

Chapter 39

Direct and Reported Speech

When someone wishes to give information about what someone else has said, one can use either Direct Speech (*Usemi Halisi*) or Reported Speech (*Usemi wa Taarifa*). Direct Speech is easy to grasp while Reported Speech will be dealt with in detail because it requires additional rules.

Section A: Direct Speech

Direct Speech is a form of speech in which the actual words of the original speaker are quoted. In writing, Direct Speech is indicated by the use of quotation marks. For example:

“Gari hili ni bluu,” Hawa alisema.

“This car is blue,” Hawa said.

“Mifuko mitano ya viazi iliibiwa,” mwenye duka alisema.

“Five bags of potatoes were stolen,” the shopkeeper said.

“Unakwenda shuleni?” mwalimu aliuliza.

“Are you going to school?” the teacher asked.

Section B: Reported Speech

Reported Speech (*Usemi wa Taarifa*) is a form of speech in which the actual words of the original speaker are paraphrased. The order of the words and the grammar of the original sentence are changed without changing the message of the original speaker. The changes that occur affect the following:

Changing Personal Subject Prefixes
 Changing Tenses
 Adding Reported Speech Indicators
 Changing Verbs
 Changing Demonstratives
 Changing Adverbs of Time
 Changing Possessive Suffixes and Personal Pronouns
 Changing Imperatives

Before we continue, it is important to note that when using spoken English, it is sometimes difficult to know whether a sentence is in Direct or Reported Speech. This happens when there is not enough contextual information about that sentence, leading to ambiguity. For example:

Natasha said, I like to eat.

When the above sentence is spoken, the hearer of that sentence could have interpreted the pronoun “I” as referring to the speaker or to Natasha. This is because the above sentence could have been considered as either a Direct or Reported Speech. If it was known that the sentence above is in Direct Speech, then the “I” in the sentence must be Natasha referring to herself. However, if it was known that the sentence above is in Reported Speech, then the “I” in the sentence must refer to the speaker.

In order to avoid ambiguity, English speakers prefer to use Reported Speech. The original sentence would be reported as:

Natasha said she herself likes to eat.

In Swahili, both the Direct Speech and Reported Speech can be used when speaking as it does not cause ambiguity. For example,

Natasha alisema, ninapenda kula.

Natasha said, I (the speaker) like to eat.

When the sentence above is spoken, the hearer is sure that the Personal Subject Prefix *ni-* can only refer to the speaker. If we wanted to refer to Natasha being the one who likes to eat, we would use the Personal Subject Prefix *a-* and the sentence would be:

Natasha alisema, anapenda kula.

Natasha said that, she likes to eat.

The use of Subject Prefixes in Swahili eliminates the type of ambiguity that occurs in English.

Changing Personal Subject Prefixes

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech any singular Personal Subject Prefix could remain the same or be changed to either of the other two singular Personal Subject Prefixes. For example, the Personal Subject Prefix *ni-* in Direct Speech could remain as *ni-* or become *u-* or *a-* in Reported Speech depending on who the reporter and/or hearer is. Here are a few examples that will illustrate this point.

If John was talking about Anna and said in Direct Speech, “She is cooking,” then, it can be reported in the following ways.

If Anna is reporting what John said about her to a 3rd party, she would say:

He said I am cooking.

Alisema kwamba ninapika.

If Anna is reporting back to John what John said about her, she would say:

You said I am cooking.

Ulisema kwamba ninapika.

If John reports what John said about Anna to another person, he/she would say:

I said that she is cooking.

Nilisema kwamba anapika.

If John reports back to Anna what he said about her, he would say:

I said you are cooking.

Nilisema kwamba unapika.

If a 3rd party reports to Anna what John said about her, he/she would say:

He said that you are cooking.

Alisema kwamba unapika.

If a 3rd party reports to John what he said about Anna, he/she would say:
 You said that she is cooking.
Ulisema kwamba anapika.

If a 3rd party reports to another person about what John said about Anna, he/she would say:
 He said that she is cooking.
Alisema kwamba anapika.

As with the singular Personal Subject Prefixes above, the plural Personal Subject Prefixes follow the same format. When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech any plural Personal Subject Prefix could remain the same or be changed to either of the other two plural Personal Subject Prefixes. For example, the Personal Subject Prefix *tu-* in Direct Speech could remain as *tu-* or become *m-* or *wa-* in Reported Speech depending on who the reporter and/or hearer is.

Changing Tenses

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech, it is important to know how much time has elapsed since the time of the original utterance. The tense does not change when, at the time of reporting, the utterance refers to an action that is still taking place or refers to an action that is still expected to take place in the future. However, tense changes must occur when the utterance refers to an action that took place or was supposed to take place in the past or an action that was expected to take place in the future and at the time of reporting the future has passed. When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech and a tense change occurs, it is referred to as “backshifting.” If a Direct Speech sentence has a negative tense then backshifting occurs to the corresponding negative tense. Table 39.1 shows the tense changes from Direct to Reported Speech.

TABLE 39.1
Tense Changes with Direct to Report Speech

Direct Speech	Action still pending	Reported Speech
-na-	-na-	-li-
a-	a-	-li-
hu-	hu-	-li-
-ta-	-ta-	-nge-
-li-		-likuwa -me-
-me-		-likuwa -mesha-
-nge-	-nge-	-ngali-
-ngali-		-ngali-
-ki- (conditional)	-ki-	-nge-
-ki- (present participle)	-ki-	-ki-
-mesha-		-likuwa -mesha-

Note that when a sentence using the *hu-* tense marker is not preceded by a noun or a personal pronoun, it cannot be turned into Reported Speech. This is because it is unclear who or what the subject of the sentence is.

Reported Speech Indicators

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech, speech indicators are used to introduce the original words that are being reported. There are different types of speech indicators depending on the type of sentence.

For declarative sentences, the most frequently used speech indicators are *kuwa*, *kwamba*, *ya kwamba* and *kama* which are all equivalent to “that” as used in Reported Speech in English. In addition, *eti* and *sijui* are used as speech indicators when the reporter doubts the intention of the original speaker. Furthermore, *eti* shows surprise as well as doubt as to the intention of the original speaker.

For interrogative sentences, the speech indicators used depend on the type of interrogatives. For YES/NO questions, there is only one speech indicator which is *kama* and is equivalent to “that” as used in

Reported Speech in English. For WH questions (questions using who, what, when, where, why and how), the speech indicator used depends on what the question is being asked. For example, the indicator will be *kwa nini* if the question is asking about the reason, *wapi* if the question is asking about the place, *vipi* if the question is asking about the manner in which something was done, *lini* if the question is asking about the time etc. WH questions can also use a relative pronoun as a speech indicator (See Chapter 28 for more information on Relatives Infixes).

Verbs in Reported Speech

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech, two categories of verbs are used to introduce Reported Speech in declarative sentences. The first category of verbs simply states facts and does not necessarily require speech indicators. Examples of such verbs are *ambia* (tell), *sema* (speak) and *shauri* (advise). The second category of verbs provides explanation and elaboration and requires speech indicators. Examples of such verbs are *eleza* (explain) and *fahamisha* (inform).

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech, interrogative sentences require the verb *uliza* (ask) or the verb phrase *taka kujua* (want to know) which must be used with the interrogative speech indicators.

Now that you have been taught Personal Subject Prefixes, Tenses, Reported Speech Indicators and verbs in Reported Speech, below are a few examples of Direct Speech and Reported Speech sentences.

“Ninasoma kitabu,” baba alisema. – “I am reading a book,” father said.

Baba alisema kwamba alisoma kitabu. (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter) – Father said that he read a book.

“Tulinunua peremende,” watoto walimwambia mwalimu. – “We bought peppermint,” the children told the teacher.

Watoto walimwambia mwalimu kwamba walikuwa wamenunua peremende. (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter) – The children told the teacher that they had bought peppermint.

“Utajitolea kujenga shule?” waziri aliuliza. – “Will you volunteer to build the school?” the minister asked.

Waziri alitaka kujua kama ningejitolea kujenga shule. (if reference made to the reporter) – The minister asked if I would volunteer to build the school.

“Mnakwenda Dar es Salaam lini?” wakala wa ndege aliuliza. – “When have you (pl.) gone to Dar es Salaam?” the airline ticket agent asked.

Wakala wa ndege alitaka kujua lini tulikwenda Dar es Salaam. (if reference made to the reporter) – The airline ticket agent wanted to know when we had gone to Dar es Salaam.

“Umeshamaliza kula chungwa?” mpokezi alimwuliza mkurugenzi. – “Have you already eaten the orange?” the receptionist asked the director.

Mpokezi alitaka kujua kama mkurugenzi alikuwa ameshamaliza kula chungwa. (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter) – The receptionist wanted to know if the director had already eaten the orange.

“Nikiandika barua pepe nitapata jibu,” mtalii alisema. – “If I write an email I will get an answer,” the tourist said.

Mtalii alisema kwamba angeandika barua pepe angepata jibu. (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter) – The tourist said that if he/she wrote an email he/she would get an answer.

“Ungesoma kwa bidii, ungefaulu,” mshauri aliniambia. – “If you were to study with diligence, you would succeed,” the counsellor told me.

Mshauri aliniambia kwamba ningalisoma kwa bidii, ningalifaulu. (if reference is made to the reporter) – The counsellor told me that if I would have studied with diligence, I would have succeeded.

“Ungalisoma kwa bidii, ungalifaulu,” mshauri aliniambia. – “If you would have studied with diligence, you would have succeeded,” the counsellor told me.

Mshauri aliniambia kwamba ningalisoma kwa bidii, ningalifaulu. (if reference is made to the reporter) – The counsellor told me that if I would have studied with diligence, I would have succeeded.

Practice Exercise A

Change the following sentences from Direct to Reported Speech and assume backshifting occurs.

1. *“Juma anacheza katika kiwanja cha michezo,” Thomas alisema.* (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter)
2. *“Nilitaka kujitolea hospitalini,” msimamizi alieleza.* (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter)

3. “*Tumekubali kuchanga pesa za kutengeneza mabomba,*” mafundi bomba walifahamisha. (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter)
4. “*Mtaondoka lini kwenda Zimbabwe?*” mama aliuliza. (if reference is made to the reporter)
5. “*Ningekuwa rubani, ningesafiri dunia nzima,*” mwombaji alinong’ona. (if reference is not made to the hearer and reporter)

Changing Demonstratives

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech, the following changes need to be made when demonstratives are used. (See Chapter 14 for Demonstratives)

- Demonstrative of Proximity becomes Demonstrative of Distance.
- Demonstrative of Reference for Proximity becomes Demonstrative of Reference for Distance.
- Demonstrative of Distance and Demonstrative of Reference for Distance remain unchanged.

Below are a few examples:

“*Jino hili ni imara,*” daktari wa meno alisema. – “This tooth is firm,” the dentist said.

Daktari wa meno alisema jino lile lilikuwa imara. – The dentist said that tooth was firm.

“*Jino hilo ni imara,*” daktari wa meno alisema. – “This (referred to) tooth is firm,” the dentist said.

Daktari wa meno alisema lile jino lilikuwa imara. – The dentist said that (referred to) tooth was firm.

Practice Exercise B

Change the following sentences from Direct to Reported Speech assuming that reference is not made to the hearer and reporter and backshifting occurs.

6. “*Mtu huyu anatengeneza milango ya gereji,*” mwenyenyumba alisema.

7. *“Mahali hapo patapendeza sana,” mjenzi alieleza.*
8. *“Je, simba yule amelala?” meneja wa zu aliuliza.*
9. *“Kitabu kile kimechanika,” mkutubi aliwaambia wasomaji.*
10. *“Ningalikula lile chungwa tamu ningalifurahi,” mhakiki wa chakula alieleza.*

Changing Adverbs of Time

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech, it is important to know how much time has elapsed since the time of the original utterance. The adverb of time changes only when backshifting is required otherwise the same adverb of time used in Direct Speech is used in Reported Speech. Mentioned below are changes to adverbs of time when backshifting occurs, and then some examples.

leo – today

siku ile – that day

sasa – now

wakati ule – that time

jana – yesterday

siku iliyopita – the day that passed

kesho – tomorrow

siku iliyofuata – the day that followed

sasa hivi – right now

wakati ule ule – at that exact time.

“Mwanaanga atatusia katika mwezi leo,” msemaji alisema. – “The astronaut will land on the moon today,” the spokesperson said.

Msemaji alisema mwanaanga anatusia katika mwezi siku ile. – The spokesperson said the astronaut would land on the moon on that day.

“Tutaondoka kwenda sokoni sasa hivi,” nyanya alisema. – “We shall leave for the market right now,” grandmother said.

Nyanya alisema kwamba wataondoka kwenda sokoni sasa hivi. – Grandmother said that they would leave for the market right now.

Note that in the second example, backshifting did not occur, hence the tense and the adverb of time did not change.

Practice Exercise C

Change the following sentences from Direct to Reported Speech assuming that reference is not made to the hearer and reporter and backshifting occurs.

11. *“Mzungu yule atacheza mpira wa miguu leo,” refa alitangaza.*
12. *“Mbwa alilala usiku mzima,” mganga wa wanyama alieleza.*
13. *“Vikapu viwili vimeibiwa jana,” polisi alisema.*
14. *“Ninataka aiskrimu sasa hivi,” Hawa alisema.*
15. *“Bilauri ya maji ingemwagika sasa hivi,” mpishi alisema.*

Section D: Possessive Suffixes and Personal Pronouns

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech any singular Possessive Suffix could remain the same or be changed to either of the other two singular Possessive Suffixes. For example, the Possessive Suffix -*angu* in Direct Speech could remain as -*angu* or become -*ako* or -*ake* in Reported Speech depending on who the reporter and/or hearer is. Here are a few examples that will illustrate this point.

If John was talking about Anna and said in Direct Speech, “She is cooking her food.” then, it can be reported in the following ways.

If Anna is reporting what John said about her to a 3rd party, she would say:

He said I am cooking my food.
Alisema kwamba ninapika chakula changu.

If Anna is reporting back to John what John said about her, she would say:

You said I am cooking my food.
Ulisema kwamba ninapika chakula changu.

If John reports what John said about Anna to another person, he/she would say:

I said that she is cooking her food.
Nilisema kwamba anapika chakula chake.

If John reports back to Anna what he said about her, he would say:

I said you are cooking your food.

Nilisema kwamba unapika chakula chako.

If a 3rd party reports to Anna what John said about her, he/she would say:

He said that you are cooking your food.

Alisema kwamba unapika chakula chako.

If a 3rd party reports to John what he said about Anna, he/she would say:

You said that she is cooking her food.

Ulisema kwamba anapika chakula chake.

If a 3rd party reports to another person about what John said about Anna, he/she would say:

He said that she is cooking her food.

Alisema kwamba anapika chakula chake.

As with the singular Possessive Suffixes above, the plural Possessive Suffixes follow the same format. When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech any plural Possessive Suffix could remain the same or be changed to either of the other two plural Possessive Suffixes. For example, the Possessive Suffix *-etu* in Direct Speech could remain as *-etu* or become *-enu* or *-ao* in Reported Speech depending on who the reporter and/or hearer is.

Note that when the *-a* of Association is used as a possessive, no changes occur when Direct Speech becomes Reported Speech.

When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech any singular Personal Pronoun could remain the same or be changed to either of the other two singular Personal Pronouns. For example, the Personal Pronoun *mimi* in Direct Speech could remain as *mimi* or become *wewe* or *yeye* in Reported Speech depending on who the reporter and/or hearer is. Here are a few examples that will illustrate this point.

If John was talking about Anna and said in Direct Speech, “She is cooking her food.” then, it can be reported in the following ways.

If Anna is reporting what John said about her to a 3rd party, she would say:

He said I am cooking my food.
Alisema kwamba mimi ninapika chakula changu.

If Anna is reporting back to John what John said about her, she would say:

You said I am cooking my food.
Ulisema kwamba mimi ninapika chakula changu.

If John reports what John said about Anna to another person, he/she would say:

I said that she is cooking her food.
Nilisema kwamba yeye anapika chakula chake.

If John reports back to Anna what he said about her, he would say:

I said you are cooking your food.
Nilisema kwamba wewe unapika chakula chako.

If a 3rd party reports to Anna what John said about her, he/she would say:

He said that you are cooking your food.
Alisema kwamba wewe unapika chakula chako.

If a 3rd party reports to John what he said about Anna, he/she would say:

You said that she is cooking her food.
Ulisema kwamba yeye anapika chakula chake.

If a 3rd party reports to another person about what John said about Anna, he/she would say:

He said that she is cooking her food.
Alisema kwamba yeye anapika chakula chake.

As with the singular Personal Pronouns above, the plural Personal Pronouns follow the same format. When Direct Speech is changed to Reported Speech any plural Personal Pronoun could remain the same or be changed to either of the other two plural Personal Pronouns. For example, the Personal Pronoun *sisi* in Direct Speech could remain as *sisi*

or become *ninyi* or *wao* in Reported Speech depending on who the reporter and/or hearer is.

Below are a few additional examples:

“Mimi nitakwenda kujenga kibanda kijijini,” mwuza gazeti alisema.
– “I will go to build a kiosk in the village,” the newspaper vendor said.

Mwuza gazeti alisema yeye angekwenda kujenga kibanda kijijini. – The newspaper vendor said that he would go to build a kiosk in the village.

“Sisi ni wafanyakazi wa kampuni hii,” mwakilishi wa wafanyakazi alisema. – “We are employees of this company,” the workers’ representative said.

Mwakilishi wa wafanyakazi alisema kwamba wao walikuwa wafanyakazi wa kampuni ile. – The workers’ representative said that they were workers for that company.

“Bangili yangu imepotea,” bibi harusi alinifahamisha. – “My bangle is lost,” the bride informed me.

Bibi harusi alinifahamisha kwamba bangili yake ilikuwa imeshapotea. – The bride informed me that her bangle was already lost.

“Magari yangu yamefika kutoka Dubai,” mfanyabiashara alisema. – “My vehicles have arrived from Dubai,” the businessperson said.

Mfanyabiashara alisema magari yake yalikuwa yameshafika kutoka Dubai. – The businessperson said that his vehicles had already arrived from Dubai.

Practice Exercise D

Change the following sentences from Direct to Reported Speech assuming backshifting occurs.

16. *“Sisi tumewadekeza watoto wetu kwa kuwapa kila wanachotaka,” mzazi alisema.* (if reference is made to the original speaker and the hearer).
17. *“Je, wewe ni mwalimu wa historia?” mgeni aliuliza.* (if reference is made to the reporter)
18. *“Nafasi ya ofisi ya Rais inahitaji kupangwa,” mnadhifishaji alilalamika mbele ya mwenzake.* (if reference not made to the hearer or reporter).

19. “*Simu yangu ya mkononi haifanyi kazi kwa sababu haina betri,*” *mfamasi alifahamisha.* (if reference not made to the hearer or reporter).
20. “*Shangazi yangu atarasimu viatu vya wasanii,*” *Krystal alisema.* (if reference not made to the hearer or reporter).

Imperatives in Reported Speech

When Direct Speech is an abrupt imperative, it is changed to a polite imperative in the Reported Speech (see Chapter 30). In addition, in Reported Speech, the prefix *a-* is used for 2nd person singular and the prefix *wa-* for 2nd person plural. Below are a few examples:

- “*Nenda sokoni!*” *mfanyakazi aliamriwa.* – “Go to the market!” the worker was ordered.
- Mfanyakazi aliamriwa aende sokoni.* (if reference not made to the hearer or reporter) – The worker was ordered to go to the market.
- “*Jibuni maswali!*” *polisi aliwaamuru wezi.* – “Answer the questions!” police ordered the thieves.
- Tuliamriwa na polisi tujibu maswali.* (if reference made to the reporter) – We were ordered by the police to answer the questions.

Note that although the Reported sentences use the polite imperatives in Swahili, they still carry the meaning of an abrupt order in English.

Practice Exercise E

Translate into Swahili and change to Reported Speech assuming backshifting occurs.

21. “Let me solve the problem!” the supervisor ordered the technicians. (if reference not made to the hearer or reporter).
22. “Do not cut down the trees without the proper permit!” the town official warned the residents. (if reference not made to the hearer or reporter).

New Vocabulary

- a kufaa*: proper, suitable
aiskrimu: ice cream(s)
bangili: bangle(s), bracelet(s)
bibi harusi: bride(s)
bluu: blue
changa: contribute
eleza: explain
eti: indicates doubt about a following statement
gereji: garage(s)
idhini: permit(s)
-jitolea: volunteer
mhakiki/wa-: critic(s)
mjenzi/wa-: builder(s)
mnadhifishaji/wa-: organizer(s)
msanii/wa-: artist(s)
msemaji/wa-: spokesperson(s)
msimamizi/wa-: supervisor(s)
msomaji/wa-: reader(s)
mwakilishi/wa-: representative(s)
mwanaanga/wanaanga: astronaut(s)
mwuza/wa-: seller, vendor
peremende: peppermint(s)
rasimu: plan, design
ruhusu: permit, allow
siku iliyofuata: the day that followed
siku iliyopita: the day that passed
Usemi Halisi: Direct Speech
Usemi wa Taarifa: Reported Speech
wakala/ma-: agent(s)
wakati ule ule: at that exact time
ya kwamba: that

Key to Exercises

Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. *Thomas alisema kwamba Juma alicheza katika kiwanja cha michezo.*
2. *Msimamizi alieleza kwamba alikuwa ametaka kujitolea hospitalini.*
3. *Mafundi bomba walifahamisha kuwa walikuwa wameshakubali kuchanga pesa za kutengeneza mabomba.*
4. *Mama alitaka kujua tungeondoka lini kwenda Zimbabwe.*
5. *Mwombaji alinong'ona angalikuwa rubani, angalisafiri dunia nzima.*

Answers to Practice Exercise B

6. *Mwenyenyumba alisema mtu yule alitengeneza milango ya gereji.*
7. *Mjenzi alieleza kwamba pale mahali pangependeza sana.*
8. *Meneja wa zu alitaka kujua kama simba yule alikuwa ameshalala.*
9. *Mkutubi aliwaambia wasomaji kwamba kitabu kile kilikuwa kimeshachanika.*
10. *Mhakiki wa chakula alieleza kwamba angalikula lile chungwa tamu angalifurahi.*

Answers to Practice Exercise C

11. *Refa alitangaza kuwa Mzungu yule angecheza mpira wa miguu siku ile.*
12. *Mganga wa wanyama alieleza kwamba mbwa alikuwa amelala usiku mzima.*
13. *Polisi alisema vikapu viwili vilikuwa vimeshaibiwa siku iliyopita.*
14. *Hawa alisema alitaka aiskrimu wakati ule ule.*
15. *Mpishi alisema bilauri ya maji ingalimwagika wakati ule ule.*

Answers to Practice Exercise D

16. *Mzazi alisema kwamba sisi tulikuwa tumeshawadekeza watoto wetu kwa kuwapa kila wanachotaka.*
17. *Mgeni alitaka kujua kama mimi nilikuwa mwalimu wa historia.*
18. *Mnadhifishaji alikuwa amelalamika mbele ya mwenzake kuwa nafasi ya ofisi ya Rais ilihitaji kupangwa.*

19. *Mfamasi alifahamisha kwamba simu yake ya mkononi haikufanya kazi kwa sababu haikuwa na betri.*
20. *Krystal alisema shangazi yake angerasimu viatu vya wasanii.*

Answers to Practice Exercise E

21. *Msimamizi aliwaamuru mafundisanifu kwamba wamruhusu atatue tatizo.*
22. *Ofisa wa mji aliwaonya wakazi kwamba wasikate miti bila idhini ya kufaa.*

