PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

22

Topic 22: Multi-Word Verbs

Multi-word verbs.

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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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Fuentes

1. INTRODUCTION

A learner who has just mastered the verb "look" is told, a week later, that she must also cope with "look up", "look after", "look into", "look forward to" and "look down on", and that none of them means what "look" plus a preposition would lead her to expect. The experience is so common that it can be summed up in a single sentence: English verbs rarely travel alone. Behind that sentence lies one of the most characteristic features of the English verbal system, and one of the greatest obstacles for Spanish-speaking students, whose own language prefers to pack meaning into a single, often Latinate, verb.

This topic is about multi-word verbs. I will begin with a definition and a classification: what a multi-word verb is, and how phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs and phrasal-prepositional verbs differ. Secondly, I will examine their syntax, with particular attention to the position of the object, the behaviour of pronouns, the tests used to tell one type from another, stress, the passive and derived forms. Thirdly, I will deal with meaning: literal, aspectual and idiomatic uses, and the question of register. Fourthly, I will compare English and Spanish and describe the typical errors of the Spanish-speaking learner. Finally, I will consider the pedagogical and didactic implications of the topic in Secondary Education and Bachillerato, before closing with a conclusion.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted for the preparation of this topic. For the grammatical description I have used Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik's A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (Longman, 1985), Douglas Biber, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad and Edward Finegan's Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (Longman, 1999) and Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum's The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language (Cambridge University Press, 2002). For the lexical side I have consulted A. P. Cowie and R. Mackin's Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (Oxford University Press). I have also used the Cambridge Dictionary's English Grammar Today, the British Council's LearnEnglish and TeachingEnglish websites, and, for the curricular framework, Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), which amends Organic Law 2/2006, Royal Decrees 217/2022 and 243/2022, and the Extremaduran Decrees 110/2022 and 109/2022 as amended in 2023.