



These notes accompany the Podcast lesson that you may access by going to <http://tltc.la.utexas.edu/brazilpod/tafalado/lesson.php?p=22>.

## Lesson #22: Epenthetic Vowels (wow, fancy word!) Fast Food

### Dialog

- Valdo:** **Você já observou como a comida daqui é diferente da nossa?**  
¿Ha observado usted como la comida de aquí es diferente que la nuestra?  
Have you ever observed how food here is different from ours?
- Michelle:** **É óbvio que sim! E o mais absurdo é que a gente não tem opção: é *fast food* todo dia!**  
Sí, es obvio. Y lo más absurdo es que no hay otra opción: es *fast food* todos los días  
It's obvious yes. And the most absurd thing is that we have no options here: fast food every day!
- Valdo:** **Você está absolutamente certa! No Brasil, nós nunca substituiríamos um prato de arroz e feijão por um pedaço de pizza ou por um *hot dog*.**  
Absolutamente, usted tiene toda la razón. En Brasil, nunca substituiríamos un plato de arroz y frijoles por una pizza o por una *hot dog*.  
You are absolutely correct. In Brazil we would never substitute a plate of rice and beans for a slice of pizza or for a hot dog.
- Michelle:** **É verdade. Nossa comida é digna dos deuses!**  
Es verdad. Nuestra comida es digna de los dioses.  
That is true. Our food is worthy of the gods!
- Valdo:** **Ainda bem que nós não somos adeptos a esse sistema, né?**



Felizmente no somos adeptos a ese sistema, ¿verdad?

It's a good thing that we aren't very adept at their system, you know?

**Michelle:** **Pois é... apesar do nosso ritmo de vida ser igual, sempre optamos por ter pelo menos uma refeição de verdade.**

Pues sí... puede ser que nuestra ritmo de vida sea igual, pero siempre hay opciones para comer una comida de verdad.

You're right... even if our rhythm of life is just like theirs, we'll always take time to at least have a real meal.

### **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.

Fast food, what a blessing! What a curse! It's easy for Valdo and Michelle to get caught up in the fast pace of life, especially as university students. The temptation is to do the same with their meals. It may be that Americans like to eat on the run, but Brazilians prefer to sit down and have a real meal, especially during the afternoon. From professional executives to blue collar workers, all take time out at lunch to eat more than just a quick sandwich. Once you get into the habit of rice and beans for lunch, why go with a little hot dog?

### **Pronunciation Notes**

Obstruent clusters and epenthetic vowels. Unless you have studied linguistics, it is hard to believe that anyone would understand those words. It is one of the features, however, that gives Brazilian Portuguese a really cool sound. OK, first off, Brazilian words do not generally end with a consonant. So, when words that are borrowed from English are adopted into Portuguese, a vowel is often added to the end of the word. That is why it is fun to hear words like *ping pong* (pingue pongue), *King Kong* (kingue kongue), *picnic* (piquenique), and Orlando's personal favorite *vicks vapor rub* (viquevaporube). Similarly in the dialog, Valdo and Michelle say fast food (fasti foodi) and hot dog (hoti doggie) with vowel sounds at the end. And in the case of those words, we also hear the palatalized versions of *ti* and *di*.



Unlike *pr* in *prato* and *dr* in *drama*, which have consonant clusters in the same syllable, obstruent clusters refer to words that have consonants that are grouped together in different syllables: *rit.mo*, *ad.vogado*, *ab.surdo*, *dig.no*, *ob.ter*, *sub.stituir*. The tendency in Portuguese is to "break up" these clusters by inserting the vowel [i] in between the two consonants. The result is something like: *riti.mo*, *adi.vogado*, *abi.surdo*, *digi.no*, *obi.ter*, *subi.stituir*. Additionally, as soon as a word has a *ti* or *di*, the regular palatalization also follows, as in the case of *ritmo* and *advogado* above.

In Spanish we also see that these obstruent clusters tend to change in natural speech. The difference is that instead of adding an extra sound, Spanish speakers tend to reduce or eliminate sounds. For example, even though the word for *rhythm* and *worthy* are spelled the same in both languages, *ritmo* and *digno*, sound extremely different.

This tendency is so strong that we have even met Brazilians who thought that the English word for *walkie talkie* was *walktalk*. Why? Because if *pingue pongue* is *ping pong* and *piquenie* is *picnic*, by analogy, *walkie talkie* would be a *walktalk*. Why not?