This book calls for critical adaptations when theories of bilingual education, based on practices in the North, are applied to the countries of the global South. For example, it challenges the assumption that transitional models necessarily lead to language shift and cultural assimilation. Taking an ethnographically-based narrative on the purpose and value of bilingual education in Mozambique as a starting point, it shows how, in certain contexts, even a transitional model may strengthen the vitality of local languages and associated cultures, instead of weakening them. The analysis is based on the view that communicative practices in the classroom influence and are influenced by local, institutional and societal processes. Within this framework, the book shows how education in low-status languages can play a role in social and cultural transformation, especially where postcolonial contexts are concerned.

“This volume presents a landmark study of bilingual education policy and local practice in a new context. It offers a fresh and thought-provoking African perspective on the value and purpose of bilingual education, foregrounding its transformative potential. Chimbutane’s arguments are grounded in detailed, multilayered research of an innovative sociolinguistic and ethnographic nature. The volume represents a significant new intellectual resource for all of us who are concerned with education in multilingual settings in the global south.”

Marilyn Martin-Jones, MOSAIC Centre for Research on Multilingualism, University of Birmingham, UK

“Chimbutane’s delicately balanced and wonderfully accessible volume is a delight to read. The author speaks from the vantage point of a well-positioned postcolonial scholar, and this excellently crafted, well-written and admirably researched piece whets one’s appetite for more of the same from the linguistic periphery.”

Christopher Stroud, Department of Linguistics, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

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