



INDIRECT SPEECH THEORY

• INTRODUCTION

➤ When we tell people what somebody says or thinks we use **indirect speech**. The **reporting verb** is of special importance. Common reporting verbs are: *answer, ask, complain (beschweren), explain, know, mention (erwähnen), wonder, remember, report, say, tell, think, write* etc.

Bill says, "I am happy."
I think, "I have a problem."

Bill **says** (= reporting verb) that **he is** happy.
I **thought** (= reporting verb) that I **had** a problem.

• CHANGE OF TENSES

RULE 1

➤ If the reporting verb is not in the past, there is no change of tenses.

Peter **says**, "The train **is** late"

Peter **says** that the train **is** late.

He **has remarked** recently, "I **will** try again."

He **has remarked** recently that he **will** try again.

Dad **will say**, "We **have painted** the fence perfectly."

Dad **will say** that we **have painted** the fence perfectly.

➤ If the reporting verb is in the past, there is a change of tenses.

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| PRESENT TENSE (SMP / PROG) | -> | PAST TENSE (SMP / PROG) |
| PAST TENSE (SMP / PROG) | -> | PAST PERFECT TENSE (SMP / PROG) |
| PRESENT PERFECT TENSE (SMP / PROG) | -> | PAST PERFECT TENSE (SMP / PROG) |
| PAST PERFECT TENSE (SMP / PROG) | -> | PAST PERFECT TENSE (SMP / PROG) |
| FUTURE I: WILL (SMP / PROG) | -> | CONDITIONAL I: WOULD (SMP / PROG) |

He **explained**, "I **don't** eat much meat."

He **explained** that he **didn't** eat much meat.

Sarah **said**, "He **was** really nice."

Sarah **said** that he **had been** really nice.

Peter **said**, "I **have** never met a lovelier girl before."

Peter **said** that he **had** never met a lovelier girl before.

She **told** us, "I **had** never seen a real tiger."

She **told** us that she **had** never seen a real tiger.

She **thought**, "I **will** have a cup of tea."

She **thought** that she **would** have a cup of tea.

➤ With cases of improbability / impossibility, natural laws / facts and some modal verbs (*could, would, should, might*) we have no change of tenses even if the reporting verb is in the past.

He **said**, "If I **were** healthier, I **would** go skiing."

He **said** that if he **were** healthier, he **would** go skiing.

Sue **said**, "The Seine **flows** through Paris."

Sue **said** that the Seine **flows** through Paris.

Jim **said**, "I **could** do it."

Jim **said** that he **could** do it.

• PRONOUNS AND HERE-AND-NOW WORDS

RULE 2

➤ Personal (*I, you* etc) and possessive pronouns (*my, your* etc) change in indirect speech.

Marc **said**, "I like **your** room."

Marc **said** that **he** liked **my** room.

Jill **told** me, "**You** are **my** friend."

Jill **told** me that I was **her** friend.

➤ Here-and-now words change to there-and-then words.

| | | |
|---|---|---------------------|
| ➤ here -> there | ➤ now -> then | ➤ today -> that day |
| ➤ yesterday -> the day before | ➤ the day before yesterday -> two days before | |
| ➤ tomorrow -> the following day | ➤ the day after tomorrow -> in two days' time | |
| ➤ (a week, month, year ...) ago -> (a week, month, year, ...) before | | |
| ➤ last (week, month, year, ...) -> the (week, month, year, ...) before | | |
| ➤ next (week, month, year, ...) -> the following (week, month, year, ...) | | |
| ➤ this / these -> that / those | | |

Bill **said**, "I like it **here**."

Bill **said** that he liked it **there**.

She **told** us, "I'm going fishing **this** week."

She **told** us that she was going fishing **that** week.

He **explained** us, "I'm not working **today**."

He **explained** us that he was not working **that day**.

• INDIRECT QUESTIONS

RULE 3

➤ Indirect questions have a different word order (SVO), no *do / does / did* and no question marks.

Monica **said**, "Where **is** John?"

Monica **asked** where John **was**.

I **asked** her, "When **can** you come?"

I **asked** her when she **could** come.

I **wanted** to know, "Where **does** Andrew live?"

I **wanted** to know where Andrew **lived**.

➤ With indirect yes / no questions we use *if* or *whether*.

He **asked** me, "Do you know Tim?"

He **asked** me **if / whether** I knew Tim.

• INDIRECT COMMANDS / POLITE REQUESTS

RULE 4

➤ We use verb + object + infinitive (with *to*) to say what people want(ed) us to do.

I **asked** John, "Could you **phone** Angela?"

I **asked** John **to phone** Angela.

Sue **told** me, "Please **do not** close the door!"

She **told** me **not to** close the door.