

Lesson Plan: Common errors in reported speech

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: 60 minutes

Grammar Focus: Reported (Indirect) Speech

Lesson Aim: To help students identify and correct common reported-speech mistakes

1. Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize typical errors in reported speech
- Correct tense, pronoun, and time-expression mistakes
- Use reported speech more accurately in speaking and writing

2. Materials

- Whiteboard & markers
- Error sentences (prepared or projected)
- Short dialogue or text (optional)

3. Warm-up (5–8 minutes)

Activity: "What did they say?"

1. Say or write on the board:

Maria: "I am tired."

2. Ask:

"How can we tell someone else what Maria said?"

3. Elicit:

She said (that) she was tired.

Write the sentence but **do not explain yet**.

4. Noticing stage (10 minutes)

Write several **incorrect reported-speech sentences** on the board:

- ✗ She said she **is** tired.
- ✗ He told me he **will** come yesterday.
- ✗ Anna said **me** that she was late.
- ✗ Tom said he was busy **today**.

Ask students (in pairs) to find the mistake and try to correct it.

5. Presentation: Common errors & corrections (15 minutes)

Focus on **4 main problem areas**.

A. Tense backshifting errors

"I am hungry.":

- ✗ She said she **is** hungry.
- ✓ She said she **was** hungry.

Explain:

When the reporting verb is in the **past**, the tense usually moves back.

B. Reporting verb errors

"I am tired.":

- ✗ She said me that she was tired.
- ✓ She **told me** that she was tired.
- ✓ She **said that** she was tired.

Highlight:

say → no object

tell → needs an object

C. Pronoun errors

"I am late.":

✗ John said that **I** was late.

✓ John said that **he** was late.

Explain:

Pronouns change to match the **speaker**, not the reporter.

D. Time & place expression errors

"I will call you today.":

✗ She told me yesterday that she would call me **today**.

✓ She told me yesterday that she would call me **that day**.

Common changes:

- today → that day
- tomorrow → the next day
- yesterday → the day before
- here → there

6. Controlled practice (10–12 minutes)

Activity 1: Error correction

Students correct the sentences:

1. He said he can help me.
2. She told that she was sick.
3. They said they will meet tomorrow.

Check together and discuss why.

Activity 2: Choose the correct option

1. "I'm angry." = She said / told me she was angry.
 2. "I'm busy today." = He told me last Friday that he was busy today / that day.
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7. Guided practice (10 minutes)

Activity: "Report it correctly"

1. Give short direct-speech sentences:

"I can't come."

"We are studying."

2. Students report them:

- She said she couldn't come.
- They said they were studying.

Monitor and correct.

8. Freer practice (8–10 minutes)

Activity: "What did they say?"

1. Students work in small groups.
2. One student reads a short dialogue.
3. Another student reports it to the group.

Encourage accuracy over speed.

9. Review & wrap-up (5 minutes)

Ask:

"What are the most common mistakes in reported speech?"

"When do we change the tense?"

Write 2 incorrect sentences on the board and have students correct them orally.

10. Optional homework

- Rewrite a short dialogue in reported speech
- Find and correct **5 reported-speech mistakes** in a paragraph