



These notes accompany the Podcast lesson that you may access by clicking <http://tltc.la.utexas.edu/brazilpod/tafalado/lesson.php?p=05>.

Lesson #5: Pronunciation of /a/ in stressed and unstressed position Self-Checkout at the Supermarket

Dialog

Valdo: Ah, essa fila tá enorme!

Esta fila está muy larga.

This line is really long.

Michelle: É verdade. Vamos pagar no auto-atendimento.

Es verdad. Vamos a pagar en el auto-servicio

That's right. Let's pay at the self-service machine.

Valdo: Onde fica a máquina?

¿Dónde queda la máquina?

Where is the machine?

Michelle: Está lá na entrada.

Está allá en la entrada.

Over there by the entrance.

Valdo: Você sabe como se usa essa coisa aqui?

¿Sabes cómo se usa esa coossa aquí?

Do you know how to use this thing here?

Michelle: Claro, é fácil. É só passar o cartão.

Claro, es fácil. Es sólo pasar la tarjeta.

Of course, it's easy. Just insert your card.

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.

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<http://tltc.la.utexas.edu/brazilpod/>

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Brazil has many ATM machines, but they really don't have self-checkout lines at the supermarkets. You have to pay for your food with the cashier at the cash register. Putting real money into a machine is always a little nerve wracking when you aren't sure what's going to happen.

Pronunciation Notes

English speakers have a tendency to reduce unstressed vowels to [ə] as in the word "above". This reduced sound is called a "schwa" and the tendency is so strong that almost all unstressed vowels are reduced, no matter what the original vowel was. Compare for example, "photo" with "photographer". When speakers of English learn Spanish, one of the major challenges is learning to not reduce unstressed "a" to [ə]. For Spanish the two vowels in "nada" are pronounced the same. The good news for speakers of English is that Portuguese also reduces word-final unstressed "a" to [ə]. The bad news for speakers of Spanish is that they now have to learn how to reduce word-final "a". Note that we are not talking about all cases of unstressed "a" but only those in word-final position: pata, nada, cava.

Note: In lessons 1-5 we have looked at the oral vowels in Portuguese. Traditionally they follow what is called the 7-5-3 rule. That is to say, there are 7 oral vowel sounds that are found in stressed syllables, 5 that are found in unstressed syllables and 3 that are found in unstressed word-final position:

- Stressed: vida [i], vejo [e], pedra [E], pato [a], pode [O], pôde [o], pude [u]
- Unstressed: viveu [i], levou [e], lavou [a], cobrou [o], subiu [u]
- Word-Final Unstressed: fale [i], fala [ə], falo [u]