

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is designed to increase your accuracy in pronunciation. It is divided into three main sections: Sounds, Tones, and Mastery Drills. The first section covers the basic sounds of Chinese, explaining all initial and final sounds found in *pīnyīn*, China's official system of romanization. It also enumerates and explains several problematic initials and finals that result from the structure of *pīnyīn*. The section on tones gives a brief yet comprehensive overview of the five tones in Chinese, along with explanation on rules for tone marks and common tone changes.

The final section is the main emphasis of this booklet. It contains permutations for two- and three-tone combinations, allowing you to practice tones in a more real-to-life setting.

That is, the ability to say a tone correctly in isolation is one thing, but to be accurate in the flow of speech is a more difficult challenge. These permutations will train you to get to that level. Furthermore, actual terms and phrases in Chinese are used, with English translations provided to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. This section also contains practices for eleven difficult sound pairs that non-native speakers often times find difficult to master.

The booklet has a total of 40 practice units, comprising both explanations and drills. Each drill is indicated by a black numbered dot in the left margin. A practice schedule is provided at the end of the booklet that systematically guides you through the practice units in a variegated manner. The schedule assumes a five-minute practice time,

five days per week for one year. At first glance, this might seem like a lot of practice for pronunciation. However, accent and pronunciation play a more important role in building relationships than does grammar. Grammar shows your command of the language. Accent and pronunciation identify you socially, and even politically. Imagine meeting a stranger in a foreign country. If that stranger speaks with any other accent than yours, it marks the stranger as a “foreigner” or an “other.” Thus, the better your accent and pronunciation, the better able you will be to accomplish your purposes in learning Chinese.

One note on tones: The neutral tone is included in the two-tone combinations; however, it is not included in the permutations with three tones. A small

handful of phrases in that section might be pronounced commonly with a neutral tone in northern China, the seat of standard Mandarin; however, full tones were used to facilitate practice in the drills.