Module: Grammar

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Level: L2

4. Reporting questions.

1. We often report questions with verbs such as ask, wonder, and want to know. Wh-questions are reported with the wh-word and the statement and yes- no questions are reported with if or whether and the statement. When reporting questions, the subject and the verb follow their order as in the statement. The question mark is omitted.

-‘Where are you going?’ She asked me where I was going.

-‘Is your father a doctor?’ She wanted to know if / whether my father was a doctor.

2. We can report some wh-questions with should (about the right thing to do) by using an infinitive.

- ‘What should I bring with me?’ She asked me what to bring with her.

3. Only whether is used after the verb question, after a preposition and before an infinitive.

- ‘Are you terrified?’ The man questioned whether they were terrified.

- ‘Are history books available?’ He inquired about whether history books were available.

- ‘Should I wait for you?’ She wondered whether to wait for me.

-‘Did you switch off the computer or not?’ He wondered whether or not you switched off the computer or if /whether you switched off the computer or not.

2.5. Reporting Orders, Requests, Advice and Opinions.

\* Orders:

1. To report orders we usually use tell with an object and an infinitive.

- ‘Don’t touch this object.’ He told us not to touch that object.

( Or: He told us that we must not /didn’t have

to touch that object.)

- ‘Start with the first list.’ She ordered everyone to start with the first list.

2. Orders can be reported with have to, must or subjunctive in more formal situations with demand and insist.

- ‘Stop talking.’ The teacher told us that we must / had to stop talking.

Or The teacher told us to stop talking.

- ‘Do it yourself.’ He insisted that we had to/must do it ourselves.

Or He insisted that we do it ourselves.

\*Requests:

We report requests mainly using ask with an object and the infinitive. Other verbs are: beg, plead to and request.

- ‘Could you stop smoking, please?’ He asked me to stop smoking.

Or She asked (me) if I could stop smoking.

- ‘Please help me.’ The old man asked me if I could / would help him.

- ‘May I lend your book?’ He asked to lend him my book. (The object is not mentioned because we report request by the speaker about his own action)

\*Advice:

1. The verb advise can be used to report advice with an object and an infinitive or with a that-clause or a gerund.

-‘Take care of your mother.’ He advised her to take care of her mother.

He advised (her) that she should take care of

her mother.

He advised taking care of her mother.

2. We can use recommend or suggest to report advice with a that-clause with should or a subjunctive. We can also use a gerund when we don’t want to mention who will perform the action.

-‘You should go by train.’ He suggested that we should go by train.

He suggested that we go by train.

He suggested going by train.

\*Opinions:

1. Opinions are reported using verbs such as: think, believe, expect, feel, imagine, reckon, suppose and suspect with a that-clause.

- It’s a nice room.’ He thought that it was a nice room.

- ‘My daughter will succeed the exam.’ She believed that her daughter would succeed the exam.

2. We can use tell and say in continuous tenses to report opinions in informal situations.

- The students are saying that the exam was too difficult.

\*The use of the different reporting verbs either with a that-clause, an infinitive or a gerund is summarised in the following table.

Examples of Reporting Verbs

+ that-clause + Verb infinitive + Gerund

tell, assure, convince, inform, notify, persuade, remind, warm (+ obj) ask, invite, urge, encourage, order, expect, remind, warm

(+obj+inf) deny, suggest, admit, mention, report, propose, recommend, apologize (for).

(+ gerund/that-clause)

say, admit, confess, propose, report, mention, announce, complain, explain, suggest, recommend

(+ to obj) offer, apply, decide, refuse, demand, volunteer

(+ obj)

agree, disagree, argue, check, confirm (+with obj) promise, agree, hope, claim, propose, threaten, vow.

(inf / that- clause)

N.B.: Complain, inquire, joke and boast (+ about + NP)