

This revision is from a dissertation by a Chinese-speaking student of Social Policy:

Original	Revision
<p>Although her husband had the attitude of reciprocity, it was she who cared for his mother. She did not argue that her husband should take this job, not her.</p>	<p>Although her husband had the attitude of reciprocity, it was she who cared for his mother. She did not argue that her husband should take on this job, not her.</p>

The difference between to **take** a job and to **take on** a job emerged clearly from a concordance, an extract from which follows. **Take a job** (citations 1-8) occurs in contexts which state what sort of job it is, how much it pays, whether it is part-time or full-time, etc. In other words, it means to **take employment**:

- 1) to pay off, she cannot now take a job paying less than pounds 12,000 a year. "I hav
- 2) iver. He is now leaving to take a job in Brussels as a European commissioner. With
- 3) a kitchen assistant before taking a job as a pizza delivery driver 18 months ago. W
- 4) x years. Three years ago I took a part-time job and have received my tax allowances
- 5) eir boy to be a lawyer. He took a job with the Ministry of the Interior but spent h
- 6) se neuroses.' At 16, Moore took a summer job working on the chassis line at GM but
- 7) er moving to New York, she took a modelling job and, while doing an ad for Olivetti
- 8) block any move for him to take another job in football." Little would see a return

Take on a job, on the other hand, occurs in contexts which show it means to assume responsibility for a task, paid or unpaid. Notice, for example, the appearance of adjectives such as **stressful** (10), **stress-loaded** (15) and **demanding** (12):

- 9) , Whitbread is strong. Why take on the job of scrapping excess capacity when this c
- 10) ays be people unwilling to take on the stressful job-loads most Utopias depend on.
- 11) A group of students could take on the job of compiling the electoral register ahea
- 12) teaching qualification to take on a demanding job from which you can be sacked wit
- 13) r does not improve when he takes on the job of defending Boston's most corrupt publ
- 14) be pounds 200,000. Now he takes on an unpaid job for an organisation which many be
- 15) He's fat, he's 53 and he's taking on a stress-loaded job. He may be leader but he c
- 16) ivated plants, while women took on the job of grain preparation.' Women had t kneel

After the consultation, investigation of a corpus of 35 million words from the Guardian/Observer showed some of the other things that you can **take on** in addition to **job(s)** (53 citations): **role(s)** (82), **responsibility/ies** (62), **task(s)** (25), **work** (22), **commitment(s)** (8), **burden(s)** and **challenge(s)** (7 apiece).

A point which will no doubt occur to some teachers (and students?) is that this seems to be a point of very minor linguistic detail. Would it not have been better for the consultant to insert the missing **on** in the matter of a second or two than to spend minutes obtaining and studying with the student a concordance of **take** in the context of **job**? My response to such an objection would be twofold:

1. To employ a fashionable distinction, what is important in the one-to-one consultations is the **process** of revision - the finding out, the testing of various possibilities, and not the **product** of revision - i.e. the maximum amount of 'corrected' text. There does, in fact, seem to be an inverse relationship between the amount of text revised and the week-by-week progress made by the student: it is difficult, if not impossible, for the average student to learn much from large quantities of corrected text.

2. Whether a linguistic point is - or is not - a matter of detail cannot be decided in absolute terms. Here, for example, the student's whole dissertation centres on the responsibilities (duties, burdens, etc.) that a carer **takes on** in looking after an elderly relative, and in that context the verb is far more than a peripheral detail.

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