



These notes accompany the Podcast lesson that you may access by going to <http://tltc.la.utexas.edu/brazilpod/tafalado/lesson.php?p=06>.

## Lesson #6: Pronunciation of Oral Diphthongs Going to the Pharmacy

### Dialog

**Michelle:** **Oi Valdo, como vai?**

Hola Valdo, ¿Cómo te va?

Hi Valdo, how are you doing?

**Valdo:** **Vou bem. Já está gastando dinheiro?**

Me va bien. ¿Ya estás gastando dinero?

I'm OK. Are you already spending a lot of money?

**Michelle:** **Só um pouquinho. O salário já é tão baixo, né? Eu precisava comprar uma caixa de anticoncepcional.**

Solo un poquito. El sueldo ya es tan bajo, ¿verdad? Yo necesitaba comprar una caja de anticonceptivos.

Just a little bit. My salary is really low, right? I needed to buy a box of contraceptives.

**Valdo:** **Mas eu soube que a lei aqui diz que a maioria dos remédios só com receita.**

Pero supe que la ley aquí dice que la mayoría de las medicinas sólo con receta.

But I hear that the law says that most medicines need to have a prescription.

**Michelle:** **Meu pai do céu! Eu não tenho receita.**

¡Mi padre del cielo! No tengo receta.

Oh my! I don't have a prescription.



**Valdo:**           **Então nada feito. Bom, se cuida. A gente se vê depois. Beijo, tchau!**  
Entonces no pasa nada. Bueno, cuídate. Nos vemos después. Beso, ciao.  
So nothing doing. OK, take care. We'll see you later. Kisses, good bye!

## 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 Brazil one can easily buy medicine at a drugstore without a doctor's prescription, for example contraceptives. If you're sick, you can go to the drugstore, describe your symptoms and the pharmacist will decide what you need. For Brazilians, the idea that you need to go first to your doctor and then take the doctor's prescription to the pharmacy seems like an extra, and unnecessary step. Of course there are certain types of medicine and drugs where Brazilians also need to get a doctor's prescription, but there are many more examples where "prescription" medicines are purchased directly at the pharmacy.

## Pronunciation Notes

A basic definition of a diphthong is when there are two vowels in a row that are pronounced in the same syllable. For example, the vowel sounds in the English word "hide" [hajd] begin with the vowel "a" and then end with the vowel "i". The vowel sounds in the English word "how" [haw] begin with the vowel "a" and end with the vowel "u". You'll notice the normal spelling of "hide" and "how" do not really coincide with the actual vowel sounds of the diphthongs.

In Portuguese there are a number of oral diphthongs that are called "falling diphthongs", which means that they are made up a main vowel followed by a glide "i" or "u" that are generally written phonetically as [j] and [w]:

- Diphthongs with [j]: **lei** [ej], pap**éis** [ɛj], pai [aj], r**ói** [ɔj], boi [oj], cuida**do** [uj]
- Diphthongs with [w]: ri**u** [iw], deu [dew], v**éu** [ɛw], ma**u** [aw], sou**be** [ow]

The challenge for speakers of English is to hear the difference between words that have a diphthong and those that do not. For example, the word "lei" (law) is pronounced with a diphthong [lej] but the word "lê" (he reads) is pronounced without a diphthong, [le].



The challenge for speakers of Spanish is a little different. In Spanish there are also a number of falling diphthongs (e.g., hay [aj], seis [sejs], soy [soj], etc.). These should not cause many difficulties when learning Portuguese. However Spanish also has a number of rising diphthongs (meaning that the glide comes first, followed by the main vowel, e.g., piano [pjano], siete [sjete], bueno [bweno]). Generally speaking, Portuguese really doesn't have rising diphthongs. That is to say, to a Portuguese speaker "piano" is a three-syllable word. Most Spanish speakers think of "piano" as a two-syllable word.

When is a diphthong not a diphthong? That is trick question of course, but there are a couple of "diphthongs" in Portuguese that are often pronounced without the diphthong. For example, [aj], is often reduced to just [a]: e.g., "caixa" ends up sounding more like "caxa"; [ej], is often reduced to just [e]: "beijo" is pronounced more like "bejo"; [ow], is often reduced to just [o], e.g., "soube" is pronounced more like "sobe".

The opposite is also true, there are times when words are pronounced with diphthongs, even when the spelling does not show it. For example, words that end in "az" or "as" are frequently pronounced as diphthongs, e.g., "rapaz" and "mas" are pronounced as [ha.'pajs] and [majs].