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Functional and Stylistic Features of Sports Announcer Talk: A Discourse Analysis of the Register of Major League Soccer Television Broadcasts

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ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes the register of television sports announcers in Major League Soccer broadcasts, based on six 20-minute transcription samples. The first part considers individual linguistic features and inquires whether they fulfill a communicative function or whether they are of stylistic nature. In an effort to attract more viewers in the United States, production companies had originally adopted the duality model of a play-by-play announcer and a color commentary from other American sports, while many other countries traditionally feature only one commentator. Consequently, the second part of this discourse analysis will focus on the cooperative interactional behavior. The conclusion will be drawn that the register of live action announcing, in contrast to halftime as well as pre- and post-game reporting, is based on cooperative principles. Moreover, both the individual and the collaborative linguistic variables mostly reflect an effort to protect one's own and the colleague's public image.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, soccer is the most played and watched sport on earth (Giulianotti). The dominating hotbeds are clearly Europe, South America and Africa, but besides a surge on the Asian continent the game is gradually reaching the United States, ever since it hosted the World Cup in 1994. It was only a logical consequence that twenty years later the tournament in Brazil would set new viewership records for the country (Bauder).

The rise in interest could not have taken place without the establishment of a professional U.S. soccer league. In an effort to gain that World Cup the United States so successfully hosted, the officials had agreed to found the national Major League Soccer (MLS), which finally kicked off in 1996 with only ten teams ("Major League Soccer"). Until today the number of franchises has doubled and a national soccer culture has begun to shape. Consequently, the demand for widespread coverage entrenched both regional and national broadcast deals, all of which required a concept for the presentation of the sport.

It seems intuitive to consider other successfully produced sports television programs for guidance. It were not the tried and tested foreign soccer broadcast productions the makers looked at, however, but those of other American sports, such as baseball, basketball or, naturally, American football. Not surprisingly, then, soccer programs decided to borrow the idea of presenting the game by means of two announcers, as opposed to a different soccer broadcast model of a single commentator.

In his article "Transforming Soccer Talk in the United States: The Misapplication of a Formulaic Announcing Methodology," Aaron DeNu criticizes this step and the impact it had on the language ideology of the broadcast. In his view, the combination of a play-by-play announcer and a color commentary with specific responsibilities caused unnecessary detail, uninterrupted talk and a superfluous coaching attitude, all of which can regularly be found in

other U.S. sports productions. While he is lamenting these changes to traditional soccer announcing, it is my goal to analyze the linguistic and communicative realities of this design by means of a discourse analysis. Therefore I will initially consider linguistic variables that have previously been addressed before moving on to the collaborative communication practices that have arisen with the duality model. Since the latter divides the high pressure of live action reporting and large-scale coverage on *two* pairs of shoulders, constant cooperation and careful negotiation are key principles to successful announcing.

Consequently, my research targets the communicative purpose of both the individual and collective linguistic behavior of what Ferguson calls *sports announcer talk* (SAT) and tries to capture which impact the duality model has had on this register.

The literature review in the following chapter will start out with a definition of discourse analysis and a consideration of some pivotal factors in the social situation of soccer announcing on television. This special context determines the linguistic choices and hence renders SAT a register. As a result, a clarification of the concept of register is essential. Afterwards, I will revisit the few studies that have previously addressed sports announcer talk, both generally and with focus on soccer. The review will end with a short excursion into the field of face-work, which will prove necessary for the analysis.

Before I present my own data, I will define the communication situation of MLS TV announcing in more detail. Then I will present my methodology and continue with the analysis. The latter will begin with a consideration of individual linguistic features, many of which were mentioned in the previous studies. I will follow up on these with my own insights before introducing three additional variables that emerged during my research. The collaborative communication strategies which arose from the duality model are presented subsequently. Ultimately, I will consider the implications of the transformation of soccer SAT and suggest ideas for future research before the paper closes with a conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I will first introduce the diversely used practice of discourse analysis. With the help of Johnstone's overview, I will exemplify the most important aspects that researchers need to consider if they choose to explore their subject by means of this research design. Afterwards, I will define the term *register* and explain why sports announcer talk can only be categorized as such. Before I will outline the socio-psychological concept of face-work, which is crucial to the analysis of the linguistic behavior, I will present the results of previous research on SAT.

Discourse Analysis

As Johnstone clarifies on the first page of her book *Discourse Analysis*, scholars from various fields claim to make use of this practice with very different research questions (1). Due to the nature of discourse, which Blommaert defines as "meaningful symbolic behavior" (2), most experts have some background in linguistics or communication studies. Discourse analysis is thus the systematic study of human interactions with focus on language. The broadness of these two definitions further explains the fact that this approach is so frequently employed across the social sciences. After all, as language pervades our social life and influences our perceptions, the study of discourse is fruitful to many a scientific exploration.

The driving forces of discourse and communicative situations are best presented with examples, which Johnstone does throughout her book. In the following, I will use her heuristic and supplement it with observations drawn from my own material.

The first component the author discusses is the relationship between discourse and what linguists like to call "the world" (Johnstone 10). In a dynamic way, discourse comes into existence through the world, but also shapes it significantly, in turn. Take, for example, TV announcers who have to convey spatial relations and distances on the field. They use what Brown calls *anchor points* (44). With these the reporter is able to give the viewers an idea of

where the action is happening, so that they can tell when they need to look up again if they have done something on the side. If you think this is a tough job, consider the radio commentator who cannot expect you to see the game on a screen. She needs to use more intricate strategies of representing the world through language only. Therefore, her use of anchor points is going to differ from that of TV announcers.

Moreover, discourse is influenced by language itself and the way in which the interlocutors decide to structure it (Johnstone 13). Broadcast productions are highly organized and follow strict formulas to guarantee success despite live coverage. In soccer commentary, for instance, the discourse structure requires more coloring in the first half to create the narrative of the match. In the second half, on the other hand, stretches of silence are more frequent and acceptable when announcers let the game "speak for itself."

The roles, identities and relationships of the announcers played a major part in my analysis (Johnstone 15). As mentioned before, the American duality of play-by-play announcer and color commentary changes the entire communication situation of reporting and a comparative discourse analysis with the European announcing model would make for a grand study. This thesis will focus on the strategies of cooperative behavior that both announcers employ to strengthen each other's authority as experts.

The fourth factor Johnstone considers is prior discourse that creates expectations of future discourse (16). Again, soccer commentary follows a certain structure that has proven successful. Failure to comply with this formulaic pattern might be seen as a violation and can lead to criticism. Similarly, earlier stretches of discourse provide the foundation for later stretches, in which a brief back reference might be enough to elicit a specific idea. Such referential shortcuts are a helpful tool for announcers, whose time is very limited.

Furthermore, discourse is highly interdependent with its communicative medium (Johnstone 17). Sports announcer talk on TV is supposed to represent the on-field action just enough to comfort the viewer. Too much detail and a lack of pauses, however, is perceived as

onerous by some soccer fans, like DeNu, as they can see the plays for themselves. Yet, on the radio, permanent commentary on the live action is needed, since the listener does not have the visual input. As a consequence, TV SAT and radio SAT turn out to be quite different subregisters.

Johnstone finally considers the role of intentions and interpretations involved in the discourse (18). As far as SAT is concerned, one can easily think of the differences between a nationally and a locally broadcasted match, regardless of the sport. It is acceptable, if not required, that local announcers have a bias towards their team, while nationally televised productions must be presented impartially. Though essentially sharing the same structure and features, both discourses have a slightly different purpose due to the different audiences, which modifies the linguistic behavior, in turn.

In brief, discourse analysis covers too many dimensions to focus on in one study. It is my goal, however, to take all of them into consideration while focusing on the roles, identities and relationships of the announcers and the connection to their communicative behavior.

Register

While dialects are based on speakers' geographical and sociolects on their social backgrounds, a *register* is a linguistic variety that is invariably bound to the social situation in which the interlocutor finds himself (Lewandowski, "The Language of Soccer" 21). As Ferguson puts it:

> A communication situation that occurs regularly in a society (in terms of participants, setting, communicative functions, and so forth) will tend over time to develop identifying markers of language structure and language use, different from the language of other communication situations. (Ferguson, "Dialect, Register, and Genre" 20)

Linguists have created different heuristics to pinpoint what constitutes a specific social situation. Halliday has proposed the determinants *field*, *mode*, and *tenor* (33). The field contains the aspects of setting, purpose and topic of the interaction. The medium of communication is the mode, while the tenor defines the relationship between the interlocutors.

As Johnstone points out, the greatest complication with the definition of register is that it builds on the idea of recurrent situations – which are, per definition, unique (176). No one situation is like another. As a result, the similarities and differences between two communication situations have to be broken down as accurately as possible. Johnstone proposes seven aspects: communicative characteristics of participants; relations between addresser and addressee; setting; channel; relations of participants to the text; purposes, intents and goals; and topic (177).

Registers contain features that can be highly functional or merely stylistic (Johnstone 176). In the first place, they must have arisen in order to facilitate or expedite the interaction. Yet, once established, variables can diffuse beyond register boundaries to closely related varieties, without serving the very same function there. In that case, they can serve as register markers and express affiliation or membership with the register they were borrowed from. In sports announcer talk, for instance, some linguistic features materialized in fast-paced sports and diffused to slow-paced sports' commentaries, even though they were of no functional use in that communication situation.

Halliday and Hasan put forward two further distinctions of registers (39-42). For one, action-oriented registers feature little talk, whereas talk-oriented varieties bear much linguistic activity. SAT is obviously talk-oriented, but during practice sessions, for instance, one will find that coaches and players use more action-oriented language. Moreover, registers can be closed – stable and limited in terms of conveyed meanings – or open and less constrained.

Lewandowski analyzes all the genres of text that he can find in the realm of soccer in order to categorize them as sociolects or registers ("The Language of Soccer" 27). Since

announcers seem to assume a scripted role when entering the communication situation of commentating a match and since they are unlikely to use the same kind of language outside of their job, SAT can safely be categorized as a register. However, it will become obvious that different channels (TV vs. radio), participants (1 vs. 2 announcers), or topics (soccer vs. basketball) make for great variation among the many subregisters that SAT can be divided into.

Sports Announcer Talk

One of the first investigations of sports announcer talk dates back to the early 1980s, when more fans had to rely on radio broadcasts and when the idea of a worldwide web was still in its infancy. Having taught a sociolinguistic seminar on register analysis, Charles A. Ferguson used much of his class material to characterize the language of sportscasting in his 1983 article "Sport Announcer Talk: Syntactic Aspects of Register Variation." He initially clarifies that not only the lexicon differs from other programs, but that also phonological features can serve as a means of differentiation. These suprasegmental patterns are so unique that it is even possible to tell the difference between a baseball and a basketball commentary – with muffled recordings, that is. However, Ferguson decided to focus mainly on syntactic variables, as the title suggests ("Sports Announcer Talk" 153).

In an effort to characterize the register SAT, Ferguson and his students analyzed radio recording excerpts of American and Japanese baseball and American football games, as well as two texts of British sportscast on soccer and boatracing ("Sports Announcer Talk" 154). Instead of providing a taxonomy or a label for the variety, Ferguson attempts to locate the register first by searching for relevant situational and functional factors. As these variables emerge, the correlation with the linguistic behavior is tested and their distinct relationship further refined (Ferguson, "Sports Announcer Talk" 155).

To begin with, Ferguson defines sportscasting as "the oral reporting of an ongoing activity, combined with provision of background information and interpretation" ("Sports Announcer Talk" 156). Moreover, the second approximation specifies that SAT is either a monolog or a dialog and that it is directed towards an unknown audience of voluntary listeners who can neither see the plays nor respond to the reporting. In the final step, the author acknowledges the shared knowledge and values between announcers and audience, which lead to certain conventions, such as technical jargon or references of time and space, like the previously addressed anchor points. He also points out that mutual expectations vary according to the sport and its popularity ("Sports Annnouncer Talk" 157).

Ferguson focuses on six syntactic variables: simplification, inversions, result expressions, heavy modifiers, tense usage, and linguistic routines. The first these, *simplification*, includes the omission of the sentence-initial noun phrase (NP), the NP and the copula, as well as post-nominal copula. The feature has long been known from other registers of both spoken and written English as *prosiopesis*. It serves parenthetical expressions and various other registers, for instance the language of headlines. In sum, its main purpose is to characterize the situation as "nonleisurely, informal, exciting and vignette[-like]" (Ferguson, "Sports Announcer Talk" 158). In addition, prosiopesis may simply be a process of "erosion of less stressed elements of recurrent formulas."

Simplification follows relatively rigid patterns. The deleted elements are easily recoverable, since they are limited and, as mentioned above, resemble constructions of pre-existing registers. Besides the copula, the indefinite article will be dropped as well, unless the subsequent NP is preceded by a nominal or adjectival modifier. Moreover, the omission of the copula mostly occurs in sentence-initial position and mainly after a one-word subject, which can be a proper noun or a common one, referencing the player or team (Ferguson, "Sports Announcer Talk" 159).

Ferguson underlines that he observed many instances of gerund-participials after copula deletion, which again reminds him of the forms more commonly used in the language of headlines and captions ("Sports Annnouncer Talk" 160). Though they share an emphatic character, the communicative function attributed to them differs from one variety to the other. The author also notes that, despite the similarities in English, "headlinese" is not always as congruent with SAT in other languages.

Inversions constitute the second class of forms whose high frequency contrasts with spoken English (Ibid.). In SAT the postposed subject is usually a player's name while the preposed predicate is a locative expression or a gerund-participial. The verb connecting the elements is regularly the copula, but may also be a verb of motion (Ferguson, "Sports Announcer Talk" 161).

Green suggests that the discourse function of inversions has to do with the time constraints of announcing (585). As the action is more readily accessible than the player's identity, reporters tend to describe it before they name the agents. This lag time also benefits the viewer for whom it is usually easier to determine the anchor point through spatial reference than by means of player identification. However, it must not be forgotten that radio announcers employ inversions in the same way, so that its communicative purpose is more likely centered on the simplification of reporting. Ferguson adds that inversions must also work as register markers, since in sports like baseball the player's identity is readily available all throughout ("Sports Announcer Talk" 161).

The third feature that Ferguson points out is a pair of constructions that marks final results: *for* + noun and *to* + verb (Ibid.). Usually these two prepositions are indexing a purpose, but in SAT we often find examples such as "Brady throws it *for* the touchdown." or "Keane with a shot *to* make it two to one." The forms might have arisen due to time constraints, though it is questionable if they, in fact, do save time, or if this was simply a misconception (Ferguson, "Sports Announcer Talk" 162). What is safe to say is that they can

be detected in the announcing of all broadcasted sports. As Ferguson observes, the variables recur frequently and must have become the norm in contrast to other possible result constructions.

Similar to inversions, *heavy modifiers* display another feature that is rather common in written English and thus highly marked in conversational contexts (Ibid.). Through appositional NPs, nonrestrictive relative clauses or preposed adjectival constructions, sports announcers regularly add casual characterizations in conjunction with an athlete's name, based on background, performance and other facts that are worth mentioning (Ferguson, "Sports Announcer Talk" 163). As the construction is quite formal in English, the author claims that only a few people are able to use it spontaneously without training. As such, it is one of the stronger markers of SAT mastery.

Ferguson also discusses announcers' *tense usage* ("Sports Announcer Talk" 164). His findings, however, are relatively intuitive and it turns out that tense usage corresponds for the most part to the demands that naturally arise during play-by-play reporting and color commentary. If a sport is dominated by short actions, Simple Present is the choice. If the reporter has to announce an event that takes time, such as a race, Present Progressive is used. Recaps require Present Perfect, on the other hand. Since the verb forms do not actually exceed their usual semantic limits, it is unlikely that there are underlying communicative functions.

Finally, Ferguson considers linguistic *routines*: formulaic expressions or even stretches of discourse that come up repeatedly despite a wider range of options ("Sports Announcer Talk" 165). This displays a lack of creativity and is probably owing to a general human tendency to adopt formulas and routines in order to simplify the task at hand (Ferguson, "Sports Announcer Talk" 169).

In some sense the prepositional result constructions mentioned above are a form of routine, since they are predominantly selected in spite of a greater pool of choices. All

routines, then, are a means of simplification as well, as the greater effort of using creative language is being avoided.

While Ferguson examined SAT qualitatively and across the board of multiple sports, Reaser focused on men's basketball games and chose a quantitative approach (303). His point of criticism is mainly directed towards the fact that previous qualitative studies were not able to define boundaries between SAT subvarieties, let alone devise a taxonomy. Through this study, he hoped to convince his readers to rethink the scope and limits of the concept of register (Reaser 304). Moreover, Reaser questions whether his analysis might give way for a distinction between radio and TV broadcast language as two distinct subregisters. After all, he argues, the reporters' responsibilities differ in both media, given that TV viewers have the additional advantage of watching the actions on the screen. In terms of spatial anchor points, for example, that means that radio announcers must employ different linguistic strategies to compensate for the lack of the audience's visual input (Ibid.).

The sample Reaser uses for his research consists of two excerpts of local coverage on the college men's basketball game – North Carolina State University vs. Florida State University (305). As both the radio and the TV broadcast are local, the announcers are assumed to have roughly the same background knowledge and the same audience. The author transcribed the commentary and analyzed the data, focusing on four of Ferguson's variables: subject simplification, copula deletion, inversion, and heavy modifiers. As Reaser (306) collected the "analyzable utterances," he paired them with what he thought would be their communicative function, selecting from the following categories: action description, strategy, report, recap, hypothetical, evaluation, and background.

The first result Reaser saw was that TV broadcast supplied only 80% of the utterances that radio reporters delivered (307). Again, the visual image spares TV announcers some more obvious comments, whereas radio broadcasters have to provide them. For both it is true that utterances are much shorter during live action, though the distribution of communicative

functions is very similar overall. The author attributes this to the fact that he considers the same game. He also highlights that radio broadcast uses more action description while, due to the shared knowledge, TV announcers can concentrate on color commentary in form of evaluation, background information or strategy analysis. Reports on statistics and scores, for instance, the second-most frequent communicative purpose on the radio, are usually visualized and less commented on (Reaser 308).

Furthermore, Reaser observes that radio color commentary happens during breaks, while it is often attached to live action on TV (309). Live actions in radio SAT almost never include recaps or strategy statements (Reaser 310). Only reports and evaluation can be found, which the author argues can be more easily connected to action descriptions.

Before Reaser turns to subject deletion specifically, he questions the purpose that Ferguson assigns to deletion in general; that is, that it be used stylistically to sound informal or exciting (311). He underlines that, originally, the feature was probably what Biber calls a "functional communicative requirement" (33), as it indeed shortens the utterance tremendously without compromising comprehension. From there it may have been conventionalized, possibly because of its exciting character (Reaser 311).

The first result of Reaser's investigation indicates that subject deletion takes place much more frequently on the radio than on TV. Since it happens mostly during live action, Reaser assumes it to be strongly functional, thus facilitating the reporting tremendously (312). On TV, in contrast, the deletion is distributed evenly across play-by-play and color commentary, which hints conventionalized behavior. Reaser hence raises the question if, besides the distinction between the SATs of radio and TV broadcasts, the individual varieties used by play-by-play announcers and color commentary may also be viewed as subregisters. He explains that it is not clear whether bearing the same features is enough for two varieties to collapse into a register, or if an equal distribution of communicative functions is similarly

required to unite them. The boundaries between registers are not sufficiently clarified and need to be revisited.

As far as copula absence is concerned, Reaser claims to have found the feature much more often than Ferguson, which he then uses to further vindicate the value of quantitative research (313). Since the variable is detectable in all game situations, it must be expected to be rather conventionalized. Yet, in some instances, there is probably still an aspect of functionality. Overall, copula deletion differs little between radio and TV commentary.

Inversions are, as Ferguson made clear already, creating a lag time for the announcer to identify the player while focusing on the action first (Reaser 314). The total rates of inversions are very similar for TV and radio broadcasts. Since they are also prevalent in low-paced sports where their functionality must be questioned (especially in sports like baseball, where players have relatively fixed positions), the author suggests that they started off fulfilling a communicative function and then spread by convention. Reaser points out that subregisters quite often adopt non-functional features symbolically by the larger register they are part of – to signal membership and belonging (315). Having blamed Ferguson's qualitative approach for his low number of copula deletions, Reaser now criticizes Green for her overestimation of inversions. Again he uses this to promote his quantitative efforts, which cannot deceive the researcher in terms of frequencies.

Last but not least, the heavy modifiers were expected by Ferguson to be more frequent in baseball and football, since there would be more time in between plays to add incidental background information. The results display, however, that more announcing time does not correlate with the occurrence of heavy modifiers, which were virtually absent on TV. Reaser speculates that "television announcers have more freedom to use more involved methods of coloring […], whereas the radio commentators are more restricted to quick and incidental coloring, of the kind afforded by heavy modifiers" (315).

Interestingly, Reaser claims to observe more conventionalized roles in radio broadcasts, where live action reporting and color commentary are tasks distinctly divided between the announcers (317). My observation will show that the conventions between TV commentators are similarly defined and responsibilities clearly demarcated.

Overall, the variation of all features across play-by-play reporting and color commentary is much greater for the radio broadcast than on TV, which suggests a higher degree of functionality in general. This makes sense since the audience's understanding hinges on the language alone, lacking the visual stimulus. All the differences between SAT on the radio and on television that were previously mentioned indicate that it makes sense to think of them as subregisters. To make an attempt at describing SAT in its most general sense would be too broad to be valuable.

Polish linguist Marcin Lewandowski has recognized the need for meaningful specification and decided to analyze Online Sports Commentary (OSC), a genre of soccer language different to SAT ("The Language of Online Sports Commentary" 65). As Biber and Conrad emphasize the need for comparative frameworks for a successful register analysis (36), Lewandowski uses SAT and another subregister, Written Sports Commentary (WSC), as elements of comparison ("The Language of Online Sports Commentary" 69).

OSC is a play-by-play report that is generally known as "liveticker" among fans. The author points out that virtually no research has been done on the subject from a register perspective (Lewandowski, "The Language of Online Sports Commentary" 65). The reports are relatively short and are published on a minute-by-minute basis, ranging from some time before the kickoff until the end of the game. WSCs are essentially post-match reports that also include personal evaluation and commentary by the writer. Similar to OSC, research on WSC is almost nonexistent (Lewandowski, "The Language of Online Sports Commentary" 67). As far as SAT is concerned, Lewandowski adds that other common features, besides those that Ferguson and Reaser discussed, are signposting devices and demonstrative pronouns.

Following Reaser's suggestions, the author quantified the linguistic variables detected in eight 2010 World Cup OSCs. Excerpts of the British TV broadcasts of the same games and official post-match reports by the FIFA, UEFA and goal.com served as comparative elements. The main question Lewandowski tried to answer in his 2012 study was to what extent the relatively new genre of OSC is a hybrid of features of SAT and WSC ("The Language of Online Sports Commentary "67). On the other hand, he hoped to uncover forms that neither of these two registers uses.

The first similarity that arose between SAT and OSC is the abundance of present tense. Naturally, WSC makes more use of past tense, as the reports are written after the game. Just as announcers on TV, OSC writers have great time pressure to release their posts in real-time – thus the tense usage. In addition, they want to create the feeling that the readers, despite their lack of visual and audio input, get the information immediately as the play unfolds, which is of course not true, given the lag time between the action and the release of the commentary. As OSC writers have less opportunity for color commentary, since play-by-play action usually takes up their focus, it is only logical that OSC makes virtually no use of past tense (Lewandowski, "The Language of Online Sports Commentary" 70-71).

Simplification, that is, subject and also copula deletion, are still sporadically present in OSC, but, when compared to SAT, the frequencies are considerably lower. Lewandowski claims that the use of the variable can also be explained with the immediacy of reporting (Ibid.). We need to question, however, to what extent this feature may have spread from SAT to other genres, and if it may have been conventionalized, instead of bearing a purely functional purpose.

Regarding subject-verb inversion, it has been argued that it creates time for announcers to identify the players while already commenting on the play. Biber et al. add (65) that it also "conveys an element of suspense and surprise." Though occurrences in OSC are lower than in SAT, the form still materializes often enough to be significant. Lewandowski

speculates that it is still used functionally to "focus the readers' attention on the field action" ("The Language of Online Sports Commentary" 71). Again, it may be brought into question if the usage is really truly functional or once more a product of conventionalization.

Lewandowski also analyzes signposting devices, i.e. adverbials of time and space, such as *here*, *there*, *still*, and *now* ("The Language of Online Sports Commentary" 72). These deictic expressions have a high frequency in SAT, even though Ferguson had not yet deemed them worth writing about. Signposting adverbials are less common in OSC and nonexistent in WSC. As the author maintains, they serve to "create an impression of shared time and place" (Ibid.).

DeNu criticizes the language ideology of Major League Soccer announcing generally and goes as far as saying that the commentary is "held hostage by the misapplication of formulaic announcing methodologies" (256). He recognizes that the dual system made up of a play-by-play announcer and a color commentary was directly borrowed from other U.S. sports and considerably reshaped SAT.

As he remarks, announcers tend to provide too many statistics and background information during live action, since there are no breaks as in other sports. They seem to dread the silence between plays and will fill it with information – a technique that is highly uncommon in traditional soccer announcing (DeNu 258). Moreover, the descriptions of live action are unnaturally detailed. DeNu assumes that announcers tend to forget about the shared visual knowledge and thus resemble radio reporters in their level of intricacy (259).

Last but not least, he laments the frequent coaching attitude of the color commentary (Ibid.). It is yet another characteristic adopted from other American sports. Since the secondary announcer is usually a former player, coach, or both, he feels compelled to provide insights and advice that would be better suited during halftime or after the match.

While some of these points DeNu addresses are certainly a matter of personal preference and possibly intentional, his observations are valid. The duality of announcers is

typically American and not something you will normally find in other countries. Furthermore, British announcers – as much as other Europeans ones – are said to let the game speak for itself at times. A study comparing the register of American and British broadcasts of the same soccer games would probably reveal even more structural and linguistic differences.

Face-Work in Social Interactions

Erving Goffman, the father of microsociology, has dedicated much of his work to the realm of social interactions, which, in his belief, is the place where all humans are "the same" ("Face-Work and Interaction Rituals" 244). In his view, people engaging in communication express, by necessity, their views on the social situation and therefore evaluate its interactants and, more than anything, themselves (Goffman, "Face-Work and Interaction Rituals" 236). Goffman calls this "taking a line" and resumes that "the term *face* maybe defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Ibid.). In other words, the face is constructed as a public image based on positive personal traits. As a result, people become attached to a face they acquire and so every instance of joining a new interaction becomes a form of commitment, as threats to one's face could potentially arise.

Fortunately, we all share this desire to be positively received by others and so we can generally rely on other participants to support our face. This form of social agreement stems from the empathy of anticipating how it must be to "lose one's face," and so it is almost morally questionable to disregard another person's self-image. Because if a face-threat does materialize, the victim is often left embarrassed, ashamed, confused or even incapacitated and it is only with *poise* that interactants can ignore the shame of being exposed in such manner (Goffman, "Face-Work and Interaction Rituals" 237). One's social face, then, is only a product of social approval, and if a person behaves in a deviant way, the public image can be lost. Consequently, we have to fulfill certain expectations in order to maintain our status. As

Goffman puts it: “Approved attributes and their relation to face make of every man his own jailer; this is a fundamental social constraint, even though each man may like his cell” (Ibid.).

The golden rule for interactants is thus to mind other people’s faces just as much as one’s own. This frequently leads to a superficial, temporary agreement on the outside, which might not represent the true feelings of all participants. In his essay “Presentation of Self” Goffman speaks of a “working consensus” that hinges on reciprocal acts of confirmation (194). These acts, in turn, can become highly conventionalized if a situation is recurrent. As Goffman maintains, “each person, subculture, and society has its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices” (“Face-Work and Interaction Rituals” 238).

This thesis specifically will often revert to the concept of face-saving as a strategy employed by soccer announcers, whose communication situation is special in many regards. Mainly because their interaction is isolated from any viewer input while simultaneously accessible to a huge audience in real-time, announcers see themselves confronted with an abundance of threats to their public image. A slip of the tongue, a wrong call or misinformation are only the more salient ways in which a commentator can lose face. In addition, long pauses or strong speech overlaps may be perceived by the audience as a failed performance as well. And a failed performance is not readily overlooked by the more critical soccer fans, whose hubris quickly fuels the idea that they could do the same job just as well. Given this pressure, it is no surprise that in sports announcer talk not only individual but also cooperative face-saving practices have emerged, some of which I will point out and analyze with the help of TV soccer broadcasts.

CHAPTER 3

DEFINITION OF THE COMMUNICATION SITUATION

In order to interpret the linguistic variables of SAT, it is crucial to define the communicative situation in which announcers find themselves. The literature review has already hinted at some of the contextual factors, but for a thorough understanding, I will use the "situational parameters of variation" Johnstone (177) adapted from Biber (40-1).

As far as the communicative characteristics of the participants are concerned, we have to keep in mind the complexity of the interaction. In the case of MLS TV commentary, there are always two announcers, both of whom are employed by the broadcast production, which in turn may or may not be affiliated with a franchise of the major league. Both reporters are, however, liable to their journalistic code of ethics and, given their fame and social status, relatively autonomous in their work, being merely guided by a director.

The addressee is the audience that follows on the screen. It goes without saying that a greater viewership increases the pressure of performance, though the exact number of addressees is irrelevant for the communication situation. The workers around the broadcast who manage and execute the production could be specified as the secondary audience. As Bell suggests, they also influence the announcers' language, though to a lesser extent (174). The talk itself is directed to a considerable extent towards the co-commentary, so that the true audience on the screen mostly feels like overhearing a conversation, since it cannot give any feedback on the performance. Yet, at other times, viewers are explicitly called on. In brief, we have two people talking to one another about soccer, while occasionally they will address an audience that is constantly muted but listening.

As feedback by the main audience is unavailable, the director has to guide the reports through the production, using formulaic procedures and scripts that have proven popular among the viewership. While it is impossible for the announcers to give one another feedback

openly in the process, we can safely assume that they have developed techniques to communicate covertly, as they are invisible during the commentary work.

The relationship between the reporters is otherwise of professional nature, though during the broadcast the impression is conveyed that they may be more than just that. This overly respectful and friendly attitude is grounded on the required level of cooperation and the positive energy that the broadcast aims to transmit. Though in everyday life they might assume a higher social status than their average viewer, both have to come across as humble and likeable. As a result, any hierarchical imbalance between addressers and addressees is eliminated.

As opposed to radio commentaries, a TV audience has visual access to the match in question, which has, as we saw, a great impact on the linguistic behavior of announcers. Furthermore, the reporters have gained years of experience working in their field and consequently have more insight into the world of soccer. Hardcore fans might be invested as well, but the special access to the surrounding branches – such as marketing, recruiting or managing – renders the commentary a kind of expertise that is unattainable to the average viewer. With this in mind, fans expect the commentary to be accurate and insightful at all times.

Regarding the setting, one has to imagine a relatively confined commentary box with just enough space to comfortably organize notes and other work material. While the match is constantly filmed and supplemented by replays and statistics, the announcers usually remain invisible for the duration of their work. Direct feedback comes, in real time, from the director, who manages the flow of the broadcast. The commentating itself takes place synchronously as well so that the immediacy of reporting imposes further pressure on the announcers.

While for the sake of this analysis the commentary was transcribed, the text is only available after the broadcast in form of a recording. Most TV channels will provide closed

captioning in the process, but this transcript is shortened and simplified to an extent that makes it impossible to capture the central linguistic features of the register.

The text itself is highly formulaic in the sense that both announcers know their responsibilities that come with the different roles of play-by-play and color commentary. While the former covers the live action of the game and often speaks considerably more, the latter is mainly responsible for recaps, evaluations or tactical analysis. Though the happenings on the field are unpredictable, the announcers manage to coordinate their turns with rare overlaps. Even more so when a broadcast is locally televised, reporters are expected to be emotionally involved. But also on national productions, a lack of commitment, at least to the importance of the game, would be received negatively. Viewers usually have a strong bias towards one team, so that comments critical of that team can become provocative too. Depending on the scale of the broadcast, then, announcers have to be careful to strike a balance between impartiality and critical evaluation.

To close the definition of the situation, the topic of the commentary is obviously the soccer live action on the pitch, supplemented by additional background information. Since the audience is very diverse, the style and content must be appropriate for all levels of expertise. Knowledge of the basic rules and regulations are, however, presupposed. The purpose of the announcing is to inform and entertain. That means that most of the content should be based on facts, while here and there the reporters will need to make evaluations or even an educated guess, for instance on tactical decisions or difficult calls.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

I entertained the idea of investigating the language of soccer commentary shortly before the FIFA World Cup of 2014 in Brazil, when the anticipation among soccer fans around the world was almost unbearable. Once the tournament started, I produced the first informal observations and short transcripts of German announcing in order to get an idea of the prominent features that might be universal. The choice to consider German broadcast first was made by necessity, as I was visiting my home country during this time and had virtually no access to English-speaking productions. Once I returned to the United States for the knockout stages, I realized that my sample would be too limited if I actually used these matches, as the Word Cup was about to be over. I thus decided to focus on the Major League Soccer, whose season was just about to begin.

In the following weeks, I transcribed 20 minute-excerpts of six MLS games. The samples were taken from different stages of the broadcast. That is to say, one excerpt featured the first twenty minutes, while another transcribed twenty minutes in the middle of the second half. I explained above that there is usually a lot more color commentary in the first half and a lot more pauses in the second. In this way, I could account for this variation that occurs within a match.

Most importantly though, I chose those broadcasts that were most comprehensible in terms of sound clarity and free of stadium interference. The closed captioning facilitated the transcription work tremendously, but it was anything else but reliable. Once I had determined three different pairs of announcers, I picked the following game they commentated as the fourth, fifth and sixth sample.

In my transcriptions and also in the short samples used throughout this paper I used commas in order to demarcate the grammatical phrase and clause boundaries. Still, they do not represent pauses in speech. Each pause made by an announcer was marked by periods in

parentheses. One period signals pauses of less than one second, two periods pauses between one and three seconds, and three periods pauses longer than three seconds. If there is no pause displayed at the end of a turn, it means that the co-commentary took the stage without noticeable break. Incomprehensible elements were indicated with the symbol "<X>" for one syllable, "<XX>" for two, and "<XXX>" for three or more syllables. When it comes to deletion, elements in brackets are added by me and represent the omitted particles that would be needed to make the utterance grammatical. Stretches of discourse in brackets, on the other hand, mark speech overlaps.

In the process of transcribing I took notice of the more salient linguistic features of SAT. Once the transcriptions were finished, I marked these first impressions and consulted the literature exhibited in the first part of this paper, which frequently supported my observations and offered the first clues as to the underlying forces of the variables. I revisited some of the features that were mentioned by Ferguson and Reaser to test if they were still present. Other particles that I could find but that were not addressed yet I analyzed through supplementary sources in order to identify their function. In the following analysis, I will move from one variable to the next, beginning with the individual patterns already introduced by other researchers and continuing with the insights that I have gained myself.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

My analysis is divided into two major parts. Initially, I will consider the individual linguistic features that Ferguson suggested and add some that I found myself. Afterwards, I will analyze the interactional behavior of both announcers within the duality model in order to find out how this constellation affects the language of the broadcast.

Individual Linguistic Features

Before I will introduce the new variables I detected in my data sample, I will revisit Ferguson's in order to figure out if they are still prevalent and if they indeed reflect the communicative purposes that he and Reaser suggested they would. I will follow the same order, starting with simplification and ending with heavy modifiers. However, I will ignore tense usage entirely, since Ferguson had noted himself that the distribution is intuitive and merely represents the demands of the situation.

Moreover, I will also disregard what Ferguson names linguistic routines. Ranging from idioms to longer stretches of discourse, announcers tend to use language in the same way for certain occasions, despite a larger pool of linguistic alternatives. This lack of creativity simplifies the reporting.

In some sense, lining up linguistic routines with the other features of SAT seems inaccurate, since *for* + noun and *to* + verb constructions, for instance, are simplifying routines as well. Routines, in turn, as well as the result constructions, are means of simplification. And no one would doubt that the process of copula or subject deletion has become a linguistic routine for announcers as well. The boundaries between SAT features thus blur into one another with this terminology. As most underlying functions are driven by simplification, the first feature's label is misleading. Similarly, the name "linguistic routines" is too broad to be valuable as an individual variable.

I will focus instead on three variables that have emerged in my corpus. First, I will exhibit the usage of diminutive elements as a means of weakening criticism. Furthermore, I have found an abundance of deictic adverbs that function as signposting devices. Last but not least, I will consider elements of discourse deixis, which tend to reinforce propositions and signal cooperation.

Simplification

As Ferguson and Reaser have pointed out, the deletion of copulas and sentence-initial subjects is a distinct marker of many registers, including SAT. In headlines, note-taking or captioning, the underlying purpose of usage is relatively clear. Headlines and captions ought to be short. Notes should be simplified as well, since otherwise the writer could simply use complete sentences. The original function thus seems to be linked to economy, while it is true that headlines should be catchy as well. What, then, is the true purpose of simplification in SAT? Consider the first samples of my corpus:

(1) Here's Higuaín (.) *[he's]* having a drop back to find possession as we expected and the Galaxy *[is]* able to clear it away, *[it's]* Keane now for the Galaxy
(2) Mike Magee (..) put this for Chicago (…) Amarikwa (.) *[is on the]* near side (.) *[he's]* able to take this, Quincy Amarikwa touches into the eighteen, Fire get numbers up, *[they/and]* drop back in, Harri Shipp fakes one shot, *[he/and]* walks it across

Both (1) and (2) are taken from live action reporting and feature many instances of simplification. Simultaneous pronoun and copula deletion can be found twice in (1) and once in (2). Mere omission of the subject is seen twice in (2), but could also be interpreted as missing a conjunction. Both excerpts additionally exhibit the omission of the copula after what Ferguson calls "a single word proper name" ("Sports Annnouncer Talk" 159) – in this

case “Galaxy” and “Amarikwa.” Yet it is visible that other particles, such as articles or prepositions, are deleted as well.

While Reaser maintained that for his TV broadcast analysis both subject and copula deletion are evenly distributed along color commentary and play-by-play reporting, my corpus showed a higher frequency for deletions during live action announcing. This observation challenges Ferguson’s interpretation that the feature had been borrowed for its stylistic value, as it renders the speech informal and exciting. It rather seems like there is a communicative function behind the use of simplification.

As the majority of tokens were found in the play-by-play component, Reaser seems to be right when he attributes the variable to the need for shorter utterances. It is very obvious that, even in a fast-paced and rarely interrupted sport as soccer, color commentaries have much more time to formulate their contributions, since they mostly take the stage during a sequence of multiple replays. Live action, on the other hand, is fast-paced and spontaneous, which creates a greater need for an economy of words. Consider additional examples:

(3) Wright-Phillips, takes a touch, *[and]* gets a shot away
(4) Good job here by Landon Donovan (.) *[he]* gets away from Romero (.) *[and]* gets away from the other defender who decided to play American Football and that’s a foul, *[it’s a]* free kick for the Galaxy

Besides the forms of simplification detected by Ferguson and Reaser, we can frequently find other deleted particles, as seen with the article and preposition in (2). In (3) and (4) patterns of recursivity become apparent, as the subject is not repeated or replaced by a pronoun in the following phrase, though reference is made to the same agent. Hence simplification is not only limited to sentence-initial subjects or copulas, but also to other

elements – conjunctions, articles, or prepositions – all of which are easily recoverable for the viewer, who has visual access to the scene.

As a result, it is likely that simplification is still a highly functional feature of TV soccer SAT. It is not only a way of sounding more exciting or informal, though it is still possible that for these reasons other low-paced sports have adopted it. Instead, it facilitates rapid spontaneous reporting by deleting the material that is unnecessary for comprehension. When more time is available, as in recaps, utterances become more complete and fragments rarer, as can be seen in (5):

(5) Yeah, excellent work by Juninho (.) he's got to make sure when the Galaxy do have the ball and they're pushing forward, it's not necessarily for him to go and support (.) it's about glancing, finding out where Higuain is drifting to so he can be close by (.) if the ball ever turns over (…)

To simplify the message due to time constraints then highlights under which pressure the announcers find themselves during live action reporting. Knowing that they are being broadcast on a large scale and that their audience expects only the most relevant and accurate comments does not make the job easier. Yet the facilitating practice is, as DeNu (259) suggested, owed to the overly detailed action descriptions that American announcers have taken on from the SAT of other American sports. As such, the underlying face threat is self-inflicted. British and German commentaries usually just call the players' names when these show fast pass combinations on the field, for instance "Salinas (...) Cronin (..) Djaló (.) Djaló with the shot." American announcers, on the other hand, tend to depict it like this:

(6) Salinas picking up the ball, the challenge from Jordan Stewart (.) finds Sam Cronin in the center, he's got runners, that one's for Djaló (.) bit of a mishit backwards from Hurtado (.) Yannick Djaló trying to curl it around Johnson and mishits it

It goes without saying that the sample utterance (6) takes much more time to be produced. While DeNu criticizes this kind of detail, it is possibly intended and even helpful to attract new viewers that are used to the announcing style of other sports. Either way, the face-threatening immediacy of reporting is particularly high for American announcers due to the strong propensity for detail. Consequently, comparative studies with British TV soccer SAT are needed to see if simplification is also a prominent feature there. If a lower level of detail and fewer deletions are found, it would be more evidence for the functionality of the variable.

Subject-Dependent Inversion

Reaser already underlined that inversions are easily overestimated. In contrast to most of the variables he and Ferguson considered, it is more often featured in written than in spoken English. Since this is somewhat counterintuitive for a register that favors simplified expressions, it is highly marked. As a result, the inversion of subject and dependent stands out but might not be as frequent as previously assumed. My analysis confirms this idea, as my corpus contains very few instances of inverted sentence structure. Here are almost half of the tokens I found:

(7) *Comes in a little bit late there and misses the ball (..) Shaun Francis*
(8) here's Omar González (.) Juninho, *wide is Zardes* (.) *back out it goes again*, Gargan
(9) *Ahead is this long ball* (.) searching for Wondolowski, it curled out of play in the air

In (7), the subject is strongly delayed, as if the announcer had originally "planned" on deleting the subject, but then realized that it is better to follow up with it for clearer reference. It goes without saying that there is not any time for planning, but that deletion happens subconsciously. We can, however, speculate that the late mentioning of the agent was, in fact, a deliberate decision. (8) features two inversions at once. As the variable is so underrepresented, we could raise the question if the first token instantiates the second one. Either way, only the first use can be said to create a lag time for the announcer, since the second one does not even contain a player that has to be identified. Likewise, (9) features one instance of inversion, but again it is not for any benefit of the commentary.

From a pragmatic perspective, rather than a syntactic one, the feature represents *topicalization*. If the argument of the verb is fronted, as is the case with "wide," "back out," and "ahead" in (8) and (9), it becomes the topic of the sentence (Birner 212). As a result, it receives greater stress than in its canonical position. In this light, these three examples signal the direction or anchor points before any other information is given and thus help the viewer determine the location of action more quickly. Though this does display an advantage to the announcer, it is at least functional to the viewer.

Given that the feature is apparently prevalent in low-paced sports, such as baseball, but not frequently used in my soccer corpus, the purpose of the variable must be challenged. It may have arisen in order to create that second of lag time. Yet the following examples show that reporters are perhaps not in need of this delay, or that they have come up with other strategies:

(10) here is McCarty on the move, *broken up by Palmer*, *taken here by Amarikwa*

(11) Pérez Garcia for Cronin, closed down, *taken off him by Juninho* (.) *intercepted there by Harris* (…) Mátias Pérez Garcia on his debut (.) trying to combine with Harris (.) knocked away

(12) (..) out wide for Lovel Palmer and it slips under his foot (…) Wondolowski, *Salinas jamming the foot race* (.) heavy touch though (.) *Soumaré able to cut across* (…) *Wondolowski keeping it in* (..) *Hurtado, backs off of Djaló* (.) sends it through for Atiba Harris

Samples (10) and (11) indicate that, instead of the traditional subject-dependent inversion Ferguson described, announcers often use passive constructions to create a lag time for identification. In the same manner, the focus is first on the action and then on the player. Though passive structures are highly frequent for both play-by-play announcers and color commentaries, it cannot be said that they necessarily need them, as the examples in (12) exhibit. Here the players' names regularly appear at the beginning of a clause.

Consequently, the few inversions that are represented in my corpus are mainly stylistic and not functional. Perhaps SAT has become more consistent in style – that is, more informal with an increasing number of passive constructions. Yet again, examples (8) and (9) have shown that there is a benefit to the viewer. Hence the original communicative function might have been to highlight the anchor points in order to convey the spatial relations faster.

In terms of face-work, inversions would have made sense, since there is almost nothing more embarrassing than getting a player's name wrong. These are faux-pas that usually do not go unnoticed by fans. I suspect, however, that the unnecessarily complicated non-canonical word order had to be replaced by simpler constructions, such as the passives. These create a lag time, but maintain a rather casual tone without intricate sentence patterns.

Result Expressions

Ferguson ins his study had claimed to find the two constructions *for* + noun and *to* + verb frequently to express a result instead of a purpose. This, he maintained, applies to all sports he has observed. As a reason behind that he suspected a perceived reduction of effort, though it was not clear if they require in fact less energy than other forms.

Result expressions of this nature are also frequent in my own corpus, with some examples displayed in the following:

(13) Oyongo didn't fall for the fake (.) stayed with the play, deflects it out *for the throw-in*

(14) just doing enough to put it out *for a goal kick*

(15) and hitting Salinas to the side of the head, it's behind *for a corner*

(16) Gargan there *to clear it out*

(17) Sarvas *to keep it alive*

(18) Sean Johnson *to deny Tim Cahill*

(13) to (15) represent the *for* + noun constructions, which were regularly used after a play led to a dead-ball position. The result was hence not only the completion of an action. Instead it rather marked the change of ball possession. Interestingly, this usually coincides with a short break for the announcer as well.

The *to* + verb expressions, as shown in (16) to (18), signaled the completion of action alone and were mostly preceded by the player's name. In some sense, the verb "managed" could be inserted right before the construction to clarify the conveyed meaning as a result.

Once more, the result expressions were more thoroughly used by the play-by-play announcer than by the color commentary, which hints at a deeper communicative function. In my eyes, Ferguson was on the right track when he suggested they save effort. While the *to* + verb constructions can also be seen as simplified versions that omit a verb, both forms are, at the very least, formulaic. Many more ways of expressing results in sports exist, but the announcers choose these two redundantly. This does, in fact, reduce the effort because they only have to insert the given facts of the situation into the expression template. Consequently, they can focus more on the accuracy of their report instead of the linguistic form.

Heavy Modifiers

Heavy modifiers are the second feature that stands out in SAT for its *formal* character. Ferguson claimed that the variable is so rarely used in spoken English that even natives would have trouble integrating it flawlessly. Announcers, as trained public speakers, certainly do not struggle to include it for incidental descriptions. However, we need to consider the context, as the samples show:

(19) Segares, *the left back* (.) has Shipp making a run to the by-line if he can get there in time

(20) Red Bulls bring Roy Miller, *the Costa Rican*, into the attack

(21) Stewart, *the thirty-two year old from England* (..) first to go into the book for that one

(22) defended well by *the Polishman* Krzysztof Krol

(23) *The thirty-four year-old Italian* (.) *former Inter Milan man* Ferrari denying New York (.) the opening score

(24) Salinas *who told us yesterday* (..) *it's worrisome* (.) *that Yannick Djaló wouldn't be here, injured and out for this game*

(25) Bernárdez (.) *who played in a second World Cup for Honduras this year in Brazil*

The first two appositional NPs in (19) and (20) are short and simple. They require only the definite article and the position and, respectively, the nationality of the denominated players. Effortlessly added after the name, they do not really consume a lot of time or interfere with the live action depiction.

(21), on the other hand, features a more complex aside, including both the player's age and his country of origin. While the first two examples were taken from a high-paced attack description, (21) was uttered during an interruption in which the player Stewart received a booking. As a result, the announcer had no time pressure whatsoever to continue with his action report, but felt free to give a little more background information than usual.

(22) and (23) are both examples of preposed adjectival constructions preceding the player's name. While the first utterance was made again during ongoing live description, the second was meant to be a recap after a significant scene. As such, the commentary was able to provide not only the age and nationality, but this time also career background of the player.

Finally, (24) and (25) display complete nonrestrictive relative clauses, which obviously consume the most effort and time to produce, as compared to the appositional NPs and the adjectival constructions. In these scenes, the announcer deliberately ignored the live action (as there was no immediate significance or threat) and focused instead on the players. This eliminates the time pressure of reporting, since the reporter can always zoom back into action if he deems it relevant enough.

In brief, the use of heavy modifiers hinges on the time constraints the announcer is facing. During short interruptions or when he decides to ignore the live action there is time enough for complex relative clauses or more extensive NPs. But when time is short, brief adjectival constructions or NPs can be easily sprinkled over the course of a description.

What is also relevant to the use of heavy modifiers is the overall timing in the game. In my corpus, it became apparent that these incidental background deliveries happen more in the earlier stages of a broadcast when some viewers may be expected to be unfamiliar with the teams and players. Effective coloring of live action provides these casual followers with enough information to keep them interested and invested. It highlights relations and connections within the world of soccer that are beyond the game itself and makes the broadcast more of a learning experience that closes gaps of knowledge. In short, if I do not know the two teams that are playing, the announcers do well to familiarize me with the sides so that I can pick one and stay tuned.

Contributing to this method are more than just incidental heavy modifiers, however. Their use is quite limited on TV, as Reaser already observed, when compared to the overall amount of background information given. As he suggested, the announcers have more time

and thus more opportunities to provide this kind of knowledge in longer stretches of discourse. In that way, the heavier modifiers, such as nonrestrictive relative clauses and complex appositional NPs, often display the beginning of a longer excursion away from the live action and thus must be challenged as being merely incidental.

Diminutive Elements

Every sports fan knows how unfairly judgmental fans can be – towards the coaches, the referee, and even the announcer. This is even more so when we are invested in the game and have a side to support. In this case, it has almost become a regular practice to dismiss whatever and whoever needs to be dismissed to justify the failure. But being harsh on the players is not always the first reaction, since they, as a collective, come closest to what we identify with – the team. Instead, we quickly attack coaches or, even more frequently, the referee. Sometimes, in the course of the game, we even get defensive over what the announcer says. And they are aware of that.

Depending on the scale of broadcast – if local or national – the biases commentaries are expected to assume differ. If the production is shown nationally, they are usually thought to be impartial, celebrating the sports only without taking a side. If they are affiliated with a team, however, they have to signal this sympathy throughout their performance, and yet maintain their journalistic neutrality in analysis and interpretation. Either way, there is a fine line for both announcers when it comes to criticizing the players. As DeNu mentions, Soccer Hall of Famer Eric Wynalda had once been dropped from his color commentary contract due to condescending remarks (260). As a result, American announcers now tend to phrase their criticism more carefully with what I call diminutive elements, as to not attract the spite of either side. The term "diminutive" is commonly used in linguistics to refer to names and other expressions that have a belittling effect, often through the suffix –y, such as in "Benny" for

"Benjamin." I, on the other hand, specifically refer to elements that minimize the effect of the utterance, like in the following examples:

(26) And Shaun Francis is *a little bit lucky* here (.) too indecisive on the ball and Zardes *just* (.) *wasn't expecting it* from Robbie Keane to win the ball in that position and *just* (.) *a foot offside*, he's definitely offside but (.) Francis needs to be *a little bit more decisive* (.) one way or another (.) put it out of play (.) don't mess around with it in those positions (..)

The first example shows the most commonly used diminutives: "a little (bit)" and "just." We have seen that SAT tends to be rather simplified, omitting as many particles as possible unless they fulfill a more significant function. In this case, the elements weaken the proposition of the announcer's utterance enough to soften the criticism.

Shaun Francis, the defender in (26), was clearly lucky after losing the ball that his team did not concede a goal. And he definitely had to be more decisive in the future in order to prevent that. In short, he almost caused his team to fall behind. However, commentaries must not be that rigorous in their language and so the minimizing "a little bit" undermines the player's failure to perform.

Likewise, forwards are under great pressure to convert every chance they get into a goal. Acknowledging the difficulty to make a run without stepping into an offside position, the announcer did not criticize Gyasi Zardes in (26) as much as he could have. Instead, he lowers the pressure by highlighting how surprising the pass was. In addition, he uses an understatement in the following, since Zardes was offside by more than just one foot. The reporter takes notice of that and quickly repairs himself. After all, his journalistic integrity challenges him to stay truthful and make definite calls. Yet his diminutives gave the players enough credit to get away with the missed performances.

Consider (27):

(27) Higuaín is really (.) looking for (.) the foul (.) there (eh) there was no foul there (.) it's (.) it's one of those situations where players (.) *I think*, trying to do *a little too much* (.) gets a (.) gets *a little bit ahead of himself*

In this situation, the announcer is supposed to criticize what soccer fans call "diving" – pretending to be fouled. However, he has to be careful with such calls, since replays often reveal that there was in fact a contact. Moreover, Higuaín is a shorter player. He is fast and agile, which causes him to be fouled a lot while not all attacks on him are recognized as such, due to his lack of physical strength. Smaller players always struggle with foul calls and the professional world has instilled in them the need to fall and protest in order to get the free kick they deserve.

Consequently, the announcer has to be careful in his judgment. He relativizes his utterance by making it more personal with "I think," which leaves room for other opinions. Once more we can observe the usage of "a little…" to take him out of the line of fire that he faces if exposed as a diver.

Criticism of any kind – towards players, coaches, referees and fans – is always employed very tactfully. On the one hand, too extreme of a position jeopardizes the image of the announcer and attracts the spite of the opposition. On the other hand, commentaries also have a responsibility as public figures, since branding someone as a diver, for example, can direct the anger of fans towards this player. Careers have been ended over death threats and lives been taken over the immense pressure of performance. To point the finger can justify people's anger, while to minimize the errors can emphasize that all actors on the field are but human themselves. Therefore, the announcers are expected to strike a balance, which is reflected in their language of criticism.

Diminutive speech, for that reason, is a variable with multiple benefits. While commentaries reduce the negative reception of the criticism they are expected to deliver by weakening their comments, they also save the public image of the actors on the pitch. Through the understatement of the player's failure to perform, the latter is relieved of a firmer attack. Announcers shape the perception of the viewers so strongly that you will often hear fans make the same statements on the day after a match, and rarely hear anyone contradict. Therefore diminutives seem to be a response to the audience's expectations, and protection from their judgment.

Deictic Adverbs as Signposting Devices

Another feature of SAT is what Beard calls *signposting devices*; that is, adverbs that point to a specific situation. Listening to the recordings, I realized quickly that each of the announcers used countless adverbs of time and space to refer to the actions on the field, such as in the following sample utterances:

(28) Gordon is fouled *here* outside his own penalty area (..) and Hilario Grajeda is gonna have a little discussion *here* with Felipe, yellow card
(29) Poor choice by Landon Donovan *there* (.) best decision for him *there* (.) taking yourself and have a shot *there* right outside the eighteen
(30) here's Gordon *now* for the Galaxy (..) Zardes (…) working out of the back *now*, Leonardo and Rogers

Each of these excerpts features one of the three most observable tokens. While we are fast to point out that "here" and "there" are adverbs of space and "now" an adverb of time, closer inspection will reveal that the practical usage may differ. Both instances of "here" in (28), for example, do not only index the place of action, but also the moment in which it

happens. In other words, “here” could be replaced by “in that situation,” which includes both time and space. Similarly, the first two uses of the distal “there” in (29) refer to the scene as a whole, whereas the third one is purely locative, pointing to the spot “right outside the eighteen.” While the highlighted adverb “now” in (30) is initially only temporal (since the “here” covers the locative aspect), the second instance can again be interpreted as both locative and temporal, as it could be felicitously substituted by “there.”

If adverbs of time and space are not really streamlined in their meaning, then what is their true function? For all we know, we can simply omit them in the samples without changing the meaning of the utterance.

Kendon (199) writes about the inherent inclination of humans to point to the things they are referring to. It does not mean that this signposting is always necessary for the listener to decipher the meaning of the utterance. When watching soccer, I may exclaim that I saw a foul and point at the screen in outrage. My friend may not even look where I am pointing at but instead fixes his eyes directly on the screen. And even if he were to follow my finger, how would he be able to figure out what exactly I am pointing at anyway?

This propensity to point is represented in the announcers’ tendency to use adverbs as signposting devices. Knowing we share the same visual image, they index the situation on the field that they are referring to at the moment of the utterance. Since they cannot use their hands, they use their language. The lacking opportunities for use of body language thus alter the linguistic behavior.

I mentioned above that most of the tokens can felicitously be replaced by “in that situation.” But, given the time pressure we have determined as one of the main cognitive forces of the register SAT, announcers tend to shorten even the briefest of phrases to their convenience. Vygotsky calls this “abbreviated speech” (87). If the interlocutors in a social situation know each other well, or if they have enough contextual information to make the same inferences, it is possible to condense an utterance to a minimum. In this case,

announcers can use any of the three signposting devices, since the context and the camera focus will make it very clear what situation they are talking about.

What appears most interesting about the distribution of signposting devices is that all commentaries use them while they certainly have a preference for one or two of them. One could have argued that the use of the more distal "there" in (29) is the greater lag time between the action and the recap of the scene, as opposed to (28), in which the report was more synchronic to the play itself. However, my analysis has shown that each commentator tends to use one of the adverbs much more than the others. As a result, signposting devices are a distinct feature of SAT, whereas the individual choice of the available adverbs is a matter of free variation. Moreover, the use of this feature also renders the reporting more inclusive and creates a shared experience, as Lewandowski had suggested.

Discourse Deixis

The final variable that stood out in my consideration of individual language behavior is a form of back-reference. To be specific, announcers tend to amplify their propositions with *discourse deixis*. Reminding us that they have made a similar statement earlier, announcers are able to strengthen their argument through repetition and reinforcement.

Birner defines deixis as "linguistic mechanisms for identifying the intended meaning of the current expression through its relationship to elements of the context of utterance" (114). The previously discussed signposting devices "here," "there," and "now" are, for instance, specimen of spatial and temporal deixis, since they link the utterance to the situation on the field. Discourse deixis is simply another referential category that makes connections to previous stretches of discourse (Birner 115). (31) – (36) will illustrate this:

(31) *we talked about* that lack of creativity (.) in the central part of the midfield (.)

(32) Well (.) for Montreal it's Felipe (.) *we talked about* Piatti, *we talked about* (.) McInerney up top

(33) *Once again* (.) *we've talked about* being in full attack mode the last five minutes

(34) Well *again* (.) they did not start for the first five minutes (.) playing aggressively

(35) we've seen that foul discrepancy so far (…) *again*, that's kinda more of (.) San José and the goonie's style (.) a lot of fouls (..) concede, a lot of fouls suffered

(36) If we look at the season for the L.A. Galaxy in (.) it didn't really (.) start out, *like you said*, the way they would have liked it

The excerpts (31), (32) and (33) contain the short phrase "we talked about," which signals that the statement being made at the moment is somewhat redundant and does not need further explanation or evidence. Especially viewers that have not watched the match from the very beginning get the impression that they ought to trust these comments even more so because they seem to have proven correct. In (33), the particle "once again" additionally intensifies this sensation. We can find the same token by itself in (34) and (35) in abbreviated form with similar effect. It is not clear when exactly the announcers have made these statements before – if earlier in the same broadcast or perhaps on the previous game day. But referring back to their own words certainly reinforces their present utterance tremendously.

This is also the point where the individual strategies become more of a collaborative effort. If the strengthened proposition would be inaccurate in any way, the second commentary would have to intervene. After all, one announcer may threaten his own face with faulty comments. Yet the other commentator is expected to correct any errors so that the first also jeopardizes the image of the duo overall. Therefore, reinforced utterances must be sanctioned by the colleague.

The final example (36) shows even more cooperation work. Here the discourse deixis is not directed towards the announcer's own statements of the past, but towards the ones of

the other commentary. As a result, besides strengthening his own proposition, the announcer also credits his colleague with the previous analysis. On the one hand, the back-reference may be seen as a marker of redundancy. The reporters know that they have made the same point earlier and want to highlight that they are repeating it for a fluctuating audience. On the other hand, the deictic elements clearly render the effect that the content is self-explanatory, since it has, in fact, been explained before. As the viewer cannot easily go back to that first mentioning, she has to accept it for the moment as factual, unless the other announcer intervenes.

Collective Communicative Features of SAT

Had the producers of MLS broadcasts decided that one announcer suffices, my analysis would have ended at this point. However, they implemented the American duality model for their commentaries, so that I will now consider the interactional behavior between the two announcers and its impact on their language.

I will begin with an analysis of the turn-taking mechanisms, as it stands out that both commentators rarely interrupt one another. Then I will deal more specifically with question-answer sequences and exhibit how the threat of performance is reduced by certain communicative strategies. I will show that interactions are generally based on cooperative values, which is often signaled by mutual reinforcement and even repetition. Ultimately, I will present some examples of other-initiated repair to indicate the caution with which these are handled.

Taking the Floor

What is extremely striking for a live broadcast is that there is virtually no speech overlap. As mentioned in the literature review, the roles and responsibilities are relatively defined between play-by-play announcer and color commentary. In terms of floor-taking, that

means that turns are to some extent negotiated. Once a significant action on the field is completed, such as a shot, corner or free kick, the color commentary will take over with a brief analysis. Consider a regular exchange:

(37)

J: And the Earthquakes send it back into center, Wondolowski (.) on the side, ball from him as Harris runs into the box (..) Wondolowski, cutting in the shot, it was fired over *(...)*
S: It's a good play from Chris Wondolowski there again playing on the line […]

The sample exhibits how most of the turn-taking is determined by the significance of the live action. A replay, for instance, is always scrutinized by the color commentary. It is exclusively his domain, while action descriptions are not. Similarly, short interruptions almost always warrant coloring. These are the default signals of SAT floor-taking.

Moreover, pauses in speech help devising the turns. In (37), the long pause at the end of the main announcer's utterance reinforces the notion that the color commentary ought to take the floor. What happens if the latter jumps in after just a short pause is displayed in (38):

(38)

J: Francis pushing forward, the opportunity for Meram, over the bar and out of play (.) goal kick here for the Galaxy (..) *[good counter]*
C: *[<XX>]*
Well <XX> great counter and it really starts with Higuain

In this case we have a premature claim to the floor, which results in an overlap. One clue to overtake has technically been given, as the final remark of the play-by-play announcer

is usually a result expression. In (38), "goal kick here for the Galaxy" would thus signal the commentary to start his recap. However, the primary announcer chooses to follow up with a short evaluative phrase, following a medium pause, which seems to have induced the overlap. Had he stopped for less than a second, this could have been prevented. But the contextual clues were too straightforward, so that the color commentary ended up claiming the floor in a manner that was certainly unintended.

Consider for a second how the communication breaks down immediately. The main announcer senses that he should have passed on the turn more smoothly and refrains himself from continuing. The color commentary, on the other hand, feels like the intruder and temporarily loses his train of thought. Overwhelmed by the overlap, he needs to make time by means of the discourse marker "well" before following up with a short mumble (Schiffrin 102). And even after that he starts out with a mere repetition of what his colleague said, which ends the moment of confusion and guides him back to his analysis of the play.

While the division of labor as well as the pauses at the end of turns clearly help negotiating the floor-taking, the almost absolute lack of overlaps cannot be attributed to these factors only. After all, long pauses appear during live action descriptions too. Besides that, color commentaries have to talk about strategy or give background information as well; and they normally comment on these issues while the game is running. So how are these turns negotiated? Moreover, we sometimes see them take the floor without a considerable pause after the previous turn. How do they infer that they can safely start talking?

What helps is a closer look at the pauses that do not seem to warrant a new turn:

(39) Pérez Garcia showing his ability *to (.)* to hold up the ball (.) good feet in tight spaces (.) waiting for his teammates *to (.)* join the attack (.) sensed that they didn't have enough numbers with him and Wondolowski *and (.)* very patient (.) allowing Salinas to join in the (.) last possession there for San José (…)

(40) I mean Robbie Rogers, it's taken him a while *but (.)* to get through the injuries *but (.)* starting out left back now and he's doing a good job

(41) (uh) again, where where is the creativity gonna come from? Chicago has ten behind the ball for the entire second half *so (..)* you need to spray the ball around, you need to move it quickly (..)

If we look at the timing of pauses in the running utterance, it becomes obvious that they are frequently made after conjunctions or other particles that cannot syntactically demarcate the end of a sentence. In other words, it seems as if announcers tend to place their shorter breathing-and-thinking pauses after these elements in order to signal that they intend to continue.

In (39), the preposition "to" is used twice before pauses, though the transition to a new turn does seem unlikely at that point. The placement of "and," on the other hand, seems to function more as marker for continued discourse, since the utterance could have felicitously ended there. Furthermore, in (40) the first use of "but" is misplaced while the second one clearly highlights that more is to come. The third example features "so" before the pause when it could have easily followed it instead, if one was to put pauses according to clause boundaries.

While there are many other elements besides conjunctions that are ungrammatical at the end of an utterance, these indicated here in the excerpts have the additional benefit of granting the announcers a second of lag time to prepare the rest of the sentence. Having stated the nature of the connection before the pause (e.g. a contradiction with "but"), the reporters have a moment to streamline the following clause syntactically with the previous material.

Unfortunately, our understanding of the mechanisms of turn-taking in SAT is still far from being comprehensive. The pauses can only account for a small fraction of the data, and

to say that the length of the utterance and its content are strong signals is highly intuitive but insufficient. Brown and Yule (101) have put forward the concept of *paratone*, which marks the end of a turn by means of content, pauses and intonation. It is safe to say, at least, that suprasegmental features play a decisive role in the turn-taking of conversations and likewise in SAT as well. And yet, even with a consideration of all variables that we have at hand in discourse analysis, we would not be able to tell if the announcers had additional strategies of marking the end of a turn. Since they are mostly unseen throughout the broadcast, they might give each other physical signals or employ other ways of communicating imperceptibly.

What can and must be said is that overlaps are to be avoided. We have seen in (38) what confusion poor turn negotiation can temporarily cause. Besides these effects, interrupting one another is usually seen as impolite or unnecessarily dominant. In contrast to analyses surrounding the match, where reporters are often expected to be playfully competitive, this context demands civil cooperation on all levels, as we will see throughout this chapter.

Announcing Expected Performance

Taking the floor is most clearly negotiated when announcers ask the color commentary specific questions. A question-answer game usually does not lead to overlap, since interrogatives are marked by a different intonation and syntactic structure than declaratives. Hence they are easily identified by the listener who can respond subsequently.

Yet the formulation of questions always poses a minor face threat, as the audience expects the commentary to have a satisfactory, insightful answer to each request. Though the experts should possess the critical knowledge required, the spontaneity of the performance can become a minor stumbling block. For that reason, announcers will often address their

colleagues with their names, or give other suitable signals, before the question is phrased, as in the following examples:

(42)

J: […] coming up at halftime all the first half highlights and (.) *Stuart Holden* on (..) Landon Donovan (.) all that and more in the MLS halftime report (.) presented by Volkswagen (..) *and Stuart* (.) on Landon Donovan in this game (.) forty-two minutes into (.) the first game since the announcement of his retirement (.) *how's he playing?* (.)
S: Well, we've seen a lot of energy from him, a lot of willingness to get forward, combining well on the (.) on the left hand side with Robbie Rogers (.) he certainly looks up for it (…)

(43)

J: Johnson long ball evades everyone (..) *Stuart* (.) a week and a half ago (.) the last home game of San José (.) they said all the right things, they knew they needed to win (..) they were two-nill down at this point to D.C. United, *what are they doing better* (.) *that they're playing well as they are tonight?* (..)
S: They're very compact (.) defensively (eh) (.) not allowing much space for (.) Chicago's creative in (eh) Magee and Shipp to find space underneath […]

These excerpts, which were both taken from the same game, show how announcing an upcoming performance gives the color commentary lag time to mentally prepare a response. John Strong has optimized this technique to the benefit of his colleague Stuart Holden, who is merely substituting to collect some broadcast experience while still actively playing in England. Well before John phrases the question, he directly addresses Stuart to signal the expected performance.

Other strategies, besides calling out the name, are possible too:

(44)

Sh: *Hey*, if you look at the Chicago Fire team tonight, you say how in the world did they score five goals? (..)
St: Magee takes the team lead with seven on the goal here tonight […]

(45)

Sh: […] he is so valuable (.) as a guy who wins the ball in the air defensively (.) *so* (..) *what would you rather have him do?* (.) *sit back deep and protect the back four* (.) *or get forward and the attack* (.)
St: And opponent such as this (.) at Red Bull Arena tonight (.) I- I don't think that's debatable (.) they want him up and they want to have him going offensively (…) wouldn't surprise us if we saw Cahill in a striker's role from time to time (.) with all these games on the slate between now and the end of October (…)

In (44), the address "hey" is sufficient to make the announcer aware of the upcoming question. On the other hand, (45) lacks such a marker. Instead, the reporter poses a closed question, followed by the two options. As a result, the colleague has more lag time after the question and can choose among a very limited number of potential responses.

We have yet to consider a failure of a question-answer sequence. If an inquiry is placed too unexpectedly for the interlocutor, for instance by means of a question tag, she can be thrown off by the spontaneous challenge:

(46)

J: And they try a factor there cause Robbie Keane likes to drop into that left side so all three of those guys will have a good understanding of what's going on, *right?*

C: *Well, it's a it's an interesting* whenever you have Robbie Keane (.) *you know*, his standard is drifting to that left side so *you've got* (.) *you've got* the combination of Landon Donovan (.) and Keane (.) and Rogers (.) *you know*, it's (.) a pretty good trio. [(eh)]

J: [Not bad]

C: Difficult for any defense to really kind of to get a hold of.

The problem with question tags is that they do not sound like interrogatives until the very end. The intonation and word order are that of a declarative sentence until the tag comes up. Moreover, this question either warrants simple confirmation or blatant contradiction. Since the case that all three players combined (Robbie Keane, Landon Donovan, Robbie Rogers) pose a major threat, color commentary Cobi Jones is left with little room for his response and thus struggles to design a more insightful answer, especially given the time pressure. Apparently surprised by the request, he starts off with "well" to make time and possibly to lower the expectations to his response, since "well" is often used as an opener for noncompliance (Schiffrin 102). In addition, his answer features some repetitions and the discourse markers "you know," while it is obvious that he initially struggles to fit his thoughts into syntactic order. Main announcer Joe Tutino must have recognized his mistake and tries to support in the following, which causes a short overlap. Eventually, Jones manages to repair the situation by a brief closing statement and both can move on.

While John Strong seemed to use the strategy of announcing expected performances more than others, all try to prepare their colleague for upcoming questions in one way or another. In such a fast-paced work environment with public focus, surprises or blackouts are lethal to one's image. And since both reporters sit in the same boat, cooperation is everything. How far the announcers really take it, however, will be shown in the next section.

Agreement and Reinforcement

While it is likely that two soccer announcers evaluate the live action similarly, as experts in their fields with long term experience, the degree of agreement is outstanding. At times it seems as if these pairs never disagree on anything. That is surprising, given that post-game reporters often debate over an abundance of issues surrounding the match. Consequently, it is not for the lack of controversy that the announcers concur. Instead, we can assume that agreement is the default option and will be pursued unless the statement made is too blatantly wrong to be approved. The two following excerpts are representative of this comprehensive cooperative ideology and are hence barely able to capture the extent to which the strategy is used:

(47)

J: […] Sarvas (..) and this will be cleared out (.) *good job by Juninho* getting back at Higuain (..) Landon (.) off of his foot (.)

C: *Yeah, excellent work by Juninho* (.) he's got to make sure when the Galaxy do have the ball and they're pushing forward, it's not necessarily for him to go and support (.) it's about glancing, finding out where Higuain is drifting to so he can be close by (.) if the ball ever turns over (…)

(48)

St: […] with all respect to Di Vaio who's on the bench (.) that's the combination we just saw (.) *Piatti and McInerney that signed long term and represents the present and future of the Impact moving forward*.

Sh: *Yeah, you're absolutely right* (.) *Piatti is the man they have signed as a Designated Player to be the catalyst going forward* (.) *McInerney (.) he is the future in terms of a striker*.

Striking is the backchanneling at the beginning of the turn. The confirmatory "yeah" is a very popular choice for the color commentary when the main announcer has made some kind of evaluation at the end of his play-by-play description. In (47) and (48) we do not find much of a personal account by the color commentary. Rather, the previous utterance is confirmed and then briefly analyzed. In (47), Cobi Jones gives his insight as a former player, whereas in (48), Shep Messing merely repeats the idea put forward by head announcer Steve Cangialosi.

Sometimes the agreement reaches another level when reporters not only confirm each other's views, but openly mirror the vocabulary in a repetition. In (47), Juninho's effort was first praised as "good job" and subsequently heightened to "excellent work." Consider (49) for more blatant repetition:

(49)

C: Poor choice by Landon Donovan there (.) best decision for him there (.) taking yourself and have a shot there right outside the eighteenth (.) he had the time and space (.) *he's gotta be more greedy*, maybe he is looking for that assist record (.) (eh) you know (.) *be greedy, get another goal* (.)

J: *Be greedy* (.) *be selfish, take the shot* (..) seventieth minute, we're tied at two (.) the Galaxy have won back into this match (…)

Here we can observe the exact same word choice in the follow-up analysis. Most frequently this happens with smaller particles, such as the praise phrases in (47). Every now and then, however, color commentaries do not try to paraphrase in their response but choose to stick with the wording of the announcer. Considering the time frame, these repetitions are probably subconsciously constructed. Yet they reflect the general relationship that is aspired

by both reporters, which is one of utmost cooperation. Reiterating an idea is therefore outright support for the colleague, but repeating the same words is an even stronger reinforcement.

This strategy also works for an individual passage of reporting. During a replay, color commentary Stuart Holden seems to be highly repetitive in his analysis:

(50)

S: I imagine Bruce Arena is happy with that (…) it's the first time Ishizaki has beat the first man (.) and Omar González *makes a great run* and gets in front of Atiba Harris who (.) as you see it back at the at the start of that play (.) *he gets a good run on them and has that momentum* (.) as he catches the ball and does well to *bounce it off the ground* and (.) *make it difficult for Jon Busch* (.) another look at it (.) Omar González' *getting it down makes it difficult for Jon Busch* to get behind it (.) it's what they say (..) get your head on it and (.) put it straight into the ground *(.) the bounce can always throw the keeper off* and that's exactly what it does there (..)

Holden also has a lot of time for his recap, as goals deserve replays from multiple angles. As a result, he is necessarily going to reiterate his points. However, it does not take away from the reinforcing effect that repetitions have. Similar to back-references, they manifest the proposition without any innovative supplementary material. As such, these practices can be seen as landmarks of cooperative behavior as they mutually establish authority and credibility.

Repair

Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks differentiate between corrections that are self-initiated and those that are performed by others (361). It is the latter that interests us in this section. With cooperative behavior at the center of sports reporting, the question arises when

announcers actually do decide to dissent from their colleague's opinion. As stated above, the statement must be somewhat radically flawed to be disapproved. On the other hand, keeping the face-saving interest of both in mind, even minor other-repair, for instance correcting a linguistic form or a small detail, is highly deviant from the confirmatory behavior standard. In fact, this is usually the strongest we get from commentators. In all six of my excerpts there was no single instance of open disagreement. In addition, even the minor repairs are so rare that I chose to include all of them in the following, as they amount to four examples only:

(51)

J: Here it comes on the right side, Finlay sending through the header, out of play (..) goal kick here for the Galaxy (…) *they do build up rather quickly* (..)

C: *Well, plays like this are what* (.) *the Columbus Crew wanna do, and he shows that speed* (.) *where he exploits the open area behind Robbie Rogers as he gets forward*, puts a beautiful cross in (.) and Bedell cannot get (.) up high enough to actually get that down, maybe just enough by Gonzalez to row it off a little bit from Bedell (..)

What first does not look like much of a controversy can be considered a minor repair, or at least what the color commentary considers a crucial addition to the previous proposition. Though it is not clear if the main announcer intended to criticize Columbus' buildups as too rushed, his utterance conveys an element of surprise. His colleague hence opens his comment with the discourse marker "well," probably signaling slight objection towards this idea. In the following, he explains why he considers these fast counters important to the success of the team, given their chance to raid an outnumbered defense. The value of this example lies in the construction of the repair. The disagreement is not openly stated, which is also due to the fact that the initial criticism is not outright either. Consequently, the addition does not warrant any

straightforward dissent but merely a response to the surprising undertones the previous statement carried.

Consider (52) for a different kind of other-repair:

(52)

St: […] *it's becoming a bit stagnant* now here New York, Shipp makes a move around Sekagya, back tracking was Miller who blocked it away (..)
Sh: *That's pretty kind to say it's becoming a little bit stagnant* (.) we've had a lot of exciting games in Major League Soccer and this one hasn't broken out yet, but (.) there is plenty of time for the Red Bulls, they have the better of the ball (.)

In this case there is no addition to the material. Instead the proposition was not strong enough for color commentary Shep Messing, so that he chooses to pick up the utterance once more to intensify it. Technically, he criticizes his colleague's use of a diminutive element. For him the statement is too weak. On the other hand, we can also see this reaction as a form of support, since he is not contradicting but simply amplifying the notion. Interestingly, no announcer was more openly critical of players and performances than Messing. Keeping this in mind, his objection here is not a great surprise. This raises of course the question of whether he puts himself in a dangerous position, as we have seen announcers being dropped after condescending statements. Either way, the repair is a minor one and does not necessarily threaten his colleague's face, since to be lenient is not always considered a vice.

For a more playful example, look at (53):

(53)

J: Yeah, *he ran himself right into the defender* (.) lost possession (.) turned into a counter attack (.)

C: Well, *right into three defenders*.

J: Yeah [laughing] (…)

While the first two examples of other-repair were meant to be a serious comment on the game, this one is obviously a rather humorous correction. The fact that it was more than one defender the player collided with is relatively irrelevant. As a result, the repair is not threatening in any way, since it does not challenge the expert image of the colleague. On the contrary, it is perceived as a joke and actually serves to ease the tension of reporting. It is not exactly an outstanding gag that would survive in the script of a comedy, but given the humorless nature of announcing it displays a welcome variation to the viewer.

Finally, consider (54) for a relatively grave face-threat:

(54)

C: Yeah, that that (.) that's a little bit of a warning (.) for Felipe and anybody else (.) gotta settle down a little bit (..) that's two yellow cards for each team now (.) *for Felipe* (.) *and Piatti* (.) *for Montreal and then Gargan (..)*

J: *Leonardo* (.)

C: *And Leonardo* [mumbling noise] (…)

(54) exhibits perhaps the strongest other-repair. In an attempt to reiterate the bookings of the game, the color commentary forgets a player's name and is reminded by the main announcer. This example is most interesting due to its ambivalence. To some extent, it is an act of face-saving, since it is not clear how much longer Cobi Jones would have needed to gather the last name. His colleague thus puts him out of his misery before it becomes a moment of embarrassment. On the other hand, many people would see it as a disservice, since it creates a sensation of superiority to finish someone's sentence. We cannot tell how Jones

conceived this himself, but it is likely that his perception hinges on the question if he would have been able to provide the name anytime soon or not. After all, not three seconds have passed before the repair was made. It is safe to say that it threw him off for a second, as indicated by the incomprehensible mumbling afterwards. In some cultures, finishing one another's sentences is considered highly desirable, as it signals interest and cooperation, whereas in others it is considered plainly disrespectful (Mitchell 63). If anything can be criticized about the act itself, it is the fact that Joe Tutino did not hesitate longer to see if Jones delivers the name. But even if other-repairs may be face-threatening, there is a greater loss of prestige for the entirety of the announcer duo if the correction is not made, since soccer fans are highly sensitive towards the reporters' shortcomings. So in some sense, other-repairs must not be seen as a violation of the cooperative ideology, but rather as temporarily jeopardizing the face of the misled announcer for the greater long term benefit of the team. The motto is: if you make a mistake, I will have to correct you for the sake of both of us. After all, nothing is more harmful than an agreement of non-disclosure when at the other end of the screen millions of critical fans are noticing the error.

All in all, other-repairs are extremely rare, since they violate the cooperative principle of collaborative announcing. The few instances that can be considered a correction are usually minor in nature, as we have seen in the excerpts. It would be insightful to see an announcer make a grave mistake during the broadcast to record the reactions of the colleague. In my corpus that did not happen, unfortunately. It goes without saying that such a repair would be very delicate and requires the most careful approach as to sacrifice as little of the commentary's image as possible.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Time constraints did not permit for this study to be the comparative analysis that Biber and Conrad demanded; and neither the quantitative approach Reaser so desired. As such, it is neither able to demarcate its described MLS register from other U.S. sports' SAT, nor a British variety of soccer SAT.

Nevertheless, I could not find a single study that has gone in depth with any soccer variety of sports announcer talk. Many features had been described by Ferguson for SAT generally, but it became clear that the latter has plenty of subvarieties. Reaser focused on basketball games, while Lewandowski investigated Online Sports Writing and the many forms of talk surrounding the sport soccer. Therefore we have had little insights into the communicative purposes of many of the variables we found. Broadcast and thus SAT had been around for a while before linguists started considering it, so it was hard to retrace the origins of this register. This study might provide some essential evidence for the functions of some features, as to shed light on their diachronic development.

Moreover, it manages to enrich our understanding of additional linguistic forms that were previously mentioned or unmentioned. Signposting devices, discourse deixis and diminutives are either more innovative features or were not deemed important enough for consideration. Yet they illuminate the way in which we respond to challenging situations and deal with threats to our public image.

Besides a seemingly novel attempt to devise a taxonomy for soccer SAT specifically, this project also succeeds in capturing some communicative patterns that are byproducts of the American duality model and have been hinted at by DeNu, whose article is rather a commentary. It exposes the need for a cooperative principle and shows that much of the interaction is formulaic. In addition, the omnipresence of face-work is once again highlighted, as almost all of the communicative behavior could be explained in Goffman's terms.

For future research comparative approaches would be preferable in the quest for clearer boundaries between subvarieties and for the question of what actually constitutes these subvarieties. Especially the British soccer SAT contrast is compelling, but perhaps for a World Cup one should consider broadcasts of other English-speaking countries as well. It would be interesting to see if announcers from South Africa, Kenya or Nigeria have adopted the same linguistic features. Australia has qualified for the last few tournaments as well and New Zealand made it in 2010. So there is more potential for register analysis for the soccer aficionados among linguists.

Moreover, the comparison with other American sports broadcasts is appealing, since one could supplement the insights on the duality model and the intensity of mutual support. Likewise, the fact that halftime shows and post-game analyses seem to be less cooperative would serve for a neat analysis of the different natures of reporting during and outside a match.

Ultimately, research comparing local and national productions would be profitable, as it would exhibit the relationship of bias and journalistic integrity in greater detail. It could potentially show how announcers signal their support and when they maintain impartiality.

Soccer will continue to be the most popular sport in the near future and hence receive even greater coverage. In the United States, the general interest in the sport has yet to rise more outside of a World Cup period, but the numbers of fans are growing steadily. Simultaneously, the MLS keeps adding teams to the league, which benefits the growth as well.

For the broadcast stations that means further revenue. But one also has to observe to whom the coverage rights are sold, and what this entails for the reporting. Deals are often made with cable companies and pay TV providers, which limits the access for many fans. On

the other hand, the internet supplies them with increasing options of live streams, which the producers are also aware of. How this affects the language of the announcer is not yet clear.

Furthermore, we are becoming more culturally diverse in the age of globalization. Due to the technological advancements, we are sometimes able to follow a team from another country without tedious live stream options, but legitimately by subscription. These shifts in viewership may or may not cause a reconsideration of the duality system, and so it is worth keeping an eye on the development of sports announcer talk.

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