

Communicative English Language Skills II

Lecture 13

Grammar Focus: Reported speech

Reporting · Indirect Speech · Accuracy

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Today's Roadmap

- What is 'reporting'? Why we report speech
- Direct vs. indirect (reported) speech
- The three key concepts: Reporting · Indirect Speech · Accuracy
- Reporting verbs and sentence structure
- Changes: tense, pronoun, time and place
- Reporting statements, questions, commands
- Classroom activities (4.7 – 4.11) and group practice
- Recap, common mistakes, and homework

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture, students will be able to:

- Distinguish direct speech from reported (indirect) speech
- Identify reporting verbs and the reporting clause
- Apply tense backshift, pronoun and adverb changes correctly
- Report statements, yes/no questions, wh- questions and commands
- Re-tell a conversation accurately, preserving the speaker's meaning

Warm-up: Think · Pair · Share

*Yesterday your friend said: "I am tired and I will not come to class tomorrow."
How would you tell ME what your friend said — without quoting them word-for-word?*

- Work with the person next to you (2 minutes)
- Write down your version on a slip of paper
- We will compare answers — notice what changes!

What Does It Mean to 'Report' Speech?

Reporting speech means re-telling what another person said — not necessarily using their exact words, but keeping their meaning faithful and accurate.

We report speech every day:

in conversations, in news, in academic writing, in court, in essays.

Reporting = passing on a message · keeping it true to the original speaker.

Direct vs. Indirect Speech

DIRECT SPEECH

The speaker's exact words.

Marked with **quotation marks "..."**

Example:

Maria said, "It was the perfect ending to two weeks in Dubai."

INDIRECT (REPORTED) SPEECH

A re-telling of what was said.

No quotation marks · usually with **that**

Example:

Maria said that it had been the perfect ending to two weeks in Dubai.

Direct Speech- Closer Look

- Sara said, "I am studying for my exam."
- The teacher said, "Open your books to page 54."
- Ayele asked, "Where are you?"
- "It was unbelievably hot," Maria said.

Notice: punctuation, capital letters inside quotes, and the position of the reporting verb.

Note: Punctuation rules: comma before the opening quote, capital letter at the start of the quoted sentence, closing punctuation inside the quotation marks.

Indirect Speech- Closer Look

- Sara said that she was studying for her exam.
- The teacher told us to open our books to page 54.
- Ayele asked where I was.
- Maria said that it had been unbelievably hot.

Notice: no quotation marks · tense moves back · pronouns change · 'that' or a wh- word links the clauses.

Spot the Differences

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
"I am happy."	He said (that) he was happy.
"I will call you tomorrow."	She said she would call me the next day.
"Do you like coffee?"	He asked whether I liked coffee.
"Close the door."	She told me to close the door.

Why Does Reported Speech Matter?

- Re-tell conversations smoothly in writing and speaking
- Quote sources in academic essays and research
- Summarise news, lectures and meetings
- Pass messages between people accurately
- Avoid misunderstandings — small word changes can change meaning!

Three Key Concepts for This Lecture

1

REPORTING

The act of re-telling what someone said.

2

INDIRECT SPEECH

The grammatical form used to report — no quotes, with backshift.

3

ACCURACY

Keeping the speaker's meaning true and complete.

Reporting is the WHAT, indirect speech is the HOW, accuracy is the WHY.

Activity 4.7 · Quoted vs. Reported

Read the paragraph about Maria's trip to Dubai (Module p. 54).

In small groups:

- Underline every example of REPORTED speech
- Circle every example of QUOTED (direct) speech
- Discuss the differences you notice

Activity 4.7 Sample Findings

From the Maria/Dubai paragraph:

- Reported: "She said that the architecture of Dubai was fascinating."
- Reported: "Maria said she didn't because she has a fear of heights."
- Reported: "Maria said that there were many shopping centers in Dubai."
- Quoted: "I don't even like being on a second-story balcony..."
- Quoted: "It was the perfect ending to two weeks in Dubai."

Reporting Verbs-The Engine of Reporting

A reporting verb introduces what was said. The verb you choose carries meaning about HOW it was said.

Most common: say, tell, ask

Stronger / more specific: explain, reply, suggest, promise, advise, warn, complain, admit, deny, agree, refuse, wonder, want to know, inquire

SAY vs. TELL- A Common Confusion

SAY	TELL
No personal object needed.	Always needs a person object.
He said that he was tired.	He told me that he was tired.
X He said me...	X He told that...

Structure of a Reported Sentence

REPORTING CLAUSE

She said / He told me / They asked

REPORTED CLAUSE

(that) she was tired / where I lived

Example:

She said (that) she was tired.

He asked where I lived.

The word 'that' is optional after say/tell in informal style — but always safe to include.

Activity 4.8 · Find the Reported Speech

In groups, read the family dialogue (Mum, Mark, Susan) on Module p. 54-55.

Find every line where one character REPORTS what another said.

Hint: look for sentences like 'Dad says that...' and 'He says he...'

Activity 4.8 Reported Lines

- Mark: "Dad says that he's lost his voice."
- Mark: "He says he went to the football match last night."
- Mark: "He says he would like some toast with honey."

Notice: 'says' (present) is used because Mark is reporting Dad in real time. The reported clause keeps a similar tense.

Note: when the reporting verb is present (says), the reported clause does NOT backshift. Backshift mainly applies after a past reporting verb.

Four Things Change When We Report

1. TENSE

Verbs usually move one step into the past

2. PRONOUNS

I/we/you shift to he/she/they/I

3. TIME WORDS

now → then, today → that day, tomorrow → the next day

4. PLACE WORDS

here → there, this → that

Note: These four areas are the structural heart of reported speech.

Tense Backshift- The Golden Rule

When the reporting verb is in the PAST, the verb in the reported clause moves ONE STEP back in time.

Direct: She said, "I am hungry."

Reported: She said that she was hungry.

Direct: He said, "I have finished."

Reported: He said that he had finished.

Tense Backshift · Table 1

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Present simple — I work	Past simple — he worked
Present continuous — I am working	Past continuous — he was working
Present perfect — I have worked	Past perfect — he had worked
Past simple — I worked	Past perfect — he had worked

Tense Backshift · Table 2 (Modals)

Direct	Reported
will →	would
can →	could
may →	might
shall →	should
must →	had to / must (no change)

Note: ought to does NOT change further.

Backshift in Action

- "I love English." → She said that she loved English.
- "They are working." → He said that they were working.
- "I have eaten." → She said that she had eaten.
- "I will help you." → He said that he would help me.
- "I can swim." → She said that she could swim.

Pronoun Changes

Pronouns shift to fit the new speaker and listener.

In the speaker's words	When you report
I, me, my, mine	he/she, him/her, his/her
we, us, our	they, them, their
you, your	I/me/my or he/she

Pronoun Changes: Examples

- Tom said, "I am tired." → Tom said that he was tired.
- Sara said, "I will help you." (to me) → Sara said she would help me.
- They said, "We have finished our work." → They said they had finished their work.
- He said to her, "You look great." → He told her that she looked great.

Time and Place Words Change Too

Direct	Reported
now	then
today	that day
tomorrow	the next day / the following day
yesterday	the day before / the previous day
this / these	that / those
here	there

Time Changes: Examples

- "I will see you tomorrow." → He said he would see me the next day.
- "I am busy now." → She said she was busy then.
- "I bought this yesterday." → He said he had bought that the day before.
- "I live here." → She said she lived there.

Reporting Statements

Use SAY (that...) or TELL someone (that...)

- Sara said, "I am studying English." → Sara said that she was studying English.
- Tom said, "I have finished my work." → Tom told us that he had finished his work.
- Maria said, "It was perfect." → Maria said that it had been perfect.

Reporting Yes/No Questions

Use ASK + IF / WHETHER · use statement word order · no question mark.

- "Do you like coffee?" → He asked if I liked coffee.
- "Are you flying soon?" → He asked whether I was flying soon.
- "Have you finished?" → She asked whether I had finished.

Note that reported questions use STATEMENT order.

Yes/No Questions- From the Module

- "Are you flying soon?" (he) → He wanted to know whether I was flying soon.
- "May I help you?" (the porter) → The porter asked whether he might help me.
- "Have you set your alarm clock?" (he) → He asked if I had set my alarm clock.
- "Is Prague the capital?" (we) → We needed to know whether Prague was the capital.
- "Do you want it?" (Joe) → Joe asked me whether I wanted it.

These come straight from Activity 4.9 in the module.

Reporting Wh- Questions

Keep the wh- word (what, where, when, why, who, how) · use statement word order · no question mark.

- "Where are you?" → My friend asked me where I was.
- "What will you choose?" → They asked me what I would choose.
- "How long have you been standing here?" → He wanted to know how long I had been standing there.

Wh- Questions- From the Module

- "What do you do?" (she) → She wondered what I did.
- "Where did you live?" (they) → They wanted to know where I had lived.
- "Why are you reading this magazine?" (he) → He was curious to know why I was reading that magazine.
- "Would you rather dance?" (Peter) → Peter asked me whether I would rather dance.

Reporting Commands & Requests

Use *TELL / ORDER / ASK + person + TO-infinitive* (negative: *NOT TO*)

- "Open the door." → She told me to open the door.
- "Please help me." → He asked me to help him.
- "Don't be late." → The teacher told us not to be late.

Commands · More Examples

- "Sit down." → The teacher told the students to sit down.
- "Please pass the salt." → He asked her to pass the salt.
- "Don't touch the wires." → The technician warned us not to touch the wires.
- "Be quiet." → The librarian told them to be quiet.

Reporting Suggestions, Offers, Promises

- Suggest: "Let's go now." → She suggested going then. / She suggested that we go then.
- Offer: "Shall I help you?" → He offered to help me.
- Promise: "I will not forget." → She promised not to forget.
- Advise: "You should rest." → The doctor advised me to rest.
- Warn: "Don't drive fast." → He warned me not to drive fast.

These specific reporting verbs make writing more precise and accurate. Choosing the right verb is itself a form of accuracy.

When We Do NOT Backshift

- When the reporting verb is in the PRESENT → He says he is tired.
- When the statement is a UNIVERSAL TRUTH → The teacher said that water boils at 100°C.
- When the situation is STILL TRUE now → She said she lives in Addis Ababa. (still does)
- Modals already past form: would, could, should, might, ought to — no change.

Accuracy first: if changing the tense would make the sentence false, leave it.

Activity 4.9 · Dialogue → Paragraph

Module p. 55-56: A list of short questions and answers between friends.

In groups:

- Read every quoted question
- Re-write each one as reported speech
- Combine them into ONE coherent paragraph
- Explain to your group HOW you changed each sentence

Activity 4.9 · Sample Paragraph

My friend asked me where I was, and they asked me what I would choose. He wanted to know whether I was flying soon. The porter asked me if he might help me, and another friend asked whether I had set my alarm clock. We needed to know whether Prague was the capital. Peter asked me whether I would rather dance, and he wanted to know how long I had been standing there. She wondered what I did, while Joe asked me if I wanted it. They wanted to know where I had lived, and he was curious to know why I was reading that magazine.

Activity 4.10 · From a Story Extract

Module p. 57: Re-read the short Animorphs extract.

- Find at least three pieces of direct speech
- Convert them to reported speech
- Pay attention to the verbs of speaking the author chose (said, replied)

Example: "Hey, the tail is neat," Rahel said. → Rahel said that the tail was neat.

This is a bridge into the bigger Activity 4.11.

Activity 4.11 · Betru and Tedla

Read the dialogue between Betru and Tedla (Module p. 58).

Your task: change the WHOLE dialogue into one indirect-speech paragraph beginning:

"Betru asked Tedla ..."

Use various reporting verbs: asked, replied, explained, suggested, agreed.

Activity 4.11 - Sample Answer

Betru asked Tedla what he was doing there, adding that he had not seen him since June. Tedla replied that he had just come back from his holiday in Nekemte. Betru asked whether he had enjoyed it. Tedla said that he loved Ireland and that the people in Nekemte had been so friendly. Betru wanted to know if he had gone to Shambu. Tedla explained that it had been his first trip and offered to show him some pictures, asking whether Betru was doing anything the next day. Betru answered that he had to arrange a couple of things but he was free that night. Tedla suggested that he might come to his place and asked what time they should meet. Betru promised he would be there at eight and asked if that was all right.

Accuracy-The Heart of Reporting

- Keep the speaker's MEANING — not necessarily their exact words
- Choose a reporting verb that fits the speaker's TONE (warned, suggested, complained...)
- Adjust tense, pronoun, time and place so the message stays TRUE
- Do NOT add information the speaker did not give
- Do NOT remove important detail (numbers, names, conditions)

Faithful reporting = correct grammar + honest meaning.

Accuracy is not mechanical — it's an ethical and academic responsibility.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Keeping QUOTATION MARKS after switching to reported form
- Forgetting to BACKSHIFT the verb after a past reporting verb
- Using QUESTION word order in reported questions ('He asked where was I')
- Confusing SAY and TELL ('He said me...' / 'He told that...')
- Leaving 'tomorrow', 'today', 'here' unchanged when the situation has shifted
- Adding a question mark to a reported question

Quick Practice · Whole Class

Convert each line into reported speech. Speak your answer out loud.

- 1. Selam said, "I am writing my assignment now."
- 2. Dawit said, "I will travel to Bahir Dar tomorrow."
- 3. The teacher asked, "Have you done your homework?"
- 4. Mom said, "Don't open the door."
- 5. He said, "Where do you live?"
- Check your task against the answers in the next slide

Quick Practice · Answers

- 1. Selam said that she was writing her assignment then.
- 2. Dawit said that he would travel to Bahir Dar the next day.
- 3. The teacher asked whether we had done our homework.
- 4. Mom told me not to open the door.
- 5. He asked where I lived.

Pair Activity - Real Conversation

Step 1: For 90 seconds, talk to your partner about your weekend plans.

Step 2: Swap partners.

Step 3: Tell your new partner — in REPORTED SPEECH — what your previous partner said.

Listener checks: Did the report stay accurate? Were the tenses, pronouns and time words correct?

Recap · The Whole Lecture in One Slide

- Direct speech = exact words, in quotes
- Indirect (reported) speech = re-told, no quotes, with backshift
- After a PAST reporting verb → tense moves one step back
- Pronouns, time and place words also shift
- Statements: SAY (that...) / TELL someone (that...)
- Yes/No questions: ASK if/whether + statement order
- Wh- questions: ASK + wh- word + statement order
- Commands: TELL someone TO / NOT TO + verb
- Always serve ACCURACY — keep the speaker's meaning true

Self-Check · Can You Do These?

- I can tell direct speech from reported speech in a paragraph.
- I can change a statement, a question and a command into reported form.
- I can backshift verbs and choose the correct pronoun.
- I can change time and place words appropriately.
- I can use a variety of reporting verbs (said, told, asked, suggested, warned...).
- I can re-tell a short conversation accurately and naturally.

Individual Assignment – Reported Speech (10 Marks)

Instructions: Convert the following sentences into reported speech. Each carries 2 marks. Write your answers clearly and check tense, pronoun, time, and place changes.

1. Selam said, “I am writing my assignment now.”
2. Dawit said, “I will travel to Bahir Dar tomorrow.”
3. The teacher asked, “Have you done your homework?”
4. Mom said, “Don’t open the door.”
5. He said, “Where do you live?”

Thank You

Questions, ideas, and reflections are warmly welcomed.

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