



Classroom Demonstrations

by Sarah Costello

Retrospective Miscue Analysis: In the Classroom

Retrospective miscue analysis (RMA) and collaborative retrospective miscue analysis (CRMA) are authentic assessments that help teachers understand what students know and do in the process of reading. RMA and CRMA also invite students to engage in self-reflection and qualitatively assess their miscues and the strategies they incorporate when reading.

A review of the research on RMA indicates a move toward proficient reading as students who have participated in RMA sessions become aware of the strengths of their existing reading strategies (Marek 1987; Miller and Woodley 1983; Stephenson 1960; Raiser 1977; Worsnop 1977). RMA has been used with adults, high school students, middle school students, and conceptually, with elementary students. All RMA research shows that students gain in self-confidence and self-assurance.

RMA can be conducted in a variety of groupings: teacher/student, teacher/small group, teacher/class, and collaborative peer groups. The procedure follows the same format outlined in *Reading Miscue Inventory* (Y. Goodman, Burke, and Watson 1987). Readers are asked to read a complete text into a tape recorder. They are informed that they will be asked to give a retelling of the story at the end of the reading. The teacher completes the analysis to identify the reader's strengths and weaknesses. The teacher also interviews the readers, helping them to define their beliefs and perceptions about the reading process and discussing the strategies they are utilizing.

Before the follow-up session, the teacher may create a session organizer (as shown below). It states the session focus and lists the miscues and strategies the teacher plans to discuss. Following is an example of a session organizer generated from data collected in a study spearheaded by Yetta M. Goodman (1991).

As students listen to themselves on tape, they become fascinated with the things they do while reading. Kelly's laughter when she miscued *caif* for *cave* reveals her self-monitoring as she reads and strives to make sense out of the text. As Kelly explains, "I laughed because it sounded funny . . . and then I corrected it because it didn't make sense." When asked about the miscue *pocketmark* for *pockmark* she stated she was "self-monitoring," and she had to "correct that because it sounded funny." Kelly's substitution of *certain* for *special* (#3 above) reflects her proficient use of predicting strategies. When Kelly

was queried about that miscue the following discussion ensued:

Teacher: What was your miscue?

Kelly: *Certain* for *special*.

Teacher: Do they look alike?

Kelly: No.

Teacher: Why do you think you made that miscue?

Kelly: Maybe it sounds better.

Teacher: Did you self-correct?

Kelly: No.

Teacher: Why not?

Kelly: Because that makes sense.

After four RMA sessions in which Kelly listened to the tapes and discovered she inserted and omitted words when she read, she shared her dismay commenting, "I know it's okay to do that, but I just never knew that I did when I was reading." RMA helped Kelly understand what "real readers" actually do when reading.

As professional educators, teachers must decide which miscues and strategies to select and discuss with their students. They base their decisions on the needs of their students, their students' confidence in themselves as readers, and the strategies they are using efficiently and inefficiently. Usually six to ten miscues are discussed. Initially, it is best to focus only on readers' strengths until they become comfortable with the procedure.

Through participation in RMA sessions, readers begin to look at their own miscues as a curiosity. The text becomes fluid, something that can be changed and manipulated in the search for meaning. This isn't new. It is well-documented that readers constantly and consistently manipulate the text—sampling, predicting, and confirming as they read (Goodman 1973, 1984; Marek, Goodman, and Babcock 1985). Central to any discussion about miscues is the notion that readers read for meaning. In the following, a reader discusses her understanding of the world and how that influences her understanding of the text.

Teacher: What are your strategies?

Student: Self-predicting and background knowledge is really good 'cause then you don't get stuck on it, 'cause if I have the title and I'm thinking *Jumanji*, I never heard of that before, I didn't have any knowledge, but then I got flowing through it 'cause I had a bit of knowledge. The other one about Pablo. I knew a lot about Mexico and Puerto Rico and Spanish, so it was easier for me to understand.

Teacher: How did that affect your miscues?

Student: It made them better. Like when they said Puerto Rico Island when actually there are many islands so it made it, the story, have more sense. Don't tell the author I said that! (Goodman, et al 1990).

When reading, Bernice is focusing on meaning and actively constructing meaning for herself. Through retrospection, she begins to understand the strategies she uses and how they assist her in creating a meaningful text. Initially, when Bernice was confronted with miscues, she assessed herself as being a "bad reader," "lazy," or making "big mistakes."

Teacher: What did you do there?

Bernice: I looked at the *s* and *a*, and maybe the *w* looked like an *i*, and I did a mistake. A very large mistake!"

Similarly, when asked what she would like to do better as a reader Bernice stated: "I'd like to quit stumbling on words. I'd like to know all the words and then quit stumbling" (Goodman et al 1990).

Reading is not the sterile, correct process echoed in the beginning of our RMA sessions. Participation in the sessions led Bernice to a more realistic view of the reading process, one that enables her to understand and believe in herself as a reader.

Collaborative Retrospective Miscue Analysis

CRMA elicits information about how readers view their reading, helps them define their beliefs and perceptions about the reading process, and provides an opportunity to discuss a variety of strategies with their peers in a collaborative setting. Students are not forced to read aloud in the group, but it is the role of the facilitator to create an environment in which, eventually, all students will feel comfortable doing so. Students are grouped heterogeneously, therefore a variety of texts are necessary to meet their needs. The collaborative grouping helps the classroom teacher, who often cannot work with just one student for long periods of time. The teacher may develop a session organizer after the reading, having the student read one day and take part in the RMA session the next day. Another alternative is for the teacher to play the tape and have the students stop the tape recorder when they hear a miscue. They then discuss the miscue. The teacher can tape the discussion or take notes during the session, recording students' strengths, weaknesses, and use of strategies.

Students can also work in heterogeneous groups without the teacher. Initially they explore ideas about miscues with the teacher in a whole-class setting or in small groups. Students are taught about miscues and the reading process during minilessons; miscues are discussed when the teacher reads with the students individually; and the teacher discusses efficient and inefficient strategies when students read in the group setting. Students should understand that all readers make miscues and that some strategies are more effective than others in creating meaning while reading. The goal is not to test the reader but to have students discuss reading in a meaningful way in the context of real reading.

One student is taped reading aloud. The students listen to the tape, stopping it when they hear a miscue. They then discuss the miscue and suggest reasons for it. The following are possible questions to engage the group in discussion.

1. Does the miscue make sense?
2. In what way does it make sense? In what way doesn't it make sense?
3. Did you change it after you made the miscue?
4. Why do you think you made this miscue?
5. Think of as many possible reasons for this miscue as you can.

The miscue session can be audio- or videotaped or the students can take notes on the discussion. Near the end of the session, the teacher joins the groups to discuss any problems, questions, or strategies the students may have about the session.

In analyzing the data from collaborative retrospective miscue sessions, two issues become apparent. First, students by their own admission were more comfortable working with their peers in reading and discussing the readings. Second, a very humorous, playful side of the students is apparent in their discussions about miscues and language. For example, in the beginning of the

Session Focus: Self-Monitoring—Reads for Meaning

Name	Date	Grade		
Text				
Line	Tape #	Miscue	Strength/Weakness	Notes
1.	047	45 c caif The cave had never	+	laughs and self-corrects
2.	052	50 c to "dogg wait" each other "except breed	+	self-monitoring/predicting
3.	061	72 certain by special cells	+	reads for meaning/predicting
4.	083	72 c pocketmark a deep pockmark	+	laughs/self-monitoring

sessions, all students say their names into the microphone for testing purposes. When Jesus shouted his name and another student said "Ahh-choo," both sounded very similar. The room, of course, exploded in laughter. This creative, playful use of language peppered the dialogue discussions. In another instance, students were discussing whether they should include a particular miscue. The tone of the session is jovial, including a play on words, but they get the job done (Costello 1991).

Miscue line 1224:

C
did

... They didn't know where their children were. (Carolyn stops tape)

Kirb: That's not a miscue. I call it.

Terry: I corrected it myself.

Carolyn: So.

Kirb (quoting the next miscue but referring to the previous miscue, stating that it is too late to go back to that miscue for discussion): She was too late. Too late. You can't go back. Do you guys want to do that miscue (the next miscue)?

All: Yes. (They look for the miscue to replay.)

Jose: What page are we on?

Terry: Three.

Miscue line 1226:

too

The next day Kathy was late for school.

Jose: Was late.

Carolyn: Too late.

Kirb: The next day Kathy was late. Do you spell it with a C? (Kirb is recording the miscue on his paper.)

Carolyn: No. Yes.

Kirb: It's with a K.

Jose: Does the miscue make sense?

Terry: Yes.

Jose: Why?

Carolyn: In what way does it make sense? You just added an extra word.

Terry: 'Cause I added an extra word.

Jose: 'Cause you added an extra word

Kirb: Just 'cause.

Jose: Did she correct it? (They listen to the tape again.)

Terry: Yes I did, yes I did, yes I did.

Kirb: Do you think you were right for changing it, or do you think you should have left it?

Jose: She was right.

Carolyn: She changed it.

Kirb: I know. Do you think you were right?

Terry: Did the miscue help me or didn't it help me? (They listen to tape again.)

Kirb: Did it help you understand the story?

Terry: It means the same thing, so yeah.

Carolyn: So what is the answer?

Kirb: No. (They all laugh.)

Carolyn: Why do you think you made the miscue?

Jesus: 'Cause you were reading too fast.

Kirb: Predicting.

Terry: 'Cause I don't like reading out loud.

Jesus: 'Cause she was reading too fast.

Terry: I never said I was reading too fast.

(Each student writes down why he or she thinks the reader miscued.)

Carolyn: Are we going to do another miscue?

Jose: What time is it?

Carolyn: We'll have to get another sheet of paper.

This conversation took place during the students' first collaborative miscue session. The discussion, the laughing, the joking, and the confusions are all part of the process. They are attending to the task, listening to the tape twice

to understand what Terry was doing when reading, and trying to make sense out of it for themselves. Their different beliefs surface through the discussion. It isn't a coincidence that the least proficient reader is the one who feels the reader is "reading too fast" and "she was right" to go back and self-correct the miscue even though there was no meaning loss. By the same token, it isn't a coincidence that one of the more proficient reader asks, "Did the miscue help you understand the story?" and suggests that Terry made the miscue because "she was predicting."

Working in a collaborative situation, where students have the opportunity to observe other readers as well as themselves engaged in the process of reading, helps them to see that many of the strategies they use are effective and efficient, facilitating understanding, while others are inefficient, disrupting meaning. While observing the reading process, they begin to view error as a qualitative rather than a quantitative issue. Sampling, predicting, and confirming support readers in their quest for meaning, while reading every word, finger pointing, and sounding out words adversely affect reading comprehension. With this awareness, students can alter their reading strategies accordingly.

The power of collaborative learning is widely recognized across the curriculum. Students feel comfortable taking risks in a group with their peers, and they are creative and supportive as they work together to discover miscues and their possible causes. Students can relate to miscues and reading strategies because they are learning about them in the context of their own reading patterns.

RMA and CRMA provide classroom teachers with a wealth of meaningful information about the strengths and weaknesses of individual students. For too long, we have put the onus of responsibility for compliance on the individual rather than on the instrument when evaluating a student's reading proficiency. RMA puts the focus where it belongs, on the student. The student is pivotal in creating the assessment, and in the same way that no two students are alike, no two assessments are alike.

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Keeping Track

Here are two forms to help teachers and students keep track of independent reading experiences.

—LBB

Reading Contract
Developed by a third grade class

I _____ am anxious to do research on (topic, ideas, etc.)

My plan of study will be _____

I will use the following resources: _____

The date I will start is _____

I will present a progress report on _____ and conclude my study on _____

I shall present my activity in the form of
 Class presentation
 Play
 Report
 Other _____

I understand that I am able to negotiate a new contract at the time of my progress report if need be.

Signed _____ Dated _____ Witness _____ Dated _____

Child's Record
How I use my reading time - 1st grade

Name: _____

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

Reading Record

Name _____ Date _____ Grade _____

Interests
 Choice of Books:
 Fiction
 Non-Fiction
 Variety
 Other Reading Materials

Silent Reading
 Comprehension
 Ideas
 Facts
 Inferences

Oral Reading
 1. Reads for meaning
 2. Corrects when necessary
 3. Makes good substitutions
 4. Concepts in reading
 5. Syntactic development in reading

My Reading Log
 Books I Like
 Name _____
 Author _____
 Illustrator _____

My Favorite Part _____

Words or phrases I want to remember _____

Problems I have _____