Retrospective Miscue Analysis for Struggling Postsecondary Readers

By Eric J. Paulson and Pamela Mason-Egan

ABSTRACT: Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA) is presented as an instructional strategy for postsecondary reading instruction. Oral reading miscues, which form the core of the RMA approach, are briefly described, and RMA is discussed as a one-on-one instructional approach utilizing the reader's own miscues. The theoretical underpinnings of RMA are discussed and detailed procedures for implementing RMA are provided. Examples from several RMA sessions that illustrate RMA procedures are presented.

Recent studies (ACT, 2006; American Institutes for Research, 2006; Associated Press, 2006a; Associated Press, 2006b) reinforce what developmental educators have known for some time: Many college students are underprepared for the demands of reading at the college level and can benefit from developmental literacy instruction. Although definitions of "who" underprepared college readers are vary, general agreement might include a description of underprepared college readers as having difficulty engaging in college-level literacy practices including reading expository material at a level proficient enough to integrate information and gain understanding (Martino, Norris, & Hoffman, 2001). Other researchers have found that underprepared readers have difficulty accessing effective reading strategies, have limited experience applying metacognitive awareness, and may have incomplete or unhelpful conceptions of how they read and process language (Caverly, Nicholson, & Radcliffe, 2004; El-Hindi, 1996). As a result, many students are unsure of what they need to become more effective readers (Maitland, 2000). In addition, it has been noted that many underprepared readers are guided by misconceptions about the nature of the reading process (Marek, 1996a) and these misconceptions can influence how they engage in college-level literacy practices. Others have found that underprepared college students do not exhibit high levels of self-regulated learning and may be functioning in a passive and dependent role (Maitland). Through our discussions of the theoretical underpinnings of Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA), and our excerpts from actual RMA sessions, our goal is to make apparent how RMA has exhibited positive influence to directly address such areas.

This article is about expanding ideas of what can be useful in a postsecondary literacy context to serve those students who need more than classroom instructional time in order to develop as college readers. Specifically, the expansion discussed herein will be in the context of one-on-one instruction for underprepared college readers. The type of one-on-one instruction focused on here is Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA), an individualized approach to literacy instruction that utilizes students' own oral reading miscues as the basis for metacognitive discussions about the reading process.

Miscue Analysis

Although oral reading miscues are sometimes associated with younger readers, readers of all ages and proficiency levels produce miscues. College readers are no exception, and ample work has demonstrated the utility of examining college readers' miscues (e.g., Brown, 1980; Ohaver, 1972; Paulson, 2001; Smith, 1980; Warde, 2005). This section introduces and describes miscues.

Defining Miscues

Miscues are unexpected responses to the text that readers produce when reading an unfamiliar text aloud. The term "miscue" is used to avoid the negative connotations of "error" or "mistake" and reflects the method's underlying assumption that miscues are the result of the same language cue systems that produce expected responses in oral reading; they are not simply random errors. The term was introduced by Ken Goodman (1969), and a taxonomy of miscues was soon developed (Goodman, 1969). Soon after, the process of miscue analysis was adapted and formalized by Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke (1973; Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 2005), and there have been hundreds of miscue analysis studies published since (Brown, Goodman, & Marek, 1996). The following illustrates the miscues of a 1st-year college reader (excerpted from Paulson & Freeman, 2003).

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Oh-Oh, the furnace clicked on, it that’s all that was! Calm down, girl, calm down! The trouble with you is, all you read the papers. You (should) read the comics and stop there.

**Analyzing Miscues**

This reader made four miscues in this section of text: one substitution (it for that), one omission (should is omitted), and two insertions (all is inserted in two places). In the first sentence, he substituted it for that. This is a syntactically and semantically acceptable miscue, since the miscue retains the grammatical form of the sentence and does not change the meaning. That is, this miscue is one that shows the reader’s understanding of the author’s syntactic construction and overall meaning. Rather than a cause for concern, such a miscue could be evidence for the utilization of many effective elements of the reading process, such as an attention to sentence grammar and an awareness of the semantic relationships between different parts of the sentence.

The next three miscues are interrelated and show some strengths as well as some areas that the reader may have needed to self-correct. First, the reader inserts the word all between the words read and the. This miscue retains an acceptable syntactic construction with part of the sentence but does not fit as well with the end of the sentence: “You read all the papers” is a somewhat different semantic construction than “you read the papers.” In the next sentence, the reader omits should and again inserts the word all between the words read and the. The omission of the word should changes the syntax of the sentence from a suggestion using a modal auxiliary to a simple description, and the resulting semantic construction is at odds with the rest of the text. However, what is evident from this sequence of miscues is that after the reader constructed the penultimate sentence in a certain way, he then constructed the subsequent sentence to reflect that syntactic construction. This shows a strong understanding of parallel construction, where texts are written so that different elements of a sentence or paragraph agree with each other in tone, singular/plural usage, tense, and so on.

In short, miscues provide a host of information about students’ reading. When used with established miscue instructional methods, as detailed following, a student’s miscues can be a powerful tool for improving reading effectiveness.

**Introducing RMA**

Readers’ miscues are frequently used as diagnostic assessment measures, particularly when teachers want an in-depth look at the strengths and weaknesses of individual readers. This information can be used for planning instructional lessons as well as for research purposes; Goodman, Watson, and Burke (1996) discuss numerous ways that miscue information can be translated into instruction, one of which is Retrospective Miscue Analysis.

Although RMA is an instructional approach usually associated with middle and secondary grades, it is important to consider at the theoretical level how RMA relates to older readers. Of course, “older readers” may be a bit of a misnomer as most college students are entering into the transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood, and there is some uncertainty surrounding the adolescent/adult categorization. However, most researchers define adolescence from ages 10 to 18 and tend to categorize college students as “adults” in many research studies (Arnett, 2000). Several researchers (Arnett; Dyson & Renk, 2006) have pointed out that most “traditional age” college students tend to see themselves as neither adolescents nor adults in what Arnett has described as emerging adulthood. Although many college students may not view themselves as full-fledged adults, most see themselves as in the process of attaining adulthood status developing two essential qualities: accepting responsibility for one’s self and making independent decisions (Arnett).

However, research has consistently found that 1st-year college students often have difficulty independently engaging in college-level literacy practices such as understanding complex assignments, employing appropriate reading strategies, and self-monitoring for understanding (Gorga Cukras, 2006). And, one of the most difficult parts of the transition to college is learning how to become self-regulated independent adult learners (Van Blerkom & Van Blerkom, 2004).

It is during this transitional time of emerging adulthood when a significant opportunity exists to engage students in self-exploration, reflection, and change. Self-evaluation is an important part of the learning process because it involves students in their own learning (Carr, 2002). When students engage in self-evaluation, they reflect upon themselves as readers and learners. Students ask themselves, “How am I doing?” “Am I improving in this area?” “What are my strengths?” and “What are my areas for improvement?” (Carr, p. 195). The goal of self-evaluation is for students to gain insights into themselves as readers and learners, and this is where educators begin with RMA. Throughout the RMA process, readers are engaged in exploration, reflection, and evaluation. This process is a means to gain insight, set goals, monitor progress, and make necessary changes in reading behavior.

**Overview of Retrospective Miscue Analysis**

The essence of an RMA session is a discussion between the instructor and the student about the student’s reading, specifically in terms of the student’s miscues. Goals of RMA discussions often include demystifying the reading process, raising reading to a metacognitive level, and engaging the reader in thinking about useful strategies for reading. Instructors seek to accomplish those goals by encouraging readers to discuss their own reading process in order to better understand and value the complex processes of reading and thereby revalue themselves as readers and learners.

**Theoretical Underpinnings of RMA**

Several key aspects make RMA a powerful instructional approach. The themes of metacognition discussions, motivation, and revaluing are consistently found in RMA sessions, and their existence forms the theoretical basis for RMA procedures.

**Metacognitive discussions.** During RMA, readers think and talk about their own miscues they produced with their instructor. Goodman and Marek (1996b) have asserted that scaffolding during RMA enables instructors to help readers discover aspects of their own reading processes, instead of simply telling readers what to think. That is, RMA “allows readers to become overtly and consciously aware of their own use of reading strategies and to value their knowledge of the linguistic systems they control as they transact with written texts” (p. 40). A core element of RMA is that learning happens when actions, thoughts, and experiences are discussed with the learner as opposed to facts being given to the learner; the emphasis is on learners playing an active role in constructing knowledge. This collaborative process helps the learner bridge the
gap from the more traditional passive student role to more active engagement in the learning process. As they engage in these metacognitive discussions they learn about themselves as readers and about the reading process while developing more productive reading strategies.

RMA has been shown to help readers renegotiate their views of themselves and how they implement reading strategies (Black, 2004). When readers do not understand the nature of the reading process and the reader's own role in that process, reading effectiveness can suffer. Instruction should address not only students' beliefs about themselves as readers and learners but also the beliefs students have about the reading process itself. That is, if a student believes that reading is sounding out words and that good reading means getting all of the words on the page correct, that belief will drive their approach to reading, which can actually hinder, not enhance, comprehension (Marek, 1996a). RMA engenders discussions in which readers "consider the qualitative nature of their reading" (Goodman & Flurkey, 1996, p. 95), which leads to a greater understanding, and control, of the process.

**Motivation.** Underprepared students' pessimism about their abilities as readers certainly affects their motivation to read and often becomes "the most powerful obstacle that teachers face in helping those students become better readers" (McCabe & Margolis, 2001, p. 45). RMA practice recognizes that a negative self-concept impedes learning and that motivation is important, one reason that instructors choose positive misuscs to discuss with readers in order to build confidence in the students' own reading ability (Goodman & Flurkey, 1996). The interrelationship between self-efficacy, the "I can" belief, and reading comprehension implies that if students believe that they have the ability to understand what they are reading, then they will be more motivated to engage with the text (Vacc, 2006). This advocacy for increasing both students' motivation and self-efficacy, as well as providing instruction for comprehension strategies, is central to the RMA process as well. Through RMA discussions readers acquire an enhanced understanding about the reading process, their own strengths in reading, and more effective ways to strategically approach reading, and this understanding results in positive changes in attitude and confidence in reading (Moore & Brantingham, 2003).

**Revaluing.** Crucial to understanding the foundation of RMA is the concept of revaluing, whereby readers redefine themselves as readers and gain a new understanding of the strengths they bring to the reading act, strengths like syntactic knowledge, semantic knowledge, world experiences, and so on that are crucial parts of reading. Revaluing also relates to how readers begin to view the reading process itself (Flurkey, 1996). Goodman (2003) has stated that the key to helping readers in trouble is to "help them revalue themselves as language users and learners, and revalue the reading process as an interactive, constructive language process" (p. 421). The goal of revaluing is to support learners in risk taking, self-monitoring, and confidence building.

Aspects of the theoretical basis of RMA, such as motivation and revaluing, are affected by growth in strategic reading comprehension development. That is, as opposed to simply being an emotional support group for struggling readers, RMA builds individuals' self-esteem. Aspects of RMA like revaluing empower students to become self-efficacious readers. Moore and Aspegren (2001) have explained this by presenting "the concept of empowerment in RMA as helping the reader 'exercise power' (Gore, 1992, p. 62) and control over the reading process" (p. 501). RMA takes the reader on a journey of self-reflection, exploration, and change. As students talk about their reading process, they often begin to realize that they know a lot more about language, and about themselves as language users, than they had previously realized.

Once a person begins to redefine him/herself as a competent reader, there is a positive impact on his/her reading proficiency. We must not underestimate the power of such a shift in attitude. It transforms people into learners who take charge of their own learning—who define themselves as readers: literacy human beings capable of learning what they want to learn. (Goodman & Marke, 1996a, p. 203)

Through shared exploration of their own reading processes, students enhance their own understanding of reading and how to become more self-directed readers.

**Procedures for Retrospective Miscue Analysis**

This section provides a description of procedures for implementing Retrospective Miscue Analysis with examples that illustrate key points. Procedures are based on and utilize Goodman and Marek's (1996b) RMA guidelines.

**Day One**

An RMA session begins like a typical miscue analysis session, and the teacher's knowledge of marking, coding, and analyzing miscues is necessary for successful implementation of RMA; for an introduction to miscue analysis, see Wilde (2000), and for a comprehensive course on miscue analysis, see Goodman, Watson, and Burke (2005). At the first meeting with the student, work toward establishing a friendly rapport so that the student is comfortable reading and talking. At this initial meeting, it is also important for the instructor to begin learning about the student's perceptions regarding reading and him or herself as a reader. Semi-structured interviews like the Burke Interview Modified for Older Readers (BIMOR; Goodman & Marek, 1996a) provide a starting point for learning about a student's reading and self-conception as a reader. The following are excerpts (Paulson, 2006) from a reading interview conducted with a college student using the BIMOR:

**Pamela (Instructor):** When you are reading and you come to something that gives you trouble, what do you do?

**Jason (Student):** I usually read it over again...either read it over or skip it because it frustrates me... Either I'll read it over twice, sometimes three times, and if I don't understand something, I'll either ask somebody or just skip it. Usually, I just skip it because I'm usually reading alone. Yeah, I usually just skip it and then see if I can put it together with something else in the beginning, or I go back and read what was before and after that and see if I can get it then using context clues.

**Pamela:** Can you describe yourself as a reader?

**Jason:** Horrible...Lost...Like a lost dog. Umm, I can read and I can get the job done, but it takes me a long time. I'm not accurate and my speed is not very good. I'll read very fast and then very, very slow. I'm all over the place...I'm like a heart monitor going up and down.

**Pamela:** Is there anything that would you like to change about your reading?

**Jason:** Speed and accuracy...being able to read quicker and more efficiently and to be able to read for enjoyment, almost.

This discussion marks the beginning of Jason's...
increased metacognition about reading and his own reading processes, which was continued throughout his RMA sessions. The full interview with Jason explored his perceptions about his abilities as a reader, his attitudes toward reading, his reading strategies, his perceptions and beliefs of what "good reading" meant to him, his early reading experiences, and his reading habits.

As with all miscue analysis sessions, an RMA session begins with the student reading an unfamiliar text aloud. This text should be challenging to the reader but not at the frustration level, and should be chosen in consultation with the student, with the student's needs and interests in mind. For example, if the student is struggling with textbook reading, using an excerpt from the student's history textbook may be an appropriate choice. During this session, the student is audio recorded reading the text aloud. After reading the text, the student "retells" the text, which for expository texts can take the shape of a detailed summary of the information in the text. If the student reads fiction/literature, the retelling can be more of a depiction of what happens in the story from beginning to end. After the retelling, if the student neglects to include elements of the text in the retelling, the instructor may want to ask some questions about the text to further assess the reader's overall comprehension of the text. Once the retelling is finished, then the initial RMA meeting is complete, and the instructor and student should make plans to meet on a subsequent day. During the interim between the two meetings, the instructor will prepare materials for their first RMA discussion.

Day Two
Preparation for the session. In preparation for the second meeting—which will be the first RMA discussion—the instructor listens to the audio recording and records the miscues the student produced, marking them on a typescript or photocopy of the text. Since it is crucial to begin with confidence building, the instructor should examine the miscues and select several that show the reader's strengths and good use of strategies, as students will often view miscues as errors that need remediation instead of being indicative of effective strategy use. The instructor should find those sections on the audio recording so that they can be easily played when next meeting with the student.

First RMA discussion. At this first discussion meeting, the instructor plays the portions of the audio that were selected, while both the student and the instructor follow along on a copy of the text. (If after the RMA session is complete the instructor plans to listen to the session for themes, progress being made, and so on, then it is a good idea to audio record this aspect of the RMA session as well.) Together, the student and instructor listen for preselected miscues, and either the student or the instructor can stop the audio when they hear a miscue. The student and instructor together then mark the miscues on a blank typescript or photocopy of the text.

Guiding questions. The instructor then begins a discussion about what the miscue shows about the student's reading, emphasizing strategies that are evident and how to employ more strategies. The instructor will guide the discussion with the "RMA Guiding Questions." Each of the following RMA guiding questions is designed to help the reader focus on reading strategies and cueing strategies and is used to guide the discussion about each miscue.

1. Does the miscue make sense?
2. Does the miscue sound like language?
3. Was the miscue corrected?

Students will often view miscues as errors that need remediation.

A. Should it have been?
If the answer to Questions 1 and 3 was "No," then ask:
4. Does the miscue look like what was on the page?
5. Does the miscue sound like what was on the page?

For all miscues ask:
6. Why do you think you made this miscue?
7. Did that miscue affect your understanding of the text?

Each question is usually expanded into a discussion by asking "Why do you think so?" Or "How do you know?"

Using these questions as a structural guide, the instructor and student discuss the student's reading, retelling, and miscues, always working toward a better understanding of the student's own reading as well as the reading process in general. These questions are starting points, and it should be expected that the discussion goes beyond the boundaries of those particular questions. As with any one-on-one, student-oriented instructional practice, each RMA discussion will be different. The general goals, however, remain the same: working with the student to come to a greater understanding of how reading works with a view toward building on the student's strengths in order for him or her to become a more effective and efficient reader.

The following session illustrates how some of those questions play out in an actual RMA session. In this excerpt, Pamela and Jason discuss two-word insertion miscues. As Jason sampled the text, he made a prediction about the structure or syntax of the following sentence from a short essay.

The printed text, with Jason's miscues overlaid on top, is:

So you searched for the killers the and ^ sluggers and ^ maulers — fellows who could hit with the force of a baseball bat.

Jason and Pamela discussed his insertion of the word "the" during his reading of the text and they focused on the reason he produced it as a means to gain some insight into Jason's reading process in the following excerpt:

Pamela: So, you said, "the killers and the sluggers and the maulers"...Does the miscue make sense?...Of course it does...But I'm more interested in why you put "the" in front of those words.

Jason: Because I was addressing "the sluggers" and "the maulers" as separate things, like titles.

Pamela: Do you think it has anything to do with the fact that the list starts with "the killers" and then you stuck with the same pattern?

Jason: Yes...I did...True.

Pamela: I'm thinking that maybe you stuck with the same structure that was there.

Jason: Yes, I just copied it. And I think it sounds better.

This metacognitive discussion between instructor and student about the student's own reading processes is evident in every aspect of RMA. As Jason read this text, he used the knowledge he had gained by sampling and followed the syntactic pattern the author used at the beginning of the sentence. He sampled the text and then predicted the structure of the rest of the sentence. Jason told Pamela that he had not realized he had added the word "the" in the sentence. For Jason, the insertion of the words made sense and the miscue was automatically confirmed. There was no need for him to go back and self-correct the miscue. In addition, he
was also able to make the connection between oral and written language since the addition of the word "the" sounded better to him. The more Jason learns, and is able to articulate, about his own reading process, the more he realizes that he brings strengths to the reading process that he can build on. When instructors make clear to readers, like Pamela does here, that readers are making good choices, applying sound strategies, and understanding what they are reading, that discussion becomes motivation for further efforts to learn and apply new strategies to the reader's reading tasks.

What follows is another example of Jason's sampling, predicting, and confirming strategies while reading the same short essay. Jason's miscues are in italics above the printed text followed by an excerpt from the subsequent RMA session:

The killing was seen by millions; it was on television. In the twelfth round, he was hit hard in the head and several times, went down, was counted out, and never came out of the coma.

**Pamela:** Okay...So, you substituted "It was" and you got rid of "was" and added "and."

**Jason:** I'll tell you why...comma, comma and then I would put "and." To me, in my head, the comma shouldn't be there. It's not necessary. And that comma shouldn't be there and that is exactly why I did that.

**Pamela:** So did the miscue make sense?

**Jason:** Absolutely.

As a result of Pamela and Jason's discussion, it was apparent that Jason was using his knowledge of grammar and punctuation to make sense of the text; he constructed a sentence that made sense to him and that did not disrupt the meaning. We can also see that Jason was sampling and predicting when he said "It was the twelfth round" instead of "In the twelfth round" because the phrase just prior to that part of the text started with "it was." He sampled the text and then predicted that the next sentence would start with the same syntactic pattern; when this made sense to him, he continued reading without disruption and told Pamela that he did not even notice what he had done. Pamela also pointed out that it was fortuitous that he had not noticed the miscues because, had he self-corrected, he would have wasted his time correcting a high-quality miscue—one that did not negatively affect syntax or meaning—that did not need to be corrected. This also offers evidence that Jason had moved away from his prior focus on words to a focus on making meaning.

**Preparation for subsequent sessions.** After completing the RMA discussion, if more than one RMA session is planned—which is advisable—another text can be read at this meeting or at a subsequent meeting. After the session is over, the instructor should reflect on and note important elements of the RMA discussion in preparation for a subsequent session, and discussions can pull together intertextual observations and discussions of reading strategies that arise over more than one session. For example, after Jason read a narrative short story, the RMA sessions that followed included a lot of discussion about Jason's attempts at integrating new reading strategies, such as the conscious reduction of word repetitions and strategic rereading. During this discussion, he also engaged in some self-assessment and gained more insight into his reading process. Pamela asked Jason to compare his experience when reading two short stories, and it became apparent that Jason had made a conscious effort to reduce the number of repetitions and corrections of high-quality miscues as he was reading. The following is part of their discussion:

**Pamela:** So you were using the repeating as a strategy to understand.

**Jason:** Yes.

Pamela noticed that Jason's rereading seemed to increase at points in the story where he seemed confused, a significant observation since it demonstrated that Jason's repetition and rereading increased in response to the loss of meaning he was experiencing. Instead of focusing on word-by-word reading, Jason was more attuned to constructing meaning and was using rereading as a strategy to comprehend the text. This was a major shift from his first reading where he demonstrated that he believed it was important to read every word perfectly and accurately, and pulling together observations across more than one RMA session illustrated this development.

**RMA Research at the Postsecondary Level: Evaluating Reader Development**

Although the theoretical underpinnings of RMA provide a foundation for its use at the postsecondary level and the detailed introduction to implementing RMA allows instructors to begin implementing the approach, the purpose of this article is not to present an original study. For this reason, an evidence-based assessment of the approach as reported in the literature is included. Research involving RMA across a range of age groups has generally had a single-participant, case-study focus, using RMA data and miscue analysis as the main measurement tool. In addition, discourse between the instructor/researcher and the student, as well as responses to interview questions, have been analyzed with an eye toward uncovering qualitative understandings of reading processes, effective reading strategies, and personal relationships with reading.

Through this type of research on RMA, Goodman (1996) and Flurkey (1996) discuss how using RMA results in readers who revalue both themselves as readers and the reading process, raise their understandings of reading processes to a meta-cognitive level, and, importantly, "improve their actual reading strategies" (p. 87). Other research demonstrates that RMA can have positive effects on readers' understandings about reading, the reading strategies they employ while reading, and their comprehension of the text being read (Goodman & Paulson, 2001; Marek, 1996a). The transcripts of RMA sessions have been especially useful in demonstrating how students themselves often realize RMA's value in improving their reading efficiency and effectiveness (Marek, 1996a; 1996b).

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Research involving RMA at the postsecondary level is relatively scarce, but it follows the general research trends of RMA research at all levels. In the studies at the postsecondary level briefly described here, readers' miscues were analyzed for qualitative and quantitative changes, and each reader's discourse was analyzed for evidence of transforming conceptualizations of the reading process and the readers' personal views of him or herself as a strategic reader. The texts utilized in these studies are narrative, primarily because a major focus of the teacher/researcher was on basic reading comprehension at the college-level instead of on specific content area reading or textbook study strategies. Indeed, an important next step in adding to the existing RMA research is to focus on textbook readings and expository text.

One study (Paulson, 2001) described the results of a series of RMA sessions with a community college student in a developmental reading class through a close focus on two of those RMA sessions. Though this student's oral reading was usually very accurate, he had basic comprehension difficulties while reading; for this reason, he met with this article's first author (who was also his developmental reading instructor) once a week to conduct RMA sessions outside of class. Although academic reading was a concern—and a focus of instruction in his reading class and in later tutoring sessions—because basic comprehension development was the focus of the initial RMA sessions, the texts initially focused on narrative short stories. Through coding of themes and trends in the transcripts, student/teacher discourse in the RMA sessions demonstrated the student's qualitative gains in understanding of how his own strengths as a reader could be used strategically to facilitate effective reading. He also made improvements measured through miscue analysis; specifically, through the RMA process this reader reduced the number of departures from the text he produced, increased the quality (measured through syntactic and semantic acceptability) of the miscues he did produce, and was able to control grammatical relationships and meaning construction at a higher level. Importantly, as illustrated through the discourse in those two RMA sessions, this student improved his understanding of how reading works and his understanding of his own strengths as a reader.

Marek's (1996b) study of another community college developmental reader reading a variety of narrative texts found similar benefits of RMA. Over the course of 11 RMA sessions, development in reading effectiveness was measured through miscue analysis which showed increased control over grammatical relationships, increased semantic acceptability of oral text, declining reliance solely on graphophonics features of the text, and fewer departures from the text overall. Utilizing a pre-post approach with interview questions designed to reveal the learner's perceptions of the reading process, Marek found that this learner demonstrated a greater control over the reading process and an improved feeling of ownership over the strategies employed to read effectively. In short, this reader began the move from dependent reader to independent reader.

Mason-Egan (2006) implemented RMA with three college freshmen who had been diagnosed as reading disabled and were enrolled in a literacy support program at a private university. RMA was used both as an assessment tool and as an instructional method to support the students as they explored how they processed language, developed more effective reading strategies, and increased confidence...! knew that I knew how to read. I began to understand reading as a reciprocal process; helping to solidify some of his new beliefs; Jason began to understand reading as a reciprocal process and that he was progressing as a proficient reader. In the following excerpt, Jason summed up what he had learned about his reading process through the retrospective miscue analysis sessions:

Pamela: Is there anything you have learned about your reading process up to this point?

Jason: That when I get frustrated, I'm focusing more on the words than on the context of the sentence. I need to focus more on reading and not sounding out the words. Reading and taking in what the paragraph or sentence is saying rather than what each word is saying or how each word is pronounced. Skipping words that aren't always necessary is okay and going through it and letting it flow rather than getting stuck on one thing. Jason had moved from a word-focused view of reading to a meaning-centered view of reading, which was at the core of what Pamela identified Jason needed to shift. Jason's ability to recognize and articulate this greatly facilitated further development in his reading proficiency. As a result of understanding his own role within the reading process, Jason revalued himself as a reader and a learner. RMA helped Jason move from a passive stance in reading to one of an active, knowledgeable, strategic reader focused on comprehension.

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Implications for Practice

The individualized nature of RMA can present a challenge to its implementation in postsecondary settings; a college instructor with 25 or more students in a single class may be at a loss as to how to implement the strategy. Since RMA sessions generally utilize a one-to-one instructional format, it is natural that RMA sessions be conducted by trained tutors or learning specialists.

Sessions can be held in college reading labs or student learning centers either as a stand-alone, reading-support service or as part of an out-of-class tutoring or lab component for college reading courses. As part of a class lab component, RMA can be integrated into a traditional developmental reading curriculum, thereby creating a more comprehensive and individually responsive reading support system for all students.

Conclusion

The collaboration between teacher and student evident in Retrospective Miscue Analysis discussions lends itself to a dynamic instructional intervention. Throughout the RMA process, readers are engaged in exploration, reflection, and evaluation as a means to gain insight, set goals, monitor progress, and make necessary changes in their reading actions. The individual nature of RMA discussions means that a reader's specific issues can be addressed; this includes issues such as problems with reading comprehension, vocabulary development, reading strategies, focus and engagement, reading efficiency, self-efficacy, and motivation. In addition, RMA may be a useful method to support students with diverse learning styles, including students diagnosed with learning disabilities. Second-language learners as well as nontraditional college students may benefit from RMA as well.

As an instructional methodology that uses discussions about a student's miscues, and reading in general, to increase that student's reading proficiency, Retrospective Miscue Analysis has the potential to address some of the issues that define postsecondary reading difficulties. Issues like limited experience applying metacognitive awareness and incomplete or unhelpful conceptions of how individuals read and process language (Caverly, Nicholson, & Radcliffe, 2004; El-Hindi, 1996), the need for improvement in reading performance of college freshmen. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.


References


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