Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN) and Phonological Awareness

Measuring the Double-Deficit to Identify Risk for Reading Difficulties

What is it?
In Malawi, a context where many students do not learn to read, we wanted a way to distinguish those who might struggle with reading acquisition regardless of instruction. Specifically, we wanted to know if students with deficits in both rapid automatic naming (RAN) and phonological awareness in Chichewa experience more difficulty with reading growth than students with single or no deficits. Prior to our study, the double deficit had been shown in opaque and transparent orthographies but had yet to be explored in Chichewa or other Bantu languages.

How does it work?
We developed a RAN measure of common objects and a phonological awareness measure with images and administered them four times during one school year to students in grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3. Students who scored poorly on one of these measures as compared to their grade-level peers were classified as having a deficit in that measure. A compelling finding was that Single Deficit and Double Deficit groups had similar oral reading scores at Time 1 but by Time 3 and Time 4, the Single Deficit group pulled away, more than doubling the average oral reading score of their Double Deficit counterparts at Time 4. Further measurement of these two constructs, RAN and phonological awareness, could help to identify children at risk for reading difficulties.

What’s next?
Students identified with deficits in RAN and phonological awareness at the onset of instruction need differentiated instruction to show improvement in reading outcomes. RTI would like to use these assessments in a longitudinal design following individual students to strengthen our understanding of the assessments’ predictive ability.

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