i> (clever, wise)
19	<i>boot</i> (big)	59	<i>labele</i> (cannot)
20	<i>ha'u</i> (I, me)	60	<i>hanesan</i> (same)
21	<i>lia</i> (word, message, question, matter, problem)	61	<i>seluseluk</i> (various others)
22	<i>nia</i> (he, him, she, her, it, his, her, its)	62	<i>loroloron</i> (every day)
23	<i>iha</i> (in, into, have)	63	<i>matابخu</i> (breakfast)
24	<i>nian</i> (his, her)	64	<i>dalaruma</i> (sometimes)
25	<i>di'ak</i> (good)	65	<i>odamatan</i> (door)
26	<i>foti</i> (raise, lift up, praise)	66	<i>tekiteki</i> (immediately, at once)
27	<i>sira</i> (they, them)	67	<i>barakliu</i> (much more, many more)
28	<i>hotu</i> (all)	68	<i>ulukliu</i> (earlier)
29	<i>ohin</i> (today)	69	<i>liuhusi</i> (via, by means of, through)
30	<i>kria</i> (make, create)	70	<i>filafali</i> (again)
31	<i>tenki</i> (have to)	71	<i>komentáriu</i> (comment)
32	<i>joven</i> (youth, young)	72	<i>prezidente</i> (president)
33	<i>tomak</i> (all, whole, entire)	73	<i>independente</i> (independent)
34	<i>nu'udar</i> (like)	74	<i>komunikadu</i> (communicated)
35	<i>serve</i> (useful)	75	<i>unidade</i> (unity)
36	<i>maibé</i> (but)	76	<i>lansamentu</i> (launch)
37	<i>oinsá</i> (how)	77	<i>politika</i> (political)
38	<i>dadauk</i> (at present)	78	<i>favoravel</i> (favourable)
39	<i>hanoin</i> (think)	79	<i>koordinadora</i> (coordinator – f)
40	<i>ne'ebé</i> (which)	80	<i>ekonomia</i> (economy)

<sup>47</sup> The original word reading task was printed on two pages, page layout landscape, in Arial, font size 16, words in rows of ten, without numbers (and without English translation).





## APPENDIX 5

### Form-filling task<sup>48</sup>

Naran:	_____
Data moris nian:	_____
Suku:	_____
Subdistritu:	_____
Distritu:	_____
Lian uluk:	_____
Lian daruak :	_____
Asinatura :	_____
<i>Hakarak aprende lee no hakerek, tanba</i>	_____
	_____

---

<sup>48</sup> The original form-filling task was printed on one page, Arial font, size 18, with more writing space than shown here.



## APPENDIX 6

### Word-writing task<sup>49</sup>

1	_____	( <i>uma</i> , house)
2	_____	( <i>paun</i> , bread)
3	_____	( <i>ka</i> , or)
4	_____	( <i>sei</i> , will)
5	_____	( <i>iha</i> , in/into/have)
6	_____	( <i>hotu</i> , all)
7	_____	( <i>hanoin</i> , think)
8	_____	( <i>dadauk</i> , at present)
9	_____	( <i>tarutu</i> , noise)
10	_____	( <i>bainhira</i> , when)

---

<sup>49</sup> The original word-writing task was printed on one page, Arial font, size 18, only the numbers 1 to 10 with a lined space after each number, with more writing space than shown here.



## APPENDIX 7

### Overview in-depth study

#### A Classes observed

Nr. Class:	Nr. Group:	Date:	Location: <i>aldeia</i> (hamlet), <i>suco</i> (village), subdistrict, district	Programme:	Described in detail in Section:
1	1	25-11-2010	Siralari, Caraubalo, Viqueque, Viqueque	Los Hau Bele	6.3.2
2	2	06-12-2010	Sarlala, Selo Kraik, Aileu-Vila, Aileu	Hakat ba Oin	6.2.2
3	3	20-02-2011	Debos, Suai, Covalima	Los Hau Bele	6.3.2
4	4	06-07-2011	Metin, Nain feto, Lah. Oriental, Dili	Los Hau Bele	6.2.1
5	4	11-07-2011	Metin, Nain feto, Lah. Oriental, Dili	Los Hau Bele	6.2.1 6.3.2
6	4	12-07-2011	Metin, Nain feto, Lah. Oriental, Dili	Los Hau Bele	6.2.1
7	5	13-07-2011	Tahobate, Tocoluli, Railaku, Ermera	Los Hau Bele	6.2.1
8	5	15-07-2011	Tahobate, Tocoluli, Railaku, Ermera	Los Hau Bele	6.2.1 6.3.2
9	5	18-07-2011	Tahobate, Tocoluli, Railaku, Ermera	Los Hau Bele	6.2.1
10	6	20-07-2011	Poana, Humboe, Ermera, Ermera	Hakat ba Oin	–
11	7	03-11-2011m	Camilaran, Letefoho, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	–
12	7	03-11-2011a	Camilaran, Letefoho, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	–
13	8	04-11-2011m	Lapuro, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	–
14	8	04-11-2011a	Lapuro, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	–
15	9	05-11-2011m	Sea-rema, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	6.2.3
16	9	05-11-2011a	Sea-rema, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	6.2.3
17	10	07-11-2011	Bemetan, Betano, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	–
18	11	08-11-2011	Rai-ubu, Letefoho, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan	6.2.3
19	12	11-11-2011	Carlilo, Aiteas, Man.-Vila, Manatuto	Hakat ba Oin	6.2.2
20	12	14-11-2011	Carlilo, Aiteas, Man.-Vila, Manatuto	Hakat ba Oin	6.2.2

Section 6.2 includes **groups** number 2, 4, 5, 9, 11 and 12.

Section 6.3 includes **classes** number 1, 3, 5 and 8.

## B Interviews conducted

Nr.	With:	Sex:	Date:	Location: <i>Aldeia (hamlet), suco (village), subdistrict, district</i>	Programme:
1	T	f	07-07-2011	Metin, Nain feto, Lah. Oriental, Dili	Los Hau Bele
2	Lg		07-07-2011	Metin, Nain feto, Lah. Oriental, Dili	Los Hau Bele
3	sdC	m	22-07-2011	Metin, Nain feto, Lah. Oriental, Dili	all
4	sdC	m	14-07-2011	Gleno, Ermera	all
5	Lg		15-07-2011	Tahobate, Tocoluli, Railaku, Ermera	Los Hau Bele
6	sdC	m	15-07-2011	Gleno, Ermera	all
7	T	f	18-07-2011	Tahobate, Tocoluli, Railaku, Ermera	Los Hau Bele
8	dC	m	18-07-2011	Gleno, Ermera	all
9	Lg		20-07-2011	Poeana, Humboe, Ermera, Ermera	Los Hau Bele
10	T	f	20-07-2011	Poeana, Humboe, Ermera, Ermera	Hakat ba Oin
11	Lg		03-11-2011	Camilaran, Letefoho, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
12	T	f	03-11-2011	CamilaranLetefoho, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
13	Lg		04-11-2011	Lapuro, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
14	T	f	04-11-2011	Lapuro, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
15	Lg		05-11-2011	Sea-rema, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
16	T	m	05-11-2011	Sea-rema, Babulo, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
17	Lg		07-11-2011	Bemetan, Betano, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
18	T	f	07-11-2011	Bemetan, Betano, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
19	Lg		08-11-2011	Rai-ubu, Letefoho, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
20	T	f	08-11-2011	Rai-ubu, Letefoho, Same, Manufahi	Iha Dalan
21	sdC	m	08-11-2011	Same, Manufahi	all
22	Lg		11-11-2011	Carlilo, Aiteas, Man.-Vila, Manatuto	Hakat ba Oin
23	T	m	11-11-2011	Carlilo, Aiteas, Man.-Vila, Manatuto	Hakat ba Oin
24	T	m	17-11-2011	Rembor, Aiteas, Man.-Vila, Manatuto	Hakat ba Oin
25	dC	m	17-11-2011	Rembor, Aiteas, Man.-Vila, Manatuto	all
Tot: 9 10 6					

T = teacher

Lg = learner group

sdC = subdistrict coordinator

dC = district coordinator

## APPENDIX 8

# Class observation checklist

### Make field notes about:

#### Teacher:

- Man/woman
- Age
- Way of teaching
- Languages used

#### Adult learners:

- How many?
- Men/women
- Ages
- How do they participate?
- What languages do they use?

#### Interaction between teacher and learners:

- Language(s)
- Content of interaction
- Atmosphere

#### Interaction between learners:

- Language(s)
- Content of interaction
- Atmosphere

#### Classroom:

- Are there tables, chairs?
- Is there electricity, a black/whiteboard?
- Where is the blackboard positioned, can learners see it well?
- How are the learners sitting (circle, everyone apart)?
- What objects are put on the walls that are relevant for the lesson (alphabet, numbers, etc.)?

#### Materials they use:

- Books? DVD's? Notebooks? Copies? Other?
- Are there enough materials? (books, notebooks, pencils, erasers, etc. for everybody?)
- How do they use the materials?
- In what language(s) are the materials?
- In what language(s) do they talk about the materials?

Lesson content today:

- What does the teacher teach, what are the learners supposed to learn?
- Is there a focus on reading, or writing, or both?
- What languages are being used?

What is happening on the blackboard?

- What is being written, how, why, by whom?
- In what language(s)?
- What is the role of the blackboard in the lessons? (Central role, or less important?)

Things they write in their notebooks:

- What do the learners write?
- How do they write?
- In what languages?
- Does the teacher go round and check the writing in the notebooks?

Audio recording

Switch on audio recorder a few minutes before the lesson starts and switch off a few minutes after the lesson finishes to record a bit of small talk before and after the lesson, both among learners and between learners and teacher (In what language do they speak? About what kind of subjects? Are different languages used on-task and off-task? etc.).



## APPENDIX 9

# Interview guidelines

## 1 Guideline for interviews with adult learners

### Languages:

- What languages are being used during the literacy classes? For example: today what languages were used?
- What other languages do you use outside the classroom?
- What languages would you prefer in literacy classes, for the books, for the explanation, for the reading and writing?

### Content & learning:

- What kinds of things (do you learn) are you being taught during the literacy classes? (letters, words, reading, writing, etc.) For example: what did you learn today?
- Do you think these things are difficult to learn? Or easy? Why?
- Do you learn enough? Or too much? Would you like to learn more? Other things?
- How does reading work? What should you be able to do, to read words/sentences?
- (In case they use the Cuban programme:) Combining letters and numbers, how does that work? Can you explain to me how that works? Is it useful to you? Does it make the reading easier?

### Relevance/profit:

- How relevant are the things you learn in the classes for you and your life/work? For example: how relevant is what you learned today?
- Do you use the things that you learn (inside the classes) outside, in your daily life/work in the community? When? How? With whom?

### Interaction:

- Do you now communicate with people in writing/reading?

### Mediation:

- Do you ask people to help you when you have to read or write things (outside the classroom) that are difficult for you? Who? (Adults? Children?) How do they help you?

### Opinions/values:

- What do you think about this literacy course? Do you have suggestions for a next round?
- What do you think about the teaching? About the materials used (books/DVDs, etc.)?
- Why is being able to read and write important for you? (What does it bring you?)

Certificates:

- Do you have/will you receive a certificate for participating in this course?
- Is it important for you to have a certificate? Why?

Future:

- Would you like to continue learning in another literacy course after this one? Why? What?
- What things would you like to be able to do, and cannot do yet? (reading newspaper/bible/letters, writing letters/prayers/products & prices, etc.)

**2 Guideline for interviews with teachers**Languages:

- What languages are being used during the literacy classes? (Like in today's lesson.)
- When (in what cases, for what purposes) do you use which languages?
- Do you use other languages outside the classroom?
- What languages would you prefer in literacy classes, for the books, for the explanation, for the reading and writing?
- Do you speak the same local language as your learners? (Are you from this region originally?)
- In the lesson observed you switched several times from language x to language y and z. Why, and why at those moments? (refer to audio recordings)

Content & method:

- What kinds of things do you teach during the literacy classes? For example: what did you teach today?
- Why do you teach them?
- Why do you teach this?
- How do you teach them?
- How do you teach this?
- Why do you teach them like that? (in that way/manner?)
- With what effect?
- How do you teach learners to read new words? What should they be able to do, to read new words? How does reading work?
- (In case they use the Cuban programme:) Combining letters and numbers, how does it work? Can you explain to me how that works? Is it useful according to you? Does it make the reading easier for the learners? Does it make the teaching easier?
- etc.

Ideas/opinions/values:

- What makes someone a good literacy teacher? Why?
- What is important to do/be/have to become a good literacy teacher?
- Why do you think it is important that adults can read and write?
- What is/are your main ambition(s) in literacy teaching?

About the learners:

- What do you think your learners should learn during your literacy course?
- What is your opinion about how your learners are learning in the classes?
- What is difficult for them? What is easy for them?
- How is their participation? (Do all of them show up all the time?)
- How do the learners participate in the lessons? (actively/passively, enthusiastic/with hesitation, etc.)
- What sort of things do you think are important to learn for your learners?
- How do your learners use their reading and writing skills in their daily lives?

Mediation:

- Do you sometimes help your learners with reading and writing in their daily lives? If so: when, with what kind of things do you help them? Do you help other people also?

Programme:

- What do you think about this literacy programme? Do you have suggestions for a next round? What would you change/add/delete?
- What do you think about the materials used (books/DVDs, teacher manual, etc)?
- Would you like to continue teaching in another literacy course after this one? Why? The same course or a different one? (with different materials, on a different level)

Testing:

- Do participants make tests during/at the end of the course?
- What is tested?
- In what language?
- How do the tests take place, how are they organised? Who supervises the testing?
- What is your opinion about the test(s)?

Certificates:

- Do the learners in your programme receive certificates after finishing the course?
- Are certificates important for them? For you? Why?
- In what language are the certificates?

Training:

- What teacher training did you attend? When, where, by whom, how long, about what?
- In what language?
- What materials did you use/receive during the teacher training sessions?
- In what language(s)?
- Was the teacher training good? Were there things you would like to add/delete/change?
- Would you like to attend more teacher training?
- What kinds of things would you like to learn/practice in teacher training?
- Where should more teacher training take place? (In Dili or the districts, in a separate place/time or 'on the job'/'in service' during your classes, etc.)

- What kind of materials would you like to receive and work on during teacher training?
  - (a) materials to use in the classes with your learners, or b) materials that you as a teacher can learn from, like a teacher handbook for adult literacy, guidelines on how to teach literacy to adults, or c) materials about standard Tetum, spelling & grammar, etc.)

### 3 Guideline for interviews with coordinators

#### Coordination:

- What are your tasks as a coordinator?
- How is the coordination organised?
- What languages do you use while coordinating? At the local level, when reporting to the district/national office, etc.
- What is working well, what problems do you encounter?

#### Participation:

- How many participants are registered?
- How many participants take part actively?
- How is the participation by adult learners?
- What languages do they speak?

#### Teaching:

- How do the teachers do their work, in your opinion?
- What languages do they use? In what languages do you communicate with them?

#### Training:

- How is teacher training being delivered? In what languages?
- What is good in the teacher training? What should change?

#### Languages:

- What languages are being used in the literacy programmes?
- What languages do you prefer for literacy programmes?
- Are the teachers from the region, do they speak the local languages?

#### Opinions:

- What is your opinion about the various literacy programmes? (materials, content, length, languages, etc.) Why do you think that?
- What is good in the literacy programmes? What should change?

#### Inspection:

- Is there inspection of literacy programmes?
- How does inspection take place? In what languages?
- What kind of things do inspectors want to know?
- Do you need to write reports?

Testing:

- Do participants make tests during/at the end of the course?
- What is tested?
- In what languages?
- How do the tests take place, how are they organised? Who supervises the testing?
- What is your opinion about these tests?

Certificates:

- Do learners receive certificates after finishing the programme?
- How does it work with the certificates: who makes them, signs them, delivers them?
- Are certificates important in your/their view?
- In what language are the certificates?

Continued learning:

- Can learners continue learning after the literacy courses? What? How? In what languages?
- Are there enough possibilities for continued learning?



## APPENDIX 10

### Overview content class observations

Cl.	Progr.	Lesson content in Tetum:	English translation
1	LHB	1 hour numeracy: the 4 operations, until 21. 1 hour literacy: letters of the alphabet with numbers below, C/Kandida; <i>ba be bi bo bu ca ce ci co cu da de di do du, ab eb ib ob ub; uma, manu, dalan, kalsa, maluk, kama, Viqueque/Bikeke, Julião, ha'u.</i>	1 hour numeracy: the 4 operations, until 21. 1 hour literacy: letters of the alphabet with numbers below, C/Kandida; <i>ba be bi bo bu ca ce ci co cu da de di do du, ab eb ib ob ub; house, chicken, road, trousers, friend, bed, Viqueque/Bikeke, Julião, I.</i>
2	HBO	<i>F, feto, fa fe fi fo fu, fahi, fulan, tuna, foho, foun, faan, Hau ba fohan, Hau ba fa'an, Hau ba foti, Hau fohan fahi, t, Hau ba tein, Hau ba tasi, Hau ba to'os, Hau fahe foos, Hau fahe etu, Hau foin mae, Hau fui bee, Hau iha batar fini, hau iha fitu ida, Hau ba tau ahi, Hau ba fase, Ohin dadeer hau ba faan folin iha merkado, Hau ba kuu kafe, Hau iha fahi ida, Hau fahe sasan ba hau nia kolega, fase, fulan, fitun, Fitun nabilan iha kalan, a/A, Hau iha oan feto ida, fuma, tabaku, foti, futu, Hau futu ai, faan, Hau faan malus, t, tasi, Hau ba tasi, toba, Hau ba toba, tunu.</i>	<i>F, woman, fa fe fi fo fu, pig, month, eel, mountain, new, sell, I'm going into the mountains, I'm going to sell, I'm going to pick up, I feed the pig, t, I'm going to cook, I'm going to the beach, I'm going to the field, I divide the (uncooked) rice, I divide the (cooked) rice, I just came, I pour water, I have corn seed, I have a thread/wire, I'm going to make fire, I'm going to wash, This morning I went to sell price/value at the market, I'm going to pick coffee, I have a pig, I divide the goods for my friend, wash, month, star, the star shines at night, a/A, I have a daughter, smoke, tobacco, pick up, tie up into a bundle, I tie up wood in a bundle, sell, I sell betel pepper, t, beach, I'm going to the beach, lie down/sleep, I'm going to lie down, bake/roast.</i>
3	LHB	<i>p-r with numbers below, professora prepara bolus, prepara, pra pre pri pro pru, primeiro, professor, Hau prepara lisaun, Ita boot lee primeiro, Professora ba prasa; letters of the alphabet with numbers below, presidente, kuadru preto, a menina muito branca, Hau nia naran ..., writing first &amp; family name, writing name of aldeia, suku, subdistrict, district.</i>	<i>p-r with numbers below, the teacher makes cakes, prepare, pra pre pri pro pru, first, teacher, I prepare the lesson, You read first, the teacher goes to the square; letters of the alphabet with numbers below, president, blackboard, the girl is very white, My name is ..., writing first &amp; family name, writing name of hamlet, village, subdistrict, district.</i>

4	LHB	<i>Pr &amp; kr</i> with numbers under letters; <i>kra kre kri kro kru</i> ; <i>krakat, kredito, kroat, krut</i> ; <i>Ema kaer kroat</i> ; <i>a e i o u</i> with numbers below; <i>kra kre kri kro kru</i> with numbers nrs below; first and family names	<i>Pr &amp; kr</i> with numbers under letters; <i>kra kre kri kro kru</i> ; ..., <i>credit, sharp/weapon, frizzly</i> ; <i>The person holds a weapon</i> ; <i>a e i o u</i> with numbers below; <i>kra kre kri kro kru</i> with numbers below; first and family names
5	LHB	<i>Tr, tr+a/e/i/o/u/l, tra tre tri tro tru</i> ; <i>trata, trigu, troka</i> ; <i>tra tre tri tro tru</i> with numbers below; date; <i>a e i o u</i> with numbers below; writing name, sex, country, birth date, signature.	<i>Tr, tr+a/e/i/o/u/l, tra tre tri tro tru</i> ; <i>arrange, flour, wheat, replace/change</i> ; <i>tra tre tri tro tru</i> with numbers below; date; <i>a e i o u</i> with numbers below; writing name, sex, country, birth date, signature.
6	LHB	<i>Gra gre gri gro gru, G, g; a e i o u</i> with nrs below; <i>g, G</i> with number 18 below; <i>Guterres</i> with <i>G</i> , <i>Augusta</i> with <i>g</i> ; writing date, district, subdistrict, <i>suku, aldeia</i> .	<i>Gra gre gri gro gru, G, g; a e i o u</i> with nrs below; <i>g, G</i> with number 18 below; <i>Guterres</i> with <i>G</i> , <i>Augusta</i> with <i>g</i> ; writing date, district, subdistrict, village, hamlet.
7	LHB	<i>T, t</i> with numbers below; <i>tinta</i> with numbers below; <i>a e i o u; ta te ti to tu</i> ; <i>tempo, Timor, tomate</i> ; <i>a e i o u</i> with numbers below; <i>tinta</i> with numbers below; <i>talento, termina, timor, tinta, Tomas, tuir, tempu, terus, Teresa</i> ; <i>Teresa, tomato, tempo</i> with numbers below; first and family names with numbers below.	<i>T, t</i> with numbers below; <i>ink</i> with numbers below; <i>a e i o u; ta te ti to tu</i> ; <i>time, Timor, tomato</i> ; <i>a e i o u</i> with numbers below; <i>ink</i> with numbers below; <i>talent, ends, timor, ink, Tomas, follow, time, suffer, Teresa</i> ; <i>Teresa, tomato, tempo</i> with numbers below; first and family names with numbers below.
8	LHB	R-r with nr 10 below, <i>ra re ri ro ru, a e i o u</i> with numbers below; <i>railakan</i> with numbers below.	R-r with nr 10 below, <i>ra re ri ro ru, a e i o u</i> with numbers below; <i>lightning</i> with numbers below.
9	LHB	<i>S; sa se si so su; sanan</i> with numbers below; <i>sanan, sapatu, Sara, sinelos, sino, serafin</i> .	<i>S; sa se si so su; sanan</i> with numbers below; <i>pan/pot, shoe, Sara, slippers, bell, seraph</i> .
10	HBO	<i>S, sabraku, sapatu, senora, salsa, salsinha; sa-bra-ka, sa-pa-tu, sal-sa</i> ; letters of the alphabet, writing first and family names.	<i>S, orange, shoe, Mrs, parsley, parsley; sa-bra-ka, sa-pa-to, sal-sa</i> ; letters of the alphabet, writing first and family names.
11	ID	Text in Book 2 about <i>Dalen ho komunikaun</i> ; from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>komunikaun, kontakta, hanaran, hakerek, komunika, maneira, koletiva, telefonika, presiza, informasaun, halo, sira, nian, hodi, ami; matematika</i> ; addition until 100, subtraction and division under 10.	Text in Book 2 about <i>Languages and communication</i> ; from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>communication, contact, to call/to name, write, communicate, way, collective, telephone, need, information, make, (sira nian = their), (hodi= bring/take, so that/in order to), we/us; mathematics</i> ; addition until 100, subtraction and division under 10.



12	ID	Text in Book 2 about <i>Maneira Komunikaŝaun</i> ; from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>maneira, komunikaŝaun, hanesan, programa, rádiu, jornal, poster, hudi, informasaun, televizaun, tabela, matan, liman, sira, ita, kaneta, simu, telefone, uza, dalaruma, baibain, Rosa, kela</i> . Matematika: multiplication until 12.	Text in Book 2 about <i>Ways of communication</i> ; from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>way, communication, same/like, programme, radio, newspaper, poster, banana, information, television, table (of data), eye, hand, they, you, pen, receive, telephone, use, sometimes, usually, Rosa, cricket</i> . Mathematics: multiplication until 12.
13	ID	Text in Book 2 about <i>Republika Demokratika</i> ; from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>republika, demokratika, povo, partidu, politika</i> . Matematika: addition, subtraction under 50, multiplication until 75.	Text in Book 2 about <i>Democratic Republic</i> ; from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>republic, democratic, the people, party, political</i> . Mathematics: addition, subtraction under 50, multiplication until 75.
14	ID	Text in book 2 about water ( <i>bee</i> ). From whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>forma, gelu, likidu, fase, hanesan, lora, manas, rai, kalan, nabilan, naroman, Manufahi, Aileu, nakukun, bainhira</i> .	Text in book 2 about water ( <i>bee</i> ). From whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>form, ice, liquid, wash, same/like, day, hot, earth/land, night, shine, shinellight, Manufahi, Aileu, dark(ness), when</i> .
15	ID	Text in Book 2 about <i>Epoka udan; fehuk, hudi</i> , from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>agricultura, bailoron, colleita, produtu, ai-farina, halibur, tempu udan, batar, fehuk, hudi, talas, combili, hare/e, coto/koto, fore; nu' u, aidila, haas, kulu, ainanas, sabraka, tomate, kafe, aiata, derok; karau, kuda, bibi, fahi, manu, asu, busa, leki, rusa, loriko</i> ; Matematika: Addition: <i>Antonio iha sabraka 5. Maria iha sabraka 3. Sira nain rua tau hamutuk hira?</i> Subtraction: <i>Maubere iha rebusadu 10. Fo tia 5 ba Buimau. Maubere hela ho rebusadu hira?</i>	Text in Book 2 about <i>Wet Season</i> ; <i>potato, banana</i> , from whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>agriculture, dry season, harvest, product, cassava, gather/collect, wet season, corn, potato, banana, taro (edible tuber), tuber, look, bean, bean; coconut, papaya, mango, breadfruit/jackfruit, pineapple, orange, tomato, coffee, custard apple, lemon/lime; buffalo, horse, goat, pig, chicken, dog, cat, monkey?, deer, lorikeet</i> ; Mathematics: Addition: <i>Antonio has 5 oranges. Maria has 3 oranges. Together they have how many?</i> Subtraction: <i>Maubere has 10 sweets. He gives auntie 5 for Buimau. Maubere has how many sweets left?</i>
16	ID	Text in Book 2 on <i>Agricultura</i> . From whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>bailoron, kolleita, produtu, habai, haloot, fa'an, hamos, prepara, bainhira, rejiaun; katana, taha, baliu, insada, taha tur, kraudikur, ai suak, sabit, kanuru, garfu, (materialu to'os)</i> .  Matematika: the 4 operations; <i>Ohin dader Artur ba hola paun fuan 10. Fahe ba ema nain 5. Ema ida han paun fuan hira?</i>	Text in Book 2 on <i>Agriculture</i> . From whole words to syllables to whole word: <i>dry season, harvest, product, dry in the sun, tidy up/put away, sell, clean, prepare, when, region; machete, machete, axe, hoe, grindstone, pick/pick axe, crowbar, trimmer/cutter, shovel/spade, fork, (tools to work in the field)</i> .  Mathematics: the 4 operations; <i>This morning Artur went to get 10 fruit buns. He divides them among 5 people. How many fruit buns does each person eat?</i>

17	ID	<p>Book 2 text on <i>Hamos batar duut, batar fulin, batar tahin, batar kuda moris ho duut</i>; From whole words to syllables to whole words: <i>hamos, batar, lehe, katar, Karlele, balu, hanesan, hamenos, ensada, bibidikur, aisauk, tahatur, katana, hen traktor, lona, kalen, bititali, bidon. Matematika: ida, rua, tolu, haat, lima, neen, hitu, ualu, sia, sanulu,</i></p> <p>addition until 20, subtraction under 10, division under 13.</p>	<p>Book 2 text on <i>Clean the corn grass, corn cob, the leaves of the corn, corn grown in a mix of weeds</i>. From whole words to syllables to whole words: <i>clean, corn, wild broadbean, itch, Karlele, half/some/part of, same/like, reduce, hoe, goat horn, crowbar, grindstone, machete, hand tractor, canvas, tin/tin can/roofing iron, mat, oil drum. Mathematics: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,</i></p> <p>addition until 20, subtraction under 10, division under 13.</p>
18	ID	<p>Book 1 text 1 about <i>Kolonia portuges</i>: From whole words to syllables to whole words <i>Kolonia, famozu, tempu, maizumenos, ai kameli, tinan, sekulu, mundial, japones, kafe, aiteka, minarai, gas, marmer, kami, nuu, fatuk, raihenek, simente, kanela, senke, ainaa, ailele, kabas;</i></p> <p><i>Matematika: reading &amp; writing numbers until 100 in Tetum, also 205, 1015, 1999, 1975, 2002; Lidia iha mantolon 20. Fahe ba ema nain haat. Ema ida simu hira?</i></p>	<p>Book 1 text 1 about <i>Portuguese colony</i>: From whole words to syllables to whole words <i>colony, famous, time, more or less, sandalwood, year, century, worldwide, japanese, coffee, teak tree, kerosene, gas, marble, candlenut, coconut, rock/stone, sand, cement, cinnamon, clove, rose wood, kapok tree, cotton;</i></p> <p><i>Mathematics: reading &amp; writing numbers until 100 in Tetum, also 205, 1015, 1999, 1975, 2002; Lidia has 20 eggs. She divides them over 4 people. One person receives how many?</i></p>
19	HBO	<p><i>Nuu, manu, kuda, fahi, bibi, asu, surat, paun, jornal</i> with big and small letters; letters of the alphabet; numbers until 20; writing first and family name.</p>	<p><i>Coconut, chicken, horse, pig, goat, dog, letter/document, bread, newspaper</i> with big and small letters; letters of the alphabet; numbers until 20; writing first and family name.</p>
20	HBO	<p>24 letters of the alphabet (+ ll, ~n, y), 4 words of book 1 (<i>asu, bero, Carlos, dalan</i>), words from book 2: <i>animal sira, bibi, busa, kuda, karau baka,</i> writing names, birth date, <i>suku,</i> subdistrict, district, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> language, signature, writing long phrase (3 lines) on literacy: <i>Ami hakarak atu bele hetan liafuan ne'ebé diak atu nunee labele lakon buat ne'ebé diak ba ami nia futuru.</i></p>	<p>24 letters of the alphabet (+ ll, ~n, and y), 4 words of book 1 (<i>dog, boat, Carlos, road</i>), words from book 2: <i>animals, goat, cat, horse, Bali cattle,</i> writing names, birth date, village, subdistrict, district, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> language, signature, writing long phrase (3 lines) on literacy: <i>We want to be able to get word that is good to thus cannot lose/disappear thing that is good for our future.</i></p>

## Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRTA	Centro de Recursos e Treinamento Aileu (Centre of Resources and Training Aileu)
DNE	Direcção Nacional de Estatística Diresaun Nasionál Estatística (National Directorate of Statistics)
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
ESL	English as a Second Language
FALINTIL	Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (The Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
Forum PWO	Forum Peduli Wanita Oecusse (Oecusse Women Care Forum)
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionário do Timor-Leste Independente (The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)
GFFTL	Grupu Feto Foinsa'e Timor Lorosa'e (Young Women's Group East Timor)
GOMUTIL	Grupo Observador Mulher Timor Lorosa'e Group of Women Observers East Timor
HBO	Hakat ba Oin (Step forward)
ID	Iha Dalan (On the Way)
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
INL	Instituto Nacional de Linguística (National Institute of Linguistics)
IPLAC	Instituto Pedagógico Latinoamericano y Caribeño (Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogic Institute)

LHB	Los Hau Bele (Yes I Can)
LPP	Language Planning and Policy
MECYS	Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports
NDS	National Directorate of Statistics
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLP	National Literacy Panel
NWO	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPMT	Organização Popular da Mulher Timor (Popular Organisation of the Timorese Woman)
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (OECD)
RDTL	República Democrática de Timor-Leste (Democratic Republic of East Timor)
SD	Standard Deviation
SEPFOPE	Secretaria do Estado para a Política de Formação Profissional e Emprego Sekretaria Estadu ba Polítika Formasaun Profesional no Empregu (Secretary of State for the Policy of Professional Training and Employment)
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UDT	União Democrática Timorese (The Timorese Democratic Union)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNETIM	União Nacional dos Estudantes Timorenses (National Union of Timorese Students)

UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor from 25-10-1999 until 20-05-2002
UNTL	Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (National University of East Timor)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WOTRO	Science for Global Development (NWO division)
YEP	Youth Employment Promotion



## SUMMARY

# **Adult literacy education in a multilingual context**

## **Teaching, learning and using written language in Timor-Leste**

This study is about adult literacy education, acquisition and use in Timor-Leste, a multilingual developing country in Southeast Asia. Its focus is on the teaching and learning in adult literacy programmes provided by the Timor-Leste government in recent years, and on the uses of and values regarding literacy in out-of-class contexts. Various research methods were applied to investigate learners' initial reading and writing abilities, teachers' classroom practices and ideas and learners' literacy practices in everyday life. This summary first describes the research context. After that the research questions, main results, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

### **Background**

This study deals with three research topics that have been discussed more or less extensively in the literature: (1) literacy acquisition in an alphabetic script by adults in a second language, (2) literacy teaching to adult learners within the framework of language-in-education policies, and (3) literacy uses, practices and values. Chapter 2 presents a review of research on these three topics.

Research on literacy acquisition shows that phonemic awareness and an understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondence are crucial to learning to read an alphabetic writing system. Grasping the alphabetic principle has proven to be pivotal in the literacy acquisition process. Studies on literacy acquisition by adults in a second language have shown that adult first-time readers pass through more or less the same phases as children when learning to read and write. In addition they have shown that building phonological knowledge and phonemic awareness is more difficult in a second language than in a first language and that not knowing word meanings complicates word recognition. The most important learner-related factors in literacy acquisition turned out to be age (the older the learner, the slower the acquisition

process on average) and previous schooling (learners with prior education being more successful than the ones without). Proficiency in the second language turned out to be another important factor determining the literacy acquisition process.

Research on teaching literacy shows that explicit instruction in the relationship between letters and sounds is necessary for learning to read, and that most eclectic methods now combine the best of both analytic and synthetic methods and emphasise code as well as meaning. Successful literacy teaching to adults who are learning to read and write in a second language turns out to be very closely related to the use of the learners' first language as a language of instruction and to the contextualisation of learning in terms of the needs and daily practices of these adult learners. Literacy teaching in general is influenced by the choices made in national policies regarding languages, language-in-education and literacy education. Teachers and learners in adult literacy groups in multilingual settings have to deal with those language choices made at a national level and with frameworks defined by national literacy programmes or campaigns.

Finally, research has shown that literacy acquisition also takes place outside the classroom. Learners engage in literacy practices that are embedded in social and cultural contexts. Among other things, these practices shape their ideas on literacy and the way they value literacy.

Chapter 3 describes the specific case of Timor-Leste. Language use and literacy practices in Timor-Leste are defined by the country's history and its multilingual context. Timor-Leste became an independent nation in 2002 after it had been a Portuguese colony for hundreds of years and had been occupied by Indonesia from 1975 until 1999. The 2002 Constitution mentions Tetum and Portuguese as official languages, a number of national (regionally spoken) languages to be valued and developed by the state, and English and Indonesian as working languages. Tetum is the *lingua franca* and as such is spoken by a majority of the population. Most people speak a regional language as their first language and Tetum as a second language. Many people have learned Indonesian and/or Portuguese as a third or fourth language. The two official languages, Tetum and Portuguese, are the main languages of schooling, although recently also regional languages (mother tongues) have been included in the national education policy, to be used as languages of teaching and learning in pre-primary and early primary education.

Literacy rates among the adult population (15 years and older) are low: based on different sources one can conclude that around 50 to 60 percent of the adults can read and write. The Ministry of Education chose to provide literacy education in national programmes, one of which was introduced within the framework of a national campaign. Besides this ministry, other ministries and



organisations have also been involved in adult literacy education, amongst which local and international NGOs, donor countries and multilateral organisations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and ILO. The 1974-1975 Freire-based literacy campaign that was organised by FRETILIN and UNETIM, and that went underground during the years of Indonesian occupation, still influences today's ideas on literacy education in Timor-Leste. Through the years, local NGOs, international organisations and donor countries have been adding new literacy concepts and methods. Research that has been done on adult literacy in Timor-Leste mainly focussed on post-independence provision of literacy education. Up until the present project, not much research had been done on actual learning achievements, classroom-based teaching practices or out-of-class literacy use.

### Research questions and methodology

Against this background, Chapter 4 presents the research questions and the research design. The three research questions were the following:

- What are the results achieved in learning to read and write in Tetum in the available adult literacy programmes and what factors are the most important in the development of adults' literacy ability?
- What classroom-based literacy teaching practices are adult literacy learners confronted with, and what ideas guide teachers' practices?
- What literacy uses and values do adult literacy learners report with reference to different social domains?

These research questions were answered by conducting two different studies. A *broad, survey-like study* was carried out to find answers to the first question. The participants in this study were 756 adult learners and 100 literacy teachers from 73 literacy groups in three literacy programmes in eight districts. The three literacy programmes were: (1) the three-month *Los Hau Bele* (Yes I can) programme, based on the Cuban programme *Yo Sí Puedo!*, which was run in Timor-Leste from 2007 until 2012 within the framework of the national adult literacy campaign; (2) the national one-year *Alfanamor* programme including the six-month *Hakat ba Oin* (Step Forward) literacy programme for beginners and the six-month *Iha Dalan* (On the Way) advanced level literacy programme, implemented in 2007-2008 and in use in Timor-Leste's 13 districts until today; (3) the four-month *YEP* (Youth Employment Promotion) literacy programme carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2011, using summarised versions of the *Hakat ba Oin* and *Iha Dalan* literacy manuals. Instruments used with the learners were a short oral interview and four basic reading and writing tasks (for grapheme recognition, word reading, form filling and word writing). Teachers were

asked to complete a written questionnaire and to participate in an interview (related to this questionnaire) afterwards.

An *in-depth case study* was conducted to answer the second and third research questions. The participants in this study were learners, teachers and coordinators of twelve literacy groups in three programmes in seven districts. Twenty of their literacy classes were observed, and interviews were conducted with nine learner groups, ten teachers and six programme coordinators. In the immediate environment of the places where the literacy classes took place, the linguistic landscape was investigated to analyse the local literacy environment and the languages displayed there (e.g. on signs, shop windows and billboards).

The research design of the broad and the in-depth studies resulted in a quantitative and qualitative database. The quantitative database contained (SPSS files with) background data on the learners and teachers who participated in the broad study, the data from the teacher questionnaire, the results from the literacy tasks carried out by the learners, and the data of the linguistic landscape study. The qualitative database contained detailed accounts of the class observations from the in-depth study and the interviews with learners, teachers and coordinators.

## Outcomes

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the outcomes of this study: Chapter 5 deals with the first research question, Chapter 6 with the second, and Chapter 7 with the third.

The learner population in the adult literacy groups turned out to be very heterogeneous in terms of age (15-78 years) and prior formal or literacy education. When asked about language proficiency, 22% reported being monolingual, the other participants had a regional language as their first and Tetum as their second language, 27% reported speaking a third language and 6% a fourth language. The teachers also varied considerably in age (19-66 years); most of them had attended over ten years of formal education and the majority (75%) only had one year of experience or less in adult literacy education. They all were multilingual (100% reported to speak a second language, 96% a third and 83% a fourth). Besides their regional language and Tetum they reported speaking Indonesian and/or Portuguese as well; 26% reported speaking a fifth language, mainly English.

The learners' results on the reading and writing tasks revealed considerable variation in literacy ability. The learner-related factors of previous schooling and age turned out to be the most important: on average, learners with prior

education were more successful than those without and older learners were less successful than younger ones. In general, most of the learners who never attended any formal education or adult literacy course before were still struggling with decoding and spelling. After attending three to four months of literacy education, more than half of the learners could not read a word of the list used in the word reading task, and more than one third could not yet write a single word of the ten words dictated in the word writing task. The results also revealed that proficiency in Tetum did not make a difference in the development of this initial literacy ability in Tetum. Educational variables that turned out to be of some (modest) influence were the total number of hours of literacy education provided, the number of hours per week, group size, teacher experience (only on word reading), teachers using daily life materials in class, and the type of programme attended. Controlled for the variables of age, the number of hours of teaching provided, and teacher experience, a significant main effect of the programme was found for all literacy skills ( $p < .01$  for word reading and  $p < .001$  for the other three skills); learners who attended the *YEP* programme scored significantly higher on all tasks than learners in the *Los Hau Bele* programme, *Hakat ba Oin* learners scoring in between these two, their scores on all four tasks not being significantly different from *Los Hau Bele* and differing from *YEP* only on the two writing tasks. The findings showed that for most adult learners the provision of three to four months of literacy education was not sufficient to acquire basic reading and writing skills, and could best be seen as a first step in a longer process. The results of learners who did the reading and writing tasks a second time after three months showed limited growth in their reading and writing abilities. The investigation of word recognition and spelling strategies revealed relatively frequent use of lower-order strategies in the beginning and the use of more advanced strategies later on, which matches the stage theories proposed in earlier studies. This study confirmed the acquisition of the alphabetic principle as being crucial in eventually achieving automatic word recognition.

Class observations revealed that teaching practices in the different programmes showed many similarities: the lessons mainly involved whole-class teaching by teachers who talked a lot, allocated turns and invited individual learners to the blackboard; learners spent most of their lesson time rather passively, listening and copying things in their notebooks, only sometimes being involved actively. Most of the teaching closely followed the guidelines and the content of the specific programme in use. More attention was paid to writing than to reading, and exercises often were limited to the letter-syllable-word level, with the use of letter names instead of their sounds. Little attention was paid to developing speed in word recognition or to reading comprehension of phrases or short texts. In general, class time was not spent efficiently,

absence rates were high and teaching circumstances were poor. And although all programmes offered possibilities for explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle, not all teachers seemed confident about the best way to teach this, and the common practice of repeating after the teacher and copying from the blackboard did not seem the most effective way of practising this. All groups consisted of learners with very different literacy levels, but teachers were generally not equipped to adapt their teaching to this variety of levels and learning needs; they applied a one-size-fits-all approach while closely following the programme in use. In the *Los Hau Bele* programme, letters had to be learned in combination with (as far as reading acquisition is concerned) arbitrarily linked numbers, which did not seem to contribute to acquiring the alphabetic principle but rather made literacy acquisition more complicated.

Analyses of interviews with teachers and coordinators revealed some of their ideas on teaching literacy. They reported that it was important for teachers to have good reading and writing capacities, motivation, discipline and patience, and to provide elaborate explanations, exercise and repetition. Teaching according to the content and methodology of the specific programme in use (as class observations also revealed) was highly valued. At the same time, interviewees worried about learners' limited progress, their lack of motivation, poor attendance, and high dropout rates. Limited progress was often reported to be related to advanced age. Lack of motivation, poor attendance and learners dropping out were generally related to external causes, such as poverty, culture and religion, and not to the programmes possibly not being suitable or not matching learners' needs. For the methodology and didactics of literacy teaching, the interviewees fully relied on the programmes they were provided with. They worried about being able to offer continuity in educational options.

Classroom interaction mirrored Timor-Leste's multilingual context. Generally, four languages were being used: mainly Tetum and the regional language for the teaching of literacy, but also some Portuguese and Indonesian for subject-related language on literacy and numeracy and for reference to numbers. Through multilingual classroom talk, teachers and learners found local, pragmatic solutions to fit the national language and language-in-education policies they had to deal with in their literacy classes.

Analyses of interviews with literacy learners, teachers and coordinators shed light on literacy uses and values in out-of-class contexts. Literacy was valued positively by all interviewees. Being able to write one's name and signature was seen as fundamental. It was also considered very important to be able to read and/or write things in the personal context (e.g., letters, sms text messages, birth certificates) as well as in the public space (e.g., posters, invitations). Many references were made to numeracy and calculation skills, and to

the ability to understand and contribute to children's education. In addition, literacy for work and 'for the future' was mentioned. Despite the large number of literacy uses mentioned, learners reported that there was little reading and writing taking place outside the classes, due to hard work and an absence of reading materials in their environments.

The ideas on literacy that learners, teachers, and coordinators expressed reflected past as well as more recent discourses on literacy in Timor-Leste. Adopting different programmes and collaborating with different partners had obviously required the literacy coordinators, teachers and learners to become familiar with and use a large variety of words and ways when talking about literacy. Terms like 'mobilisation' and 'awareness-raising' had already been in use in the past, in the 1974-1975 literacy campaign. The same applied to the idea of learning literacy 'to live free', and the habit of adapting timetables for literacy classes to the daily work in coordination with the learners. Other examples of current expressions showing traces of the past were the metaphors used for becoming literate ('coming out of the dark') and for eradicating illiteracy ('putting an end to ignorance'). Terms like 'capacity building' revealed a more recent discourse, referring to the main goal of international aid organisations active in Timor-Leste. The concept of 'declaring' the country, or individual districts, 'free from illiteracy' is related to the discourse about combating or eradicating illiteracy, which came to Timor-Leste with the originally Cuban literacy programme *Sim Eu Posso / Los Hau Bele*, which was provided in 2007-2012 within the framework of a national literacy campaign. The words 'mobilisation' and 'socialisation' evoke the same discourse, as well as the broadly felt worry that in the absence of continued literacy education, learners would quickly 'fall back into illiteracy'.

The linguistic landscape study revealed that in the immediate surroundings of the literacy classes visited, no or hardly any written language was visible. However, the linguistic landscape in the streets to the nearest market and church, places where the participants would regularly go, could clearly be characterised as multilingual. A total of nine different languages were found to be used. Tetum was the language chosen most often for informative messages to the public, varying from information on government policies regarding health, elections, and population counts, to local information on ceremonies, courses, or products on sale.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Chapter 8 presents a summary of findings, the main conclusions, discussion points and recommendations. This study generally confirms what was found

in previous studies on adult literacy acquisition, for instance, that learning to read and write for the first time as an adult takes a lot of time (in any case more than three to four months), that age and previous education are indeed important factors, as is the contextualisation of literacy learning focusing on daily needs and practices. Where the findings differed from those of previous studies was in the outcome that proficiency in the target language for literacy (Tetum) turned out not to be very relevant for literacy acquisition at the basic level of word recognition and word writing. This study also provided some new insights, for instance on classroom teaching practices that did – and sometimes did not – contribute to literacy acquisition, on multiple language use in classroom interaction and its relations with the national language and language-in-education policies, and on ideas of learners, teachers and coordinators about adult literacy and how these relate to past and more recent experiences in adult literacy education.

Acquisition, teaching and use of literacy turned out to be clearly inter-related. Although the broad study included different groups and learners than the in-depth-study, the results from the in-depth study (from the class observations, the interviews and the linguistic landscape study) definitely provide possible explanations for the results of the broad study. The limited learning achievements (as found in the broad study) were most probably partly caused by the strict adherence to the literacy programme used, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach and many learners not getting the education they needed in terms of literacy level and content (as observed in the in-depth study). Teachers were clearly not prepared for the task of meeting the diversity of learning needs and literacy levels of their learners. All the different data seen in connection illustrated the ways in which multilingualism in Timor-Leste affects adult literacy education and acquisition. The data collected in the broad study on teachers' and learners' language backgrounds showed their rich language repertoires, with a clear dominance of Tetum. These findings facilitated understanding the use of multiple languages in adult literacy classes as revealed by the class observations in the in-depth study.

The study also showed that rhetoric on and everyday practice in literacy education do not always correspond. One of the programmes was placed in the tradition of 'popular education', characterised as education that acknowledges diversity, focuses on the individual, encourages critical thinking and lets participants make their own decisions. The actual teaching and learning in the classes observed, however, rather than showing many explicit features of popular education, revealed a reality quite at odds with these intentions. Despite this, the learners probably did get empowered anyway by the (small) advances they made in their learning achievements, and by the fact that participating in literacy education made a difference to their lives.

The conclusion that most learners had not 'become literate' after three to four months of literacy education shows that declaring districts 'free from illiteracy' after participants had finished the three-month *Los Hau Bele* programme is far from realistic. At best, attending three months of literacy education is a first step on the longer road of becoming able to apply reading and writing skills in daily life. The lack of additional literacy and post-literacy education options in districts that were declared 'free from illiteracy' seemed to keep learners from making more progress on that road.

This study has revealed realities and produced new knowledge on adult literacy acquisition, teaching and use in Timor-Leste leading to three recommendations for further research. For a more in-depth investigation of processes that lead to success in literacy acquisition it would be necessary to carry out a longitudinal and really ethnographic case study, following a group of comparable beginning literacy learners for at least a year. In addition, it would be worth investigating whether the use of regional languages (often learners' first languages) as languages for reading and writing (alongside Tetum) would constitute a useful contribution to adult literacy acquisition in Timor-Leste. Finally, the study's findings indicate the necessity of investigating the usefulness and effectiveness (in literacy acquisition) of connecting numbers to letters the way it is done in the Cuban origin *Yo Sí Puedo* programme that has been employed in about 30 countries all over the world.

This study has shed some light on the complexities of – and possible connections between – adult literacy acquisition, teaching and use, which lead to recommendations for adult literacy education policies in Timor-Leste. It is important for policy-makers to avoid one-size-fits-all approaches and quick-fix thinking and to invest in long-term policies in order to realise sustainability and continuity in literacy education options that do justice to the huge diversity in learner populations. This also implies establishing improved monitoring and evaluation systems, equipping teachers to teach heterogeneous groups and using lessons learned from smaller scale, tailor-made literacy initiatives (often provided by NGOs).

Recommendations for adult literacy education practice come down to the improvement of teaching practices to increase the effectiveness of literacy acquisition. This study has shown that improvement is possible in three areas: firstly in helping learners to develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle and to achieve fluency and reading comprehension, secondly in equipping teachers to realise more tailor-made and learner-centred teaching, and thirdly in making more connections between lesson content and daily-life literacy. As a follow-up to these recommendations for adult literacy education practice, new adult literacy materials have been developed in collaboration with local stakeholders in Timor-Leste during the last phase of this study. Two

teacher manuals were developed that focus on the teaching of multi-level groups and provide suggestions for doing justice to the diversity in learning needs. In addition, six learner manuals were developed that focus on literacy (and sometimes numeracy) in out-of-class contexts, such as markets, streets and shops, and on options after literacy education, e.g., continued education, job orientation and self-study. These new (and partly already implemented) materials form a first contribution to the hopefully more relevant, learner-centred and tailor-made teaching of literacy to adults in Timor-Leste's future.



## Dissertations in Language and Culture Studies

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Timor-Leste is a multilingual developing country in Southeast Asia, working hard to increase literacy rates and raise literacy levels among its adult population. With this aim in mind, the government has been providing national adult literacy programmes in the two official languages, Tetum and Portuguese, since the country gained its independence in 2002.

How and how well do adults learn to read and write in a second language? How do they use and value literacy? How do teachers teach literacy, what resources and ideas guide their instructional practices and how do they deal with learner variety? This study combines a large-scale survey with an in-depth case study to answer these questions.

Literacy is highly valued by most of the adult learners taking part in the investigation, but the possible uses of literacy turn out to be rather restricted. The survey reveals that many adults need much more time to acquire the basics of literacy than is provided by some of the programmes. The classroom observations show that teachers have limited resources at their disposal (e.g. no tables or electricity, a lack of books) and that they are not (yet) very well-equipped to adapt their teaching to the considerable variety of literacy levels and learning needs in their groups. At the same time, while dealing with these and other challenges, they do find local, pragmatic solutions to teach literacy in this multilingual setting (for instance using multiple languages).

This study is of interest to researchers, teachers, teacher trainers and policy-makers in adult literacy education, in Timor-Leste as well as in other developing multilingual countries.

Danielle Boon is an expert in the field of adult second language and literacy acquisition. She has worked as a teacher, teacher trainer, material-developer, policy adviser and researcher. From 2003 through 2008 she was an adviser on adult literacy to the Minister of Education in Timor-Leste, through the United Nations Development Programme.

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