

Research on the Improvement Path of Junior High School English Teachers' Homework Design Competency under the Background of Double Reduction Policy

Jiixin Li

China West Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, 637002, China

Abstract: The Double Reduction Policy in 2021 has put forward clear requirements on homework and homework design, including the total amount, the content, and the management of homework in the compulsory education stage. The policy highlights the improvement of assignment design while limiting the overall workload, whose fundamental objective is to upgrade both the quality and practical efficiency of homework. For this reason, the development of well-designed assignments has turned into a widely-discussed yet tough challenge amid curriculum reforms in basic education. The National English Curriculum Standards for Junior High Schools (2025 Edition) proposes to design homework holistically based on the unit objectives and students' individual differences. By doing so, teachers can properly balance what homework includes, how hard the tasks are, and how much work students have to finish after class. Since the implementation of the new policy, traditional homework arrangements that rely on repetitive memorization and mechanical exercises can hardly match the current goals of quality-oriented education. Many junior high school English teachers are now facing practical challenges in optimizing homework content, designing layered tasks, and providing effective learning feedback. Responding to the requirements of the Double Reduction Policy and new English curriculum standards, this paper sorts out the common problems existing in current English homework design in junior high schools. It further analyzes the internal and external factors that restrict teachers' practical abilities in homework development, and puts forward feasible and targeted improvement strategies. This study hopes to offer practical references for English teachers to build low-burden and high-efficiency homework systems, while supporting teachers' long-term professional development in the context of educational reform.

Keywords: Double Reduction Policy; Junior High School English Teaching; Homework Design; Teacher Professional Competency; Professional Growth.

1. Introduction

The ongoing reform of basic education in China has placed greater emphasis on student-centered learning and holistic competency cultivation. The Double Reduction Policy was carried out to improve the whole education environment; its main goals are to reduce useless schoolwork and make classroom teaching better. Homework is a regular and key part of daily teaching, and it greatly affects how well students learn and how they feel about studying. Junior high English requires students to memorize knowledge and use it in real situations at the same time. Good homework is absolutely necessary for students to review what they learn in class, practice listening, speaking, reading and writing, and build their understanding of different cultures as well as the ability to think independently.

However, in actual English classes, most teachers still set homework in old-fashioned ways. Lots of them only assign repetitive tasks like copying vocabulary, memorizing articles, and doing the same exercise book questions for every student. These assignments can help students grasp basic knowledge a little, yet they create unnecessary heavy schoolwork and waste students' study time. This kind of boring homework fails to match different students' levels, lacks real-life situations and chances for students to explore new things. As a result, students lose interest in studying English, and they cannot fully improve their ability to use the language in all kinds of situations.

Moreover, many in-service English teachers have not received systematic training on modern homework design theories. They do not fully understand what good homework should look like, and they still need to get better at creating personalized, creative assignments that help students build overall abilities. Following the Double Reduction Policy, figuring out useful ways to help English teachers get better at designing homework matches the direction of education reforms. It also brings real, meaningful benefits: it can make junior high English lessons more effective and help teachers keep improving their professional skills over time.

2. Theoretical Basis and Core Connotation

The previous section has clarified the research value of improving junior high English teachers' ability to design high-quality homework. To carry out relevant research in a rigorous and logical way, this chapter sorts out the core theoretical support of this study. It first interprets the specific standards of homework teaching put forward by the Double Reduction Policy, and then further defines the core connotation of homework design competency for English teachers, laying a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis of practical problems and countermeasures.

(1) Practical Requirements of the Double Reduction Policy for Homework Teaching

On July 24, 2021, the General Office of the Communist

Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council jointly issued the “Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden and Extracurricular Training Burden of Students in Compulsory Education”, which provides clear regulations for the homework management of students in compulsory education. It is explicitly stated that the daily time spent by primary school students in the middle and upper grades on completing written assignments should be strictly controlled within 60 minutes, and homework design work should be incorporated into the school’s teaching and research system.

In the specific implementation of the Double Reduction Policy, on the one hand, it is necessary to build a homework system that matches the cognitive development level of students, guided by quality education, and focus on strengthening the function of homework in diagnosing students’ learning situation, consolidating learned knowledge, and analyzing learning situation. The policy also encourages the implementation of a hierarchical homework mechanism, providing personalized learning support for students with different learning needs by setting up flexible homework sections. At the same time, an evaluation mechanism for homework effectiveness should be established to avoid inefficient and repetitive training as well as punitive homework forms. On the other hand, The Double Reduction Policy proposes the establishment of an on campus homework completion guidance system to ensure that students can basically complete written homework during after-school service hours. School classroom learning is the main battlefield for student learning, so it is necessary to improve teaching quality and optimize homework design.

Different from the exam-oriented homework mode in the past, current homework design should focus more on students’ individual development and long-term competency growth. For English teaching, policy guidance encourages teachers to break away from mechanical knowledge training. Instead, homework should focus on creating real language situations, guiding students to use English in practical tasks, and gradually forming core competencies including language ability, thinking quality, cultural awareness and learning ability.

(2) The Connotation of English Teachers’ Homework Design Competency

Homework design refers to the scientific and reasonable arrangement and design of the types, objectives, and content of homework, based on the actual development level of students and the key and difficult points of teaching. In this article, “homework design” refers to an activity that is pre designed for learning tasks to make learning more effective. Starting from the requirements of learning tasks, guided by educational philosophy, based on textbooks and learning situations, guided by unit humanistic themes, through situational creation, driven by learning tasks, plan the process of students’ unit homework exercises and learning activities.

Then homework design competency refers to teachers’ comprehensive professional literacy in analyzing curriculum standards, grasping teaching progress, judging students’ learning differences, and arranging appropriate after-school learning tasks. For junior high school English teachers, this ability covers multiple practical dimensions in daily teaching.

First, the ability to interpret curriculum standards and teaching objectives. Teachers must clarify the key and difficult points of each unit, and ensure that homework content closely matches classroom teaching goals and core

competency requirements.

Second, the ability of layered and personalized design. Students in the same grade and class have obvious differences in English foundation, learning speed and learning habits. Effective homework design needs to take individual gaps into account and avoid a single unified task mode.(Liu, 2024)

Third, the ability to design situational and practical homework. Language learning cannot be separated from real communication scenarios. Teachers should connect homework tasks with daily life, cultural topics and practical application to help students achieve knowledge transfer.

Fourth, the ability of scientific evaluation and teaching reflection. Excellent homework work not only lies in reasonable design, but also lies in targeted correction, detailed feedback and continuous optimization according to students’ learning situations

3. Common Problems in Current Junior High School English Homework Design

Based on the four core abilities that English teachers need for high-quality homework design, this chapter moves on to sort out the obvious flaws of homework design in real junior high English classrooms. Combined with practical teaching phenomena and relevant research results, it sums up several typical problems existing in current homework arrangement, and lays a solid foundation for the following analysis of deep-rooted causes.

(1) Monotonous homework forms and single training orientation

At present, most daily English homework in junior high schools still focuses on basic knowledge consolidation. Common tasks include copying new words, translating sentences, finishing grammar exercises and reciting textbook passages. (Tan, 2025) Such homework is easy to arrange and convenient for unified inspection, so it is widely adopted in daily teaching. Nevertheless, long-term single mechanical training makes English learning rigid and boring.

These traditional tasks mainly focus on knowledge memory and rule consolidation, with few open-ended, creative and practical tasks. As a result, students can memorize vocabulary and grammar rules but remain poor in language output and practical communication. This situation is inconsistent with the quality improvement requirements under the Double Reduction Policy.

(2) Insufficient hierarchical design and lack of pertinence

In most junior high school English classrooms, teachers usually assign unified homework to all students regardless of individual learning gaps. For students with weak English foundation, the fixed amount of homework may be too difficult to finish, leading to learning frustration and procrastination.(Yin, 2025) For students with solid foundation, repetitive basic exercises cannot bring new learning gains, resulting in low learning efficiency and wasted after-school time.

The absence of layered homework makes it difficult to realize teaching students in accordance with their aptitude. The one-size-fits-all homework mode cannot meet the development needs of different-level students, which has become a prominent problem in current English homework teaching.

(3) Separation between homework content and real language situation

English serves as a tool for real communication, so students can only learn it well when they use it in real-life situations. Even so, most teachers only base their English homework on textbooks and exercise worksheets in daily classes. The homework they assign mostly just tests whether students have learned the content from books, without creating tasks around real life such as theme-based research, conversations set in daily scenes, cultural research or practical writing exercises.(Kong, 2023) Homework separated from real-life settings only lets students simply memorize knowledge on the surface. Students rarely get chances to use English to deal with real problems, which stops them from developing their overall ability to use the language freely.

(4) Simplified evaluation methods and insufficient teaching reflection

In everyday English classes, teachers spend a lot of time grading students' homework, yet they use very basic ways to give feedback. They mostly just tick correct answers and cross wrong ones, without explaining why students made those mistakes or giving tailored advice for each student. Once they finish marking, barely any teachers sort out the frequent mistakes students all make, nor do they change their future lessons and homework plans based on these problems. Without thorough feedback and regular reflection on teaching, homework cannot work well to find students' weak points and guide their study.(Wu, 2022) If teachers keep using the same old homework style all the time, their teaching will hardly get better step by step.

4. Analysis of Causes for Inadequate Homework Design Competency

From the above discussion on the current drawbacks of junior high English homework design, it can be seen that most teachers lack the ability to create high-quality, student-centered homework. The single homework form, unreasonable difficulty level and ineffective evaluation all restrict the cultivation of students' comprehensive English ability. This chapter will dig deep into the root factors behind teachers' insufficient homework design ability from multiple perspectives, including teaching ideas, professional training, and teachers' heavy workload.

(1) Traditional teaching concepts restrict innovative homework practice

For a long time, education has focused heavily on exam results, so many teachers still think the most important thing for English class is to help students get better grades. They think doing lots of repetitive practice can help students remember basic knowledge and score higher in tests. Because of this old way of thinking, teachers are unwilling to try new types of homework and prefer to stick to simple, repetitive practice tasks they are used to. Even with the new curriculum changes and the Double Reduction Policy in place, a lot of teachers have not completely updated their teaching ideas. They do not fully understand homework that focuses on developing students' overall abilities, and this stops them from actively creating creative homework tasks.

(2) Lack of targeted professional training on homework design

Most training courses held by schools mainly help teachers improve their in-class skills, lesson planning and classroom control. There are very few special training sessions that teach how to design English homework. Most teachers only learn to set homework by repeating the same teaching work year

after year, without receiving complete theoretical support or studying useful real teaching examples. Without standardized professional training, many teachers cannot learn modern skills such as designing homework for students of different levels, creating tasks connected to real situations, and using various ways to give students feedback. This slows down their progress in designing high-quality English homework.

(3) Heavy daily teaching workload limits teachers' research time

Junior high school English teachers undertake dense teaching tasks, daily class management, student tutoring and routine educational work. Their daily timetable is packed and they often feel stressed. With such a heavy workload, most teachers barely have free time to figure out problems with homework, sum up their teaching experience or come up with new kinds of homework. Doing the same repetitive work day in and day out makes teachers stick to their old teaching routines. Their ways of assigning homework become fixed, and they lose the drive to keep improving themselves professionally.

(4) Imperfect school incentive and evaluation mechanisms

At present, most schools' teaching evaluation systems focus on classroom teaching effects and student examination results. There is no clear evaluation standard for homework quality, nor effective incentive mechanism for excellent homework design. Teachers' innovative attempts in homework teaching are often not fully recognized or encouraged. The lack of institutional support makes teachers lack continuous motivation to optimize homework design, which indirectly restricts the overall improvement of school homework teaching quality.

5. Practical Paths to Improve English Teachers' Homework Design Competency

Homework design ability has become an essential professional skill that all junior high English teachers must master under the background of the Double Reduction Policy and the new curriculum standard. Based on the existing problems of English homework design summarized above, this chapter puts forward operable improvement strategies from multiple dimensions including teachers' educational ideas, school training support, layered homework design and homework evaluation feedback. These targeted practical approaches aim to help English teachers break away from rigid, exam-driven homework modes and continuously raise their overall level of homework design.

(1) Update teaching concepts and establish competency-oriented homework awareness

To adapt to the requirements of educational reform, English teachers need to actively update their educational concepts and abandon the traditional misunderstanding that "more homework equals better learning effects". Teachers should clearly realize that the core of homework teaching is to promote students' ability development rather than simply consolidate examination knowledge. In daily teaching, teachers should take core competency cultivation as the starting point of homework design, focus on promoting students' language application ability, thinking quality and cultural cognition, and gradually form a scientific and rational homework view adapted to the Double Reduction Policy.

(2) Participate in systematic training and accumulate professional theoretical literacy

Schools and teaching research departments should carry out targeted special training on English homework design, covering unit integrated homework design, layered task arrangement, situational task development and diversified evaluation strategies. At the same time, teachers should take the initiative to look at good homework examples from high-quality teaching materials, learn useful advanced teaching ideas, and adjust these ideas to fit their own classes to create new suitable homework. If teachers keep learning relevant theories and collecting useful homework examples, they can break away from old, outdated teaching methods and gradually get much better at designing high-quality homework.

(3) Implement layered homework design to meet diverse learning needs

In actual teaching practice, teachers can divide daily English homework into three levels: basic compulsory tasks, improved selective tasks and expanded exploratory tasks.

The basic homework is for every student. It mainly lets students review words, memorize sentence structures and practice simple grammar, so all kids can master the key knowledge learned in class. The improved homework is meant for students with average English skills. It includes flexible grammar practice, writing sentences for real situations and short essay exercises to help them get better at using English. The extended homework suits top students, covering extra English reading, theme-based writing, cultural research and oral practice in daily scenes. These tasks can inspire students to think creatively and bring out their full language ability.

Setting homework with different difficulty levels fixes the downside of assigning the same work to everyone. It lets teachers teach students based on their own levels and cuts down useless heavy schoolwork for learners.

(4) Enrich homework types and build situational practical homework systems

Under the background of Double Reduction, English teachers need to break the single written homework mode and diversify after-school learning tasks. On the basis of traditional knowledge consolidation homework, teachers can add various practical tasks such as oral imitation, situational dialogue recording, English picture book reading, unit theme investigation, short English creation and cross-cultural sharing tasks. These diverse homework forms connect English learning with students' daily life and social topics, effectively enhance students' learning interest, and help students realize the transformation from passive knowledge memorization to active language application.

(5) Optimize evaluation feedback and form teaching closed-loop reflection

Teachers should change the single right-or-wrong evaluation mode and build a diversified evaluation system combining teacher evaluation, peer evaluation and student self-evaluation. In homework correction, teachers should not only mark answers, but also analyze typical errors, sort out common learning problems, and give targeted improvement suggestions.

After long-term accumulation, teachers can form error archives of student learning, adjust classroom teaching priorities, and optimize subsequent homework content and difficulty. Through continuous "design- implementation- evaluation- reflection" circulation, teachers can realize iterative improvement of homework teaching.

(6) Build a school-based teaching research community for

collaborative growth

Schools can organize English teaching and research groups to carry out regular homework discussion activities. Teachers can collectively analyze difficult problems in homework design, share excellent homework cases, and explore unit-based integrated homework design schemes. Through peer communication and collaborative research, individual teaching deficiencies can be effectively supplemented.

The construction of a collaborative teaching research platform helps form a good academic atmosphere, promotes the overall improvement of English teachers' homework design ability, and drives the overall optimization of school English teaching quality.

6. Conclusion

Homework is a continuation of the course. Under the Double Reduction Policy, the updating of school education concepts can ensure the balanced development of students in school education, solve the problem of excessive learning pressure, and improve the quality of basic education in schools, enabling students to have a richer learning experience. In junior high school English teaching, homework design is related to students' learning outcomes and the cultivation of their learning abilities. To fully understand the Double Reduction Policy and reduce students' learning burden, it is not about not leaving homework, but about removing repetitive and unnecessary learning tasks and exploring diverse teaching methods. Continuously innovating homework design methods to enable students to master effective learning methods through personalized assignments, while also continuously improving their learning motivation, thereby promoting their comprehensive development and enhancing their English proficiency.

To improve homework design competency, English teachers must take the initiative to update educational concepts, receive systematic professional training, and actively practice layered and diversified homework design modes. Meanwhile, schools need to provide effective institutional support, build collaborative teaching research platforms, and encourage teachers' innovative attempts in homework teaching.

High-quality English homework can effectively reduce students' inefficient academic burden, activate students' learning interest, and promote the all-round development of their core English competencies. In the future, frontline English teachers should keep pace with educational reform, continuously explore high-quality homework design strategies, and realize the mutual growth of students' learning quality and teachers' professional competency.

References

- [1] Cooper, H. (1994). *The battle over homework*. Corwin Press.
- [2] Barak, M., & Levenberg, A. (2016). A model of flexible thinking in contemporary education. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 22, 74–85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2016.09.002>.
- [3] Gu, M. M., Lee, C. K. J., & Jin, T. (2023). A translanguaging and trans-semiotizing perspective on subject teachers' linguistic and pedagogical practices in EMI programme. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 14(6), 1589–1615. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2022-0123>.
- [4] Yin, S. Q. (2025). Action research on implementation strategies of differentiated homework for upper-grade primary

- schools under the "double reduction" policy [Master's thesis]. Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University. (In Chinese)
- [5] Feng, G. R. (2024). Research on the design and evaluation of primary school English homework under the double-reduction policy. In *Proceedings of the 2024 Annual Seminar on Educational Innovation and Experience Exchange* (pp. 198–201). (In Chinese)
- [6] Wu, M. F. (2022). Junior high school English homework design under the "double reduction" policy. In *Proceedings of the Educational Theory and Practice Scientific Research Academic Research Forum (I)* (pp. 11–13). (In Chinese)
- [7] Kong, L. Q. (2022). Brief discussion on primary school English homework design under the "double reduction" policy. In *Proceedings of the International Academic Conference on Innovative Educational Practice (III)* (pp. 197–199). (In Chinese)
- [8] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2025). *Compulsory education English curriculum standard (2022 edition, revised 2025)*. <https://zwfw.moe.gov.cn/>.
- [9] Liu, S., Chen, G. Q., & Yuan, Y. (2024). Characteristic homework design of primary school English under the background of "double reduction". *Campus English*, (20), 25–27. (In Chinese)
- [10] Tan, Z. Z. (2025). Exploration of junior high school English homework design based on subject core competencies under the "double reduction" policy [Master's thesis]. Southwest University. (In Chinese)