

## UNIT 48    Reported speech (2)

- a) It is not always necessary to change the verb when you use reported speech. If you are reporting something and you feel that it is still true, you do not need to change the tense of the verb:

*direct*     Tom said 'New York is bigger than London'.  
*reported*   Tom said (that) New York is (or was) bigger than London.  
*direct*     Ann said 'I want to go to New York next year'.  
*reported*   Ann said (that) she wants (or wanted) to go to New York next year.

Notice that it is also correct to change the verb into the *past*.

But you must use a past tense when there is a difference between what was said and what is really true. Study this example situation:

You met Ann. She said 'Jim is ill'. (*direct speech*)  
Later that day you see Jim playing tennis and looking well. You say:  
'I'm surprised to see you playing tennis, Jim. Ann said that you were ill'.  
(*not* 'that you are ill', because he isn't ill)

Must, might, could, would, should and ought stay the same in reported speech. May in direct speech normally changes to might in reported speech.

- b) Say and tell

If you say who you are talking to, use tell:

– Tom **told me** (that) he didn't like Brian. (*not* 'Tom said me ...')

Otherwise use say:

– Tom **said** (that) he didn't like Brian. (*not* 'Tom told (that) he ...')

Also: you can't say 'Tom told about his trip to America'. You have to say:

– Tom **told us** (or **me/them/Ann** etc.) about his trip to America.

If you don't say who he told, you have to say:

– Tom **talked** (or **spoke**) about his trip to America. (*but not* 'said about')

- c) We also use the *infinitive* (to do / to stay etc.) in reported speech, especially with tell and ask (for orders and requests):

*direct*     'Stay in bed for a few days', the doctor said to me.  
*reported*   The doctor **told me to stay** in bed for a few days.  
*direct*     'Don't shout', I said to Jim.  
*reported*   I **told Jim not to shout**.  
*direct*     'Please don't tell anyone what happened', Ann said to me.  
*reported*   Ann **asked me not to tell** anyone what (had) happened.  
*direct*     'Can you open the door for me, Tom?' Ann asked.  
*reported*   Ann **asked Tom to open** the door for her.

Said is also possible with the infinitive:

– The doctor **said to stay** in bed for a few days. (*but not* 'said me')