

Research on English Homework Design in Compulsory Education under the Background of “Double Reduction”

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Abstract: This paper focuses on English homework design in compulsory education under the “Double Reduction” policy. It first analyzes the research background and significance, reviews relevant literature at home and abroad, and points out existing problems. Then, based on constructivist learning theory, multiple intelligences theory, and formative assessment theory, it proposes design principles like reducing burden and increasing efficiency, and design strategies such as layered design. Although the research has limitations, it provides theoretical and practical references for English education reform.

Keyword: Double Reduction policy; English homework design; Constructivist learning theory; Multiple intelligences theory

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

On July 24, 2021, the “Double Reduction” policy was issued, aiming to ease students’ academic burden. This policy significantly impacts English education in compulsory education. With the over-emphasis on English training in society, causing family and social anxiety, English became a key subject under this policy.

In current English teaching in compulsory education, homework design faces many issues. Excessive homework makes students dislike English. Homogeneous homework cannot meet students’ diverse needs, and it often lacks connection to real life, preventing students from applying knowledge in practical communication. The single-dimensional homework evaluation system fails to comprehensively reflect students’ learning achievements, and the lack of innovation in homework hinders the construction of students’ knowledge system. The “Double Reduction” policy encourages English teachers to address these problems and meet students’ actual needs.

1.2. Research significance

Optimizing English homework design in line with the “Double Reduction” policy is crucial. It relieves students’ pressure, allowing them to focus on high-quality learning. Well-designed homework can be more targeted, innovative, and practical. Teachers can create tasks with different difficulties according to students’ learning requirements and capabilities, respecting individual differences. By following principles like teaching students according to their aptitude, making learning fun, and integrating with life, homework can be more interesting, stimulating students’ learning motivation and improving efficiency. Plus, it helps teachers get feedback to guide students in correcting mistakes and enhancing learning quality.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical and practical research on homework design abroad

Foreign scholars have done in-depth research on homework design. Veugen *et al.* focused on formative assessment in classrooms. It helps teachers adjust teaching strategies based on students’ learning process information, promoting collaborative learning ^[1]. Uslu and Körükcü found that students have a positive view of the constructivist learning environment, which aids in understanding knowledge and developing thinking skills ^[2]. Pan applied constructivism in teaching, advocating student-centered methods ^[3]. They suggest that homework should be open and exploratory, with teachers guiding students to reflect on learning through feedback.

These foreign studies have constructed a multi-dimensional theoretical framework for homework design. However, in the actual implementation process, there is a key problem to be solved urgently—how to effectively transform these advanced foreign theories into highly operable homework design schemes suitable for various disciplines, especially English, and then effectively promote the improvement of the quality of education and teaching in China.

2.2. Research on the reform of English education under the “Double Reduction” policy

Domestic scholars and teachers have re-evaluated English homework design since the “Double Reduction” policy. Wang thought layered homework can meet different students’ needs, yet accurate stratification and difficulty control remain to be explored ^[4]. Song and Zhang proposed diversified and interesting homework to replace traditional mechanical tasks, but it is essential to balance interest with knowledge and skill development ^[5]. Chu pointed out that interdisciplinary integration in homework design has potential but faces problems like a lack of unified textbooks and effective subject convergence ^[6].

In general, scholars at home and abroad have carried out research on English homework design under the background of “Double Reduction” from multiple dimensions, which has built a comprehensive theoretical framework and provided rich practical ideas. However, in the specific implementation, problems such as the precise stratification of layered operations, the balance of the objectives of multiple operations, and the practical problems of interdisciplinary integration need to be solved.

2.3. Status quo and challenges of English homework design in the compulsory education stage

Under the background of the “Double Reduction” policy, the design of English homework in compulsory education has become the focus of academic circles. Foreign research focuses on the application of formative assessment, the constructivist learning environment, and the constructivist theory in classroom teaching,

providing conceptual guidance for the optimization of homework design. Domestic research has built a comprehensive theoretical framework around the directions of hierarchical operations, multi-interest operations, and interdisciplinary integration, providing practical ideas. However, in the process of transforming these research results into practical teaching, there are still many challenges. It is difficult to transform foreign advanced theories into highly operable programs for English subjects, and when implementing domestic research results, problems such as the precise stratification of stratified homework and the practical operation of interdisciplinary integration need to be explored.

Therefore, this paper aims to reconstruct the homework design in the compulsory education stage of our country, explore a highly operable homework design scheme, and effectively promote the improvement of English teaching quality.

3. Theoretical basis

3.1. Constructivist learning theory and its implications for English homework design

3.1.1. Constructivist learning theory

Constructivism, emerging in the early 20th century and influenced by Piaget, Bruner, and Vygotsky, posits that learning is an active construction process. Learners build, enrich, and adjust their cognitive structures through the interaction of old and new knowledge. It has four core aspects: the knowledge view (knowledge is a personal interpretation of reality), the student view (students have prior knowledge affecting new knowledge understanding), the learning view (learning is an active interaction process), and the teaching view (teachers are facilitators in students' knowledge construction). Constructivism also emphasizes learning initiative, sociality, and situationality, advocating teaching methods like situational teaching and collaborative learning.

3.1.2. Inspiration of constructivist learning theory to English homework design

This theory inspires English homework design in multiple ways. Teachers can create real life-based situations, such as designing dialogues about daily life or writing tasks related to local culture. Group research assignments can encourage collaboration and communication. Exploratory tasks can stimulate students' initiative in constructing knowledge. Additionally, considering students' individual differences, homework should be innovative and diverse.

3.2. Multiple intelligences theory and personalized design of English homework

3.2.1. Multiple intelligences theory

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, proposed in the 1980s, states that intelligence is composed of various independent yet interacting intelligences, including language, logical-mathematical, musical, and others. This theory offers a new educational perspective, emphasizing the cultivation of multiple intelligences to stimulate students' learning potential and promote all-around development.

3.2.2. Multiple intelligences theory and personalized design of English homework

Based on this theory, teachers can design personalized English homework. For students with strong language intelligence, writing and speaking tasks are suitable; those with logical-mathematical intelligence can do grammar analysis. Students with spatial intelligence can create mind maps, and those with musical intelligence can sing and adapt English songs. This way, homework can match students' learning styles and intelligence strengths, facilitating personalized growth.

3.3. Application of formative assessment theory in English homework

3.3.1. Formative evaluation theory

Formative assessment focuses on continuously evaluating students' learning progress during teaching and providing immediate feedback. Its purpose is to improve the learning process rather than merely summarize results. Rooted in constructivism and Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" theory, it has characteristics like real-time feedback, interaction, and promoting development.

3.3.2. Application of formative assessment theory in English homework

In English homework design, formative assessment can improve learning efficiency and quality. Teachers can offer personalized feedback, highlighting both mistakes and progress, and use online platforms for real-time sharing. Encouraging self-evaluation, such as through reflection forms, helps students understand their learning. Digital tools like online dictionaries can support independent learning, and teachers can monitor and guide. Displaying and sharing homework, like through compositions or dialogues, boosts students' confidence and provides learning opportunities for others.

4. English homework design under the background of "Double Reduction"

4.1. Design principles

4.1.1. Reducing burden and increasing efficiency

English homework in compulsory education should be moderate in quantity to avoid overburdening students while being targeted to consolidate knowledge. Teachers should select high-quality content, avoid repetitiveness, and focus on quality over quantity. For example, instead of a large number of textbook exercises, students can be asked to choose key words to make sentences and answer reading comprehension questions.

4.1.2. Teaching students in accordance with their aptitude

This principle, dating back to Confucius, emphasizes tailoring education to students' individual differences. Teachers should identify students' strengths, like good pronunciation or strong grammar skills, and design appropriate homework. For students with learning difficulties, the difficulty of homework should be carefully considered.

4.1.3. Teaching through fun activities

"Edutainment" combines education with entertainment. Teachers can design gamified homework, such as word-break games and English riddles. Activities like creating English-themed scenes, dubbing cartoons, or making short videos can make learning English enjoyable.

4.1.4. Combination of life and practice

Connecting English homework with real life can enhance students' language and comprehension abilities. Teachers can assign tasks like making an English shopping list, describing items, or introducing local places. Community-based tasks can also increase students' social participation.

4.2. Design strategy

4.2.1. Layered design

Teachers can stratify students into different levels (A: extended, B: consolidated, C: basic) based on classroom

observation and evaluations, without publicly labeling them. For example, in a “festival culture” unit, C-level students can describe Spring Festival customs simply, B-level students can compare festivals in writing, and A-level students can plan festival publicity. Combining with the multiple intelligences theory, diverse homework forms can be designed.

4.2.2. Diversified types of questions

Diversifying question types is important. Basic questions help students review knowledge, interactive questions like dialogues promote communication, and project-based questions improve comprehensive skills. In reading comprehension, open-ended questions and creative writing tasks can be added.

4.2.3. Innovative evaluation (focusing on process evaluation)

Innovative evaluation in English homework can motivate students and promote their all-around development. Teachers should break away from the score-only evaluation model and use technology to create a dynamic evaluation system, such as tracking students’ pronunciation progress and creating learning records.

4.2.4. Interdisciplinary integration

Integrating different disciplines in English homework can enrich students’ learning experiences. For example, when learning about animals, English can be combined with biology, and in festival-themed classes, history and art can be incorporated.

5. Conclusion and prospects

This study reviewed relevant literature and found that existing research on English homework design under the “Double Reduction” policy focuses on aspects like burden, quality, and effect. The study aims to optimize homework design, improve education quality, and contribute to students’ development. It transforms the “Double Reduction” policy into a quality-improvement framework, providing theoretical and practical references for English education reform.

However, the research has limitations. It does not cover all schools and regions, and fails to fully consider the influence of teachers’, parents’, and students’ individual differences. Empirical data may have deviations, and the analysis is not comprehensive enough due to limited professional knowledge and simple methods. Future research could expand the scope, use more advanced methods, and further explore how to better implement the “Double Reduction” policy in English homework design.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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