Homework! What, Why, How?

Primary school English teachers’ attitudes towards and use of homework in China

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the attitudes to English homework held by teachers of primary school (Grades 4-6) in Mainland China, through an online survey. After obtaining 112 responses and analysing them by utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods, the results found that English teachers in China have a unified positive attitude towards homework and its effect. English homework is most commonly assigned once a day. Repetition or Exercise is the most popular type of assigned homework, and it is overwhelmingly preferred by the teachers, followed by Preparation and Reading. The respondents stress that homework has an indispensable connection with the scheduled school teaching. Through assigning the correct volume of homework, students can develop positive habits with regards to self-study, and therefore students can improve their academic performance in examinations. A combination of both oral and written feedback is utilised the most. Follow-up of homework usually appears to be two-dimensional; material stimuli such as penalty copy and self-correction, and immaterial stimuli such as encouragement and criticism. All of the evidence shows that China’s particular education system reflects Skinner’s behaviourist theories of learning, meaning that students’ behaviour with regards to acquiring knowledge can be shaped by frequent and random reinforcement, and this behaviour will eventually persist in the long-term even in the absence of reinforcements.

Keywords

Homework, China, English learning and teaching, Teachers’ attitudes, Feedback
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1. Introduction

The present study was inspired by Hallman’s (2017) study, which presented an overview of English teachers’ opinions of homework in Sweden, by carrying out a survey answered by approximately one hundred participants. This study reminded me of my earlier study experience from primary school to junior high school in China, where homework always seemed an essential part of the education system. Prior to moving to Sweden, I studied in China for eight years. My classmates and I spent a great deal of time after school completing our homework. Unlike China, Swedish teachers I have met assign much less homework, and provide much more time to complete any homework assigned. Regardless of whether in China or Sweden, English homework always comprised of instrumental training such as reading, recitation, grammar practice and writing.

A large amount of time is still spent on homework in China. According to online education platform, Afanti (2017), Chinese students aged 6-13 spend an average of 2.28 hours a day completing homework. This is compared to the US where the average was 1.22 hours, Japan 0.76 hours and Finland 0.56 hours. Moreover, teachers in China work on average 54.4 hours per week, and 40.37 percent of their work time is spent correcting homework. This stimulates the consideration of how homework is understood and assigned in Sweden and China. Through presenting an overview of Chinese teachers’ thoughts on English homework via an online survey based on both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study will explore the reason for this disparity, and examine what, why and how homework is assigned.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The study aims to investigate the attitudes to English homework held by teachers of primary school (Grades 4-6) in Mainland China. This study can be regarded as a replication of Hallman’s (2017) study in a Chinese context. The results of this study are therefore compared with Hallman's (2017) results, in order to investigate the differences of teachers’ attitudes in both countries. The study will also focus on teachers’ attitudes towards different kinds of homework tasks based on the pre-designed categories in accordance with the Swedish National Agency for Education (2014, p.13-14). Moreover, the study will focus on formative assessment and thus how teachers formatively use homework within the scheduled lesson time, including assignment, correction and follow-up. The present study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Which types of homework do English teachers in China assign and how frequently?

2. How does feedback and follow-up of the homework occur during scheduled school hours in China?

3. How do English teachers in China think that homework affects students’ language learning?
2. Background

This section will list and explain the important concepts in this study (section 2.1), provide a comparison of the national curriculum and syllabi of China and Sweden for grades 4-6 (section 2.2), give some background information on the Chinese education system (2.3), outline the previous studies on homework (2.4), highlight the relevant theoretical perspectives (2.5), and provide a summary of the background section (2.6).

2.1. Central concepts

This section will define some central concepts of the study such as different types of assessment and homework.

2.1.1. Different types of assessment

Assessment can be divided into three phases. The initial assessment focuses on what a pupil is already able to do prior to the teaching period. In the second phase, formative assessment aims to improve the student in a certain field of knowledge and allow them to reach their goal through the provision of continuous feedback on their ongoing performance and work. In the last phase, the summative assessment, the teacher will provide a grade which sums up the knowledge, skills, and approaches that the pupil has developed in that certain field of knowledge during the teaching period (Wahlström, 2016). Tests are usually used as reference material for the grading, but depending on the situation, sometimes homework can also be used as reference material (Skolverket, 2014).

Formative assessment is future-oriented and focuses on a student’s future performance. Unlike the formative assessment, summative assessment revolves around a student’s comprehensive performance in the current situation. Formative assessment is primarily provided by feedback. Feedback can be divided into three common types: feed up, feedback and feedforward (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). “Feed up” is where goals are established or explained in advanced. It provides students opportunity to set up or obtain a clear and structural view while a new project/chapter starts. While the project/chapter is progressing, feedback is provided to all students so that they can understand how much they are in line with the goal and what they can improve to reach their expected result.

2.1.2. Types of homework

The Swedish National Agency for Education divides homework into five types. Repetition or Exercise (ROE) is the most common type of homework. This type of homework aims to provide training and repetition of the content students have been working on during the teaching period. Through assigning this type of homework, teachers can use the lesson time effectively for other activities. Examples of such homework in English learning are gap-fill questions, true-false questions, multiple-choice questions, and translation (Skolverket, 2014).

Another common type of homework is preparation (P) for the upcoming lesson. For example, students are assigned to read a chapter from a fictional book, and thereafter a conversation of said chapter will be worked on in the upcoming lesson; or students are asked to observe and document something independently outside from the school environment, and then their observation will be used as the basis
for the further lesson. The flipped classroom is a special type of preparation homework. It means students receive the content of a lesson from the teachers in advance and take part in instruction, briefing or explanation with the teachers in the actual lesson (Skolverket, 2014).

Authentic homework (AH) focuses on content outside of the scheduled school teaching, and subjects that, for practical reasons, cannot be carried out as well on the school's premises. For example, students may be asked to interview their guardians or any other persons, or participate in activities from outside of school, which can benefit the students’ learning (Skolverket, 2014).

Some homework aims at pupils catching up or revising the content they have missed during the lesson time. Sometimes the catch up (TCU) is given at the end of a lesson to those students who have not met their work goals or completed learning established by the teachers (Skolverket, 2014).

There is also homework aimed at giving the teacher a richer basis for assessment and grading. This assessment support (AS) could comprise of tasks that students are expected to complete independently after the lesson time (Skolverket, 2014).

Apart from the types of homework mentioned above, reading (R) is also a common type of homework in school teaching (Hallman, 2017).

### 2.2. Curriculum and syllabus

This section will present the curriculum documents (including the syllabus for English) for English teaching, with a focus on ability, and a description of the homework in the related school policy documents in both Sweden and China.

Both Skolverket (Swedish National Agency for Education) and MOE (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China) indicate when the pupils finish sixth grade they should have developed their abilities in English to a certain degree. According to the knowledge requirements of the Swedish syllabus, pupils who receive a grade E at the end of year 6 “can understand the essential content in clearly spoken, simple English ...//... can choose and apply a strategy for listening and reading ...//... can express themselves simply and understandably in words, phrases and sentences ...//... comment in simple forms on some phenomena in different contexts and areas where English is used .../...” (Skolverket, 2011, p.36).

Meanwhile, MOE (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China) divides the knowledge requirements in English into five different areas: language skill, language knowledge, emotion and attitude, learning strategy, and cultural awareness. There are five steps with standard descriptions under each area. When the pupils graduate from primary school (year 6) they are required to have met the fifth step in all five areas. Here are some examples of the fifth step of language skill: “Can understand the speaker’s intention based on intonation and stress. Can communicate with others and cooperate to complete tasks. Able to understand the meaning of new words by relating to the inference of context and word formation. Can simply describe people and events” (MOE, 2011, p.17).

Thereafter, there are detailed descriptions about the goals for English language learning in both Chinese and Swedish curriculum documents. In summary, the curriculum documents from both countries aim to provide their pupils with a comprehensive development of their English language skills through school
teaching. The goals of English language learning are not only for the purposes of passing the exam and enrolment, but also for daily use, entertainment, and work.

There are no laws or regulations regarding homework in Sweden, and whether or not to assign homework depends on the decision of the principal and the teachers (Skolverket, 2016). The Swedish Education Act states in chapter three paragraph 5 a § “...//... tasks from teachers, other school staff, ...//... it appears that a student cannot achieve the minimum knowledge requirements, the student shall be promptly given support in the form of additional adjustments in the ordinary course of instruction ...//...” (SFS 2010:800). This law indicates that the school is obligated to provide additional customisations for students who are unable to complete their homework independently. In recent years, homework support has become a popular option in terms of additional customisations.

In contrast to the Swedish Education Act, there is no mention in the Education Law of the People's Republic of China that schools shall provide any compulsory support for pupils who cannot finish their homework independently. Meanwhile, it states in chapter five article 44 “The Educated receivers shall perform the following duties” (3) “studying strenuously and fulfilling assigned learning tasks.” (MOE, 2015). Through the above statement, the students in China are required to take more responsibility for their study and thus results in some students being more dependent on either their parents or other paid educational institutions, or both, instead of the school, for the acquisition of extra support to complete their homework. Teachers in China usually assign homework daily and set a time limit for the following day, because there is not a legal obstacle preventing teachers from assigning daily homework. Meanwhile, the students shall according to the law complete the assigned homework on time.

2.3. The Chinese education system

The Chinese education system has three components. Primary education (year 6-11), secondary education including junior and senior secondary schools (year 12-17), and higher education including university and vocational college (year 18+). As a result of growing urbanisation, there is a rural-urban gap and regional differences in the quality of education in China. Although the Chinese government has implemented various programmes in rural areas in order to close or narrow the gap, for example, raising the welfare and wages of the rural teachers, attracting urban teachers to work in rural areas by affording even higher welfare and better wages, and implementing special training programmes to improve the teaching skills of rural teachers, the quality of education in urban areas is still much higher than rural areas in China (OECD, 2016).

China has a nine-year compulsory education system, where Chinese students have the right and obligation to receive education free from tuition cost in primary and junior secondary schools. The main role of this system is to eradicate illiteracy. According to NBS (2016), the enrolment ratio of school-age children in 2016 reached more than 99 percent.

A lesson in Chinese primary school is commonly 40 minutes long. From the fourth to sixth grades, schools must provide three to four weekly lessons in a foreign language (English). Considering the fact that mainland China is very vast in terms of area, and is unbalanced in the development of its economy and education, schools can arrange their courses based on their conditions. However, all students must meet the corresponding national standards (see section 2.2) when students graduate from grade 6 (MOE, 1993; 2011).
Educators need to obtain different legal qualification certificates to teach at pre-primary, primary and secondary educational institutions (MOE, 2013). Certificates are obtained after completing the national unified teacher qualification exam. The exam consists of a written and a practical test. All participants must complete at least three years or more of relevant professional study to apply for the exam. In addition, the participants cannot have any criminal record. All qualified teachers need to update their qualifications every five years by completing various requirements and tests; those who fail to update cannot continue to work as teachers (MOE, 2013; OECD, 2016).

In China, competence-based class grouping is a common phenomenon. At the time of enrolment, students are usually divided into different classes according to their scores on their entrance exams. Some schools even divide students into different classes every year by means of a placement test (Li, Loyalka & Yi, 2016).

2.4. Previous research on homework

This section has been divided into four parts: time spent on homework (2.4.1), the effectiveness and influence of homework (2.4.2), the attitudes of students, teachers and parents towards homework (2.4.3), and the original research in Sweden (2.4.4).

2.4.1. Time spent on homework

PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment) is an international study carried out by the OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). The aim of the study is to evaluate systems of education in various metropolitan areas and countries by every three years testing the 15-year-old students’ abilities in areas such as science, mathematics and reading. Up until 2015, 72 countries participated in this study including Sweden and mainland China. In the top ten regions with the highest PISA score (OECD, 2012; 2015), seven of them were in East Asia. All regions in China have always been within the top 10, and Shanghai took first place in 2012.

All 72 PISA countries assigned homework (OECD, 2014). In 2012, students worldwide spent an average of 4.9 hours per week completing homework, compared with 5.9 hours in 2003. Students from socio-economically advantaged families tend to spend more time (average of 5.7 hours weekly) on completing homework and other tasks assigned by teachers than disadvantaged students did (average of 4.1 hours weekly). The difference in homework time between the advantaged and disadvantaged students is larger in some countries; up to 3.5 hours or more (OECD, 2014).

Students worldwide spend more time doing homework assigned by teachers than other after-school learning activities such as attending extra classes, personal tutoring and studying with a family member. Among students from the participating regions, students from Shanghai spent the most time on homework, at an average of 14 hours weekly (OECD, 2014). This is not just a recent phenomenon. 30 years ago, the fifth-grade students from Beijing, China spent an average of 456 minutes on weekly homework, compared with fifth-grade students from Chicago, America, at a rate of 250 weekly minutes on homework completion. As a result of this, the parents from Beijing also spent more time supporting their children than American parents did (Chen & Stevenson, 1989).
The above facts suggest that students who spend more time on homework might have better opportunities for gaining a higher PISA score, and that the academic performance of students and the time they spent on homework have a certain degree of correlation.

2.4.2. The effectiveness and influence of homework

Homework has several positive effects, such as “reinforcing materials presented in class and developing personality. …Improving children’s self-image and impendence” (Chen & Stevenson, 1989, p.559). Homework can also be used as a supplement to help the students to catch up with class content that they miss or don’t understand during the lessons, as well as a tool to transfer short-term knowledge into long-term memories, and provide highly-performing students with stimulation to maintain active learning (OECD, 2014).

Around 30 percent to 40 percent of the teachers in Chicago, Beijing, Taipei, and Sendai considered homework to have no negative effects (Chen & Stevenson, 1989). However, there has been some controversy around and criticism of homework. Major criticisms of homework were that an overload of homework could lead students to lose interest in their studies, and also that homework could result in poor study habits. Economically disadvantaged families usually cannot provide an appropriate working environment at home, nor can they always support their children in doing homework. Therefore, assigning homework may increase the gap in learning between advantaged and disadvantaged students (OECD, 2014).

An overload of homework can also cause anxiety and stress. Students who are overly anxious and stressed tend to put less effort into their homework. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable among students who could have completed high-quality homework. In contrast, students are unlikely to put in a full amount of effort when they are not stressed or anxious about homework or exam. However, the feeling of anxiety and stress is very subjective, because everyone has different capacities for withstanding stress. Therefore, it is difficult to judge whether the workload is excessive or not, and different people should be treated differently (Hong, Mason, Peng & Lee, 2015).

2.4.3. The attitudes of students, teachers and parents towards homework

A large amount of homework does not necessarily lead to a dislike of homework. Students who spend more time on their homework show a better attitude towards homework than students who spend less time (Chen & Stevenson, 1989). Chinese students like to do their homework because they think homework is useful and it can improve their scholastic performance, but also to avoid punishment from their teachers. Meanwhile, American and Japanese students show a neutral and pragmatic attitude towards homework by indicating they spent only the necessary time doing homework and that they lack enjoyment in completing homework.

As a norm, intellectual parents from a middle-class background are inclined to attach great importance to “cultural capital”, which can provide them and their children higher social status (Bourdieu, 1986). This is because knowledge is a key part of “cultural capital” and homework is usually deemed the sole approach to communication between individual families and school teaching. It has been suggested that academic parents tend to restrict themselves by attributing great value to homework in the learning process of their children, meaning that they only focus on homework and subsequently ignore other the importance of other school activities. In addition, non-academic parents could also be influenced by this
phenomenon and start to follow the same path as other academic parents. Therefore, some teachers could become frustrated in such cases (Katipoglu, 1993).

The attitudes of teachers in Western and Eastern countries have diverged. Chinese and Japanese teachers universally indicate that homework has a relatively strong connection to a student’s academic achievement. Meanwhile, American teachers do not place a high value on the contribution of homework to school teaching and relegate it to a fairly low position in the hierarchy of school activities involved in the academic achievement of students (Chen & Stevenson, 1989).

Katipoglu (1993) investigated the attitudes of parents and teachers toward homework in Turkey and found that, in general, parents and teachers shared similar attitudes towards homework. However, there were still some disagreements between them. 70.2 percent of the parents were of the belief that students should finish their homework in school time, with only 52.2 percent of teachers being in agreement with this. Finishing homework in school time implies numerous extra working hours, which the teachers wanted to avoid. Furthermore, teachers want to deliver a positive impression of the work carried out at the school and allow the parents to participate in school teaching. 61.4 percent of the parents believe that homework should not be assigned more than two or three days a week, compared with 31.8 percent of teachers. Parents believe that their children should not spend their spare time frequently carrying out homework. In contrast, teachers wished to assign regular homework to develop students’ study habits. 89.4 percent of the parents think that homework should be evaluated and graded by the teachers. Meanwhile, only 60 percent of the teachers agreed. Some teachers may consider evaluating homework as time-consuming and not the responsibility of the teachers. 55.6 percent of the parents express that homework only needs to be assigned to some courses. Meanwhile, 91.3 percent of the teachers agree, with teachers considering some main courses such as language and mathematics to be more essential than other courses (Katipoglu, 1993).

2.4.4. The original research in Sweden

Hallman (2017) carried out an investigation of Swedish English teachers’ attitudes towards homework by obtaining 149 responses to a survey that was distributed to a teacher group via online social media. Her study found that 116 (77.9 percent) English teachers of grades 4 – 6 in Sweden assign homework once a week. Repetition or Exercise is the most popular homework type assigned by teachers (131 teachers), followed by Reading (96 teachers) and Preparation (87 teachers). Meanwhile, authentic homework, and the catch-up and assessment support are rarely assigned.

According to the teachers, due to lack of school teaching time, homework usually appears as instruction-based preparation and control-based follow-up outside of the scheduled lesson time. In addition, homework is also used as an additional customisation for students who cannot focus during the lesson time, providing them an extra opportunity to study in a comfortable environment. Feedback on homework, in general, appears separately as oral, written, or group feedback. Furthermore, students’ cooperation and communication skills are gradually improved through group homework and peer assessment.

The majority of teachers have a positive attitude towards homework and its usefulness because it improves students’ skills in reading and vocabulary. In addition homework effectively improves students’ academic self-image and makes them more responsible. Some of the teachers are of the belief that the effect of homework will be influenced by the design of homework, the quality of parent support, and students’ preferences of different homework types.
In addition, Hallman (2017) discusses how the education system in Sweden reflects the theory of Vygotsky’s social construct perspective. The theory stresses that humans, as social beings, learn through communication in a context where differences meet. Through social interaction, humans can realise their deficiencies and work to obtain new knowledge (Säljö, 2000). In this context, individual homework becomes less important. Moreover, assigning homework may increase the gap between academically well-performing and under-performing students. This is due to the fact that the quality of homework is generally determined by how well parents can help. Students with poor academic performance generally lack help from their parents. Therefore, undertaking homework cannot effectively improve their ability and instead may reduce their self-confidence.

2.5. Theoretical background

The above sections (2.3 & 2.4) reflect that the Chinese education system has a strong connection to behaviourism. Behaviourism developed rapidly after the publication of Darwin’s theory of evolution in 1859 and had frequently been applied to learning and teaching. According to Darwin, humans are biologically continuous with the animal kingdom; there are great similarities between humans and other animals (Phillips & Soltis, 2009). Watson (1913) argues that observing and analysing other animal behaviours in experiments is a reliable and objective method for understanding how humans’ behaviour is acquired, and how learning works. Pavlov used experiments to develop the notion of classical conditioning (Phillips & Soltis, 2009), highlighting that a new stimulus can replace the natural stimulus and eventually cause a conditioned response after the new stimulus has appeared with the natural stimulus over time. After a few decades, Thorndike and Skinner developed the theory of operant conditioning (Phillips & Soltis, 2009). According to their perspectives, reinforcements such as material and spiritual rewards and punishments can further stimulate learner behaviour, thus providing a strong motivation for the learner to respond. Also, the behaviour can be shaped by frequent and random reinforcements; and the newly learned behaviour will eventually persist in the long term even in the absence of reinforcements (Phillips & Soltis, 2009; Skinner, 2013).

Through applying the theory of behaviourism in the Chinese context, assigning homework is utilised as a stimulus in the learning process in China. By finishing homework, can students avoid the teacher’s punishment (negative reinforcement) and obtain a better score in different kind of tests such as placement tests and final exams (positive reinforcement). Finally, the habit of doing homework will be ingrained whether the reinforcement is applied or not (Skinner, 2013).

2.6. Summary of the background section

Feed up, feedback, and feed forward, each type of the feedback has a significant effect on formative assessment for students’ learning. There are generally six types of homework teachers commonly use in teaching; each with a specific use such as knowledge reinforcement and supplement, preparation for new knowledge, and assessment support material. The curriculums in Sweden and China have detailed descriptions of the actual use of English skills, not just for passing the examinations. In contrast, there are not any descriptions about homework in the school policy documents in either country. Instead, Chinese education law clearly states that students must obey and carry out teacher instructions. The Chinese school has had a habit of assigning a lot of homework for nearly three decades. Compared with other countries, Chinese students spend basically twice as much time on doing homework weekly, but all regions of China have been ranked consistently within the top 10 of the PISA survey. The majority
of parents and teachers consider that homework has a necessary role in learning. Children worldwide have a neutral attitude towards homework, meanwhile, Chinese children like homework but also doing homework in order to avoid punishment. The way the Chinese education system regards and assigns homework reflects the theoretical perspective of behaviourism.
3. **Method**

This section describes the methods that were chosen for the implementation of the study. In particular, to achieve a comprehensive research, this study has utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the research questions. It also explains how the primary and secondary data was gathered and analysed, namely using an online survey. This survey was created through an online platform called *Wenjuanxing* (Survey star).

### 3.1. Material and data collection

Most of the questions were formulated with single and multiple-choice questions, although some questions required the participants to answer using a rating scale, and others were open-ended questions which required the participants to provide more detail on their answer. The survey is based on Hallman’s (2017) research survey but was adapted to correspond the Chinese context. The participants mostly included primary English teachers from South China. However, there were others from different geographic regions within China. The participants were notified about anonymity and confidentiality of this survey through a request letter and this was additionally included in the preface to the survey (See Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4).

The online survey was chosen, as it allows for a large number of participants, and has functions for simplified analyses. The original survey was in Chinese and the translated version in English, both of which are available in Appendix 1 and 2. The survey was created and distributed using *Wenjuanxing* (Survey Star), which allowed for the responses of each participant to be automatically sorted according to the time or by the question. It also assists with creating visual representations of the results. However, some of the figures included below were created using *Microsoft Excel* where they could not be created by the platform.

### 3.2. Validity and reliability

Compared with Hallman (2017); only a few survey questions were added to measure the research more accurately for the context of the research objectives. The survey consisted of simple and straightforward questions which were easy to understand, for example “Does the school you work provide homework support?”, “How often do you assign homework in English teaching?” The questions used concise language and where specific terms were used, clear examples were given to avoid ambiguity, for example “Repetition or Exercise such as translation of words or sentences, grammar exercises.”, “Preparation such as homework preparation for examinations or presentations.” (See Appendices 1 & 2).

The participants were sent a request letter and participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. The online survey was proven to be an excellent tool, as there was good participation from several teacher groups. By applying the quantitative and qualitative questions in the survey, a better understanding of the answers can be obtained (Patel and Davidson, 2011).

The aim of the research was to investigate a sample of teachers from mainland China. Although more than one-third of the survey responses were gathered from Guangdong Province, the survey still
obtained responses from teachers located in several regions, and with economic status, in mainland China; which can increase the reliability significantly (Hjerm, Lindgren and Nilsson, 2014).

To further increase the reliability of the research; apart from the fixed response options the survey also provided several questions where the participants needed to provide more detailed answers (See Appendix 6). Moreover, with the relatively large sample obtained, and since the survey questions were fixed, the confidence interval increases, which increases the validity and reliability of the sample (Hjerm, Lindgren and Nilsson, 2014).

3.3. Ethical considerations

This research has followed the ethical principles within the human subjects research of Codex (2018) and the utmost attention has been paid during the study to meet the following four concepts: secrecy, professional secrecy, anonymity and confidentiality (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017; Patel and Davidson, 2011). The request letter, the reminders that were sent, and the preface of the survey provided a detailed description of the study and highlighted that participation is completely voluntary and anonymous (See Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4). The information gathered will only be used for its intended use within this study and will be deleted after the examination. School and personal names will not appear in this study nor will they be used for any other purposes. All the participants have the right to receive the final version of this study, and were able to request this by leaving their email address at the end of the survey.

3.4. Informants and procedure

The survey was released on the 13th November 2017 (See Appendix 3). After receiving 25 responses, a reminder was sent on the 15th November 2017 and the survey was eventually closed on the 25th November 2017 with 112 responses obtained after the second reminder was sent (See Appendix 4). All the participants were teachers with English teaching experience for students in grades 4 – 6 in China, and participation was completely voluntary and was requested through a request letter.

43.75 percent of the respondents were located in Guangdong Province, with 9.82 percent from Guangxi Province, 7.14 percent from Zhejiang Province, and 6.25 percent each from Beijing and Shanghai. The rest of survey responses were gathered from several other regions in Mainland China.

Since the author is not located in China, most of the participants were contacted through an online chat programme called QQ, which is used by many primary school teachers for discussion and knowledge sharing. Due to time constraints and the verification of the groups, only five groups were accessed, and each with around 100 – 200 members. Several other participants were contacted using personal contacts on the online chat platform called Wechat, such as the author’s former English teachers in primary school, teachers of friends and relatives, and their colleagues.

The total sample size was 112, of which 110 (98.21 percent) were qualified and licenced teachers and 104 are still actively employed as teachers. 80.36 percent of the sample were female, and the sample only included 17 males, and 5 participants chose not to disclose their gender. Of the sample 73.21 percent taught at public schools, with the rest employed in private schools.

Almost half the sample was aged between 20 and 30 years old, with another 36.61 percent aged between 31 and 40 years old. With regards to experience, there was a good range of new and experienced
teachers. Just over a third of the sample had less than five years’ experience, 30.36 percent had between five and ten years of experience, with the remaining third having over 20 years of experience. The age and years of experience profile of the sample are illustrated below in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Age of the participants.

Figure 2. Experience in teaching of the participants.
3.5. Methods of analysis and data processing

As this is a replication study, the study has applied similar methods of analysis as Hallman (2017). However, according to Patel and Davidson (2011), each research problem is unique, therefore an accustomed and determined method does not exist. Consequently, the most appropriate methods will be adopted as per the understanding of, and at the discretion, of the analyst. This survey contained both quantitative and qualitative responses. The responses were categorised according to the type of research question.

With regards to the analysis of the quantitative responses, Wenjuanxing has a built-in feature to transfer the collected data into descriptive statistics. Most of the survey questions were based on the nominal level, within which the measurement values were divided into several categories, with no hierarchy between the categories (Hjerm, Lindgren and Nilsson 2014; Patel and Davidson, 2011). The results of this analysis will be presented in section 4.1 using descriptive statistics. The results will be presented using tables, stacked column figures, and bar graphs. Some of the diagrams are edited by Microsoft Excel where they were not provided for by Wenjuanxing.

The qualitative responses have been analysed and categorised into themes, illustrated by relevant and representative quotes, which are discussed at length (Sections 4.2 and 4.3). The purpose of the method of analysis is to establish a deeper understanding of teachers’ attitudes towards homework, as well as their perspective on teaching and learning English.
4. Results

The present study’s results are presented in the following sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, in an attempt to answer the research questions in chapter 1.1. By analysing both the quantitative (4.1) and qualitative data (4.2 and 4.3), the results are displayed in the appropriate forms such as charts, quotes, keyword frequency, and comments. In order to make the quotations readable after translation into English, the author has corrected the grammar and sentence structure of the respondents’ answers. Nevertheless, the essence of the answers has been preserved as much as is possible. So as to increase the ease of classification, the abbreviation SA (Survey answer) is used with a number before each quote. Moreover, some keywords that have been appeared multiple times in the answers of respondents were displayed with a frequency count to show an overview of the respondents’ thoughts.

Some answers from the respondents were irrelevant or too brief and thus have not been included in the analysis, and this can be considered attrition of the survey (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The attrition was as follows: 15 pieces in question 4, 2 pieces in question 5, and 7 pieces in question 6 (See Appendices 1 & 2).

4.1. Choice of homework in English teaching

In order to visualise the data, the following charts present the results of which types of homework are assigned by teachers of English in China, including their frequency. Diagram 1 shows how often English teachers in China assign homework. The diagram represents the seven-point scale used for the respondents’ answers, from “once a day” to “never”.

![Diagram 1. Frequency of assigning homework in English teaching.](image)

As shown in Diagram 1, among 112 participants, 54 (48.21 percent) assign homework a few times a week, and 49 (43.75 percent) assign homework every day. These frequencies represent the majority of home assignments. Meanwhile, only 7 respondents (6.25 percent) answered once a week, and 1 (0.89 percent) answered once every two weeks and 1 (0.89 percent) answered once every three weeks.
Diagram 2 shows to what extent different types of homework are assigned by English teachers in China. This diagram presents the data from the multiple-choice questions, which is why the total percentage exceeded 100 percent.

![Diagram 2: Types of homework the teachers assign.]

As shown in Diagram 2, among 112 participants, preparation and exercise (ROE) has been chosen for 107 times, preparation (P) 59 times, authentic homework (AH) 23 times, catch up (TCU) 37 times, assessment support (AS) 33 times, and reading (R) 57 times (a detailed explanation of the homework types are provided in section 2.1.2.). The diagram shows that ROE is the most common type of homework assigned by teachers, followed by P and R.
In general, teachers use several types of homework in their practical teaching. Therefore, there are 30 different combinations of homework types which appear in the survey. Diagram 3 shows the different combinations of homework types used by teachers, and a frequency count for each combination.

Diagram 3. The combinations of the homework types.

Diagram 3 shows that ROE and ROE+P+R are the most common combinations, followed by ROE+P and ROE+R. In addition, among all the combinations, 14 combinations contain ROE+R, 13 combinations contain ROE+P, and 12 combinations contain ROE+TCU. Therefore, combinations with ROE, P, TCU, or P are the most common combinations used by teachers.
Table 1 shows how often different types of homework are used in English teaching by the different English teachers in China. Each type of homework has been rated from 1 (least) to 6 (most) according to their frequency of use. The yellow divisions contain the highest value of each homework type.

**Table 1. Frequency of use of the different homework types.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homework Type</th>
<th>1. Least</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6. Most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetition or Exercise</td>
<td>1 (0.89%)</td>
<td>3 (2.68%)</td>
<td>3 (2.68%)</td>
<td>9 (8.04%)</td>
<td>28 (25%)</td>
<td>68 (60.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>4 (3.57%)</td>
<td>18 (16.07%)</td>
<td>32 (28.57%)</td>
<td>26 (23.21%)</td>
<td>20 (17.86%)</td>
<td>12 (10.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic homework</td>
<td>42 (37.5%)</td>
<td>22 (19.64%)</td>
<td>26 (23.21%)</td>
<td>14 (12.5%)</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
<td>3 (2.68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The catch-up</td>
<td>23 (20.54%)</td>
<td>15 (13.39%)</td>
<td>19 (16.96%)</td>
<td>30 (26.79%)</td>
<td>20 (17.86%)</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment support</td>
<td>13 (11.61%)</td>
<td>20 (17.86%)</td>
<td>30 (26.79%)</td>
<td>22 (19.64%)</td>
<td>20 (17.86%)</td>
<td>7 (6.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>9 (8.04%)</td>
<td>16 (14.29%)</td>
<td>22 (19.64%)</td>
<td>21 (18.75%)</td>
<td>34 (30.36%)</td>
<td>10 (8.93%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of ROE, the remaining five types of homework are relatively evenly distributed. The table indicates the trend that ROE is the dominant homework type in English teaching. AH, on the other hand, is rarely assigned by the teachers. Moreover, the teachers show a neutral attitude to P, AH, TCU and R by assigning the various types of homework at different times.

The result shows that:

1. Almost 50 percent of the teachers assign homework daily and other 50 percent assign homework several times a week.

2. ROE, P, and R are the most common types of homework assigned by the teachers, and the use of ROE is overwhelmingly higher (95.54 percent) than all the other homework types.

3. AH is rarely used compared with other homework types.

**4.2. Feedback and follow-up of the homework**

The section will present how feedback and follow-up occur during the scheduled school hours in China, according to the teachers. This section has three components: frequent words (section 4.2.1), feedback (section 4.2.2), and follow-up (section 4.2.3). The quotes in section 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 have been extracted from the survey data (see Appendix 6) and thematised into different categories; each category contains several representative statements concerning the category.

**4.2.1. Frequent words**

The respondents expressed their opinion via free text about how they respond to students’ homework. Certain words frequently appeared in respondents’ answers. The words and their frequency of occurrence have been presented in Diagram 4 to provide a visualised overview of the answers.
Diagram 4. Frequent words 1.

Diagram 4 shows highlights that in the responses, the word “correcting” appeared 40 times, “mistakes” 14 times, and “explain” 11 times.

4.2.2. Feedback

26 teachers described the giving of oral feedback as presenting an opportunity to provide students with either a review of the lesson, or personalised comments, or both. In example 1, the teacher considered oral feedback to be a detailed explanation of the content that students had not fully mastered.

“…an explanation of the lesson which lets the students understand more about points which are unclear to them.” (Example 1, SA 77).

In examples 2, 3 and 4, oral feedback was seen as a repeated moment that provides students with an explanation about their mistakes prior to self-correcting.

“Correct and identify the mistakes; some mistakes are clarified through individual comments, and common mistakes are explained in a unified way.” (Example 2, SA 25).

“Explain through the lesson, or allow students to correct themselves in accordance the answer.” (Example 3, SA 28).

“Actively explain problems and mistakes remaining from homework.” (Example 3, SA 34).

84 respondents mentioned written feedback in their response. Written feedback is usually combined with either oral feedback, a parental report, or both, and subsequently appears as written comments alongside a rating scale. In examples 5, 6 and 7, it is highlighted that students’ homework is usually graded and recorded by the teachers each time following revision. There are two common rating systems in China, the first one is “Excellent-good-average-qualified-poor”, the second one is “A-B-C-D-E-F”. “Poor” and “F” are equal to failure.

“Create a homework registration form, and the student's score will be recorded each time they complete the homework. Students will be found to correct the homework.” (Example 5, SA 8).
“The teacher corrects the student's homework and gives ratings on a scale.” (Example 6, SA 1).
“Students’ homework is graded by means of a rating scale; specific scores don’t exist, and suggestions will be provided based on the students’ mistakes.” (Example 7, SA 78).

As shown in examples 8 and 9, written comments primarily focus on mistakes students have made in their submitted homework to help them avoid these mistakes in the future.

“Above all, revision is necessary for every assignment; common mistakes will be emphasised during the lesson, and individual mistakes will be explained to students individually.” (Example 8, SA 69).

“As much as possible, it is important to make detailed comments on the problems students have had in their homework.” (Example 9, SA 50).

Parent report was mentioned by 5 teachers and focuses on students’ guardians instead of students themselves. Students receive feedback subsequently from their parents instead of from their teachers. This method of feedback usually is usually carried out via parent group on different online chat programs such as QQ or WeChat. The below quotes are some example of how the respondents describe parent reports (See examples 10, 11 and 12).

“Feedback on the class and parent group” (Example 10, SA 3).

“Serious rating and revision gives parents feedback and allows the parents to support the students.” (Example 11, SA 15).

“It takes place through WeChat to communicate with parents and ensure that they urge their children in learning.” (Example 12, SA 108).

As shown in example 13, only one teacher mentioned peer assessment as a useful method of feedback which can effectively increase a student's knowledge and retention.

“Students revise each other’s homework, compare their work to the excellent homework assessments, and finally provide comments to one another in order to improve knowledge intake.” (Example 13, SA 107).

4.2.3. Follow-up

Self-correcting usually appears along with penalty copy; together becoming the most popular form of follow-up, as mentioned by 14 teachers. These two methods require the students to correct and remember their mistakes via a written form (See examples 14, 15, 16 and 17).

“Revise the homework and circle the mistakes in order to remind students to modify or correct.” (Example 14, SA 11)

“Use of penalty copies for multiple mistakes.” (Example 15, SA 32)

“Explain the mistakes and clarify the requirements for revision face to face.” (Example 16, SA 43).

“Ask the students to make multiple entries on their penalty copy.” (Example 17, SA 104).
Follow-up can also come in the shape of encouragement and criticism, mentioned by 12 respondents. Compared with the self-correcting and penalty copy, encouragement and criticism focus more on students’ psychological dimension by applying different immaterial stimuli. As shown in examples 14, 15 and 16, students who have submitted excellent homework will be praised in front of the whole class, and their works will be presented as a sample. Meanwhile, students who have submitted poor homework will be criticised privately or anonymously.

‘Praise students who have done well.” (Example 14, SA 18).

“Share excellent assignments with the entire class, and provide face-to-face criticism of the students who have done poor homework.” (Example 15, SA 37).

“Praise students for high-quality homework. Have a private discussion with poor students and make requests.” (Example 16, SA 38).

In addition, 7 teachers indicate, with the help of the submitted homework, that they can recognise theirs and their students’ weak points and further adjust lessons as well as the homework content. Below are some examples extracted from the responses (See examples 17, 18 and 19).

“Seriously revise students' assignments, summarise the students' homework, and determine how well students have mastered knowledge during the class, and promptly remedy any problems that arise.” (Example 17, SA 54).

“The questions that come from frequent mistakes in homework will increase students’ knowledge.” (Example 18, SA 55).

“Carefully examine student's homework, analyse problems that arise, and give feedback to students who are weak in some area.” (Example 19, SA 95).

4.3. Teachers’ attitude towards homework in relation to language learning

This section will provide an overview of how English teachers (112 respondents) in China think that homework affects students’ language learning. This section will be divided into three parts: frequent words (section 4.3.1), positive attitude (section 4.3.2), and negative attitude (section 4.3.3).

4.3.1. Frequent words

Below are the frequent words which have appeared multiple times in the respondents’ answers (See Diagram 5).
4.3.2. Positive attitude

Overall, the respondents have a unified positive view of homework and depict it as an indispensable part of language learning.

Among all 112 respondents, 66 responses mentioned homework as a supplement to a limited schedule school time, knowledge consolidation, review, and preparation. According to the teachers, the scheduled lessons do not provide sufficient training and time for the students to master the language. In addition, given the lack of second language environment, students require increased preparation and reviews in order to memorise and use English more expertly (See examples 20, 21, 22 and 23).

“Prepare what you will learn, consolidate and memorise what you have learned, and use the knowledge more skillfully.” (Example 20, SA 6).

“English homework is a necessity for English teaching. It helps students to review and prepare. Homework and teaching are supplementary to each other.” (Example 21, SA 34).

“Repeated exercises are very necessary and important in foreign language learning. Whether there is a lack of linguistic environment or not, the teacher will anyway assign homework of listening, reading, copy, and dictation. This seemingly uninteresting homework will allow the student to retain 70% of their acquired knowledge.” (Example 22, SA 1).

“There is limited school time every day, therefore it is important that students review at home, and improve the frequency of review with homework.” (Example 23, SA 15).

Homework appears partly to be a method for teachers to ensure that the student has mastered the knowledge, and accordingly adjust the teaching methods in later lessons. This was mentioned by 21 respondents (See examples 24, 25 and 26).

“The homework is the performance of checking feedback on students’ learning. Whether they learned something or not, the areas in which they are lacking and making mistakes, difficult points for the students to master; all these things will be addressed in homework. Therefore, I personally think that
Homework is very important in English teaching. Homework plays a big role in students’ learning.” (Example 24, SA 54).

“By assigning homework, teachers are able to promptly check the student’s learning. The teacher can also promptly establish relevant guidelines and make the necessary adjustments to the teaching plan so as to facilitate the students' learning.” (Example 25, SA 40).

“We can detect if students have mastered what they have learned. Through the homework, you can understand what students have already mastered and what they haven’t.” (Example 26, SA 25).

12 teachers are of the belief that assigning homework is a huge factor which affects the examination results of the students. Since China has a test-oriented education system, by doing homework, students can effectively improve their academic performance and obtain better test scores (See examples 27, 28 and 29).

“Increasing time for homework is very important for children’s’ academic performance.” (Example 27, SA 15).

“At present, China implements quality education, in fact, test-oriented education still dominates the mainstream, so it is appropriate for after-school homework to allow students to consolidate what they have learned and gain a subsequent advantage in the examination.” (Example 28, SA 18).

“Allow students to review at home, to absorb the classroom knowledge in a better way, to improve their academic performance through homework training.” (Example 29, SA 107).

12 respondents agreed that an appropriate amount of homework could be considered a way to develop learning habits and enhance interest in language learning. Students will learn about the culture of other countries through doing homework and also shape a habit of self-study (See examples 30, 31 and 32).

“Diversity of homework can better help students become more interested in foreign language learning. A lack of variation in homework assignments will make the students lose interest.” (Example 30, SA 3).

“Improve students' motivation for learning and develop good study habits.” (Example 31, SA 110).

“Homework is an effective way for students to consolidate knowledge, preview new knowledge, develop good habits, and cultivate self-learning habits.” (Example 32, SA 69).

4.3.3. Negative attitude

109 of the respondents have a positive attitude towards homework, only 1 person was of the opposite opinion and criticised the effect of homework. The teacher in example 33 indicates that mechanically carrying out homework will impede the student’s development of knowledge and make them unable to master the knowledge they learned practically:

“Homework is an extension of classroom teaching, but in traditional English teaching activities, homework is just a moment of the links for consolidating knowledge and checking knowledge. It only leads students to memorise mechanically, and they cannot skilfully use the knowledge that they have
learned. This severely hinders the development of students' comprehensive ability.” (Example 33, SA 59).

4.4. Summary of the result section

49 percent of the respondents assign homework daily, and 54 percent assign homework few times a week. ROE is the most popular type of homework used by teachers (95.54 percent), followed by P (52.68 percent) and R (50.89 percent). Only one-third of teachers use TCU and AS, meanwhile AH is rarely assigned. Feedback on homework is usually provided in written form along with either oral feedback or parent report, or both. In contrast, only one teacher mentioned the advantages of peer assessment. The follow-up to homework usually appears to be either encouragement, criticism, self-correction, or provision of a penalty copy. Students are required to correct their homework in accordance with the teachers’ guidelines or answer sheet when the homework has been revised by the teachers. The majority of the time, students are also punished by being made to copy their mistakes several times after correcting them. By revising students’ homework, the teachers can easily adjust the content of subsequent lessons and homework, increasing how targeted and appropriate they are. Finally, a majority of the participants all had positive attitudes towards homework, other than one teacher, who had a negative attitude towards homework. Teachers are of the belief that homework has an indispensable connection to examination results. The right amount of homework will increase students’ interest and improve their academic performance. However, they do not indicate how much homework is the right amount of homework.
5. Discussion

The discussion section is divided into four, namely, a discussion of the results section (section 5.1), the pedagogical implications (section 5.2), a discussion of the methodology (section 5.3), and suggestions for further research (section 5.4).

5.1. Discussion of the results

The overall results of this study are different from those of Hallman (2017). In comparing both sets of results, it should be recognised that there are significant divergences between Sweden and mainland China, regardless of the attitudes of the English teachers or the education system.

Similarly to Hallman’s (2017) study, it was found that repetition or exercise (ROE) is the most popular type of homework provided by English teachers, followed by reading (R) and preparation (P). Meanwhile, authentic homework (AH) is still the least popular type of homework. This evidence verifies that there is not a huge difference in the attitudes of teachers towards different homework types in either China or Sweden.

Unlike in Sweden, teachers in China tend to be more likely to assign catch up (TCU), assessment support (AS), R, P, and even AH. The reason could be that the teachers in China have more chance of assigning different types of homework since homework is assigned on an almost daily basis. In Sweden, homework tends to be assigned once a week and there is an average of two English lessons per week (Hallman, 2017). This may explain why Chinese students spend almost three times as much time doing homework than the average data from PISA (OECD, 2014).

China has developed a tradition over the last thirty years of students completing a great deal of homework (Chen & Stevenson, 1989; OECD, 2014). This phenomenon could be affected by the test-oriented style of education mentioned by several teachers in the survey. Intensive homework and feedback is a means by which to improve students’ academic performance in terms of them achieving better scores.

Out of the 112 respondents, there was a unified positive attitude towards homework (with only one respondent in disagreement). Similar results to Hallman (2017) regarding the effect of homework were gained. Chinese teachers consider homework to have the same value as scheduled lessons. Therefore, lessons and homework are commonly perceived to complement one another. By doing homework, students’ habits with regards to learning can be progressively shaped and a better result can be obtained in the examination. Meanwhile, Swedish teachers consider homework more like a supplement and additional customisation of scheduled lesson time. Homework has been viewed as something extra used to increase students’ vocabulary outside the scheduled time given the short time of two lessons per week. Or, they are seen as an extra chance to study in a quiet environment because some students cannot concentrate during the lesson (Hallman, 2017). Accordingly, the value of homework is less important in Sweden than in China.

Many students do their homework to avoid the punishment of their teachers (Chen & Stevenson, 1989). It is therefore evident that the teacher in China has a relatively high status. This status may mainly originate from two factors, the first of which is that teachers and parents usually shared the same attitude
towards school teaching (Katipoglu, 1993), and this phenomenon is especially the case in China. It means, in general, parents will support teachers, instead of opposing them. As can be seen in the results of the survey, many teachers and parents frequently communicate via an online chat programme. In addition, Chinese education law stresses that learners should follow the educator’s instruction and are obligated to obey. Therefore, the parents’ cooperation and laws give the teacher tremendous power in the classroom. Additionally, this status might come from Chinese teachers’ intensive workload. As shown in the results, assigning homework daily also means correcting it and providing daily feedback. The feedback is not just commonly given in either the written or oral form, but both. In addition, by punishing and praising the students from time to time on their school performance, the Chinese students have developed a sense of both respect and fear for the teacher. Through the above analysis, it can be further confirmed that a certain system of education in China reflects behaviourist theories of learning.

Unlike in the present study, in Hallman’s (2017) study, it can be seen that a certain system of education in Sweden reflects Vygotsky’s social constructivism. The perspective of Vygotsky emphasises that human’s linguistic and bodily interaction is the key to learning (Säljö, 2000). In this context, homework has its use as a tool for interaction to a certain extent, but it cannot be seen as an indispensable part of learning. This is why homework, particularly independent, individual homework, is less important in Sweden than in China.

In contrast, behaviourism focuses on how behaviour is formed. Homework can be seen as an effective tool for behaviour formation. As the result has shown, in China, doing homework has an indispensable role in developing the habit of self-learning and the ability to pass examinations. In this context, peer assessment of homework by applying linguistic and bodily interaction between students becomes less important. This is because single-directional feedback of homework provided by teachers is more effective and immediate.

5.2. Pedagogical implications

The study contributes to the understanding of the attitudes of teachers in mainland China, in particular, their attitudes towards different types of homework in English. Through investigating the teachers’ attitudes towards homework, the teachers’ emphasis and perspective on learning and teaching can be discovered. Unfortunately, this study cannot verify the effect of homework as the respondents are teachers, not students. However, this study has determined a homework as a factor which appears to be influential in the top performance of China, and the moderate performance of Sweden in PISA (OECD, 2012; 2015).

However, in comparing this study and the previous study done by Hallman (2017), an overview can be gained of educational institutions in China and Sweden from the teachers’ perspective, and how the two learning perspectives work in different educational institutions with massive divergences. It is also possible to recognise the perceived advantages and disadvantages which certain amounts of homework can cause.

5.3. Method discussion

Every method has its advantages and disadvantages; and consequently it is difficult to determine which method is best. As the author could not travel to China, the research method applied is the most appropriate method for a study which requires the effective investigation of teachers’ thoughts in China.
However, if resources and time allow, a more detailed and deeper understanding of the teachers’ thoughts can be acquired by carrying out further qualitative interviews (Hjerm, Lindgren and Nilsson 2014; Patel and Davidson, 2011).

Participants were able to take part in the online survey of the research through clicking the link. Subsequently, all the responses from the survey could be collected easily and sorted by the wenjuanxing’s built-in programmes, and analysed for presentation in various charts.

Nonetheless, this method still contains some disadvantages. Firstly, since the survey was distributed across several online chat groups, there was no effective way to confirm that all respondents are teachers. However, the survey was voluntary and unpaid and therefore there was no motivation to pretend to be a teacher. Secondly, some of the respondents might not spend enough time reading the questions or clearly expressing their thoughts, leading to attrition. Due to the survey being anonymous, after the attrition taking place, it is almost impossible to search respondents and ask them to further modify the answers.

Several improvements can also be made, as some survey questions are not as clear as they could be. For example, “please describe in detail” should be added after survey questions 4, 5, and 6 (See Appendices 1 & 2).

In order to gather more detailed background information of the education system in China and verify the authenticity of the Chinese school policy documents and other resources about China, certain questions should have been included in the survey, for example: “What time do you usually start and finish work”, “How long is each lesson”, and “How many English lessons do grade 4 – 6 students have weekly?”.

5.4. Suggestion for further research

Here is some extra information gathered by the survey which may inspire further research. As reported by the survey responses, almost 80 percent of the schools provide homework support, 23 percent of which charge money for the additional support. Around 70 percent of the students have more or less used the homework support provided by their school. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the students have also used the homework services of private academies. 77 percent of them have submitted their homework on time. The percentage of students who didn’t submit their homework is similar to the percentage of the students who have not used the homework support of their school or for-profit agencies. Is it there any connection between the punctual submission of homework and homework support?

Clearly, those families who have a higher income can usually provide better education in terms of both economic support and a decent study environment, so that their children can more easily succeed in learning (Schueler, 2014). According to the responses to question 13 on the survey (see Appendices 1 & 2), the per capita disposable income of the parents is evenly distributed across five different levels, from low-income households to high-income households (NBS, 2016). Around 50 percent of the parents have a relatively poor economic income. By combining the information of the previous paragraph, it is evident that many economically disadvantaged families still need to pay either school or private agency fees in order for the students to receive homework support. In addition, there is around 20 percent of students that do not utilise homework support. As shown in this study, doing homework and a student’s academic performance have a correlation. Will non-free homework support become a serious factor that
increases the gap of student’s academic performance between economically advantaged and disadvantaged families?

It is known that around 80 percent of students use homework support from schools. Free homework support might be essential for many economically disadvantaged students. Why can schools in China not provide this free support?

Based on the above questions, the sociocultural and socioeconomic factors could be a significant influential factor in the equivalence in English teaching. Therefore, the above questions may be noteworthy for further research.
References


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Appendix 1

Survey (Original Chinese version)

关于小学4-6年级的英语作业问卷调查

本调查问卷针对的是小学4-6年级的英语教师。目的在于调查英语教师如何在英语教学中使用作业。

这项研究是瑞典斯德哥尔摩大学以4-6年级教师为重点的本科教育的高级研究的一部分。

您的问卷答案是完全匿名的，本研究旨在分析4-6年级英语教师是如何在英语教学上使用作业。

所有的这些信息将根据瑞典研究委员会（2011）的研究实践条例进行处理。

调查需要大约5分钟的时间来回答。如果您有兴趣了解本研究的结果可以留下的您的邮箱。

感谢您的参与！

作业

1. 您在英语教学中布置作业的频繁程度？

   - 每天一次
   - 每周几次
   - 每周一次
   - 每两周一次
   - 每三周一次
   - 每月一次
   - 从不

2. 您在布置英语作业时最常用到的作业是什么类型的？（多选题）

   - 复习或练习类作业，如单词或句子的翻译，语法练习。
   - 准备类练习，如为了考试或者演讲前准备的作业练习。
   - 校园外的实践作业，如关于采访，调查或者通过其他媒体进行的作业。
   - 让学生赶上进度的作业，当学生错过课或者赶不上进度时布置的作业，如写一篇文章，读完一本书。
   - 为了增加更丰富的成绩依据的作业。教师为了得到更丰富评估成绩而增加的作业，如额外地书写一篇文章，或者做一份卷子。
   - 阅读作业，如阅读各类英语书籍与刊物。
3. 请以 1-6 来评估以下六种作业类型的使用频率。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. 最少</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6. 最频繁</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>复习或练习类的作业</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>准备类的作业</td>
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<td>校园外的实践作业</td>
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<td>让学生赶上进度的作业</td>
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<tr>
<td>为了增添更丰富成绩依据的作业</td>
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<tr>
<td>阅读作业</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

作业的用途
请尽可能地详细回答以下问题

4. 您是如何看待作业在学校英语教学中的作用的？

5. 您是如何反馈学生上交的作业的？

6. 您认为作业对于学生的英语学习作出了什么样的影响？

英语作业辅导

7. 你们学校提供作业辅导嘛？
   - 有
   - 没有

8. 学校的作业辅导是免费的吗？
   - 是
   - 不是
   - 学校没有作业辅导

9. 您认为您学校的学生有使用学校的作业辅导吗？
   - 有，少数
   - 有，多数
   - 没有使用
10. 您认为您学校的学生有使用其他盈利机构的作业辅导吗？

- 有，少数
- 有，多数
- 没有使用
- 不清楚

11. 您觉得学生们都会按时完成作业吗？在哪个程度上？1 为最低，5 为最高。

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

社会经济条件
这部分是针对收集关于您工作的这间学校的社会经济条件的信息的。

12. 您所工作的学校的学生会从父母那里获得作业辅导吗？

- 少数会
- 多数会
- 不清楚
- 不会

13. 您所工作的学校的家庭的年人均收入大约为（多选题）

- 5 千 2 百以下
- 5 千 2 百以上，1 万 2 千以下
- 1 万 2 千以上，2 万以下
- 2 万以上，3 万以下
- 3 万以上，5 万 5 千以下
- 5 万 5 千以上
- 不清楚

14. 您所工作的学校的的学生的父母所从事的工作多数为（多选题）

- 国机关、党群组织、企业、事业单位负责人，如国家机关，人民团体和群众团体、社会组织及其他成员组织，全事业单位的负责人。
- 专业技术人员，如科学研究，工程技术，教学，文学艺术，体育，医疗卫生，农业，法律，社会和宗教专业人员，新闻出版，文化，经济和金融等各类拥有专业技术的人员。
• 办事人员和有关人员，如行政办事人员，人民警察，消防员。
• 社会生产服务和生活服务业人员，如批发于零售服务，交通运输，住宿和餐饮，金融服务，房地产服务，技术辅助服务，水利、环境和公共设施管理服务，信息传输、软件和信息技术，修理及制作，健康服务，文化、体育和娱乐服务等各类服务性行业的人员。
• 农、林、牧、渔，如农业，林业，畜牧业，渔业的生产人员以及以上四行业的生产辅助人员。
• 生产、运输设备操作人员及有关人员，如农副产品，食品、饮料生产，烟草，纺织，木材加工，印刷，石油，化学原料和化学制品，医药，各类大中小型设备的粗精加工的制造和加工人员。
• 军人
• 其他

关于您的一些简短信息

15. 您从事教师多少年了？

• 1-5 年
• 5-10 年
• 10-15 年
• 15-20 年
• 20-30 年
• 30-40 年
• 40 年以上

16. 你是有合法的英语教学资格的 4-6 年级的英语教师吗？

• 是
• 不是

17. 您目前是否依然正在做英语教师？

• 是
• 不是

18. 您多少岁？

• 20-30 岁
• 31-40 岁
• 41-50 岁
• 51-60 岁
• 61-70 岁
• 70 岁以上

19. 您所工作的学校位于哪个省和哪个城市？

20. 您所工作的学校是
• 民办的
• 公立的

21. 您的性别是

• 男
• 女
• 其他
• 不希望透露

关于调查的反馈

在这部分您可以选择对本调查问卷进行反馈。如：缺乏对应的选项，对问卷或一般反馈和建设性的疑问。

如果您想获取这次研究的结果也可以在下方留下您的邮箱。

22. 反馈（自愿填写）

Stockholms universitet/Stockholm University
SE-106 91 Stockholm
Telefon/Phone: 08 – 16 20 00
www.su.se
Appendix 2

A survey about English homework of Primary School grades 1-6 (Translated version in English)

This survey is focused on English teachers in grades 4-6 in primary schools. The purpose is to investigate how English teachers use homework in English teaching.

This study is part of an advanced study of undergraduate education focused on teachers of grades 4-6 at Stockholm University, Sweden.

Your answer to the survey is completely anonymous. This study aims to analyse how English teachers in grades 4-6 use their homework in English teaching.

All this information will be handled according to the research and practice regulations of the Swedish Research Council (2011).

The survey takes about 5 minutes to answer. If you are interested in understanding the results of this study can leave your e-mail address.

Thank you for your participation!

---

Homework

1. How often do you assign homework in English teaching?

   - Once a day
   - Few times a week
   - Once a week
   - Once every two weeks
   - Once every three weeks
   - Once a month
   - Never

2. What type/types of homework is/are the most commonly used according to you? (Multiple choice)

   - Repetition or Exercise such as translation of words or sentences, grammar exercises.
   - Preparation such as homework preparation for examinations or presentations.
   - Authentic homework such as interviews, surveys, or assignments conducted through other media.
   - The catch-up. When a student misses a lesson or fails to get up to schedule, he writes an article and finishes reading a book.
   - Assessment support. Teachers' assignments to get richer assessment results, such as writing an additional article or doing a volume.
   - Reading. Such as reading various English books and publications.

3. Please evaluate the frequency of use of the following six types of homework by 1-6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.Least</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.Most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetition or Exercise</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
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<td>Authentic homework</td>
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<td>The catch-up</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of the homework
Please answer the following questions in detail.

4. How do you see the role of homework in school English teaching?
5. How did you respond to students' homework?
6. What impact do you think the homework has on students' English learning?

English homework support

7. Does the school you work provide homework support?
   - Yes
   - No

8. Is it the homework support free?
   - Yes
   - No
   - The school doesn’t provide homework support

9. Do you think that students from the school you work have used school’s homework support?
   - Yes, minority
   - Yes, majority
   - Don’t use
   - Don’t know
   - The school doesn’t provide homework support

10. Do you think that students from the school you work have used homework support from other profit agencies?
    - Yes, minority
• Yes, majority
• Don’t use
• Don’t know

11. Do you think your students have finished their homework on time? To which extent? 1 is the lowest, 5 is the highest.

• 5
• 4
• 3
• 2
• 1

Social and economic conditions
This section is for collecting information about the socio-economic conditions of the school where you work.

12. Will the students from the school you work receive homework support from their parents?

• A few will
• Most will
• Don’t know
• They don’t receive

13. The per capita disposable income yearly of the students’ parents from the school you work. (Multiple choices)

• Below 5200
• Above 5200, below 12000
• Above 12000, below 20000
• Above 20000, below 30000
• Above 30000, below 55000
• Above 55000
• Don’t know

14. The students’ parents are mostly working as (Multiple choices)

• The responsible person of state organs, party organizations, enterprises or institutions, such as the responsible person of state organs, people's organizations, mass organizations, social organizations, other member organization enterprises, and institutions.
• Professional and technical personnel, such as personnel of scientific research, engineering technology, teaching, literary arts, sports, medical and health, agriculture, legal, social and religious professionals, press and publication, culture, economics, and finance.
• Service personnel and related personnel, such as administrative staff, police, and firefighters.
• Personnel of social production services and life services, such as personnel of wholesale in retail services, transportation, accommodation and catering, financial services, real estate services, technical support services, water conservancy, environmental and public facilities management services, information transmission, software
and information technology, repair and production, health services, culture, sports and entertainment services and other service industries.

- Production personnel of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, such as major production personnel and auxiliary production personnel of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and fisheries.
- Production and transportation equipment operators and related personnel, such as personnel of agricultural and sideline products, food and beverage production, tobacco, textiles, wood processing, printing, petroleum, chemical raw materials and chemical products, pharmaceuticals, the rough finishing of all types of large, medium and small-sized equipment Manufacturing and processing.
- Military man
- Other

Some brief information about you

15. How many years have you been working as a teacher?

- 1 – 5 years
- 5 – 10 years
- 10 – 15 years
- 15 – 20 years
- 20 – 30 years
- 30 – 40 years
- More than 40 years

16. Are you an English teacher in grades 4-6 who have a valid English teaching qualification?

- Yes
- No

17. Are you still work as an English teacher?

- Yes
- No

18. How old are you?

- 20 – 30 years old
- 31 – 40 years old
- 41 – 50 years old
- 51 – 60 years old
- 61 – 70 years old
- Older than 70 years old

19. Which province and city are the school in which you are working?
20. The school you work is a

- Private school
- Public school

21. Your gender is

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Don’t want to reveal

Feedback on the survey
In this section, you can choose to give feedback on this questionnaire. Such as lack of corresponding options, or general feedback and constructive questions about this survey.

If you want to obtain the results of this study you can also leave your email below.

22. Feedback (Voluntary)

Stockholms universitet/Stockholm University
SE-106 91 Stockholm
Telefon/Phone: 08 – 16 20 00
www.su.se
Appendix 3

The request letter of the survey.

The following appendix was sent to several online teacher groups and primary schools in Mainland China on 13th November 2017.

你好！我的名字叫江政尧，是一名大四在读生。我就读于瑞典斯德哥尔摩大学小学老师 4-6 年级的专业。我目前正在进行毕业论文数据收集工作。论文的内容是关于中国小学 4-6 年级的英语作业对比。目前需要作为小学 4-6 年级英语教师的您抽出 5-10 分钟填写一下这份网上在线问卷调查：https://www.wjx.cn/jq/18085479.aspx

这份调查问卷是匿名且自愿参与的。参与者有权阅读论文最终版本。如想在论文中注明感谢可留下学校名称或/和个人名称。

The translated version in English

Hello! My name is Zhengyao Jiang, and I am a senior university student. I’m a student teacher of grades 4-6 of primary school in Stockholm University, Sweden. I am currently working on data collection of My dissertation. The content of this dissertation is about a comparison of English homework of grades 4-6 in primary school in China and Sweden. I wish you, an English teacher (or have worked as an English teacher) who has teaching experience for grades 4-6 in primary school can take 5-10 minutes to complete this online survey: https://www.wjx.cn/jq/18085479.aspx

The survey is anonymous and voluntary. The participants have the right to read the final version of this essay. You can leave the school name or/and personal name; if you want to be appreciated and noted in the essay.
Appendix 4

The reminder of the survey

The following appendix was sent to several online teacher groups and primary schools in Mainland China on 15th November 2017 and 22nd November 2017.

非常感谢所有已经回答调查问卷的人！但是基于这个研究需要更大的回答基数，我还需要更多的问卷问答，如果你们（还没作答的人）有 5-10 分钟的时候请帮一下这个忙：
你好！我的名字叫江政尧，是一名大四在读生。就读于瑞典斯德哥尔摩大学小学老师 4-6 年级的专业。我目前正在着手毕业论文数据收集工作。论文的内容是关于中瑞小学 4-6 年级的英语作业对比。目前需要作为（或曾做过）小学 4-6 年级英语教师的你能抽出 5-10 分钟填写一下这份网上在线问卷调查：https://www.wjx.cn/jq/18085479.aspx

这份调查问卷是匿名且自愿参与的。参与者有权阅读论文最终版本。如想被在论文里注明感谢可留下学校名称或/和个人名称。

The translated version in English

Thank you very much to all the participants who have answered the survey! However, based on the research requires a larger answer base, I still need more answered surveys, if you (for those who have not yet answered) have 5-10 minutes, please help with this:

Hello! My name is Zhengyao Jiang, and I am a senior university student. I’m a student teacher of grades 4-6 of primary school in Stockholm University, Sweden. I am currently working on data collection of My dissertation. The content of this dissertation is about a comparison of English homework of grades 4-6 in primary school in China and Sweden. I wish you, an English teacher (or have worked as an English teacher) who has teaching experience for grades 4-6 in primary school can take 5-10 minutes to complete this online survey: https://www.wjx.cn/jq/18085479.aspx

The survey is anonymous and voluntary. The participants have the right to read the final version of this essay. You can leave the school name or/and personal name; if you want to be appreciated and noted in the essay.
Appendix 5

Abbreviation of important terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Terms</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROE</td>
<td>Repetition or Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Authentic homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCU</td>
<td>The catch up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Assessment support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skolverket</td>
<td>Swedish National Agency for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6

Responses of the survey question 4
48
Responses of the survey question 5

1. 老师通过批阅查看学生的作业并给予等第评分反馈
2. 通过批改还有检查
3. 班级反馈，家长群上反馈。
4. 根据学生提交的情况和质量。
5. 当天批改，不合格的当天下订正
6. 打分，评语、课堂讲解，
7. 检查
8. 制作一个作业登记表，每次写上学生完成作业得分；找学生订正作业
9. 批改作业并讲解
10. 批改，重改
11. 批改作业并圈出错处，提醒学生进行修改或订正
12. 批改，评讲
13. 检查
14. 看有否二次错误
15. 非常认真的进行评分和检查，给予家长反馈，让家长给予支持
16. 面向全体学生讲解
17. 批改或讲评
18. 一般批改之后讲评，表扬完成得好的学生。
19. 批改，点评
20. 复习课题，课堂点评。
21. 选择性地评论
22. 谢谢小朋友完成作业进度！
23. 校讯通
24. 有选择性的讲评
25. 批改发现错误，个别面批，普遍存在错误统一讲解
26. 批改作业、讲评练习，展览优秀作业
27. 批改。批注，写评语，提醒学生纠错。
28. 通过课堂讲解或让学生自行根据答案更正
29. 以分数来衡量。
30. 评讲
31. 打分重难点
32. 错题抄写多次
33. 批改并讲解
34. 积极讲解作业中遗留的问题，错误，帮助学生纠正错误，以取得进步。
35. 单词和语法有没有掌握
36. 课案。
37. 把学生作业呈现给全班同学共享，不够好的作业则找学生面批
38. 当众表扬作业质量高的学生，私下里跟作业马虎的学生商量开提要求
39. 赞励的态度
40. 进行详细的批改，给予充分的指导意见
41 各科成绩的综合评价，这样对学生的学生成绩进行全面的评价。
42 会导致学生在课堂上出现不良的行为。
43 需要对学生的作业情况进行全面的了解。
44 需要对学生成绩进行全面的评价。
45 成绩的综合评价，才能更全面地了解学生的学习情况。
46 成绩的综合评价，这样对学生成绩进行全面的评价。
47 成绩的综合评价，这样对学生成绩进行全面的评价。
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98 成绩的综合评价，这样对学生成绩进行全面的评价。
99 成绩的综合评价，这样对学生成绩进行全面的评价。
100 成绩的综合评价，这样对学生成绩进行全面的评价。
Responses of the survey question 6

1. 老师通过批阅查看学生的作业并给予等级评分反馈
2. 考试和测试
3. 个别反馈，家长反馈，
4. 根据学生提交的情况和质量。
5. 当天批改，不合格的当天订正
6. 打分、改卷、课堂讲解，
7. 检查
8. 制作作业登记表，每次写上学生完成作业的得分；找学生改正作业
9. 批改作业并讲评
10. 批改、重改
11. 批改作业并圈出错误处，提醒学生进行修改或订正
12. 批改、讲评
13. 检查
14. 看有无二次错误
15. 非常认真的进行评分和检查，给予家长反馈，让家长给予支持
16. 面向全体学生讲解
17. 批改或讲评
18. 一般批改后讲评，表扬完成得好的学生，
19. 批改、点评
20. 复习课上，课堂点评。
21. 选择性地点评
22. 暴晒小朋友们完成作业进度！
23. 以反馈通报
24. 有选择性的讲评
25. 批改现象错误，个别面批，普遍存在的错误统一讲解
26. 批改作业，讲评练习，展览优秀作业
27. 批改，批注，写评语，提醒学生纠错。
28. 通过课后讲解或让学生自行根据答案更正
29. 以分数来衡量。
30. 评讲
31. 打分重难点
32. 错题重抄写多次
33. 批改并讲解
34. 积极讲解作业遗漏下问题，错误，帮助学生纠正错误，以取得进步。
35. 单词和句法有没有掌握
36. 课后
37. 把优秀的学生作业呈现给全班同学共享，不够好的作业则找学生面批
38. 当众表扬作业质量高的学生，私下下眼作业马虎的学生再提出要求
39. 鼓励的态度
40. 进行详细的批改，给予充分的指导意见
认真检查作业，针对出现的问题分析并向学生反馈掌握知识点。
96. 在作业中点评及对知识的掌握情况
97. 体现学生最近学习情况及接受能力
98. 首先，检查学生作业掌握的情况，了解学生学习态度，并从中发现存在的问题，在下次作业中复习学生掌握得不好的知识点
99. 进行批改，明确布置作业
100. 每次都会当堂批改，并点评
101. 指对作业的正确与错误的地方
102. 批改作业在作业上评语
103. 通过检查学生上课的学习和掌握情况，将学习的不足地方反馈给学生并要求在今后的学习中重点加强。
104. 作业上学会正确的批改，让学生更正错误的课。
105. 批改完毕后，课上对作业进行批改，做的不好的举高要求学生认真完成，隔几天查学总总结错误，并进行及时的辅导和改正
106. 学科老师批改作业，批改作业在作业上评语，做的不好的举高要求学生认真完成，隔几天查学总总结错误，并进行及时的辅导和改正
107. 批改完毕后，课上对作业进行批改，将作业的不足地方反馈给学生并要求在今后的学习中重点加强。
108. 学科老师批改作业，批改作业在作业上评语，做的不好的举高要求学生认真完成，隔几天查学总总结错误，并进行及时的辅导和改正
109. 及时批改并反馈给学生上课的学情和家长沟通交流督促孩子学习
110. 作业
111. 检查
112. 给孩子一些爱心、象星卡片，让孩子有学习的乐趣