

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE IPA

### French

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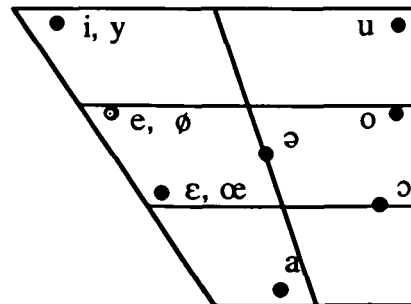
The following description of French is based on the speech of a young Parisian female speaker. Varieties of French have almost identical inventories; the main differences are to be found in the maintenance or loss of certain contrasts.

#### Vowels

*Oral vowels.* French vowels, which are all monophthongs, are normally described using four values for height and two or possibly three (front, central, back) for backness. All back vowels are rounded; there are both rounded and unrounded sets of front vowels.

The mid-high and mid-low vowels have limited overlap in their distributions, but cannot be regarded as allophones. The contrast between [e] and [ɛ] is found in open syllables in final position (eg. [se] *ses* (3rd person possessive, plural) vs. [sɛ] *sait* 'knows' and [pwɛɲ] *poignet* 'wrist' vs. [pwɛɲ] *poignée* 'handful'). Elsewhere, [e] occurs in open syllables and [ɛ] in closed syllables: compare [se.viʁ] *sévir* 'to rage' vs [sɛ.viʁ] *servir* 'to serve'. For the other pairs of mid vowels, the contrast between mid-high and mid-low is limited for the most part to closed monosyllables. In other environments, the mid-low vowels [œ] and [ɔ] occur in closed syllables and the mid-high vowels [ø] and [o] in open syllables. However, in addition to this general rule, the nature of the syllable-final consonant also has an effect: the mid-high vowels [ø] and [o] are found in syllables ending in [z], and [o] is not found even in monosyllables ending in [ʁ], [ʁ], and [g] (Delattre 1966, Léon 1992). It is noticeable that our speaker often produces a markedly centralized allophone of [ɔ], especially before [ʁ]. This is transcribed [ɔ̃] in the passage below. Some speakers have a contrast between two low vowels [a] and [ɑ]; our speaker has only one low vowel, [a], which is central. Schwa, [ə], is also a central vowel, with some rounding.

|   |     |       |                  |
|---|-----|-------|------------------|
| i | si  | si    | 'if'             |
| e | se  | ses   | 'his, hers' (pl) |
| ɛ | sɛ  | sait  | 'knows'          |
|   | sœʁ | serre | 'tightens'       |
| y | sy  | su    | 'known'          |
| ø | sø  | ceux  | 'these'          |
| œ | sœʁ | soeur | 'sister'         |
| ə | sə  | ce    | 'this'           |
| a | sa  | sa    | 'his, hers' (f)  |
| u | su  | sous  | 'under'          |
| o | so  | sot   | 'silly'          |
| ɔ | sɔʁ | sort  | 'fate'           |



Some speakers retain a contrast between long and short vowels in a very few words, but most speakers no longer maintain any length contrast.

*Nasalized vowels.* Traditionally, French is described as having four distinctively nasalized vowels, [ɛ̃], [ɑ̃], [ɔ̃], and [œ̃]. However, our speaker, like many others, lacks [œ̃], which is replaced by [ɛ̃].

The vowel [ɛ̃] is produced with tongue and lip position very similar to its oral counterpart [ɛ]; however, several articulatory studies (e.g. Zerling 1984, Lonchamp 1988) have suggested that [ɑ̃] and [ɔ̃] differ substantially from their supposed oral counterparts [ɑ] and [ɔ]. The position of the tongue is similar in [ɑ̃] and [ɔ̃], and the main articulatory difference is that [ɔ̃] has a greater degree of lip rounding. These authors suggest that other symbols might be more appropriate for transcribing these two vowels, but we have retained the traditional usage as none of the alternate proposals has gained widespread acceptance.

|    |     |              |                     |
|----|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| ɑ̃ | sɑ̃ | <i>sans</i>  | 'without'           |
| ɔ̃ | sɔ̃ | <i>son</i>   | 'his, hers' (m sg.) |
| ɛ̃ | sɛ̃ | <i>saint</i> | 'saint'             |

**Consonants.**

|                     | Bilabial | Labio-dental | Dental | Palato-alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Uvular |
|---------------------|----------|--------------|--------|-----------------|---------|-------|--------|
| Plosive             | p b      |              | t d    |                 |         | k g   |        |
| Nasal               | m        |              | n      |                 | ɲ       | ŋ     |        |
| Fricative           |          | f v          | s z    | ʃ ʒ             |         |       | ʁ      |
| Lateral Approximant |          |              | l      |                 |         |       |        |

**Central Approximants**

| Palatal | Labial-palatal | Labial-velar |
|---------|----------------|--------------|
| j       | ɥ              | w            |

|   |        |                |               |   |      |              |                          |
|---|--------|----------------|---------------|---|------|--------------|--------------------------|
| p | pu     | <i>pou</i>     | 'louse'       | f | fu   | <i>fou</i>   | 'crazy'                  |
| b | bu     | <i>boue</i>    | 'mud'         | v | vu   | <i>vous</i>  | 'you (pl)'               |
| t | tu     | <i>tout</i>    | 'all'         | s | su   | <i>sous</i>  | 'under'                  |
| d | du     | <i>doux</i>    | 'sweet'       | z | zo   | <i>zoo</i>   | 'zoo'                    |
| k | ku     | <i>cou</i>     | 'neck'        | ʃ | ʃu   | <i>chou</i>  | 'cabbage'                |
| g | gu     | <i>goût</i>    | 'taste'       | ʒ | ʒu   | <i>joue</i>  | 'cheek'                  |
|   |        |                |               | ʁ | ʁu   | <i>roue</i>  | 'wheel'                  |
| m | mu     | <i>mou</i>     | 'soft'        | l | lu   | <i>loup</i>  | 'wolf'                   |
| n | nu     | <i>nous</i>    | 'we, us'      |   |      |              |                          |
| ɲ | aɲo    | <i>agneau</i>  | 'lamb'        | w | swɛ̃ | <i>soin</i>  | 'care'                   |
| ɲ | paʁkiɲ | <i>parking</i> | 'parking lot' | j | sjɛ̃ | <i>sien</i>  | 'his, hers'              |
|   |        |                |               | ɥ | sɥɛ̃ | <i>suint</i> | 'grease on sheep's wool' |

French voiced stops are typically fully voiced throughout; voiceless ones are described as unaspirated. When preceding high vowels, they are often followed by a short period of aspiration and/or frication. The velar nasal occurs only in final position in borrowed (usually English) words.

French has one rhotic, whose production varies considerably among speakers and phonetic contexts. The speaker presented here uses a uvular fricative [ʁ] that is sometimes reduced to an approximant [ʁ̥], particularly in final position; it may also be devoiced (for examples see the transcribed text), and can be reduced to zero in some word-final positions. For other speakers, a uvular trill [ʀ] is also fairly common, and an apical trill [r] occurs in some dialects. Vowels are often lengthened before this segment.

The approximants [w], [ɥ], and [j] each correspond to a high vowel, [u], [y], and [i] respectively. There are a few minimal pairs where the approximant and corresponding vowel contrast, but there are also many cases where they are in free variation. Contrasts between [j] and [i] occur chiefly in final position, as in [abej] *abeille* 'bee' vs. [abei] *abbaye* 'monastery'.

Word-final consonants are always released, and in keeping with a general favoring of open syllables, they are usually resyllabified as onsets when followed by a vowel-initial word (*enchaînement*). Underlying word-final consonants that are not pronounced before a consonant, are pronounced only when preceding a vowel in the same rhythmic group. This process, known as *liaison*, also contributes to this canonical open-syllable pattern.

## Prosody

Although French is often described as having stress on word-final syllables, in connected speech this is pre-empted by the accent on the final syllable of a group of words (sense group or accentual group, see Vaissière 1992 for discussion).

## Transcription of recorded passage

The transcriptional style adopted in this illustration is a relatively narrow one, which reflects the particular pronunciation used in the recording of the passage made for the illustration.

la biz e læ soʎeʃ sə dispyte || fakē asyḅā kilete læ ply fōʁ || kāt ilzō vy ē  
 vwajazœ ki savāse || āvlope dā sō mātō || i: sō tōbe dakōʁ kə səʎi ki  
 aʁivœ læpʁəmje a læ ʎi fœote || səkə kəgəkde kōm læ ply fōʁ || alōʁ la  
 biz sʁ miz a sufle də tut se fōʁs || me ply el sufle ply læ vwajazœʁ sœkə  
 sō mātotœ də ʎi || finalmā el kənōsa læ ʎi fœote || alōʁ læ soʎeʃ kōmāsa  
 bʁije || e o bu dʒ mōmā læ vwajazœ kəʃofe ota sō mātō || ēsi la biz dy  
 kəkōnet kə læ soʎeʃ ete læ ply fōʁ.

### Orthographic version

La bise et le soleil se disputaient, chacun assurant qu'il était le plus fort. Quand ils ont vu un voyageur qui s'avavançait, enveloppé dans son manteau, ils sont tombés d'accord que celui qui arriverait le premier à le lui faire ôter serait regardé comme le plus fort. Alors, la bise s'est mise à souffler de toutes ses forces, mais plus elle soufflait, plus le voyageur serrait son manteau autour de lui. Finalement, elle renonça à le lui faire ôter. Alors, le soleil commença à briller et au bout d'un moment le voyageur, réchauffé, ôta son manteau. Ainsi, la bise dut reconnaître que le soleil était le plus fort.

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