PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

24

The Expression of Assertion, Emphasis and Objection

Expresión de la aserción, el énfasis y la objeción.

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NOVIEMBRE DE 2026

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.

Índice

1. INTRODUCTION

2. ASSERTION

- 2.1. Affirmative Polarity and Its Markers
- 2.2. Degrees of Commitment: Modality and Hedging
- 2.3. Contrasts with Spanish

3. EMPHASIS

- 3.1. Prosodic Emphasis
- 3.2. Emphatic "Do"
- 3.3. Syntactic Emphasis: Clefting, Fronting and Inversion
- 3.4. Lexical Emphasis
- 3.5. Graphic Emphasis and Contrasts with Spanish

4. OBJECTION

- 4.1. Negation
- 4.2. Disagreeing, Contradicting and Refusing
- 4.3. Contrasts with Spanish and Typical Errors

5. PEDAGOGICAL AND DIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS

6. CONCLUSION

Fuentes

1. INTRODUCTION

"'Seems,' madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems.'" With these words Hamlet answers his mother in the second scene of the play, and in one short line Shakespeare gives us the three notions of this topic: Hamlet asserts what he holds to be true ("it is"), he puts weight on a single word by repeating it, and he objects to what Gertrude has just said. Later, watching the play within the play, the Queen herself casts doubt on another speaker's assertions: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks." In Shakespeare's English, protest meant 'vow' or 'declare solemnly', so her remark is itself a quiet objection to an excess of assertion. Whenever we speak, we do not only transmit information: we commit ourselves to it, we highlight the part that matters, and we disagree with other people. Welcome to Topic 24: The Expression of Assertion, Emphasis and Objection.

I will divide this topic into four main sections. Firstly, I will examine assertion: what it is, how English marks affirmative polarity, and how speakers modulate their commitment to what they say. Secondly, I will turn to emphasis, which can be achieved through prosody, grammar, vocabulary and writing. Thirdly, I will analyse objection, that is, negation and the language of disagreement, always in connection with the contrasts that Spanish-speaking learners need to master. Finally, I will reflect on the pedagogical implications of this content within our current educational framework.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted for the preparation of this topic. These include: Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik's A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (Longman, 1985); Huddleston and Pullum's The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan's Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (Longman, 1999); Swan's Practical English Usage (Oxford University Press); and Roach's English Phonetics and Phonology (Cambridge University Press), together with the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. I have also drawn on the LOMLOE (Organic Law 3/2020), Real Decreto 217/2022 and 243/2022, and Decreto 110/2022 and 109/2022 of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura.