

Research on Junior Middle School English Homework Design and Evaluation from the Perspective of Core Competences

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Abstract: In general, students homework has the potential to extend learning beyond the classroom. Teachers play a vital role in the design and implementation of these assignments. Their faiths and views are important factors in determining the type and evaluation of homework. The general senior high school English curriculum has an important educational function of developing students subject core competencies, which include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability, with an ultimate goal of implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. In fact the junior middle school English curriculum aligned with the general senior high school English curriculum. Recently, there has been renewed interest in English homework design and evaluation because of the “Double reduction” policy. In this study, we selected 93 junior high school English teachers for investigation and depth interviews. The aim was to assess the situation of junior high school student’s homework and how to improve the quality of homework and reduce the burden of homework based on the core competences.

I. Introduction

Homework is a “complicated thing” (Corno, 1996), a “battlefield” for teachers, students, and parents. Teachers grumble about students failing to complete their assignment, students resent the time that homework takes away from more enjoyable activities, and parents complain about the family stress caused by disagreements on whether, when and how to do homework. Those days “Double reduction” policy proposed, ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education. In order to ensure the health of students and adequate rest time, the quality of homework research is increasingly important.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Definition

Homework is defined as “tasks assigned to students by schoolteachers that are intended to be carried out during non-school hours” (Cooper, 2007, p.4). Teacher’s assignment homework for a variety of purpose. First give students chance to practice skills learned in class; to prepare students for the next lesson; to increase students participation; and to support their personal development. Moreover, teachers’ purposes of assigning

homework also include promoting parent-child relations; supporting parent-teacher communications; encouraging peer interaction; and fulfilling school or district requirements in homework policy (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).

The core competencies achieved through the learning of a school subject are the concentrated reflection of the educational value of the subject, which consist of correct values and attitudes, indispensable qualities, and key abilities. The core competencies achieved through the English subject include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability, which will help students broaden their international horizons, enrich their ways of thinking, and participate in cross-cultural communication.

2.2 Literature Review

The main homework set was reading, learning, spelling and learning multiplication table, but activities involving aspects of basic literacy and numeracy loomed large. Sending books home for parents to read with their children was done by school. Also, the wide range of activities in relatively small proportions: comprehension sheets, fact sheets, general literacy, practice questions for the national test, assessment practice, projects, quizzes and completing work.

Despite the long history of homework research, the association between homework and achievement is not well established (Trautwein & Koller, 2003). The research investigating the relationship between achievement and homework has mostly focused on homework time. The general perception amongst most Americans is that the more homework schools assign the better (Cooper, Lindsay, Nye, & Greathouse, 2000).

Feedback is another aspect of homework that should be considered closely. In their review on feedback, Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest that feedback which includes information about how well a task is accomplished, the processes underlying the task, and students monitoring and regulating of their actions are suggested to be highly effective.

The content of the English curriculum is the basis for developing students subject core competences, which consists of four components: language ability, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability. Language knowledge consists of phonetic knowledge, and pragmatic knowledge. These areas of knowledge are the important foundation for forming language ability. Language skills are receptive and productive skills in learning and using language, including listening, speaking, reading, viewing, and writing. Most of the learning activities carried out around the texts are those activities designed to help students understand and respond to the texts by using these language skills. Cultural knowledge refers to knowledge of humanities and science at home and abroad, including knowledge of material and spiritual civilization. Learning strategies include metacognitive strategies, communication strategies, and affective strategies.

The generalizability of much published research on this issue is problematic. So in this study the author wants to find the problems on the homework through investigation and carried out how to design and evaluation students' homework from the perspective of core competences.

III. Research Design

3.1 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the present situation of English homework in Junior Middle school from the perspective of core competences. Here from the teachers view the author figure out the problems existing in operation of Junior Middle School English assignment and give suggestions on homework design, improving English homework quality.

3.2 Research Subjects

The subjects of this study are teachers from four schools. They are all formal teachers, familiar with students.

3.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing or their answers or selecting form among existing answers.

3.4 Case Analysis

In this part, the author will collect some English homework and make a detailed analysis on them. The purpose of it is to gather some authentic case that can well reflex the current situation of the English homework.

IV. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Analysis of Questionnaires

This status survey is related to three questionnaires: teacher questionnaire. It contains five specific aspects: see the from below.

Item	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
Teacher	1.2.3.4	5.6.7.8	9.10.11.12.13.14.15.16.17.18	19.20.21	22.23.24

D1: The amount and difficulty of English homework; D2: The sources and the forms of English homework;D3: The purpose and design of English homework (designed under the guidance of perspective of core competences);D4: The evaluation of homework;D5: Impact of double reduction policy

The survey results we presented are as follows: analysis the amount and difficulty.

Figure 4-1 Questionnaire Statistics of the amount and difficulty



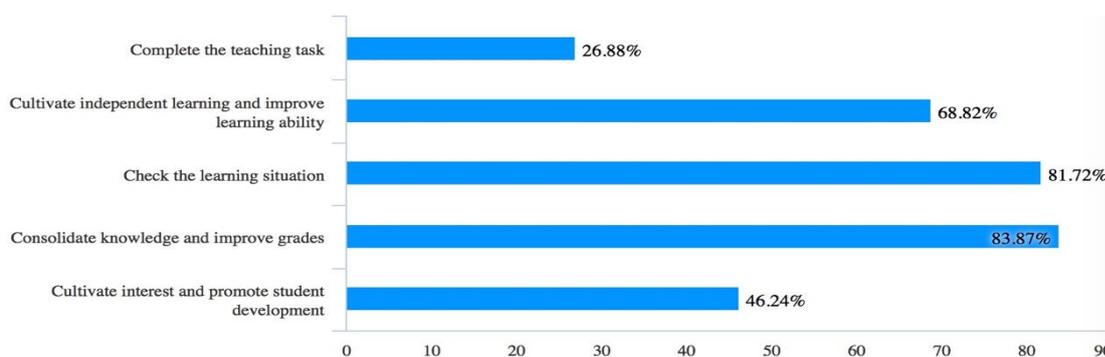
From the questionnaire statistics of Figure 4-1, we can draw the conclusion as follows. When teachers assign homework, 60% of them expect students to complete their homework in 30minutes each day.39% of teachers await the time to be 30-60 minutes. Only 2.15% think that the time is more than 60 minutes.As for the question 2, nearly half of the teacher arranges homework once a day. One thirds of the teacher not clear their homework frequency. In terms of question 4, about 40% teacher think it is not different and also 11% teacher think it is easy.so from the teachers view, two thirds of the teachers holding the opinion that the amount of the daily English homework is suitable. And also, the difficulty is also appropriate.

Figure 4-2 Questionnaire Statistics of the form and content

		Quantity (N)	Percent (%)
Types of English homework often assigned	Written assignments	82	88.17%
	Oral assignments	66	70.97%
	Performance	30	32.26%
	Practice	17	18.28%
Total		93	
Content of English homework often assigned	Textbook knowledge	82	88.17%
	Review knowledge	66	70.97%
	Preview knowledge	44	47.31%
	Others	7	7.53%
Total		93	
Resources of English homework often assigned	Textbooks and supplements	79	84.95%
	Design by yourself	37	39.78%
	Problem set (workbook and test paper)	72	77.42%
	Collaborate design	26	27.96%
	Teaching and research group arrangement	42	45.16%
	Internet resources	28	30.11%
Total		93	

According to the table 1, 93 teachers, which more than 88% assigned written assignments and use textbook as the homework content. 66% teachers assigned oral assignments and use review knowledge as the homework content. Performance and practice homework assigned rarely, in particular practice homework Only a few teachers will consider. As for the resources of English homework assigned, textbooks and supplements are more than 84%, workbook and test paper up to 77%, teaching and research group arrangement more than 45%, internet resources achieve 30%.Diversified teaching resources are being used.

Figure 4-3 Questionnaire Statistics of the function and design



Question 8 is designed to know the function of the homework. More than 80% teacher think it can check the learning situation and consolidate knowledge and improve grades. Nearly 70% believe it can cultivate independent learning and improve learning ability.

We coded and categorized question 10 to 17. It is focus on homework design based on the Core Competencies and theory of multiple intelligences. See the table 1.

No.	Language ability	Cultural awareness	Thinking capacity	Learning ability
Q10	✓		✓	✓
Q11	✓		✓	
Q12	✓		✓	✓
Q13	✓		✓	✓
Q14	✓	✓	✓	
Q15	✓	✓	✓	✓
Q16	✓	✓		✓
Q17			✓	✓

Table 2 teachers design of English homework

No.	Always	%	Often	%	Sometimes	%	Seldom	%	Never	%
Q10	33	36%	39	42%	19	20%	1	1%	1	1%
Q11	18	19%	22	23%	30	33%	11	12%	12	13%
Q12	23	25%	54	58%	11	12%	0	0	5	5%
Q13	12	13%	56	60%	18	19%	1	1%	6	7%
Q14	12	13%	34	36%	37	40%	8	9%	2	2%
Q15	14	15%	22	24%	39	42%	17	18%	1	1%
Q16	9	10%	19	20%	42	45%	20	22%	3	3%
Q17	12	13%	33	35%	39	42%	7	8%	2	2%

According to the data statistics of the questionnaire results in the table 4, there are the following analyses:

Question 10 is about when design homework will consider the teaching goals, key difficulties and learning strategies. It is obvious that most of the teachers will often consider that focus on language ability, thinking capacity and learning ability.

Question 11 is about whether student's homework close to life and interesting. From the data 19% teachers think it always close to life and interesting, 23% says often, 33% says sometimes, while 12% think seldom and 13% show never. Obviously, at the level of thinking ability training, the teacher design homework should consider more about thinking ability.

As for question 12, which is about student's homework enhance language sense and thinking, the number of always and often is comparatively increasing than that of the former two questions. Evidently, teacher will consider more about elementary knowledge.

And through the data of question 13, we can see nearly 60% teacher indicates student's homework of the stimulate learning motivation. What's more about question 14, 37% teacher design homework sometimes will consider integrate into cultural awareness. 34% show often consider, 12% indicate always regard. Also, consider the data of question 15, 39% teacher sometimes will arrange homework to develop team activities, 22% show they often do it, 14% express they always do it.

On question 16, which is about student's homework interdisciplinary, 45% teachers sometimes will consider, 20% often consider, 10% always consider. Also, according to the data of question 17, it can be drawn that 42% teachers sometimes design homework cultivate spirit of innovation, 35% often think about it, 13%

always take this way.

From the statistics in table 2, it is easy to find that most of the teachers' pay much attention to the English assignment and realize the importance of it. also, they have core competencies awareness.

4.2 Case Analysis

In order to make sure the current situation of junior high school English homework assignments and the actual situation of students completing homework. parts of the assignments were randomly selected as cases for interpretation and analysis. Whether the junior high school English homework under the background of the new curriculum implements the development of the four dimensions of language ability, thinking quality, cultural awareness and learning ability.

Selected 30 homework assignments by teachers, statistics found that words and phrase transcription accounted for more than 95%. Basically, every teacher will assign transcriptional homework; then 90% recitation and dialogue; 87% of the supporting workbook; 85% of the test paper; translation 70%; writing 60%; reading 50%; listening practice 40%; watching movies and learning singing 10%; practice homework 5%.

Most homework focus on the exercise of language knowledge then lack actual communication and use. When teacher assignments the homework they are less consideration of humanity and instrumentality of language. So, when teacher assignments homework they will spend most time to design.

About the English homework quality. Teacher must consider their existing knowledge and recent development areas, comprehensive assignments that can inspire students to think. For example, when teaching module 8 story time: goldilocks hurried out of the house. The homework will be designed by the following:

1. Background assignment: ask students to read the text and find out the story background and find out the characteristics of the characters.
2. Content assignment: draw the clue structure diagram of the article. Use mind maps to analyze the relationship between characters and clarify the context of the story.
3. Cooperative assignment: work in pairs, say what happened next in goldilocks and the three bears. Such as: I think goldilocks decided to go home... maybe she stayed in the house.
4. Innovative assignment: story adaptation or follow up after reading.
5. Practical assignment: adapt the textbook play and perform it on stage.

All the homework assignment is adhering to the principle of educating people first. And enhance students well-rounded development; promote equity in education; lead the curriculum reform with core socialist values; stress the ideological content, scientific approach, and systematic structure of the curriculum, and ensure that it keeps pace with the times and its nature as a guiding document; facilitate reform and innovation of talent training modes; and nurture a new generation of capable young people who have a good and all-round moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetical grounding and are well-prepared to join the socialist cause.

There other case is Module 10 Spring Festival. The homework will be assignment by the following:

1. Layered work: teachers will give three level homework; students will choose homework according to one's own ability and knowledge structure.
2. Listening and speaking homework: students will choose some listening materials and do the speaking working.
3. Background assignment (preparatory homework): find out the origin of the spring festival. And let the students recall how the family prepares for the Spring Festival every year.
4. Content assignment: make sure the text types. Then sketch language knowledge such as phonetic knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, grammar knowledge, discourse knowledge, and pragmatic knowledge's areas of knowledge are the important foundation for forming language ability.
5. Language skills assignment: language skills are receptive and productive skills in learning and using language,

including listening, speaking, reading, viewing, and writing.

6. Cultural knowledge assignment: the position and influence of the Spring Festival in China. And ask students describe how to celebrate the Spring Festival.

7. Learning strategies: introduce your own learning method for this module study.

4.3 Multiple evaluation

For the physical and mental health of students, teachers should make multiple evaluation of students. Faculty clinical evaluation tool will be present.

Written communication skills (class assignments, charting, care plans, documents, nursing process); oral communication skills; ability to relate theory to clinical practice; physical assessment skills; planning skills such as priority and goal setting, organizational skills; implementation skills. So, because of those evaluation tool we can design the suitable evaluation way for students.

Teachers not only right or wrong to give the score but also targeted guidance based on the student's homework. Find out the source of student's mistakes, infer students learning conditions based on their basic mistake, make reasonable suggestions, encourage students to finish homework better next time, and set short-term goals.

Develop a student's evaluation, let students know every step of their growth. In the multiple evaluation. We must see both the strengths and weakness of the students. Then record into a book, objective evaluation, give the positive guidance.

VI. Conclusion

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that homework design and evaluation is very important for study. Teacher should take more time to design the homework, enrich evaluation methods and improve evaluation capabilities. A limitation of this study is that the lack of diversity in English homework design and evaluation is not deep enough. We will go deeper in future research.

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