Who's Who on the Overhead Projector

Mark Seng, The University of Texas at Austin

Here is a transparency device for the overhead projector which will provide both teacher and students with amusing and interesting opportunities to practice asking and answering questions. A single, thermal overhead transparency (containing a variety of subjects, verbs, and other constructions arranged in columns) is made, or one can be hand-lettered on a page protector (see figure 1). This transparency is then cut into five strips which are inserted into slots previously cut in an ordinary, manila folder (see figure 2). Created by Anne Epstein Bavarian several years ago, this transparency's usefulness, simple and inexpensive construction, and convenient storability immediately impressed me.

Classroom Use

In use on the overhead projector, the teacher (or a student) slides one or more of the strips through the slots, replacing components of the model sentence with new ones. A wide variety of constructions can be practiced this way. For example, all of the *wh-* interrogatives (*who, what, where, when, why*) may be used. The whimsical and unlikely combinations which arise will maintain good class attention. Students will quickly see the value in being able to use them. Question words can get important answers quickly.

Students will find they need to pay close attention as their teacher or peer asks "Who went to Europe?" or "Why did she go to the moon?" or perhaps "When did they go?" or "Where will they go?"

Construction

An ordinary, manila folder is used as both a transparency "frame" and a component. To construct this device, on the front side of the folder only, cut slots to accept and guide the individual strips of transparency film. (The dimensions of these slots will depend upon the amount of space required by words on the transparency produced.) The separate slots allow the instructor to manipulate each "filmstrip" separately. Only the large center slot is cut through both sides of the manila folder. This feature allows projection of only one item from each filmstrip at a time, forming a complete sentence.

Once the slots are cut, the folder is taped at the sides, stapled, or cemented with white glue. Cement stiffens the unit and facilitates handling it. Only a small amount is needed. Because of the porous nature of the cardboard, white glue will adhere almost instantly.

Use a permanent marking pen on an ordinary page protector to make a transparency if a thermal transparency making machine is not available. Lettering should be large enough to be easily read from the back of the room by all students.

Additional lengths of plastic or any suitable material can be taped to the ends of each strip to provide a means for pulling the filmstrips back and forth.

Of course, this device can also be used by small groups of two or three students at their desks, if it is constructed with paper rather than transparent inserts.

THE FARMER	WENT	TO TOKYO	TO EAT A CHEAP MEAL	YESTERDAY
A DOCTOR	SWAM	TO A BANK	TO BUY A NEW CAR	2 HOURS AGO
THE STUDENT	FLEW	TO EUROPE	TO DRINK BAD WHISKEY	2 DAYS AGO
THE MOTHER	RAN	TO TEXAS	TO READ THE FIRST CHAPTER	LAST YEAR
A TEACHER	SWAM	TO A STAR	TO VISIT FRIENDS	LAST MONTH

Figure 1. Sample transparency master

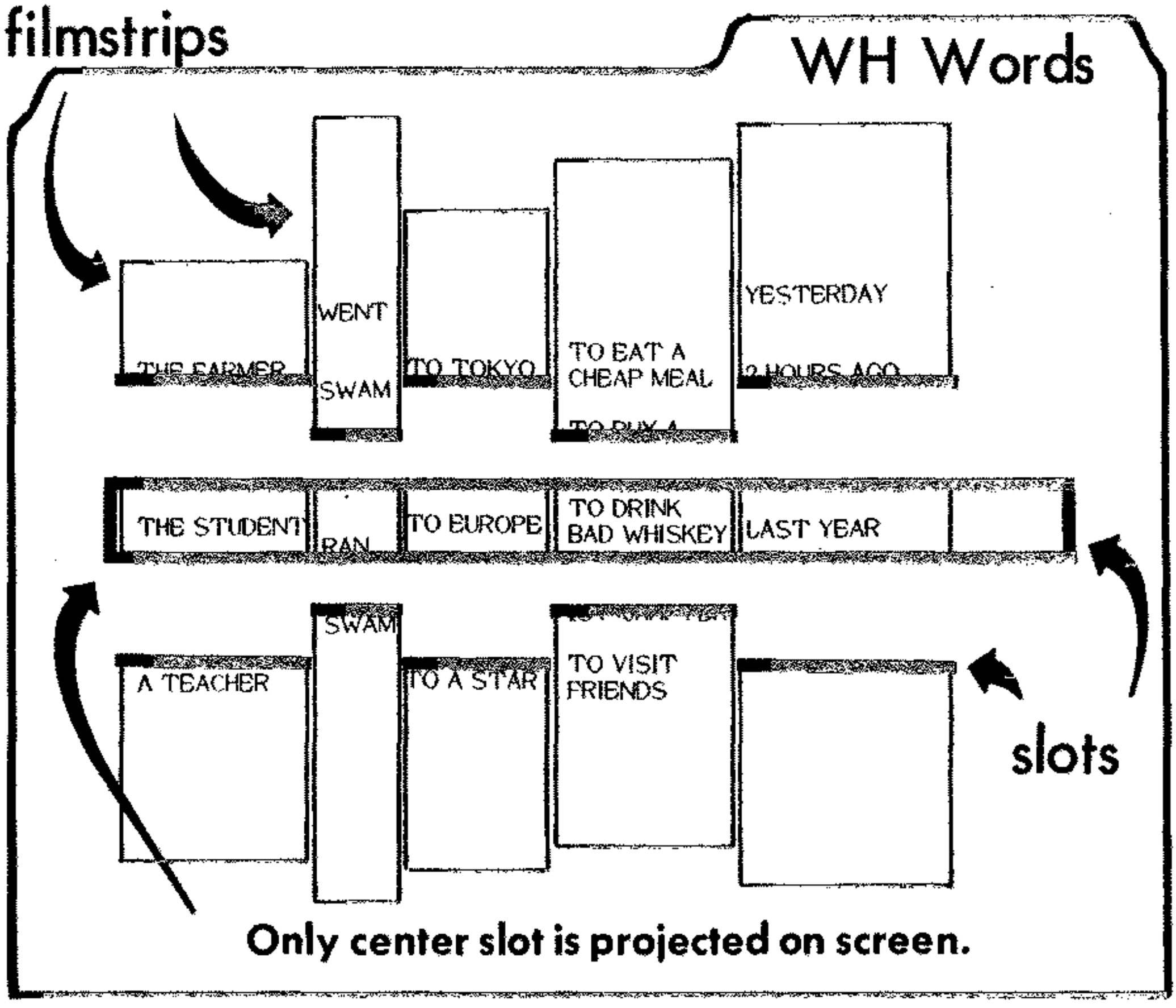

Figure 2. The finished, assembled transparency

If you don't have an overhead projector, this device could also be constructed from a large sheet of paper or cardboard (substituting for the folder) and adding machine paper (substituting for the filmstrips). In this way, the device becomes a wall chart with lettering large enough to be read from the entire classroom without the need for a projector. When finished, this chart could easily be folded or rolled for storage.