

A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Input Flood and Pre-reading Instruction Methods of Teaching Collocations in Chinese Contexts

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Abstract

This is a research proposal of comparing of the effectiveness of Input Flood and Pre-reading Instruction methods of teaching collocations in Chinese contexts. The study will investigate L2 learners' acquisition of collocations following two kinds of approaches: Input Flood and Pre-reading Instruction. Sixty 11-year-old students of the fifth grade will be exposed to frequent collocations embedded in English picture books that will be taught during five days. Their collocational competence will be subsequently assessed in a delayed test. It will use SPSS to analyze the data. In this article, it also includes discussion of limitations and ethical considerations.

Keywords

Input Flood; Pre-reading Instruction; Collocation.

1. Introduction

There are many teaching methods in language teaching fields and each method has its own effectiveness. As an English teacher, it is necessary to know which method is appropriate for achieving the specific teaching aims, such as, the development of vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skill. There are no best approaches, so we should know which is a better way. Collocation as an important and challenging knowledge in language learning teacher should spend time on teaching collocations, so they need to know which methods are the most effective. In my opinion, the process of teaching phrases is similar to the process of teaching vocabulary, so we can use vocabulary teaching approaches to teach collocations. There are some common approaches of vocabulary teaching, such as, input flood, text enhancement, Pre-reading instruction, post-reading exercise [1].

In this research proposal, I will design an experiment of comparing the effectiveness of Input Flood and Pre-reading Instruction of teaching collocation. The article will show the definition and advantages of input flood method and Pre-reading instruction. The research context is primary school students who speak Chinese as a first language and learn English as a second language. It will use quantitative research method to complete the study and SPSS will be used to analyze the experiment data.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Input Flood and Pre-reading Instruction

Input flood is an effective vocabulary acquisition method. According to Han, artificially designed frequencies are used to increase the saliency of target language features [2]. Input Flood refers to the process of learning English by increasing the frequency of specific language features in order to make learners perceive and pay attention to them, thereby increasing their exposure, perception, and attention to specific language features to improving their learning efficiency. In the context of curriculum reform, students' expectations of passing English exams and other reasons, the majority of English teachers adopt utilitarian teaching methods and are unwilling to spend too much time on teaching collocations, and even some teachers simply give

up teaching collocations and let students learn or recite them on their own [1]. In fact, this is a deep misunderstanding of collocation teaching, which is not reciting collocations, but teaching a set of rules, ways and means of acquisition principle to improve the efficiency of collocation acquisition.

Nation in 2006 has shown that learners need 5-16 exposures to words before they are likely to master them [3]. Therefore, teachers should increase students' exposure, perception, and attention to collocations through various forms of input flood reinforcement based on linguistic principles, so as to effectively promote students' collocation acquisition efficiency. This method increases the frequency of presentation of specific linguistic features in an artificial way, which increases the opportunities for learners to perceive and focus on specific linguistic features, and thus improves the learning efficiency of English learners.

Another form of teaching collocation is Pre-reading instruction which is also a common method in SLA field. Tudor believes that Pre-reading activities refer to learners' participation in activities related to the target text, aiming to help them deal with the text in a more meaningful way [4]. However, Haque argues that Pre-reading activity is the warm-up activity for students before reading, intending to prepare for the reading task later [5]. Wei pointed out: "Pre-reading refers to a series of educational methods that help learners participate in conceptual activities related to the text before processing the target text and process the text in a more meaningful way [6]." Pre-reading activities refer to a series of activities (i.e., games, songs and jigsaw puzzles, role-play, and imitation) that students are involved in before reading as a preparatory work for their formal reading [7].

There are the benefits of Pre-reading instruction. Recently, some researchers believed that the processing advantages of Pre-reading education seem to help the integration of words and text [8]. Some people think that through reading instruction, learners learn word collocations deliberately through explicit contact. After that, combined with the context, further contact and consolidate the knowledge of the recently learned project [9]. In addition, Pre-reading guidance is a way to solve the low success rate of vocabulary reasoning in reading comprehension [10]. Researchers also believe that Pre-reading guidance improves the saliency and cognitive processing of target words and improves the efficiency of incidental vocabulary acquisition [11].

2.2. Collocation

Different scholars have different research objects and different definitions of collocation. The word "collocation" has its origin in the Latin verb "collocare" which means "to set in order/to arrange" [12]. This term was first introduced by Firth to define a combination of words associated with each other [13]. Despite the familiar notion, collocation has no single precise definitions and researchers have adopted different approaches. Nesselhauf pointed out that collocation refers to "some kind of syntagmatic relation of words" and multiword combinations are "not in fact clearly delimitable" [14, 15]. Researchers have identified two major approaches employed to delimit a collocation the frequency-based approach and the phraseological approach [16, 17].

Studies have shown that vocabulary collocation has not been given enough attention in Chinese English classrooms, and the traditional teaching methods have focused on practicing vocabulary collocation forms, which is considered to be not effective [18]. Another reason to research collocation acquisition is that collocation is difficult to learn, even the advanced learners with L1 contexts [19]. Because L2 learners tend to make mistakes as the influence of language transfer. For example, Chinese students may express "deal with a problem" as "deal problem". The last two decades have witnessed an increasing focus on formulaic language, including more specifically on collocations [20]. The benefits of formulaic knowledge to enhancing language fluency and communicative competence have been widely recognized and well accepted [21].

Most of the related literature is about how to teach vocabulary and grammar, while how to teach collocation is rarely discussed. Common ways to teach collocation is to depend on reading texts. In addition, here are less researches on collocation acquisition in primary school students, most articles focus on high school and college students. Therefore, in this research proposal, I will design an experiment of comparing the effectiveness of teaching collocations to primary students with Input flood method comparing Pre-reading Instruction method.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participant

Piaget believed that cognitive development is the development process of cognitive structures [22]. He divided cognitive development into four stages: the sensorimotor stage, pre-operational stage, concrete operational stage, and formal operational stage. According to Piaget's theory of stages of cognitive development, the cognitive level of primary school students is between the pre-operational stage and the concrete operational stage, that is between 7 to 11 years old. Teachers should fully understand the characteristics of students' cognitive development in these two stages to be able to, and effectively implement foreign language teaching activities. Therefore, I will choose 11-year-old students of the fifth grade in a public primary school. The reason of choosing a public school (rather than a private school) is that they all use a standard English teaching system which designed by the Ministry of Education of China, which are making them more representative of the English language proficiency of general Chinese students than students in private elementary school.

Sixty Chinese learners of English in China will take part in the study. All participants from a small city and Chinese are their L1. They had studied English for at least 3 years, so they have had a certain degree of understanding of English learning.

I will use three groups to design the research. One is a control group, the other two groups are an Input flood group, and a Pre-reading Instruction group. They are recruited from three intact classes which formed two experimental groups (20 participants each group) and a control group (20 participants).

3.2. Materials and Instruments

3.2.1. Reading Content

English picture books can be chosen as the teaching material. Picture books are popular reading materials for students and can be used by teachers as innovative classroom materials. English picture books are rich in content, varied in theme, and can be used in a variety of ways, such as initiation for children English language learning as classroom materials, or as reading materials for after-school practice. Through reading English picture books, students can accumulate English knowledge, train their language skills, enhance their thinking, and develop positive emotional attitudes and values. In this research, a graded picture book for primary school English named '跟上兔子' (Keep up with the rabbit) will be chosen. One of the story 'Snow' (see Appendix 1) will be the reading text.

3.2.2. Collocation

When we choose the collocation from the text, the difficulty, length, and frequency of collocations should be considered. Because the difficulty of collocation and the frequency of use will affect the results of students' acquisition, so try to choose words of moderate difficulty that are easy to master. This study tackles the acquisition of frequent verb-noun collocations made up of frequent single words. All of them should have a high Mutual Information score, which is a common test that shows the common collocation pattern [23]. All the individual words comprising of the collocations should be frequent that belongs to the first 3000-word families.

In this study, 6 collocations (see Appendix 2) will be selected as target objectives for the class. Two of them are v.-n. collocations that consist of frequent verbs (e.g., 'direct,' 'build') and frequent nouns, for example, 'build a house'. These frequently used verbs usually form word partners and become meaningless verbs. That means, the overall meaning of this phrase is presented mainly by the noun. In addition, since general sentences contain various kinds of collocations, two target objectives are adj.-n. collocations composed of frequent adjectives and frequent nouns (for example 'heavy snow'). The other two objectives are a verb collocation 'come out' and a collocation 'stay at home' structured as a verb- preposition-noun.

3.2.3. Grading Test

In order to understand the participants' vocabulary knowledge, a Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) will be implemented, which is a vocabulary size acceptance test developed by Schmitt and Clapham [24]. VLT is a tool to measure the written receptive vocabulary knowledge of learners of English [19]. After the test, according to the test results, we can ensure that the average level of each group is similar, so as to avoid the situation that all members of the particular group is of high level or the whole group is of low level, which would affect the experimental results.

3.3. Procedure

The entire study will span five days. Teacher will teach collocations by a story that contains the target collocations. Experimental sessions are as following: 1) On the first day, participants will be selected; 2) The next day is a proficiency test; 3) On the third day, starting group classes and evaluating the learning situation; 4) On the fourth day, collecting data; 5) On the fifth day, the results will be analyzed.

Participants will take the VLT which will be 60 minutes. After the test, papers will be collected, the researcher will score the papers and another teacher will review them to determine the final scores. A one-way ANOVA will be conducted to investigate whether there are significant differences in the English proficiency levels of the students in the three groups and to ensure that the results are not affected by the levels of English vocabulary knowledge between the groups. In this process, the researcher will place the target words in the VLT paper to test whether the target collocations are new words to the subjects. If someone know the target collocations, researchers will count the number of correct answers, and these scores will be used for compared the after-class test scores.

After the test, each of the three groups will have a 45-minute class. In the first group, teacher will lead the students to read the picture book and mark the collocations to be learned, and then they will be asked to remember them by themselves. The second group, teacher will use the input-flood method. Videos and pictures will be applied to show the collocations during the lesson to continuously reinforce the learning content. In the third group, they will be given a preview of the text before they start to learn it, so that they can get a general idea of the text before learning the collocation.

After the class, learners will finish an exam (see Appendix 3) to know how well they have grasped the collocations. There are ten questions in the paper, one point for each correct answer. At last, teacher will count everyone's test scores and analyze them.

3.4. Descriptive Statistics

Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) will be used to analyze the data in this study, which is a popular statistical analysis software. In order to investigate the effect of different ways on the acquisition of collocations by elementary school students, the researcher need to conduct an independent sample T-test on the data obtained. First, to see if there is a significant difference between the acquisition effects brought about by the two different lesson forms, and then to conduct a group comparison to find out how the two groups' performances differed from each other. If the results of one of the experimental groups produce a significance different

($P < 0.05$) from the control group, it means that the teaching method in this group will be effective for the acquisition of the collocation. If $P > 0.05$, it means that this teaching method is inefficient. Finally, the two experimental groups will be compared, and if there is a significant difference ($P < 0.05$), it will be possible to know which group's method is more effective.

4. Discussion

4.1. Ethical Consideration

Because the participants are not adult, admission must be obtained from the school and guardian prior before selecting participants. Because the participants are underage elementary school students, their safety and privacy must be ensured during the experiment. We must maintain the participants' right to know and right of decision. Before the experiment begins, participants should know the purpose of our research and what kind of support they need to provide. The consent of the person is required before the experiment can be conducted. In addition, the experimental site must also be approved by the relevant institution. For this experiment, we will use the school classroom, so we need to get the approval of the site from the relevant person in charge of the school. Last but not least, as there will be a possibility that participants may not actively cooperate during the experiment, so the researcher should arouse the participants' enthusiasm in time so as not to affect the results of the experiment.

4.2. Future Research

Both of input flood and Pre-reading instruction method involve repetition during the teaching process. In the future research, based on this research plan, it can be extended to study the correlation between repetition and language acquisition. Hulstijn believes that learning vocabulary in reading is a process in which learners discover the meaning of new words, carefully process vocabulary information, and repeatedly strengthen the relationship between form and meaning [25]. Eckerth and Tavakoli also found that frequency effects were covered by the involved Load Hypothesis, that is, the effect of learners on the cognitive processing of second language vocabulary [26]. This confirms the view of Hulstijn that second language vocabulary acquisition is a complex and difficult process in which frequency plays an important role, while other factors that influence the success of the learner also need to be considered [25].

4.3. Limitations

Regarding the limitations of our research proposal, I just rely on a relatively small sample of participants. This design can be changed in actual experiments. Nevertheless, we will still consider our proposal to be a tentative proposal, and I am still seeking more empirical research on acquiring a second language under various educational conditions. Besides, the research proposal is only based on the study of native Chinese-speaking English learners, so this research project can only be limited to Chinese. Also, the research object is only for students in public elementary schools, and the same research plan cannot be applied to students in private elementary schools.

5. Summary

In summary, I have designed a research plan of comparing the effectiveness of input flood method and Pre-reading instruction method of teaching collocation. This article describes the research design and methodology that will be used in terms of how the data will be collected, the target population, and how the data will be analyzed. The research design and methodology chosen is appropriate to the researcher's study. For now, this study concludes, and although it

is not a perfect research plan, I hope that there will be a follow-up study to complete the experiment and draw further conclusions.

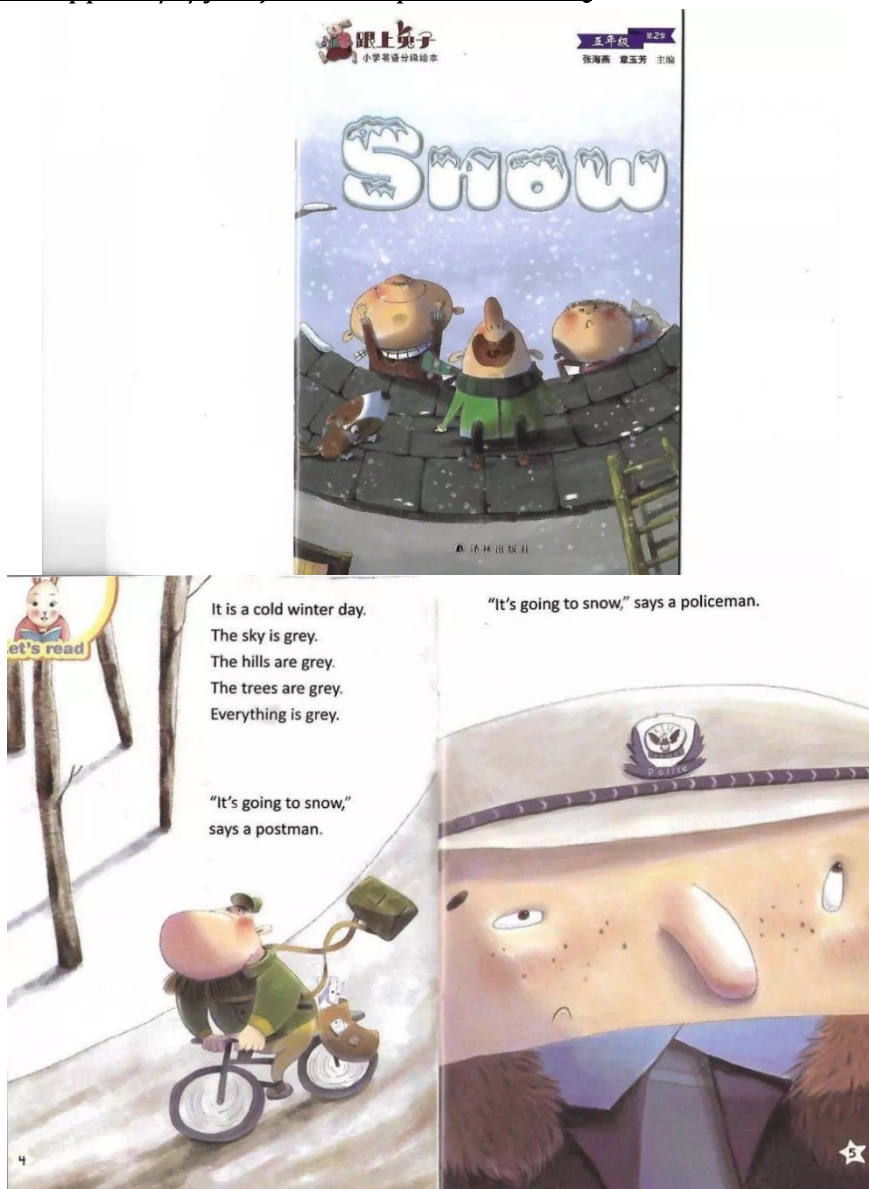
References

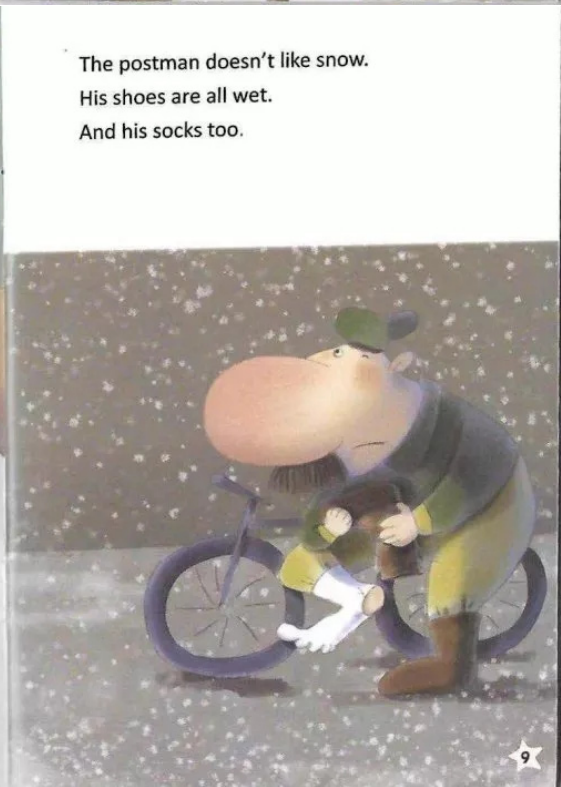
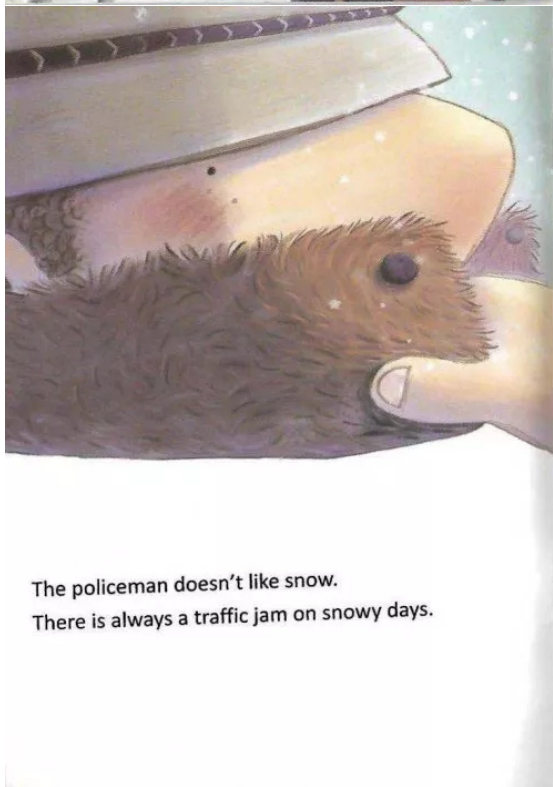
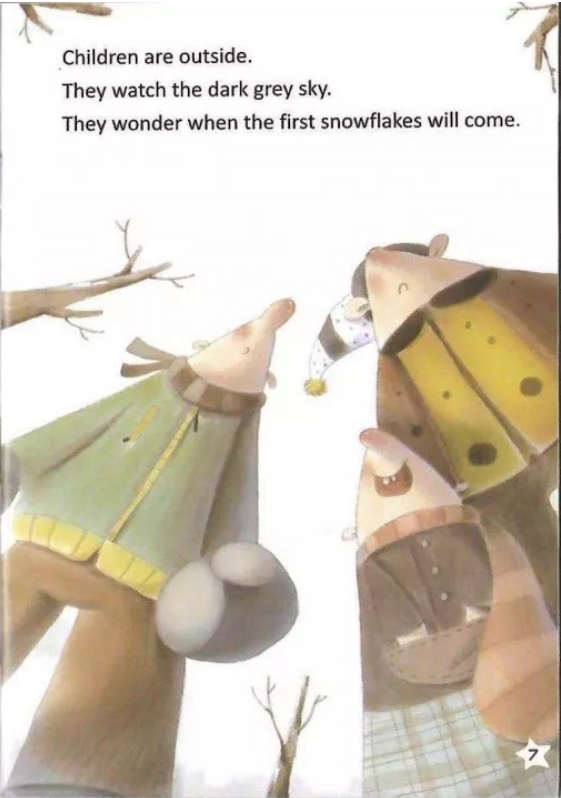
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Appendix 1

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The farmer doesn't like snow either.
His donkeys get hungry easily on snowy days.



10

Children are excited to see
snow of this winter.
They taste it and feel it.
They don't mind the cold.



11

The snow comes fast.
The ground becomes white with snow.

The postman has a bad fall and breaks his leg.
His newspapers go everywhere.



12



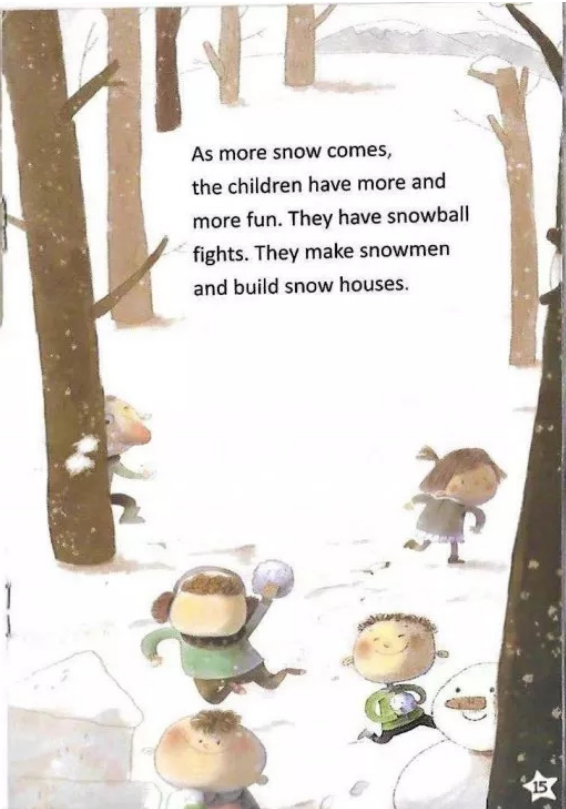
Cars move slowly in the snow.
The policeman has a hard time
directing the traffic.

13

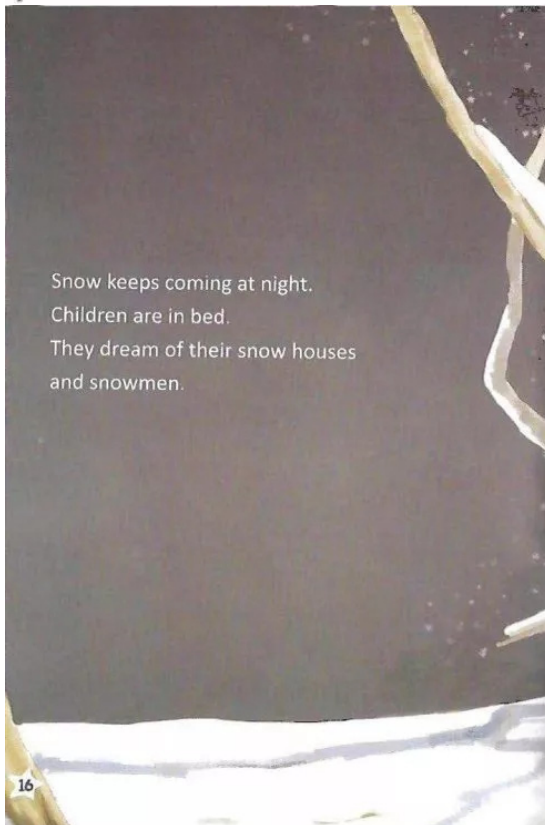


The farmer clears a path from his house to the stable. He has to check on his donkeys.

1



As more snow comes, the children have more and more fun. They have snowball fights. They make snowmen and build snow houses.



Snow keeps coming at night. Children are in bed. They dream of their snow houses and snowmen.

16

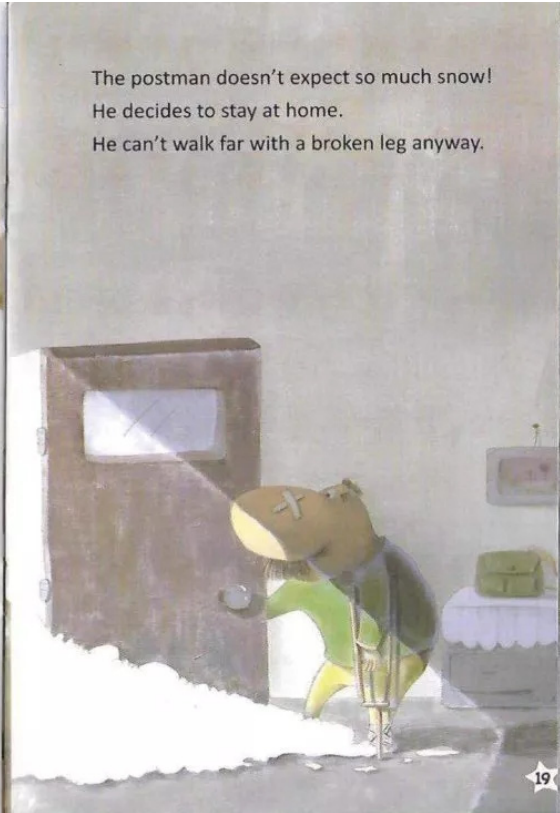


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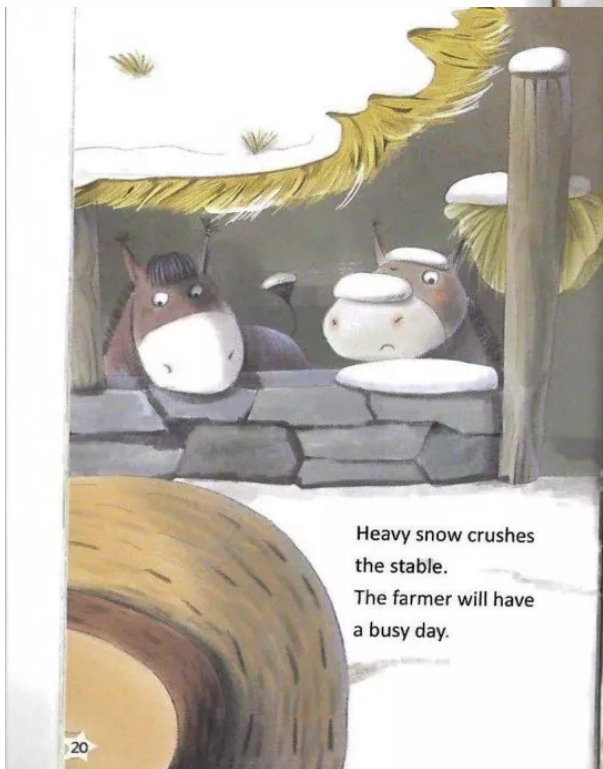
The next morning, the snow stops.
The policeman can hardly recognize his car.

18



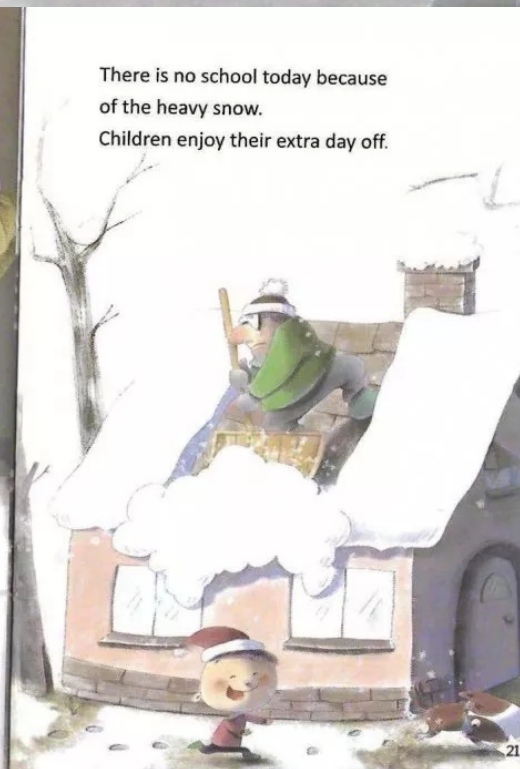
The postman doesn't expect so much snow!
He decides to stay at home.
He can't walk far with a broken leg anyway.

19



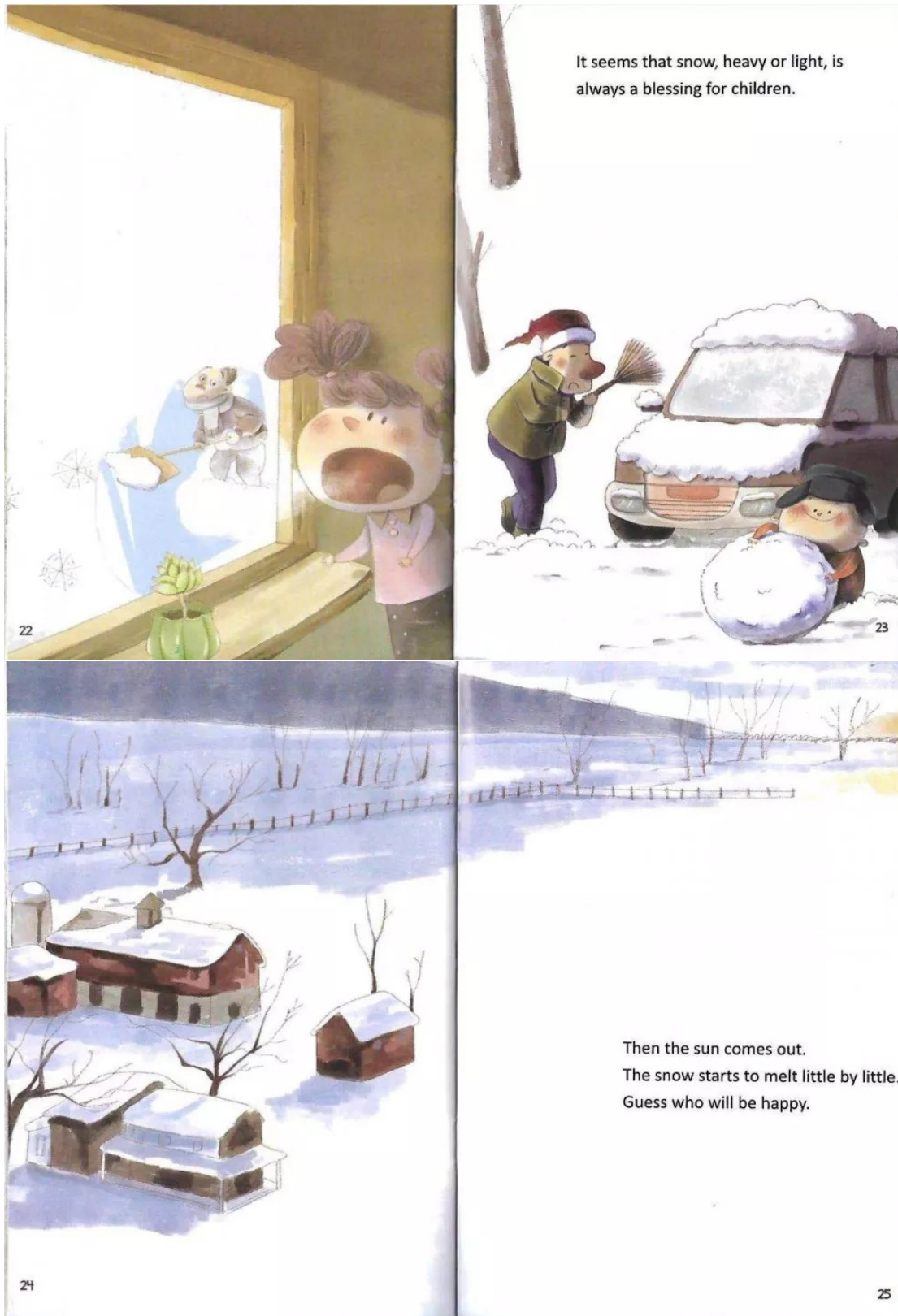
Heavy snow crushes
the stable.
The farmer will have
a busy day.

20



There is no school today because
of the heavy snow.
Children enjoy their extra day off.

21



Appendix 2

Target items: build a house, direct the traffic, heavy snow, snowy day, come out, stay at home.

Appendix 3

Test

1. We are going to () a house on this lot.
A. make B. build C. do
2. There will be () snow in the coming few days.
A. big B. heavy C. large
3. 我喜欢呆在家里。(translate)
4. 这些动物只在夜晚出来。(translate)
5. _____(指挥交通) is the job of the police.
6. I cannot _____(出来)tonight . I have to revise.
7. We will _____(盖一座房子) round them.
8. After today's _____(大雪), many rows are still blocked .
9. Her grandmother was feeling unwell and had to _____(呆在家里).
10. there is always a traffic jam on _____(大雪天).

Answer

1. B
2. B
3. I am happy to stay at home.
4. These animals only come out at night.
5. Direct the traffic
6. come out
7. build a house
8. heavy snow
9. stay at home
10. snowy days