

# College English Personalized Assignments Design under the Background of Informatization

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**Abstract:** *Assignment is a supplement and extends for face-to-face teaching, an important way for students to learn after class, a window for teachers and students to know more each other about instruction information, and it plays a significant role in teaching practice. In recent years, the teaching reform has been continuously promoted, with which information technology and education has integrated deeply, thus college English course teaching has achieved quite good reform results. However, the current situation of assignment still needs to be improved further, the standardized assignment overlooks students' differences, while personalized assignment advocates respecting students' personality and promoting their development comprehensively. As information technology developed profoundly, implementing personalized assignment to change the current situation of inefficient homework by the supporting of information technology has become possible. The author conducted research on the design and practice of personalized college English assignments. The implementation effect has demonstrated from aspects such as students' assignment emotion, initiative, and learning enthusiasm.*

**Keywords:** *informatization; personalized assignment; college English*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the development of information technology, various handheld devices have become widely popular, providing students with a highly convenient learning environment. This environment has laid the foundation for personalized learning, allowing students to engage in targeted learning based on their learning levels and habits, often in a fragmented manner. The delivery of personalized learning resources enables students to promptly address knowledge gaps and receive tailored improvements. When teachers recognize students' differences and provide individualized learning guidance, each student can maximize their progress at their current level, thus respecting and fully developing their individuality. Personalized learning aligns with the student-centric concept of quality education and the demand for talent development, making it a new trend in education, which will continue to deepen with further advancements in information technology. Despite revolutionary changes in university English classroom teaching due to the promotion of information technology, a situation persists where "there is a new classroom setup, but traditional methods outside the classroom." Post-class assignments still tend to adhere to conventional norms, with most teachers conventionally assigning uniform homework. Such homework designs are inconsistent with the concepts of personalized development and quality education and fail to achieve the desired results. This is mainly evident in students' negative homework emotions, low motivation, and passive behavior, which hinder effective linkage between in-class and out-of-class learning and impede students' progress and development.

## 2. The Essence of Personalized Assignments

Homework is a vital component of teaching; hence, personalized assignments represent one facet of achieving personalized learning. "Personalized assignments refer to the design of assignments by teachers based on students' knowledge levels, learning needs, and interests under the guidance of certain educational ideas and theories.<sup>[1]</sup> These assignments, which take into account students' diverse capabilities, allow each student to experience the joy of success, enhance their self-efficacy, and thereby promote the full, independent, and harmonious development of students."

In this study, the author transformed the traditional extracurricular assignment model by considering students' assignment motivation, initiative, English learning level, and attitudes while integrating

classroom teaching. Leveraging online platforms as tools, the author designed discriminating and graded assignments for students at different learning levels.<sup>[2]</sup> This approach allows each student to make further progress based on their existing knowledge. Additionally, teachers designed exploratory assignments that students can complete in various forms based on their interests, promoting students' autonomy and agency. This strategy enhances students' self-efficacy and sense of accomplishment, facilitating personalized development.<sup>[3]</sup>

### 3. Principles of Personalized Assignment Design

In the author's institution, the English course is divided into different levels and platforms based on students' performance in the college entrance examination (Gaokao). Students are categorized into three platforms, namely A/B/C, with A being the highest-scoring, followed by B, and C, each containing an average of over 80 students. The English course spans four modules with varying credits and hours: College English (I) - 3 credits, 56 hours; College English (II) - 3 credits, 64 hours; College English (III) - 3 credits, 64 hours; and College English (IV) - 1.5 credits, 32 hours. The author has been teaching College English for five years, primarily focusing on C-platform students, who generally possess weaker English foundations. However, within this group, students exhibit diverse learning characteristics and attitudes.<sup>[4]</sup> They can be broadly categorized into the following groups: The first group consists of active students with open minds, rich imagination, and some interest in English learning. Their primary challenge is a lack of vocabulary and insufficient practice. The second group comprises quieter students who tend to be reserved and not highly expressive in class. They dutifully complete English learning tasks but lack strong preferences for or against English learning. The third group consists of students with very weak English foundations, with vocabulary levels approximately at the junior high school standard. They have a deep-seated aversion to English and exhibit low interest in learning it. Their minimum requirement is to pass the final exam (i.e., achieving a pass or higher in the College English IV exam and maintaining an average score of 65 or above).

After two years of practical experience, the author has deduced that the design of personalized English assignments should adhere to the overall principle of "balancing foundational and differential aspects, considering systematic and diverse elements, and promoting both class-wide progress and individual student development." In other words, personalized assignments should, while ensuring that students meet the assessment requirements, cater to the varying learning performances and styles of different students.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### 3.1 Objective-Based Principle

The objective-based principle entails several aspects. Firstly, when designing personalized assignments, it is essential to define the teaching objectives, unit learning goals, and specific session objectives. Simultaneously, consider students' learning objectives to determine the assignment objectives. The assignment content should align with the course syllabus and unit objectives to enhance the relevance of assignments, highlighting teaching emphasis and difficulties. Secondly, it is essential to incorporate educational objectives into assignment design. As English courses are a fundamental part of university education, promoting students' development, cultivating good learning habits, and fostering ethical values are vital.<sup>[6]</sup> Personalized assignment design should reflect these values. Assignments should not serve as mere mechanisms to fulfill assessment requirements (as the author's institution places stringent requirements on process-based assessments), but as tools to facilitate learning throughout the entire learning process. Through various forms of exercises, such as entertaining dubbing, simulated dialogues, and challenging checkpoints, students should be encouraged to learn sentence structures within contexts and cultivate a positive learning attitude. Lastly, personalized assignment design should consider the developmental goals for different students. Since students' attitudes and motivation towards college English courses vary, assignment design should take these factors into account, allowing assignments to match each student's "zone of proximal development" and promote continuous improvement. For instance, as mentioned earlier, the author categorizes students into three groups. For the first group (students with some interest in English), the primary goal of assignment design is to encourage them to practice more, accumulate vocabulary, and aim to pass the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) exam. Therefore, assignments primarily focus on oral communication, vocabulary accumulation, written expression, supplemented by real exam training and translation practice. For the second group (quieter, less expressive students), assignment design aims to boost their motivation. While the assignments maintain a foundation in grammar and oral communication, creative elements, such as dubbing, are introduced. Additionally, guidance and

encouragement are provided during presentation-based assignments to enhance students' interests. For the third group (students with weak foundations and an aversion to English), assignment design focuses on building a solid foundation, stimulating their motivation, transforming their attitudes toward English learning, and helping them pass exams. Thus, assignments mainly consist of vocabulary challenges, text reading, and translation exercises. The language expression requirements for presentation assignments are relatively relaxed compared to the first two groups, with flexibility in allowing presentations not entirely in English (permitting the use of Chinese).

### **3.2 Suitability Principle**

The suitability principle emphasizes that assignment content, difficulty levels, and specific requirements should be tailored to students' actual situations, promoting harmonious development between education and individual students. The traditional model of extracurricular assignments, with uniform content, standardized requirements, and identical deadlines for all students, ignores students' individual differences.<sup>[7]</sup> If assignments are overly demanding in terms of workload or difficulty, some students may resort to plagiarism to cope, potentially developing inertia over time and diminishing their learning enthusiasm. Conversely, if assignment content is too simplistic, it fails to elevate students. In the author's practice of personalized assignments, he takes into account the specific circumstances of students, ensuring that assignment quantity and difficulty align with the suitability principle. Additionally, assignments' content varies based on students' learning initiatives and in-class performance. To foster students' personalized development, presentation-based assignments allow multiple forms of completion, encouraging students to showcase their strengths.

### **3.3 Enjoyability Principle**

During the university phase, some students have relatively low expectations for learning in public foundational courses such as English, often aiming merely to pass. As a result, overall interest in learning might be quite low. However, English serves as a window to cross-cultural communication, playing a pivotal role in higher education and talent development. Therefore, the design of English assignments needs to consider enjoyability. Assignment content and formats should incorporate creativity. Assessment feedback should be diverse, real-time, hierarchical, and tailored, aiming to motivate students to approach English assignments with a positive attitude and stimulate and enhance their interest in learning.

### **3.4 Principle of Openness**

The principle of openness primarily pertains to presentation-based assignments (extension category). Presentation assignments have strong shaping capabilities, and teachers need to break free from the demands of "uniformity" and "standardization." There should be no restrictions on the form and results of assignments. Students should have the freedom to choose the methods they prefer based on their individual strengths and practicality. This approach stimulates students' interests, enhances their English proficiency, and promotes personalized development. For example, during the unit on "Internet," the requirements for extension assignments entail students who draw this topic to organize group presentations around it. Some students collaborate within their groups to conduct simulated e-commerce live broadcasts, while others engage in group debates on the pros and cons of the internet. Through students' critical thinking and creativity, the classroom atmosphere becomes livelier, students' motivation to learn increases to some extent, and their talents and individualities are developed.

## **4. Implementation of Personalized Assignments in the Context of Informatization**

### **4.1 Design Scheme**

In the research and practice of personalized English assignments in university courses, the first step involves grouping students based on their learning performance and motivation. Grouping is not intended to label students but rather to enhance the relevance of assignments and design content that significantly promotes student progress and development. Initially, through surveys and interviews, the author categorized students into three main groups (as mentioned earlier) based on their learning performance and attitudes. Then, according to the distribution of students within each category, further subgroups were formed. Before designing assignments, a thorough analysis of the curriculum, teaching

objectives, and the state of student learning is conducted to establish clear assignment objectives.

The designed assignments mainly consist of fundamental and extension categories. Fundamental assignments primarily include vocabulary recognition, translation, oral practice, grammar exercises, and other forms of practice exercises closely related to the textbook content. These assignments are broadly applicable and are intended to cover the entire class. Extension assignments, on the other hand, involve creative and engaging activities such as role-playing, drama performances, and presentations that broaden and elevate the themes from the curriculum. These assignments may vary based on the different learning performances within each subgroup. Within a single assignment, there is differentiation in the assignment content for various subgroups, but each subgroup's assignments show a progression in difficulty over successive assignments. The goal is to recognize and respect the learning diversity among students and promote their development to the greatest extent. Once the assignment content is determined, it is posted on the teaching platform from the teacher's end. On the student end, specific assignment requirements and content are displayed. Students can communicate with the teacher if they have any questions through class groups or private messages. For assignment evaluation and feedback, it is essential to employ diverse assessment methods, ensuring promptness and effectiveness. For activities like oral practice and dubbing exercises, students refer to immediate feedback provided by the platform, allowing them to correct pronunciation promptly and continually challenge themselves to meet the required scores.

Teacher feedback is provided in both online and offline formats. Based on students' assignment reports, including scores and item completion rates, teachers offer online feedback. Meanwhile, any common issues observed across the entire class's assignments prompt teachers to provide concentrated offline feedback and guidance. If necessary, adjustments to teaching content or progress may be made based on the issues identified. The performance of students in each assignment serves as reference data for the design of subsequent assignments. Language software platforms may also intelligently recommend content to address students' weaknesses, facilitating targeted practice.

After the implementation, the author gathers feedback from students regarding their assignment emotions, initiative, and other aspects through surveys, interviews, and analysis of result data. This information, combined with log records and reflective analysis of issues, aids in the formulation of improvement strategies.

#### ***4.2 Recommendations for Implementing Personalized Assignment Design***

In the context of informatization, the implementation of personalized assignments in university English should pay attention to the following points. First, the assignment content should be based on the teaching syllabus and unit objectives, combined with students' learning styles, goals, and English learning initiative, to set assignments with differentiation, allowing students of different learning levels to make progress and development. Second, there should be innovative and diverse assignment formats to avoid students developing a sense of boredom. According to the English learning characteristics of each group of students, fully utilize the advantages of various platform software, design diverse exercise content to enhance learning interest. Through expansive types of assignments, encourage students to use their imagination, report on English learning in forms they like, and fully tap into students' initiative, fostering creativity and analytical skills. Third, the workload should be reasonable and moderate, achieving a balance between reducing the burden and increasing efficiency. Before teachers publish assignments on the platform, preview the content and estimate the time required to complete the assignment. Adjust the workload moderately based on teaching reality to avoid students developing negative and resistant emotions due to excessive workload, affecting the effectiveness of assignments. Additionally, spending extended periods completing assignments on mobile phones or computer terminals is not conducive to students' visual health. Fourth, the difficulty of assignments should be appropriate. Respect the diversity of students, design suitable assignments for students of different learning levels and styles, enhance students' learning confidence, and promote student development.

#### ***4.3 Recommendations for Assignment Evaluation and Feedback***

Under the background of information, the feedback of personalized homework evaluation in college English is mainly based on systematic evaluation and teacher evaluation. At the same time, diversified evaluation methods such as students' self-evaluation and mutual evaluation are added. Moreover, for students with different learning levels and learning performance, the evaluation criteria will be slightly

different.

For assignments related to oral skills, a voice recognition system (the author used iFlytek's speech platform) provides instant scoring based on predefined criteria. Teachers can set minimum score requirements, motivating students to continually challenge themselves and improve their oral skills. Teacher assessments mainly involve online and offline feedback. Using the online platform, teachers can view students' assignment data and provide online feedback, which includes personalized comments and recommendations for excellent assignments to encourage and guide students. Through the analysis of class-wide assignment data, teachers can provide concentrated offline feedback and guidance. Additionally, common issues identified in assignments can inform teaching reflections and, if necessary, lead to adjustments to achieve precision teaching.

Furthermore, the author designed extension assignments in which multiple assessment methods are employed. These include teacher assessments, self-assessments by students, and peer assessments. By involving students in the assessment process, self-reflection skills are cultivated, and students experience the enjoyment of personalized assignments. For students with weak English foundations and reservations about English courses, the assessment criteria for oral expression in presentation-type assignments can be relaxed compared to those for other student groups, providing encouragement and enhancing their learning motivation, ultimately building their confidence in English learning.

## 5. Conclusion

The practical results have shown that students have a positive attitude and a strong interest in personalized English assignments. After several rounds of implementation, the author conducted surveys, interviews, and classroom observations to understand the significant changes in students' assignment emotions. Even those students who initially had a negative attitude towards English learning improved their negative assignment emotions through this practice. At first, students' external motivation for liking the assignment format gradually transformed into an internal drive for enjoying the English course. Most students not only completed assignments on time but also developed an increased interest in learning English. In oral assignments, students corrected their pronunciation and intensified their practice based on the platform's immediate feedback. They continually challenged themselves to achieve higher scores and proactively used the platform's features to enhance their practice, leading to an increased sense of initiative in learning. For extension and presentation-style assignments, students devoted more effort, engaged in thoughtful reflection, collaborated effectively, and fully leveraged their unique talents. The diverse forms of assignment completion led to outstanding and varied presentation results. Students experienced the joy of personalized assignments, expressed their individuality, and contributed to their overall development. Simultaneously, this practice further enhanced the effectiveness of classroom teaching. However, since the author conducted this design practice in a large-class setting, only a rough form of "personalization" was achieved through grouping. It was not possible to fully individualize assignment designs for each student. Therefore, in the future, with the continuous development of informatization, it will be necessary to explore and refine the solution further, taking advantage of the platform's strengths.

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