

## Accuracy in the Usage of Direct and Indirect Speech in Learning English as a Second Language: Tertiary Level

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Direct speech in English Language refers to quoted speech, for example, *Rani said, "I visited my uncle yesterday."* Indirect speech refers to reported speech, for example, *Rani said that she had visited her uncle on the previous day.* When direct speech is converted into indirect speech, there are some fundamental changes to be made: changing the tense of the verb, the punctuation marks and references in time, pronoun, etc. Due to these complex rules, there is a possibility that the learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) would find difficult to convert direct speech into indirect speech successfully. The objectives of this study are: to find out whether there are significantly different areas in converting direct speech into indirect speech where all the 12 tenses of verbs in English language are concerned; to examine the percentages of the accurate usage of the punctuation marks and references in time, place, and pronoun in both direct and indirect speech. Total number of 50 first year students, randomly selected from the Faculty of Science, University of Kelaniya, participated in this study. Twelve sentences in direct speech, each carrying one *tense* out of 12 *tenses* of verbs in English Language were provided to these students to convert into indirect speech, and vice versa. SPSS-21 was used to analyse the correct usage of verb, punctuation marks, and the references in time, place and the pronoun in the direct and indirect speech. An ANNOVA was run, and the Tukey's HSD test showed that there are significant differences in the correct use of verb across the 12 tenses in both direct and indirect speech. The findings concluded that there are considerable difficulties for these students in the use of verbs, punctuation marks and the references in direct and indirect speech. These findings can be used to facilitate teaching direct and indirect speech for ESL students at the tertiary level.

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