

**Indirect Speech in Coursebook Exercises**

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## 1. Introduction

Views on grammar differ widely among learners as well as among teachers. As a pupil, I thought that the views my classmates had on grammar were usually shaped by their own learning experiences. They liked, disliked or just accepted it as part of school life, depending on whether they found it easy or difficult to learn grammar, on whether learning grammar proved to be helpful for communication or whether it was just something we were taught at school in order to be tested on it afterwards.

Now as a teacher, I observe that teachers' views on grammar are also influenced by their experiences. These experiences include the way they learned grammar themselves, but also classroom experiences when teaching grammar. We reflect on what seems to work for students and what works for ourselves and try to combine these two by a compromise. In addition, university and advanced training confront teachers with new theories and findings, which teachers may also integrate into their teaching practice.

Additionally, classroom practice is largely determined by the course book used. Although teachers tend to assume that course books offer the optimal way of teaching grammar according to the latest discoveries in second language teaching, this assumption is to be applied with some precaution. The way grammar is presented in these course books is also defined by specific views the authors had on language learning, shaped by all sorts of experiences and theories. The question remains open whether these views truly support language learning and lead to successful language use.

I have the impression that this mingle of views and theories applies in particular to the presentation of indirect speech. Even though the aim of all the exercises is to teach indirect speech, it is not always evident whether they only teach the forms so that learners can apply them correctly at school, or whether they attempt to teach indirect speech as a further means of communication in English. In this seminar paper I am going to analyse several different exercises taken from four different school textbooks to see to what extent they promote the learning of indirect speech for real- life use or whether they just represent artificial classroom practices. First, however, I am going to provide some theory from which I draw my criteria of analysis I consider relevant for this purpose.

## **2. Theory**

### **2.1. Traditional Grammar in Modern Language Teaching**

As explained by Newby (1998a: 1), modern grammar teaching is strongly influenced by a variety of different approaches concerning language learning. Among the most prominent ones he mentions traditional grammar, the communicative approach, learner- based approaches and second language acquisition. He notes that “traditional grammar still tends to form the core both of classroom practices and of grammar books” (1998a: 2).

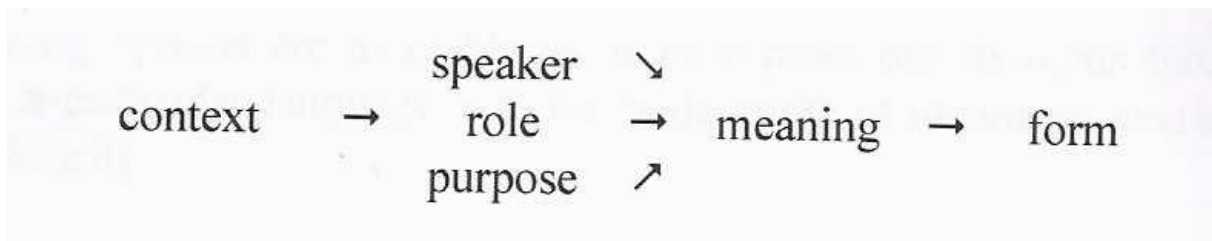
In Traditional Grammar, grammar is mainly seen as a “set of forms and structures, which comprise the main focus of the textbook syllabus” (Newby 2000: 1). It applies a deductive view on grammar by analyzing the forms and structures of sentences, aiming at “building” correct sentence structures. As explained by Newby (2000: 2), the most frequent forms of exercises in Traditional Grammar are “gapped sentences, pattern drills and sentences for transformation”. Needless to say, these types of exercises also represent easy and uncomplicated testing methods, since there is usually only one right solution. Traditional grammar thus bears the danger of mixing up teaching and testing. As Newby (2010: 22) points out, it is important to judge whether exercises support learning or whether they only test learning. Since modern teaching is still very much influenced by Traditional Grammar and exercises that test knowledge may seem quite attractive from the teacher perspective, language teachers and course books run the risk of giving in to methodology which does not truly support language learning.

### **2.2. Cognitive + Communicative Grammar**

Newby (1998a: 2), observes that “elements of communicative methodology in the form of oral activities and games are available in an increasing number of EFL books”. However, it needs to be pointed out that “oral activities and games” do not automatically make an exercise communicative. It is a common misconception among language teachers that ‘oral’ is seen as synonymous with ‘communicative’. In order to avoid this confusion, it is advisable to consider the following “communicative criteria for assessing grammar exercises” proposed by Newby (2010: 23):

1. Clear and realistic context
2. Realistic use/processing of language (authenticity of process)
3. Meaning, and meaningfulness of grammar stressed
4. Personalisation (students link grammar to their own knowledge, ideas, experience, wishes etc.)
5. Open- ended exercises
6. Task- based
7. Integrated skills (vocabulary, speech acts, speaking, writing)

These criteria are based on the view that “in real life language is used to exchange meaningful messages in actual contexts” (Newby 1998a: 3). According to Newby, such a view should be applied by all teachers when teaching a foreign language:



**Figure 1: Communication model (Newby 1998a: 3)**

This communication model suggests that at the core of authentic language use is not the form, but a context that gives rise to a communicative purpose from the perspective of the speaker, which causes him to encode a certain meaning into an adequate form. If the goal of language teachers and course books is to make pupils not mathematicians but successful communicators, it makes sense to design teaching material in a way that reflects the rationale behind this model. We must not look at language as a product of forms and meanings expressed, but take into account that the speaker is subject to a series of mental processes. (cf. Newby 1998a: 8).

It follows from the model that grammar is no longer to be defined simply as a set of rules, but as a wider concept of competence, of which the knowledge of formal rules is only one component among others. Apart from the knowledge of forms, grammatical competence can include the knowledge of meanings, which Newby likes to describe in terms of ‘notions’, the knowledge of purpose (speech functions) and the knowledge of style and of discourse. In order to be able to apply these kinds of knowledge, it must become ‘procedural’, rather than stay ‘declarative’ (cf. Newby 1998a: 4).

While the term ‘competence’ refers to theoretical knowledge about grammar, ‘performance’ means the ability to use the forms and meanings of the English language correctly and appropriately in real- life contexts. Although most language teachers consider performance to be their ultimate goal, Newby (1998a: 8) notes, “there is often a gap between competence and performance”.

### **2.2.1. Cognitive learning stages**

In order to avoid this gap and to lead students towards performance, it is of great importance to consider the cognitive learning stages learners ideally go through when acquiring grammar (cf. Newby 2010: 19-20):

- Learners receive a certain input, i.e. a language product embedded in a certain context as it is presented to a learner.
- At the awareness stage, grammar is thought to enter the learner’s consciousness. When processing the new items of language, mental energy is released.
- Conceptualisation relates to the stage in which learners form hypotheses about grammatical meanings and rules and in which they internalize these rules. Such hypotheses can be derived from a combination of their existing linguistic knowledge, their own schematic knowledge, contextual information found in the new input etc. In traditional grammar, rules were given to learners before they got the chance to form hypotheses, making them passive users of rather theoretical and abstract rules. A cognitive view, however, assigns language teachers and course books the task to facilitate and encourage the process of hypothesis building.
- Proceduralisation refers to the stage when the learner’s knowledge of a language gradually moves from competence to performance, i.e. when declarative knowledge becomes procedural. In short, this stage is crucial to fill the gap between “do you know” and “can you use”. The main focus is no longer on processing new language concepts and structures, but on the skill of using them in oral and written production.
- Performance is the ultimate stage in which language can be used in a real- life context without any need for scaffolding.

### 3. Method

Owing to all these considerations, it makes sense to consider the following questions when analyzing the way course book exercises attempt to teach indirect speech:

- 1) What is the **grammatical objective**?
- 2) What is the **learning objective**?
- 3) In how far is the exercise **communicative**?
- 4) **Testing vs. teaching**  
Does the exercise support learning, or does it rather test learning?
- 5) **Learning stages** (p. 18-20)  
Which learning stage does the activity support?
- 6) **Do you know vs. Can you use**  
Does the exercise go beyond the conceptualization stage?
- 7) **Depth of processing**  
How mentally active is the learner when doing the exercise?
- 8) **Dual processing**  
Does the exercise demand the learner to use both his linguistic and schematic knowledge?

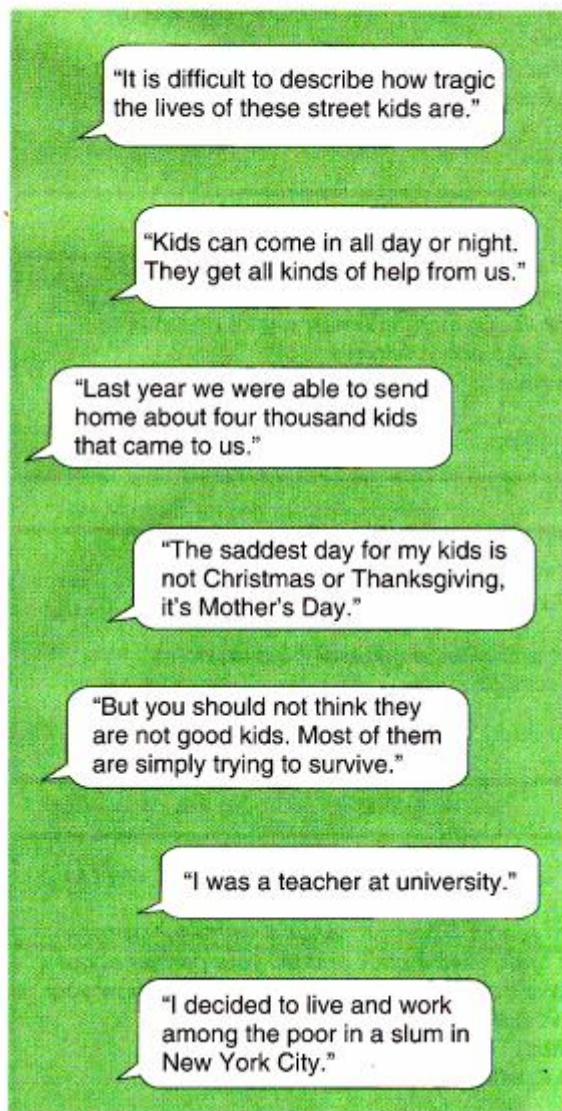
I will try to consider all these questions not in chronological order, but in a logical order which seems to make sense in connection with the individual exercises. The exercises are taken from the following course books: *The New You & Me*, *Friends*, *English to Go*, and *Your Ticket to English*. In all these books, indirect speech is introduced in year four.

## 4. Analysis of Exercises in School Textbooks

### 4.1. *The New You & Me 4*

Imagine that the reporters of an American school magazine wrote a report about an interview with Bruce Ritter. Then look at the sentences on the left. This is what he actually said. Then look at the examples on the right. Put the rest of the sentences into reported speech.

#### What Bruce Ritter said:



"It is difficult to describe how tragic the lives of these street kids are."

"Kids can come in all day or night. They get all kinds of help from us."

"Last year we were able to send home about four thousand kids that came to us."

"The saddest day for my kids is not Christmas or Thanksgiving, it's Mother's Day."

"But you should not think they are not good kids. Most of them are simply trying to survive."

"I was a teacher at university."

"I decided to live and work among the poor in a slum in New York City."

#### What the magazine wrote:

Bruce Ritter is a New York priest who runs a home for street kids called Covenant House. We went to see him to ask him about his work. He said it was difficult to describe how tragic the lives of these street kids were. He showed us around Covenant House, which is open twenty-four hours a day. He told us

that kids \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He told us that the year before \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He added that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He pointed out to us that we shouldn't think that they

\_\_\_\_\_

He told us that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He said that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 2: Activity 1 (Gerngroß et al. 1997: 71)

This exercise can be called a prototypical example of an exercise based on a very traditional approach concerning reported speech. What pupils are required to do is merely to change tenses and pronouns. The rest is about copying the sentences. Whether they actually

understand or even pay any attention to the content does not play an important role. If we exchange all the content words with nonsense words, it is still possible to complete the task. Let us consider example number four, in the middle:

Direct speech: “The gropest blup for my piddles is not Kaydockey or Lubbazaki, it’s Hoofidel.”

Indirect speech: He said that the gropest blup for his piddles was not Kaydockey or Lubbazaki, (but that) it was Hoofidel.

This suggests that the learner does not really need to be mentally active when doing this exercise. It would just as well be possible to read the instructions for the changes of tenses and pronouns from a table without even thinking about what the text actually means to express.

The exercise clearly does not go beyond the conceptualisation stage. However, it does not promote conceptualisation in a meaningful way. The problem may be that in this case that teaching seems to be influenced by testingteaching. Frequently, teachers just want grammar to be convenient for them and thereby forget to consider the perspectives and the needs of the learners. Simply testing pupils by asking them to transform complete sentences according to certain rules centred around a limited number of grammatical categories, i.e. tenses, pronouns and adverb of time, seems to be an easier system for some teachers than assessing more open exercises. Consequently, the learning stages also remain on this very superficial level. They are restricted to these kinds of transformation exercises and rarely confront pupils with the real notions of indirect speech. As long as learners of English create the expected output in exams, there seems to be little incentive to change the teaching.

Perhaps, however, language teachers as well as authors of textbooks should ask themselves whether by doing so they are not rendering grammar more complicated than it really is. Focusing on what seems to be the most obvious change from a structural point of view does not necessarily support learning. In fact, what is new to pupils at this stage is neither the change of tenses, nor the change of pronouns, but the “mental processes when reporting” (Newby 2010: 31). This notion is usually neglected.

The word-by-word transformation of direct speech into indirect speech does not reflect real life use. Considering the length of the utterances to be reported, it is unrealistic to assume that one could even remember the exact words and phrases. As explained in Newby

(2002: 126), we report ideas rather than the exact words. Although the resulting change in tenses and pronouns is only a logical side effect, it is frequently presented as the major cognitive task and becomes the main teaching objective in class as well as in course books. The grammar objective observable in *The New You & Me* is a formal one, and the learning objective is to teach the forms of indirect speech as opposed to the ones in direct speech.

The context in which the exercise is embedded is an interview that is used for a report for an American school magazine, which is as such quite an authentic context in which reported speech is frequently used. The problem is that in truth, the statements are extracted from a text on the previous page, which is clearly not an interview, but some sort of report. This means that the exercise does not even require students to select appropriate and meaningful statements themselves.


Dual processing is a competence not involved in this kind of exercise. Pupils do not need any schematic knowledge to complete this task. Knowledge of the linguistic rules about how to transform tenses and pronouns is the only requirement.

A more open ended variation of the exercise that does not provide the phrases in the speech bubbles would have allowed pupils to make the necessary choices themselves as to which ideas to report and to become aware of the mental processes involved in the act of reporting. Instead, pupils are confronted with a limited number of statements in direct speech, which are taken out of their immediate context, and are required to continue the sentences that are predetermined by the beginning of the sentences being given. Denying pupils the possibility to select the ideas worth reporting themselves negates/ignores the function of Grammar as a means for communication.

## 4.2. Friends 4

**Kevin's interview**

Yesterday I met Mr Collins and he was really nice. At the end of the interview he told me that I could do my "work experience" with him. Here are some of the things he said. My classmates wanted to know what it was like so I told them all about it. Do you know what I told them? *Tick the correct sentences!*



- 1) "Why do you want to work here?"
  - a) He asked me why I wanted to work there.
  - b) He wanted me to work there.
  - c) He told me that he had worked with other students the year before.

---

- 2) "What are your hobbies?"
  - a) He asked me how many hobbies I had.
  - b) He asked me if I had any hobbies.
  - c) He asked me what my hobbies were.

---

- 3) "Show me the articles you have written for the 'Friends Mag!'"
  - a) He wanted me to show him my articles.
  - b) He wanted me to write articles for him.
  - c) He wanted me to give up writing for the 'Friends Mag'.

---

- 4) "Tell me about two of your strengths and two of your weaknesses!"
  - a) He wanted me to tell him all my qualities.
  - b) He asked me to tell him about two of my strengths and two of my weaknesses.
  - c) He asked me to tell him about his strengths and weaknesses.

---

- 5) "When do you want to do your 'work experience'?"
  - a) He wanted to know the reasons why I was interested in "work experience".
  - b) He asked me about the place where I would like to work.
  - c) He asked me when I wanted to do the "work experience".

---

- 6) "Come back on Monday at 9 a.m."
  - a) He wanted me to come back on Monday at 9 a.m.
  - b) He warned me to come back on Monday at 9 a.m.
  - c) He told me he would be back on Monday at 9 a.m.

Figure 3: Activity 2 (Diwold et al. 2008: 92 )

This exercise taken from the textbook *Friends 4* constitutes the first contact of learners with indirect speech in this book. It asks learners to choose from a list of sentences that report the messages of the statements in direct speech above. All the sentences offered are

grammatically correct, but only one respectively corresponds to the sentence above as far as the content is concerned.

At first glance, neither the Grammar objective nor the learning objective is clearly definable. It can be argued that this exercise constitutes a way of introducing the new grammar item by providing numerous simple but correct examples following a certain pattern and that it forces learners to engage by demanding them to understand the meanings of the sentences. In terms of cognitive grammar, it might be aimed at the awareness stage. This is based on the assumption that learners would be able to deduce the rules for the form and use of indirect speech from the examples given. They do not actively produce language at this stage, but should become aware of the form of indirect speech.

It is questionable whether students will be able to grasp the rules merely by being confronted to these examples without the grammar objective being made clear. Since the language focus is not made explicit, for example by adding instructions that ask pupils to try to come up with a possible rule by looking at the right examples, the exercise is not very effective. There is no need to take the new grammar into account, because it is not necessary to apply any knowledge about indirect speech; the exercise could be done simply by looking at the content. Consequently, the depth of processing remains very much on the surface.

It cannot be seen as a try to promote dual processing by forcing learners to consider the semantic content of sentences either, because that would be a severe misconception: the exercise only eliminates the necessity for linguistic knowledge concerning indirect speech. In order to find out which statement best represents the utterance above, learners only need the capacity to encode very basic language structures, but they can do without any real world knowledge. In short, the exercise does not provide any adequate context in which both linguistic and schematic knowledge could be applied.

Considering the strong reliability on the content, the exercise cannot really be blamed of being influenced by testing methods. By means of this exercise, no teacher would be able to assess whether a learner has acquired the forms and notions of indirect speech or not. Still, the testing method of having pupils transform one sentence from direct to indirect speech is clearly foreshadowed in this exercise.

Like the previous exercise from “You and Me 4”, this exercise focuses on the transformation of single sentences from direct into indirect speech, and ignores the fact that in real life, people do not tend to give a word per word account of what has been said, but report

ideas. It has to be recognized, however, that if the aim is to present the formal changes very clearly, simplification can make sense.

The problem is that this exercise remains almost the only one dealing with this grammar point. Apart from one single exercise appearing in the accompanying workbook in the style of the example from “You and Me 4”, the chapter does not offer any further room for practice. Thus, the extent to which indirect speech is being treated in “Friends 4”, is restricted to the awareness stage. By consequence, there remains a huge “do you know – can you use”-gap.

Owing to the points mentioned above, it is not surprising that very few of the communicative criteria are fulfilled. It has already been outlined that the way the grammar is presented is not very authentic. Furthermore, the meaningfulness of reported speech is not stressed, since the key to solving the task is not the new grammar but the content. Beside this, personalization is only given to a certain extent if the learners are at a stage on which they are personally confronted to work experience. The context as such is relatively clear and realistic. After job interviews, young people are likely to report the exact questions they were asked to their friends so that they can prepare for their own interviews. What the candidate responded is sometimes left out, although it might be interesting to hear about that, too. The main problem to be seen in terms of the communicative approach is that the exercise is not open ended and that it does not integrate many of the skills. It needs to be taken into account, however, that at the awareness stage, there is neither much space nor a real need for all the communicative criteria to be fulfilled. The real problem is that it is not followed by exercises that would take the learner further. Merely providing a few examples is not enough.

### 4.3. English to Go 4



#### What about you and school?



- a. **Work with a partner and interview one another about school.** Write down five questions and then ask your partner. Think about the past, present, and future.

*Questions I can ask:*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....

- b. **Work with a new partner.** Tell one another about the interview.

First he/she asked me ... .

Then he/she wanted to know ... .

**Figure 4: Activity 3 (Westfall/ Weber 2006: 72)**

This is an exercise which very much depends on how it is used in the classroom. According to the instructions given by the book, pupils first have to write down five questions to ask a classmate about their school experience (and the other way round) and then to report their interviews to a different classmate. Depending on one little detail, this exercise can be compared to the transformation exercise in “You and Me 4” and rest on the conceptualization stage, or it can enter the spheres of proceduralisation and even approach performance: since in [a], some space is provided for their own questions to be written down, pupils may be seduced to note down their classmates’ questions as well. If they write full sentences, they are likely to take the sentences in direct speech and read out the versions in indirect speech in [b] just- by manipulating the most striking formal categories. As a consequence, the exercise will resemble the one found in “You and Me 4” in terms of depth of processing, dual processing, cognitive stage etc. Although this one seems more communicative than the first one, it is rendered artificial in that it does not take into account that in real life use, utterances tend to be summed up or even interpreted rather than “translated” literally from direct into indirect speech. However, it has to be recognized that this is not so much the case with questions, since they are usually quite short and precise, so that it would not make any sense to simplify them, since people usually do not have any difficulty remembering short questions.

Anyway, if teachers decide to prevent learners from writing down more than key words, the task becomes a very communicative activity. Personalization is given due to the

context of school experience, which connects all the pupils, and due to the interaction with their classmates about this topic. Meaningfulness of grammar is stressed, it is task-based, and it combines several different skills (vocabulary, writing and speaking) in one exercise. Most importantly, it is open ended in that pupils can formulate their questions themselves. This requires them not only to apply their linguistic knowledge, but also to make use of their schematic knowledge in this first step.

The only criterion I am in doubt about is authenticity of context. This depends on whether pupils only report the questions they were asked, as suggested by the example phrases or whether they really report the whole interview including the answers they gave. The problem is that in this book, “reporting questions” precedes “reporting statements”. One could rely on the learners’ autonomy to intuitively form hypotheses about how to report statements because it makes sense in this context. At least the instruction says “Tell one another about the interview”, which by common sense would not only include the questions asked, but also the answers given. It simply does not seem very natural to report only the questions in this context.

At this stage, learners start using indirect speech more or less freely, even though it still appears in a slightly scaffolded context, sample phrases to begin with being given. Procedural knowledge has started to take over and the oral activity stresses the use of the grammar item. Partly due to the immediacy of the task and its promoting relatively free use of the grammar in speech, the exercise demands quite some depth of processing.

The grammar objective is to report questions, which is taught before pupils learn how to report statements in this book. This chapter appears one unit later. The authors of the textbook show their awareness of the formal aspects including the change of tenses. However, this is not explicitly made an issue, but it confronts pupils with this aspect by asking them to “[t]hink about the past, present, and future” to make sure that they are not led to conclude from the numerous examples provided for a single tense that reporting always implies the use of one distinct tense.

#### **4.4. *Your Ticket to English 4***

The previous examples taken from three different course books had different strengths and weaknesses, and each addressed a different learning stage. As mentioned in chapter 2 of this paper, it is important that a unit leads pupils through all the stages from

awareness to performance so that the new grammar item is internalized and can be used properly. In contrast to the examples discussed so far, *Your Ticket to English 4* dedicates a total of six exercises to “reporting conversations”. In this part, I am not going to analyze every single exercise in as much detail as I used for the previous exercises, but it seems more meaningful to analyze how the different parts work together to teach the form, use and implications of reporting.

**Reporting conversations** \* *Über Gespräche Berichten*

**3.1 Telephone conversations**

Listen and decide if the statements are right or wrong. Tick the correct boxes.

	R	W		R	W
1. Peter invited Sally to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sally had to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go to a jazz club with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...do a test first.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go to a youth club with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...study for a test.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Peter invited Eve to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eve had to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go dancing with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...stay at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go to a party with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...ask Elizabeth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Peter invited Elizabeth to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elisabeth had to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go to the film with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...look after Brenda.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go for a walk with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...look after her sister's baby.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Peter invited Brenda to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brenda...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go dancing with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...didn't have time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...go out with him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...was going out with friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Figure 5: Activity 4 (Heindler et al. 2002: 42)**

The unit starts with a listening comprehension. Apparently, its content is a telephone conversation, by which learners are confronted with the initial setting which may provide the basis for a context in which indirect speech would be produced. In short, the first exercise provides the scenes that are going to be reported in one of the following exercises. Please note that in addition, the way the questions are posed suggests how the content of conversations can be summed up meaningfully.

● ● **3.2 Tick some of the boxes:**

If you were a friend of Peter's what would you say to him?

The girls like you but they are very shy.  The girls don't really like you.

The girls were busy; try again next week.  The girls were making excuses. Forget it.

He	<b>asked</b>	Sally if she <b>wanted</b> to...	Reporting questions
She	<b>said</b> <b>told</b> him	(that) she <b>had to</b> study.	Reporting statements

**Figure 6: Activity 5 (Heindler et al. 2002: 42)**

The second exercise again stresses the meaningfulness of the conversations. It already suggests that what we report is sometimes influenced by our own interpretation or evaluation of what was said and is not strictly bound to the exact phrases uttered by the speaker, even though up to this point indirect speech has not directly appeared yet. By making learners evaluate the meaning of the different speech acts, the exercise additionally promotes dual processing.

What follows is a little grammar box giving one example for reporting questions and one for reporting statements. These examples are based on the ones in chapter 3.1. of that unit, which are already summaries of what was said in the telephone conversations the pupils listened to. There is no explicit explanation given in the form of descriptive text, but major aspects that need special attention (e.g. the tenses) are highlighted.


● ● **3.3 Try to complete Peter's letter.**

Use the information in exercise 3.1.

TEXT  
WRITING  
GUIDE

Dear Richard,

First I phoned Sally and asked her...  
But she said she...  
Then I asked Eve if ... she said she...  
Next I asked Elizabeth...  
Finally I phoned Brenda and she said...




**Figure 7: Activity 6 (Heindler et al. 2002: 42)**

As a next step, pupils can take the example sentences from the grammar box as a model and continue to report the telephone conversation by ending the phrases provided by the “text writing guide”. This exercise covers the conceptualisation stage as learners are trying to form sentences that apply to some kind of rule they implicitly have deduced from the example sentences. Needless to say, they must be mentally active to a great extent in order to figure out how the “system” works.

● ● ● **3.4 Write a dialogue story.**

Sally, Eve, Elizabeth and Brenda have just met in the street. Complete their conversation.

Sally: Guess what! Peter phoned me last week.  
 Elizabeth: Really? What did he want?  
 Sally: He asked me if I wanted to go to the youth club with him.  
 Eve: You're joking! What did you say?  
 Sally: Well, of course I didn't want to go so I told him I had to study for a test.  
 Elizabeth: Oh, what a lie!  
 Brenda: That's funny, because he phoned me, too!  
 Sally: Are you serious?  
 Brenda: Yes, he asked me if...



**Figure 8: Activity 7 (Heindler et al. 2002: 43)**

This exercise takes pupils to the cognitive stage of proceduralisation/ performance. Completing the conversation demands them to apply both their new linguistic, as well as their schematic knowledge: they have to integrate their own interpretation of the utterances they have heard in the listening comprehension. This world knowledge has already been used in chapter 3.2 and is now reactivated for dual processing in 3.4. This demonstrates that coherence is an important feature to build up a unit and to promote its efficiency.

Furthermore, this exercise is clearly not influenced by traditional testing methods. On the contrary, it is very communicative. The beginning of the dialogue only suggests the type of discourse, but what people think about Peter's proposals, what they say and how they say it is totally left to the learners to decide. This is clearly an authentic task, in which meaningful language can be used.



● **3.5 Report the "mini-dialogues".**

1	2
Sandra is telling her mother what happened.	Moira is telling her friend Vivian about her conversation.
John: Busy? Sandra: No. John: Cinema? Sandra: Headache.	Moira: Homework? Keith: No. Moira: Walk? Keith: Too tired.
<i>The other day I met John in the street. He asked me if...</i>	<i>This afternoon I met Keith and asked him if...</i>

**Figure 9: Activity 8 (Heindler et al. 2002: 43)**

This exercise finally corresponds to the performance stage. All the exercise does is give learners a situation and hints at some content points which are reduced to a very basic level, and pupils are left to themselves to use appropriate language. Mental activity is no longer centred around processing new language input and hypothesis building, but on the authentic use of language. They will have to apply their world knowledge to be able to make sense of the key words given.

Despite the main content points being given, the exercise is open-ended enough to allow pupils to use their own creativity to interpret the utterances in many different ways. The most obvious meaning for the first example, of course, would be something like, "The other day I met John in the street. He asked me if I was busy. I said I wasn't. Then he asked whether I wanted to go to the cinema, but I said that I had a headache". Still, pupils could also extend the dialogue and even report slightly different situations. Some teachers who are still greatly influenced by more traditional, but seemingly safe exercises, in which there is only one possible solution to a task, might regard this exercise with suspicion because it does not coincide with the way they usually test this grammar item. However, transformation of sentences from direct to indirect speech can hardly lead pupils to use language on a performance level.

Peter	<b>invited</b> <b>wanted</b> <b>asked</b>	Brenda Sally Eve me	<b>to go</b> out with him.	<i>Über Einladungen berichten</i>
They	<b>told</b>	him her	<b>to phone</b> you.	<i>Über Aufforderungen berichten</i>

● ● **3.6 Report the following situations.**

Your dad:

1. Turn the radio down. It's too loud!	5. Don't go near the biscuit tin.
2. Would you be quiet, please!	6. How about going to the cinema tonight?
3. Hurry up! Hurry up!	
4. Make sure you come home before midnight.	

Example: 1. *Dad told me to turn the radio down.*

**Figure 10: Activity 9 (Heindler et al. 2002: 43)**

This last exercise presents some further functions of reported speech. These speech functions actually refer to speech acts that were circumscribed in the previous exercises. What was circumscribed as “He asked Brenda if she wanted to go out with him”, for example, can now be expressed by “He invited/ wanted/ asked Brenda to go out with him”. Again, these options are presented in a small grammar box offering examples in which the most crucial words are highlighted.

#### **4.5. Suggestion for Improvement:**

As the analysis has shown, many English course books offer exercises corresponding to the awareness stage or conceptualization stage, and stop there. Very often, transformation exercises are the only task-types pupils are presented with, which creates a rather inauthentic and artificial image of the use of reported speech. On the BBC homepage for Teachers of English, I have come across an exercise which I find very useful because it simulates a real-life context, in which reported speech can be used rather spontaneously and orally (considering that reporting is a speech act not exclusively but frequently done orally). What has to precede this activity, of course, are some exercises on the awareness and conceptualisation stage to allow pupils to form their hypotheses about rules and to internalise

them. Then, depending on how much scaffolding is employed, this activity can lead learners to proceduralisation and performance. Teachers can supplement their course by doing this activity with their pupils, if the course books they use do not take learners far enough in terms of cognitive learning stages.

Before starting the activity, Sabbadini (<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/activities/eavesdropping> 2003), who designed and published the exercise on the site, suggests to revise the notions of reported speech and to write some possible sentence starters onto the board (e.g. first she said..., and then he replied...). Then she sets up a context in which eavesdropping- this concept is to be explained as well- might be used. What worked well with her classes, she says, is first dates. Tables and chairs then have to be arranged in a way that it simulates a coffee shop. Couples sit opposite one another, decide on names for their characters and on topics to talk about. They take a seat in their simulated coffee shop and start their conversation. The teacher walks around, tapping one person on the shoulder. This person then stands up to go and eavesdrop on another couple's interesting conversation. They then return to their tables and report what they have heard to their own partners. Afterwards, the class comes back together to report to the whole class, what they grasped from another couple's conversation. The latter can then explain what their conversation had really been about and what information the eavesdroppers lacked.

## 5. Conclusion

Traditional Grammar still has a strangle hold on classroom practice when it comes to teaching reported speech. Despite the growing awareness and popularity of Communicative Language Teaching and of cognitive processes involved in language learning, teaching reported speech is still strongly marked by traditional habits. This becomes visible in the way many exercises concerning reported speech are designed in course books. Even though the extent of this paper has allowed me to analyze only a limited number of copies, some basic observations can be summed up as follows:

One very common task- type is the literal transformation of whole sentences from direct speech into indirect speech, which usually only demands some conscious knowledge of the change of tenses, pronouns and sometimes adverbs of time, which is not proceduralised properly. This type of exercise does not reflect authentic use of reported speech and puts too much weight on the set of formal rules involved in reporting, instead of considering the notions connected to reported speech. Even worse, some exercises do not even have a clearly visible learning aim and leave learners with a few examples deprived of a context and with no meaningful activities to take learners through further cognitive learning stages.

In some cases the teacher has the possibility to determine the effectiveness of an exercise proposed in a course book by changing a few simple details. However, the ideal case of coherent units that lead learners from the early stage of awareness up to performance are almost as rare in modern course books as they were in the bloom of Traditional Grammar. Fortunately, other useful material is available, for example on the internet, offered by motivated teachers whose views on grammar potentially support language learning. As far as indirect speech is concerned, few course books support learners at all stages, and it seems to be up to the teacher to fill this gap by their own initiative.

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