

Book review

**Christine Nuttall: Teaching Reading Skills in a
Foreign Language.**

Macmillan Education, 2005.

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This is the second edition of Nuttall's 1982 book on teaching reading skills, justly described as a "classic" - it is a well-known and much-read contribution to the field. The book is divided into three main parts. The first part, comprising chapters 1 to 3, is introductory. In chapter 1 we are invited to consider the nature of reading, reasons for reading and the nature of the reading process. Chapter two moves on to features of text itself (especially ideas of meaning and rhetorical structure), after which chapter three introduces some basic ideas about teaching reading in (and outside) the classroom. Part two (chapters 4 to 7) is about reading skills and strategies. The writer describes ways that students can be encouraged to develop a range of skills - related to faster reading, to dealing with unknown vocabulary, and to getting the *plain sense* (signification, or propositional meaning) as well as the "underlying patterns of meaning", pragmatic and contextual, in a text. Part three of the book, the longest part (chapters 8 to 14), brings the foregoing exegesis to bear on more practical matters such as choosing tasks and texts and planning lessons. There is also a chapter by Charles Alderson on the testing of reading. Finally, the appendixes show examples of teaching materials and lesson plans.

The book does not deal with the teaching of literature or with the ever more popular topic of literacy. It is determinedly non-political in tone. These things apart, it is extremely thorough, covering a huge amount of theoretical and practical ground in about 250 not overly dense pages. Although the author does not talk directly about research very much, she manages to distill the findings of the last 30 years or so into a brief but readable form. Thus the reader is introduced to ideas like top-down and

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