Retrospective Misuse Analysis: In the Classroom

Retrospective misuse analysis (RMA) and collaborative retrospective misuse 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 misuses 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 (Marr 1997; Miller and Woodley 1983; Stephenson 1960; Rainer 1977; Wootson 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 Misuse Inventory (Y. Goodman, Burke, and Waterman 1989). 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 then analyzes the reading to identify the reader's strengths and weaknesses. The teacher also interviews the readers, helping them to define their beliefs and perceptions about their 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 misuses and the 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 familiar with the things they do while reading. Kelly's laughter when she misused call for forgiveness as she self-monitoring as she read, and strives to make sense out of the text. As Kelly explains, "I laughed because it sounded funny. . . . and then I corrected it because I didn't make sense." When asked about the misuse pocket myth, Kelly stated she was "self-monitoring," and she had to correct "it 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 misuse the following discussion ensued.

Teacher: What was your misuse?
Kelly: Certain for special.
Teacher: Do they look alike?
Kelly: No.
Teacher: Why do you think you made that misuse?
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 dismaying comment, "I know it's okay to do that, but I just never knew I did when I was reading." RMA helped Kelly understand what "real reader" do.

As professional educators, teachers must decide which misuses and strategies to select and discuss with their students. They base their decisions on the perceptions of students, their students' confidence in themselves as readers, and the strategies they are using efficiently and inefficiently. Usually six to ten misuses 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 take ownership of their misuses and begin to develop a curiosity. The text becomes fluid, something that can be changed and manipulated in the search for meaning. This isn't new. It well-documented that readers constantly and consistently manipulate the text—sampling, predicting, and confirming as they read (Goodman 1973, 1984; Marr, Goodman, and Babcock 1985). Central to any discussion about misuses 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 jumphouse, 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 misuses?
Student: It made them better.
Teacher: That's when they said Puerto Rico Island when actually there are many islands so it made the story, have more sense. Don't edit the author I said that (Goodman, et al 1990).

When reading, Bernie is focusing on meaning and actively constructing meaning for herself. Through retrospection, he begins to understand the strategies she uses and how they assist her in creating a meaningful text. Initially, when Bernie was confronted with misuses, 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 led Bernice to develop a more realistic view of the reading process, one that enables her to understand and believe in herself as a reader.

Collaborative Retrospective Misuse 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 group helps the classroom teacher, who may only have one fast reader, 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 the rest 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 misuse. They then discuss the misuse. The teacher can then lead 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 misuses with the teacher in a whole-class setting or in small groups. Students are taught about misuses and the reading process during minilessons; misuses 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 misuses 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 misuse. They then discuss the misuse and suggest reasons for it. The following are possible questions to guide the discussion.

1. Does the misuse 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 misuse?
4. Why do you think you made this misuse?
5. Think of as many possible reasons for this misuse as you can.

The misuse 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 the coherence of their ideas, reactions to certain strategies, or strategies the students may have about the session.

In analyzing the data from collaborative retrospective misuse 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, they developed numerous, playful side of the students not apparent in their discussions about misuses and language. For example, in the beginning of the
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 cre-
active, playful use of language peppered the dia-
logue discussions. In another instance, students were discussing whether they should include a par-
ticular mise on their tape. The tone of the session is jovial, including a play on words, but they get the job done (Costello 1991).

Mise line 1224:
C did

... They didn't know where their children were. (Carolyn stops tape)
Kirb: That's not a mise. I call it.
Terry: I corrected it myself.
Carolyn: So?
Kirb (pointing at the previous mise, stating that it is too late to go back to that mise for discussion): She was too late. Too late. You can't go back. Do you guys want to do that mise (the next mise)?
All: Yes. (They look for the mise to replay.)
Jesse: Why are we out?
Terry: Three.

Mise line 1226:

The next day Kathy was late for school.
Jesse: Was late.
Carolyn: Too late.
Kirrb: The next day Kathy was late. Do you spell it with a C? (Kirb is reciting the mise on his paper)
Carolyn: No. Yes.
Kirb: It's a K.
Jesse: Does the mise make sense?
Terry: Yes.
Jesse: Why?
Carolyn: In what way does it make sense? You just added an extra word.
Terry: Cause I added an extra word.
Jesse: Cause you added an extra word.
Kirb: Just cause.
Jesse: Did she correct it? (They listen to the tape again)
Terry: Yes. I did yes. I did yes. I did.
Jesse: Do you think you were right for chang-
ing it, or do you think you should have left it?
Jesse: She was right.
Carolyn: She changed it.
Kirb: I know. Do you think you were right?
Terry: Did the mise 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 mise?
Jesse: Cause you were reading too fast.
Kirb: Predicting.
Terry: Cause I don't like reading out loud.
Jesse: 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 made the mise).
Carolyn: Are we going to do another mise?
Jesse: What time is it?
Carolyn: We'll have to get another sheet of paper.

This conversation took place during the stu-
dents' first collaborative mise session. The dis-
cussion, the laughing, the joking, and the con-
fusions are all part of the process. They are at-
tending to the task, listening to the tape twice
to understand what Terry was doing when read-
ing, and trying to make sense out of it for them-
selves. Their different beliefs surface through the discussion. It isn't a coincidence that the least pro-
cient reader is the one who feels the reader is "reading too fast" and "she was right" to go back and self-correct the mise even though there was no warning, as is the case. It isn't a coincidence that one of the more pro-
cient reader asks, "Did the mise help you under-
stand the story?" and suggests that Terry made the mise 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 there are many of the strategies they use are effective and efficient, facilitating under-
standing, while others are inefficient, disrupting meaning. While observing the reading process, they begin to view error as a qualitative rather than a quanti-
tative one, 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 mises and their possible causes. Students can relate to mises and reading strategies because they are learning about them in the con-
text of their own reading patterns.

RMAs 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 instru-
ment when evaluating a student's reading pro-
ficiency. RMA puts the focus where it belongs, on the student. The student is pivotal in creating the assess-
ment, and in the same way that no two students are alike, no two assessments are alike.

References
Costello, S. 1991. Collaborative retrospective mise analy-
ysis with seventh grade readers. Tucson, University of Arizona.
Goodman, Y., C. Burke, and D. Watson. 1987. Reading mise inventory: Alternative pro-
Marek, A. Marek, S. Costello, Brown, J. Wein-
rich, and A. Hulley. 1990. "A study of retro-
spective mise analysis with good and poor
readers in seventh grade." NCTC Research Project.
Marek, A. 1987. Retrospective mise analysis: Case study of two adult readers. Doctoral disser-
tation, University of Arizona, Tucson.

Reading

Rascher, B. 1977. Reading strategies employed by non-profi-
cient adult college students as observed through mise analysis and retrospection. Doctoral dissertation. Holstoa University.
Worsnop, C. M. 1977. A procedure for remedial reading instruc-
tion based upon mise analysis research and tech-
niques. Unpublished manuscript. Canadian Education Department.
Sarah Costello is a language arts teacher at Fister Middle School in Tucson, AZ.

Keeping Track

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

---

Reading Contract

---

Reading Record

---

Reading Log

---

The Whole Language Catalog Supplement on Authentic Assessment: Documenting Learning 153