



Assigning Home Work: A Tool to Enhance Language Skills

KEYWORDS

homework, performance, efficacy, students' attitude, writing skill

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ABSTRACT *This paper discusses about an efficacy of assigning homework and how it accelerates the language learning, particularly the language skills. The main aim of this study is to find out the students' attitude towards homework and how it enhances their learning process. Students' interest on homework, type of homework, assignments have been analyzed by using the simple questionnaire to collect the data. The research findings of this study show the positive attitude of the students to do the homework.*

Introduction

There was a continuous debate on homework assignments whether its boon or a bane. Recent scenario of teaching and learning process is showing its interest towards homework. "Practice makes man perfect", particularly language skills needs practice, and class timing is not enough to do the practice. Now teachers, students and parents are also interested in homework.

What is Homework?

A set of task prepared outside the class using authentic materials without any direct or indirect supervision of the teacher is considered as homework.

Eddy, 1984 described the following types of home work:

1. Practice - reinforcing
2. Preparation – getting ready
3. Extension – short and long term project.

Cooper, 1994 expressed "homework as an instructional tool". The amount of time spent on homework and the nature of the home work also varies skill to skill. Actually homework accelerates the learning process also augments the creativity. In 1989-90 he suggested three positive and three negative factors about the homework in his study "Synthesis of Research on Homework".

He pointed out the following negative effects

1. Loss of interest in academic materials
2. Physical and emotional fatigue
3. Not ready to utilize the free time and copying from other students.

These three affective factors are to be considered to overcome and to bring out the possible effectiveness in assigning homework.

Caroline Sharp, Wendy Keys and Pauline Benefield were carried out the extensive research on "Homework –Review of Recent Research" and published on 2001, in this research they discussed about the following facts:

1. there is a positive relationship between time spent on homework and secondary school level

2. girls tend to spend more time to do the homework than the boys
3. Spending more time on homework and achievement should not be taken as an evidence for the best performance

In this study, we found the following

1. Students those who were really interested in doing homework by spending time to collect, review materials were performed well in the tests, their grades were improved and able to see their creativeness in their presentations and project demonstrations.
2. At the same time students those who were not interested in doing homework were not performed well, their progress was not up to the mark.

In general homework is tagged as an inefficient practice in the teaching learning process. According to various researchers in the 20th century, "home work does not improve the performance of the students".

M.A. Kaboodvand, 2004 conducted a survey in Iran, according to the findings of his research the students were very much interested and enjoyed the homework.

M.Thompson, 2004 analyzed the effects of homework by applying Coopers and Eddy's research views and brought out the conclusion that, a successful homework brings out an excellent development in the teaching learning process.

Therefore, the overview of literature on assigning homework divulges contradictory perspectives on homework.

Over all problem

Considering these conflicting views, this study carried out by asking the following questions.

1. Whether assigning homework in the undergraduate level will be effective?
2. Will it be enhance the language learning skills?
3. Do the language learners accept to do the task beyond the college hours?

This study aims at answering the above questions by presenting research findings on students' interest and atti-

tudes towards homework on language skills at collegiate level. Also discusses the effectiveness of assigning home work in English Language Skills.

Apart from M.A. Kaboodvand, 2004 and M.Thompson, 2004 research studies, there is no data to support the hypothesis that the home work is good for language learners' academic achievement.

Limitations of the Study

For this study, we collected the data from the students studying English Language at NBU, College of Education and Arts, KSA. Classroom teaching duration is three hours per week. Total number of participants for this research was 48 students from first semester, 52 students from second semester 49 students from third semester.

Methodology

Beginning of the second semester in the year of 2013-2014, started assigning homework for the students in writing skill. In the beginning students were not showing interest on homework, they don't submit their assignment on time, few students started copying information from the internet, some students denied and few were copied from their friends. Though, their interest and the attitude were very positive.

How to reinforce the exercises? Class timing is not enough, and then there is no other positive way to reinforce the drills and exercises. So we started encouraging and motivating students to do the homework by allotting 2 marks for the assignment also informed the students that, these 2 marks were from their classroom participa-

tion. We found the great difference after implementing this strategy, students were started valuing the homework. Tried with other group in the first and the second semester 2014-2015, assigned various types of homework. Each and every Academic Counseling hour, we started encouraging and motivating the students to write and submit assignments and do the project demonstrations.

Writing skill students were asked to prepare the project demonstration on various topics, write paragraphs about various topics, and prepare Power point Presentation. Each student was assigned to write One Writing Assignment, One Project and One Presentation in total 3 assignments per semester. Apart from these assignments, they were assigned to write weekly assignments about various topics and group projects.

The students' attitudes and preferences regarding homework assignments were administering by interviewing the students, during their academic counseling time. The students' performance was also monitored through their quizzes and midterm. In actual fact effective homework supports language learning process.

Language Learners attitudes towards homework

During the academic counseling session, the students were asked to answer the following question to find out their attitude about the homework.

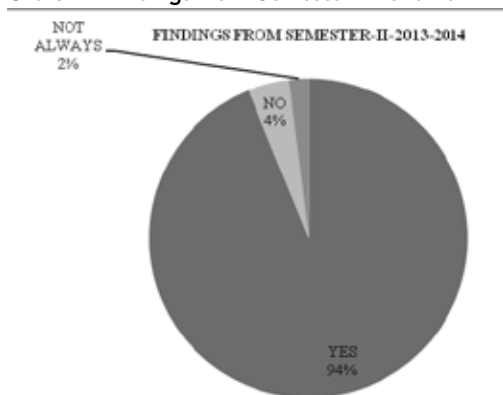
Do you like to do the homework? – Answer choices –Yes/No/Not Always (if your choice is 'no' write the reason in one word, if 'yes' write the type of task you like?)

Table: 1 Findings from three different Semesters (2013-2014-Semester-II, 2014-2015-Semester-I & II)

S.No	Year/Semester	No. of Students	Yes	Responses									
				Yes				No					
				Writing	Presenta-tion	Textbook Exercises	Projects	Boring	Lack of Interest	Family Re-sponsibilities	No Use	Not Always	
1	2013-2014 –II	48	45	22	8	2	15	2	0	0	2	0	1
2	2014-2015-I	52	48	25	7	2	14	3	0	0	3	0	1
3	2014-2015-II	49	45	19	5	3	18	3	0	0	3	0	1

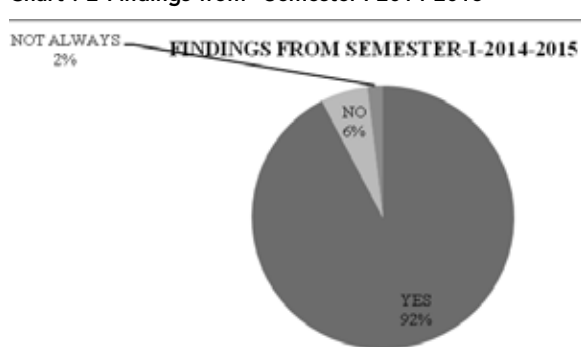
Findings from Responses

Chart:1 – Findings from–Semester-II-2013-2014



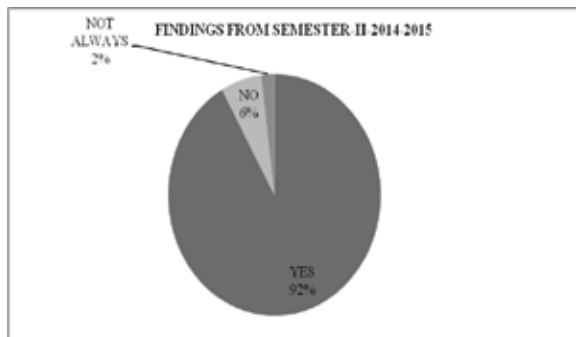
The data from the first semester out of 48, there were 45 students i.e, 94% of the students were very much interested on doing homework. 4% of the students denied / not willing to do the homework they said No, another 2% of the students were interested to do but not always.

Chart : 2 Findings from– Semester-I-2014-2015



2014-2015, first semester 92% of the students were interested to do the homework. Out of 52 only 3 students were said "NO", they were not ready to do the homework, another 2% of the students said that, they are interested to do the project as homework, once in a semester but not always.

Chart : 3- Findings from - Semester-II-2014-2015



2014-2015, second semester 92% of the students were interested to do the homework, 6% of the students said not willing, 2% of the students were interested but not always.

Chart : 4- Findings from Semester-II-2013-2014- Response "Yes"

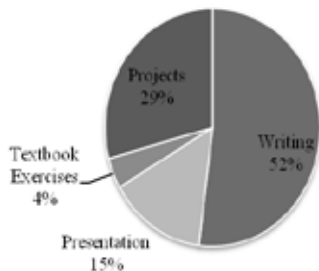
FINDINGS FROM SEMESTER-II-2013-2014 RESPONSES-'YES'



In column "Yes" the learners' responses to various tasks were identified. Writing Task, Presentation (group & Individual), Regular Text book Exercises and Doing Projects (group & Individual). Nearly 45% of the students have been marks off Writing Task, 18% of the students were interested in doing presentation. Very less number of students 4% were interested in doing Text Book Exercises. 33% of the students were really interested on doing projects.

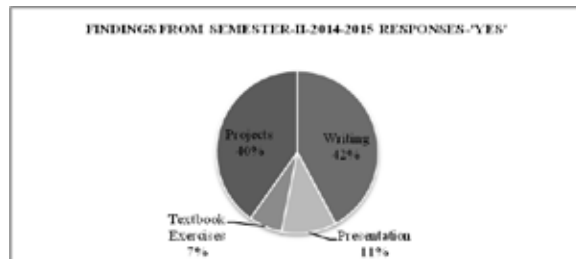
Chart : 5 Findings from Semester-I- 2014-2015Responses- YES

FINDINGS FROM SEMIESTER-I-2014-2015 RESPONSE-'YES'



Out of 52, 48 students were interested in doing homework. 52% of the students were interested in writing assignments, 29% of the students were interested on doing projects as homework, 15% of the students were interested in power point presentation and only least 4% of the students were interested on doing text book exercises.

Chart :6- Findings from Semester-II- 2014-2015Responses- YES



Responses from Second Semester,2014-2015, 42% of the students were interested on writing assignments, 40% of the students were curious to do the projects, 11% of the students were interested on preparing power point presentation, very fewer number of students, 7% only interested on text book exercises.

Table-2- Findings from the year 2013-14-Semester-II, 2014-2015-Semester-I, 2014-2015-Semester-II – NO

Responses-NO				
Year/Semester	Boring	Lack of Interest	Family Responsibilities	No Use
2013-2014-semester-II	0	0	4.16	0
2014-2015-semester-I	0	0	5.76	0
2014-2015-semester-II	0	0	6.12	0

In column "NO", boring, lack of interest, family responsibilities and no use were the responses. Throughout all three semesters not even a single student said boring or not interested or no use. 4.16% of the students in the second semester 2013-2014, were not able to do the homework due to their family responsibilities. 2014-2015, first semester 5.76% of the students were unable to do the homework, because of their family hindrances. Semester – II, 2014-2015, 6.12% of the students were expressed their inability, real reason was their family situation.

This 5% to 6% of the students were needed counseling. These students were not ready to lose their marks, that's why, they involve in the group projects.

Conclusion

Concluding the research findings regarding the attitude and the mindset of the students towards the homework are very positive. From the data analysis the following questions have been answered successfully.

1. Whether assigning homework in the undergraduate level will be effective? Yes. 93% of the students were really interested to do the home work, students those who were interested but not always; this category also can be included into positive attitude category, now we can see the maximum highest result.
2. Will it be enhance the language learning skills?Yes. Their quizzes, midterm and final examination results show the academic performance.
3. Do the language learners of collegiate level accept to do the task beyond the college hours? -Yes.

5-6 % of the students those who were not participating, definitely change their attitude on doing homework; if the teacher motivates. Another valuable question from the students was "will it be helpful for scoring marks in the exam?"

Effective and interesting homework definitely helpful for their exam, they don't want to memorize, they can easily recollect the relevant information during the examination. Teachers must create the awareness and make the students to believe that doing homework will enhance their language learning process.

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