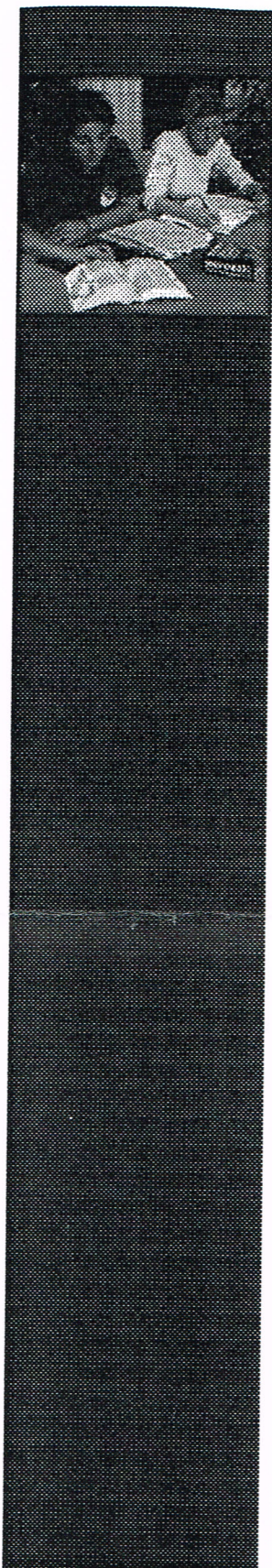

Tips *for* Teachers

Tips on setting up vocabulary notebooks

by Norbert and Diane Schmitt

Norbert and Diane Schmitt suggest useful tips on how to set up vocabulary notebooks in class over a period of weeks. Appropriate for all levels of English.

WEEK 1



Day 1:

Introduce the vocabulary notebook as an important coursebook, and tell students what materials they need to buy.

Day 2:

Introduce the ten new words for the week, and tell the students to use a dictionary to write L1 translations or L2 synonyms on the front of the card or page, and the new word on the back. Ask the students to choose ten additional words from the week's lessons, and write them in their notebooks.

Day 3:

Using good learners' dictionaries, if possible, show the students where to find each word's phonemic transcription and part of speech. Ask them to write this information in their notebooks for all twenty words.

Day 4:

Again using a learner's dictionary, have the students write the L2 definition of each word in their notebook. (This may be done using the dictionary definition or their own words). Show them how to find the meaning which best fits how that word has been used in class; this will be a lesson in using context.

Day 5:

Collect the students' notebooks and skim through them to check that the information they have written is correct. Depending on the motivation of your students, you may want to give them some kind of mark for completing their homework. In order for the introduction of vocabulary notebooks to be a success, it is important that they be mandatory for an extended period of time, since it will take time for students to see the benefits of this type of study. If they are not encouraged, they may give up too soon. Give the notebooks back, so that students can study from them over the weekend. Tell the students to arrange the words according to how well they feel they know them.

WEEK 2

The following activities expand upon what was learnt in the first week, with the inclusion of information about derivatives.

Day 1:

Introduce this week's ten new words. Give the students a worksheet which shows them how to form derivatives for their new words. Show them where to find information about derivatives in their learner's dictionary. Tell them to write the new words, their L1 translations, and their derivatives in their notebooks.

Day 2:

Ask the students to find ten additional words from the week's lessons and to write them, their L1 translations, and their derivatives in their notebooks.

Day 3:

Tell the students that they should add the derivative information to all of last week's words, and all of the previous week's information to the week's words.

Day 4:

Remind the students to continue working with their notebooks.

Day 5:

Collect the students' notebooks and skim through them to make sure that the information is correct.

WEEK 3

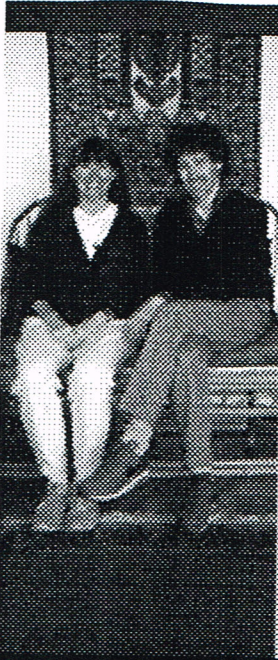
In each subsequent week, teachers can introduce ten new words and a new strategy that will enrich their students' word knowledge. Initially, they will need explicit instruction in how to use each strategy. After that, class time should no longer be necessary except to

remind the students to look for ten additional new words and to add any new information to the words already in their notebooks. Teachers should continue to make periodic checks of the notebooks both for accuracy and for compliance. This is a good chance to determine which strategies have been mastered and which need additional attention. Teachers should also check to see that words are moving to different sections of the notebook - a sign that students are gaining mastery over some words, and putting extra study time into others. Some teachers may give their students periodic quizzes on words and strategies from the notebooks. Quizzes can be individualized by including both assigned words and self-selected words from each student's notebook.

As the number of words in the notebook grows larger, students will no longer be able to complete all information for each word. However, the minimum information for each word should include: L1 translation or L2 synonym, part of speech, phonemic transcription, L2 definition, and the word's derivatives. After using their notebooks for a period of weeks, students should gain some sense of which other information they find beneficial.

From 'Vocabulary Notebooks: Theoretical Underpinnings and Practical Suggestions' by Norbert and Diane Schmitt, first published in **ELT Journal**, Volume 49/2.

Find out more about **Oxford's range of learner's dictionaries**.



Norbert Schmitt lectures at the University of Nottingham on second language vocabulary studies, applied linguistics, language testing, corpus linguistics, and language teaching methodology. He recently co-edited *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition, and Pedagogy* (CUP) with Michael McCarthy, and is currently writing an introduction to vocabulary, also for Cambridge University Press

Diane Schmitt co-directs English language teaching at Nottingham Trent University. She is now undertaking a study to track international students through British universities to determine optimum TOEFL/IELTS entrance requirements.

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