

Revisiting Revisiting Miscue Analysis.

A response by Ken Goodman

I'm embarrassed for McKenna and Picard.(RT December 2006) As countless readers of the Reading Teacher could tell them they do not understand much about miscue analysis, its history, nor the view of the reading process it has contributed to. Had they sent me their criticism in advance I would have been happy to save them this embarrassment. Miscue analysis continues to be popular with teachers because it helps them to understand how their pupils make sense of print. It is in wide use in teacher education programs as a means of getting teachers to revalue the reading process. It continues to be used in research because it provides a depth profile of the reading process in use. No published critique of miscue analysis has shown it to be invalid.

To make their case against miscue analysis they cite a single unfunded study done by me over 40 years ago. It was the very beginning of examining oral reading miscues.(K. Goodman, 1965) An incidental finding of that study is that it supported what teachers have always known: even first grade readers can read many of the words in context that they can't read out of context. They claim other researchers have proven that my conclusion in that study about the importance of context in reading was wrong. I've never understood why anyone concerned about reading would want to argue that words can be identified as easily out of context as in context. Only in a real text does any word have definable meaning and many cannot even be reliably pronounced out of context. (For example, read, lead, dove, record, desert, etc.)

Since that study there has been forty plus years of miscue research by me, my students and colleagues and countless others. (Brown, et al 1996) Miscues by hundreds of readers at all levels of development using all kinds of texts in many different languages have been analyzed. The taxonomy of oral reading miscues was developed in a series of funded studies. (K. Goodman, 1969) In a recent doctoral study by Shaomei Wang a Chinese adaptation of the taxonomy was developed and miscue analysis was shown to be applicable to Chinese. (Wang, 2006)

Yetta Goodman with her colleagues developed the Reading Miscue Inventory, now in its third revision, which provides alternate forms of miscue analysis for use by teachers, clinicians and teacher educators. (Y. Goodman, et al 2005)

I've learned a lot in the last 40 years and published much of what I've learned in several books, and many book chapters and articles. The model of the reading process I developed using miscue research over those decades views reading as meaning construction (not word recognition). (K. Goodman, 1996) It has received broad verification including work that combines eye movement research with miscue analysis, (Paulson et al, 2003) research on oral language comprehension (Liu & Bever T. 2004), research in text linguistics (Fries,1999) and the recent prediction memory model of brain function.(Hawkins 2004) A field of retrospective miscue analysis has developed which involves readers in revaluing their reading by examining their own miscues. (Y. Goodman and Marek, 1996)

The authors seem to believe that each miscue is assigned to a single cuing system. They are

wrong. In miscue analysis every miscue is analyzed on several different variables. In the article they invent a pony /horse substitution miscue example. They do not provide a context, so I cannot show how the miscue would be fully analyzed. But miscues vary in type: substitution, omission, insertion, reversal or complex. A complex miscue involves shifts in multiple words in the expected or observed response. In their example pony is substituted for horse. Pony for horse would be coded as to whether the resulting text is semantically and syntactically changed and/or acceptable; though the word is changed, meaning and syntax may be fully acceptable depending on the context. The ER and OR have some graphic similarity but no phonemic similarity . It would also be coded as a noun for a noun, again depending on the context. And we would record whether or not it was corrected. Miscue analysis is qualitative but it is also quantitative. We don't just count miscues: we examine their qualities. That's why miscue analysis produces a rich description of the reading.

The major misunderstanding in this article comes from the authors' limited view of reading as calling the names of words (they refer to miscues as miscalling words) A century of eye movement research has shown that readers do not even fixate about one third of all text words. Miscue analysis looks at how readers sample the text, predict, use inference and then confirm or disconfirm as they construct meaning, correcting if necessary. I have never represented reading as serial identification of words. It is not. It is all about making sense of print- constructing meaning. If the authors wish to criticize miscue analysis I would welcome that. But they should do that on the basis of what miscue analysis is and does and not by misrepresenting it.

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