

VOCABULARY · EPISODE 49

The Obstacle Is the Way

Key words & expressions · English + Español

10 words

Your English Toolbox

1

an obstacle

un obstáculo · un escollo en el camino

DEF

something that blocks your path or makes it difficult to move forward; a challenge that stands between you and your goal

Obstacle comes from Ryan Holiday's Stoic philosophy book — the idea that obstacles are not detours from the path, they ARE the path. For language learners, every difficulty is actually training.

ES

Algo que bloquea tu camino o dificulta avanzar; un desafío que se interpone entre tú y tu objetivo.

Viene del libro de filosofía estoica de Ryan Holiday — la idea de que los obstáculos no son desvíos del camino, sino que SON el camino.

Treat every grammar obstacle as a gift — the things you struggle with are exactly what you need to master.

Treat every grammar obstacle as a gift. -> Trata cada obstáculo gramatical como un regalo.

The obstacle is the way — the pronunciation you find hardest is the one that, once conquered, sets you apart.

The obstacle is the way — the pronunciation you find hardest is the one that, once conquered, sets you apart.
-> El obstáculo es el camino — el escollo de pronunciación que encuentras más difícil es el que, una vez conquistado, te distingue.

2

to persevere

perseverar · seguir adelante sin rendirse

DEF

to continue working toward a goal despite difficulty, discouragement, or repeated setbacks

Persevere is the verb of long-term grit — it has a moral dimension, suggesting courage and character. Language learners who persevere through difficulty are building more than language skills; they are building resilience.

ES

Continuar trabajando hacia un objetivo a pesar de la dificultad, el desánimo o los contratiempos repetidos.

Es el verbo de la tenacidad a largo plazo — tiene una dimensión moral que sugiere coraje y carácter.

Persevere through the difficult stage — everyone who has ever become fluent passed through exactly what you are feeling now.

Persevere through the difficult stage — everyone who has ever become fluent passed through exactly what you are feeling now. -> Persevera durante la etapa difícil — todos los que alguna vez han llegado a ser fluidos pasaron exactamente por lo que sientes ahora.

She persevered through three years of slow progress and then improved dramatically in the fourth year.

She persevered through three years of slow progress and then improved dramatically in the fourth year. -> Siguió adelante sin rendirse durante tres años de progreso lento y luego mejoró drásticamente en el cuarto año.

3

to push through

seguir adelante · avanzar a pesar de la dificultad

DEF

to continue despite difficulty, pain, or resistance until you have passed the hard part

Push through is the verb of grit — you do not stop when it gets hard, you push. In language learning, pushing through a plateau, an embarrassing moment, or a difficult text is what separates those who improve from those who stagnate.

ES

Continuar a pesar de la dificultad, el dolor o la resistencia hasta que hayas pasado la parte difícil.

El verbo de la tenacidad — no te detienes cuando se pone difícil, empujas.

The hardest moment in any language plateau is when you feel like giving up — push through it.

The hardest moment in any language plateau is when you feel like giving up — push through it. -> El momento más difícil en cualquier meseta lingüística es cuando sientes ganas de rendirte — sigue adelante.

She pushed through three months of slow progress and emerged with a level she could not have imagined at the start.

She pushed through three months of slow progress and emerged with a level she could not have imagined at the start. -> Avanzó a pesar de la dificultad durante tres meses de progreso lento y emergió con un nivel que no podría haber imaginado al principio.

4

a hurdle

un obstáculo concreto · un reto que hay que superar para avanzar

DEF

a difficulty or challenge that must be overcome in order to make progress

Hurdle is the athletics metaphor for challenge — you do not go around hurdles, you jump over them. In language learning, each new hurdle (accent, grammar, confidence) is a specific thing to get over, not a general reason to stop.

ES

Una dificultad o desafío que debe superarse para hacer progreso.

La metáfora atlética para el desafío — no rodeas los obstáculos, los saltas.

Every learner faces the same hurdles — pronunciation, vocabulary, confidence — in different orders.

Every learner faces the same hurdles — pronunciation, vocabulary, confidence — in different orders. -> Cada estudiante enfrenta los mismos retos que hay que superar para avanzar — pronunciación, vocabulario, confianza — en diferentes órdenes.

The biggest hurdle for most learners is not grammar but the fear of being misunderstood.

The biggest hurdle for most learners is not grammar but the fear of being misunderstood. -> El mayor obstáculo concreto para la mayoría de los estudiantes no es la gramática sino el miedo a ser mal comprendido.

5

to face something head-on

enfrentar algo de frente · afrontar una dificultad directamente sin evitarla

DEF

to deal with a difficulty directly and without avoidance — confronting it rather than working around it

Face something head-on is the language of direct confrontation with challenge. In English learning, head-on means choosing the harder path on purpose: speaking when you would rather write, asking for clarification instead of pretending to understand.

ES

Lidiar con una dificultad directamente y sin evasión — enfrentarla en lugar de rodearla.

El lenguaje de la confrontación directa con el desafío. En el aprendizaje de inglés significa elegir el camino más difícil a propósito.

Face your pronunciation difficulties head-on — record yourself and work on exactly the sounds you avoid.

Face your pronunciation difficulties head-on — record yourself and work on exactly the sounds you avoid. -> Enfrenta de frente tus dificultades de pronunciación — grábate y trabaja exactamente en los sonidos que evitas.

Instead of avoiding conversations about topics she found difficult, she faced them head-on.

Instead of avoiding conversations about topics she found difficult, she faced them head-on. -> En lugar de evitar conversaciones sobre temas que le resultaban difíciles, los afrontó directamente sin evitarlos.

6

determination

la determinación · la firmeza para seguir adelante pese a las dificultades

DEF

the quality of being firmly committed to achieving a goal despite difficulty, setbacks, or the temptation to quit

Determination is the long-distance version of willpower — it is not the strength to resist temptation for an hour, but the commitment to keep going for months and years. Language learning is a test of determination above all else.

ES

La cualidad de estar firmemente comprometido con lograr un objetivo a pesar de las dificultades, contratiempos o la tentación de rendirse.

La versión de largo recorrido de la fuerza de voluntad — no la fuerza para resistir la tentación por una hora, sino el compromiso de seguir durante meses y años.

Determination is what gets you through the months when progress is invisible.

Determination is what gets you through the months when progress is invisible. -> La determinación es lo que te lleva a través de los meses en que el progreso es invisible.

Her determination was visible — she missed no more than two sessions in a year and improved beyond anyone's expectations.

Her determination was visible — she missed no more than two sessions in a year and improved beyond anyone's expectations. -> Su firmeza para seguir adelante pese a las dificultades era visible — no faltó a más de dos sesiones en un año y mejoró más allá de las expectativas de todos.

7

to get in your own way

interponerte en tu propio camino · sabotearse a ti mismo

DEF

to behave in ways that prevent you from achieving what you actually want — usually through fear, perfectionism, or negative thinking

Get in your own way is the phrase for self-sabotage. It names the irony of failing not because the task is impossible, but because your own habits of thought are blocking you. Every English learner does this at some point — refusing to speak, waiting to be perfect.

ES

Comportarte de maneras que te impiden lograr lo que realmente quieres — generalmente por miedo, perfeccionismo o pensamiento negativo.

La frase para el autosabotaje. Nombra la ironía de fracasar no porque la tarea sea imposible, sino porque tus propios hábitos de pensamiento te bloquean.

Stop getting in your own way — the only thing stopping your English now is your belief that it is not good enough.

Stop getting in your own way — the only thing stopping your English now is your belief that it is not good enough. -> Deja de interponerte en tu propio camino — lo único que detiene tu inglés ahora es tu creencia de que no es suficientemente bueno.

She realised she had been getting in her own way for years by refusing to speak until she was sure she was right.

She realised she had been getting in her own way for years by refusing to speak until she was sure she was right. -> Se dio cuenta de que se había estado sabotajeando a sí misma durante años negándose a hablar hasta estar segura de que tenía razón.

8

to try again

intentarlo de nuevo · volver a intentarlo tras un error o fracaso

DEF

to make another attempt after a failure, error, or unsuccessful result

Try again is the fundamental language learning permission. Every error in language is just a try. The willingness to try again without excessive shame or self-criticism is the most essential quality for language success. It is also the simplest phrase — two words that contain everything.

ES

Hacer otro intento después de un fracaso, error o resultado insatisfactorio.

El permiso fundamental del aprendizaje de idiomas. La disposición a intentarlo de nuevo sin vergüenza excesiva es la cualidad más esencial para el éxito lingüístico.

When you make a mistake in English, do not apologise for ten minutes — just try again.

When you make a mistake in English, do not apologise for ten minutes — just try again. -> Cuando cometes un error en inglés, no te disculpes durante diez minutos — simplemente inténtalo de nuevo.

She made the same error in pronunciation five times and tried again each time without discouragement.

She made the same error in pronunciation five times and tried again each time without discouragement. -> Cometió el mismo error de pronunciación cinco veces y volvió a intentarlo cada vez sin desanimarse.

9

to chip away at something

avanzar poco a poco · ir erosionando un objetivo con pequeños esfuerzos constantes

DEF

to make gradual, steady progress on a large or difficult goal by doing small amounts consistently over time

Chip away is the perfect metaphor for language learning — you do not smash a mountain, you chip at it each day. Over months and years, the mountain becomes a hill, then a stone, then nothing. This phrase captures the true nature of fluency: patient, daily, incremental.

ES

Hacer progreso gradual y constante en un objetivo grande o difícil haciendo pequeñas cantidades consistentemente a lo largo del tiempo.

La metáfora perfecta para el aprendizaje de idiomas — no golpeas una montaña, la picas cada día.

You will reach fluency by chipping away at English every day — not by cramming once a month.

You will reach fluency by chipping away at English every day — not by cramming once a month. -> Alcanzarás la fluidez avanzando poco a poco con el inglés cada día — no estudiando de golpe una vez al mes.

She chipped away at her accent for two years and then suddenly noticed it had changed completely.

She chipped away at her accent for two years and then suddenly noticed it had changed completely. -> Fue erosionando su acento con pequeños esfuerzos constantes durante dos años y luego de repente notó que había cambiado completamente.

10 a breakthrough

un avance decisivo · el momento en que todo hace clic

DEF

a sudden and significant moment of progress or understanding after a period of effort or difficulty

Breakthrough is the word for the moment when everything clicks. You understand what you could not understand before; you speak what you could not speak. In language learning, breakthroughs often come after periods of apparent stagnation — which means the dark periods are not wasted, they are preparation.

ES

Un momento repentino y significativo de progreso o comprensión después de un período de esfuerzo o dificultad.

La palabra para el momento en que todo encaja. Los avances decisivos a menudo vienen después de períodos de estancamiento aparente — el período oscuro no fue en vano.

Every language plateau is the silent preparation for a breakthrough — keep going.

Every language plateau is the silent preparation for a breakthrough — keep going. -> Cada meseta lingüística es la preparación silenciosa para un avance decisivo — sigue adelante.

She had a breakthrough when she heard a native speaker and understood every word for the first time.

She had a breakthrough when she heard a native speaker and understood every word for the first time. -> Tuvo el momento en que todo hizo clic cuando escuchó a un hablante nativo y entendió cada palabra por primera vez.