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OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE OF HOMEWORK AVOIDANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: In today's rapidly evolving world, the need for language learning and teaching is reaching new heights. In particular, English communication is expanding globally, and also within Uzbekistan. However, teachers often face certain difficulties during the teaching process. Working on these problems is essential for making education more effective. In my own teaching career, I have faced such several barriers and began searching for ways to overcome them. Consequently, I wanted to share my research and findings with you.I gathered my data from conversations with different experienced teachers, and paid attention to the students' conceptions with the help of questionnaires, and observed students' behavior by recording. Based on my findings, I planned some effective actions and implemented it. My actions proved that they were really functional in rising the level of students' task aversion.

Key words: homework completion, homework avoidance, quick checking techniques, homework star chart, rewards.

Annotatsiya: Bugungi shiddat bilan rivojlanayotgan dunyoda chet tillarini o‘rganish va o‘qitishga bo‘lgan ehtiyoj yangi bosqichga ko‘tarilmoqda. Xususan, ingliz tilidagi muloqot ko‘lami dunyo miqyosida, shuningdek, O‘zbekistonda ham kengayib bormoqda. Biroq, pedagoglar o‘quv jarayonida ko‘pincha muayyan qiyinchiliklarga duch kelishadi. Ta'lim samaradorligini oshirish uchun ushbu muammolar ustida ishlash juda muhimdir. Shaxsiy o‘qituvchilik faoliyatim davomida men ham bir qator to‘siqlarga duch keldim va ularni bartaraf etish yo‘llarini izlay boshladim. Natijada, o‘z tadqiqotlarim va xulosalarimni ushbu maqolada baham ko‘rishga qaror qildim. Tadqiqot ma'lumotlari tajribali o‘qituvchilar bilan suhbatlar, so‘rovnomalar yordamida o‘quvchilarning fikrlarini o‘rganish hamda dars jarayonlarini videotasvirga olib, o‘quvchilar xulq-atvorini kuzatish orqali to‘plandi. Topilgan natijalar asosida samarali harakatlar rejasi ishlab chiqildi va amaliyotga tatbiq etildi. Mazkur choralar o‘quvchilarning vazifalarni bajarmaslik (rad etish) darajasini kamaytirishda va ularning faolligini oshirishda haqiqatan ham samarali ekanligini isbotladi.

Tayanch so‘zlar: uy vazifasini bajarish, uy vazifasidan qochish, tezkor tekshirish usullari, uy vazifasi yulduzli jadvali, mukofotlar.

Аннотация: В современном быстро меняющемся мире потребность в изучении и преподавании языков достигает новых высот. В частности, сфера общения на английском языке расширяется как в глобальном масштабе, так и внутри Узбекистана. Однако учителя часто сталкиваются с определенными трудностями в процессе обучения. Работа над этими проблемами необходима для повышения эффективности образования. В ходе моей преподавательской деятельности я столкнулась с рядом подобных барьеров и начала искать пути их преодоления. В данной работе я делюсь результатами своего исследования. Данные были собраны в ходе бесед с опытными преподавателями, изучения мнений учащихся с помощью анкетирования, а также наблюдения за поведением студентов посредством видеозаписи. На основе полученных результатов был разработан и внедрен план эффективных действий. Мои практические шаги доказали свою результативность в снижении уровня нежелания учащихся выполнять учебные задания.

Ключевые слова: выполнение домашнего задания, уклонение от домашнего задания, методы быстрой проверки, звездная карта домашних заданий, вознаграждения.

INTRODUCTION:

Last year, I started my teaching career in a secondary school. Initially, I really did not pay attention to my students' interests and needs. During my teaching practice, I identified multiple issues with students, such as consistently avoiding homework, which affected both their academic progress and classroom environment. I had never taken time to find out about these problems and how I could solve them. Whenever we started to have a subject related to a teacher research. During the course, I was able to brainstorm on the new challenges that encounter in my classroom and how these challenges could be solved through exploratory action research. This was a turning point in my career as a teacher. This research was conducted in a 5th –grade class at a general secondary school in Namangan, where I currently teach while studying at the institute .While I have been officially employed here for a year, I have gained a total of three years of practical experience in this educational setting. I chose this class now that their main challenge- not completing homework- was more serious compared to other problems. The class consists of 15 students who are A2 level, moreover very playful, and energetic, which often affects their learning habits and responsibility. They take three or four hours of English lessons weekly, but their proficiency level remains low. For this reason, I decided to focus my research on improving their homework completion and learning engagement.

Literature Review

In the context of my research, the literature highlights several key factors that can influence students' engagement and homework completion. One of the main factors is clear instructions and interesting activities. They play a vital role in completing home assignments. According to Trautwein et al.(2006), homework is more successful if students believe the task is valuable and well-integrated into the classroom curriculum. To address these points, teachers should pay attention, firstly, their own understanding and their own speech. Another influence is "Parental support". Dumont.H (2012) and his collegues found that the way parents help with homework matters a lot. When parents support their child's independence, students work harder. However, if parents are too controlling, it can cause them to avoid their hometask. Conversely, in my research with 5th graders, I noticed that students often feel more motivated when their parents encourage them rather than just telling them what to do. Furthermore , Zimmerman and Kitsantas(2005) emphasize that homework avoidance is often a byproduct of low self-regulatory skills, suggesting that students who lack the ability to set goals and monitor their progress are more likely to view assignments as impossible obstacles.This particularly relevant for 5th graders, as they are transitioning from primary to middle school and are still developing the self-regulationskills.

So this paper will deeply look through the following questions:

1. What is the main reason why my students avoid doing homework?
2. How can different strategies help my students reduce homework avoidance?
3. How does my students' classroom behaviuor affect theis consistency in completing homework?

For each of these questions I selected various data collection tools:

1. Own perception: "Informal conversation with collegues"
2. Students' perception: "Responses to a questionnaire"
3. Students' behavior: "Lesson recording"

Methods

To investigate challenges learners face in doing home assignments, both recording and questionnaires were designed to collect information about their challenges. Informal discussions with colleagues were also used to respond to strategies that could be used to enhance students' interests and engagement.

a. Informal conversation with collegues:

I discussed my research topic, the challenges I faced during the lesson, and possible solutions with my collegues. From their own experience, the teachers tried to give me some useful advice. One teacher said: “Homework avoidance is becoming a big issue in my classes too. Pupils often say : “ I was busy”, “ I forgot”, or “ It was too hard!”.But honestly, sometimes I feel they are just overwhelmed or not motivated. One thing that helped a bit is giving shorter, more purposeful homework. When tasks are small and meaningful, students do not feel scared to start. Before, I used to give long worksheet, and most students did not even try. Also, parent communication is crucial. Some parents do not even know what homework their child has. When I send a short message or photo of the task in the parent group, completion increases a lot”.

Overall, the conversation showed that students often avoid homework because tasks feel too long, difficult, or they don’t understand the lesson well.

b. Responses to a questionnaire:

I made a questionnaire that consisted of eight questions with possible options to find out how they find homework activities, to identify the difficulties they face with their hometasks, and also to know their expectations about home assignments. These questionnaires were written in Uzbek to help them better understand and give accurate responses. As their level was not suitable to catch the meaning of the questions and answer. The questionnaire helped me to identify the challenges the students faced and also provided some expectations which I later exploited as strategies to help them improve on their hometasks.

Here are English version of my questions given to my students:

1. How often do you usually do your homework?
A) Always
B) Often
C) Sometimes
D) Rarely
2. What is the main reason you do not do your homework?
A) I do not understand the topic
B) There is too much homework
C) I don’t have enough time at home
D) There is no one to help me
3. What is the biggest difficulty you face while doing homework?
A) Not understanding the questions
B) Difficulty concentrating
C) Laziness / lack of motivation
D) No good study environment (noise, no time)
4. What would make homework more interesting for you?
A) If it is given in a fun or game-like way
B) If the tasks are shorter and easier
C) If it includes pictures, videos, or creative tasks
D) If we can do it in groups
5. What motivates you the most to complete your homework?
A) Getting stars, stickers, or grades
B) Teacher’s praise
C) Parents’ encouragement
D) Feeling good about myself / self-improvement
6. What kind of support from your teacher helps you do homework more easily?
A) Explaining more clearly
B) Giving examples
C) Dividing the task into smaller parts
D) Giving extra time

7. Who helps you with homework at home?
A) Parents
B) Siblings
C) Classmates
D) No one
8. What would help you do homework regularly?
A) Making a schedule
B) Using phone/gadgets less
C) More interesting tasks
D) A quiet place to study

c. Lesson recording:

I recorded my lesson especially giving and checking homework process. According to that, I asked my students to close their books and notebooks to check if they learned the new vocabulary independently. Students were asked one by one to say the new vocabulary related to family members.I attempted to check all 15 students individually, but managing the whole class was difficult. The pace of checking was slow, causing other students to become restless or lose focus .Students who did not learn the vocabulary did not provide clear reasons. Some students avoided eye contact or looked nervous when asked individually. A few students tried to help each other by whispering answers. Classroom management became challenging because attention dropped while waiting. Some students did not learn the vocabulary, which may be due to not understanding the homework, no support at home, lack of motivation or forgetting. Students who already knew the vocabulary had to wait too long, leading to boredom or side-talking. I worked hard, but the method was not efficient for checking 15 students. The video suggests that individual checking takes too long, reduces class engagement, and does not support students who struggle with homework.

Exploratory research findings

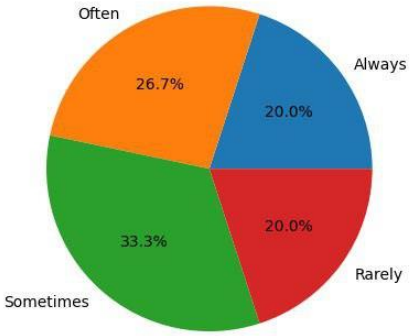
After collecting all the information from data tools I concluded different ideas and realized some strategies. From the conversation with colleagues, I took various findings. My counterparts suggested using shorter, meaningful tasks, checking understanding before assigning homework, and informing parents about the tasks to reduce avoidance.

When it comes to the student questionnaire, the findings are amazing. I took this questionnaire from my students, 15 pupils attended and I marked the highest answers. The results show that many students sometimes do their homework, and the main reason for avoidance is that they do not understand the topic well (46.6%). The biggest difficulty they face is not understanding the questions (53.3%), indicating that comprehension problems are a major factor. Students reported that homework would be more interesting if it were fun or game-like (53.3%) and more creative. Their strongest motivation comes from parents' encouragement (53.3%).They feel they need more clear explanation from the teacher (46.6%) to complete homework successfully. A large number of students said no one helps them at home (53.3%), which increases their struggle. Finally, students believe they would do homework more regularly if tasks were more interesting (60%).

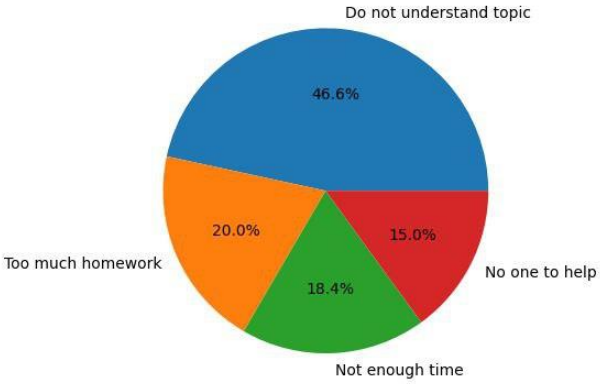
Overall, the data suggests that homework avoidance is mainly caused by lack of understanding, low support at home, and unengaging tasks, and students respond best to clear instructions, parental encouragement, and fun, interesting activities.

The lesson recording showed that checking vocabulary homework one by one was difficult to manage with 15 students. Many students became distracted while waiting, and several did not learn the vocabulary. The video suggests that individual checking takes too long, reduces class engagement, and does not support students who struggle with homework.

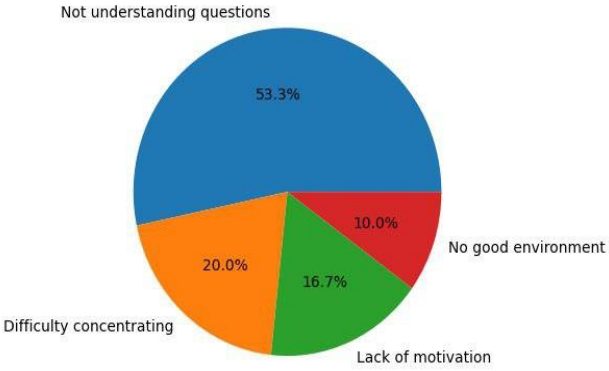
1. How often do you usually do your homework?



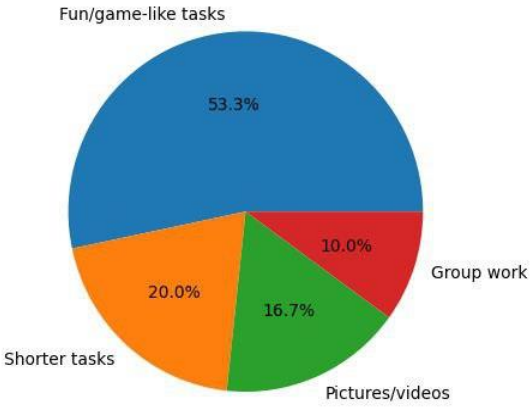
2. Main reason for not doing homework



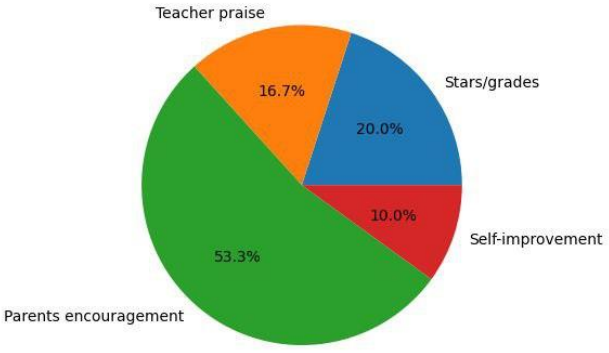
3. Biggest difficulty while doing homework



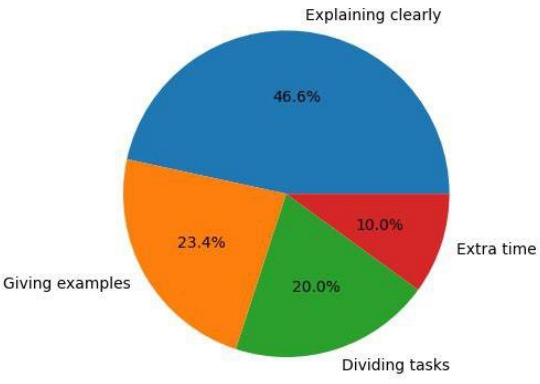
4. What makes homework more interesting?

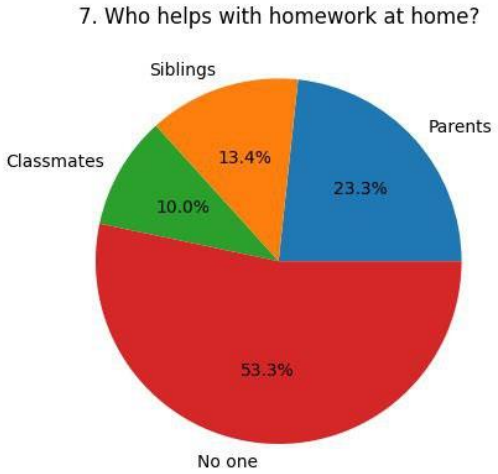


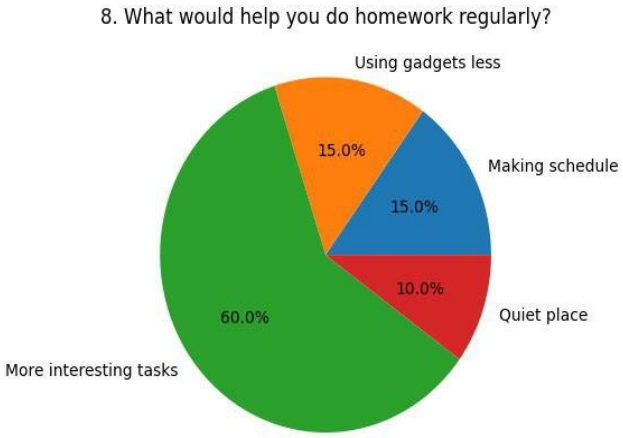
5. What motivates you most?



6. Teacher support that helps most





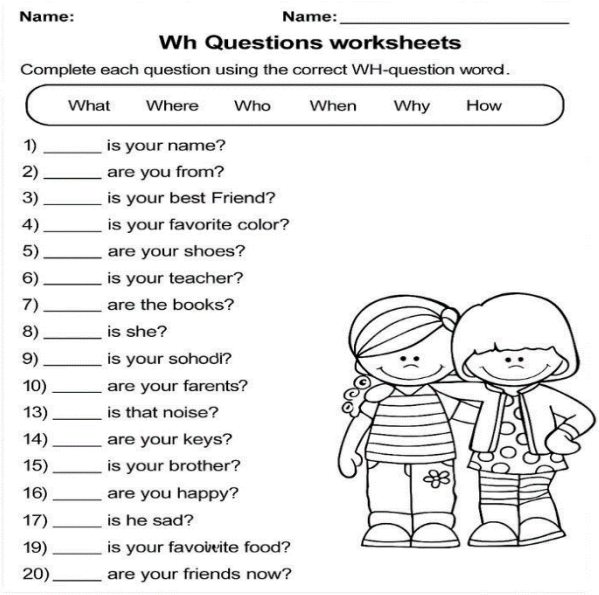


Action Research

Based on my findings from conversation, questionnaire and recording, I planned some actions:

Firstly, many pupils do not do their assignments because of not understanding the lesson well. Therefore, I may assign small tasks, provide an example before giving the task. This supports the theory of Bandura (1997), who stated that individuals tend to avoid tasks they believe exceed their capabilities. To address this, I provided clear examples and smaller tasks to build their confidence.

Secondly, according to my lesson recording, students didn't learn vocabulary at all. For that, I want to use quick checks like mini quizzes, and group techniques:



Name: Name: _____

Wh Questions worksheets

Complete each question using the correct WH-question word.

What Where Who When Why How

1) _____ is your name?
2) _____ are you from?
3) _____ is your best Friend?
4) _____ is your favorite color?
5) _____ are your shoes?
6) _____ is your teacher?
7) _____ are the books?
8) _____ is she?
9) _____ is your sohodi?
10) _____ are your farents?
13) _____ is that noise?
14) _____ are your keys?
15) _____ is your brother?
16) _____ are you happy?
17) _____ is he sad?
19) _____ is your favoiwite food?
20) _____ are your friends now?

While checking home assignment I decided to use “Homework star chart” method in class. In short my methodology is called: “Short, clear, and game-based homework supported by strong guidance and fast checking techniques”.

After developing the action plan, I started implementing it in my lessons. I used the methods I had selected. First of all, I explained the lesson carefully, and before giving homework, I conducted a quick question-and-answer session to check how well they had understood the topic. Then I assigned the task and showed an example of how to do it. For example, the task was to fill in the blanks using the new words learned in the Workbook. I demonstrated the first one myself and told them to complete the rest at home. In the next lesson, I prepared a crossword to quickly check their homework. This was

a very interesting and time-saving method. After checking the tasks, I applied my "Homework Star Chart" method depending on whether they had done the homework and how well they had mastered it. As mentioned above, I gave different stickers to the students who completed the homework well. Since the 5th graders have English lessons four hours a week, every two weeks we count the stickers they have collected, and I give a wonderful prize to the student who has the most. These colorful stickers had a positive impact on my students. As for parental support, I joined the class parents' Telegram channel and, after each lesson, I posted the homework and reminded them. This encouraged parents to stay alert and helped them monitor their children so they would not forget their homework.





Every step I took in order to engage students and tried to increase homework completion is built on four key principles:

1. Homework must be short and purposeful;
2. Understanding must be checked in class before assigning;
3. Tasks must be engaging, creative and enjoyable;
4. Students need consistent support from the teacher and the parents.

Discussion of findings

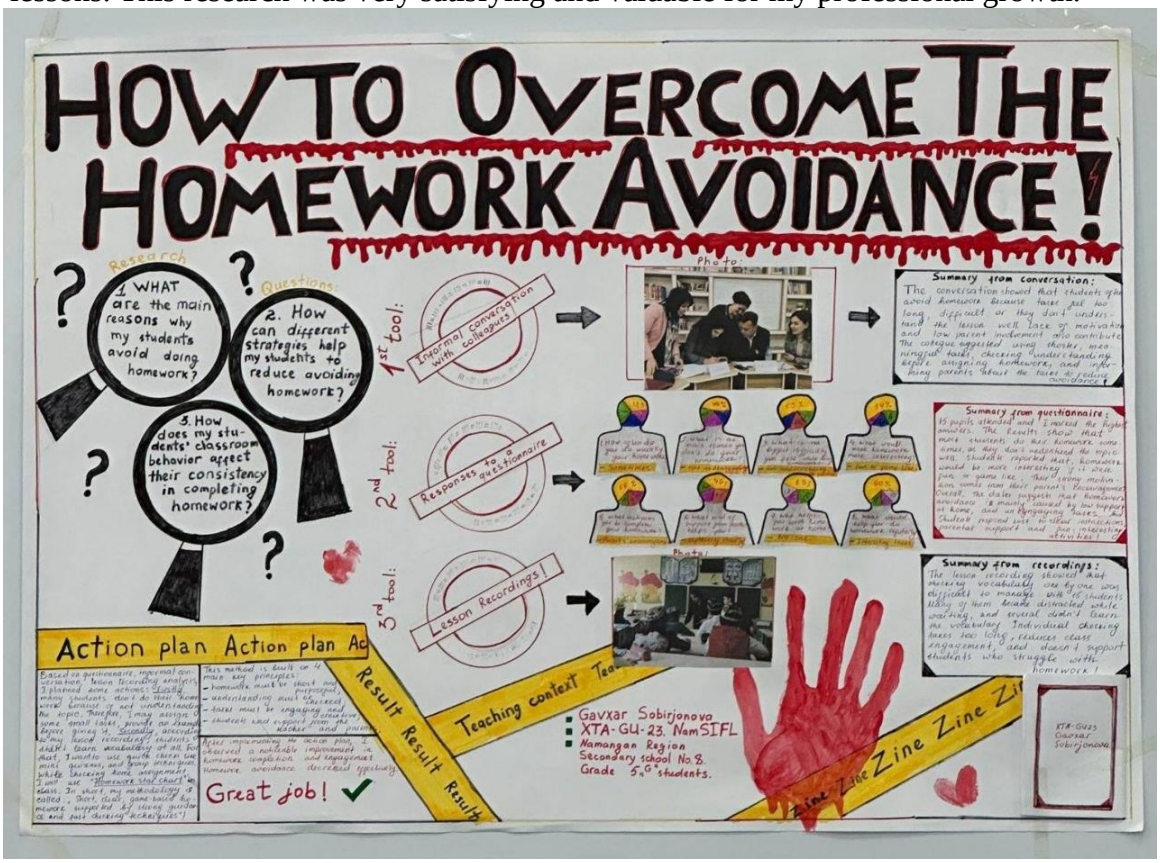
This study investigated the effectiveness of specific strategies in enhancing students' homework completion. The findings of this research indicate that the implementation of the different strategies were effective and actually helped to enhance pupil's interest towards doing homework. They suggest that using short and interactive gamification tools in order to check students' knowledge. Also understanding the topic must be checked carefully before giving home assignment. The results of this study have several pedagogical implications for teaching in the classroom. Firstly, it suggests that teachers should pay attention students' needs and provide support and scaffolding to help them improve their interests towards homework. Secondly, teachers should use creative tasks and activities to enhance their engagement to the lesson.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the importance of providing students with a supportive and structured learning environment to enhance their skills. The findings have implications for teaching practice and suggest that teachers should use a combination of strategies to support students' homework development. By doing so, teachers can help students develop the hometask skills they need to attain academic and professional opportunities.

Conclusion:

When I first came to work as a teacher, I was surprised that many students had little interest in the lesson and were indifferent to homework. For this reason, I identified homework completion as a major problem and decided to conduct my research on this issue. From each research tool I used, I drew useful conclusions and created an action plan based on the findings. I then applied this plan in

my classroom. I am happy to sav that it worked verv well. After I started using the "Star chart", my students became more interested. and the number of students who completed their homework increased in every lesson. Now I feel more confident in my ability to find solutions to the problems that appear in my lessons. This research was very satisfying and valuable for my professional growth.



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