

WEBSITE RESOURCE W9.8

Miscue analysis

Miscue analysis was pioneered by Kenneth and Yetta Goodman (1974). The process outlined here is an adaptation of their original methods. Its aim is to identify the strategies a reader uses so that appropriate support can be provided to help that reader develop in confidence and fluency. The Goodmans created the term 'miscue' because they wanted to signal that often the 'errors' children make when reading are positive indicators of active processing of a text rather than failures. The procedure can be used when a child is a **Developing reader** on the Scale of Progression for Reading. **Emergent** or **Early** readers may be assessed using a Running Record.

A miscue analysis is not a reading test. It is a diagnostic analysis to help decide how best to support a child's progress in reading. It will take about 30–45 minutes so you may need the help of someone in school to organise a suitable time. In discussion with the class teacher, select a child whose reading has been a cause for concern. The analysis should be carried out in a relatively quiet place where, if you wish, you could sound record the reading. Recording the reading means that you will not be writing while the child reads, which can be off-putting. Having a recording also means that you can return to the reading to check on details.

Procedure

1. Choose a text – one which the reader will enjoy but which is at the leading edge of her or his competence. Find a text which is unknown to the reader. It is worth choosing a passage which includes some variety – for example, speech as well as narrative; a range of sentence lengths and familiar/unfamiliar vocabulary. It should certainly be one of sufficient quality for the reader to want to read it! You will need at least two copies – one for you and one for the child – and perhaps another photocopied one that you can write on if you are using a book. It is a good idea for the reader at least to have a book so that s/he can use any available context cues. You may find it useful to have another couple of texts ready in case you have over- or underestimated the reader's competence. The passage should be about 100–150 words long.
2. Reassure the reader that this is not a test of their reading but a way of looking closely at how they go about reading so that together you can work out ways to get better at it.

Let her/him know that you will be recording the reading. There are then four stages. The reader will:

- read the extract silently
- tell you about the extract (start recording here)
- read the extract aloud
- discuss the extract in more detail with you.

Reading the text silently

The amount of time needed for this will vary. During this time, notice the reader's strategies, for example the ability to sustain silent reading; eye movements; the time taken to settle to the task; body movement; the degree of involvement in the text while reading silently.

Telling you about the extract

This should be as near as possible to a genuine conversation about the text. You might start with a prompt like: 'I'd like you to tell me what that was about' and inviting her/him to start the recording. This process of recounting will show what the reader has understood, although it is worth remembering that retelling is a learned activity and your chosen reader might not be confident at doing it. You will have the recording to return to so that you can listen attentively later to how the recounting goes.

Reading the extract aloud

You will need to explain to the child that you are not going to give any help unless it is absolutely necessary because the idea is to see what they can do on their own. Be reassuring but clear that you will only give help when it is absolutely necessary. Try not to give in to appeals for help when a little more trying might yield results. You will need to use your own judgement about whether the child really can't read the word or has become used to adults helping out when the going gets tough! You can help with names of characters where these are not easily decodable. You might start the reader off by saying 'I'd like you to read this to me as well as you can. I want to see how you can manage without me helping you.' You will see when you do the analysis that this will show what strategies the reader can call on when challenged.

This part of the procedure will show you just what the reader is doing when coming across challenges in the text. You will use the recording to do the full analysis, but you might want to note any observations about reading behaviour during the reading. It is a good idea to stay as low profile as you can while the reading is going on; for one thing so that the reader forgets that you might be a convenient provider of a tricky word, for another so that your presence does not prove inhibiting.

Discussing the extract in more detail with you

This will depend on what the reader said before and the kind of book. You might want to pick up on previous points. If the text is a story, you might ask the reader to talk about a character s/he liked or about what might happen next. The more experienced a reader, the more s/he will be able to talk about the implicit meanings in the text. If it is an information text, you might ask for clarification of a process or detail so that the reader

can show understanding of the purpose of the text. It is important that you find ways of encouraging the reader to say as much as possible by asking open questions rather than focusing on the meanings of particular words, for example. The aim is to find out how much the reader understood of the extract and how it might fit with the longer text it was taken from.

The analysis

(This may take about half an hour.)

When you are aware of the strategies a reader uses, you are in a better position to help move her or him on, for example:

- reading on in order to help work out a word
- going back and repeating a previously read sentence/section in order to establish or check the context
- stopping if what is read doesn't make sense and correcting the miscue
- using the graphophonic features of words to help read them
- using more than one strategy to guess a word, for example, syntactic (sentence structure) or semantic (meaning) cues.

You may also want to note any punctuation that the reader ignores. In analysing the miscues you will be looking for the positive and negative strategies the reader seems to be using.

Positive strategies are intelligent substitutions and show that the reader is attempting to get meaning out of the text, having understood the general gist, for example, substituting 'dear' for 'darling'; this has some phonic correspondence (the initial 'd'), it fits in terms of syntax (both are nouns) and it fits the meaning (semantics) because both are endearments. Negative strategies are those which get in the way of understanding the text and show that the reader is not reading mainly for meaning, for example 'lost' for 'less' which, although it has the same initial letter, does not match grammatically (syntax) nor in terms of meaning (semantically).

Once you have decided on whether the miscues are positive or negative, mark them on your copy of the text as:

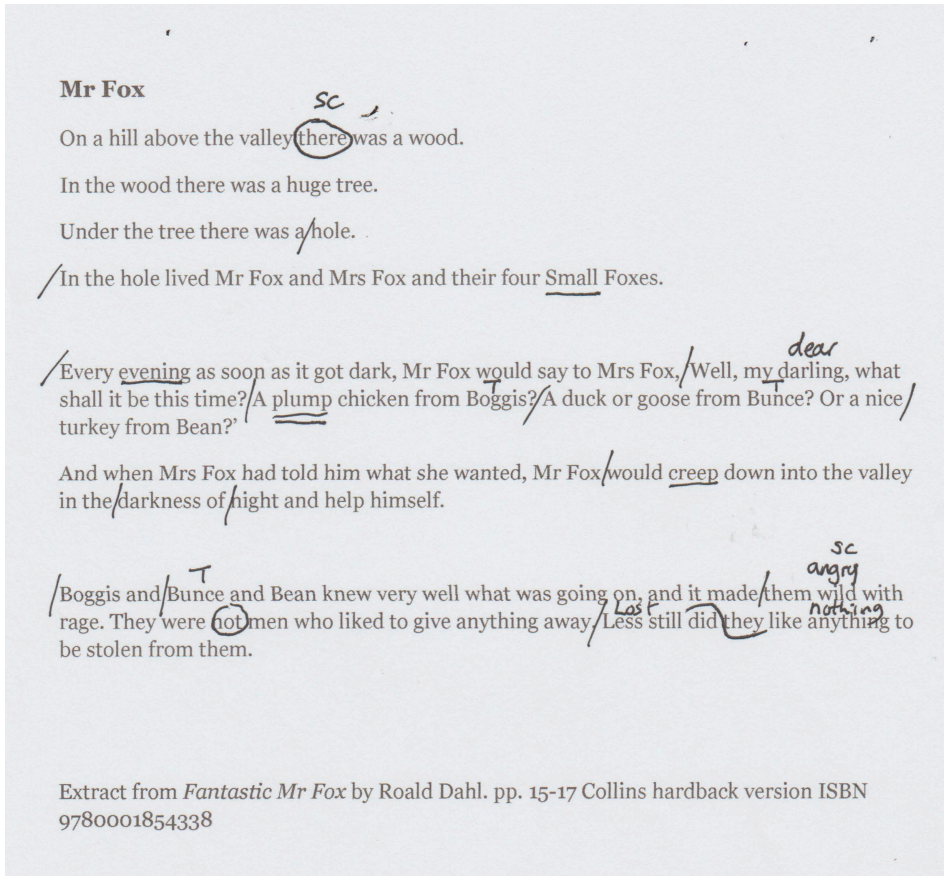
| No attempt | cross the word through with a diagonal line |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Long pause, teacher gives help | mark with T |
| Repetition | underline the repeated word as many times as it is repeated |
| Omission | circle the word missed out |
| Insertion | write the word inserted above ^ |
| Reversal | mark the words with a xxxcontinuous line |
| Substitution | write the word substituted above the correct word |
| Self-correction | mark SC after the substitution, omission etc. |
| Hesitation | mark with a diagonal line before the word paused at / |

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The example in Figure W9.1 shows a marked version of an extract read by Marco

When writing a summary of the analysis, it is important to identify:

- the reader's strengths
- support/experiences needed to make further development.



Amira, Marco's teacher, analysed his miscues:

I chose to do a miscue analysis on Marco's reading because he has been showing signs of reluctance about reading, and is very reticent in guided reading sessions. I don't know if that is because he's having problems decoding texts.

When Marco read the extract to himself he seemed quite tense, bending over the page, although his eyesight is fine. His eye movements were fast and went back and forth over each sentence.

When he talked about the extract he was able to say that it was about Mr and Mrs Fox although, understandably, he seemed unclear about who Bunce, Boggis and Bean were.

Throughout the reading, Marco used a range of strategies, including sounding out initial digraphs for 'plump' and 'creep' and splitting words like 'evening' and 'darkness'. After being given the name 'Boggis' he was able to read it again a few lines further on but needed me to give him 'Bunce' again.

He self-corrected a couple of times, once when he had missed out a word 'there' in the first line and when he had substituted 'angry' for 'wild'. Both of these show that he is reading for meaning, checking back for the sense of the sentence in the first instance, and providing a good substitution for the second, then noticing that it did not make sense with the following two words.

Two of his four substitutions ('dear', 'angry' 'lost' and 'nothing') fitted syntactically and semantically, and in the first case, graphophonically. The third substitution only matched graphophonically and he seemed to be a little adrift in that sentence, reversing 'did they' to 'they did' and substituting 'nothing' for 'anything' which could be seen as using his spoken language experience ('nothing' is often substituted for 'anything' in the local dialect – 'I didn't do nothing'). I think that the miscues in the final sentence are because he was rushing to get to the end of what he had found quite a demanding experience.

The most striking part of this miscue for me is the pattern of his hesitations and repetitions. Although he read the passage accurately, he often paused a few words before something he found demanding, for example 'evening' and 'darkness'. This, and the repetition of words he had successfully read suggests strongly that one of Marco's main 'problems' is a lack of confidence in his own ability to read aloud and anxiety associated with reading. Most of his miscues were positive and indicated that he could read the words accurately and make sense of the extract and when we talked about what might happen next in the story he was able to suggest that 'Mr Fox will get in trouble' so he had clearly got the gist.

Action: I shall have to find ways of taking the heat off reading so that Marco gains some confidence. Paired reading in guided reading may help, and perhaps encouraging him to read comics because I know he likes these and information texts about animals, another of his favourites.

Reference

Goodman, K. & Goodman Y. (1974) To Err is Human: Learning About Language Processes by Analyzing Miscues. In K. Goodman and Y. Goodman (2014) *Making Sense of Learners Making Sense of Written Language* (pp. 115–134). London: Routledge.