

Unit thirteen

Vocabulary

SECTION 3

Quoting, reporting and interpreting

1 REFERRING DIRECTLY TO OTHER PEOPLE'S WORDS

We can use a number of phrases or structures to refer to what other people have said or written:

According to the Chancellor, a tax increase is unavoidable.

In the words of Shakespeare, 'All the world's a stage'.

To quote Julius Caesar: 'I came, I saw, I conquered'.

As the Prime Minister has it, 'Things can only get better'.

Beckett once wrote that people were 'bloody ignorant apes'.

To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, we're not all idiots all the time.

2 INANIMATE OBJECTS CAN SPEAK

It's not only people who say and tell us things. We can talk about written materials in a number of ways:

'What came in the post, dear?' Oh, the usual stuff. The Sun says it's time to forget we're Europeans. And there was a leaflet offering four CDs for the price of one. And a letter from WD Autos reminding us that a service is due on the car. And a circular from the Town Hall telling us that our house is to be demolished. And a note from my boss saying I've been fired.

3 CASTING DOUBT ON WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID

We may wish to cast doubt or uncertainty on what has been said. We can use different phrasing:

If he's to be believed, he's on his way out. They're saying that he's on his way out. I gather / I understand / I hear he's on his way out. He is supposed to be on his way out. There's a rumour going around that he's on his way out. The word is that he's on his way out.

1 Fill each gap with one of the words listed.

unconfirmed spies rumour bird apparently

- has it that he's leaving.
- My tell me you're going.
- A little told me you're emigrating.
- this is her third marriage.
- reports say she's resigning.

4 INTERPRETING THE MEANING OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID

Sometimes, as the listener or reader, we interpret what we hear or read. We can use a number of verbs and common phrases:

I infer from your letter that...

The only possible inference is that...

Your comments imply that...

From the tone of your letter I conclude that...

I feel bound to interpret your comments as...

Judging by your reply, you...

What you are saying in so many words is that...

2 Fill each gap with one of the words listed.

denote read signify dropping driving take

- What does this line from 'Hamlet' ?
- If I between the lines, ...
- A colon can a list is to follow.
- I think he was a hint.
- I couldn't see what he was at.
- f what he said with a pinch of salt.

5 VERBS THAT INDICATE HOW SOMETHING IS SAID

We can use a number of verbs (and related adverbs) to indicate the purpose or effect of speakers' or writers' words:

He stated categorically that he was innocent.

He maintained throughout that he had done nothing wrong.

He challenged the authenticity of the papers.

He questioned the people's right to doubt his sincerity.

- Other verbs that indicate the person's attitude include:
(utterly) repudiate assert confirm clamour (for)
(openly) confess (to) doubt demand recollect
allege reminisce (proudly) proclaim suspect

6 NOUNS THAT SUMMARISE WHAT HAS BEEN SAID

If we know what was said previously, we can summarise it with a noun:

He has repudiated all the recent allegations.

She continues to deny their accusations.

We cannot possibly meet their demands.

Their claims border on the ludicrous.

- Common nouns that act like this include:
comments remarks statements queries criticism
praise compliment attack recollections protest

Practice

1 Fill each of the gaps in the dialogue below with one of the verbs listed in an appropriate form.

read imply quote put infer jump make judge
conclude interpret assume confirm

- ME If I (1) between the lines, you're (2) that I'm incompetent.
BOSS No, I wouldn't say that. You're (3) a false interpretation on what I said.
ME So, I shouldn't (4) in any way from your remarks that you want to get rid of me, then?
BOSS (5) what you will of my comments.
ME I (6) from what others are saying that you think things have been getting rather slack. And your monthly report (7) that. According to that, I'm useless.
BOSS I think you're being over-sensitive.
ME But others have (8) your text in the same way.
BOSS They're just (9) to conclusions.
ME (10) by your comments I think I can safely (11) you wouldn't be averse to losing me.
BOSS To (12) somebody or other: 'No one's indispensable.'
ME Enough said.

2 Underline the option, a, b, c or d, that best completes each sentence.

- 1 The police me about my missing road tax disc.
a suspected b accused c queried d questioned
- 2 He will be hard pressed to these latest allegations.
a refute b restrain c object d dissent
- 3 We'll have to take what he says on
a trust b faith c belief d confidence
- 4 Coming from him that is indeed.
a praise b congratulations c comment d compliment
- 5 What did you infer what he said?
a from b up c of d out
- 6 Don't me, but I think most modern art is a load of rubbish.
a report b paraphrase c quote d attribute
- 7 What does this word have in this context?
a connotations b purposes c meanings d proposals

- 8 They say that under pressure from the authorities Galileo
a repudiated b rebutted c recanted d renounced
- 9 Under pressure from his peers, Big Billy
a denied b admitted c confessed d withstood
- 10 I think we can take what he says with a of salt.
a grain b pinch c carton d speck

3 Fill each of the gaps in the following sentences with one suitable word.

Example: I couldn't work out what his message was.

- a What did you make what he said?
- b I couldn't make what he had written.
- c I think she saw his promises immediately.
- d His assurances certainly didn't take me
- e I couldn't make head nor of what he was saying.
- f I'm afraid his lecture on astrophysics went right over my
- g There was so much information being thrown out I just couldn't take it all
- h How would you sum what he said?
- i I still have no idea what he was getting

4 Rewrite the following sentences using the one, two or three prompt words that follow.

Example: My mother really scolded me. **real**

My mother gave me a real telling off.

- a She insisted that I should be silent.
silence
- b She talked to the others about me behind my back.
spread / gossip
- c He denied categorically that he had been involved.
denial / involvement
- d He issued an ultimatum that the others ignored.
paid / demand
- e When she put her foot down regarding his time-keeping, he acquiesced.
strong / toe
- f When he announced the redundancies, everyone was astonished.
announcement / caught
- g He criticised us constantly until we just had to retaliate.
kept / at / answer
- h He mocked her mercilessly until she simply blew her top.
merciless / resulted / temper