

## **International Students Learning to Teach English Online: A Socio-cultural Activity Theory Perspective**

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The internationalisation of higher education (HE) worldwide witnesses increasing numbers of international students studying in education-export countries like Australia, the UK and the US. In Australia, courses like ‘Masters of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages’ (TESOL) have hosted predominantly international students, significant numbers coming from China. Work-integrated-learning (WIL), such as teaching placements, is a well-established way of providing tertiary students with rich learning experiences and preparing them to transition into the workforce. However, finding WIL opportunities for international students in Australian universities can be challenging. This project aims to explore an innovative WIL model for MTESOL international students at an Australian university. The initiative allowed MTESOL students, all Chinese international students, to practise teaching English in a structured way to Syrian students affected by the Syrian conflict via an online platform. Using a case-study method, this research employed qualitative techniques, including teaching observations, individual interviews with five MTESOL students, recorded meetings with key stakeholders, and survey questionnaires with Syrian students. Data were cross-referenced and analysed using thematic analysis. Analysis drew on socio-cultural activity theory (Engeström, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978), especially the concepts of object-motive and contradictions, to shed light on how the Chinese MTESOL students learned to teach English online to the Syrian students. The findings reveal that the MTESOL students encountered several systemic contradictions relating to technology and teaching students at different levels of English proficiency with English being the only medium of communication. Whilst resolving these contradictions, they were able to work toward their object-motive to respond to their students’ learning needs, apply a learner-centred approach and simultaneously learn to link theory to practice. The study has many implications for research and practice in online teaching placements and WIL provision for international students.

### **References:**

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