

# The Digital Transformation of English Learning in Secondary Schools in the Context of the “Double Reduction” Policy

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**Abstract:** “Double Reduction” policy that has been firmly carried out throughout China with the intention of reducing students’ subject-related loads and improving education quality. It requires English educators to attach great importance to the cultivation of students’ listening, speaking, reading, writing and observing abilities. With the advent of the information age and the development of artificial intelligence, the trend of digital transformation provides an excellent opportunity for the upgrading of educational concepts and practices, which will greatly improve the cultivation effect of students’ listening, speaking, reading, writing and observation ability. Focusing on the current situation of digital transformation in secondary school English learning, the paper explores the connotation and characteristics of digital transformation in secondary school English teaching that highlights the characteristics of the subject, emphasizes the “all-data empowerment of English classroom concepts and the synergy of all elements of the English classroom structure”. After investigating the combination of the characteristics of the “double-reduction” policy and its development pattern, the paper furthermore raises proposals for the digital transformation of secondary school English learning and puts forward a collaborative infiltration of the digital transformation into secondary schools English teaching and learning, which will provide theoretical support and practical ways for the digital transformation of English learning in secondary schools in the era of the “Double Reduction” policy.

**Key words:** “Double Reduction”; secondary school English learning; digital empowerment

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## 1. Introduction

Due to some educational institutions’ misunderstanding on the perception of education in recent years, a considerable portion of primary and secondary school students have experienced much more pressure from learning performance and assignments. What made the situation worse was that after-school

training classes sprang up in chaos, which broke the ecological environment of education and plunged many parents into deep anxiety for kids’ education. To investigate the causes of educational anxiety, starting from the internal environment, it is mainly caused by parents’ own experience, social life, education policy and other external environment. Fundamentally,

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parents educational anxiety stems from the uncertainty of access to quality educational resources (Zhang Zhiyong, 2021).” In order to alleviate the spread of negative emotions such as “education anxiety”, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the General Office of the State Council (GOH of the CPC) issued the Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of assignment on Compulsory Education Students and the Burden of Out-of-School Training (referred to as the “Double Reduction”) in 2021. Its primary purpose is to effectively reduce the excessive burden of assignment on students in compulsory education, emphasizing the need to improve the quality of assignment design and encouraging layered, flexible, and personalized assignment (Ministry of Education, 2021). The emergence of the “Double Reduction” policy at this time points to reducing the burden and increasing the effectiveness of educational work. In secondary school English teaching, teachers should cultivate students’ listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing skills, but the fact is not satisfactory; some English classroom teaching still focuses on training test-taking skills rather than cultivating core literacy and cultural character. In the practice of education, there are many misconducts, such as “unclear goal setting, unclear teaching instructions, activities divorced from reality, ignoring students’ lives, lack of effective solutions to problems, focusing on knowledge and skills but ignoring cultural connotations, and inappropriate design of tasks beyond the cognitive ability of secondary school students” (Xu Xiaoling, 2022). Under such circumstances, the “Double Reduction” policy clarifies the purpose of education and improves the quality of education. Educators and students also need to take the introduction of the “Double Reduction” policy as an opportunity to utilize the current development of digital information technology to improve the efficiency of teaching and learning and to help secondary school English education. Therefore,

it is essential to discuss how secondary school English learners can promote the digital transformation of their learning styles under the environment of “Double Reduction”, make use of all kinds of information resources, enhance their abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing, and improve the efficiency of teaching and learning, to realize the “quality improvement and quality enhancement” advocated in the “Double Reduction” policy. Combining the “quality improvement and efficiency enhancement” advocated by the “Double Reduction” with various digital methods and resources is one of the effective ways to provide new ideas for teaching English in secondary schools in the broader context.

## **2. Current Situation of English Teaching in Middle School**

The “Double Reduction” policy has attracted widespread attention from society since it was proposed in July 2021, and more and more domestic scholars and front-line teachers have been conducting researches on subject teaching, examination forms and assignment design in compulsory education in the context of the “Double Reduction”, with the main focuses on the digital transformation of classroom teaching, the exploration of the improvement of assignment design and the investigation of the modernization path of home-school collaboration. These studies mainly focus on the digital transformation of classroom teaching, the improvement of assignment design, and the modernization of home-school partnerships. These studies are based on the reality of China, focus on the current education situation, explore the causes of the problems, and present a new research perspective for the study of the “Double Reduction” problem from different levels and provide a solid theoretical basis for optimizing the effects of education.

As far as the exploration of digital transformation of classroom teaching is concerned, the construction of a digital China and the promotion of systematic

changes in the mode of social production and lifestyle through digital transformation have become the trend of development in the current era, and the innovation of digital transformation of the education system has also been a central issue in the practice of international education reform. The Ministry of Education Working Points for 2022 explicitly proposes implementing strategic actions for digitalizing education and constructing a national public service platform for intelligent education (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2022). As a result, many scholars have begun to explore the path of digital transformation of education. For example, Xie Youru et al. (2022) proposed that digital transformation should enable comprehensive and systematic transformation of classroom teaching and continue to promote the process of digital transformation of classroom teaching. Meng Yaling (2022) pointed out that one of the ways to promote the high-quality development of classroom teaching is to make teachers realize the importance of digital learning resources and tools in daily teaching and play their due roles, and this is also one of the key points to help teachers and students effectively teach and learn under the “Double Reduction” education ecology. Among the various shared digital resources, some secondary school teachers have begun to use tools such as Chaoxing Xuexitong, Rain Classroom and other intelligent teaching platforms to expand learning resources and learning space for students, especially for the specificity of the English subject, the use of various multimedia resources in classroom teaching can enrich the interest of learning to a certain extent and stimulate the interest of students in learning. So as to improve the teaching efficiency students can acquire knowledge and improve the core quality in the process of happy learning. In this way, students can develop expertise and improve their core literacy in the process of learning happily.

In terms of exploring the enhancement of assignment design, the researchers believe that one of

the core principles of “Double Reduction” is to reduce students’ “excessive assignment burden effectively”, and after-class assignment is a supplement and extension of classroom teaching, which can help students deepen their understanding and consolidate the knowledge they have learned in the classroom. It can also help students deepen their understanding of what they have learned in class and consolidate what they have learned. Undeniably, assignment plays an irreplaceable role in students’ growth and development in the learning process. However, the excessive amount of assignment and the uniform and undifferentiated design of assignment often aggravate the burden of students and fail to play the role of its original. Li Chenzhi and Zhang Xiaoyun (2023) pointed out that China’s primary and secondary school assignment design has long existed the ‘three exceeding’ problems of over-quantity, time-out and over-standard. Under the background of “Double Reduction” policy, it is an important topic of homework research to reduce the quantity of homework and “reduce the burden and improve the quality” while ensuring the healthy development of students. Chang Yongmei and other scholars (2023) proposed a “data-supported hierarchical assignment design”, and analyzed “student stratification strategy”, “assignment design and assignment strategy” and “assignment evaluation strategy”. Wang Mengqian and Wang Lu (2023) examined the concepts and practices of teachers’ assignment design from the perspectives of “Necessity” and “Reality”. They proposed that the multiple interactions between necessity and reality should be strengthened. It is suggested that teachers should strengthen the multiple interactions between necessity and reality, set up the concept of “integration rather than single” assignment design, guide students to cooperate in informal learning through assignment, give students space to make choices, and cultivate students’ ability to make choices and so on, so as to provide their own insights into the assignment design

in the process of teaching and learning. To summarize, in the context of “Double Reduction”, many scholars have begun to think about improving the quality of assignment assignments so that students can efficiently complete their assignment and simultaneously achieve the purpose of consolidating what they have learned.

In terms of exploring the modernization path of home-school collaboration, researchers emphasize that in the context of the “Double Reduction” policy, families and schools should jointly complete the mission of education, as Sukhomlinsky (2021) said that the effectiveness of education depends on the consistency of the educational influence of the school and the family. If there is no consistency, the school teaching and education process collapses like a house made of paper”. To alleviate students’ academic pressure and parents’ worries, schools should strengthen the relationship between family education and schools and establish a complete home-school cooperation system and mechanism under the “Double Reduction” environment. Deng Tingfu and Liu Aiqing (2023) put forward three major parenting mechanisms for home-school cooperation, namely, the “home-school education concept consensus mechanism”, “home-school education responsibility sharing mechanism”, “home-school education cooperative mechanism”, and advocate home-school cooperation to create a sound education ecology. Gu Lilan (2023) and other scholars put forward the concept of “digitally empowered home-school collaborative education” by analyzing the dilemma of home-school collaborative education, pointing out that in the context of “Double Reduction” we should “actively promote the digital transformation of home-school-society collaborative education” to form a “digital transformation of home-school-society collaborative education”. In this context, schools should strictly implement the construction of the home-school cooperative and integrated parenting system, guide parents to correctly understand the growth

and development of their children, reduce parents’ educational anxiety, and strictly prevent the “burden reduction in school and burden increase outside school” (Ding Shiming, Zou Yan, 2022). Under the “Double Reduction”, how to return education to the original intention of educating people and how to create an excellent educational ecology should be a common problem for every educator and parents to think about. The realistic path of home-school cooperation is also an inevitable topic to be explored in the current educational environment.

### **3. Analysis of “Digital” Teaching Path**

#### **3.1 Optimizing Classroom Teaching Design**

With the development of information technology today, the design of English classroom teaching has been dramatically impacted. Teachers can use some software or hardware devices to assist the teaching process, constantly enrich the presentation of language knowledge, increase the interest in classroom teaching, and at the same time can enhance the efficiency of teaching and thus better develop students’ multiple literacy skills. In teaching practice, the use of network information tools to combine knowledge, interest and interaction in teaching design can not only mobilize students’ initiative, but also effectively improve students’ practical English application ability and cross-cultural communication ability. Therefore, secondary school English classroom teaching design can lay the foundation for improving the quality and efficiency of English classroom with the help of diversified digital information technology.

In the context of “Double Reduction”, one of the key points to realize the reduction of burden and increase efficiency is to improve the “quality” of classroom teaching, and a highly efficient classroom is inevitably need for teachers to carry out careful teaching design in advance. Some scholars have pointed out that “digital technology resources provide materials and pathways for language learning and use, and have

a positive effect on language teaching” (Lai Chun, Lv Boning, Gong Yang, 2023). With the help of networked information tools to promote the efficient operation of classroom teaching, teachers can obtain diversified materials related to the teaching content through online resource search engines, online libraries and educational platforms to enrich classroom teaching and provide a richer learning experience. Foreign scholars have integrated a large number of empirical studies to prove that the integration of technology into teaching activities can have a specific positive impact on language learning, and the relevant data show that the overall effect size of integrating technology into the teaching process on language learning is about 0.50 (Plonsky & Ziegler, 2016; Lee et al. 2022), and that the positive effect on vocabulary development and writing ability is particularly prominent with effect sizes presented by the data of 0.85 (Hao et al. 2021) and 1.00 (Seyyedrezaei et al. 2022). Therefore, teachers can make full use of digital network platforms in their instructional design to provide students with instructional videos on related topics and multimedia presentations, which can also increase the visual and auditory learning experience and present the teaching content more vividly. In particular, English teaching, as a language learning, has higher requirements for teachers’ digital literacy. Teachers should have sufficient understanding and preparation of the course content and course objectives before class, so as to truly improve the classroom teaching efficiency, implement the requirements of the new curriculum standards, and cultivate students’ multiple abilities. In conclusion, network information tools can provide teachers with more innovative teaching opportunities, optimize classroom teaching design, enhance students’ learning experience and learning effect, and help improve the quality and efficiency of the English classroom.

### 3.2 Utilizing Multiple Digital Platforms

The promulgation of the “Double Reduction”

policy has put forward new requirements for assignment in compulsory education, especially in the precise design of assignment and the control between assignment “quality” and “quantity”. In particular, the accurate design of assignments and the management between quality and quantity of assignment. Since entering the 21st century, a new generation of information technology, such as big data and artificial intelligence, is developing rapidly in various industries, and also brings new opportunities and ideas to education and teaching practice. Utilizing diversified digital platforms in all aspects of assignment design, arrangement, correction, evaluation and analysis can not only enhance the relevance and effectiveness of assignment and improve its efficiency, but also enable students to consolidate their knowledge, improve their abilities and promote their individual development. Through the intervention of diversified information technology, in the process of analyzing and evaluating the assignments, it can also make a multi-dimensional and all-round diagnosis of the learning situation of students, classes, schools, regions and other levels, which is an essential means of solving the contradiction between “scaling” and “individualization”.

Streamlining and improving assignment is a practical necessity for implementing the “Double Reduction” policy. To effectively reduce the excessive burden of task on students, meet their needs for personalized assignment, and give full play to the role of assignment in educating, primary and secondary schools should adhere to the fundamental orientation of comprehensive education in the practice of assignment improvement, and deal with a good balance between the “quality” and “quantity” of assignment. Some scholars have pointed out that the current positioning of assignment is very one-sided and narrow, with the goal of “improving scores”, limiting students’ education to “academic results” and “scores”, and placing assignment above educational purpose (Wu Lihong,

2023), and the unreasonable assignment will not play its original role but just can only be a burden for students to learn. “Teachers are the direct subjects of assignment improvement, and it is the first task for teachers to clarify the meaning of assignment improvement” (Yang Qing, 2022). In the context of “Double Reduction”, how to use a variety of digital platforms to improve the effectiveness of homework to help students complete a certain amount of homework at the same time, consolidate the knowledge learned in class, is a problem that all educators should think about. In English teaching, teachers can utilize multiple digital platforms, such as online learning platforms, educational apps, or cloud-based document-sharing tools, to ensure the convenience of assigning and submitting assignment according to students’ characteristics and the needs of the English subject. Some scholars have pointed out that “different cognitive activities involve the working state of different brain regions that learners subdivided into logical or verbal, such as ventral premotor cortex, posterior temporal lobe, inferior temporal gyrus, etc.” (Planton S, Jucla M, et al. 2013). Therefore, teachers can use the digital platform such as online quizzes, forum discussions, drawing tools, creative assignments and so on to design diversified forms of assignment, according to students’ cognitive level and learning interests, personalized assignment design so that each student can find a suitable learning style and rhythm. In conclusion, by using multiple digital platforms, teachers can assign assignments more efficiently, improve students’ motivation and learning effectiveness, and maintain the quality and efficiency of education in the context of “Double Reduction”.

### 3.3 Integration of Online Communication Resources

The “Double Reduction” requires education to follow its specific laws, which emphasize the importance of being student-oriented and paying attention to the all-round development of students to

improve the quality of education, reduce the number of extracurricular cramming classes of various types and alleviate the educational anxiety of parents, and to create an excellent educational ecology conducive to the all-round development of students in the areas of moral, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor. Families and schools sometimes suffer from one-sided and fragmented home-school collaborative parenting due to a disconnect in communication. Schools use online communication resources to enrich the way of contact and communication with parents, expand, systematize, and comprehensive the content of home-school co-education, and guide parents to participate in co-education activities as educators in order to promote the overall development of students and build an ideal situation of home-school co-education.

Against the backdrop of the “Double Reduction” policy, new requirements have been put forward on how schools can play a more significant leading role in home-school cooperation, establish a set of effective home-school cooperation mechanisms, and enable parents to focus on fulfilling their responsibilities and provide them with scientific and orderly guidance. Yang Xianjiang said that there is life, there is education. Family education has been the main form of human social education for an extended period, and it bears the function of cultivating children into social people. However, with the development of society, family education has been affected by the modern wave and has gradually appeared such undesirable phenomena as absence or “alienation” (Zhao Liang, Wang Zhaojing, Ni Juan, 2023). With the development of The Times, under the background of “Double Reduction”, by integrating online communication resources, promoting home-school collaborative education and helping parents actively participate in the learning process, parents can better understand their children’s learning content and teaching objectives, so that a good education ecology can be established. Many scholars

have also begun to explore how to realize family-school collaborative parenting. Yang Xinyu and Lu Xiaozhong (2023) analyzed the dilemma of family-school cooperative parenting in the context of “Double Reduction” from the perspective of “field theory”. They proposed practical measures to break through, pointing out that “families and schools can only clarify their responsibilities and rights in concept and establish common goals. Only by breaking the old habits in action, strengthening cooperation channels, using information technology to bridge the gap between the cultural capital of the two sides, and integrating each other’s education fields can we promote the construction of a new system, a new ecology and a new pattern of home-school collaborative education.” Therefore, schools can establish dedicated online platforms or social groups where teachers, students, and parents can easily exchange information, share learning resources and interact. Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers on the online platform, raise questions and feedback, and teachers respond in time to form a positive interactive communication atmosphere. To sum up, through integrating online communication resources, families and schools can cooperate more closely, jointly care for and support students learning and growth, form an excellent education force, and better cope with the educational challenges.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the context of “Double Reduction”, it analyzes the continuous promotion of the digital transformation process of middle school English classroom teaching. To improve the high-quality development of English classroom learning is the value appeal of reducing the burden, improving the quality and increasing the efficiency of education in the new era and the urgent need of training innovative talents. It is the only way to lead the reform and innovation of middle school English learning with digital resources, seize the opportunity of digital transformation and development, and practice

the classroom values in the new era. Integrating the teaching concept of digital intelligence can promote the digital transformation of middle school English learning under the background of “Double Reduction”, give students the initiative in learning, and provide students with the guidance of digital learning and the direction of personal growth. Thus, it can better enhance the quality and efficiency of English classroom teaching, activate the drive of English classroom itself and students’ learning, improve English learners’ man-machine cooperation and co-progress ability, and provide concept guidance and strong support for innovative talents in the new era. Under the background of “Double Reduction”, the concept of promoting the digital transformation of middle school English learning emphasizes the basic theory and principle of continuous deepening of education and teaching, requires the implementation of moral cultivation as the fundamental task, and the simultaneous development of five education as the goal orientation. Through the research on making full use of data resource elements to empower English teaching to improve the effectiveness of educating people, it provides theoretical guidance for the digitalization of English in secondary schools and expects to promote the high-quality development of English learning and teaching in secondary schools and cultivate socialist builders and successors who are all-roundly developed in terms of morality, intelligence, physical fitness and aesthetics.

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