Portuguese Pronunciation Guide 5

How Diacritical Marks Affect The Sound of Two Consecutive Vowels

Tony de Araújo

—tech writer

YouTube URL: https://youtu.be/wfu2Q5Wl0Z4

⏰ Timecodes ⏰

0:00 Diaresis in English
— how two dots mark separate syllables

0:50 Acute accent in Portuguese
— creating a hiatus between vowels

1:23 Pronouncing Araújo correctly in Portuguese

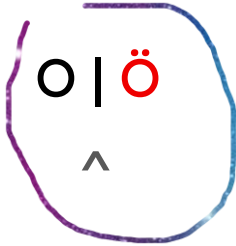1:42 Dual function of the acute accent in Portuguese words

2:12 Examples of words with vowel hiatus using the acute accent

3:36 Session summary — diphthongs vs. hiatus in Portuguese

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Portuguese acute mark secondary purpose

O | Ö

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diaresis.

Today we are going to learn about a secondary purpose of the Portuguese acute accent, besides being a *stress* mark.

In English, we sometimes use a mark called the *diaresis* (diaeresis) — which are two little dots over a vowel.

The dots tell us that this vowel is pronounced as a separate syllable from the previous vowel. You'll see it in older spellings like

naïve, *coöperate*, or *reëxamine.*

Of course, nowadays we usually write it differently:

naive, *co-operate* or *cooperate*,

and *re-examine.*

But the point in this session is that a mark can tell us to split two vowels into separate syllables.

Otherwise, the word might sound different.

For example,

In *coöperation*, that *c o ö* helps us say "co-op"

instead of "~~coop~~."

Now, let's look at Portuguese.

Here, an acute accent is normally used to show stress

— as in *matemática* or *José.*

But the acute accent can also

be used like the *diaresis* to break two vowels apart,

creating what we call a hiatus.

For example, in the Portuguese version of *naïve,*

we call attention to the syllable separation by

adding an acute accent to "í":

na-í-ve

Take my own last name as another example:

*Ara*ú*jo*

The word breaks down as *A-ra-ú-jo.*

Without the accent on *ú,*

the *au* would merge into a diphthong,

and the stress would fall on the *a.*

So, the accent forces us to pause: *a-ra-ú-jo.*

Here the acute accent does two things at once:

it separates the vowels

and marks the stress.

In the U.S., people often pronounce

my name as "Aroojo,"

which is the sound my kids grew up with.

But in Portuguese,

that little accent makes all the difference because

my real name is a-ú,

not oo.

Let's look at a few more examples:

País (country) → *pa-ís* (two syllables).

Compare it with *pais* (parents).

Same spelling, different sound.

In pais (parents) we have a diphthong ai,
and therefore, a <u>single syllable</u>, pais .

The stress is on "a", while "i" acts as a gliding sound.

But in País (country),

there are two syllables:

Pa-ís.

Let's look at a few more examples:

- *Sa**í**da* (exit) → *sa-í-da.*

- *Sa**ú**de* (health) → *sa-ú-de.*

- *Ju**í**z* (judge) → *ju-íz.*

- *Ru**í**do* (noise) → *ru-í-do.*

- *Cafe**í**na* (caffeine) → *ca-fe-í-na.*

- *Mi**ú**do* (kid) → *mi-ú-do.*

- And

  aí (there, where you are located) → *a-í*
  Without the accent, would sound like ai,

  single syllable, which means "ouch!"

In summary,

In the last session we learned how diphthongs
(two vowels in a single syllable, like *ai* in *vai*)
place the stress on the first vowel,
while the second vowel acts as a glide.

Vai is just one syllable.

If, however, we added an acute accent on *í,*
we'd conceptually break it into two syllables:

va-í.

That word doesn't exist, but it helps illustrate the idea.

We also looked at other diphthongs from the last session:

mais, sai, ai, eu, ui, and *fui.*

In this current session,

we've seen how some words

use the acute accent

to separate vowels into

distinct syllables

— creating a hiatus.

Examples include:

- *Sai* vs. Sa*í.*

  Sai is the third-person present tense of *sair* (to leave).

   while Sa*í* is the preterit perfect of the same verb.
   And two syllables: Sa *-í.*

- *Raínha* — here the *í* becomes its own syllable:
  ra-í-nha, instead of *rai-nha.*

- And of course, *Araújo* — *A-ra-ú-jo.*

I'll see you in the next session.

Tony de Araújo

—tech writer