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Book Review

Implementing and Promoting Multilingualism: Speaking Through Different Tongues in South African Higher Education Spaces

Edited by Nomalungelo Ngubane, Berrington Ntombela, and Hloniphani Ndebele University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2024

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Introduction

The new South Africa inherited a history of linguistic marginalisation, and the dawn of democracy ushered in a period of redressing and reclaiming African languages to their rightful place. The country has had to live its true multilingual nature, a project that continues to evade former colonial states. True to the commitment of a linguistically equitable society, this collection of research papers, written in isiZulu, Sesotho sa Leboa, and Sesotho, amongst other Indigenous languages, argues for the centrality of multilingualism as means of intellectualising, utilising, and developing African languages.

The book has been published in the nick of time because technology within the current South African dispensation is rapidly developing and therefore requires a new and equivalent terminology to be created in African languages. This is indeed the time when terminology in the world of work, as well as in science, requires new terms to develop a metalanguage that can effectively explain the phenomena underlying any form of science.

Broad Thoughts About the Book

From the outside cover of the book, one does no shadow of doubt that readers will be impressed by how immaculately it has been structured and arranged in various African languages. The book succeeds in promoting the idea that multilingualism plays a pivotal role in guaranteeing development and success in various forms of readership, teaching, and learning.

Readers can drink deeply from the well of knowledge presented by the editors of this book, drawing on the wealth of significant and original insights embedded within it. Reading the contents of this book, it becomes crystal clear that it stands as an immense contribution not only to the existing body of knowledge, but also as a source of new opportunities for students, lecturers, budding authors, language practitioners, and language patriots in general. From an academic perspective, readers have good reason to devote their time to reading and rereading this book. In fact, doing so would be meaningful not only for lecturing staff and students at various institutions of higher learning, but also for the general reading public.

As languages are in a constant state of flux and develop on daily basis over time and context, it is important to have books of this nature to alert readers about the role of multilingualism within the current

South African academic dispensation. Reading this book further, one realises that huge strides have been made not only in the development of multilingualism in South Africa, but also in the promotion of African languages as tools for both linguistic and cultural transference.

Comments on Improving the Second Edition of the Book

As a matter of necessity, it is advisable that, in the second edition of this book, specific languages be clearly indicated in the Table of Contents and at the beginning of each chapter. In doing so, readers would more easily recognise and locate their target languages. Otherwise, the book is clearly structured and presented across all eleven African languages. It is apparent that great efforts have been made to collect broad and relevant data as content for the book. Indeed, the text has been logically compiled, meticulously researched, and outlined with references appropriately acknowledged in each language.

A Word to the Reading Public

Within the teaching and learning scenarios in South African institutions of higher learning, the question of multilingualism is fundamental and must be regarded with the utmost seriousness. The success of education—encompassing teaching activities, students' academic performance, research output, and creative writing—depends directly on the development, implementation, promotion, and sustained practice of multilingualism.

The Book and Its Anticipated Impact on Translation Theory and Practice

Many translation scholars believe that translation can be understood as the “house in which we live,” meaning that translation plays a significant role in life, and must be developed at all costs. Therefore, by implementing and promoting multilingualism, translation as both an art and a science can be developed to enhance accessibility and effective communication among various language speakers within our country and internationally. Higher education institutions that offer courses in translation theory and practice would certainly benefit from adopting multilingualism as a key foundation of translation studies.

Conclusion

The book is unique and will surely pave the way for readers to recognise the importance of implementing and promoting multilingualism alongside development of technological and scientific terminology. As already indicated, the importance of this publication will have far-reaching implications across various spheres of life. It is hoped that this collection of scholarly essays will contribute to the intellectualisation of African languages as viable tools for academic engagement in higher education. This book is a step towards the practice of multilingualism in higher education and, we hope, to inspire other sectors to follow. A commitment to multilingualism has never been more urgent.