



These notes accompany the Podcast lesson that you may access by going to <http://tltc.la.utexas.edu/brazilpod/tafalado/lesson.php?p=09>.

Lesson #9: Pronunciation of Vowel Raising Parking Meters

Dialog

Valdo: Onde podemos estacionar o carro? Já estou morrendo de fome.

¿Dónde podemos estacionar el carro? Ya estoy muriendo de hambre.

Where can we park the car? I'm dieing of hunger.

Michelle: Menino, como é complicado estacionar aqui nos Estados Unidos, né?

Niño, Cómo es complicado estacionar aquí en los Estados Unidos, ¿no?

Man it is hard to park here in the United State, you know?

Valdo: Já sei. Vamos parar à esquerda daquele restaurante pequeno. Você tem moedas?

Ya lo sé. Vamos a la izquierda de aquel restaurante pequeño? ¿Tiene usted las monedas?

I know. Let's park to the left of that little restaurant. Do you have change?

Michelle: Tenho sim. Quanto você precisa?

Sí, las tengo, ¿Cuánto necesita usted?

I do. How much do you need?

Valdo: Quatro moedinhas.

Cuatro moneditas.

Four little coins.

Michelle: Agora só espero que a comida e a bebida sejam boas.

Ahora solo espero que la comida y la bebida sean buenas.

Now let's just hope that the food and drinks are good.



Cultural Notes

Besides the lessons in pronunciation, all of the dialogs key on some cultural issue that Valdo and Michelle have noticed as Brazilians living in the United States.

In Brazilian parking on US streets is a problem because they aren't used to the idea of paying for a limited time. In Brazil parking on streets is always free, regardless of the time that you are parked. Now, it is true that Brazil has many parking lots where one pays, but the idea of a parking meter is harder to understand.

Pronunciation Notes

In the previous lesson we have seen that Brazilian Portuguese has 7 possible vowel sounds in stressed syllables: *vida* [i], *vejo* [e], *pedra* [ɛ], *pato* [a], *pode* [ɔ], *pôde* [o], *pude* [u]. These 7 vowel sounds are reduced to 5 in unstressed syllables because there is no open [ɛ] and [ɔ]: *vivemos* [i], *bebemos* [e], *falamos* [a], *tomamos* [o], *pulamos* [u]. These 5 unstressed vowel sounds are reduced to 3 in unstressed word-final position: *vive* [i], *viva* [ə], *vivo* [u]. Speakers of Spanish will notice that this seems much more complicated than the 5 basic vowel sounds that Spanish maintains in all positions.

This lesson looks at a tendency that linguists call "vowel raising" (sorry for the technical jargon). It refers to times when the pronunciation of [o] becomes [u] and the pronunciation of [e] becomes [i]. We've already seen it in the case of the 3 vowel sounds in word-final position (*vive* [i], *viva* [ə], *vivo* [u]). However Portuguese, unlike Spanish, also has vowel raising in other instances:

1. [e] becomes [i] in pretonic syllables. This is a fancy way of saying that "*bebida*" is pronounced [biβidə], "*espero*" is pronounced [isperu], "*preciso*" is pronounced [prisizu], etc.
2. [o] becomes [u] in pretonic syllables. The same process occurs with words that are spelled with "o": "*motivo*" is pronounced [mutivu], "*moeda*" is pronounced [muedə], "*comida*" is pronounced [kumidə].

We should mention that these changes depend a lot on dialect, education, formality of speech, etc. However, the point is that, unlike Spanish where the vowel sounds remain fairly consistent no matter where they are in the word, Portuguese vowel sounds are continually changing and vowel raising is another example of that.