



These notes accompany the Podcast lesson that you may access by clicking <http://tltc.la.utexas.edu/brazilpod/tafalado/lesson.php?p=03>.

### **Lesson #3: Pronunciation of /é/ and /ê/ Public Health and Health Insurance**

#### **Dialog**

**Valdo:** **Você já quebrou o pé?**

¿Usted se ha quebrado el pié?

Have you ever had a broken foot?

**Michelle:** **Quebrei a perna. E você não sabe como pesou no bolso.**

Me quebré la pierna. Y usted no sabe como pesó en mi bolsillo.

I broke my leg. And you can't imagine how hard it hit my wallet.

**Valdo:** **Por quê?**

¿Por qué?

Why?

**Michelle:** **Porque paguei uma nota pelo gesso. Até mesmo com seguro-saúde o preço é elevado.**

Porque pagué mucha plata por el yeso. Así mismo con el seguro médico, el precio es elevado.

Because I paid a lot for my cast. Even with insurance the price was high.

**Valdo:** **Teve que engessar, é?**

Tuviste que enyesarlo, ¿verdad?

So you had to get a cast?

**Michelle:** **O médico achou que era melhor. Dê uma olhada aqui e veja você mesmo como ficou.**

El médico pensó que era mejor. Dé una mirada aquí y vea usted mismo como quedó.



The doctor thought it would be better. Check it out yourself and see how it ended up.

## 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.

Brazilians are used to a system of public health that is free. They are not used to our insurance systems with primary providers, co-payments, etc. In this dialog the Brazilians are still a little confused about why it would cost so much money to get a cast, even when you already have insurance.

## Pronunciation Notes

This dialog focuses on the sounds for /ê/ (also called "closed e") and /é/ (also called "open e"). The "closed e" is similar to the sound of English words "hay, hate, bay, bait" and exactly like the vowel "e" in Spanish, as in words like "bebe, lleven, desde". The "open e" is similar to sounds in English words that are generally spelled with an "e", as in "let, get, better, credit."

As a general rule of thumb, the "open e" is only found in stressed syllables in Portuguese. Of course in actual pronunciation things are more complicated, but as a general rule, if the syllable is not stressed, the "e" will be closed. If the syllable is stress, the "e" may be either open or closed. Here are a few tendencies to keep in mind:

- Words written with a circumflex accent are closed: você, por quê
- Words written with an acute accent are open: até, pé
- Many words that have the diphthong "ie" in Spanish have an open pronunciation in Portuguese: quiero > quero, fiesta > festa
- Nasal consonants that follow "e" produce a closed sound: pensa (despite SP "piensa")

The challenge for learners who speak English is to avoid pronouncing the "closed e" as a glide (a combination of "e" and "i"). In Portuguese the presence or absence of the glide will change the meaning of the word: "dei" (I gave) and "dê" (give). English speakers tend to pronounce both as a glide. Second, English speakers tend to pronounce words that are spelled with "e" with the open sound. For example, "problema" with an open "e" instead of "problema" with a closed "e".



The challenge for learners who speak Spanish is to recognize that not every instance of "e" is pronounced with the closed "e". They need to learn to also use the open "e". Spanish speakers do not have any difficulty saying "por quê" but they find it more difficult to remember to say "até".

Note: In the dialog we have shown "seguro" and with the closed "e". However, in natural speech, this word is usually pronounced with what is called "vowel raising" where "e" is pronounced more like "i": "siguro". We'll deal with that in a future lesson.