

Rethinking Bilingual Education in Postcolonial Contexts

BILINGUAL EDUCATION & BILINGUALISM

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Feliciano Chimbutane

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This book is dedicated to my wife, Mamo, and to my sons, Dino and Eric. Their support and tolerance during the writing of this book were outstanding.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ARPAC	Arquivo do Património Cultural (Archives and Cultural Heritage)
CNP	Comissão Nacional do Plano (National Commission for Planning)
EP1	Ensino Primário do Primeiro Grau (lower level primary education)
EP2	Ensino Primário do Segundo Grau (upper level primary education)
Frelimo	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique / Mozambican Liberation Front
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDE	Instituto Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação (National Institute for the Development of Education), the Research and Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Mozambique
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estatística (National Institute of Statistics)
IRE	Initiation-Response-Evaluation
IRF	Initiation-Response-Feedback
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MEC	Ministério da Educação e Cultura (Ministry of Education and Culture)
MINED	Ministério da Educação (Ministry of Education)
NELIMO	Núcleo de Estudo de Línguas Moçambicanas (Nucleus for the Study of Mozambican Languages), at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PEBIMO	Projecto de Escolarização Bilingue em Moçambique / Bilingual Education Project for Mozambique

Renamo	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana / Mozambican National Resistance
RM	República de Moçambique (Republic of Mozambique)
RPM	República Popular de Moçambique (Peoples' Republic of Mozambique)
SNE	Sistema Nacional de Educação (National Education System)
UDEBA-LAB	Unidade de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica – Laboratório (Unit for the Development of Basic Education – Laboratory)

Transcription Symbols and Conventions

.	stopping fall in tone, with some sense of completion
,	a slightly rising tone giving a sense of continuation
...	pause
?	raising intonation (marking uncertainty or a question)
!	emphasis (marked prominence through pitch or increase in volume)
^	raising intonation on accented syllables, followed by an oral gap that a speaker (e.g. teacher) expects the listener(s) (e.g. pupils) to fill with a syllable, word or phrase
[overlapping turns
[
xxx	completely unintelligible utterances
" "	indicates the beginning and end of a direct quotation (reported speech) or parts of reading from textbooks, blackboard, etc.
' '	translation (Portuguese or English glosses)
(...)	indicates that parts of the episode transcribed have been omitted
((text))	contextual information
[word or text]	word, phrase or text not uttered but implicit in speaker's speech
<i>Italics</i>	marks utterances or words in Changana or Chope
<i>Italics</i>	marks utterances or words in Portuguese
(emboldened)	
UPPER CASE	indicates louder speech than the surrounding talk
no::o	one or more colons indicate a stretched sound (marks the length of the preceding vowel)
/ri/	phonological representation
S:	non identified student
Ss:	several or all students speaking simultaneously

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Book

This book focuses on data drawn from an ethnographic study of discursive practices in two primary bilingual schools in Mozambique, fictionally called *Escola Primária Completa de Gwambewni* and *Escola Primária Completa de Bikwani*. The book also draws on insights from my previous and current involvement with bilingual education in Mozambique, where I have been working together with government and non-government organisations as teacher trainer, consultant and researcher.

Combining discourse analysis and ethnography, my main concern in the study was to explore how different views about the purpose and value of bilingual education in Mozambique are manifested in bilingual classroom discourse practices and how these practices relate to local, institutional and societal discourses.

By ‘value’ of bilingual education I mean the significance that stakeholders attach to the resources acquired through this educational provision and their evaluation of how well it allows access to those resources. These resources include proficiency and literacy skills in an African language and in Portuguese (which is a second/foreign language for most Mozambican citizens), academic achievement in both languages, as well as the symbolic and material rewards associated with those resources.

This study comes after a language-in-education policy shift that has extended over several years and after widespread curriculum innovation in Mozambique, involving a move away from a Portuguese-only system of education to a situation in which local African languages have also been accorded a space in formal education through the gradual introduction of a bilingual programme. Unlike many other African countries, however, Mozambique does not have any prior tradition of bilingual education. It is therefore currently facing many challenges in the implementation of the programme, including in defining the appropriate role and place of African languages and associated local cultures in the classroom. Within this scenario, this study provides empirically grounded

insights for diagnosing as well as informing policy and implementation of this innovative programme in the country and beyond.

Against this background, this book has practical as well as theoretical aims. From a practical point of view, I believe that an ethnographically informed study of discourse practices in bilingual classrooms can impact on education planning and implementation. Indeed, by linking the analysis of the classroom interactional order with cultural and socio-historical factors, including institutional ideologies, the book can contribute to helping teachers reflect on their own language interaction practices with pupils in the classroom and on their overall teaching techniques. On a macro-level, the book may also help educators and education planners identify and address factors that may be fostering or hampering the introduction of local linguistic and cultural resources in bilingual schools, providing therefore insights that may, for example, inform teacher training planning and practice as well as language curricula development.

From a theoretical point of view, the book contributes to discussions about the value of bilingual education from educational, cultural and political-economic perspectives, contributing in this way to empirically informed theory-building on bilingual education especially as concerns developing countries. In this respect, the book can be taken as an African contribution to a growing body of empirically informed work on the ideological and ideologised nature of bilingualism and bilingual education (e.g. Freeman, 1998; Heller, 2006, 2007; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001). It adds to the understanding of the role of bilingual education in social and cultural transformation, including processes that can lead to changes in speakers' perceptions about the value of low-status languages and associated cultural practices.

Why an Ethnography of Bilingual Education in Mozambique?

Following Blommaert (2001a), I take ethnography as being an essential component of any research that starts from a view of language as a social practice. It was within this framework that the study reported in this book was designed to be a qualitative analysis based on discursive and observational data. Although quantitative or experimental studies are more likely to be compelling for education planners and decision-makers, in this study it was assumed that socio-cultural and political-economic phenomena impacting on education are better captured through qualitative-interpretive processes of enquiry since these processes are often discursive in nature. In this way, and following Watson-Gegeo

(1988), ethnography offers perspectives and methodologies that allow us to investigate

how institutional and societal pressures are played out in moment-to-moment classroom interaction, and how to gain a more holistic perspective on teacher-student interactions to aid teacher training and improve practice. (p. 575)

As it is shown next, the employment of ethnographic methods of enquiry is chiefly justified by the context and objectives set for this study.

Mozambique is a multilingual society, as it is a norm in most African countries. In addition to Portuguese, there are over 20 African languages spoken in the country. Partly due to this linguistic diversity, the former colonial language (Portuguese) was proclaimed as the official language of the new nation-state after independence in 1975. Up to 2003, Portuguese held a prestigious position as the only official language of formal education at all levels, from primary to tertiary education. African languages had been accorded a role neither in the classroom, nor in any other official domains. Therefore, with different justifications, the policy adopted after independence was the same as that in place in the colonial era: in both cases Portuguese enjoyed the privileged official status whereas African languages were marginalised and even banned from official functions such as education.

However, socio-political transformations and poor education outcomes seem to have played a key role in generating discussion and leading to a reconsideration of the language-in-education policy in the country. In multilingual contexts like Mozambique, among other factors, it is common to attribute academic failure to poor proficiency in the language of instruction, usually a learner's second or foreign language. In such contexts, the use of a language familiar to the child is assumed to be a necessary condition for school success, hence the introduction of bilingual education. Indeed, although socio-cultural aims have also been officially evoked, the main purpose of bilingual education in Mozambique seems to be scaffolding pupils' learning of Portuguese and academic content in this language.

The move in Mozambique is in tune with bilingual education theory and international practice which suggest that initial literacy and academic development are better achieved when a first/home language of the child is used as a medium of instruction than when a second or foreign language is used (e.g. Bamgbose, 2000; Cummins, 2000, 2001; Hornberger, 1988; UNESCO, 1953, 1990). The overall impact of this move should be to allow the majority of Mozambican children whose first language is