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METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR TEACHING REPORTED SPEECH, QUESTIONS, AND REQUESTS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines effective approaches to teaching reported speech, reported questions, commands, and requests in English language instruction. These grammatical structures are frequently confusing for English language learners because they represent complex shifts in tenses, pronouns, and word order from direct speech patterns. Learners often struggle to differentiate between the syntactic structures of reported statements and reported questions, which frequently leads to grammatical and communicative errors such as maintaining inverted word order in indirect questions. The article discusses the linguistic background of these forms and identifies common learning difficulties such as backshifting overgeneralization, pronoun confusion, and translation interference. Furthermore, it presents a range of pedagogical strategies including contextual teaching, contrastive analysis, visual transformation charts, communicative role-plays, and task-based learning. The study emphasizes that effective grammar teaching should combine explicit explanation with meaningful communication practice in order to improve both accuracy and fluency in learners' language use.

Keywords: reported speech, indirect questions, commands and requests, backshifting, English grammar teaching, communicative language teaching, task-based learning.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a fundamental component of language learning, and its effective teaching plays a crucial role in developing learners' communicative competence. Among various grammatical structures in English, reported speech, questions, commands, and requests represent a common area of difficulty for second language learners. These forms originate from direct utterances but function as complex indirect discourse clauses with entirely different morphosyntactic requirements. The reported form is typically used to convey information, inquiries, or directives spoken by another person without quoting their exact words, shifting the temporal and situational deictic center to the reporter's perspective. Despite the systematic rules governing these changes, learners frequently confuse these forms due to differences between English and their first language structures, lack of contextual exposure, and reliance on mechanical memorization rather than meaningful understanding. For example, a learner might fail to perceive the





structural distinction between a reported statement and an indirect question, resulting in common errors like "He asked me where did I live" instead of "He asked me where I lived". Therefore, identifying effective teaching strategies for reported structures is essential for improving learners' grammatical accuracy and communicative performance in English.

The difficulty of indirect speech can be explained through both linguistic and pedagogical perspectives. Linguistically, English requires systematic backshifting of tenses (e.g., Present Simple moving to Past Simple), adjustments of pronouns, and changes in time and place adverbials (e.g., here becoming there, now becoming then). Furthermore, reported questions require a complete structural reconfiguration, changing from an inverted auxiliary-subject order to an affirmative statement word order, while removing the question mark. Commands and requests introduce another distinct syntactic pathway, shifting the finite predicate into an infinitive phrase structure using reporting verbs like tell or ask (e.g., "Come here" becomes He told me to go there).

One of the most effective teaching approaches to address these multi-layered transformations is contextual learning, where grammar is introduced within meaningful narrative paragraphs, news reporting scenarios, or dialogue reconstruction rather than isolated rules. When learners encounter expressions within real contexts, they are much more likely to understand the functional necessity of altering tenses and viewpoints to match the perspective of the speaker. Another important method is contrastive analysis, which involves directly comparing direct speech formulas with their corresponding reported counterparts in structured transformation tables. This visual comparison helps learners recognize logical patterns, understand the systematic behavior of backshifting, and reduces cognitive confusion. Visual aids such as color-coded arrow charts and real-life situational diagrams also play a significant role in enhancing comprehension, prompting students to map out the shifts in pronouns and time frames before producing complete sentences.

In addition, communicative activities such as "Gossip chains", interview reporting, and information-gap exercises allow students to use the target grammar in authentic communication rather than relying on mechanical drills. Task-based learning further reinforces understanding by engaging students in meaningful tasks, such as writing summary reports based on a simulated press conference or re-telling witness accounts in a creative mystery solving game.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, reported speech, reported questions, commands, and requests represent a challenging but essential area of English grammar for second language learners. The main difficulty lies in understanding the complex coordination of tense backshifting, pronoun realignment, and word order restructuring. Effective teaching requires a combination of contextual learning, contrastive analysis, visual support, communicative practice, and task-based learning. When these methods are





applied together, learners are more likely to develop a deep understanding of grammatical meaning rather than relying on rote memorization. As a result, their fluency, accuracy, and communicative confidence in English significantly improve.

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