ON THE ENGLISH ASSIGNMENT DESIGN FOR CHINESE SENIOR-HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT
This study adopted questionnaire and interview to investigate the situations of the design of English assignment for Chinese Senior-High-School Students. It is found that the amount of assignment is unreasonable, assignment lacks real contexts and the types of assignment are single. And the causes are analyzed, on which some suggestions are put forward based on the theory of multiple intelligence and the students learning needs.

Keywords: Assignment; Problems In Assignment Design; Suggestions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High School English（2017edition and 2020 revision) points out that English curriculum is focused on the comprehensive cultivation of students' language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability, which is in line with the curriculum of compulsory education. In order to meet the requirements of the curriculum standards, English teachers need to conduct targeted language training for students according to their personality and learning level. assignment is one of the ways of language training, and an important channel to improve students' English ability. However, the design of assignment has not been paid enough attention to. On one hand, in order to stand out in the college entrance examination, most teachers arrange students a lot of assignment, so that students cannot extricate themselves in the sea of problems, such as reading comprehension, text correction, grammar filling-in and so on. When designing the assignment, the teachers are often one-size-fits-all and do not take into account the actual level of students, which undoubtedly makes some students feel pressure, or even reduce their sense of achievement and interest in learning English. On the other hand, due to the high pressure of senior high school teaching, many teachers tend to spend most of their time on preparing lessons, but often do not seriously think about how to design appropriate assignment to students at different levels. Proper assignment types and assignment with moderate difficulty can not only enhance the effectiveness of assignment, but also enable students to study flexibly instead of focusing on rote memorization. Moreover, the teachers seldom give timely and effective explanation and evaluation of students' assignment due to the large number of students and the limited time.

Therefore, how to design and arrange senior high school English assignment scientifically and effectively, reduce students' academic burden and enhance students' learning interest, has become an urgent problem to be solved. To solve this problem, it is necessary to first find out what problems currently exist with English assignment.

2.RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research questions

(1) What types of English assignment are there for students of senior high school?
(2) What is the amount of English assignment for students of senior high school?
(3) Are there any problems that teachers have when arranging English assignment?

2.2 Subjects

This survey randomly selected 6 classes of students and 10 English teachers (a total of 300 students and 10 English teachers) in Grade One of Lianshui Foreign Language High School, Huai' an City in China as the objects of this survey. The school has 24 classes and 20 English teachers in Grade One.

2.3 Instruments

The author conducted a questionnaire survey among 300 students and an interview with 10 teachers. In addition, the author collected 30 pieces of assignment and used statistical method to calculate the types of the assignment.

2.4 Data collection

2.4.1Questionnaire

In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the current situation of senior high school English assignment, after studying relevant literature, the author modified the questionnaire by referring to Zhang Yue's Study on Status and Strategies of High School English assignment Design(2022). The questionnaire was issued in October 2022. It raised a total of 13 questions from the amount, type and function of assignment. The author contacted several senior high school teachers. With their help, 300 questionnaires were distributed to the students in this school. It took five minutes to complete the questionnaires. Then the author examined 300 questionnaires collected, among which 298 questionnaires were measured as valid ones.

2.4.2 Interview

In order to make up for the shortage of questionnaires and to comprehensively understand the situations of senior-high-school English assignment, this study also adopts the interview method,which focuses on the amount, the type and the function of assignment. The interviewer asked 10 teachers three questions: （1）How long does it take you to complete reviewing the assignment you assign each day? What do you think is a reasonable amount of time? （2）What do you think is the function of assignment in senior high school English learning? （3）What kind of assignment do you think can improve students' interest in learning English? The answers of each teacher were recorded and sorted out. By means of the interview, the author hopes to understand the problems existing in high school English assignment from multiple perspectives, so as to analyze the causes and provide ideas for the good design of English assignment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1 Results
3.1.1 Results of the questionnaire

There are 13 questions in this questionnaire, including 10 single choice questions and 3 multiple choice questions. Among them, questions 1, 2 and 3 are related to the amount of assignment, questions 4, 5, 6 and 13 are related to the function of assignment, and questions 7, 8, 11 and 12 are related to the type of assignment. The author analyzes the questionnaire data, and the specific situation is as follows.

Table 3-1 The Amount of assignment

Questions	Options	Percentage
How much time do you need to finish your assignment every day?	Within 30 minutes	20%
	30-60 minutes	70%
	More than 60 minutes	10%
What do you think of the amount of assignment arranged by the teacher?	Too much	65%
	Moderate	30%
	Too little	5%
Do you think English assignment has been your learning burden?	Heavy	30%
	A little	55%
	No	15%

As can be seen from the above table, 70% of students need 30-60 minutes for daily English assignment, and 10% of students spend more than 60 minutes. 65% of students think teachers give them too much assignment, while only 5% think they do too little. Therefore, 85% of students think that English assignment is a burden to themselves. Among them, 20% of students think the burden is too heavy, and only 15 % think not. All in all, the students need to spend a lot of time in their spare time to complete the English discipline tasks arranged by teachers, and the heavy assignment brings a burden to life.

Table 3-2 The function of assignment

Questions	Options	Percentage
English assignment can help improve English grades.	Strongly agree	20%
	Agree	68%
	Disagree	12%
English assignment can help develop comprehensive language skills.	Strongly agree	15%
	Agree	20%
	Disagree	65%
English assignment can help students form the habit of learning English in their spare time.	Strongly agree	19%
	Agree	65%
	Disagree	16%

What do you think is the value of English assignment? (multiple choice)	Consolidate the knowledge learned in class	87%
	Expand reading and vocabulary, and develop reading and writing skills	45%
	Develop a sense of language	13%
	To improve English listening, speaking, reading, writing and other comprehensive language skills	10%
	Cope with exams in order to get high marks in exams	78%
	Useless	5%

As can be seen from the above table, 88% of the students think that English assignment can help improve their English scores, while only 35% think that the current English assignment can help develop comprehensive language ability, and 84% think that English assignment can help students develop the habit of learning English in their spare time. 87% of students believe that assignment can consolidate what they have learned in class, and 78% believe that assignment is arranged for exams. It can be seen that in the eyes of students, the function of English assignment is mainly to improve English achievement and help them develop the habit of learning English in their spare time. But the other ability cultivation function of English extracurricular assignment, students basically did not realize.

Table 3-3 The Type of assignment

Questions	Options	Percentage
Is your English assignment mostly written exercises?	Always	94%
	Some times	4%
	Never	2%
Do you focus on memorization and representation in your English assignment?	Always	91%
	Some times	5%
	Never	4%
What kind of English assignment do you usually have? (multiple choice)	Write or dictate words and phrases, recite dialogues, texts, etc.	68%
	Synchronize written exercises or test questions	98%

	Oral assignment (reading, acting, retelling the text, recording tapes, etc.)	18%
	Read English extracurricular books	1%
	Production (English menus, posters, warning signs, etc.)	3%
	Practical (ask directions in English, guide in English, interview and survey, etc.)	3%
	Interesting (listening to English songs, watching English programs, animations, movies, etc.)	5%
	Complete small projects (collect, consult, sort out data and then display)	2%
What kind of assignment do you prefer? (multiple choice)	Write or dictate words and phrases, recite dialogues, texts, etc.	2%
	Synchronize written exercises or test questions	2%
	Oral assignment (reading, acting, retelling the text, recording tapes, etc.)	1%
	Read English extracurricular books	18%
	Production (English menus, posters, warning signs, etc.)	47%
	Practical (ask directions in English, guide in English, interview and survey, etc.)	58%
	Interesting (listening to English songs, watching English programs, animations, movies, etc.)	90%

	Complete small projects (collect, consult, sort out data and then display)	25%

As can be seen from the above table, 98% of students' English assignment is basically written assignment, and 96% of students' assignment focuses on memorizing and reproducing knowledge. 68% of students write or dictate words and phrases, and recite dialogues and texts as their main assignment, while only 2% of students like this type of assignment. 98% of students usually work on synchronized written exercises or tests, while only 2% of students prefer this type of assignment. 3% of students have practical assignment on daily days, and 58% of students like this type of assignment. Only 5% of the students did interesting work that 90% of the students liked. It can be seen that the types of assignment arranged by teachers are relatively simple, mainly traditional writing or memorization. These two types of work can only cultivate language ability but no other abilities of students, and students do not like these two types of work. They like practical and interesting assignment, which can be seen that teachers rarely or even do not assign these two types of assignment.

3.1.2 Results of the interview

There are three questions in the interview with the teachers as follows：

(1)How long does it take you to complete reviewing the assignment you assign each day? What do you think is a reasonable amount of time?

10 teachers agree that 30 to 60 minutes is a reasonable amount of time to complete assignment. One teacher says that " the proportion of reading comprehension questions in the current college entrance examination is high, so students need to brush reading questions every day to improve their scores in this part". Therefore, some students in the class need to do a reading comprehension question after finishing the English assignment on that day. However, if all disciplines are arranged in this way, it will bring great burden to students and does not meet the national requirements for assignment management and sleep management.

(2)What do you think is the function of assignment in senior high school English learning？

For parents, teachers and schools, the most important thing is the academic performance of students. Therefore, one teacher says that "assignment is designed to improve students' grades". Daily English assignment is to consolidate the knowledge learned that day, but also to check the gaps between the current level and the trageted level of the students. However, one of teachers also says that "As a part of teaching design, assignment serves to cultivate students' core competence of English discipline, so assignment is naturally an important way to cultivate students' core competence of English discipline". How to achieve the balance between improving students' English performance and cultivating students' core quality of English discipline is still a big difficulty for many teachers. It can be seen that teachers are not unaware that assignment should serve to cultivate students' core qualities, but under external pressure, teachers still choose the assignment that can quickly improve students' scores.

(3)What kind of assignment do you think can improve students' interest in learning English?

All of the 10 teachers say that "students are more interested in listening to music or watching movies". However, when listening to songs and watching movies, students tend to pay more attention to the melody of songs or the plot development of the movies, and pay less attention to the language points. When watching movies, students only focus on Chinese subtitles and do not

pay attention to English expressions. It can be seen that interesting assignments can enhance students' interest in English learning.

3.1.3 Results of assignment collected

According to the 30 assignment collected, the author found that about 90% of the assignment types were about copying words, reciting texts related to the content taught in class or arranging exercises uniformly configured by schools to students. The main feature of this kind of exercises is to serve for the college entrance examination. It usually has multiple choice questions, cloze questions, passage correction and reading comprehension. That design of assignment is not popular with students. That type of assignment, which involves copying words and reciting texts, continues throughout a student' s senior high school career. Students have to repeat the single type of assignment almost every day so that there is less time for students to do their own learning tasks. It makes the type of assignment expected by students significantly different from the type of assignment they actually contact, which is not conducive to the development of students in all aspects. On the contrary, only about 10% of assignment is interesting to the students, such as watching English movies, listening to English songs and writing English stories and so on.

3.2 Discussion
3.2.1 Problems in English assignment

Through the analysis of student questionnaires and teacher interviews, it is found that there are several problems with the current senior high school English assignment as follows.

3.2.1.1 Unreasonable amount of assignment

Beaton, Cooper and other researchers believe that the "quantity" of assignment design is important to the effect of assignment completion. Only when the amount of assignment is controlled within a certain range can it have a positive impact on students' achievements. In the questionnaire survey of students, it is found that 65% of the students think that teachers arrange too much assignment. 85% of the students think that English assignment is a burden to them. Among them, 55% think it is a little burden, and 30% think it is a heavy burden. And the most of the teachers think the amount of assignment they arrange is reasonable. This shows that teachers' assessment of students' learning ability is not accurate and the analysis of learning situation is not in place. For students, it is a burden, which is not conducive to students' academic learning and comprehensive development.

3.2.1.2 Single type of assignment

According to the questionnaire survey of students and the interview with teachers, it can be reflected that English assignment is usually about the reciting English words and texts, or matching exercises and synchronous exercises behind the textbook, which costs students a lot of time, and students lack interest and are unable to mobilize the enthusiasm in English learning. One teacher says that "The assignment can improve students' grades". According to the 30 assignment collected, the author found that about 90% of the assignment types were copying words, reciting texts related to the content taught in class or arranging exercises uniformly configured by schools to students. And only about 10% of assignment is interesting. From the short-term effect, the single assignment has a certain effect. But it is not good for the long-term development of students.

3.2.1.3 Lacking real context

In English learning, linguistic forms serve the purpose of understanding and expressing meaning and content, with the comprehension and expression of content and meaning being determined by the context. So the context matters. From the students' assignment, the author found that students think of the corresponding English "open" when they see the Chinese character "kai（开）". That causes the phenomenon of misusing words. In fact, the English collocation of Chinese character "kai（开）" in different contexts is different. For example, to open a door, to hold a meeting, to make a joke, to drive a car and so on. Therefore, vocabulary teaching is not to ask students to memorize words, but to combine the context to practice to understand and express.

3.2.2 Causes of the problems
3.2.2.1 Teachers

Influenced by the concept of "exam-oriented", assignment is often employed to control students' spare time, improve their academic achievements and enrollment rate. Most senior high school English teachers follow the principle of "National College Entrance Examination first". When assignment arranged, the type of assignment should basically be consistent with the exam questions, tending to consolidate the basic knowledge of textbooks, and focusing on improving students' test-taking ability and exam results. In addition, most senior high school English teachers also report that they are under great pressure in their daily work. They are not only responsible for teaching, but also prepare for research projects, teaching competitions and administrative assistance. In order to ease the daily workload, students are often assigned to do assignment that is not in line with their learning abilities and learning needs.

3.2.2.2 Parents

In the eyes of most parents, academic achievement is the main indicator to measure the effect of learning in school and identify whether a student is outstanding. Most parents believe that in order to improve academic achievement, a lot of written exercises must be conducted, and the amount of assignment determines the level of learning and academic achievement of children. In addition to the assignment arranged by teachers, many parents also prepare more exercises for students. As a result, students can only squeeze in a small amount of extracurricular time to complete the school assignment. This increases students' psychological pressure and assignment burden to some extent, and reduces students' learning interest and enthusiasm. In an interview with teachers, one teacher says that "The function of English assignment is to consolidate what they have learned in class, check the gaps and make up for them, and improve their grades through assignment". In practice, teachers often take assignment as a tool to consolidate what they have learned, which will make the content monotonous and boring and reduce students' interest in English learning. Such assignment is often divorced from the reality of life, hindering students' habit formation, unable to help students develop learning ability and problem-solving ability.

3.2.2.3 Students

Students from different junior high schools to senior high school, by which time they have at least 7 years of English learning experience, the current stage of their English learning ability and learning degree are greatly different. And most of these students have not developed good learning

habits in junior high school. In the questionnaire of students, it can be seen that 65 percent of students think that teachers give them too much assignment, while only 5 percent think that they do too little. This is the result of students' different learning abilities and learning habits. For teachers, it is not only necessary to take into account the uneven English level of students, but also to grasp the learning habits of students. Under the pressure from all sides to improve the scores, it is inevitable for teachers to choose the traditional assignment mode to make students achieve quick results.

3.3 Suggestions

English assignment is an important channel to improve students' English ability. The purpose of designing English assignment in high school is not simply to cultivate students' comprehensive English ability, but to better students' problem-solving ability. Teachers should follow the core competence concept from the three aspects of autonomy, cultural level and learning ability to design assignment that can meet the needs of the above three directions and the students' learning needs. Only in this way can students' English ability and problem-solving competence be comprehensively improved.

3.3.1 Designing assignment interesting to students

It is the key to implement the core competence of English to cultivate the consciousness of independent learning of senior high school students. During the design of assignment, teachers must ensure that the assignment is interesting, so that they can effectively stimulate students' learning enthusiasm, so that students can gradually form a good sense of independent learning in repeated operations, laying a foundation for the improvement of their core English competence. When designing interesting assignment, teachers can combine the preferences of senior high school students, so that students can participate in the exploration independently and improve their learning ability.

For example, when learning "attributive clause", teachers can start from another angle--songs, which will quickly stimulate students' desire to practice. Find a song with mostly attributive clauses, for example, Groove Coverage's SHE lyrics "She is the one that you'll never forget", "She must be the reason why God made a girl" and so on. At this time, teachers can design assignment: students are asked to analyze the lyrics of the sentences about attributive clauses. It can be said that the biggest advantage of designing assignment based on the preferences of senior high school students is that it can satisfy their curiosity and desire to explore. This kind of assignment based on interest is much stronger in function and effect than the traditional question sea tactics.

3.3.2 Designing open-ended assignments without standard answers.

The design of English assignment centering on core competence requires teachers not only to enhance students' autonomy from the perspective of stimulating interest, but also to lead students to know more Western culture from the perspective of cultural deposits. For example, translating English into Chinese is an important part of senior high school English learning. Students can master the features of English learning through translation. However, due to the differences between Chinese and Western languages and cultures, teachers should not deal with them literally, but integrate their understanding of Western cultures when guiding students to translate . This is the embodiment of open assignment. Students must carefully study the cultural differences between China and the West in order to better understand the sentences and master the grammar.

Open assignment enables students to take the initiative to learn relevant English knowledge, which can help students to learn English more comprehensively

3.3.3 Designing exploratory assignment

While cultivating students' consciousness of independent learning and enriching foreign cultural heritage, teachers should also design exploratory assignment around the core competence concept, so as to exercise students' learning ability, so that they can quickly get rid of the dependence on teachers and master effective learning methods.

We can design exploratory assignment about life style for students when teaching grammar knowledge. We can ask students to analyze some English sentences in life, such as advertising slogans, and point out the grammar knowledge contained in them as well as its application rules, so that students can master the knowledge in continuous attempts. The purpose of designing exploratory for students is to cultivate students' practical ability, so that they can flexibly use English in life. In this way, they can not only enhance their English thinking, but also improve their independent learning ability.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Major findings

Through questionnaire and interview, three major problems with English assignment lie in the unreasonable amount of assignment, lacking real context and single type of assignment. It is found that the reasons for these problems are as follows: (1) At present, the college entrance examination is still the main way for students to enter college, so the design of assignment is mainly to improve the score. (2) Restricted by their own experience and facing the pressure of school and society, teachers choose the traditional assignment mode. (3) There are many differences in individual students, and it is difficult to achieve hierarchical assignment in a class with a large number of students.

Combined with core competences of English curriculum and multiple intelligence, three suggestions are put forward for teachers' assignment design: (1) Designing interesting assignment to cultivate students' sense of autonomy; (2) Designing open assignment to enrich students' cultural heritage; (3) Designing exploratory assignment to exercise students' learning ability.

4.2 Implications

In order to overcome the disadvantages of English assignment in the traditional mode, teachers should avoid the single type of assignment when designing English assignment for their students. First of all, teachers should pay attention to the diversity of assignment types, stick to the combination of written assignment and oral assignment to ensure the diversity of the forms of assignment completion. Secondly, teachers should follow the principle of variety when evaluating assignment to ensure that the evaluation subject, evaluation method and evaluation content to develop from the single direction to the diversified one . Finally, teachers should design different assignments for students to choose, and flexibly arrange assignment according to the teaching content and students' learning situations to mobilize the enthusiasm of students to complete the assignments.

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