



**Title of Project:**

Understanding University Lecturers' Perspectives on Plurilingualism as Communicative Resource in Development Related Industries in Timor-Leste

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**Project Summary:**

The aim of this project is to understand the perceptions and responses of higher education lecturers in Timor-Leste with regard to the academic and professional communication challenges facing their plurilingual students in development-related disciplines. The Timorese higher education sector is undergoing rapid change as it attempts to respond to a national development agenda to 'produce' a skilled workforce for the new nation, particularly in the Agriculture, Petroleum and Tourism industries. At the national, institutional, and even faculty levels, highly polarised language policy debates manifest over which single language or which multilingual arrangement from among the dominant four languages of Timor-Leste – Tetun, Portuguese, Indonesian, and English – should be used to teach different disciplines.

Lecturers in development related fields are uniquely placed to be able to comment on the communication challenges that they see their students facing, their own challenges in supporting their students, and expected employment outcomes for graduates. Data for this research will be drawn from focus groups, interviews, and class observations with lecturers from Agriculture, Petroleum Studies, Tourism, and Community Development Studies disciplines in three Timorese higher education institutions. Analysis will focus on lecturers' descriptions of their students' plurilingual communicative competencies for academic and professional purposes, as well their own plurilingual approaches to readying their students for the workplace in their respective industries in what is a complex and conflicted language policy environment. Insights gained are expected to reveal much about the relationship between development, higher education, and language in multilingual, post-colonial developing societies like Timor-Leste.