

## AUTHOR'S FORWARD

Everyone needs the dictionary to verify pronunciation and spelling, apart from getting definitions. Curiously, these key dictionary skills are rarely taught below college level, and then essentially to theatre and education majors.

This book and course were created for the express purpose of simplifying (and so, encouraging) the teaching/learning of standard American-English pronunciation using dictionary diacritical codes. Its content and structure were developed and refined in the classrooms of Truman College (one of the City Colleges of Chicago), in the Uptown community of Chicago. Uptown is a magnet for immigrant and refugee populations in the Midwest, and Truman College has the largest concentration of non-native students in the city and state, offering one of the nation's broadest programs targeting this special population.

In addition to its proved usefulness with adult non-native speakers, a number of professionals have suggested that the book and course also seem appropriate for Americans who speak—and wish to change—non-standard dialects. The preliminary trials indicate that it will work for native speakers with only minor adjustments, already outlined in the text.

Several things are unique with this book. First, it permits volunteers to tutor standard pronunciation and related conversational English skills even without prior teaching experience or professional background in linguistics. Second, it permits those volunteers to tutor groups of up to ten students, although one-to-one arrangements are still prevalent in volunteer networks. Third, the course teaches the pronunciation skills comprehensively, so no further classroom work is needed: the student is self-sufficient in vocabulary development ever after. That promotes self-confidence and self-reliance. Fourth, its whole-language approach to the pronunciation focus allows it to hone related skills in conversation, leading to improved comprehension and fluency, as well.

As a result, employers, ethnic and religious organizations, public agencies, unions, and even concerned individuals can take direct action in an area previously considered prohibitively complex for non-professionals. Moreover by orienting tutors as well as by tutoring students, community colleges can multiply the effects and benefits of existing budgets and resources.

There is abundant need for a quantum growth in capability. Although numerous literacy organizations are already functioning across the country, all the efforts of educational systems and volunteer networks *together* are now reaching about ten percent of the estimated need, according to reports quoted by the Business Council for Effective Literacy.

Because the Federal government (and therefore most states and interested foundations) has funded only basic levels of reading/writing—that is, through Grade 5.9, or fifth grade completed—inadequacy is built into the present system. Guidelines for the Amnesty program have not been announced as of press time.

Consequently, those who attain a sixth grade level or more often must attend formal classes at their own expense or remain forever at marginal levels of competency. Since many persons with marginal communication skills are already working long hours at low-paying jobs *because of language handicaps*, formal classes are not a realistic alternative.

Traditional policies and approaches are being reassessed at many levels at present. New approaches are certain to result.

Meanwhile, in its own area of delivering pronunciation skills—and so, self-sufficiency in vocabulary development—*Practical Word Power* is a proved alternative that can make a difference. . . now!

Richard Cavalier