

Original Article

A Survey and Research on the Design of English Homework in Rural Junior High Schools Under the "Double Reduction" Policy

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Abstract - As an indispensable teaching process in middle school English teaching, English homework is not only a consolidation and extension of the classroom but also an important channel for teachers to understand the implementation of teaching objectives and for students to identify and fill in gaps. With the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, reducing students' homework burden has become a task that teachers cannot ignore. How to achieve the load reduction goal in the context of "double reduction" while ensuring the rationality and effectiveness of English homework design for rural junior high schools, and improving the overall quality of homework from all levels, has become a problem worth exploring. This article conducts a survey and analysis of the English homework design of rural junior high school students in a mountainous area of western China through a questionnaire. It proposes some suggestions on how to improve homework design based on the analysis results. The questionnaire survey shows that middle school students generally believe that the current form of English homework is relatively single, the homework is boring and uninteresting, and teachers cannot assign English homework based on the differences between students. On this basis, it is proposed that teachers should design hierarchical homework and adhere to the principles of diversity, interest, and hierarchy.

Keywords - "Double reduction" junior high school english homework design.

1. Introduction

In July 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework and Off-campus Training Burden of Students in Compulsory Education", which clearly stated the need to "comprehensively reduce the total amount and duration of homework, and reduce the excessive homework burden on students", Compulsory education is required to incorporate homework design into the teaching and research system, with a systematic design that conforms to age characteristics and learning patterns, and reflects the orientation of quality education. Layered, flexible, and personalized homework is encouraged. The "double reduction" policy points out the important role that schools play in the growth and development of students. To enable students to return to the main battlefield of the classroom and strive to successfully complete various tasks of classroom learning, thereby greatly improving students' learning effectiveness, teachers need to design classroom assignments in the classroom carefully, organically integrate them into classroom teaching, and improve the effectiveness of classroom assignments.

At the same time, the "Five Management" policy on homework management notice also puts forward certain requirements for school homework education. Firstly,

schools must regard homework as an important part of educational and teaching work. Schools in various regions should follow educational laws, adhere to individualized teaching, strictly implement curriculum standards and teaching plans, assign scientific, reasonable and effective homework, and help students consolidate knowledge, form abilities, and cultivate habits; Secondly, there are corresponding regulations on the number of written assignments, with junior high school students not allowed to have more than 90 minutes of written homework per day. This regulation also needs to improve students' classroom learning effectiveness further, and students should try to complete the academic tasks of the day in the classroom as much as possible. Finally, teachers should improve their ability to design homework independently, accurately design homework according to students' different situations, select homework content based on actual learning situations, reasonably determine the number and difficulty of homework, and avoid designing mechanical training, repetitive, and punitive homework. It is not difficult to see the necessity of classroom homework design from these policies. Teachers should learn to optimize the design of classroom homework in classroom education and teaching, to improve the efficiency of students completing classroom homework, which can improve students' learning efficiency.

The theory of multiple intelligences points out that everyone has diverse intelligences but not a single, identical



intelligence. This emphasizes the diversity, development, difference, plasticity, cultural nature, creativity, and practicality of intelligence. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences points out that there should be at least eight intelligences within the human body. However, the combination of these intelligences within each human body is diverse, and different combinations of intelligences highlight individual intelligence advantages. The intelligence within each human body is independent of each other, resulting in individual differences. Dr. Gardner believes humans are the most fundamental and should be fully valued based on individual differences. Strive to tap into the potential of human intelligence and promote the development of multiple intelligences. Therefore, teachers should establish a correct teaching concept, recognize the differences and diversity in intelligence among students, stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, and enable students to achieve comprehensive development in their thinking, senses, and body. Explore the different bits of intelligence of students to optimize the design of classroom assignments to achieve the effectiveness of classroom assignment design.

Rural children lack parental supervision, and intergenerational upbringing is a common phenomenon. Children who lack parental supervision do not develop good learning habits, do not attach importance to learning, and neglect the importance of homework. The phenomenon of lacking, under-submitting, and not submitting homework is relatively serious. At present, the urban-rural gap in education has not been eliminated. For rural children to grow better, they need to make greater efforts. Homework is an important breakthrough in improving the quality of education and plays an important role in helping students improve their grades and develop good habits.

2. Research Status

Based on the Chinese Journal Full Text Database (CNKI) as the data retrieval source, 466 articles were searched using the theme word "English homework design", with 28 core journals included. The overall number of literature publications is on the rise. Search for 224 articles on the topic of "Rural Middle School English Homework Design", but there are currently no core journals, indicating insufficient attention in this field and the need for further in-depth research.

In a survey on the current situation of English extracurricular homework in rural junior high schools, Mu Jing (2015) pointed out that rural English extracurricular homework has a large volume, monotonous form, and unified content, which cannot effectively stimulate students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning English. Fan Xiongying (2022) believes that most rural English teachers currently rely too much on teaching aids available on the market in homework design and have not adjusted and optimized their homework design according to the actual situation of students. This makes it difficult to stimulate the individual potential of students, and at the same time, there may be phenomena such as repeated training and excessive

burden. Lu Xiaojuan (2022) pointed out that there are problems in the current design of English homework for rural junior high schools, such as a single form of homework, unreasonable difficulty in homework design, excessive reliance on fixed data, and insufficient interest in homework design. Wang Aiyun and Kong Fanqing (2022) also pointed out that currently, English teaching in rural junior high schools in China is generally valued and has made significant progress. However, in the design of English homework for rural junior high schools, there is a simple pursuit of the quantity of homework forms and a vague understanding of its functions; The homework design lacks a systematic perspective, with a single form and content, and a negative tendency to overlook the humanization of the design.

In summary, rural middle school teachers overlook individual differences among students, assign monotonous homework content, form, quantity, and quality, and have a single grading form, lacking diversified evaluation methods. This increases students' academic burden and goes against the concept and dual reduction policy advocated by the new English curriculum reform. Scientific and reasonable junior high school English extracurricular homework enables teachers to receive timely feedback on teaching effectiveness, helps teachers further improve teaching, stimulates students' interest in English extracurricular homework, and improves their comprehensive language proficiency. Therefore, to understand the current situation and existing problems of English homework design for middle school students in rural areas, this study conducted a survey on the homework situation of rural middle school students in all middle schools in a certain county using a questionnaire survey method and proposed some countermeasures and suggestions, to provide feasible suggestions for future teacher homework design.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

This study combines the current situation of English homework design for middle school students in a certain county to understand the completion and satisfaction of students' English homework, analyze the reasons for the problems in homework design, help teachers improve homework design, improve students' learning efficiency, and promote students' comprehensive development. The specific research questions are as follows:

- How is the quality of English homework in rural junior high schools?
- Can rural junior high school English homework stimulate students' interest?
- How to evaluate English homework in rural junior high schools?

3.2. Research Subjects

This survey conducted a sampling survey on junior high school students throughout the county. There were a total of 680 students in this survey (see Table 1), including 284 male students, accounting for 41.76% of the total number, and

396 female students, accounting for 58.24% of the total number. The male-to-female ratio was 4:6. From the proportion of grades, the eighth grade has the highest proportion, accounting for 40.44% of the total population; ninth grade has the lowest proportion, accounting for 27.96% of the total population, and seventh-grade accounts for 31.62%.

Table 1. Basic Information of Students

Gender	Male	284	41.76%
	Female	396	58.24%
Grade	Seven	215	31.62%
	Eight	275	40.44%
	Nine	190	27.96%

3.3. Research Tools

The questionnaire survey method was based on relevant references and compiled the "Survey Questionnaire on the Current Situation of English Homework in Rural Junior High Schools". A sample of junior high school students from all schools in a certain county was selected for the questionnaire survey to fully understand the basic situation of English homework design for junior high school students in a certain county and township. The questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS 25.0, and the data were organized using an Office software Excel spreadsheet.

3.4. Research Process

This questionnaire survey aims to understand the current situation of English homework design and

implementation in rural junior high schools. The survey mainly took the form of a questionnaire star, with a total of 680 students participating in the online survey, of which 680 were valid questionnaires, and the effective rate was 100%.

The data in the valid questionnaire is complete, and no missing values exist. The questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS 25.0, and the data were organized using an Office software Excel spreadsheet.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Quantity of English Homework in Rural Junior High Schools

Table 2. Number of English assignments

How long does it take you to complete your English homework every day?		
20--30 minutes	288	42.35%
30-60 minutes	285	41.91%
60-90 minutes	71	10.44%
More than 120 minutes	36	5.29%

Regarding the amount of homework for students, 42.35% of students need 20-30 minutes to complete English homework, 41.91% of students need 30-60 minutes, and the majority of students can complete English homework within an hour. 10.44% of students require 60-90 minutes, while 5.29% of students require more than 120 minutes (see Table 2).

4.2. Content of English Homework Design for Rural Junior High Schools

Table 3. Content of english homework design

What is the content of your English homework?		
Written type (such as copying words, important sentences in textbooks, grammar-related concepts learned, creating problem sets, etc.)	626	48.20%
Oral type (such as reading aloud, reciting, telling stories, giving speeches, etc.)	361	27.80%
Activity-oriented (such as writing textbook dramas, conducting surveys, collecting information, visiting, etc.)	98	7.60%
Type of work (such as self-edited tabloids, poetry and art matching, writing exercises, etc.)	106	8.20%
Exploratory (such as conducting research and discussions on hot topics that arise in real life and learning)	107	8.20%
What is the content of your favourite English homework?		
Written type (such as copying words, important sentences in textbooks, grammar-related concepts learned, creating problem sets, etc.)	469	38.60%
Oral type (such as reading aloud, reciting, telling stories, giving speeches, etc.)	318	26.20%
Activity-oriented (such as writing textbook dramas, conducting surveys, collecting information, visiting, etc.)	174	14.30%
Type of work (such as self-edited tabloids, poetry and art matching, writing exercises, etc.)	118	9.70%
Exploratory (such as conducting research and discussions on hot topics that arise in real life and learning)	135	11.10%

According to the survey questionnaire, it was found that the current middle school English homework is mainly written and oral, with fewer activity, work, and inquiry types

of homework. The form of homework is single, lacking flexibility, and student's interest in the activity, work, and inquiry types of homework is not high. In response to this

phenomenon, teachers should combine the learning content with the aim of improving students' listening, speaking, reading, writing skills, emotional attitudes, cultural

awareness, etc., and vividly and flexibly design various and interesting assignments (see Table 3).

4.3. Completion of English Homework in Rural Junior High Schools

Table 4. Perception of english homework

Do you think the current form of middle school English homework		
There are many practical activities and interesting assignments	325	35.20%
Simplify homework format and focus on practice questions	440	47.70%
The form is dull and uninteresting	158	17.10%
What are your feelings during the process of doing English extracurricular homework?		
Dull	156	22.94%
Interesting	211	31.03%
Full of freshness	157	23.09%
Feeling frustrated	106	15.59%
Hate English	50	7.35%
Do you think English homework fully considers students' ability levels at different levels?		
Very sufficient	168	24.71%
Basically	374	55%
Rarely does this happen	94	13.82%
Never	44	6.47%
If you encounter difficulties and cannot complete your homework, what will you do?		
Proactively ask the teacher	192	28.24%
Proactively ask classmates or parents	141	20.74%
Proactively search for information and find answers	214	31.47%
Keep the problem waiting for tomorrow's teacher's review	133	19.56%
Almost no help	46	6.76%
What do you think are the main problems with the homework assigned by the teacher at present?		
English homework is boring and uninteresting.	226	33.24%
There is too much English homework to play.	59	8.68%
English homework cannot be assigned based on differences between students.	250	36.76%
I have a lot of English homework, but my grades have not improved significantly.	145	21.32%

47.7% of students believe that the current form of English homework is singular, with practice questions as the main focus; Only 31.03% of students find it interesting to do English extracurricular homework. In the process of assigning homework, 55% of students believe that English homework fully considers the ability levels of students at different levels; Most students believe that English homework helps improve their English grades; When encountering difficulties in doing homework and unable to complete it, 31.47% of students will choose to search for information and find answers actively, and 28.24% of students will proactively ask the teacher. However, they believe that teachers also have many problems with homework assignments: 33.24% of students find English

homework boring and uninteresting; 36.76% of students believe that teachers cannot assign English homework based on differences between students; 21.32% of students feel that they have more English homework, but their grades have not significantly improved (see Table 4).

4.4. Evaluation of English Homework in Rural Junior High Schools

In general, teachers will choose to give a correct or incorrect judgment and provide a rating or rating when evaluating homework, while 64.41% of students hope that teachers will not only give a correct or incorrect judgment, rating or rating when evaluating homework but also provide comments (see Table 5).

Table 5. Evaluation of english homework

How does your English teacher evaluate homework in general?		
Provide only right and wrong judgments	104	15.29%
Provide a correct or incorrect judgment and provide a score or rating	293	43.09%
Not only does it provide correct or incorrect judgments ratings, or ratings, but it also provides comments	283	41.62%
How would you most like an English teacher to evaluate homework?		
Provide only right and wrong judgments	65	9.56%
Provide a correct or incorrect judgment and provide a score or rating	177	26.03%
Not only does it provide correct or incorrect judgments ratings, or ratings, but it also provides comments	438	64.41%

5. Analysis and Suggestions on the Main Problems in the Design of Middle School English Homework

5.1 The Main Problems in the Design of Middle School English Homework at Present

5.1.1. The Amount of Homework Lacks Rationality

The "double reduction" policy clearly proposes to "comprehensively reduce the total amount and duration of homework and reduce the heavy homework burden on students". Schools should ensure that the average completion time of written homework in junior high school does not exceed 90 minutes. The survey results show that less than half of the students can complete their homework within half an hour. Therefore, when designing homework, teachers should adhere to the principle of appropriateness and control the amount of homework within a reasonable range.

5.1.2. Lack of Diversity in Homework Forms

Based on student survey questionnaires, it has been found that the current form of homework in junior high school English is single, mainly focusing on transcribing words, important sentences in textbooks, relevant grammar concepts learned, and written assignments in exercise books, test papers, English reports, question banks, etc. However, more than half of the students are not interested in English homework for training in listening, speaking, and reading skills.

5.1.3. The Homework Content Lacks Interest

The previous homework model placed too much emphasis on grammar knowledge, with exam points as the basic criteria, and the homework content was single. A questionnaire survey of students found that the majority of students believe that the traditional homework model is dull and uninteresting, which leads to low efficiency in completing homework and gradually leads to a loss of interest in learning English. To change this situation, teachers should try to design diverse types of homework to enhance the fun of the homework.

5.1.4. The Difficulty of Homework is 'One Size Fits All.'

In the real teaching process, teachers assign almost the same English homework to the entire class, which may be simple for students with good academic performance, but for students with poor English foundations, completing this

homework is beyond their ability range. Each student's intelligence structure is different, so they exhibit different differences in intelligence. Teachers should recognize the differences between students, acknowledge and respect them, and scientifically design assignments based on their level of mastery of the knowledge they have learned, personal needs, interests and hobbies at the current stage, which is conducive to students' personalized development.

5.2. Suggestions for Problems in Designing Middle School English Homework

5.2.1. Layered Operation Design

The "double reduction" clearly proposes to "comprehensively reduce the total amount and duration of homework and reduce students' heavy homework burden". To achieve this goal, the layered education method has been emphasized. Middle school students usually have different levels of understanding of knowledge due to their differences, and the degree of absorption in the homework writing process is also different. Therefore, the graded homework method of teaching students according to their aptitude has become the key for teachers to solve this problem. Teachers should fully understand the actual situation of each student in the class, help each student gain knowledge and ability improvement in homework that suits their own situation, and lay the foundation for students' good development and learning efficiency improvement.

5.2.2. Layering of Homework Subjects

When designing homework, teachers should adhere to the principle of a student-centered approach, taking into account the differences between students. Therefore, teachers can classify the student-centered approach in homework design. Before designing layered homework for students, teachers should closely pay attention to their learning situation and deeply analyze their learning situation from each stage of learning. Only by fully understanding the specific learning situation of students can they scientifically classify them and then design targeted homework to guide students to achieve comprehensive development.

5.2.3. Assignment Content and Difficulty Stratification

After scientifically categorizing the homework subjects, teachers should also appropriately classify students' homework content and difficulty. Only by accurately categorizing homework content and difficulty based on students' learning status can students achieve significant

improvement in scientific homework design, avoid the traditional "one size fits all" approach in homework design, and fully consider students' specific learning differences, Ensure that students at all levels can complete assignments within their ability range, while also ensuring that students can improve based on consolidation.

5.2.4. Stratification of Homework Evaluation

In the homework evaluation process, teachers also need to conduct it from a hierarchical perspective. Teachers need to set different homework standards and provide corresponding homework guidance based on students' abilities at different levels, truly exerting the role of hierarchical homework design and providing guarantees for the good development of students at all levels.

The evaluation and feedback of students' homework is also an important part of homework design, which can ensure that students can find a more scientific direction for improvement.

5.2.5. Design Principles for Layered Operations

In the context of "double reduction", the design of hierarchical homework for junior high school English requires teachers to understand the differences between students, assign homework targeted, encourage students to master more English knowledge, enhance each student's learning confidence, reduce their homework pressure after class, and enable students to feel the joy of English learning. In practice, to better leverage the advantages of hierarchical design in English homework, teachers also need to adhere to corresponding principles.

Diversity Principle

Under the guidance of the theory of multiple intelligences, teachers should recognize the diversity of students' intellectual structure composition. They can promote the further improvement of students' superior intelligence and the comprehensive development of various bits of intelligence through diversified forms of homework. Students can exercise their language intelligence through English homework and develop other intelligences, and their interest in learning English will continue to increase.

Interest Principle

As is well known, interest is the best teacher for children. Teachers must cultivate a strong interest in English homework to stimulate students' motivation to complete homework. Currently, most English homework is written (such as copying words, important sentences in textbooks, grammar-related concepts learned, and creating problem sets).

So teachers need to change the monotonous and tedious homework in the past based on students' interests and hobbies, carefully design homework content, ensure the diversity of homework forms, and make the homework content relevant to students' actual life. Only in this way can students' resistance to homework be changed and their enthusiasm for homework be increased.

Hierarchy Principle

Professor Ye Lan once pointed out that there are differences among students. The so-called difference refers to the uniqueness of each student. The differences between students are reflected in their intelligence, abilities, interests, and learning habits. This requires teachers to recognize students' uniqueness, consider the differences between students, design different types and difficulties of homework, allow students to choose homework based on their interests and abilities, and meet the needs of all students. As a teacher, it is necessary to fully understand and grasp the overall learning situation of the class and the learning status of each student in the class. When designing homework, it is necessary to help each student stimulate their unlimited potential and strive to assist them in crossing the "nearest development zone".

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