

Strategies to Implement “Burden Reduction and Efficiency Increase” in Junior High School English Homework under the “Double Reduction” Policy

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore ways of decreasing homework burden of students and increasing efficiency in junior high school English homework under the "Double Reduction" policy. To deal with these problems, this paper offers several suggestions: controlling homework volume, optimizing homework structure, carrying out personal design, giving diversified evaluation feedback, and building a home-school collaboration support network to strengthen communication. The results showed these strategies can cut students' homework burden, increasing homework efficiency, and promoting their comprehensive ability. The findings are important for effectively implementing the "Double Reduction" policy and optimizing junior high school English homework design, offering valuable opinions for educators.

Key words: "Double Reduction" Policy; English homework; Reduce burden and enhance efficiency

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1 Introduction

Per Li's research, homework stands as a central link in school education and a key focus of education reform. Effective homework helps students reinforce knowledge, link it to real life, and learn for practical use, hence holding profound significance.

In English teaching, the "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards" contained basic skills and basic knowledge. Homework design is important to achieving these objectives in junior high schools. Yet traditional English homework—such as exercises, word copying, and test papers—is rigid, adding to students' burdens and decreasing their learning interest.

In July 2021, the "Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden and Off-Campus Training Burden on Students in Compulsory Education" was released, advocating efforts to cut decreasing students' burdens. Under this policy, it is necessary to design effective, workable, and practical English homework for junior high schools. This study aims to explore ways to "Reduce Burden and Enhance Efficiency" in junior high school.

2 Literature Review

The "Double Reduction" related to "reducing the excessive homework burden and off-campus tutoring burden on students in compulsory education." The relevant leaders of the Ministry of Education have specifically summarized it as "Reduce total volume, control time duration, adjust structure, and enhance quality." "Burden Reduction" refers to the reduction of learning tasks that exceed students' physiological and psychological developmental capacities, the elimination of mechanically repetitive homework exercises that are useless for developing students' intelligence in learning activities, and the removal of outdated, cumbersome, and practically irrelevant teaching content. "Efficiency Increase" primarily refers to, under the guidance of national policies, the transformation of ideas among society, parents, and school teachers to improve educational and teaching methods and approaches, enabling students to learn effectively and enjoyably. "Enhancing Efficiency" does not require teachers to reduce classroom teaching time but rather to focus their efforts on improving the quality and efficiency of classroom instruction.

2.1 Relevant Research about English Homework Design at Home

Compared to foreign countries, China started research on English homework design relatively late. Many domestic scholars explore the functions of English homework, mainly focusing on two aspects: Firstly, the positive impact of English homework: Xia Xiaoqing believes that English homework mainly serves the purposes of home-school communication, teaching functions, and development functions. Zhao Nana also notes that when grading English homework, teachers can grasp how well students have mastered knowledge. Then, based on students' homework performance, teachers can further shape classroom teaching and after-school homework to steadily improve students' English learning abilities. Secondly, the negative impact of English homework: Pang Chunliu argues that mechanically repetitive or overly difficult homework can dampen students' learning enthusiasm and confidence. Regarding English homework design principles, research shows: Xia Zhifen stressed diversity, proposing homework could include exercises or real-life problems in written or oral forms. Feng Yanhong focused on tiered design for different lesson types, advocating effective evaluation through portfolios to track students' progress and stir their interest. Zhang Qing put forward a holistic approach, designing personalized, practical and engaging homework that integrates listening, speaking, reading and writing, and encouraging students to independently create assignments.

Although domestic research on English homework design started relatively late, it has achieved multiple accomplishments, encompassing the exploration of both positive and negative functions of English homework, research on homework design principles, homework evaluation methods, as well as the continuous deepening of the "burden reduction" policies. However, there are still shortcomings in the research. For instance, there is a lack of diversity in homework types; the connection between evaluation results and teaching is not

close enough; and the guarantee system for the implementation of the "burden reduction" policies needs to be improved.

2.2 Relevant Research about English Homework Design Abroad.

Since the 1990s, two main perspectives on homework have emerged in the U.S. Positive Impacts of English Homework: Since the 1990, Cooper's (1994) believe that appropriate English homework can enhance memory consolidation, deepen understanding, cultivate critical thinking, enrich curriculum content. Epstein's (2010) Framework: Proposes ten functions of homework, including providing practice opportunities, engaging in practical activities, developing individuality, improving parent-child relationships, promoting peer interaction, building school image, and correcting problematic behaviors. Negative Impacts of English Homework: Cooper (1994) Warns that low-quality homework can be counterproductive, increasing academic pressure, eroding interest, and causing conflicts between teachers and parents. Kohn (2006) Empirical studies suggest homework can be "divisive," with inappropriate assignments triggering antagonism between teachers/students and parents/children. Moorhouse (2017) Highlights that excessive, burdensome, or overly complex homework fosters negative or even avert attitudes toward formal learning among teachers and students.

Hallam (2006) Advocates for studying English homework under broad methodological frameworks, considering sociocultural, educational policy, economic, school management, parental involvement, and homework characteristics. Gardner (1982) suggests designing homework based on student interests to meet their needs, encourage conscious task completion, and gauge knowledge mastery. Vatterott (2009) emphasizes full alignment between English classroom instruction and homework content.

In the 1970s, Japan's "Course of Study Guidelines" aimed to reduce class hours, learning difficulty, and promote "relaxed education." Curriculum reform led to a 30% reduction in teaching content and shortened class hours, easing students' academic burden and providing more time for autonomous learning. In 1956, France abolished English homework for primary students. Korea followed suit in 1981, and the UK and Spain also banned English homework for primary and secondary students. Since 1985, Turkey has prohibited English homework. UK experts suggest that if homework is not mandated, students should not be burdened with it. Tailored teaching methods are essential. New Zealand evaluates students using four levels instead of grades (Rosario et al., 2019). Like UK schools, although it lacks specific textbooks, it has a unified curriculum to meet individual needs. Focusing on comprehensive development of students and teaching from students' realities, it implements a "double reduction" policy.

Research on English homework in foreign countries started relatively early. Future research could further integrate these findings to explore more strategies for English homework, thereby achieving an organic integration of academic improvement and the cultivation of students' competencies.

3 Theoretical Basis

3.1 Humanistic Psychology

In the context of the 'Double Reduction' policy, humanistic psychology offers practical solutions for reducing the burden of English homework while enhancing its efficiency.

Humanistic psychology emerged in the United States in the 1950s. Rogers (1983), a famous American psychologist, put forward a view of meaningful free learning. He insisted that true learning is not only about improving the mind but also about perfecting and developing students themselves. It is concerned with the "whole person". Maslow (1943) proposed a personality view of self-actualization. He believed that people have the need for self-actualization, that is, people have the desire to realize their potential.

The Humanistic Psychology provides several implications. Firstly, in the teaching process, teachers should design scientifically sound and appropriate questions based on students' individual characteristics and levels of physical and mental development to stimulate students' thinking and autonomous exploration and learning.

3.2 Multiple Intelligences

The theory of multiple intelligences was developed by Howard Gardner. He divided human intelligence into eight core domains: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (Gardner, 1982). These eight intelligences are inborn and greatly shaped by social environment, education and other factors. With proper education and training, each student's corresponding intelligence can be fully developed (Zhong, 2004: 7-11). This matches Gardner's view that "the most effective form of education is one that enables children to find a place where they can exercise their gifts (Wang, 2022)." Implications of the theory of multiple intelligences are clear: Homework design for students should be based on each individual's intellectual development. Thus, homework content should be both diverse and stratified. Diversification here means arranging a variety of homework types in the teaching process.

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4.1 Pedagogical Implications

The concept of "Streamlined Homework" encompasses two dimensions: first, the reduction of homework quantity and secondly the simplification of homework content. However, during the process of "reduction" and "simplification," ensuring "effectiveness" is important.

To reduce the auxiliary role of English homework in teaching and developing students' core competencies, teachers need to combine subject knowledge with practical skills by using theories like multiple intelligences and humanistic psychology. Learning is a gradual process that involves understanding and thinking step by step. From understanding knowledge to applying it, reflecting on it and using it in new

situations, students' learning improves repeatedly. It requires clear step-by-step understanding, real learning situations and clear thinking processes.

Drawing on the after-class exercises in American history textbooks, English homework should be designed step by step, from simple to difficult. This helps students understand gradually and feel the value of advanced thinking as they grow. According to students' different interests, levels, personalities and learning aims, we can design homework such as dialogues, pictures and performances. In this way, teachers can develop students' advantages and show the cross-subject value of English, so as to make homework more efficient.

From classroom observation, it shows that when English homework is handed back, students, whether they do well or not, will quickly open their exercise books to read the teacher's feedback. Teachers can use Chinese or English comments, including opinions on homework quality, learning attitudes, learning methods, and even daily life suggestions. For students with poor foundations and learning difficulties, teachers can use warm English words like "If you work harder, you will make progress" or "You are improving, keep going!" For students with weak basic knowledge, teachers can give specific suggestions to help them improve. For example, teachers can write "Review what you've learned before, and you will do better" or "Ask your classmates or me for help when you have problems."

No matter what type of evaluation comment is used, content quality should be prioritized. Teachers should first recognize and affirm students' efforts, then objectively assess their homework quality or learning attitudes, point out homework problems in English learning, and finally offer reasonable advice. Face-to-face correction is also a key method for homework review. Since students are in a growth stage, their development relies on teachers' guidance. Especially when correcting English translations and compositions, teachers should communicate with students, explaining specific word usage contexts and fostering their English thinking. Building a "home-school collaboration" support network is a good way in contemporary education to respond to the "Double Reduction" policy and promote students' comprehensive, healthy development. Therefore, English homework design and management should achieve home-school collaborative practice, guiding English teachers to focus on existing homework issues and "improve homework design quality, carefully craft foundational assignments, and properly add exploratory, practical, and comprehensive tasks." At the same time, schools should organize "English Homework Co-design Workshops," inviting parents to personally experience the process of designing English homework. Through these activities, parents will gain an in-depth understanding of the school's educational philosophy and the principles of scientific, and engaging English homework design. Parents will collaborate with teachers to explore how to design more student-tailored English assignments under the premise of reducing burden while enhancing efficiency. This initiative aims to foster greater parental recognition and support for school homework reforms, thereby cultivating a positive environment for home-school co-education.

5 Conclusion

This research is based on current status, existing problems and possible strategies for achieving "Burden Reduction and Efficiency Increase" in junior high school English homework under China's "Double Reduction" policy. It successfully answered the questions by decreasing students' stress about completion of English homework, as well as teachers' views and challenges in designing homework. While the research offers value, it has limitations. The sample was restricted to one region, which may limit how well the findings apply to other educational areas. Besides, using secondary data provided a narrow consequences of the current situation but failed to capture dynamic changes over time. Given these limitations, future research could expand its scope by examining English homework practices across different regions and educational contexts.

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