

at this level. The positive outcome of homework is contingents on (a) teacher preparation and planning; (b) assignments appropriate to the skill, attention, and motivation levels of students.

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For more information about teaching and homework the following internet addresses can be helpful:

<http://www.ed.gov/>

<http://www.teachnet.com>

<http://www.studyweb.com>

The following sites can be very useful in providing ideas about the type of homework activities which can be assigned in classroom:

<http://www.learnenglish.org.uk/kids/>

http://www.Longman.com/young_learners/teachers/resources.html

http://www.longman.com/young_learners/pdfs/FoodnDrink.pdf

Lesson 4, English book 2

Who was Hans Christian Andersen?

Reading stories and newspapers/ searching for some factual knowledge

Students can be assigned to read simple stories, or find some information of their interest in newspapers or look for some factual knowledge. Examples:

Lesson 7, English Book 1

What are some of the reasons for which birds migrate?

Lesson 4, English Book 3

Read and find some information about winter Olympic Games.

What is your favorite sport? Find some information about the gold medal winners of your favorite sport.

The history of the Olympic Games

Preparing class posters

Students can be required to work in groups and prepare class posters. For instance, as the subject of lesson 4 of English Book 3 brings to mind, students can be asked to prepare a class poster on “winter games”, “water games”, “water and snow ski” or even of the “sports and health”. Students interest is of great importance in assigning this type of extension homework. Furthermore, different groups can be assigned to work on different topics.

Collecting idioms and idiomatic expressions

This can be a very useful and interesting

activity. Teachers can ask students to find English equivalents for some Persian proverbs, or provide them with some English expressions and require them to find meaning in Persian. This task can take the format of class posters, as well.

Writing letters to a favorite character/writing for getting some information

Students may be asked to write a letter to their favorite character and ask him or her some questions. Additionally, students can be assigned to write and ask for some information about a place such as a zoo, a post office, a park, a museum, etc. Examples:

Write a letter to your favorite athlete.

Write a letter to a zoo and ask the following information:

The number of animals, the kind of animals, the opening and closing hours, the ticket price

Conclusion

Homework provides students with the opportunities to apply practice to learning and leads to academic success for students. The relation between homework and students language performance can heavily be influenced by the appropriateness of the homework to the level of the students. Homework should be viewed as one of several methods teachers can use to show students that learning takes place everywhere. For high school, however, homework can have significant effects on achievement. Indeed, relative to other instructional techniques, and considering the minimal costs involved in implementation, homework can yield a considerable increase in academic performance

Check the meanings, phonetic transcriptions, and parts of speech of the words on page 19. Use a dictionary. Write them down in your notebooks.

Finding picture cut-outs to illustrate the new words of the lesson

This homework type can be of assistance in contextualizing the new words and hence can decrease the liability of forgetting them.

Find pictures for each of the following words: Alphabet, kindergarten, motor-bicycle, plant, salad, world

Arranging the scrambled words

The purpose of the following three activities is two-fold: a) they cause students to read the lesson before attending the class; b) they facilitate learning the spelling of the words.

Example:

Try to arrange the following scrambled words.

You can look them up in lesson 1 of your book:

Ctnryou, tyci, apm, voer, loena, vole
(country, city, map, over, alone, love)

Completing the beginning or ending of the words

Complete the following words. You can find them in lesson 1 of your book:

-----garten, ---tle, --one, -ay, --ow, flo---, pa--,
---many

Completing unfinished sentences of missing words

Read the text on page 11 your book and try to complete the following sentences:

- 1-Friedrich Froebel lived in -----
-- ago.
- 2- He couldn't do things -----.

3- Kindergarten is a -----.

4- Soon ----- for Friedrich to-----
-----.

5- They should have ----- with -----
-----.

Finding additional material about the topic of the lesson and presenting it in the class:

This activity can be assigned to more competent students who have access to additional sources or the internet. It can provide this group of students with the opportunity to improve their reading comprehension ability and vocabulary knowledge. This homework can also be viewed as a brainstorming tool in class.

Example:

Find some information about any one of the following topics:

kindergarten, the first school in Iran, the person who built the first school in Iran

Extension homework

Preparation of presentations to class

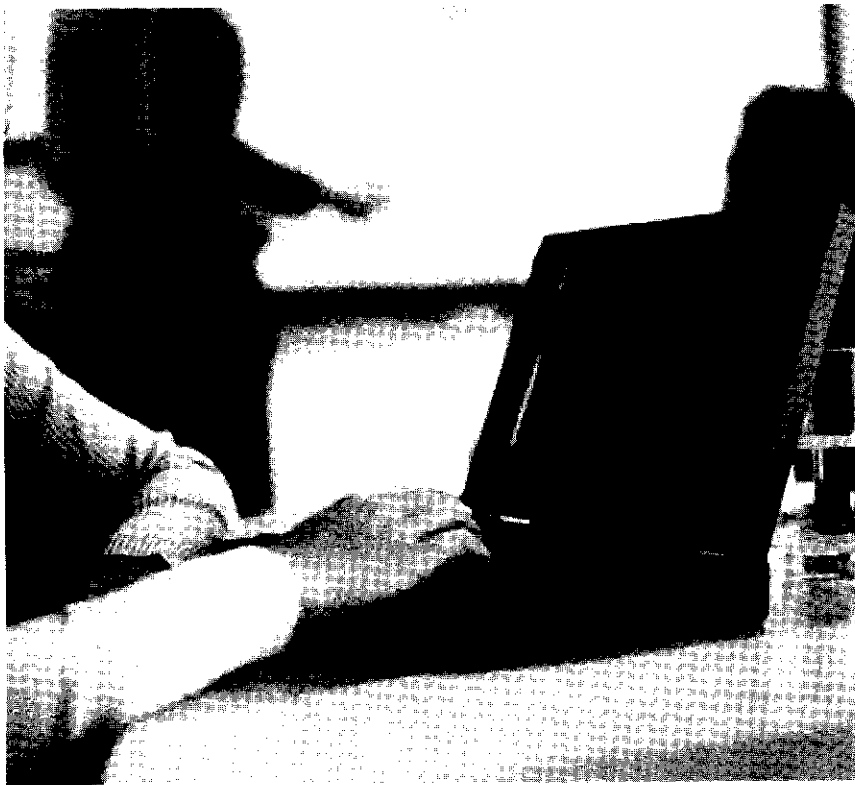
Students can be required to prepare some presentations to class depending on the topic of the lesson. They can be asked to work in groups, as well. As noted earlier, not all students have the necessary language ability to accomplish this task; thus, more capable students can be called for in this regard. Some suggested topics:

Lesson 3, English book 1

Prepare a presentation on "A story about Einstein" / "A story about Edison"

Lesson 9, English book 1

Prepare a presentation about "Our Holy Prophet"



Finding relevant pictures and writing about them

Looking for pictures can help students read their lesson carefully and extend what they studied in their text book to other contexts as well as writing on their own.

Example:

Find some pictures of different flowers and plants and write a sentence about each.

Identifying similarities and differences

This activity not only expands the vocabulary knowledge of the students but also addresses student's competence in other areas. More to the point, it requires students to employ thinking and reasoning skills (see Marzano and Pollock, 2001). **Example:**

*List the differences between a city and a country.
List the similarities and differences between a tree and a flower.*

Another example which can be referred to in this regard and can better denote use of students' competence in other areas is the following example for lesson 2 of English Book 2:

List the differences between the moon and the earth.

Finding advantages and/or disadvantages

List the advantages of trees over flowers.

Preparation homework

When students are assigned to prepare themselves for what is going to be taught in class, they feel the responsibility they have towards learning. They can realize that unless they contribute to the process of learning they can't succeed. Here are some preparation homework examples for **Lesson 1 of English Book 1:**
Checking the meanings, phonetic transcriptions, and parts of speech of the new words of the new lesson

This activity helps students to prepare for the lesson before coming to class and therefore have a better understanding of the lesson. Checking the pronunciation of the new words facilitates reading of the texts and checking their part of speech strengthens the students' language usage.

assignment, students are required to apply what they have previously learned to new areas (e.g. to read and extra text and write a summary about it or to choose a picture from a magazine or newspaper and write about it).

Some suggestions for homework assignment

In our country, high school students can unexpectedly be heterogeneous in English classes; therefore, choosing different types of homework depends on the language level of the students. It is the teachers' responsibility to decide on the appropriate homework type for the students. Here are some examples of the homework types students can be required to do:

Practice homework

In order to explicate this type of homework **lesson 1 of English Book 1** is used as a sample lesson:

Making sentences on the newly learned grammatical point

To practice the newly learned grammatical point above and beyond doing drills and exercises, students can be assigned to write some sentences of their own. This homework type can help students to think about what they have learned and produce sentences that may apply to their own situation. Example:

Write five sentences about the things you can do.

Write five sentences about the things you couldn't do when you were three years old.

Writing sentences with the new words of the lesson

Writing sentences with the new words of the lesson helps students to learn how to use them

in different contexts; however, if students are not able to write new sentences they can re-write the sentences of the lesson in which the new words are used. This activity necessitates careful reading of the lesson. If making sentences is easy for students, they can be required to write a paragraph of their own using the words identified by the teacher. Example:

Make sentences with each of the following words or phrases.

All over the world, become older, grow up, alone

Preparing lists based on what has been taught

Depending on the content of each lesson, students can be required to prepare different lists such as shopping lists, lists of water sports, fruits, plants, etc. This activity can help students to extend their vocabulary knowledge.

Example:

Make a list of flowers, plants, and trees in English. (A dictionary or picture dictionary can be used).

Summarizing the lesson

Summarizing the lesson helps the students to improve their reading, writing, dictation, and vocabulary use.

Read the passage "The Kindergarten Man" and summarize it in about ten sentences.

This activity can help students to use the words of the lesson and write of their own. Besides, it can extend their vocabulary knowledge and visual precision.

Example:

Choose one of the pictures of the lesson and write what you see in it.

Basic guidelines regarding homework suggest that in order to enrich and extend learning experiences, homework should be purposeful, relevant, interesting, and useful (Harmer, 2001). Students should clearly understand what they are asked to do. Besides, as Pollard (2002) asserts, homework should be checked by teachers. Teachers should provide effective verbal and written directions to students for homework completion. Teachers often assign homework at the end of the class or as the bell rings without fully explaining homework directions or objectives. Likewise, review of 15 studies on the effects of homework achievement (Walberg et al. 1985) shows that regular homework confers greater achievement benefits than little or no homework. The review also signifies that the benefits of homework will be greater if it is commented on and/or graded. Researchers (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Epstein, 1988; McCarthy, 2000) recommend that teachers should involve students in discussions related to the objectives and expected outcomes of the assignments.

To sum up, homework can be most beneficial when assignments are:

- Closely tied to the subject matter currently being studied in the classroom
- Given frequently as a means of extending student practice time with new material
- Appropriate to the ability and maturity levels of students
- Clearly understood by students
- Quickly checked and returned to students
- Graded and/or commented on

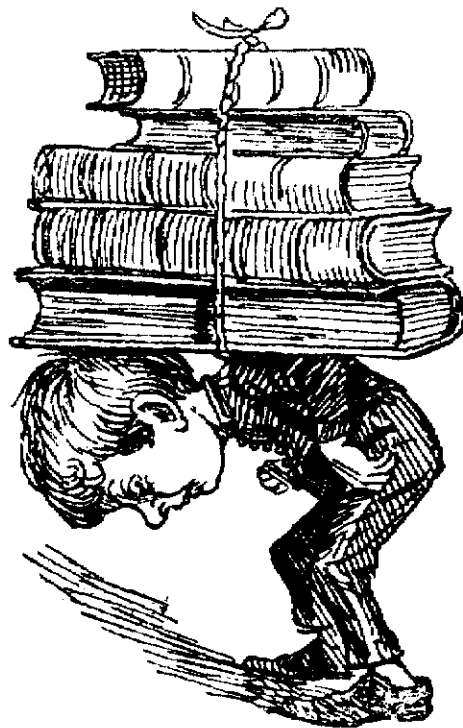
Different types of homework

According to LaConte (1981), there are three

types of homework which are commonly assigned: *practice*, *preparation*, and *extension*. *Practice assignments* reinforce newly acquired skills of knowledge. For example, when students are asked to do some exercises on a structure or make sentences with the new words of the lesson they have recently learned, they are performing practice assignments. These assignments are most effective when carefully evaluated by the teacher, when matched to the ability and background of the individual student, and when students are asked to apply recent learning directly and personally (e.g. assigning English Book 2 students who are studying lesson 2 to write sentences with “any” and “no”).

Preparation assignments, alternatively, are intended to provide students with some background information on the subject they are going to be taught. These assignments can include some extra reading related to the class text, library research, and collecting materials for a class demonstration. These assignments require gathering to organizing information prior to teaching a new lesson. It should be noted that students should be instructed how to complete such assignments. Besides, the level of difficulty of the assignments should be estimated and coordinated with the language level and capabilities of the students (e. g. to list what can be found in a dollhouse or to write three sentences about a favorite childhood toy for English Book 2 students, studying lesson3).

However, *extension assignments* encourage individualized and creative learning by emphasizing student initiative and research. Usually long-term projects which are related to the subjects taught in the class are classified in this type of assignment. In this type of



that vary in style, format, and content. This assures that all students have some kind of assignment that suits their interests. It is also possible to provide students with choices in doing homework. Students may all need to master the same material, but they can do so in different ways. For example, one student might write an essay about the topic of the lesson, while another can search the internet for some additional information. When teachers provide students with choices in doing homework, students feel they have control over their learning. Besides, this enables them to enjoy the assignment they are doing. For example, a teacher can provide three different assignments and ask students to volunteer for each type. Consider lesson 2 of English Book 3 taught in high schools in Iran. The teacher may ask some students to check the meaning, parts of speech, and phonetic transcriptions of some of the words of the lesson from the dictionary. Others may volunteer to write a few sentences about the advantages of being educated, and the third group of students may be assigned to prepare an outline of the "Value of Education". Another example would be of lesson 2 of English Book 2. Some students would prefer to write two or three sentences about their parents' jobs, while another

group may be assigned to write about something "we know now and people didn't know in the past" (based on the reading passage "The Other Side of the Moon"), and yet another group might be assigned to make a list of at least twenty different jobs and one thing which is necessary for doing the job (e.g. plumber/pipe, photographer/camera, teacher/book, cook/spoon and so on).

Assigning students different types of homework makes them accept the responsibility of participating in their learning process. Furthermore, because of the individual differences and needs of students, teachers would better not require or expect all students to experience the same kind of homework in connection with classroom instruction. It is worth mentioning that allowing for flexibility in homework assignment and providing clear directions for doing it serve to improve students' self-directedness and ability to self-manage their work, and increase the likelihood that homework will be completed. However, in order to make homework useful and a necessary part of learning, it should be reasonable and feasible; thus, assigning internet search for students who do not have access to computer is not recommended.

Introduction

Homework refers to any work planned and approved by the teacher to be completed by the student outside of the regular classroom without his/her immediate and direct supervision. Homework is also defined as the out-of-class tasks that students are assigned as an extension of their classroom work (LaConte, 1981). It benefits students by complementing classroom learning and fostering good study habits (Harmer, 2000). Furthermore, homework helps the students practice individually while leaving more class time for instruction. Besides, since learners have to study without the help of the teacher when they do their homework, it can encourage their autonomy and develop their confidence (Harmer, 2001).

However, creating meaningful and appropriate homework assignments and getting students to complete the assignments successfully is very difficult. Teachers should students that learning is a joint venture for which they should assume responsibility. Students should understand that they cannot be learned English unless they themselves take at least part of the responsibility of their learning. Students should realize that they can not succeed unless they study in their own time, doing homework, and thinking about what and how they should learn (Harmer, 2000).

The literature dealing with the relationship between homework and academic achievement is basically inconclusive. No studies have been able to control the many variables that affect this relationship. Nevertheless, reviews of students', teachers', and parents' perceptions reveal that all believe homework helps students achieve better grades (LaConte 1981). In addition, some studies have uncovered a more positive relationship between homework and student performance. In

a study carried on by Keith (1982), it is shown that increased homework time results in higher grades for high school seniors of all ability levels. Additionally, through increased study, lower ability students can achieve grades commensurate with those of brighter peers (Keith 1982). Besides, Ward et al. (1983) assert that there is a direct relationship between one to two hours of homework a day and the highest levels of reading performance for 13-year-olds. For 17-year-olds, as their study demonstrates, reading performance increases as the amount of time spent of homework increases. Students spending more than two hours a night on homework show the highest performance levels. Furthermore, Rutter et al. (1979) demonstrates that schools that assign homework frequently show higher student achievement levels than do schools that make little use of homework.

According to Smyth and Shacklock (1998) more attention to homework can extend the length of the school instruction and therefore enhance the quality of education. It assists students to practice new material and hence more class time is left for quality instruction. Therefore, it can be concluded that homework is an essential part of learning that can extend the study time of students. Besides, it can ensure the improvement of learning especially in large classes where there is not sufficient time for classroom practice.

Assigning homework to students

It is very difficult to create assignments that appeal to every single students in a large class of heterogeneous students. However, the teachers' responsibility is to provide assignments



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Homework as an Effective Instructional Tool

چکیده

منظور از تکلیف منزل فعالیت‌های درسی است که دانش‌آموزان باید در خارج از محیط و زمان کلاس انجام دهند. تکلیف منزل در یادگیری دانش‌آموزان نقش مهمی دارد. به علاوه با استفاده از تکلیف منزل می‌توان کمبود وقت در کلاس‌های درس را جبران کرد. به عبارت دیگر، تکلیف منزل به دانش‌آموزان کمک می‌کند تا تمرکز بیش‌تری بر مطالب درسی داشته باشند و بتوانند نقاط ضعف خود را برطرف کنند. به علاوه، تکلیف منزل موجب می‌شود تا دانش‌آموزان خود را برای درس آینده آماده کنند. به این ترتیب می‌توان به دانش‌آموزان یاد داد که در قبال یادگیری حوزه مسئول باشند و متوجه شوند که آموزش یک تعامل دو جانبه بین معلم و شاگرد است که در آن هر دو طرف دارای وظایفی هستند. البته میزان و نوع تکلیف منزل به طور معمول برای معلمان روشن نیست و ذهن اغلب دبیران را به خود مشغول می‌کند. نتیجه‌ی تحقیقات متخصصین تعلیم و تربیت نشان می‌دهد، رابطه‌ی مستقیمی بین یادگیری و انجام تکلیف در منزل وجود دارد. البته، همان‌گونه که بررسی‌ها نشان می‌دهند تکلیف باید با توانایی دانش‌آموزان هم‌خوانی داشته باشد. در نتیجه این نظریه که همه‌ی دانش‌آموزان یک کلاس موظف به انجام تنها یک نوع تکلیف خاص و واحد باشند، مورد قبول نمی‌باشد. یعنی می‌توان در یک کلاس، دانش‌آموزان را به دسته‌های مختلفی تقسیم کرد و برای هر گروه تکلیف منزل خاصی را در نظر گرفت که این تقسیم‌بندی می‌تواند براساس علاقه‌های فردی دانش‌آموزان، توانایی‌ها، امکاناتی که به آن‌ها دسترسی دارند و یا سطح زبان آن‌ها باشد. همچنین، تأکید بر این است که دبیران با دستورالعمل‌های مشخص، نوع فعالیت‌هایی را که از دانش‌آموزان انتظار دارند، مشخص کنند و با تصحیح و بازگرداندن تکلیف‌های منزل به آن‌ها، در دانش‌آموزان انگیزه‌ی لازم را برای انجام آن‌ها به وجود آورند. هدف مقاله‌ی حاضر به دست دادن تعریف مشخصی از تکلیف منزل و مرور تحقیقات انجام شده در این زمینه است. همچنین در این مقاله به سه نوع تکلیف متفاوت (تکالیف تمرینی، تکالیف آماده‌سازی و تکالیف اضافی) و اهدافی که هر یک دنبال می‌کنند، اشاره شده است. به علاوه برای هر یک مثال‌هایی نیز آورده شده است.

کلید واژه‌ها: تکالیف منزل، یادگیری، تعامل، تکالیف تمرینی، تکالیف آماده‌سازی، تکالیف اضافی.

“Homework” is one of the biggest challenges and concerns teachers face in their teaching profession. The assignment of homework, like many educational practices, can be beneficial, neutral, or detrimental depending upon the nature and context of homework tasks. The use of homework bears a significant and positive relationship to achievement when it is carefully assigned. Therefore, devising constructive assignments can be an important contribution to language learning. This article attempts to elucidate the advantages of assigning homework to Iranian high school students and the different types of homework which can be employed to enhance their language ability.

Key Words: homework, learning, interaction, practice assignments, preparation assignments, extension assignments.