

Portfolio Folder

by Ronald Schmidt-Fajlik

A portfolio folder is not only a practical way to help students organize their handouts, but also an excellent way to initiate student interest in studying English and learning about another culture.

Teachers often give students handouts as a way to supplement textbook material. Students usually have no way to organize such handouts. The handouts are often thrown in their desk or haphazardly filed in notebooks. This makes it difficult for students to refer to such handouts at a future date as they can become misplaced. A folder assists students in organizing important handouts for future reference. The folder may also serve as a type of assessment portfolio as students may submit the folder and its contents as a record of student work based on the handout material.

The folder is designed to be a class project. It is recommended that instructions be given in simple English either orally at each step of construction, or an instruction sheet be provided supported by visuals (such as the diagram below so that students may work on their own. Once the appropriate vocabulary has been explained to students, instructions may be given using imperatives such as 'meas-

ure the paper', 'cut the paper', 'fold the paper', etc. which may be an excellent way to introduce such verbs and the sentence order in which they are used.

The folder

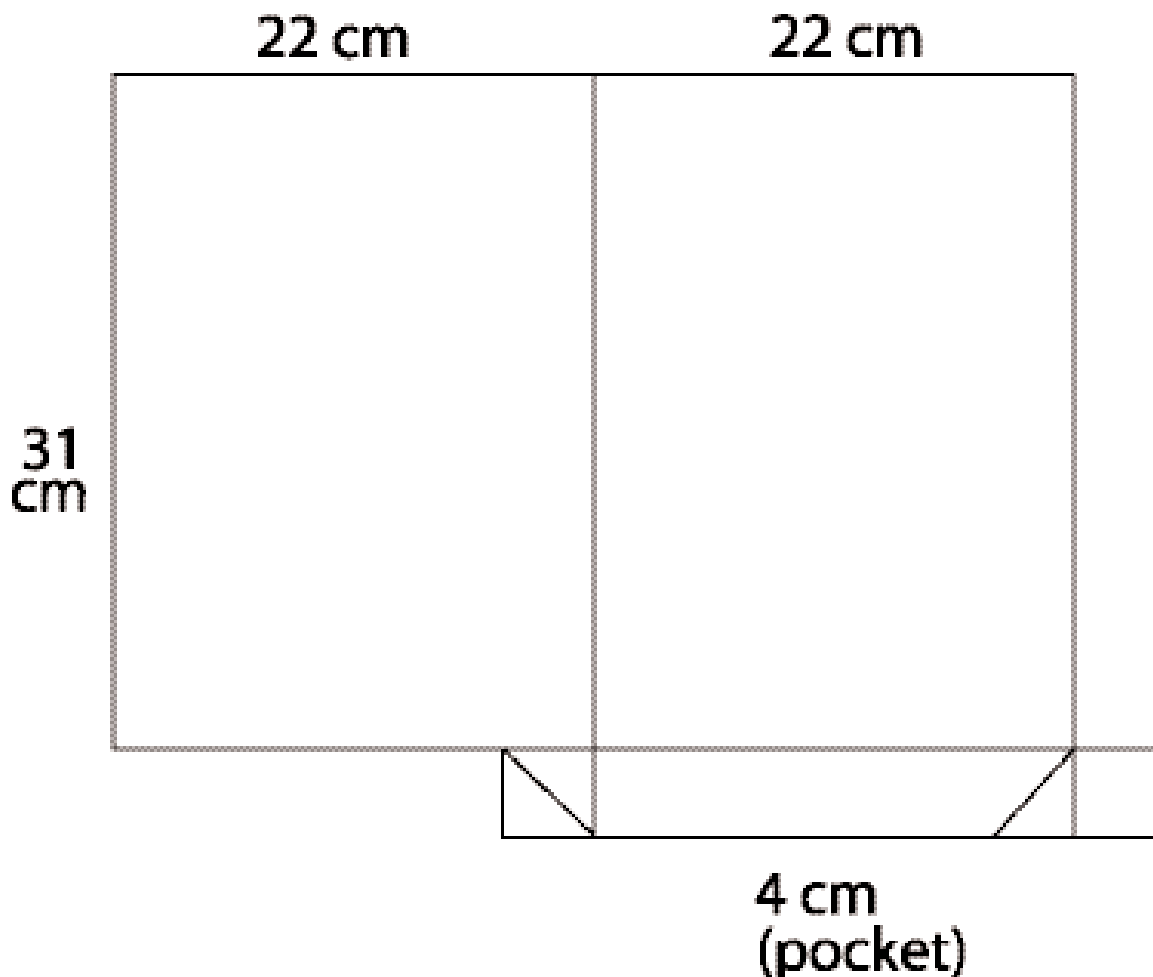
The folder is made from posterboard or any other stiff paper easily obtained from a local stationary shop. The following instructions and diagram may be changed or adapted based on class needs. Although the dimensions given below are appropriate for A4 sized handouts, they may be altered to accommodate the size of handout which students are given.

1. Cut the poster board to the dimensions shown in the figure.

Cover Work

Once the basic shape (including tabs for the pocket) has been cut out, students work on the really fun part: the cover. This is to be completed before folding and gluing the pocket so that a flat surface is retained during pasting of the cover work.

In creating the cover work, absolutely no artistic experi-



ence is required, so everyone has an equal chance to complete the project successfully. The students are to create a collage of pictures and drawings from English magazines. The teacher should bring to class an adequate supply of magazines that they no longer need (students could also be encouraged to bring in English magazines, books, pictures etc.). Music and fashion magazines prove popular with high school students, as they are lively and colourful. Sports magazines, news magazines, or any other type of English magazine may also be used. The material not only introduces students to the celebrities of another culture, but also introduces students to the thoughts of another culture based on its use of images, words, and symbols. As Japan is a homogeneous society, using pictures of people from English speaking countries may also assist students in a better understanding of English speaking culture and society as these magazines often include pictures of people of various ethnic backgrounds, which emphasizes the multicultural aspect of many English speaking countries.

The students first select a variety of pictures and paste them down. The idea is to create a collage with many overlapping elements. Once students have covered their portfolio cover with various visuals, they are then asked to look for interesting words and phrases to paste down over top the pictures. As magazines use fonts of various styles and sizes, this adds further interest to the cover work. In my experience I found that students often asked for the meaning of words and phrases that they had come across, demonstrating the motivating aspect of the project in developing student interest in studying English.

Completing the Folder

Once the pasted material has dried, the pocket may be completed. Cut and fold the tabs. Fold the pocket. Glue the tabs down. Place a heavy object (such as a book) over the tabs during drying. Once the pocket has dried, fold the cover in half. The folder is ready for use! Once completed, students may display their folders to show their class-

mates. The covers may also serve as a basis for discussion to further stimulate student interest.

Evaluation

The folders may be used as part of student evaluation. This may be in terms of a combination of degree of involvement in the project (based on class observation), the variety of visuals and English text used, and overall design.

Conclusion

The portfolio folder provides a

convenient way to store handouts as well as serving to initiate student interest in studying English. Students are also given an opportunity to become more aware of the cultural aspects of English speaking society by being exposed to various images and uses of language in the visual material that they choose. I found that in assigning the project to a 2nd year Japanese high school class, student interest in studying English was greatly improved during and after completion of the project. ETJ