

INSTRUCTIONS FOR "VOLATS" (VOCABULARY LEARNING & TESTING SYSTEM)(1) GENERAL REMARKS

Do not be misled by the apparent simplicity of this system. It depends for its efficacy less on its structure than on the strict regularity of its implementation. This, its crucial component, cannot be built into the system except by devoting a supervised class period to it every day. Rather than waste class time in this way, the actual implementation of the system will be left to you to timetable and observe faithfully.

The system can be applied to other things than vocabulary learning. Any information that is reducible to unique equations can be learned and tested by this system. It can be used for model sentences illustrating syntactic structures, idioms etc. It can be used for learning radical-numbers.

It could even be applied, for instance, to pre-examination revision of non-language parts of the course, particularly to skeleton answers to possible questions on history, literature etc. The slips in this case would bear on the face side the question and on the reverse side an outline of the answer consisting of keywords and any necessary mnemonics.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the secret of success in this system (as in Oriental martial arts, calligraphy, meditation etc) is the regular daily ritual sustained over a long period. The only possible reason for failure is not lack of ability or powers of concentration but failure to keep up the daily repetition. If only this can be achieved, you will have a powerful tool for any kind of learning.

(2) PURPOSE

The purpose of VOLATS is to provide you with a simple, self-operating mechanism that will enable you to keep a permanent check on your vocabulary learning and retention. It is not in itself a complete learning-system, of course, since vocabulary is best learned in context. It is intended to help you keep under control and reduce in volume those characters and vocabulary items that are giving you the most trouble. It will keep your attention on the problem-words rather than on words which you learn easily. What you do about these problem-words may or may not fall within the scope of VOLATS, but at least you will know which they are. Some procedures that can be applied to the problem words are:

- (a) Devise mnemonics and add these to the slips (reverse side);
- (b) Collect examples from dictionaries such as Fred Wang, Dict. of Spoken Chinese, Daily Use, etc, on numbered pages of a notebook, with a reference to the page-number entered on the slip;
- (c) Use the column method;
- (d) Display them in your room.

Although the primary purpose of VOLATS is testing and control, it was discovered early on that there is a valuable spin-off: by regularly testing vocabulary, you find that you are learning it without actually trying. The system has been tested on at least four languages besides Chinese and found to be surprisingly effective.

(3) EQUIPMENT

- (a) 17 large guidecards (LGs) of which the first is labelled 'IN' and the last is labelled 'OUT'.
- (b) 156 small guidecards (SGs) arranged between the LGs as follows (/ = LG, fig. = number of SGs):-

/ 1/1/1/1/1/1/5/5/5/5/5/25/25/25/25/25/  
IN OUT

Guidecards are made from 5"x3" record-cards as follows: LG is 3" wide x 3½" high; SG is a half-card, i.e. 2½" wide x 3" high.

- (c) An appropriate number of slips of paper 2¾" square.
- (d) A long narrow box to hold slips and cards (allow 2" for the cards and 4" per thousand slips).

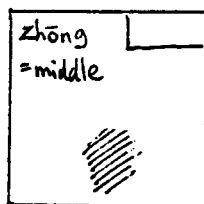
The slips may be obtained from A. C. Barnes; the current price is 40 p per thou-

sand. 5x3 record cards may be obtained from any stationers; you will need 100.

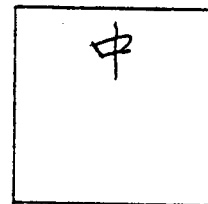
#### (4) OPERATION

(a) PREPARATION OF SLIPS. At the top of side 1 write the 'question' or 'stimulus'. Leave sufficient space at top right of slip to add (at a later date) the date the slip passes 'OUT'. At the bottom of this side you may, if you wish, apply black crayon or whatever to prevent 'show-through' from the other side and inadvertent 'cheating'. Rotate the slip 180° on a horizontal axis and at the top of the other side write the 'response'. When the slip enters the system, side 1 will face the operator. It will probably be found most convenient to prepare slips in advance (e.g. a week's supply at a time) and keep them in reserve. Do not make the mistake of putting a large number into the system one day and nothing on succeeding days. A regular daily input of (say) 5 makes for smooth throughput and ease of calculation of efficiency of throughput (if desired).

Side 1



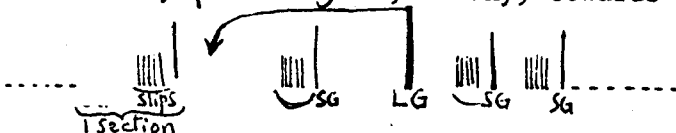
Side 2 (inverted)



#### (b) DAILY INPUT, TESTING, SORTING and OUTPUT.

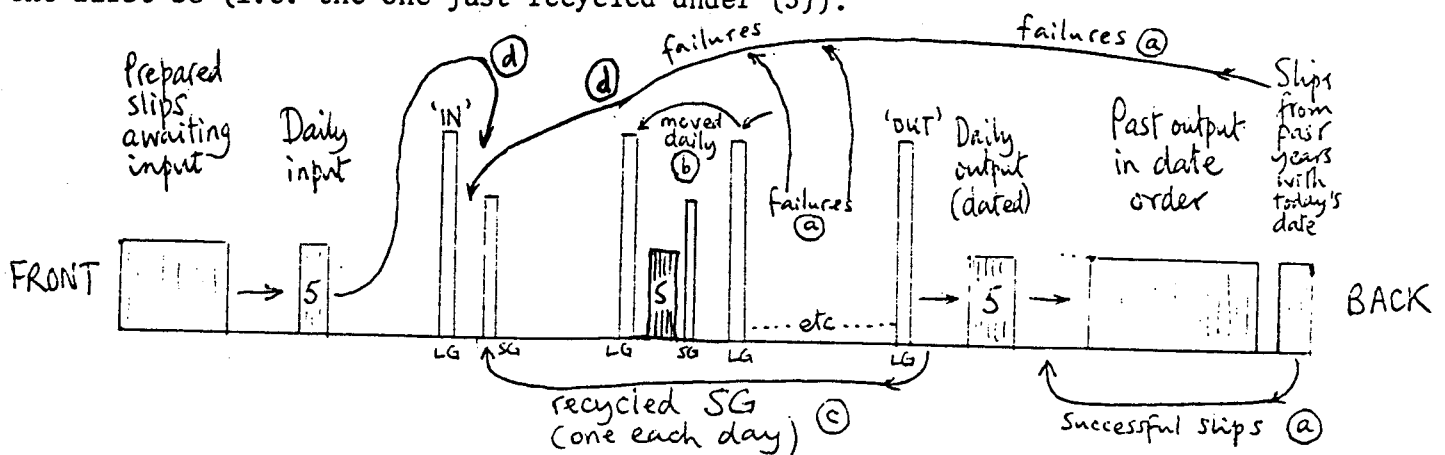
(1) Beginning at the front (the 'IN' card), test the slips between each LG and the immediately following SG. (If the system has been in use 17 months or more, test also those (one-year-old) slips that bear today's date: if failures, demote as usual; if successful, place immediately after 'OUT'.) Do not test any other slips. The testing process involves (a) looking at side 1 of slip, (b) writing down what one thinks will be on the other side, and (c) turning over the slip and checking one's supposition. Remove failures to one side; leave successful slips where they are.

(2) Move each of the LGs (except 'IN') one section (i.e. one SG and the slips immediately preceding it, if any) towards the front:-



(3) This will bring one SG past 'OUT'. Write date (day and month only) on top right-hand corner of any accompanying slips (as from day 155) and leave them there, but recycle this SG only by bringing it back to a position immediately behind 'IN'.

(4) Place failed slips, together with 5 new slips from those awaiting input, before the first SG (i.e. the one just recycled under (3)).



Side-view of system in full operation.