
RESEARCH ARTICLE

English Language Primary Teachers' Perceptions about Homework: A Replication Study

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ABSTRACT

This study replicates Matei and Ciasca's (2015) article about teachers' perceptions concerning assignments. The purpose of this study is to examine the similarities and differences between the opinions of Math and Romanian primary teachers and primary English teachers, and the main aim of this study is to determine if teachers in this study would focus solely on the efficacy of homework and neglect its negative side as did the teachers in the original study. The data were collected using the original study questionnaire with some slight adaptations. The participants were 71 primary English teachers in Turkey. After the data was collected and analyzed, the results indicated a significant number of similarities between the teachers' opinions. It was revealed that most teachers have positive perceptions about homework, but compared to the original study, the opinions about homework efficacy and students' achievement varied and were different. Teachers in the present study have shown some disagreement and did not fully disregard the negative aspects of the assignment. In light of these findings, it was disclosed that teachers in both studies support parents' guidance, daily homework and the use of projects as a supplement. The noticeable difference between the two groups was that teachers in this study were more open to using projects and pair-work assignments.

KEYWORDS

Turkish teachers, replication, English homework, perceptions, primary level

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1. Introduction

Homework is commonly used in most schools, learning centers, and universities to improve learners' performance and to provide them with opportunities to practice at home at their own learning pace. Homework is defined as the different tasks that teachers assign to their students to do outside the classroom (Cooper, 1989). It is a way to review what has been learned and reinforce students' understanding (Epstein & Becker, 1982). It is "an important extension of in-school opportunities to learn" (Good & Brophy, 2003, p. 393). Opinions about homework have been constantly changing over time, from positive to negative. Many researchers have considered homework as an essential component in promoting students' academic success (Epstein, 1988) and a beneficial tool in learning the target language (Wallinger, 2000). While others have mentioned that homework is effective, learners' achievement varies depending on the learners' educational level (Cooper, 1994).

Taking into consideration the significant role of teachers in preparing and giving assignments to students, several studies have investigated teachers' perceptions about homework and generally, most studies have shown that teachers consider assignments as a beneficial tool for students' success. Brock et al. (2007) examined teachers' views about the reasons for assigning homework and the role of assignments in learners' achievements. Based on their study, it was concluded that educators have positive beliefs towards homework practices. Gu and Kristoffersson (2015) examined Swedish secondary teachers' attitudes and their experience with homework, and the findings showed that most educators assign homework and believe it is an effective tool. Similarly, Demirbağ's (2020) study about students' and teachers' opinions in relation to the use of homework and learners' success also revealed that teachers, along with students, have positive attitudes about homework and emphasized that students' progress is closely related to the use of regular homework.

2. Literature Review

Numerous Studies have been conducted on homework efficacy and whether it has a positive or negative impact on students. Cooper (1994) mentioned that homework helps in remembering the acquired knowledge and boosts students' understanding. It develops good study habits and learners' autonomy. Students learn to manage time and their learning tasks, but doing homework constantly leads to pressure, losing interest in learning and exhaustion. It also leads to the interference of parents and a lack of spare time on the part of students. Epstein (1988) argued that it is not certain that learners' progress is increased by assigning and specifying more time for homework. Muijs and Reynolds (2001) stated that assigning large amounts of homework could be stressful and affect young learners negatively. Good and Brophy (2003) pointed out that homework must consider students' abilities to do the task autonomously and that assignments must be reasonable in terms of length and the challenge it presents to students.

Teachers give homework to students for several reasons. It is assigned to give them an opportunity to review what has been learned in class and to apply their understanding of the subject (Coulter, 1979). Epstein and Becker (1982) claimed that homework provides learners with more practice and reinforces their understanding. It helps students to be engaged in learning and taking decisions. Additionally, it involves the parents and consolidates the communication between parents and their kids. It is also a way to apply the school policy related to assigning homework, inform parents of what has been covered in the classroom and lastly, regulate students' disruptive behaviors. Muijs and Reynolds (2001) indicated that "the precise form that homework will take will depend on the goals that the teacher is trying to accomplish. However, the bottom line of all these goals is aiding pupils' learning" (p. 140). Researchers have argued about parents' involvement. As an example, Hoover-Dempsey (2001) maintained that parents think they should be involved in their children's assignments as it is part of impacting their learning. They are involved because they think teachers, as well as kids, are expecting them to be engaged. This involvement affects young learners' achievement positively, which could be reflected in minimizing students' difficulties and elevated rates of assignment completion (Patall, 2008). The role of parents is not to do homework for their children but to guide, monitor, and assist them in doing assignments when it is required (Hallam, 2004). Parents' total engagement in doing homework for their children could have a negative impact as it interferes with applying their knowledge and understanding the concepts by themselves, and it discourages them from trusting in their capabilities (Paulu, 1996).

The original study, of which the present study is a replication, revealed that teachers have positive views about assigning homework and disregard the negative side of homework. The first aim of replicating Matei and Ciasca's (2015) research about teachers' perceptions in relation to homework is to examine the similarities and differences between the opinions of Math and Romanian primary teachers in Matei and Ciasca's (2015) original study and those of primary English teachers in Turkey. The second aim is to find out if English primary teachers' opinions focus on the positive aspects of homework and neglect the negative side, as did educators in the original study. To serve this purpose, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the similarities and differences between English primary teachers' perceptions of assigning homework and those of Romanian as well as math teachers?
2. Which perceptions are common among primary English teachers towards homework? Positive or negative?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The original study was conducted with 51 primary teachers teaching Math and Romanian in Romania. In the current study, the participants were 71 English language teachers in Turkey. All the teachers worked or had worked in Istanbul but in different primary schools. They were 56 females and 15 males. Most teachers were young. Their ages ranged between 20 and 34. The majority of teachers were bachelor's holders, and some of them were enrolled in a master's degree program. Forty participants worked in primary schools, and the other 31 had previous experience with primary learners. Forty-six teachers have been teaching English for 1-5 years, and 13 participants have been working for 6-10 years. Most participants worked in urban areas and in public institutions as well as private schools. Fifty-seven teachers have attended teacher training programs or English language teaching courses for professional development.

3.2 Materials

This replication study used Matei and Ciasca (2015) questionnaire to collect the data and to better address the aims of the current study. There were some modifications in the questionnaire, such as adding one demographic question and using closed-ended as well as open-ended questions. The questionnaire included 17 questions in total: ten demographic questions and seven questions related to teachers' views about homework. One demographic question was added to determine if teachers had enrolled in English language teaching programs. Closed-ended questions were used as in the original study, and the open-ended option was added for three questions to give the participants a chance to write their own thoughts about homework. A Cronbach alpha analysis was undertaken to test the internal reliability of the questionnaire for Likert-type scale items. The results of the Cronbach alpha were 0.72 and 0.90, which indicates a high level of internal consistency among the items.

3.3 Procedures

The study was conducted in December 2022. The questionnaire was posted on a Facebook group of English primary teachers working in Turkey. The respondents filled out the questionnaire voluntarily and had the opportunity to choose a suitable time to participate in the study. The data took four weeks to be collected. Respondents were informed that responses would remain confidential.

4. Results and discussion

The descriptive analysis of the data revealed that a great number of teachers (66.2 %) reported that most of their students do homework regularly, and the rest (16.9 %) stated that some of their students do homework. (9.9%) of the participants agreed that all their students do homework, and (5.6 %) mentioned that few students do their homework. Table 1 presents more information.

Table 1

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Regular Homework Completion in Class

All students	Most students	Some students	Few students	No one
9.9 %	66.2 %	16.9 %	5.6 %	1.4 %

The participants reported their perceptions about homework's contribution to learners' success and its importance in increasing learners' achievement in English through a 5 Likert type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. As seen in Table 2, most teachers (35.2 %) agreed that homework impacts learners' success, and (38 %) of the teachers strongly agreed that homework increases learners' achievement in English. Overall, most teachers agreed that assigning homework impacts students' educational success and enhances students' achievement in English.

Table 2

Teachers' Responses about the Importance of Homework for Learners' Educational Success and Achievement in English

	Strongly disagree	Partially disagree	Strongly agree	Partially agree	Do not know
12. Homework is essential for students' success.	9.9 %	22.5 %	32.4 %	35.2 %	0 %
13. Homework increases the students' achievement in English.	14.1 %	12.7 %	38 %	32.4 %	2.8 %

Note. Adapted from "Primary Teachers Opinion about Homework", by S. Matei and L. Ciasca, 2015, *Acta Didactica Napocensia*, 8(3), p. 32.

In the current study, the participants were asked to answer three open ended questions which are presented in Table 3 as items 14, 15, and 16. In item 14, (45.1%) of the participants supported replacing homework with a project and giving more time to students to complete the given task. (43.7%) of teachers did not agree. (11.2 %) mentioned that it depends on the students and that teachers sometimes should assign projects or extend assignments' grace. Some of them argued that it should not be replaced, but a project could be used as an addition to supplement the homework. Others stated that it is not efficient for young learners' improvement, and it is better to assign students projects that arouse their interests and keep them involved, especially after a hectic day at school.

The percentage of respondents (77.5%) who answered the question positively to item 15 was higher than the respondents who chose no (22.5%). This shows that students still get help from their parents. A high percentage (52.1%) of the participants stated in item 16 that homework should not include only teachers and students. It was followed by (42.3%) who indicated that solely the teacher and students should be involved in homework assignments. (5.6%) expressed that it depends on the type of homework and the amount of help that parents provide. Parents should only guide students to do their homework.

Table 3
Teachers' Responses Concerning Homework Replacement, Parents' Help, and Involvement

	Yes	No	Other Answers
14. homework should be substituted by a project	45.1%	43.7%	11.2%
15. Parents assist their kids in doing homework	77.5%	22.5%	0%
16. Assignments should include only teachers and pupils	42.3%	52.1%	5,6%

Note. Adapted from "Primary Teachers Opinion about Homework", by S. Matei and L. Ciasca, 2015, *Acta Didactica Napocensia*, 8(3), p. 32.

Item 17 included 10 statements based on the four Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Table 4 presents the percentage of agreement between teachers teaching Romanian and Math in Matei and Ciasca's (2015) study and teachers teaching English in the present study.

Table 4
The Percentage of Agreement of Teachers in the Current and the Original Study

	Level of agreement in the replication	Level of agreement in the original study
Homework should be designed according to the students' level and ability.	42.3%	35,29%
Homework should motivate students to find different solutions.	50.7%	39,22%
Homework should include the element of challenge.	25.4%	37,25%
Homework should review and practice what has been learned in class.	36.6%	50,98%
Projects can be used as an alternative to homework.	25.4%	21,57%
Homework should encourage pair work.	12.7%	9,80%
The teacher should verify and correct the assigned homework every day.	25.5%	49,02%
Students should verify and correct homework.	31%	23,53%
Homework should be relatable to students' life experiences.	40.8%	41,18%
Homework should promote self-directed and independent learning.	49.3%	54,90%

Note. Adapted from "Primary Teachers Opinion about Homework", by S. Matei and L. Ciasca, 2015, *Acta Didactica Napocensia*, 8(3), p. 34.

Based on the analysis of the collected data, students in both studies do homework regularly, but there is a slight difference in the percentages. According to teachers, in the original study, all or most students do homework daily, but in the present study, most or some students do homework regularly. The teachers' views in Matei and Ciasca's (2015) study and the current study are similar regarding the effective role of homework in learners' educational success. Most respondents agreed it is a beneficial tool, but in this study, some teachers expressed their disagreement and stated that homework is not essential for students' academic success,

while the findings of the original study showed that teachers did not express any disagreement. This comparison reveals that teachers' perceptions about homework and students' success are slightly changing from positive to negative over time.

Participants agreed that homework enhances the students' success in English and it provides them with more opportunities to practice the language, which is in accordance with the teachers' responses in Matei and Ciasca's (2015) study. In the original study, a great number of teachers did not want homework to be replaced by a project and to be completed over a longer period of time. Both teachers mentioned projects could be used to supplement homework. The difference is that most teachers in the original study did not support replacing homework with projects, while in the current study, the participants' responses varied between supporting and disagreeing. In fact, they were more interested in using projects and assigning less homework to students than teachers in the original study.

There is a noticeable difference between the participants' answers about item 15. In the current study, from the teachers' perspectives, parents are more involved in their children's learning. They provide help to their children and guide them to do their assignments. According to the teachers, the parents constantly ask the teachers if there is homework to do, which shows there is constant interaction between teachers and parents about doing homework. In the original study, from the teachers' perspective, parents did not assist their kids in doing homework because of their insufficient knowledge of the subject and because they were unaware if their kids had homework. Teachers mentioned that even when parents provide help, it is not effective. In this study, teachers agreed that their help was reflected in students' progress. Participants in both studies agreed that assignments should not include only teachers and students. They stated that parents should only guide students to do their homework and not be fully involved. If a third party is involved, it should only guide the student to answer and not provide the answers. Learners should be autonomous and rely on themselves.

Identical to Matei and Ciasca's (2015) results, participants agreed that homework should be suitable for students' levels. It should reinforce and practice what has been learned in the classroom. They agreed on using projects not as a replacement but as a supplement to the actual homework, and they indicated that assignments should promote self-directed and independent learners. In both studies, teachers were supportive of verifying homework regularly. The respondents had similar views about having a connection between the assigned homework and learners' real-life.

Teachers in Matei and Ciasca's (2015) study did not seem to agree with assigning homework in pairs and projects. Teachers' responses in this study were divided between agreeing and disagreeing. Some teachers were open to assigning homework in pairs to encourage students to work collaboratively. Others disapproved. Teachers in both studies stated that pair-work should be monitored by an older person. Primary Math and Romain language teachers in Matei and Ciasca's (2015) study asserted that students in primary school are not able to follow a model to correct and understand mathematical problems. English teachers showed more agreement with students' following a model and correcting homework by themselves. Teachers mutually emphasized the importance of grading homework and giving feedback for students' assignments as it increases the engagement and enthusiasm of learners.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the similarities and differences between the opinions of Math and Romanian primary teachers and primary English teachers. It also examined whether English teachers hold positive or negative perceptions about homework. After analyzing the data, several significant findings emerged. The results revealed that there are more similarities than differences between primary English teachers in Turkey and Math as well as Romanian teachers in Romania. They both supported assigning daily homework and emphasized that parents should only monitor. Both groups of teachers preferred using projects as a supplement, but teachers in the current study were more open to assigning projects, pair-work, and student's ability to follow a model. Additionally, the findings indicated that teachers in both studies hold positive perceptions regarding homework. However, the current study revealed some disagreement among English teachers, as they did not fully disregard the disadvantages of assigning homework as did teachers in the original study. It was also disclosed that the parents' involvement was different in both studies according to teachers' views and that the opinions about homework efficacy and students' achievement varied. This replication study provides a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions in a different context and population from the original study. It provides updated and additional insights into teachers' perceptions of homework which determines whether the findings of Matei and Ciasca (2015) are similar or different to the newly collected data. The current study is significant because it provides valuable information for designing effective homework practices that align with teachers' viewpoints. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The current research was limited only to teachers' perceptions and did not explore students' as well as parents' perspectives towards homework. To further enhance a general understanding of this topic, future research could consider exploring the perceptions of parents and students about homework. This could provide a better understanding of all the parties involved in homework.

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