Section 16  noun clauses

The revision exercises are provided here for students who may still need them. However, for many learners indirect speech is mostly unproblematic. In particular, tenses in indirect speech mostly have nothing special about them: they are nearly always the tenses that are natural for the situation. Compare ‘She was tired because she had been working late’ and ‘She said she was tired because she had been working late’. Both sentences use ‘was’ and ‘had been working’ – adding ‘She said’ makes no difference. The main exception is when we report present-tense statements and questions: here we may use past tenses to talk about things that are still true:

‘How old are you?’ ‘What?’ ‘I asked how old you were.’

But in general, there is no need to teach complicated rules about tense changes to most students, and exercises in which students change direct to indirect speech may be unnecessary, as well as being unnatural – that isn’t how native speakers construct indirect speech sentences.

However, in some languages indirect speech does have special grammar, so some students may have continuing problems due to transfer of mother-tongue structures:

*I told her that I don’t understand her problem.

*I thought that I would have been late, so I hurried.

And some languages do not have a separate indirect speech structure like those in European languages, so speakers of these languages may mix direct and indirect structures:

*They told us you must come back tomorrow, but we couldn’t.

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possible further activities

Differences between direct and indirect speech  Get students to find a short piece of dialogue (perhaps in a language-teaching book), and to underline the words that would be changed if one of the speakers reported the conversation to someone else in another place.

Memory test  Get each student to tell the class one true thing and one untrue thing about him/herself, using a present tense. (‘I’ve got three brothers.’ ‘I speak Arabic.’) In the next lesson, see if students can remember what each one said.

Natalie said she had three brothers.

Franz said he spoke Arabic, but it isn’t true.

Interviews  Students prepare interview questions for each other on topics of their choice. Then they interview each other, and write reports in indirect speech.

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possible further activities

Old beliefs  Ask students if they can think of things that people used to believe. Help with vocabulary as necessary.

People believed that the earth was flat.

Personalisation: childhood beliefs  Small children believe some very strange things. Give students a few minutes to think, and then ask them to tell the class about things they believed when they were small. (‘I believed my mother knew everything.’ ‘I believed that the teacher lived in the school.’)

Personalisation: misinformation  Ask students to think of things they have been told in their lives (by parents, teachers, politicians, newspapers, boyfriends, girlfriends, strangers, …) that were not true.

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.  ➔ Section 16 continues
Refer students to the ‘past and past perfect’ explanation box on page 220 and ask them to check the accuracy of the explanation. Suggest they look for the following:

“He said his wife had been”
“People believed that dinosaurs had been”
“People believed that dinosaurs were”

possible further activities

‘How to’ etc  Ask students to remember a time when they first arrived in a new place (new city, new school, new country …). Can they write five or more sentences on the following patterns?

I didn’t know how to …
I didn’t know where to …
I didn’t know what to …
I didn’t know when to …

possible further activities

Personalisation  Ask students what they feel glad about – probably quite a lot of things. Give them a few minutes to think, supply vocabulary as necessary, and then ask them to write at least five sentences beginning I’m glad (followed by a clause without that).

For example:

I’m glad the cold weather’s finished.
I’m glad I live in …
I’m glad I’m …
I’m glad I don’t …

‘The fact that …’  Ask students to think of one thing that has made life easier for them and one thing that has made life difficult. Get them to talk about these using ‘The fact that …’.

For example:

The fact that I was good at sport made life at school easier.
The fact that I was very shy made life difficult for me when I was younger.

possible further activities

Difficult teenagers  Ask students to imagine that they are difficult teenagers (perhaps they are!), and to complete the following statements for their parents.

I’ll … whoever I …
I’ll … whatever I …
I’ll … wherever I …
I’ll … whenever I …
I’ll … however I …

(Sentences might end for example with like, want, choose, feel like or decide.)
possible further activities

*Personalisation*  Ask students to complete some or all of the following sentences with their own opinions:

- It’s amazing how many …
- It’s not surprising that …
- It’s always good to …
- I love it when …
- I hate it when …