

## unit 18

### LENGUA EXTRANJERA INGLÉS

**18. The verb phrase (1): its head. Verb classes. The morphology of the English verb. Spanish-English contrasts: tense and aspect. Multi-word verbs.**

- 18.1. The verb phrase (1): its head. Types of verbs and their main features.
- 18.2. The verb phrase (1): its head. The morphology of the English verb.
- 18.3. The verb phrase (1): its head. Time and tense in English and Spanish.
- 18.4. The verb phrase (1): Phrasal verbs and verbal idioms.



## SIMBOLOGÍA UTILIZADA EN EL TEMARIO

### NOTA ENLACE

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Link con otros temas del temario oficial. Para que aproveches al máximo tu tiempo de estudio y para que tengas en cuenta en todo momento los bloques de contenido del temario.

### CONSEJO

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Indicaciones, consejos y pequeños trucos que, al margen del desarrollo expositivo del tema, pueden ayudarte en tu preparación.

### PREGUNTA CLAVE

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Preguntas de respuesta abierta, situadas al final de un epígrafe o fragmento del tema, cuya respuesta te da las claves para saber si has asimilado o no el fragmento que acabas de estudiar o leer.

### RECORDANDO CONCEPTOS

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Recordatorio de conceptos básicos o previos, que has de tener en cuenta para un óptimo estudio del tema. Nociones aclaratorias vinculadas con el tema tratado.

### NOTA

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Una aclaración o nota al margen de la exposición del tema. Sólo la encontrarás en casos excepcionales.

### CONSULTA EN EL ANEXO

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Remisión al apéndice o al anexo del temario o del tema en concreto para que amplíes la información legislativa de tu Comunidad o sobre cualquier otro aspecto relevante.

## **1. THE VERB PHRASE (1): ITS HEAD. TYPES OF VERBS AND THEIR MAIN FEATURES**

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- 4.1. PHRASAL VERBS
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## INTRODUCTION

After a brief survey of the structure of the English VP, the possible realisations of the auxiliary element are considered. Since the traditional distinction between auxiliary and lexical verbs fails to explain many aspects of the morphosyntactic behaviour of verbs, syntactic and semantic criteria for auxiliaryhood will be used to justify a functional classification of verbs into four basic classes: auxiliary, semiauxiliary, catenative and lexical. The morphology of regular and irregular verbs is presented, including the realisations of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and past forms. A brief review is made of the systemic parallels between the Spanish and English tenses followed by an exploration of their non-systemic differences and the possible equivalents in terms of tense and aspect. Finally, the patterns of multi-word verbs, including phrasal, prepositional and phrasal-prepositional verbs are described and illustrated with tests which distinguish them.



It is advisable to study this Unit, especially section 4, in combination with Unit 19 on mood, aspect and voice.

## 1. THE VERB PHRASE (1): ITS HEAD. TYPES OF VERBS AND THEIR MAIN FEATURES

Like other phrases, the verb phrase (VP) has **two elements**: the **head** and the **dependants**. In the VP the head can be identified with the main verb and the dependants with the auxiliary element. Thus the structure of the VP is: auxiliary element + main verb. Morphologically, these two constituents are realised differently. The main verb is realised by a lexical verb in its base form (see section 3 below) and its function is to provide the semantic content of the VP: a state (*seem*), and action (*write*), or a process (*turn*).

The auxiliary element can be realised in different ways:

- **No realisation**: *Some lecturers follow the syllabus closely.* The absence of an auxiliary form is as meaningful as its presence and therefore VPs such as this should be analysed as  $\emptyset$  + Head (*follow*).
- An **inflectional morpheme** attached to the main verb: *Some lecturers followed the syllabus closely.* The VP *followed* is formed by the auxiliary element realised by the inflectional morpheme  $-ed_1$  and the main verb. The structure of this VP is  $-ed_1$  + Head (*follow*) –irregular verbs should be analysed in the same way: *burnt* =  $-ed_1$  + Head (*burn*).
- An **auxiliary verb**: *More cuts may follow.* Here the VP is formed by the auxiliary element realised by the modal auxiliary *may* and the main verb. The structure of this VP is *may* + Head (*follow*).
- A combination of one or more **auxiliary verbs** and one or more **inflectional morphemes**: *The beer mats might have been stolen by some rival bar-owner.* The structure of this VP is  $[-ed_1 + may^1 + have -ed_2 + be -ed_2]$  + Head (*steal*).

The structure of the English VP is the following:

$$\underbrace{\{TENSE\} \{MOOD\} \{PHASE\} \{ASPECT\} \{VOICE\}}_{\text{AUXILIARY ELEMENT}} + \text{MAIN VERB}$$

$$\{-ed_1\} \{ \text{modal v.} \} \{ \text{have } -ed_2 \} \{ \text{be } -ing \} \{ \text{be } -ed_2 \}$$



VPs in English can be divided into tensed (sometimes called 'finite') and non-tensed ('non-finite') VPs (infinitive, present participle *V-ing*, past participle *V-ed<sub>2</sub>*). Tensed VPs combine with mood, phase, aspect and voice. Non-tensed VP (e.g. *to know*, *being taken*) can never take tense and generally they will combine with phase, aspect and voice. Verb modifications will be studied in Unit 19.



It is important to distinguish between 'lexical verb' (a class of verbs) and 'main verb' (a function within the VP); and between 'auxiliary verb' (a class of verbs) and 'auxiliary element' (a functional constituent in the VP which may or may not be realised by auxiliary verbs).

<sup>1</sup> Modal verbs *could*, *should*, *would* and *might* as the 'remote' forms of *can*, *shall*, *will* and *may*, that is, as  $-ed_1$  + *can*,  $-ed_1$  + *shall*, will be analysed in Unit 19 on mood and modality.

From a functional point of view, verbs have been traditionally classified into auxiliary and lexical or full verbs. However, the classification of verbs into these two groups does not reflect their morphosyntactic behaviour accurately. There are verbs of intermediate function whose behaviour is in some cases similar to that of auxiliaries and in others resembles that of lexical verbs. Accordingly, the following **fourfold classification** will be considered: **(i) Auxiliary verbs, (ii) Semiauxiliary verbs, (iii) Catenative verbs<sup>2</sup>, (iv) Lexical verbs.**

## 1.1. CRITERIA FOR AUXILIARHOOD

A variety of criteria have been used in order to classify verbs and, as a result, grammars differ in the list of auxiliaries, semiauxiliaries and catenatives. The most consistent way to proceed is to apply what is referred to as the «criteria for auxiliaryhood». The following criteria are fully met by auxiliary verbs (semiauxiliaries fulfil them partially) while main verbs usually meet the opposite criteria (catenatives have an object realised by a non-tensed form and may fulfil some of the semantic criteria only marginally):

- **Impossibility of independent existence as full VP.** In contrast to lexical verbs, auxiliary verbs have no independent existence as full VP:
 

[1] *She beat him easily at chess* vs. \**She could him easily at chess.*
- **Possibility of acting as operator in the NICE contexts.** Only auxiliaries act as operator in **N**egation with not, **I**nversion of subject and operator, **C**ode, i.e. operator in reduced clauses such as question tags, short answers and anaphoric contexts (*so/neither/nor* +operator; *operator +too/ either*), and **E**mphatic positive:
 

[2] (a) *She doesn't eat meat* vs. \**She eatn't meat.*  
 (b) *Will you sign here?* vs. \**Sign you here?*  
 (c) *I'll go and so will Ted* vs. \**I go and so goes Ted.*  
 (d) *I will go there* (stress marks contrast) ≠ *I go* (no contrast cf. *I do go*)
- **Possibility of being placed before adverbs** such as *always/never, certainly/probably*<sup>3</sup>:
 

[3] *I can always go* vs. \**I want always want to go* (cf. *I always want to go*).
- **Impossibility of imposing semantic restrictions on the subject.** This criterion, together with 'there' and passivisation, is based on the idea that auxiliary verbs are to some extent independent of the subject of the sentence:
 

[4] *Malcolm/the book will be there* vs. *Malcolm/\*the book wants to be there.*
- **Possibility of accepting existential 'there' as subject:**

[5] *There could be trouble ahead* vs. \**There expects to be trouble.*
- **Possibility of accepting, without change in meaning, the passive transformation of the verb** which is supposed to function as main verb:
 

[6] (a) *I will teach them a lesson* ≈ *They will be taught a lesson.*  
 (b) *I expect to teach online* ≠ *They expect to be taught online.*

2 Here we are only concerned with the function of catenatives as main verbs. For a syntactic analysis of catenative constructions, see Unit 23.

3 Specifically they belong to the following subtypes: 'always' and 'never' are frequency subjuncts; 'certainly' and 'probably' are epistemic disjuncts. See Unit 21.

We can add several specific criteria for modal auxiliaries:

Criteria	Modal auxiliary
Followed by bare infinitive	<i>I can go</i>
No non-tensed forms	<i>*to will, *maying, *canned</i>
No 3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. -s	<i>*She cans go there</i>
No co-occurrence	<i>*I may must go</i>

Table 1. Modal auxiliary criteria.



It should be noted that the first three criteria for auxiliaryhood are more reliable than the last three. The former are based on morphosyntactic principles while the latter are based on semantic ones. In case of contradiction, the first criterion should be given priority.

## 1.2. FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF VERBS

The criteria presented in the previous section provide the basis for the functional classification of verbs in English. Firstly, the classification establishes which verbs realise the auxiliary element and which the main verb. Secondly, it allows us to establish the limits of every VP. The classification is given in table 2:

AUXILIARY SYSTEM	Auxiliary	Primary aux.	<i>be+ed<sub>2</sub>, be+ing, have+ed<sub>2</sub></i>
		Pro-aux.	<i>do</i>
		Central modals	<i>can, could, must, might, will...</i>
	Semiauxiliary	Marginal modals	<i>used to, dare, need, ought to</i>
		Modal semiaux.	<i>be to, be going to, have to</i>
MAIN VERB	Catenative	<i>begin, finish, appear, try, want</i>	
	Lexical	<i>write, catch, drink, vote, learn</i>	

Table 2. Functional classification of verbs.

Let's consider the following example:

[7] *Always cut well on the waste side of your pencilled guidelines, you can always cut a bit more off if need be, but it is more problematic to have to try to glue bits back on if you have overcut.*

- **VPs:** *cut, can cut, need be, is, to have to try, to glue, have overcut.* **Lexical:** *cut, glue, overcut.* **Catenative:** *try.* **Modal semiauxiliary:** *have to.* **Marginal modal:** *need.* **Central modal:** *can.* **Primary auxiliary:** *be, have.*

So far we have not distinguished between tensed or finite VP (*cut, can cut, have overcut*) and non-tensed or non-finite VP (*to try, to glue*).

It should be noted that *need be* is a single VP with *be* as lexical verb and *need* as auxiliary followed by bare infinitive (cf. *We need to have an action plan*).

Note also that the construction *have to try* has only one VP because it contains one main verb (*try*), while *try to glue* is analysed as two VPs since we have two main verbs: catenative *try* and lexical *glue*.

## 2. THE VERB PHRASE (1): ITS HEAD. THE MORPHOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH VERB

Regular verbs such as *walk* have four morphological forms. Irregular verbs vary in this respect: *take* has five whereas *shut* has only three (note that *be* has eight):

		Regular v.	Irregular verbs		
TENSED FORMS	past tense	<i>walk</i>	<i>took</i>	<i>shut</i>	
	present tense	3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. sing.	<i>walks</i>	<i>takes</i>	<i>shuts</i>
		general	<i>walk</i>	<i>take</i>	<i>shut</i>
NON-TENSED FORMS	base	<i>walk</i>	<i>take</i>	<i>shut</i>	
	present participle	<i>walking</i>	<i>taking</i>	<i>shutting</i>	
	past participle	<i>walked</i>	<i>taken</i>	<i>shut</i>	

Table 3. Inflectional paradigm of English verbs.

- The **base form** is in all cases identical to the lexical stem.
- The **general present tense form** is syncretised with the base form. Only for *be* are all the present tense forms distinct from the base.
- The **3<sup>rd</sup> person singular** present is normally formed by adding a suffix to the lexical stem. The suffix has three main variants, depending on the phonological properties of the stem:
  - (i) if the stem ends in a sibilant (/s, z, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/) it is /ɪz/, as in *kisses*, *watches*, etc.
  - (ii) if the stem ends in voiceless consonant (/p, t, k, f, θ/) it is /s/, as in *walks*, *hops*.
  - (iii) otherwise /z/, as in *runs*, *sees*.
- **Past tense form**, referred to as [-ed<sub>1</sub>]. Regular verbs add to the lexical stem a suffix which has three main variants, phonologically conditioned:
  - (i) if the stem ends in alveolar stop (/t/ or /d/) it is /ɪd/, as in *landed*, *wanted*.
  - (ii) if the stem ends in voiceless consonant (/p, k, f, θ, s, ʃ, tʃ/) it is /t/, as in *pushed*, *laughed*.
  - (iii) otherwise it is /d/, as in *killed*, *died*, *robbed*.

With **irregular verbs**, the past tense generally involves a change in the stem vowel, alone (*sang*, *knew*, *met*) or accompanied by suffixation of either /d/ (*sold*) or more often, and even after voiced consonants, of /t/ (*lost*, *crept*, *felt*). Other types of irregularity are illustrated in *taught*, *burnt*, *cut*, etc.

- **Past participle**, referred to as [-ed<sub>2</sub>]. For regular verbs and the majority of irregular verbs too, the past participle is syncretised with the past tense form. Where it is not syncretised, the past participle generally ends with the suffix /ən/ or less often /n/, as in *taken*, *broken*, *fallen*, etc. Examples of a distinct past participle form without the /ən/ suffix are *swum*, *drunk*, *sung*, etc.

- **Present participle**, referred to as [V-ing]. This is always formed by adding the suffix /ɪŋ/ to the lexical stem.



For a detailed classification of the 250 or so irregular verbs see Quirk et al (1985) pp. 104-120.



There is a simple test to resolve the syncretism (the merging of two or more originally different inflectional forms) between the past tense and the past participle, as in (a) *They rejected it;* (b) *Those rejected were of little value.* By replacing *reject* by *take* we see that the construction in (a) requires past tense *took* while (b) requires past participle *taken*.



1. Is the distinction between lexical verb and main verb justified?
2. «All catenative verbs can also be lexical but not all lexical verbs are catenative.» Explain and give examples.
3. How would you classify *would rather*? Apply the criteria for auxiliaryhood to justify your answer.
4. In *Do you think we'll get charged?* is the underlined form a past or past participle? Use the substitution test.
5. Give the six inflectional forms of the following verbs: *skid, seek, bleed, blame, sue*.
6. Give the phonological realisation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. and the past form of the following verbs: *watch, merge, hop, talk, kill*.

### 3. THE VERB PHRASE (1): ITS HEAD, TIME AND TENSE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

The most coherent theories of tense distinguish **systemic** from **non-systemic meaning**. The former is the meaning each category has within the overall system, and in general Spanish and English concur here. The latter includes specialised functions, and the two languages diverge more in this case. Accordingly, we will summarise the systemic parallels in this section and focus on non-systemic differences in sections 4.1. and 4.2.

The choice of tense for portraying a situation depends on the speaker's orientation: 'right now' vs. 'back then'. Each such orientation is an axis or timeline along which the event being described is located in one of three ways: anterior to the orientation the speaker adopts, as simultaneous with it, or as posterior to it. The different tenses express these three ordered relations according to different perspectives. This is crucial since verbal tenses are not all located on the same line as are points in real time.

#### ■ Present perfect – Present – Future

*She has sung (ha cantado) – She sings (canta) – She will sing (cantará)*

Here the orientation is the Present Point (PP) (now) so that events (actions, states, processes) that are simultaneous with it appear in the present tense. Events that have begun before PP are expressed by the present perfect and events that are posterior can be expressed with modal *will*.

#### ■ Past perfect – Past – Conditional

*She had sung (había cantado) – She sang (cantó) – She would sing (cantaría)*

When narrating the past, speakers usually switch perspective from PP to some Recalled Point (RP), a strategy called 'backshifting'. Tenses oriented toward RP indicate how matters stood back then. Anteriority is depicted by a perfect tense, the past perfect, for it expresses what had already happened before RP. Simultaneity with respect to RP is expressed by the past tense in English and the preterite or imperfect in Spanish. Finally, posteriority with respect to RP represents what was foreseen or predicted to happen subsequently, that is, what would happen and is expressed by *would* and other remote modals.



We will be dealing with the future and the conditional in English not as tenses but as modal non-factual meanings expressed by modal verbs (including *will*) and also by several other tense + aspect + adverbial combinations (e.g. *He is arriving tomorrow*).

### 3.1. EXPRESSING THE SPANISH INDICATIVE IN ENGLISH

#### 3.1.1. Contrasting simple and progressive forms

In English, there is a systematic contrast between non-progressive tenses such as *I write* and progressive tenses such as *I am writing*. In Spanish, *escribo* can be either of the two, while *estoy escribiendo* stresses the latter (although progressive tenses are never included in the Spanish tense system).

[8] (a) *I write* every afternoon between shifts.

(b) *I am writing* this with the sun beating down on me in Caracas.

*Escribo* could be either *I write* (habit) or *I am writing* (action in the middle of its process). The English present can have other semantic implications but always with a common 'present perspective' both in simple and progressive form:

[9] (a) *I am thinking* about my spectacles lying on the desk before me as *I write*.

(b) *I am writing* to complain about manufacturers who use unnecessary packaging.

Note that the underlined VP in [9a] could become progressive while the underlined VP in [9b] would rarely be non-progressive. Also [9a] can mean *escribo* or *estoy escribiendo* while the Spanish progressive would not be used in a context such as [9b]. Likewise, the aspect of some Spanish verbs makes the non-progressive form the only acceptable equivalent (expressed by '≈') to the English progressive: *How are you feeling?* ≈ *¿Cómo te sientes?*

### 3.1.2. Contrasting past tenses

In Spanish there is a systematic distinction between the imperfect (continuative action in the past) and preterite (past completed action seen as a whole). The English simple past can have both aspectual meanings:

[10] *When I was in London I stayed in a hotel in Kensington.*

This could refer either to a particular stay in London or to a past habit. Without any context, the sentence is ambiguous. This ambiguity does not arise in Spanish because in the first case we would use the preterite (*estuve/fui*) while the imperfect would indicate habit (*iba*). In English this distinction can be expressed lexically:

[11] *Whenever I was in London I used to stay in a hotel in Kensington.*

Thus in examples such as [10] the past time reference of the English simple past would be equivalent to that of the Spanish preterite whereas an unambiguous English equivalent to the imperfect would require adverbials (*whenever, every time*) or the constructions *use(d) to* or *would*.

#### ■ Contrasting simple and perfect forms

In constructions with *hace*, the Spanish simple present can be equivalent to the English present perfect because of the reference to actions that began in the past and are continuing to the present:

[12] *Hace mucho que no juego ≈ I haven't played for a long time.*

The construction *llevar + gerund* is also equivalent to the English present (or past) perfect simple or progressive with *for*. Despite the different tenses in the two languages, both constructions have in common a 'continuative' reference:

[13] *Llevamos muchos años sabiendo que el 60% de las tripas de los pollos tenían Salmonella ≈ We have known that there was salmonella in 60 percent of chickens' guts for many years.*

## 3.2. EXPRESSING THE SPANISH SUBJUNCTIVE IN ENGLISH

The use of the subjunctive mood in contemporary English is extremely limited. It has only one form, which is the base of the verb, for all persons (no 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular -s). It is used only in the following cases:

#### ■ Mandative subjunctive

In subordinate clauses introduced by *that* dependent upon a clause expressing request, command, necessity, etc.

[14] *China had demanded that he be returned home (≈ que se le devolviera).*

The use of the subjunctive is preferred in American English. In British English, speakers prefer the construction with *should* or *to-infinitive*:

[15] (a) *He demanded that at least part of his inheritance should be handed over to him at once (≈ que se le entregara).*

(b) *William seemed almost anxious for him to accept (≈ que él aceptara).*

*Independent clauses expressing wish and idioms: Come rain or shine.*

■ **Hypothetical conditions and wishes**

With *I wish, if only* we find *were* (past subjunctive form of *be*): *I wish I were brainy like you!* Although the form *were* is being replaced by *was*: *I wish I was older.*

Since the subjunctive has fallen out of use, particularly in BrE, it is much more common to find one of the following constructions as equivalent to the Spanish subjunctive:

- a) Should. In subordinate clauses when the verb in the main clause expresses a command, the so-called *mandative subjunctive* (*insist, demand, order*), when the verb in the main clause expresses a feeling or opinion (*emotive should*), or when the verb in the main clause expresses possibility or necessity (*putative should*):

[16] *It never ceased to amaze her that she should have given birth to such tall children*  
(≈ *que hubiera dado a luz*).

- b) (*For*) accusative + to-infinitive. With verbs of volition that express command, request, permission, advice (*want, need, allow* and its opposites), the construction with an object (noun or accusative pronoun) + to-inf. is used; when the main clause expresses a possibility, feeling or opinion, the construction *for* + noun/accusative pronoun + to-inf. is very common:

[17] *I don't expect you to understand this at your age* (≈ *que lo entiendas*).

- c) May/might. These modals are used with the value of a Spanish subjunctive in sentences that express possibility, subordinate purpose clauses and concessive clauses (with inversion of the main verb and the subject):

[18] *Mr Major is child and heir of Thatcherism, smile and smile as he may* (≈ *por más que sonría*).

- d) Wish/if only + V-ed, /would. The simple past, *would*, and past perfect are used after *wish/if only* to express a desire for something to be different from the way it is. The first two are equivalent to the Spanish imperfect subjunctive, and the third to the pluperfect subjunctive:

[19] *If only Anna had been able to attend!* (≈ *¡Ojalá que Anna hubiera podido asistir!*).

- e) Let + accusative + bare infinitive. *Let* followed by a noun or accusative pronoun is used to express an order:

[20] *Let them do the attacking!* (≈ *¡Que ellos sean los que atacan!*).

- f) The corresponding tense of the indicative. The English indicative sometimes translates the Spanish subjunctive. This is the case in many subordinate temporal and conditional clauses:

[21] *I'll be telling her as soon as she can understand* (≈ *en cuanto sea capaz de entenderlo*).



The use of *should* for the subjunctive outlined in (a) above is considered too formal. Speakers usually prefer one of the options presented in (b)-(f).

## 4. THE VERB PHRASE (1): PHRASAL VERBS AND VERBAL IDIOMS

The main category of multi-word verbs includes **phrasal verbs** (*take off*), **prepositional verbs** (*cope with*), and **phrasal-prepositional verbs** (*get away with*). However, these combinations are considered multi-word verbs only where they behave as a single unit either lexically or syntactically. The words which follow the lexical verb (*off, with, away*) are morphologically invariable and will be given the label of ‘particles’.

(A) Prepositions only	<i>against, as, at, beside, for, from, into, like, of, onto, upon, with, etc.</i>
(B) Prepositional adverbs	<i>about, above, across, after, along, around, by, down, in, off, on, over, past, round, through, under, up, etc.</i>
(C) Spatial adverbs only	<i>ahead, apart, aside, away, back, forward(s), in front, out, etc.</i>

Table 4. Classes of particles.

The most obvious difference between the prepositions and the spatial adverbs is that where prepositions require a following NP as a prepositional object<sup>4</sup>, adverbs do not. Hence classes (A), (B) and (C) can be distinguished as follows:

PREPOSITIONAL CONSTRUCTION	ADVERBIAL CONSTRUCTION
(A) <i>Do you approve <u>of his policies</u>?</i>	<i>*Do you approve <u>of</u>?</i>
(B) <i>He went <u>up the path</u>.</i>	<i>I've waited and you've not turned <u>up</u>.</i>
(C) <i>*She passed <u>out consciousness</u>.</i>	<i>She passed <u>out</u> (= 'fainted').</i>

As can be seen, only particles of class (B) are acceptable in both constructions.



Superficially, stranded prepositions resemble adverbs in that the preposition appears at the end of the construction without a NP: *They tend to choose subjects they like and approve of*. Nevertheless, these prepositions do have a complement (overt or understood) realised by a relative and it is always possible to front the preposition, in which case the overt complement is obligatory: *They tend to choose subjects of which they approve* (see Unit 26 on fronted and stranded prepositions).

### 4.1. PHRASAL VERBS

#### 4.1.1. Type I (intransitive) phrasal verbs (Verb + adverb particle)

[22] *Top analysts gave it the thumbs up and prices took off.*

Other examples are *touch down, get on, turn up, give in, fall out* (= ‘quarrel’). These verbs are usually informal. The particles come from classes (B) and (C) and usually cannot be separated from the verb (*\*The tank blew suddenly up*).

Phrasal verbs have distinct meanings which cannot be predicted from the meaning of the verb and particle in isolation (*catch on* = ‘understand’). They contrast with free combinations of verb + adverb: *He walked past*. In free combinations the adverb has its own meaning and its function is equivalent to that of a prepositional phrase of direction. In these constructions the verb and adverb can be separated. Both features can be seen in the example: *He'd probably have walked right past her*.

<sup>4</sup> In our analysis of prepositional phrases (PP) the preposition is the head and as such can take various dependents, both complements and modifiers. The range of complements includes object NP, predicative, PP, AdvP and clause. See Unit 22.

#### 4.1.2. Type II (transitive) phrasal verbs (Verb + adverb particle + Od)

[23] *Have they found out what's happened to everyone inside yet?*

Other examples are *bring up, make out, turn on, hand in, call off*. Some combinations such as *blow up* can be both type I and II: *The magazine blew up, A lucky shot had blown up the magazine.*

With most type II phrasal verbs, the particle can either precede or follow the direct object: *They call the strike off. – They called off the strike.* When the Od is a personal pronoun, it can only be placed between the verb and the particle: *They called it off. – \*They called off it.*

There are also free combinations of verb + prepositional adverb but they differ from phrasal verbs in that both elements keep their separate meanings: *Sam was not taken in (= 'deceived'). – Maureen and Aubrey took in and cared for injured birds (= 'brought inside').*

### 4.2. PREPOSITIONAL VERBS

#### 4.2.1. Type I prepositional verbs (Verb + preposition + prepositional object)

[24] *Emperor Leopold II approved of much of the work of the Constituent Assembly.*

Other examples are *look at, care for, cope with, go into, come by*. In these combinations the lexical verb is followed by a preposition with which it is semantically and/or syntactically associated.

These constructions display transitive and intransitive features. The label 'prepositional verb' indicates that the NP after the preposition is its object and not the Od of the verb. This intransitive interpretation is justified by the potential of adverbial insertion (*He approved distinctly of my appointment*), an insertion usually avoided between V and Od. On the other hand, passive transformation with the prepositional object as subject is frequently possible. There are therefore two complementary analyses:

ANALYSIS 1:	S _____	V _____	A _____	
	<i>Sarah</i>	<i>looked</i>	<i>at</i>	<i>her mother</i>
ANALYSIS 2:	S	V		O

#### ■ Prepositional verbs contrasted with phrasal verbs

Type I prepositional verbs which contain particles of class (B) can be confused with type II phrasal verbs:

[25] (a) *He came by the money legally.* Prepositional verb (= 'acquired')

(b) *She put by the rent for the six weeks.* Phrasal verb (= 'saved')

The NP after the particle cannot be placed after the verb in (a) *\*He came the money by* (but *She put the money by*). Similarly, the order of particle and pronoun is different: *He came by it* (not *\*He came it by*), *She put it by* (not *\*She put by it*).

Although both constructions allow passivisation, in prepositional verbs stress falls on the lexical verb while in phrasal verbs stress usually falls on the adverb particle: *The money was 'PUT by – The money was come 'BY.*

#### 4.2.2. Type II prepositional verbs (Verb + NP + preposition + NP)

These type II prepositional verbs are followed by two NPs, normally separated by the preposition: the former is the Od, the latter the prepositional object:

[26] *The government blamed Escobar for a series of bomb blasts in Bogota.*  
V            Od            A [PP: Prep + C]

Other examples are *rob of*, *confine to*, *protect from*, *remind of*, *provide with*. These constructions have a passive with the Od becoming subject of the passive VP (*Escobar was blamed...*).

There is a subtype of these verbs in which the Od forms part of the idiom: *make a mess of*, *pay attention to*, *take advantage of*, *lose hope of*.

### 4.3. PHRASAL-PREPOSITIONAL VERBS

There is another category of multi-word verbs called phrasal-prepositional verbs because they contain both an adverb and a preposition as particles. These combinations are usually informal:

[27] *At football matches the police have to put up with a lot of abuse.*

Other examples are *look forward to*, *look in on*, *get away with*, *look down on*, *do away with*. They often have a one-word paraphrase: *put up with* = 'tolerate'. The prepositional passive is only acceptable with some verbs (*Gradually those symptoms had to be admitted and faced up to* [= 'confronted']).

All the possible structures of multi-word verbs display three binary contrasts expressed in the formula:

VERB ± Od ± ADVERB ± PREPOSITION ± O

	Lexical verb	Direct object	Particles		Prepositional object
			Adverb	Preposition	
Phrasal V. I	<i>blow</i>	-	<i>up</i>	-	-
Phrasal V. II	<i>turn</i>	<i>someone</i>	<i>down</i>	-	-
Prep. V. I	<i>come</i>	-	-	<i>across</i>	<i>a problem</i>
Prep. V. II	<i>take</i>	<i>someone</i>	-	<i>For</i>	<i>a fool</i>
Phrasal-Prep. V.	<i>come</i>	-	<i>up</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>an answer</i>

Table 5. Types of multi-word verbs.



1. Which are the possible Spanish equivalents to the English present progressive?
2. How do you express in English the difference between the Spanish imperfect and preterite?
3. The English present perfect can be equivalent to the Spanish present indicative. Give two different examples.
4. Give three examples of common constructions which are equivalent to the Spanish subjunctive.
5. Explain the two complementary analyses of clauses with prepositional verbs.
6. How can you distinguish phrasal verbs from prepositional verbs?

## CONCLUSION

The verb phrase is the central element in the syntactic structure of the clause and also supplies the semantic skeleton of the message. Both the morphology of the English verbs and the structure of VPs are essential to explain tense, phase and aspect distinctions and a necessary basis to understand complementation. Since the operations on the simple sentence are based on the use of auxiliaries, the criteria for auxiliaryhood can be a useful tool to establish an accurate functional classification of verbs.

The English curriculum in secondary education includes the capacity to express ideas and interact efficiently with native speakers and the use of verb tenses is a crucial element in both spoken and written interaction. This is often a difficult topic for Spanish learners because of the mismatches between the English and Spanish tense systems. Another common area of difficulty is multi-word verbs, which are fundamental to develop the students' fluency. In addition, some explicit knowledge about the verb classes can be a helpful resource for self-assessment and development of learning strategies.

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### ANNOTATED REFERENCES

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CHALKER, S. (1992): *A Student's English Grammar Workbook*. Harlow: Longman.

This is a very useful workbook for Quirk *et al.* (1985) *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Verb morphology and auxiliaries are dealt with in Ch. 3 and Ch. 16 includes useful exercises on multi-word verbs.

HILL, S. (2000): *Bilingual Grammar of English-Spanish Syntax*. Lanham: U. P. of America.

Although this book is intended for advanced students of Spanish, it is very useful for any language specialist. It provides sound explanations of different grammatical aspects taking into account semantics, pragmatics and translation issues.

HUDDLESTON, R. (1988): *English Grammar. An outline*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is a shorter version of Huddleston's *Introduction to the grammar of English*, which deals with the complexities of the longer version in an accessible manner. It also includes exercises.

HUDDLESTON, R. (1984): *Introduction to the Grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This book provides a thorough and precise account of grammatical categories within a framework of modern structural linguistics. Ch. 4 is has a detailed analysis of the structure of VPs.

HUDDLESTON, R. & G. K. PULLUM (2005): *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is an undergraduate textbook on modern English grammar which presupposes no knowledge of linguistics. It is based on the groundbreaking *The Cambridge grammar of the English language* (2002) by the same authors. Ch. 3 deals with verbs.

HUDDLESTON, R. & G.K. PULLUM (2002): *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is the current standard reference work for English grammar. It provides a comprehensive and detailed look at the principles of the English language. Ch. 3 is devoted to the verb.

LEECH, G. (2004): *Meaning and the English Verb*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Pearson ESL.

This new edition is still the clearest and most authoritative statement of meaning in the verb phrase. The writing combines complexity with accessibility. Invaluable for descriptive linguists, applied linguists, teachers and students of the English language.

PALMER, F. R. (1987): *The English Verb*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Longman.

Still a highly regarded account of all aspects of the English verb including tense, phase and aspect. Theoretical discussion is kept to a minimum, but the arguments are always presented within a sound theoretical framework.

QUIRK, R., GREENBAUM, S. LEECH, G. & SVARTVIK, J. (1985): *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.

For a number of years, this has been the standard reference work used by linguistic scholars. It is a descriptive account of English based on extensive analysis of real usage. Its analysis of multi-word verbs (Ch. 16) is second to none.

WHITLEY, M. S. (2002): *Spanish/English Contrasts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Washington: Georgetown U. P.

Description of the Spanish language and its differences from English including grammar, language use, and social and dialectical variation. It includes exercises for student application and class discussion. Chapter 7 on tense and mood is a must-read for this unit.

## WEBLIOGRAPHY

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<http://dictionary.reverso.net/english-cobuild/>

This site offers the Collins Cobuild and Thesaurus for searches online. It is better than the official Cobuild website since entries are displayed fully, including the valuable grammatical information and examples of the printed version (omitted in the official site).

<http://esl.about.com/sitesearch.htm?q=verb+tenses&SUName=esl>

Very good range of material for advanced students of English as a foreign/2nd language. Together with a good review of tenses, the site offers several worksheets on tense identification and verb conjugation.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/01/>

The Purdue Online Writing Lab has a section devoted to grammar for ESL. With a focus on writing throughout, this site offers several handouts on verbs including one on the sequence of tenses in English.

[http://spanish.about.com/od/verbtenses/Verb\\_Tenses.htm](http://spanish.about.com/od/verbtenses/Verb_Tenses.htm)

Comparison of the uses of verb tenses in English and Spanish with clear explanations and examples.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode63/languagepoint.shtml>

This is the 'language point' devoted to multi-word verbs in the BBC Learning English site.

<http://www.englishcorner.vacau.com/idioms/idioms.html#phvrbs>

The English Corner is a site for intermediate and advanced students of English as a foreign language. This is the phrasal verbs page. The site has a useful search tool to browse links for teachers.



## SUMMARY OUTLINE

### 18. The verb phrase (1): its head. Verb classes. The morphology of the English verb. Spanish-English contrasts: tense and aspect. Multi-word verbs.

- 18.1. The verb phrase (1): its head. Types of verbs and their main features.
- 18.2. The verb phrase (1): its head. The morphology of the English verb.
- 18.3. The verb phrase (1): its head. Time and tense in English and Spanish.
- 18.4. The verb phrase (1): Phrasal verbs and verbal idioms.

## 1. THE VERB PHRASE (1): ITS HEAD. TYPES OF VERBS AND THEIR MAIN FEATURES

VP: head + dependants.

Head: MAIN VERB (lexical verb)      Dependants: AUXILIARY ELEMENT

AUXILIARY ELEMENT: no realisation (*follow*), inflectional morpheme (*followed*), auxiliary verb (*may follow*), a combination of auxiliary verb(s) and inflectional morpheme(s) (*might have been stolen*).

STRUCTURE:

{ TENSE } { MOOD } { PHASE } { ASPECT } { VOICE }  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 AUXILIARY ELEMENT  
 { -ed<sub>1</sub> } { modal v. } { have -ed<sub>2</sub> } { be -ing } { be -ed<sub>2</sub> }

Verb classes: auxiliary, semiauxiliary, catenative, lexical

### 1.1. CRITERIA FOR AUXILIARINESS

Criteria met by auxiliary verbs:

- **Impossibility of independent existence as full VP.**
- **Possibility of acting as operator in the NICE contexts:** Negation with not, Inversion of subject and operator, Code (operator in question tags, etc.), and Emphatic positive.
- **Possibility of being placed before adverbs** such as *always/never, certainly/probably*.
- **Impossibility of imposing semantic restrictions on the subject.**
- **Possibility of accepting existential 'there' as subject.**
- **Possibility of accepting, without change in meaning,** the passive transformation of the verb which is supposed to function as main verb.

#### Criteria for modal auxiliaries

Followed by bare infinitive  
No non-tensed forms  
No 3rd pers. -s  
No co-occurrence

### 1.2. FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF VERBS

AUXILIARY SYSTEM	Auxiliary	Primary aux.	<i>be+ed<sub>2</sub> be+ing, have+ed<sub>2</sub></i>
		Pro-aux.	<i>Do</i>
		Central modals	<i>can, could, must, might, will...</i>
	Semiauxiliary	Marginal modals	<i>used to, dare, need, ought to</i>
		Modal semiaux.	<i>be to, be going to, have to</i>
MAIN VERB	Catenative	begin, finish, appear, try, want	
	Lexical	write, catch, drink, vote, learn	

## 2. THE VERB PHRASE (1): ITS HEAD. THE MORPHOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH VERB

			Regular verbs	Irregular verbs	
TENSED FORMS	past tense		walk	took	shut
	present tense	3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. sing.	walks	takes	shuts
		general	walk	take	shut
NON-TENSED FORMS	Base		walk	take	shut
	present participle		walking	taking	shutting
	past participle		walked	taken	shut

The 3<sup>rd</sup> person sing.:

- (i) if the stem ends in a sibilant → /ɪz/ (*kisses*)
- (ii) if the stem ends in voiceless consonant → /s/ (*walks*)
- (iii) otherwise /z/ (*runs*)

Past tense form [-ed,]:

- (i) if the stem ends in alveolar stop (/t/ or /d/) → /ɪd/ (*landed*)
- (ii) if the stem ends in voiceless consonant → /t/ (*pushed*)
- (iii) otherwise /d/ (*killed*)

With irregular verbs, the past tense generally involves a change in the stem vowel, alone (*sang*) or accompanied by suffixation (*sold*, *lost*).

## 3. THE VERB PHRASE (1): ITS HEAD. TIME AND TENSE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Similarities between Spanish and English tenses:

- Present perfect (*has sung*) – Present (*sings*) – Future (*will sing*)

The orientation is the Present Point, PP, (now) so events that are simultaneous with it appear in the present tense. Events that have begun before PP are expressed by the present perfect and events that are posterior can be expressed with modal *will*.

- Past perfect (*had sung*) – Past (*sang*) – Conditional (*would sing*)

When narrating the past, perspective is switched from PP to some Recalled Point, RP. Anteriority is depicted by the past perfect. Simultaneity with respect to RP is expressed by the past tense in English and the preterite or imperfect in Spanish. Finally, posteriority with respect to RP is expressed by *would* and other remote modals.

### 3.1. EXPRESSING THE SPANISH INDICATIVE IN ENGLISH

#### 3.1.1. Simple and continuous forms

In English, there is a systematic contrast between non-progressive tenses such as *I write* and progressive tenses such as *I am writing*. *Escribo* can be either of the two, while *estoy escribiendo* stresses the latter.

#### 3.1.2. Contrasting past tenses

In Spanish there is a systematic distinction between the imperfect (continuative action in the past) and preterite (past completed action seen as a whole). The English simple past can have both aspectual meanings so *use(d) to/would* is used to avoid ambiguity.

#### 3.1.3. Contrasting simple and perfect forms

Constructions with *hace* + simple present ≈ English present perfect.

The construction *llevar* + gerund ≈ English present (or past) perfect simple or progressive with *for*.

### 3.2. EXPRESSING THE SPANISH SUBJUNCTIVE IN ENGLISH

Only one form: base of the verb for all persons.

- Mandative subjunctive

Used only in *mandative subjunctive*, *independent clauses expressing wish and idioms*, and *hypothetical conditions*.

■ Hypothetical conditions and wishes

Common constructions equivalent to the Spanish subjunctive:

- a) *Should*.
- b) *(For) accusative + to-infinitive*.
- c) *May/might*.
- d) *Wish/if only + V-ed, /would*.
- e) *Let + accusative + bare infinitive*.
- f) The corresponding tense of the indicative.

## 4. THE VERB PHRASE (1): PHRASAL VERBS AND VERBAL IDIOMS

VERB + PARTICLE: Phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs.

PARTICLES	
(A) Prepositions only	<i>against, as, at, for, from, into, like, of, upon, with, etc.</i>
(B) Prepositional adverbs	<i>about, around, by, down, in, off, on, over, up, etc.</i>
(C) Spatial adverbs only	<i>ahead, apart, aside, away, back, forward, out, etc.</i>

Prepositions require a following NP as a prepositional object, adverbs do not.

### 4.1. PHRASAL VERBS

#### 4.1.1. Type I (intransitive) phrasal verbs (Verb + adverb particle)

*Touch down, get on, turn up*

They have distinct meanings which cannot be predicted from the meaning of the verb and particle in isolation (*catch on* = 'understand'). The particles cannot be separated from the verb.

#### 4.1.2. Type II (transitive) phrasal verbs (Verb + adverb particle + Od)

*Bring up, make out, turn on*

The particle can either precede or follow the Od. When the Od is a personal pronoun, it can only be placed between the verb and the particle.

### 4.2. PREPOSITIONAL VERBS

#### 4.2.1. Type I prepositional verbs (Verb + preposition + prepositional object)

*Look at, care for, cope with*

The lexical verb is followed by a preposition with which it is semantically and/or syntactically associated.

These constructions display transitive (passivisation) and intransitive (PP as adjunct) features:

ANALYSIS 1:	S _____	V _____	A _____
	<i>Sarah</i>	<i>looked</i>	<i>at her mother</i>
ANALYSIS 2:	S	V	O

■ Prepositional verbs contrasted with phrasal verbs

Prepositional verbs: V(stressed) + Prep. + NP/pronoun

Phrasal verbs: V (NP/pronoun) + particle (stressed) + (NP)

#### 4.2.2. Type II prepositional verbs (Verb + NP + preposition + NP)

*Blame for, rob of, provide with*

There is a subtype of these verbs in which the Od forms part of the idiom:

*make a mess of, pay attention to, take advantage of*

### 4.3. PHRASAL-PREPOSITIONAL VERBS

VERB + ADVERB + PREPOSITION:

*put up with, look forward to, get away with*

One-word paraphrase: *put up with* = 'tolerate'

Structure of multi-word verbs:

VERB ± Od ± ADVERB ± PREPOSITION ± O

	Lexical verb	Direct object	Particles		Prepositional object
			Adverb	Preposition	
Phrasal V. I	blow	-	<i>Up</i>	-	-
Phrasal V. II	turn	someone	<i>Down</i>	-	-
Prep. V. I	come	-	-	<i>across</i>	<i>a problem</i>
Prep. V. II	<i>take</i>	<i>someone</i>	-	<i>for</i>	<i>a fool</i>
Phrasal-Prep. V.	<i>come</i>	-	<i>Up</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>an answer</i>

## SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How many VPs can one find in a sentence?
  - a. Only one.
  - b. It depends on the number of auxiliaries.
  - c. None.
  - d. As many as main verbs.
  
2. How many VP(s) can you identify in *They should have to begin to pay for using the equipment they have bought*?
  - a. One.
  - b. Two.
  - c. Three.
  - d. Four.
  
3. The main verb in a VP can be realised by...
  - a. a central modal verb.
  - b. a semiauxiliary verb.
  - c. a catenative or a lexical verb.
  - d. a marginal modal.
  
4. Which of the following statements is not true?
  - a. Some central modal verbs don't have non-tensed forms.
  - b. All regular verbs have tensed and non-tensed forms.
  - c. Some irregular verbs have identical past and past participle forms.
  - d. The base form is in all cases identical to the lexical stem.
  
5. If the stem ends in a sibilant, the pronunciation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. is...
  - a. /z/.
  - b. /ɪz/.
  - c. /s/.
  - d. /dʒ/.

6. If the stem ends in voiceless consonant, the pronunciation of the regular past tense form is...
- a. /t/.
  - b. /d/.
  - c. /t/ or /d/.
  - d. /ɪd/.
7. Which of the following is sometimes an equivalent to the Spanish imperfect?
- a. *Would rather*.
  - b. *Had better*.
  - c. *Would*.
  - d. *Need*.
8. Which of the following equivalents to the Spanish subjunctive is less common in BrE?
- a. Accusative + to-infinitive.
  - b. *Would*.
  - c. *Should*.
  - d. *May/might*.
9. Why are constructions such as *Do you approve of?* ungrammatical?
- a. Because sentences cannot end with a preposition.
  - b. Because prepositional verbs require an object NP.
  - c. Because phrasal verbs are always transitive.
  - d. Because phrasal-prepositional verbs have two particles.
10. The verb *go into* can be... (choose as many answers as apply):
- a. a phrasal verb.
  - b. a prepositional verb.
  - c. a phrasal prepositional verb.
  - d. a free combination of verb + preposition.