PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

19

Topic 19: Real Time and Verbal Tense. Aspect and Mood

Tiempo real y tiempo verbal. Aspecto y modo.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Bernard Comrie writes that "tense is grammaticalised expression of location in time". The sentence is short, but it contains the whole problem of this topic. Time is a feature of the world: it flows, it has a past, a present and a future, and it does not depend on any language. Tense, by contrast, is a feature of grammar: it is the part of time that a language has turned into verb forms. The two do not coincide. English says "My train leaves at nine tomorrow" with a present form, and "If I were you" with a past form that refers to no past at all. A learner who thinks that present means now and past means before now will be wrong in both sentences.

This topic therefore asks us to separate three layers. The first is real time, the extra-linguistic reality in which events happen. The second is verbal tense, the grammatical system that locates a situation in that time. The third is a pair of categories that are not about location at all: aspect, which concerns how the internal shape of a situation is viewed, and mood, which concerns the speaker's attitude to its reality. I will first distinguish real time from verbal tense and set out the theories that explain the relation between them. Secondly, I will describe the English tense system and the expression of future time. Thirdly, I will study aspect, both grammatical and lexical. Fourthly, I will examine mood and modality. Fifthly, I will compare English and Spanish and list the typical errors of Spanish-speaking pupils. Finally, I will consider the pedagogical and didactic implications of this content in Secondary Education and Bachillerato.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted. For the descriptive framework I have used Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik's A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language and Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum's The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language. For the theory of tense and aspect I have relied on Bernard Comrie's Aspect (1976) and Tense (1985), and for mood on Frank Palmer's Mood and Modality. For the learner's perspective I have used Geoffrey Leech's Meaning and the English Verb and Michael Swan's Practical English Usage, together with the Cambridge Dictionary grammar and the British Council LearnEnglish pages. As for the legal framework, I will refer to Ley Orgánica 3/2020 (LOMLOE), which modifies Ley Orgánica 2/2006 on Education, to Real Decreto 217/2022 and Real Decreto 243/2022, which set the minimum teaching for ESO and Bachillerato, and to Decreto 110/2022 and Decreto 109/2022 of the Junta de Extremadura.