

# **Tetun language learning for international scholars and students**



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# Overview

- Language learning goals
- Tetun for special purposes
- Learning Tetun through Dili Institute of Technology



# LANGUAGE LEARNING GOALS

Language level

Vocabulary

Purpose

# Intermediate low = survival

- Simple conversations.
- Predictable familiar topics related to daily activities.
- Understood, with some repetition, by sympathetic listeners used to foreigners.
- Takes 3 weeks of 20 hours tuition.

# Advanced = limited working proficiency

- Narrate, describe, compare, explain, discuss.
- Deal with an unanticipated complication.
- Most informal and some formal settings.
- Topics of personal and general interest.
- Understood without difficulty by speakers unaccustomed to dealing with foreigners.

# Plateau

- Most learners plateau by intermediate low or mid, i.e. at conversational, not professional level.
  - May make progress in passive skills (reading, listening) but not in production.
  - Errors are fossilised, in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar (e.g. *ami/ita*).
- Often need help to get past this.
- Tetun grammar is easy. But the grammar and way of speaking are very different to English, so the “easy” can be deceptive.

# Vocabulary needs

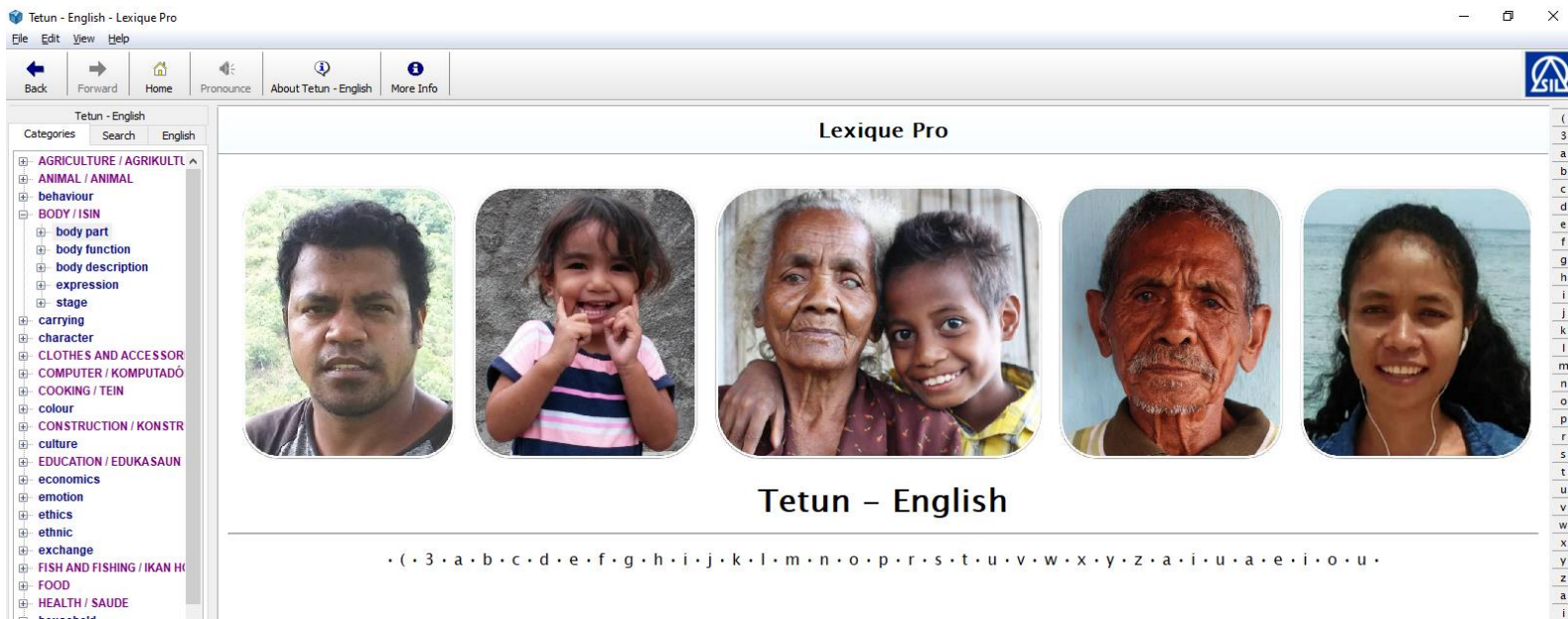
In English:

- 3,000 words: Can read a high percentage of words in an average text.
- 5,000 words: Can read a short novel for pleasure.
- 10,000 words: Can read first year university materials

(From: Richards, Jack C. (n.d.) *Moving beyond the plateau: From intermediate to advanced levels in language learning*. <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/pdfs/moving-beyond-the-plateau.pdf> (downloaded 28/6/11)).

# DIT interactive Tetun/English dictionary

- for Windows: [www.tetundit.tl/Publications](http://www.tetundit.tl/Publications)
- for Android: Search “Tetun DIT” in Google PlayStore.
- for Apple: We need help.





# Sample entry

## reimbolsa

*vt.*

reimburse, refund

*Category:* economics

*Usage:* educated

*From:* Port

Horiseik hau sosa livru nee ho hau nia osan rasik; ohin finansas reimbolsa fali.

*Yesterday I bought this book with my own money; today the finance department reimbursed me.*

*Synonym:* [foo fali osan hotu](#)

# Search by category: body parts

ain tunur *See main entry: ain tuur. n. knee.*

ain tutun *n. toes, the end of the foot (used in expressions, not for talking about individual toes).*

ain tuur *n. knee.*

anus *n. anus.*

apéndise *n. appendix.*

aten *n. liver.*

aten book *n. lung(s).*

baboton *n. fontanel.*

# Some vocabulary is guessable

## **DIT Interactive dictionary:** 11500 entries

- 23% are single-word native Tetun, so not guessable: *uma* ‘house’.
- 43% are single-word Portuguese loans, many guessable from French loans in English: *governu*, *situasaun*.
- 34% are multi-word, some are guessable:
  - *isin diak* (body good) ‘well’
  - *produtu internu brutu* ‘gross domestic product’

# Purpose for learning Tetun

- Huge differences between formal written and informal spoken Tetun.
- Formal written Tetun:
  - high proportion of Portuguese loans (easily 40%, up to 80% of content words)
  - many non-native constructions: “all back-to-front!”
  - translationese

Williams-van Klinken, Catharina, & Hajek, John. (2018).  
Language contact and functional expansion in Tetun Dili: The  
evolution of a new press register. *Multilingua*, 37(6), 613–648.



**TETUN FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES**

# Needs

- Specialised vocabulary
- Control of language levels. Ability to express technical concepts in non-specialised vocabulary
- Discourse
- Formulaic speech and writing
- Understanding of differences between Tetun and own language

# Specialised vocabulary

- Still being developed, mostly by practitioners, mostly from Portuguese.
- Very little coordination between academics, practitioners and linguists.

# Dictionaries

## **Tetun/English:**

- Hull, Geoffrey, 2000, *Short English-Tetum dictionary*. Sydney.
- — 2002, *Standard Tetum-English dictionary*. (3rd edition). SASP and INL.
- Williams-van Klinken, C., 2015, *Word-finder: English-Tetun, Tetun-Ingles*. Dili, DIT.
- — 2019, *Tetun-English interactive dictionary*. Dili: DIT.

## **Monolingual Tetun:**

- Correia, A. J. Guterres., B. de Araújo e Corte-Real, et al., 2005, *Disionáriu nasionál ba Tetun ofisiál*. Dili, INL, UNTL

## **Tetun/Indonesian:**

- Manhitu, Yohanes, 2002, *Kamus Indonesia-Tetun Tetun-Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gramedia.



# Glossaries

- **Tools:** de Souza, Ilda & Josué Morgan de Queiroz. 2012. *Glossário multilíngue de ferramentas e instrumentos: Português – Tétum – Indonésio - Inglês*. Hera: Faculdade de Engenharia, UNTL.
- **Agriculture:** Qintão, G. da Silva, 2007, *Disionáriu jerál agrikultura*. Dili, Timor Aid.
- ——— 2008, *Disionáriu tékniku pekuária no veterinária*. Dili, Timor Aid.
- USAID Land law Program II, n.d., *Glosáriu agrikultura nian*.
- **Food and tourism:** Williams-van Klinken, Catharina, da Silva, Helio Brites, Tilman, Cesaltina Martins, Silva, Martinha Rodrigues Rebelo Santos, Cardoso, Marta, Santos, Anabela Maia, & da Silva, Justino. (2016). *Tourism and food glossary*. Dili: DIT.
- **IT:** Williams-van Klinken, Catharina, Cham, Marcelo Fernandes Xavier, & Alkatiri, Saleh Abdullah. (2013). *IT glossary in Tetun, Portuguese, English and Indonesian*. Dili: DIT.
- **Training:** Secretaria de Estado do Trabalho e Solidariedade, 2002, *Vocational training: a glossary of selected terms in Portuguese, Tetum and English*. Dili.
- **Civic education:** UNDP, 2002, *Glosáriu Edukasaun Sívika ho lian Tetun, Portugés, Inglés, Indonézia*. Dili.
- **Elections:** IEC and UNDP, 2002, *Glosáriu eleisaun nian: lia fuan kona ba eleisaun*. Dili, East Timor. [Developed by Catharina Williams-van Klinken, in conjunction with Nuno Gomes, Fransisco Luis Fernandes and Bernardino Menezes. [www.tetundit.tl](http://www.tetundit.tl)]
- **Human rights:** UNTAET Human Rights Unit, 1999, Human rights glossary. Dili.
- **Land law:** USAID Land law Program II, n.d. *Glosáriu lei rai nian*.

# Discourse

- How to give instructions, and how to link them: ‘Before eating wash your hands.’ / ‘Wash hands and.only.then eat.’
- How to give background information in stories, and how to distinguish between major and minor characters.
- How to present arguments.

## Discourse structures of Tetun Dili

an Austronesian language of Timor-Leste



Catharina Williams-van Klinken and Olinda Lucas

2020

# Formulaic speech and writing

- Official welcomes, thanks, farewells
- Written invitations, memos...
- Meeting language
- Making appointments
- Apologies
- Making speeches, esp. opening, closing, referring to the audience.

# Understand Tetun / English differences

- Tendency to translate literally.
- DIT teach a 20-hour translation course which focuses on English to Tetun translation.

Williams-van Klinken, Catharina, & Lucas, Olinda. (2019). *Tradusaun ba lian Tetun. Dili: Biblia ba Ema Hotu.*



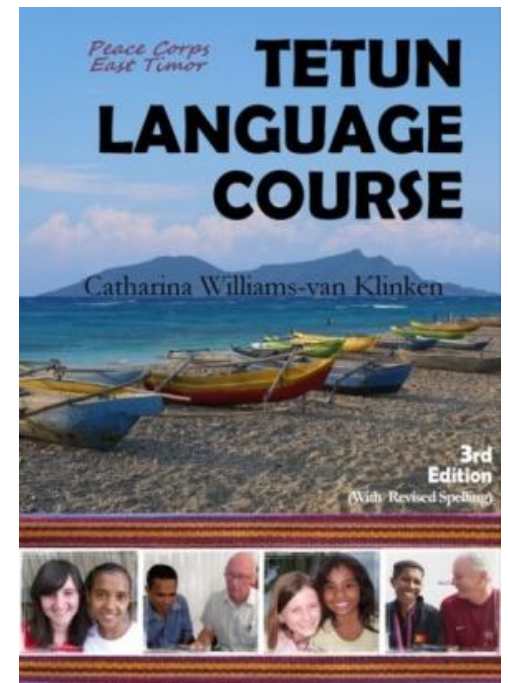
# **LEARNING TETUN THROUGH DILI INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

# To learn other Timorese languages

- Bibliography of grammars and dictionaries:  
[www.tetundit.tl/Publications](http://www.tetundit.tl/Publications)

# Tetun as a foreign language

- Intensive in small groups on campus: 2007 on
- Online or in person off-campus: since Covid
- Largely monolingual Tetun, practice, oral.



# More advanced Tetun

- Students choose areas of interest.
- Have taught Australian National University level 2, including rural home visit.
- Conduct Language Proficiency Interviews to determine ACTFL level.

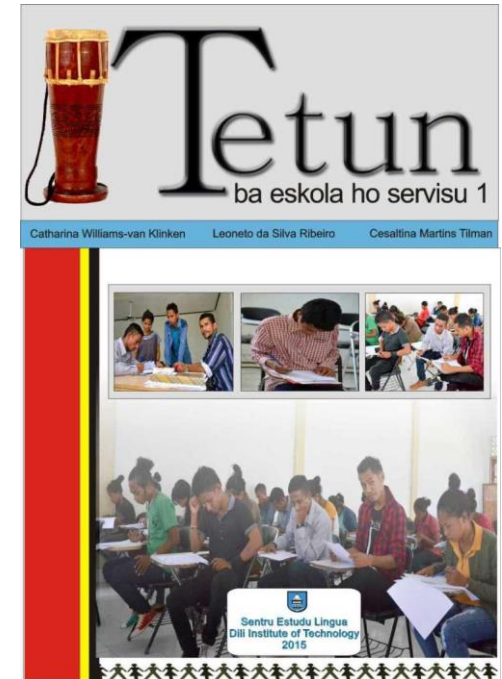


# DIT's online classes

- Internet in Dili is usually sufficient.
- Individual classes gives flexibility, can pursue own interests.
- Groups of two give opportunity to learn from one another, become 'study buddies', greater motivation.

# Tetun academic and translation skills

- **Academic skills in Tetun** to tertiary students in all faculties of DIT (3 semesters, 4 hours per week): paragraphs, note-taking, essays, presentations, report-writing...)
- **Translation**, focusing on English to Tetun (20 hours).



# Happy learning! [www.tetundit.tl](http://www.tetundit.tl)

