The following illustration of European Portuguese is based on the Lisbon dialect. The text is transcribed from a recording made by a female native speaker of Lisbon in her mid-forties, speaking in a style that may be described as educated colloquial. All phonemes of European Portuguese are illustrated in the passage unless otherwise noted.

European Portuguese comprises several regional accents, including those of the archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores. The Lisbon accent is one of the two national standard varieties in mainland Portugal, the second being that spoken in the area of the city of Coimbra.

The language is characterized by a velarized resonance superimposed on both vowels and consonants, in that the usual posture of the tongue body is retracted and raised. In addition, an overall rather lax articulation further affects vowel quality and voicing, as well as the articulation and voicing of voiced consonants. These features are not, it should be pointed out, exclusive to informal or careless speech and, together with specific prosodic patterns, they constitute the most striking characteristic distinguishing European from Brazilian accents of Portuguese.

### Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Palato-alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p b</td>
<td>t d</td>
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<td></td>
<td>k g</td>
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<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>n</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>s z</td>
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<td>θ</td>
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<td>Tap</td>
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<td>Lateral Approximant</td>
<td>l</td>
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<td>ξ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

|  |  |  |  |  | k  | katu cacto 'cactus' |
| b  | batu bato 'I strike' | d  | datu dado 'I date' | g  | 'gatu gato 'cat' (m) | p  | pinha pine 'pine cone' |
| m  | matu mato 'I kill' | n  | nato nato 'innate' (m) |  |  | f  | fato chato 'flat' (m) |
| f  | fatu vinha 'vinho' | s  | kazu caso 'I marry' |  |  |  |  |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ɪ 'pire pira ‘pyre’</th>
<th>k 'ratu rato ‘mouse’ (m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I 'linha linha ‘line’</td>
<td>A 'piilha pilha ‘battery’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vowels**

European Portuguese has 14 monophthongs, 9 oral and 5 nasalized. These vowels are usually described using four values for height and three for backness. Their positions are shown on the chart below according to the values widely agreed on in the literature, with the exception of the vowel /ui/. This vowel, which occurs only in unstressed syllables, is often represented as /ə/ but does not correspond to the mid central quality associated with *schwa*. It is a fronted and lowered high back unrounded vowel; hence the symbol chosen here for its transcription. The chart represents target articulations of the vowels, which are normally ‘undershot’ in connected speech, resulting in more centralized qualities.

**Oral vowels**

\[\begin{array}{lll}
i & vi & ‘saw’ (1 sg) 
\epsilon & ve & ‘see’ (3 sg) 
\epsilon & se & ‘cathedral’ 
a & va & ‘go’ (3 sg) 
\sigma & so & ‘alone’ 
o & sou & ‘I am’ 
\text{mudo} & mudo & ‘mute’ (m) 
\text{pagar} & pagar & ‘to pay’ 
\text{pegar} & pagar & ‘to grip’ 
\end{array}\]

**Nasalized vowels**

\[\begin{array}{ll}
\text{i} & \text{vim} & ‘came’ (1 sg) 
\text{e} & \text{etro} & ‘enter’ (1 sg) 
\text{etru} & \text{antro} & ‘den’ 
\text{o} & \text{som} & ‘sound’ (n) 
\text{mudo} & \text{mundo} & ‘world’ 
\end{array}\]

**Diphthongs**

There are 14 diphthongs, 10 oral and 4 nasalized, as shown below. The diphthongs /ei/, /oi/ do not occur in the transcribed passage.

\[\begin{array}{lll}
\text{e} & \text{ai} & anéis ‘rings’ (n) 
\text{i} & \text{ai} & sai ‘go out’ (3 sg) 
\text{e} & \text{ei} & sei ‘know’ (1 sg) 
\text{i} & \text{oi} & mói ‘grind’ (3 sg) 
\text{oi} & \text{moi} & moita ‘thicker’ 
\end{array}\]
ui  v'nuif  anuis  ‘agree’ (2 sg)

iu  viu  viu  ‘saw’ (3 sg)

eu  meu  meu  ‘mine’ (poss m)

êu  veu  véu  ‘veil’

au  mau  mau  ‘bad’ (m sg)

êi  sêi  cem  ‘hundred’

ði  v'noif  anois  ‘dwarves’ (m)

ûi  'muítu  muita  ‘much, many’ (f)

êu  mêu  mão  ‘hand’ (n)

Conventions
Except in word-initial position (and after nasalized vowels), the voiced plosives /b, d, g/ are normally pronounced as the fricatives [β, ð, ɣ]. /ʃ, ʒ/ are weakly fricated in syllable-final position. Syllable-final /ʃ/ occurs as [ʒ] before a voiced consonant (except before /ʒ/ itself, where it is deleted), and as [z] before a syllable-initial vowel both within and across word boundaries, as in [k'ual duʒ doiz ɛɾo] qual dos dois era o ‘which of the two (m) was the (m)’ in the transcribed passage. /l/ is velarized in all its occurrences.

/l/ does not occur in word-initial position, and /p, k/ only occur initially in a few borrowed words, and in the case of /k/ also in the clitic pronoun /kui/ lhe ‘to him/her/it’ and all the forms in its paradigm.

All vowels have lower and more retracted allophones before /l/, and higher and more advanced allophones before alveolar, palato-alveolar or palatal consonants. /u/ and unstressed /e, u/ are voiceless in word-final position.

The end-points of the diphthongs, although transcribed [i] and [u], tend to be more central and, in the case of [u], less strongly rounded than these symbols suggest. The diphthong /ei/ in the Lisbon accent is tending towards a retracted onset [ɛi] or [aɪ]. In some words the offglide has been altogether lost, as in the pronunciation of the word /pejtu/ peixe ‘fish (n)’ as [peʃ].

In a vowel sequence in which the first vowel is an unstressed /i/ or /u/ and the second a stressed vowel, the first vowel may lose its syllabic identity, e.g. /ri'val/ real ‘real’ can be pronounced as a monosyllable, [ʁi'val], and /mu'idB/ moída ‘ground’ (adj, f) as [mɯide].

Prosody
Lexical stress
Lexical stress is distinctive. Stress provides very productive class-changing contrasts, such as those between nouns and verbs in pairs like [duvidB] dúvida ‘doubt (n), [du'vidB] duvida ‘doubt (v, 3 sg)’. Less frequently, words in the same class contrast in stress, e.g. the nouns [ 'tunel] túnel ‘tunnel’, [tu'nel] tonel ‘wine cask’.  

Most Portuguese words are stressed on the penultimate syllable, although lexical stress may fall on any of the last three syllables of the word, and even on the fourth from last in the case of verbal forms with enclitic personal pronouns such as [ʃɐ'mavemɐ[tɐu], chamávamos-te ‘we called you (sg)’, [ɛkɾɐ'bavəsɐwɔtɐu] acabava-se-lhe ‘he/she/it ran out of’. Syllables with diphthongs not bearing primary stress are assigned a secondary stress, e.g. [au'tɛtiku] autêntico ‘authentic (m sg)’.

Rhythm, vowel reduction and devoicing
European Portuguese is a stress-timed language with vowel reduction in unstressed syllables. In connected speech, unstressed vowels are either centralized or altogether omitted, and consonants and vowels in unstressed positions may be devoiced (Mateus 1975; Willis 1971). Examples in the transcribed passage include /'e'o/voltu/, phonetically [ʊɿ volt], envolto ‘wrapped (m)’ and /duziʃ'tiul/ [dʒʃ][tʃu] desistiu ‘gave up’ (3 sg), where a potentially trisyllabic word is reduced to a monosyllable with a complex onset.

Intonation
Portuguese intonation can be analyzed as a set of nuclear tones associated with phrase-length intonation groups. The nuclear tones fall on a stressed syllable, typically the last stressed syllable in the intonation group. If the nuclear syllable is not the last syllable in the group, the nuclear pitch movement continues on any following weak syllables. Normally, such weak syllables are only pronounced when required for completion of an intonational pattern.

There are six main nuclear tones in Portuguese, three falling, two rising, and a rise-fall. They are transcribed here with ‘tone letters’ placed before the nuclear syllable. The low fall (A) is the neutral tone for statements and question-word questions; a high fall (N) is generally associated with emphasis; an extra-low fall is used in exclamations and commands. The low rise (M) is the typical tone for yes/no questions, and marks continuation or incompleteness in discourse. The high rise (A) is associated with echo questions or with questions requiring repetition of a previous utterance. The rise-fall (N) typically marks implication and reserve. Only the low fall and low rise occur in the transcribed passage. Cruz-Ferreira (1998) provides a more comprehensive outline of the prosodic system.

Transcription of recorded passage
The transcription provided below is narrow in certain respects, and includes the representation of sandhi phenomena (Herslund 1986), for example, in line 1 where [ɛɾɔ] is the contraction of /ɛɾə u/, and of pitch excursions. Unstressed syllables which maintain their target vowel qualities are not transcribed with a secondary stress; secondary stress is shown only with diphthongs. Upstepped syllables are followed by low or falling syllables, downstepped syllables by low or rising syllables. Since upstep and downstep do not necessarily occur on a stressed syllable, all primary stresses not indicated by a tone mark are shown in the transcription.
u Ṯvētu 'nort Ṯi u sol ẓdkutī, ṭi kwal duiz Ṯero maij Ṯfortu | Ṯkū̆du susur'deu pe'sar Ṯ vie'țētu Ṯī Ṯvolt nume Ṯkapa || au Ṯvelu | Ṯpōi Ṯbis diš斗志 o Ṯi 'komu Ṯkēl kw prī'meiru kōs'gis obrīgar u vie'țētu Ṯ tīraru a Ṯkapa | srie kōsiduṭradu u maij Ṯfortu || u Ṯvētu 'nortu kumurso a su'praru kō 'muīte Ṯfurin | maʃ Ṯkū̆tu maij su'pravau | maiz Ṯu vie'țētu si ekōʃyğava su'e Ṯkapa | Ṯte Ṯkiu 'vētu 'nortu Ṯđżṭiu || Ṯu sol brī'yọ ẹtēu kō 'todu Ṯplēldor | i Ṯimudiatetmēt u vie'țētu tīro a Ṯkapa || u Ṯvētu 'nortu tev Ṯsi du ụ ụkūnurṭser Ṯ supuriuridad Ṯdu Ṯsol ||

Orthographic version

O vento norte e o sol discutiam qual dos dois era o mais forte, quando sucedeu passar um viajante envolto numa capa. Ao vê-lo, pôem-se de acordo em como aquele que primeiro conseguisse obrigar o viajante a tirar a capa seria considerado o mais forte. O vento norte começou a soprar com muita fúria, mas quanto mais soprava, mais o viajante se aconchegava à sua capa, até que o vento norte desistiu. O sol brilhou então com todo o esplendor, e imediatamente o viajante tirou a capa. O vento norte teve assim de reconhecer a superioridade do sol.

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References


