Introduction

To the Teacher

Whoever teaches foreign languages knows that there are no magical formulas. Written exercises, oral practice, audiovisual and audio-oral resources, structural drills, communicative approaches—all these are useful, but none provides “the solution.” In general, teachers make use of each method as they feel it to be appropriate. No substitute has been devised for the resourceful teacher seconded by the intelligent, hard-working student.

Is there a methodology that harmonizes perfectly with the current linguistic theories? My position, amply borne out by classroom experience, can be expressed in Anna Ciliberti’s words: “The best methodology, the one that yields the most satisfactory results, is always a mixed methodology, difficult to define because its success dwells in the details, in the dosage, in flexibility . . .—features that are difficult to generalize” (Manuale di Glottodidattica [Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1994], 83; my translation). This does not mean that theory is irrelevant, just that its use in our activities must always be subordinated to the goals of language teaching. Ultimately every procedure will stand or fall according to the excellence of its results.

Since language teaching is essentially such a complex activity, teachers will do well to have at hand a variety of tools and to learn to employ them all. This book provides one such tool, aimed at perfecting students’ pronunciation of Portuguese by means of exercises and drills.
Principles Underlying the Approach

A pronunciation workbook Some authors question the utility of a pronunciation workbook, often because they misunderstand the claims of Communicative Language Teaching and related methodologies, which are in fact perfectly compatible with a focus on phonological and phonetic accuracy. As an auxiliary resource, a pronunciation workbook is a very useful tool in language teaching, particularly at the early stages. Pronunciation skills are basically automatic; that is, pronunciation is one of those things that you do not really know until you forget about them. The acquisition of correct pronunciation—especially by adults—requires a great deal of practice, and that is what the exercises in this book provide.

The contrastive approach The approach adopted here may be defined as contrastive—another of the formulas once thought to provide a basis for “the solution” and later, just as wrongly, rejected by some as useless. Contrary to what some authors apparently believe, contrastive analysis is not connected in any essential way to behaviorist theories in linguistics or in psychology. It is neutral as to theoretical approach and assumes simply that a main source of the difficulties an adult encounters when learning a new language is interference between the features of that language and comparable features of his or her native language. For instance, we can predict that an English speaker will have some trouble with the gender of nouns in Portuguese (e.g., mesa ‘table’ is feminine, whereas banco ‘bench’ is masculine); with the pronunciation of nasal vowels; and with the structure of the (colloquial) relative clause o casaco que eu viajei com ele ‘the coat I traveled with.’ Such potential points of difficulty are identified by means of a contrastive analysis of the two languages.

For all its relevance, contrastive analysis does not solve all problems. Not all points in which the two languages differ will automatically become learning problems, nor are contrastive differences the only source of problems. The task of learning pronunciation is complex, and we should never put our trust blindly on any one resource. There is nothing simple about language learning and teaching.

The contrastive analysis of the native language with the language being learned is, however, one of the resources that authors and teachers must use when trying to devise more efficient language courses. And exercises and drills are indispensable in enabling adult students (as opposed to children up to about twelve) to develop fluent speech habits in a foreign language.

Differences among languages Some authors hold that foreign-language learners tend to concentrate on the aspects of the language that are essential for communication
while neglecting the aspects that are of low utility. Apart from the vexed question of ascertaining with any reliability the utility of each element of a language, I think such an opinion is disproved in most cases. Rather, classroom experience shows that students are very often bogged down by those features of the foreign language that, regardless of their communicative utility, differ most markedly from related features in the students’ native language. If it were otherwise, there would be no explanation for the trouble that native Portuguese speakers have in learning to aspirate initial voiceless consonants or to pronounce correctly the r’s in sequences like Sorority Row, nor their ease in pronouncing the z in zebra—which is difficult for speakers of Spanish, a language that lacks the z sound. Such contrastive differences loom particularly large in the area of pronunciation.

Fossilization  A serious and often neglected aspect of language learning is that perfect pronunciation is not essential to communication; it is possible to speak and be understood in a foreign language even if one’s pronunciation only approximates a native speaker’s. As soon as basic communication is achieved, poor pronunciation habits may “fossilize”: “The learner stops at a certain level of competence, sufficient for the needs of communication, and does not progress any more.” Ciliberti explains further that fossilization “seems to be caused by the fact that the [learner] does not manage to analyze the incoming data, compare them with his own production, evaluate the differences, and finally formulate new hypotheses” (Manuale, 46, 174).

Fossilization helps account for the inability of many adults to acquire a good pronunciation of a foreign language. Doing serious work on pronunciation at the early stages of learning is important, therefore. If fossilization is inevitable, teachers must at least work with the students, and students must strive, to achieve pronunciation as close to native as possible.

Overall Organization

OVERVIEW

The sounds  The present workbook consists mainly of exercises. Complete descriptions and explanations of all sounds in Portuguese and their orthographic representations are found in chapters 2–6 of my Modern Portuguese: A Reference Grammar (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). Although Modern Portuguese may be consulted as a reference, this workbook can be used independently. All crucial information is provided in the workbook or in the recording.
A systematic approach  In this workbook the study of Brazilian Portuguese pronunciation is approached in a way that may be described as progressive and contrastive. Instead of beginning with complete sentences, that is, with all the phonetic and phonological complexity of normal utterances, I have classified every sound of the language, taking into account their clusterings and distribution in words and sentences, and introduced them according to the degree of difficulty they present to the English-speaking student.

The intersection of English and Portuguese  Students will begin practicing pronunciation with words composed of sounds that are virtually identical in English and Portuguese. In the first words, the sounds are placed in phonological environments as similar as possible to the ones in which they occur in English. New environments are gradually introduced. Eventually the student is learning Portuguese sounds that have no correlates in English.

Vowel and semivowel pronunciation  For unknown reasons, some sound sequences that are present in both English and Portuguese cause pronunciation problems for many English speakers. Let me mention in particular certain vowel and semivowel sequences like the ones found in maioría ‘majority’ and continuar ‘to continue.’ I include exercises to practice these.

DESIGN OF THE LESSONS

Each sound is the subject of special drills that emphasize listening and speaking in turn. The systematic approach enables students to build adequate pronunciation without overloading their attention with too many unknown sounds at once. The accompanying CD provides models of native speech to be imitated. It includes all Portuguese words and sentences given in the text. The thirty-two lessons provide a complete course in the pronunciation of Brazilian Portuguese.

• Lessons 1–3 focus on words made up of vowels and consonants identical in English and Portuguese. The exercises present them in phonological environments that match their distribution in English.
• Lesson 4 introduces the vowel [u], which is similar, but not identical to, English u in rule and thus requires special attention.
• Lesson 5 presents the vowel [ε], which is identical to English e in less but appears in different environments. In Portuguese it may, for instance, appear at the end of a word. After completing this lesson, students will have been introduced to all
sounds of the language, as well as all sound sequences that may be difficult to produce.

- Lessons 6–32 deal with intonation, stress, rhythm, and sound changes in context—the rest of the elements that, once learned, make speakers sound like native Brazilians.

In certain cases Portuguese utilizes phonological oppositions that are absent in English, and these are treated in special drills. An example is the opposition between oral versus nasal vowels, for which I provide exercises based on the perception and production of minimal pairs (mudo [u] / mundo [ũ], pau [aw] / pão [ãw], vi [i] / vim [ĩ], etc.).

**LEARNING THE SOUNDS**

At the head of each lesson is a list of the sounds or special contexts being introduced. The sounds are given in phonetic transcription and then briefly described. I compare them with English sounds where applicable. The descriptions, in boxes marked with a pushpin, are sometimes taken more or less verbatim from *Modern Portuguese*.

The explanations are to be taken only as memory aids. Students should work primarily by imitating the models provided on the CDs and by the teacher. No description or explanation can replace aural perception and memorization. Still, explanations can be useful given the difficulties students may experience in perceiving phonetic differences between the languages (the “blind spots” of aural perception)—as when an English-speaking student fails to perceive the difference between Portuguese oral and nasal vowels and thus cannot tell *vi* ‘(I) saw’ from *vim* ‘(I) came,’ or when the student pronounces the Portuguese *dei* (with a dental consonant) as identical to the English *day* (with an alveolar consonant). Here the role of the teacher is crucial, for students are often unable to overcome such deficiencies by themselves.

After the sound list, I give some words or short phrases to be pronounced in isolation following the recorded models. With each word or phrase is a phonetic transcription plus a gloss (sometimes very approximate). Where appropriate, I provide minimal pairs to help students perceive sound differences that do not occur in English.

Only one phonetic transcription is given for each form, but in some cases other pronunciations are also possible and equally acceptable. For instance, *reis* ‘kings’ and *rés* ‘head of cattle’ are assigned different pronunciations (['heːjs] and ['heːs],...
respectively); but for many speakers they are homophonous, both being pronounced [\textipa{\textasciitilde e\textipa{t}s}]. These alternatives are not given in the material included here; some of them are described in chapters 2–4 of Modern Portuguese.

Every lesson includes a set of sentences and phrases that provide models of intonation patterns and the way words are joined in normal speech, allowing students to practice fluency with longer stretches of discourse. The repetition of ready-made sentences, carefully planned to include only sounds already studied, has the advantage of freeing students’ attention to concentrate on the pronunciation, including intonation, following the recorded models.

In the first three lessons, I include some additional phrases and sentences for advanced students who already have some proficiency but still need to work on their pronunciation. Beginners should skip over all the exercises marked “For Advanced Students.”

**Learning the Dialogues**

To take the practice in normal speech one step further, I also provide, starting with Lesson 15, some short dialogues, to be memorized and performed as little plays by pairs of students. At that stage the student will probably be able to understand these dialogues (perhaps with the help of the teacher). A student should never learn by rote a text he or she does not fully understand. Learning a series of sounds by themselves leads nowhere.

Memorizing texts may be viewed by some as an old-fashioned activity, but in my opinion, it is very useful in acquiring good pronunciation of a foreign language. Memorization frees the mind from the burden of building the utterance and makes it easier for the student to focus on details of pronunciation—in particular, intonation, rhythm, and the fluent, natural linking of words in sentences.

All texts are recorded, providing a model to be followed. The first texts are planned to avoid some of the more difficult sounds and sound combinations, such as nasal vowels and diphthongs, triphthongs, and proparaoxytones, as well as very long words. These difficulties are gradually included in later texts, following their introduction in the lessons.

The texts are written in a rather colloquial register, to sound natural when spoken. In this I follow the general practice of modern Brazilian playwrights.

Some of the sentences in the lessons are used only in the spoken language (see chapter 1 of Modern Portuguese for the difference between spoken and written usage in Brazil). And if some of the sentences sound slightly funny, please remember that
they were composed under severe phonological limitations: each sentence contains only sounds studied in previous lessons. The same applies to the selection of isolated words, so in a few cases I had to depart from the criterion of selecting high-frequency items in order to attend to the needs of phonological illustration.

SLURRING

In the recording the exercises are limited largely to the pronunciation of isolated words and short phrases. But an isolated word is one thing, and a word in its discursive context is quite another, phonetically speaking. Brazilians, like English speakers, are much given to slurring words, especially where the speaker feels that the context is sufficiently informative. Since practice in slurring in a workbook like this one would complicate it unduly, I have compromised in favor of relatively careful pronunciation, the pronunciation accepted as correct by all speakers and normal in slower styles of speech. This workbook is aimed at developing basic pronunciation skills.

Yet it must be said that slurring—a characteristic feature of fast speech—is an important phenomenon. Here a few examples.

- A word like *canto* \( ['k\ddot{a}:tu] \), will be shortened to \( ['k\ddot{a}:] \) when used before the preposition *de* in a noun phrase, as in *canto de passarinho* ‘bird song,’ where it is pronounced \( ['k\ddot{a}:d\ddot{a}jipasa'ri\ddot{i}:ju] \), as if the phrase were *can'dipassarinho*.

- A long word like *eletrônico* may lose its two final (unstressed) syllables, which will at most be just whispered and nearly inaudible, because the word is long enough that the first part of the word is sufficient for identification.

- A word that was already employed in the discourse may occur in reduced form when repeated, because it is easily identified from context.

All these reductions are subject to rules, which may relate to syntax or pragmatics as well as phonology. Their inclusion in a workbook will have to wait until the subject is researched as it deserves.

In the listening-comprehension exercises students must bear in mind that a word is identified not merely by its phonetic and phonological shape but also by the predictions the hearers make as they listen. If I say in English *I’ll have a lettuce and tomato salad*, the word *salad* may sound like *solid*, yet no confusion will result, because hearers process the utterance at all levels simultaneously and know that *solid* would make no sense. The reading *solid* does not even arise in a hearer’s mind. This mechanism of processing utterances at several levels is essential; trying to identify...
every word on the basis of its phonetic shape alone would block comprehension. Therefore, even though this workbook provides a basis for developing listening comprehension, for all-round improvement students must work at other aspects of comprehension by other means—among other things, by the acquisition of a large vocabulary.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Variations in pronunciation Brazilian pronunciation is quite uniform across the country, but there are regional differences, which, though comparatively small, must be taken into account in teaching and learning Brazilian Portuguese. The basis for the exercises in this book is the pronunciation of schooled people in the Southeastern part of the country, which may be considered a compromise between the more extreme varieties of the Northeast and the South. It is also the pronunciation most commonly used in television and radio broadcasts. Since even in the Southeast pronunciation is not totally uniform, some decisions had to be made as to which variants to include in the exercises. Instead of registering all regional or social variants, which might lead students into confusion and uncertainty, I have systematically selected one form for each word. For instance, the pronunciation I give for syllable-final s is [s], instead of [ʃ], because the former is less limited regionally. Fortunately, the variation of pronunciation in Brazil is generally slight enough not to seriously impair comprehension even for beginning students.

Phonetic transcriptions The transcriptions given are broad phonetic; that is, without going into detail, they often represent even sound differences that are not linguistically significant (as with the difference in pronunciation of t as [tʃ] before [i], and as [t] elsewhere). Minor differences are best learned from live speakers or from recordings. Stressed vowels are all long, but I indicate their length, mainly as a reminder, because English-speaking students have a tendency to pronounce some of them short. (Lengths do vary slightly; final stressed vowels are usually shorter than nonfinal ones, for example. But such fine distinctions need not be represented in the transcriptions; they are better learned by ear.)

The phonetic transcriptions are enclosed in brackets, [ ]. Phonetic training is not necessary for students working with this book, however; the transcriptions are included as an aid for teachers, so that they can see at a glance the subject matter of each lesson. The students can work on the exercises with the sole help of the recording.
Spelling  Some Portuguese words are pronounced differently according to their syntactic environment and speed of delivery; for instance, não ‘do not’ is often pronounced num, and está ‘is’ is usually pronounced tá. I have indicated this only for está/tá. Não will sometimes be pronounced num in the dialogues, but the spelling is não in all cases.

How to Use the Workbook

OVERVIEW

This workbook is not meant to be the exclusive basis of a course. It is not advisable to spend a long time working only on formal aspects of the language such as pronunciation. Rather, the material found here should be used in class as a complement to more traditional studies based on texts not planned around phonology. As a supplement, then, is the best way to make use of this workbook, and this is also the reason for minimal explanations. The purpose is not to teach Portuguese in toto but to perfect just one, if a very important, aspect of proficiency in the language.

WORKING WITHIN A TYPICAL SYLLABUS

The pronunciation workbook can be covered in about sixteen weeks (two lessons per week), taking up no more than fifteen to twenty minutes per class. Additional time will be spent self-teaching outside class with help of the recording. When working with the listening drills in class, the teacher should supplement the recording with his or her own pronunciation; this, besides lending liveliness to the class, has the advantage of exposing the students to differences in voice, style of pronunciation, and perhaps regional speech. It is also possible to work through the material by oneself, missing, of course, the advantages provided by the live interchange with the teacher and among the students (see below, Tips for the Self-Teaching Student).

The workbook can be used with beginning and intermediate students, along with a regular handbook, and with advanced students who need remedial work in pronunciation. It is highly desirable to work on pronunciation when first taking up the study of the language in order to avoid establishing poor pronunciation habits, which may prove difficult to eradicate afterward (the “fossilization” phenomenon, mentioned above). When working in class, the teacher can control the accuracy of the students’ reproduction of the pronunciation models.
THE EXERCISES

I have devised four main types of exercises:

• Isolated words and phrases introduce each sound and sound sequence.
• Sentences help the development of fluency and the acquisition of intonation patterns.
• Minimal pairs help students who have trouble making phonological distinctions that are present in Portuguese but not in English.
• Dialogues provide examples of speech used in normal situations, with (almost) every difficulty occurring in the text as happens in real-life conversation.

How much time is spent on each type of exercise will depend on the needs and deficiencies of individual students. Beginning students should be exposed to the whole course, following the lessons in order. For remedial work a previous diagnosis is advisable.

Lessons 1–3 As mentioned above, exercises in the first three lessons are arranged into two stages to serve intermediate and advanced students as well as beginners. Those marked “For Advanced Students” include whole sentences and phrases and are planned for the use of students who already have some proficiency with the language but still need to work on pronunciation. Beginning students should skip over all exercises so marked.

Lessons 4–32 After Lesson 4, the distinction between exercises for beginning and advanced students is no longer maintained. All students can do all the exercises, regardless of their degree of fluency in the language.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPEITION

Sentences and dialogues With the sentences and the dialogues the first step is to understand their meaning. There are many ways to achieve comprehension, and teachers will use the methods they prefer. Once a dialogue is properly understood, the student should listen to it several times to memorize the words and their pronunciation. The idea is to free the student both from the effort of deciphering the text and from the need to pronounce words seen for the first time. The student will thus be able to concentrate on pronunciation (including intonation) and expres-
sion, exactly as if learning a part in a play. In fact, the dialogues can be enacted as little dramas, thus adding interest to the study of pronunciation and encouraging the use of the language in communicatively natural situations. But the main function of the sentences and dialogues is for practicing comparatively long stretches of discourse, along with intonation and expression.

**Drills**  The drills are comparable to scales and arpeggios in music: they are necessary, but they are only a part of the study of the language. Just as a music student must play compositions as well as scales, the language student must repeat drills to learn pronunciation, as well as practice pronunciation in guided and free conversation. Just as in music, the command of expression in language depends crucially on the acquisition of automatisms.

**Studying with the CDs**

For technical reasons it was not possible to include all instructions in the recording, nor every exercise on a separate track. Instructions for doing the exercises, along with locations of the exercises on the CDs, are given in the workbook.

For each exercise, reference is given in the workbook to the CD and track on which it is recorded; thus, for the first exercise in Lesson 1:

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The recording of the exercise will be on track 2 of the first CD.

Students should locate the exercise on the CD, then look at the exercise in the workbook. The words and phrases are written out, along with instructions for doing the exercises. The instructions are numbered a, b, and c.

a. **Listen.**

This instruction is given in the workbook and in the recording. Students should do exactly as it says: listen to the recording. The speaker says the words, separated by pauses.
b. Listen again. Repeat aloud after each word.

This instruction is given in the workbook but not in the recording. Students should return to the beginning of track 2. This time they should listen to the words and repeat them in the pauses.

c. Read each word aloud.

This instruction is given only in the workbook. Students should repeat the words, remembering how they were pronounced in the recording.

Having several different drills for the same list of words allows for variations according to the needs of individual students. The teacher or the students themselves can evaluate what kinds of drills they need to spend time on.

Tips for the Self-Teaching Student

Although this book was planned as an aid to classroom work, it can also be used in self-teaching, by students who want to supplement their classes or their previously acquired knowledge of Portuguese with exercises leading to a better pronunciation of the language. Such students will depend on the recording. For them I have several pieces of advice.

Tip 1  Do not worry about the phonetic transcriptions. These are meant to orient the linguistically trained teacher (or student). They are not mandatory. If you are not proficient in phonetic symbols, feel free to disregard them. All the necessary information for correct pronunciation is on the CD.

Tip 2 I made every effort to provide easily understandable descriptions of each sound. But a sound cannot be adequately described in words, and I would suggest that you concentrate as much as possible on the models provided on the CD. You should also seize every opportunity to make verbal contact with native speakers. Brazilians are usually cheerful, talkative, and willing to criticize and correct their friends’ pronunciation.

Tip 3 When working with the CD, monitor your own reproduction of the model pronunciation—if possible, by recording it and playing it back. Especially in the first stages, try to be rigorous and demanding in order to develop the automatisms
that make up correct pronunciation. Making yourself understood is not enough! As you proceed, work on the production of longer and longer utterances—whole words, small phrases, sentences. Your aim should be to go through stretches of discourse fluently, without undue breaks or faulty intonation.

*Tip 4* Do not be afraid of learning Portuguese sentences by rote—the more such sentences you have stored in your memory, the easier it will be to apply the same sounds, junctures, and intonation contours to your own utterances.

*Tip 5* Finally, never work for a long time just on pronunciation. Rather, intersperse your pronunciation exercises with grammatical exercises and with lots of free conversation. In this way you will be able to develop good pronunciation of Portuguese—it is mainly a matter of patience and intelligent work.