



Badger, R. (2018). *Teaching and learning the English language: A problem solving approach*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic.

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In the preface to his book, Richard Badger states "My aim as a teacher educator is to support teachers as they try to help their learners use English more effectively, and I hope this book will contribute to the problem-solving that goes on in your classrooms" (xvii).

The author addresses the three stages involved:

- i. Identifying the problem
- ii. Collecting information about ways of addressing the problem
- iii. Trying out possible solutions

This book would be an excellent introduction to and overview of TESOL teaching along with providing a revision of TESOL theories, methodologies and strategies (past and present) for practising teachers and teacher educators. It is extensively researched with around 500 references to enable readers to extend their knowledge and skills in TESOL.

This book is reader-friendly, and devoid of a lot of the jargon associated with TESOL theory and practice. The layout adds to the readability through generous use of space, lines, and bold headings / sub-headings to clearly distinguish between chapter sections, although the fonts could possibly be changed in some Activities to differentiate between the author's instructions and the actual task.

There are five sections:

1. The fundamentals
2. Teaching knowledge and skills
3. The language elements
4. Language skills
5. Conclusion

Each chapter has a clear introduction and summary plus suggestions for further reading. Also included in every chapter are Activities for the teacher to undertake either alone or with colleagues. These selected Activities are where possible 'problems' are addressed, and lend themselves more to group discussion that would be relevant to teacher

training and ongoing staff development.

The accompanying website is in its early stages but looks promising. It focuses on classroom activities in skill areas and includes video clips of teachers in action.

Badger explains simply and in context many of the theories of language learning, giving the kind of overview that would have been very welcome when I was gaining TESOL qualifications and struggling with Transformational Grammar and other such mysteries.

My initiation into the TESOL world in the early 1980's was as a team teacher for an On-Arrival group of refugees from the former Kampuchea, now Cambodia. The young and enthusiastic teacher was keen to use the SCAV approach, (Structuro-Global Audio Visual – not one, I noted, mentioned by Badger!) which seemed to involve a lot of moving around and beating out rhythms on the backs of other learners and such activities. I was as uncomfortable – and as bewildered – as the group. The method was not only culturally unsound but psychologically disastrous. These people were so traumatised, they all gave their occupation as 'farmer' and denied (through an interpreter) speaking any other language other than Khmer. Months later, when the trauma had abated a little we discovered that in fact most were from professional backgrounds: doctors, accountants, lawyers etc., and many could speak both English and French. Badger's underlying theme of **Know Your Students** gets a big tick of approval. However, as we all know, this focus on learners is subject to the constraints of the teaching and learning context, the motivation and goals of the students, requirements and expectations of the funding source (private, government, NGO's or the learners themselves), available facilities and resources, and geographical/cultural considerations, to name a few.

Badger also examines theories behind the teaching and learning of the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Many of the approaches and strategies are applicable to L1 English students.

But of course, if TESOL teachers are to be 'supported' by this book (and the accompanying website), they will be

seeking practical strategies to implement in their classrooms and to solve related problems as they arise. Badger gives examples with references on where to find further ideas and information and these are the book's main strength.

I did find the Index inadequate, and sometimes rather puzzling regarding what the author chose to include and exclude. There also needs to be a comprehensive list of acronyms. Often I had to thumb back through a chapter to confirm the meaning of an acronym.

Badger did not touch upon an aspect of TESOL particularly relevant to learners who are settling permanently in an English-speaking country such as Australia. As mentioned, I taught Communication in TAFE for years and know the importance of tone (especially on the telephone when there is no visual contact) and what can loosely be called 'body language'. I include just one example out of hundreds I could recount.

An Afghani refugee, a doctor in his own country but not accepted as such here, came to see me extremely upset after an unsuccessful job interview for a position as Records Clerk in a Sydney hospital. I asked him to demonstrate what happened in the interview.

This question was put to him by a member of the panel:

*"You were a doctor in Afghanistan. How will you feel just working in an office?"*

My student apparently almost leapt across the table shouting:

*"NO! NO". It is ok!! It is OK!"* thumping his fist on the table and looming very close to the faces of the interview panel. When asked, he demonstrated how all four panel members shrank back into their chairs looking 'upset' (his word).

We practiced culturally appropriate body language and suitable voice tones and facial expressions for different situations. We also created and practised scripts with utterances along the lines of "I know I have been a doctor but I understand my qualifications are not accepted here. So I would be very happy to just find a good job" etc. He was successful in a job interview two weeks later.

Still along the lines of Communication, I often muse that a penchant for acting would be a useful attribute in a TESOL teacher. After all, so much of meaning comes through tone, facial expressions, gestures and body language.

Finally, I was aware of the one area not covered adequately by the author, understandably, given the chosen length of this compact book. This concerns the increasing and ubiquitous use of smartphones with Translate functions by learners in class situations, indeed the growing use of communication technology devices and e-learning in general and how these are incorporated into the learning context by both teachers and learners today.