

**TESOL Teacher Training
with the School for International Training**

Sabbatical Report

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SIT

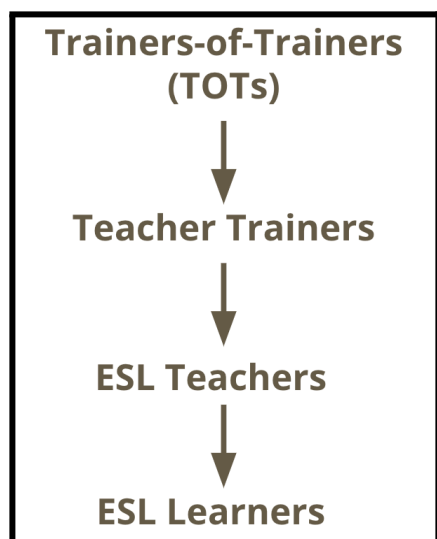
SCHOOL FOR
INTERNATIONAL
TRAINING

CELEBRATING **60** YEARS

Background

I have been working in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) for more than twenty years, with more than half of my career spent in Lane Community College's ESL (English as a Second Language) Department.

Many ESL teachers begin their career in this field by earning a TESOL Certificate. This certification helps educators develop the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach English to non-native speakers. While the certification process varies across different programs and institutions, TESOL Certificate programs often last between 120-180 hours, including both theoretical and practical components. These programs provide training in teaching methodologies, language acquisition theories, lesson planning and design, classroom management techniques, and cultural awareness, all tailored to working with ESL learners.



A chart illustrating the training hierarchy at the School for International Training

One of the most respected and well-renowned TESOL Certification programs is that offered by the School for International Training (SIT), part of the international development and education non-profit World Learning. World Learning SIT has been a leader in international education for over 50 years. It hosts more than 80 educational programs across 40 countries, as well as professional programs and master's degrees. Since 1997, SIT has offered a TESOL Certificate Course, which trains participants to teach the English language in a variety of settings and contexts. This internationally-recognized

180-hour certificate course is regarded so highly in the field of English Language Teaching that it is accepted as a graduate-level course at many institutions.

These SIT TESOL Certificate Courses are facilitated by experienced Teacher Trainers. While Teacher Trainers do sometimes take on the role of a traditional teacher, directly giving participants salient information and imparting knowledge, this is not considered their primary role. Instead, Teacher Trainers are seen as *facilitators, guides, and coaches*.

Goals and objectives

The main goal of my sabbatical was to complete the training to become a certified SIT TESOL Teacher Trainer. In doing so, I hoped to accomplish some related goals:

- **Refresh my knowledge of TESOL**
 - Because the process of becoming a teacher trainer includes participating in two thorough, high-quality SIT TESOL courses as an observer/co-teacher, I would be able to refresh my knowledge of pedagogy and review concepts that I may not have encountered since completing my own TESOL certificate in 2003. In addition, it is important for any instructor to stay up-to-date on current research and best practices in their field. Since SIT has always been on the cutting edge of language pedagogy, training would include learning about the most recent developments in the field of TESOL.
- **Renew enthusiasm and perspective**
 - One of the best ways to renew an instructor's passion for teaching (and therefore avoid rigidity and burnout) is to expose them to fresh perspectives and approaches to their work. SIT embraces the experiential learning model, which encourages experimentation, observation, and self-reflection in the

classroom. Such an approach to teaching fosters creativity and enthusiasm, benefiting both the instructor and students.

- **Build a network of TESOL professionals**

- Participating in the teacher training process would introduce me to a handful of very experienced and accomplished educators in the field of TESOL. These relationships could lead to future partnerships in TESOL training, research projects, and other professional opportunities.

- **Become an effective mentor**

- In my role as a contracted faculty member in the ESL Department, I often participate in hiring and onboarding new instructors in our department, as well as hosting interns and potential ESL instructors as a practicum mentor. As a certified teacher trainer, I would improve my skills and knowledge to serve in these roles.

- **Explore a potential partnership between Lane Community College and SIT**

- SIT partners with organizations and institutions to offer their TESOL Certificate course. I planned to speak with SIT representatives and some of their training partners to learn more about their relationship with SIT and experience running the courses as official SIT TESOL Training Centers to explore a potential partnership with LCC.

Training Process

After being accepted into the SIT Teacher Training program, I officially became a Trainer-being-Trained, or TBT. The TBT must complete two training phases for certification.

During the initial **Introduction Phase** of this process, I completed extensive readings and written assignments in order to sharpen my skills as an ESL Teacher and deepen my knowledge of 10 key content areas:



Ronald Bradley, my first Trainer-of-Trainers, during the Introduction Phase or “PCTB”

- Unit 1: ***Experiential Learning and Course Format***
- Unit 2: ***Course Content & Competency-based Learning***
- Unit 3: ***Trainer Roles and Skills***
- Unit 4: ***Learning***
- Unit 5: ***Objectives***
- Unit 6: ***Planning***
- Unit 7: ***Processing***
- Unit 8: ***Feedback***
- Unit 9: ***Culture***
- Unit 10: ***Synthesis and Moving Forward***

Traditionally, this phase has been referred to as the PCTB, or the “Pre-Course Task Book”. This phase is facilitated by an SIT-appointed mentor called a “Trainer-of-Trainers” or “ToT”. My ToT for this phase was Ronald Bradley.

During this phase, I completed the tasks independently and submitted each unit for review. My ToT would then return it to me with feedback and further information and resources, and we would sometimes meet over Zoom to discuss the material covered.

The next phase of the training-up process is called **Supervised Trainings**. In this phase, TBTs participate in and/or help facilitate two SIT TESOL Certificate Courses while being mentored and supervised by another Trainer-of-Trainers.

For the first supervised training in this phase, my ToT was Brian Long, who works for the International Language Institute of Massachusetts in partnership with World Learning SIT. The ILI offers both intensive and extensive SIT TESOL courses, both online and in-person, at its school in Northampton, MA. I participated in one of the online courses from September - December, 2024. I began the course as an observer and occasional participant, but over time I was asked to take on more responsibilities as a Trainer-being-Trained, such as facilitating lessons, delivering workshops, and giving feedback to participants.



Brian Long, my second Trainer-of-Trainers, during the Supervised Training Phase



Brian Long meets with ESL teachers-in-training to discuss teaching speaking skills during an online SIT TESOL Certificate Course. Observing and assisting in this class was part of the Supervised Training Phase of my training-up process.

Unfortunately, the course I had arranged to co-facilitate for the second supervised training was canceled due to low enrollment, so I have not been able to complete this phase of the training-up process yet. This co-teaching portion of my training will need to be rescheduled for a future term.

Results

I was disappointed that I was not able to achieve my main goal of becoming a certified SIT TESOL Teacher Trainer due to the class cancellation. However, I hope to be placed on a different course and complete the training-up process to become an SIT Teacher Trainer sometime in the future.

I had mixed success with some of my related goals:

- **Refresh my knowledge of TESOL**

This was perhaps the most beneficial part of the process. Since it had been decades since my own certification, it was very helpful to learn about current research and fill in gaps from my own initial training.

- **Renew enthusiasm and perspective**

I'm happy to report that I completed my sabbatical with a fresh enthusiasm for the work that I do. I was excited to tackle one of my new teaching assignments, *ESL Level E Academic Listening and Speaking*, and completely redesigned the course using SIT TESOL approaches and frameworks.

- **Build a network of TESOL professionals**

I thoroughly enjoyed working with a number of TESOL colleagues at all different stages of their TESOL career - from those just entering the world of ESL teaching, to

those who have been training ESL teachers since before I was born. We've kept in touch over the last year and discussed possible partnerships and collaborations.

- **Become an effective mentor**

I now feel I'm in a better position to offer feedback and guidance to new instructors, especially by facilitating their own reflective teaching practice.

- **Explore a potential partnership between Lane Community College and SIT**

After speaking to SIT and a current partner institution (ILI) about a potential LCC partnership as a training site, I have some reservations about the potential financial viability of such an arrangement at this time. Since even scheduled courses at established SIT locations are sometimes canceled due to low enrollment, I'm hesitant to move forward with a recommendation presently. Perhaps I can revisit this idea in the future under more favorable conditions.

Reflection

While my sabbatical did not culminate in achieving my main goal of becoming a certified SIT TESOL Teacher Trainer, I did still find it an enriching and valuable experience. I was able to refresh my knowledge of current TESOL methodologies, reignite my passion for teaching ESL, and establish meaningful connections with professionals in the field. The training I received has already influenced my teaching practices, allowing me to bring innovative approaches to the classroom and enhancing my ability to mentor new instructors.

Although the cancellation of my second supervised training has delayed my certification, I remain committed to completing this process at some point in the future.

My exploration of a potential partnership between Lane Community College and World Learning SIT highlighted the complexities involved and merits further consideration and discussion.

Overall, this sabbatical allowed me to grow both personally and professionally, and I am eager to apply the insights gained to continue improving as an educator and mentor in the TESOL field.

Acknowledgement

Many wonderful TESOL professionals contributed to the success of this project. I'd like to express my gratitude to my two wonderful Trainers-of-Trainers, Ron Bradley and Brian Long, for sharing their expertise and experience with me. They are excellent mentors, and I am thankful for their guidance. I am also indebted to Holly Marvin, the director of the SIT TESOL Certificate Trainer program, for allowing me to complete the training-up process virtually - a first in the history of the program.

I would also like to thank my dean, Anna Gates Tapia, and the rest of the ESL Department for their encouragement and support during this process.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to Lane Community College's Faculty Professional Development for giving me the opportunity to pursue my dream of becoming a Teacher Trainer.