“Learning to Read in Multilingual Contexts of Low- and Middle-Income Countries”

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Harrington Towers 301

Abstract: The reading acquisition environments of low- and middle-income countries are characterized by rampant multilingualism, and limited access and exposure to print resources in any language. This presentation will focus on three main areas: 1) technical assistance to governments in Ethiopia, Zambia, and Egypt on framing multilingual education curricula; 2) preliminary findings on the predictors of multilingual literacy outcomes in a longitudinal study of approximately 600 children in the urban “slum” communities and villages; and 3) the findings from a study using mobile phones to support literacy development in rural India. The connections between practice, policy, and research in multilingual education in developing nations will also be discussed.

Biographical Note: Pooja Reddy Nakamura is a researcher in the International Development, Evaluation, and Research (IDER) Program at the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Dr. Nakamura’s work focuses on the processes underpinning successful literacy development in multilingual contexts of the developing world. She is currently Principal Investigator of a study funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) identifying the strongest predictors of reading success in urban slums and remote villages of India. She has also been involved in developing research studies in Egypt and Zambia to better understand the learning mechanisms involved in the development of literacy in diverse scripts and complex multilingual environments.

Previously, Dr. Nakamura has worked at the Human Development Lab at Carnegie Mellon University. In this position, she designed a one-year English as a Second Language (ESL) literacy curriculum for educational games on mobile phones for children in rural India. She has also taught a variety of language courses at the university level, including English as a Second Language and Japanese as a Foreign Language. She has presented her work at international conferences and authored peer-reviewed articles. She received her PhD in Second Language Acquisition from Carnegie Mellon University, and her BA in Cognitive Psychology from the University of California, Irvine.