



การศึกษาลักษณะทางวากยสัมพันธ์และหน้าที่ในการสื่อสารของภาษาอังกฤษ ที่ใช้ในการบรรยายสดฟุตบอลออนไลน์

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A Study of Syntactic Features and Communicative Functions in Online Football Commentary

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาลักษณะทางวากยสัมพันธ์และหน้าที่ในการสื่อสารของภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้ในการบรรยายสดฟุตบอลออนไลน์ โดยใช้แนวทางการศึกษาลักษณะทางวากยสัมพันธ์ของเฟอร์กูสัน (Ferguson, 1983) และแนวทางการศึกษาหน้าที่ในการสื่อสารของเดลลิน (Delin, 2000) ข้อมูลการวิจัยนำมาจากการบรรยายสดฟุตบอลออนไลน์จำนวน 19 นัด ที่นำเสนอทางเว็บไซต์ Skysports.com ระหว่างเดือนพฤษภาคม พ.ศ.2555 ถึงเดือนสิงหาคม พ.ศ.2556 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูล คือ ตารางวิเคราะห์และรวบรวมความถี่ของลักษณะทางวากยสัมพันธ์และหน้าที่ในการสื่อสารประเภทต่างๆ สถิติที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยครั้งนี้ คือ ร้อยละ ผลการวิจัยสามารถสรุปการเกิดของลักษณะทางวากยสัมพันธ์เรียงตามลำดับความถี่จากมากไปหาน้อยได้ดังนี้ คือ กริยาปัจจุบันกาลปกติ ประโยคลดรูป กริยาปัจจุบันกาลต่อเนื่อง วลีแสดงผลการกระทำ ส่วนขยายวิสามานยนาม กริยาอดีตกาลปกติ และสำนวนเฉพาะทาง โดยลักษณะทางวากยสัมพันธ์ที่ไม่ปรากฏ คือ การสลับที่ระหว่างประธานและกริยา นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัยยังสามารถสรุปหน้าที่ในการสื่อสารของภาษาที่ใช้ โดยเรียงตามลำดับความถี่จากมากไปหาน้อยได้ดังนี้ คือ การบรรยายเหตุการณ์ การประเมิน การสรุปเหตุการณ์ และการให้ข้อมูลเสริม ผลการวิจัยในครั้งนี้ช่วยเพิ่มความเข้าใจในต้นลักษณะภาษาที่ใช้ในสัมพันธ์สารประเภทสื่อกีฬาออนไลน์

คำสำคัญ: ลักษณะทางวากยสัมพันธ์ หน้าที่ในการสื่อสาร การบรรยายสดฟุตบอลออนไลน์

Abstract

The aims of this study are to examine the occurrence rate of syntactic features and communicative functions in online football commentary by theoretically following Ferguson (1983)'s and Delin (2000)'s frameworks, respectively. Data were nineteen matches of web-based football commentary issued online during May, 2012 up to August, 2013 by Skysports.com. The research instruments were cumulative frequency tables configured for tallying and analyzing the syntactic features' and communicative functions' occurrence rate. The tallied frequency of occurrence was presented in percentage. The results revealed that the rate of occurrence of syntactic features in descending order of occurrence was: present simple tense, simplification, present continuous tense, result expression, heavy modifier, past simple tense, routine, and inversion. Meanwhile, the occurrence rate of communicative functions was sorted in respective descending sequence as follows: narrative, evaluative, summarizing, and elaborative. The results of this study enhance the understanding of language used in sports-related electronic discourse.

Keywords: Syntactic features, Communicative functions, Online football commentary



Introduction

To keep pace with growing social demand for information openness, many established news broadcasters have lately initialised internet-based published materials that cover a wide range of news variety, including Online Football Commentary (hereafter; OFC). OFC is defined as a minute-by-minute and web-based football commentary. With English and football being historically the most used language and statistically the most popular sport in the world, respectively, it is sound to propose that academic attention should and deservedly centralize more on the English language about football in a contemporary trend of communication such as OFC (Bergh, & Ohlander, 2012). Furthermore, by taking into account that the study of OFC is still new to a researching field, and all but a few small-scaled works (Pérez-Sabater, Pena-Martínez, Turney, & Montero-Fleta, 2008; Lewandowski, 2012) mainly emphasize on the analysis of syntactic features but entirely lack an analysis of communicative functions, it could be well worth the effort to carry out this present study to compensate for the shortage of data in the former works as well as to analyze OFC on the innovative basis of communicative functions.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are: to investigate the occurrence rate of syntactic features, and to investigate the occurrence rate of communicative functions in online football commentary.

Theoretical Frameworks

One of the most clear-cut elements agreed upon by some researchers such as Pérez-Sabater, et al. (2008) and Lewandowski (2012) to affect OFC is

syntactic features – “the identifiable markers of language structure and language use that differ by discourse genres” (Ferguson, 1994 as cited in Lewandowski, 2012, p. 65). Ferguson (1983) underlines six principal categories of sports commentary’s syntactic features as follows.

1. Simplification is the exclusion of certain sentential constituents. First is head noun simplification, second is head noun plus copula simplification, and third is copula simplification. The examples are as respectively follows:

1.1 [He] hit 307.

1.2 [It’s] a breaking ball outside.

1.3 McCatty [is] in difficulty.

In sports commentary, the deletion of sentence initial elements serves to “index the moment as non-leisurely, informal, exciting, and vignette-quality” (Ferguson, 1983, p. 153), while the omission of copula functions to make the utterance sound more emphatic.

2. Inversion is the inverted construction between subject-copula or between subject-verb. The examples are as follows:

2.1 Over at third is Murphy.

2.2 Up goes Sheringham.

The use of inverted subject-predicate in sports commentary is equally agreed by Ferguson (1983) and Delin (2000) as a technique that helps a commentator to recognize a player with action in progress under time pressure more easily. According to Delin, other two plausible reasons are that: 1) a commentator is supposed to shift more focus to a player’s name by locating it at the end of utterance, or 2) he is meant to describe the detail of action for a little while longer by introducing the predicate prior to the subject.

3. Result expression is the phrase in the form of preposition “for” followed by noun or “to” succeeded by verb to indicate an immediate



consequence of previously informed action in action–result order. The examples are as respectively follows:

3.1 He throws **for the out**.

3.2 There's a strike on the outside corner to **make it 2 and 1**.

Typically, these phrases are identified in a variety of sports commentary both in British and American English and its usage is potentially for a commentator's time-saving purpose.

4. Heavy modifier is the pre- or post- nominal phrasal modifier that attaches to proper noun. The examples are as the following:

4.1 According to Paul Pryor, **the plate umpire**...

4.2 **First-base umpire**, Larry Barnett waited a while before...

These modifying phrases are claimed to function in supplying the informative and descriptive details (e.g., playing position, style, record, etc.) for the modified proper noun.

5. Tenses are the uses of three tense types, including 5.1) present simple for reporting a short-lived and simultaneous action, 5.2) present continuous either for reporting an action that continues for a longer period of time or for summarizing the game, and 5.3) past simple tense, for repeating the action that took place earlier. The examples are as respectively follows:

5.1 Washington **backhands** it.

5.2 They're **bringing** that ball back to the 27-yard line. (for reporting a continuous action)

The Expos are **perking**. (for summarising the game)

5.3 There goes Haden back to pass...throws it...and Haden **threw** that ball high.

6. Routine is the formulaic and rule-governed expression, exclusively used in sports commentary discourse, in the forms of idiomatic phrase and numerical statement, to make denotative reference

and to state numbers in fixed word order at a specific time of reporting. The examples are as the following:

6.1 One **and oh**

6.2 **2 and 2**

“and oh” is a formulaic expression used alternatively by a commentator and understood reciprocally by audience of baseball commentary as “zero point”. “2 and 2” is the statement of teams' scores in a brief summary form in which the two cardinal numbers are interconnected by “and”. Ferguson (1983) explains that the second routine refers to “two balls, two strikes, count”.

Another variable, which is still a new topic to entire OFC research, is a communicative function – the classification of content message conveyed and comprehended by discourse participants. Functional utterances of verbal sports commentary have already been studied by some scholars. Notably among them are Delin (2000) and McGuire, & Armfield (2008), who transcribe football commentary; meanwhile, Morris, & Nydahl (1983) and Reaser (2003) choose basketball commentary as their sources of transcriptions. This is because functional utterances are also viewed as a governing part that forms, shapes, and characterizes the overall discourse organization. In a particular sport of football, four types of communicative functions are proposed by Delin (2000, p. 46) as follows:

1. Narrative functions to give a detailed running account of the action of a game. The examples are as follows:

1.1 Scholes having it back.

1.2 But it's England's corner which Anderton will take.

2. Subjective function includes:

2.1 Evaluative functions to give opinion on footballers, squads, trainers, and match officials' calls. The example is illustrated below:

Well kick to Romania.



2.2 Elaborative functions to give historical/statistical facts about the squads and footballers, the supporters, prediction on footballers' mental intentions. The example is as follows:

He'll keep going and going in the ninety-first ninety second or whatever.

2.3 Summarizing functions to make a match summary up to the present moment. The example is shown below:

That's a couple of times that Hagi's been made to look very dangerous and finding some space in that particular area.

To conclude, there are two fundamental functional utterances in a football commentary. First, the narrative function is related to the description of play-by-play action that occurs on a real time basis such as a mention of a player who contains the ball or set-pieces (e.g. free kick, corner kick, throw-in). Second, the subjective function has an assisting role in adding more colors and variety to the narration via evaluation, elaboration, and summarization.

Methodology

When compared with other sports, the time-critical and unpredictable nature of football influences its commentarial language to demonstrate greater linguistic possibilities and complexities, which is seen, from linguistics point of view, as a challenge for analysis. Therefore, the data of nineteen real-time commentaries were accumulated from Skysports.com. Under a team of renowned sports journalists and pundits, Skysports.com is acknowledged as one of the most leading online sportscastings, held at the number 66th ranking of the most visited websites based in England statistically (Alexa, 2014). Nineteen commentaries are in series of consecutive

odd numbers of Manchester United Football Club's match calendar, which had begun from the Twentieth of August, 2012 up to the Twelfth of May 2013. Although the data were solely collected from one source, the commentarial reports were, indeed, composed by a group of different journalists and thus reflected a variety of writing patterns. The commentaries were then transcribed and the frequency of occurrence of syntactic features (simplification, inversion, result expression, heavy modifier, tense usage, and routine) and communicative functions (narrative, evaluative, elaborative, and summarizing) were gathered and subdivided by using frequency tables, designed and configured by basing on Ferguson (1983)'s and Delin (2000)'s theoretical frameworks, respectively. Ferguson's one was chosen on the basis that it was highly regarded as the most pioneering and influential work, providing a complete set of syntactic features in relation to sports register analysis. Delin's was also selected since her set of communicative functions were natively classified from authentic oral football commentary transcriptions, which was safe to say that it could be applied the analysis of OFC thoroughly. With regards to this study's unit of analysis of syntactic features, only the presence of syntactic features in main clause(s) of a sentence was examined and tallied. In relation to the unit of analysis of communicative function, an individual sentence was reexamined to sort its type(s) of function. To convert the sum frequency of each tallied syntactic features and communicative functions into percentage, the following formula was employed: $X/N \times 100$ (X = sum frequency of an individual syntactic feature and communicative function tallied; N = sum frequency of overall syntactic features and communicative functions tallied). In reference to inter-rater reliability, the entire tallied frequencies were sent to two English language specialists, who



have been teaching English at a tertiary education level, to reassess and reaffirm the analyzed data.

Results

The nineteenth pieces of web-based football commentary were examined to meet the study's first

objective: to accumulate the occurring rate of six categories of syntactic features asserted by Ferguson (1983). Table 1 displays the occurring rate of six syntactic categories and subcategories in a descending sequence.

Table 1 Frequency of Occurrence and Percentage of Syntactic Categories and Subcategories

Categories and Subcategories of Syntactic Features	Frequency	Percentage
1. Tense	3,365	72.50
1.1 Present Simple	2,989	64.40
1.2 Present Continuous	282	6.08
1.3 Past Simple	94	2.02
2. Simplification	848	18.27
2.1 Head noun plus copula deletion	518	61.08*
2.2 Copula deletion	301	35.50*
2.3 Head noun deletion	29	3.42*
3. Result Expression	225	4.85
3.1 To phrase	158	70.22*
3.2 For phrase	67	29.78*
4. Heavy Modifier	159	3.43
4.1 Post-posed	126	79.25*
4.2 Pre-posed	33	20.75*
5. Routine	44	0.95
5.1 Numerical Statement	36	81.82*
5.2 Idiomatic Phrase	8	18.18*
6. Inversion	-	-
6.1 Subject copula inversion	-	-
6.2 Subject verb inversion	-	-
Total	4,641	100

*Comparative proportion between sub categories of syntactic features, based on its main category's sum frequency.

Table 1 reveals that the most frequently detected syntactic feature in OFC was the present simple tense (64.40%); whereas, the lesser employed tenses were the present continuous tense (6.08%) and the past simple tense (2.02%). Simplification was detected secondarily (18.27%): amongst the three subcategories of simplification, the head noun plus copula deletion had the proportion of 61.08%, the

copula deletion of 35.50%, and the head noun deletion of 3.42%. The tertiary syntactic feature was the result expression (4.85%): the proportion of "to phrase" was higher than that of "for phrase" at 70.22% and 29.78% respectively. The results also showed that heavy modifier was evident as the fourth in a descending sequence (3.43%) with the post-posed modifier being more frequently identified than



the pre-posed modifier at 79.25% and 20.75% respectively. Routine appeared as the least identified syntactic feature with the occurrence rate of 0.95%, and amongst its two subcategories, the proportion of numerical statement was higher than that of idiomatic phrase (81.82% and 18.18%, respectively). The completely unidentified syntactic feature was inversion since its occurrence rate was accounted at 0.00%.

Table 2 Frequency of Occurrence and Percentage of Communicative Functions

Categories of Communicative Functions	Frequency	Percentage
1. Narrative	2,271	57.62
2. Evaluative	1,151	29.21
3. Summarising	358	9.08
4. Elaborative	161	4.09
Total	3,941	100

As shown in Table 2, the narrative was the most frequently identified communicative function (57.62%). The evaluative communicative function ranked as the second function being analysed (29.21%). The tertiary communicative function was summarising (9.08%). The elaborative communicative function held the number four ranking (4.09%).

Discussions

The organization of this section is primarily based on the two studied objectives in: 1) investigating the occurrence rate of syntactic features, and 2) investigating the occurrence rate of communicative functions in OFC. First, the findings of syntactic features are discussed by basing on its descending sequence of occurrence rate.

1. Syntactic Features

1.1 Tense

With present simple tense being the most frequently detected syntactic feature, this study's findings are in line with the results of the former works by Lewandowski (2012) and Pérez-Sabater,

To meet the second objective of this study, which is to accumulate the occurring rate of four categories of communicative functions, as divided by Delin (2000), the further analysis of the same set of nineteen football commentary was carried out. Table 2 exhibits the occurring rate of four functional utterances in a descending sequence.

et al. (2008). As Lewandowski proposes, plentiful occurrence of present simple tense is a consequence of both real-time narration and written language medium. In time-critical narration, writers are required to depict football players' movements one after the other. Furthermore, in written commentary, serially used verbs are needed in illustrating the running actions, which contradicts to spoken commentary on television. Reaser (2003) asserts that, through television, audience can visualize what is occurring by themselves. Therefore, compared with OFC writers, television announcers have no need to use a lot of verbs by rather letting the moving images speak for them. The example is as follows.

"Rafael again **makes** a good run on the over-lap, he **crosses** but **can't** find a United shirt and Villa **clear**, Scholes **looks** for quick ball back in – but it is not great and the home side **manage** to ease the pressure." ("Aston Villa versus Manchester United", 11th Match)

From the above-mentioned example, all descriptions of ongoing actions or sentential predicates are represented through the use of verb in



the present simple tense form. The verbs of the singular clausal subjects such as proper noun and pronoun, for instance, “Rafael” and “he”, are attached with the morphemes {s}, functioning as present simple tense markers such as “makes” and “crosses”. Meanwhile, the verbs of plural subject or collective noun, such as “Villa” and “the home side”, which mutually refer to a team of individuals named “Aston Villa”, are in the plural verb form such as “clear” and “manage”.

Although present simple tense is plentiful in its occurrence, both present continuous and past simple tense are found as the lesser-used tense forms, particularly the latter, which is correlated with Lewandowski (2012) and Pérez-Sabater, et al. (2008)’s studies. The rare use of past simple tense for reiterating the previous incident can be a result of time constraints in which OFC writers have to keep updating the commentaries as promptly as possible while catching up with the actual game being in progress, as suggested by Lewandowski. The example below will illustrate this part:

“Taylor is down after a nasty challenge from Welbeck. The United forward **went in studs up**.” (“Manchester United versus Swansea City”, 37th Match)

As illustrated, although the first commentarial utterance, which describes a player falling down following a tackle from his opposition, is presented in the present simple tense form, “is down”, it is apparent that the vivid description of that bodily contest between the two opponents is retold again in the second commentarial statement with the past simple verb form “went in studs up”, depicting how recklessly “Welbeck” commits a foul on “Taylor”.

1.2 Simplification

This study’s result of simplification being in the number two ranking is also

correspondent with the findings by Lewandowski (2012). Also in accordance with Reaser (2003)’s study, the head noun plus copula deletion is most frequently tallied amongst the three subcategories of simplification. Reaser stresses that the head noun and copula are viewed as inessential; thus, droppable linguistic constituents. Therefore, in OFC, their omission can help increasing writing speed, as further suggested by Lewandowski. The example is as follows:

“**[It’s a] Goal!**” (“Manchester United versus Swansea City”, 37th Match)

As exemplified, such noun-like formation, relating to descriptions of goal scoring, literally sounds more brief, interesting, and less bookish when its subject and verb are left out as Ferguson (1983) originally asserts. It’s also an obvious characteristic of narrative communicative functions that entirely marks football commentary register.

With regards to the lesser-found subcategories of simplification, the copula deletion, either in the present progressive tense or passive form, can reflect the spontaneous nature of commentarial language: the cohesion between focal linguistic referent (proper name subject) and its action (predicate) via copula is still obvious to audience to build through the main verb even though reduced (Orch, 1979 as cited in Delin, 2000). Head noun deletion can be: first, the distinctive feature of time critical and improvisational sports announcing (Teddiman, 2011); second, the sign of informal communication between OFC discourse participants (Chovance, 2007); and third, the ways of shortening language in limited time and space (Pérez-Sabater, et al., 2008). In addition, the present findings strikingly demonstrate that copula is also dropped under other possible conditions, especially when it succeeds other nouns of different



category such as the indefinite noun or proper noun referring to a place – as respectively in “Nothing [was] given.” or “Upton Park [is] in good voice now...”. This phenomenon contradicts Ferguson’s initial assertion that says copula is omitted only when it is in behind proper noun denoting a person’s name.

1.3 Result Expressions

This study’s findings of result expression also affirm Ferguson’s proposal. Certain uses of the preposition for along with technical nouns of set-pieces can particularly represent the semantic coherence between an action formerly stated and its outcome, as shown in the instance below:

“De Gea lifts a long kick upfield and it goes out for a **Toon throw**.”

(“Newcastle United versus Manchester United”, 7th Match)

As can be perceived from the example, the earlier reported action of a player kicking the ball out and its consequence of the opponent resuming the game shortly after by taking “a set-piece” or “a throw” is interconnected via “for phrase”.

1.4 Heavy Modifier

In this study, both pre- and post-nominal heavy modifiers are found in different forms such as non-restrictive relative clause, prepositional phrase, and apposition, to name but a few. Most of them are mainly used for supplying proper noun with additional information, as Ferguson puts forward. However, there are certain uses of non-defining relative clause that functions differently. Notably, instead of adding information to the proper noun, they function to report proper name’s following action. The example is as follows:

“Giggs fires long towards Rooney, **who controls on his chest**.”

(“Manchester United versus Manchester City”, 31st Match)

According to the above-mentioned instance, the proper name, “Rooney”, as an object of preposition of the first clausal unit, is immediately followed by a non-restrictive relative clause “who controls on his chest”, which foregrounds his action that comes after. As pinpointed by Delin (2000), in spontaneous language of a real-time sports report, sometimes sports announcer employs a relative pronoun, “who”, instead of coordinators, to link two meaningful clausal units together since it creates more immediacy and coherence.

1.5 Routine

In parallel with Pérez-Sabater, et al. (2008)’s, the present study’s results show the fewest occurrence rate of routine. This can be because either numerical statement or idiomatic phrase is employed sporadically in a particular context when a team or a player has scored a goal. Examples are as the following:

“QPR **0-2** Man United.” (“Queens Park Rangers versus Manchester United”, 27th Match)

“GOAL – ADAM LE FONDRE – An unmarked Le Fondre on the six-yard box **heads home**.”

(“Reading versus Manchester United”, 15th Match)

As the first example shows, the numbering expression is routinized in the following ways, according to Ferguson (1983). First, instead of being presented in a full sentence, it is shortened into a noun phrase form. Second, the pair of cardinal figures is fastened together by “-”, and third, the home and away teams’ names are fixed in position: in British football commentary, the home team’s name and score is traditionally reported prior to the away team’s ones. The second example shows that the idiomatic phrase “head home” is specially employed in a specific setting of goal scoring, as



presented in Head home (2014). This exclusive phrase can be denotatively comprehended by only audience of football commentary as to scoring a goal by using a person's head. However, if appearing in non-football related context, it will be connotatively understood as "Le Fondre departs for his home".

1.6 Inversion

The present study's results of inversion being unidentifiable are in line with Pérez-Sabater, et al. (2008)'s findings. The reasons that an inverted sentence is unemployed can be as the following. First, the discursive function of inversion for subject's identification purpose, as put forward by Ferguson (1983), is inessential in written commentary. Writers can have enough time to identify the subject being reported by not necessarily switching the position of subject and predicate. Second, as proposed by Pérez-Sabater, et al., English language's inversion is more preferable in literature than in news writing.

The following discussions present the research findings with regard to the second study's objective. The results of communicative functions are discussed by sorting from the highest to lowest totals, which are narrative, evaluative, summarizing and elaborative.

2. Communicative Functions

2.1 Narrative

Amongst the four categories of communicative functions, the highest frequency rate of narrative can reaffirm that web-based football commentary shares a principal function with play-by-play sports commentary in spoken context such as football (Delin, 2000; McGuire, & Armfield, 2008; Nowson, 2001) and basketball (Moris, & Nydahl, 1983; Reaser, 2003) to describe ongoing account of the action of a game. Narrative utterances are in the following descriptive forms of: first, players or teams possessing the ball, second, players or teams taking

set-pieces, and other general actions, as shown in the examples below:

"**The ball** is now back with De Gea..."
(“Fulham versus Manchester United”, 25th Match)

"Toffees **free-kick**." ("Everton versus Manchester United", 1st Match)

"Young and Evra **move** down the left."
(“Manchester United versus Manchester City”, 31st Match)

From the aforementioned examples, the first utterance functions to narrate the action of a player getting the ball since it gives the audience an idea of the ball travelling and then being under control by a player. Meanwhile, the second one focuses on the doer of the action or the set-piece taker, who starts the game anew by taking "free-kick". The third one conveys an idea of manner of two player's moving, which is considered a part of typical play-by-play actions.

2.2 Evaluative

Evaluative function has the second-highest occurrence rate. This indicates that web-based football commentary also has the secondary communicative purpose in common with conventional sports commentary to gain spectator's attention through a commentator's opinions on game's events and participants as proposed by Ghadessey (1988) and Delin (2000). This present study also finds that the majority of evaluative functions are represented through adjectives and adverbs, which is comparable to Politis (2007)'s research on football news' core lexical items. The examples of evaluative function, marked by the adjectival and adverbial modifier, are as follows:

"**A bit harsh**, not much contact."
(“Everton versus Manchester United”, 1st Match)

"City knocking the ball around **nicely**."
(“Manchester United versus Manchester City”, 31st Match)



From the first instance, the presence of the adjective phrase “a bit harsh” is an obvious indication of a commentator’s unfavorable impression towards the match official’s call; while, in the second instance, the presence of the adverb “nicely” is an apparent clue of his favorable comment towards a team whose performance is praiseworthy.

2.3 Summarizing

The tertiary commentarial function is summarizing, which can be sorted as the following: first, an occasional summary that interrupts ongoing narration; second, an instant repetition of crucial actions (e.g., teams scoring goal, footballers being sent-off); third, a conclusion at half-time interval or full-time. The examples are illustrated below:

“United are looking for something in these late stages.”

“Red card for Ivanovic! Ivanovic clips the heels of Young as the United winger sprints through on goal...” (“Chelsea versus Manchester United”, 9th Match)

“The whistle blows for half-time and it’s Newcastle 0 Manchester United 2 after goals from defenders Evans and Evra.” (“Newcastle United versus Manchester United”, 7th Match)

Written in the progressive aspect along with an adverbial phrase of time, the first utterance functions to summarize what a team are currently doing in a specific portion of time of a game. In the second one, the summarizing function is used for immediately and strikingly detailing the priorly occurred action of a player committing a foul against his opponent, which leads to him being sent off all over again. The historical present tense is used here to emphasize the vividness of the recent past incidents (Celce-Murcia, & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). The third one is a conclusion of the major incidents that has taken place in the first forty-five-minute interval.

2.4 Elaborative

Elaborative function has the lowest occurrence rate, for it is entirely irrelevant to running account of the action of a game. It just focuses on informative background of squads and footballers, fans, and the announcer’s prediction on footballer’s mental intention. The examples of elaborative commentarial type are as follows:

“That goal will come as a massive boost to the Magpies who have not won at Old Trafford since 1972.” (“Manchester United versus Newcastle United”, 19th Match)

“Wayne Rooney has scored seven goals in eight games at Old Trafford in 2013 (all competitions).” (“Manchester United versus Reading”, 29th Match)

“Goodison is rocking now, with the fans belting their support.” (“Everton versus Manchester United”, 1st Match)

“With City having won 3-1 at Newcastle earlier, United will be more than ever determined to bag a three-point result today.” (“Manchester United versus Reading”, 17th Match)

As shown above, the first to the third utterances convey the ideas of a historical fact of a team, a record of an individual footballer, a reaction of supporters, respectively. In the fourth utterance, a commentator’s prediction of a team’s mental desire is represented through the modal auxiliary “will”, which is associated with a grammatical concept of degree of possibility, as proposed by Leech (2006). Moreover, the entire verb phrase “will be more than ever determined to bag a three-point result today” could be linked to the team’s motives and thoughts.

Observably, this present study also manifests that communicative functions can co-occur in a commentarial sentence, especially the one that consists of more than one clausal and idea unit. By the same token, the overlap of functions in a



commentarial utterance can also characterize a variation of content message delivered by OFC authors. Evaluative is the function that most commonly overlaps with other three functions to different extent since it can be explicitly conveyed through adjectival and adverbial modifiers. The following instances illustrate the overlap of evaluative with other functions in a commentarial sentence:

“Good interchange between Valencia and Kagawa brings a corner for United on the right.” (“Southampton versus Manchester United”, 3rd Match)

“It’s been a terrific half of football at Stamford Bridge, in which Chelsea are firmly back into after going 2-0 down early on. (“Chelsea versus Manchester United”, 9th Match)”

“Van Persie has not scored since early February and it is easy to see that his confidence is low. (“Manchester United versus Reading”, 29th Match)”

As exemplified, the first commentarial sentence primarily narrates the ongoing account of the action of a game, where two players exchanging the ball, but the presence of the adjective “good” is an obvious sign of a commentator’s evaluation towards that particular action as well. In the second utterance, a summary of the first half coexists with an announcer’s evaluative comments, marked by the use of adjectival and adverbial modifiers “terrific” and “firmly”. The third one has two clausal and communicative units: the former conveys the idea of a footballer’s poor goal-scoring records, which falls under the elaborative category, while the latter represents a commentator’s evaluation towards that particular player via the use of adjectives “easy” and “low”.

Throughout this section, certain samples of syntactic features and those of functional utterances are discussed. Regarding syntactic features,

it can be summed up that the present simple tense is vastly identified since the employment of verbs plays a crucial role in narrating a series of time-critical actions in detail. The past tense, although used limitedly, shows a tendency to be employed to reiterate the dramatic past actions that occurred shortly before. Simplification also shows high frequency of occurrence: some sentential components are commonly dropped to speed up the OFC writer’s language production because they are already known to the audience either through the linguistic context or general world knowledge. The employment of preposition “for” along with technical lexis of set-piece is an evident way to express a result of a particular action in OFC. The use of post-nominal heavy modifier in the form of non-restrictive relative clause acts not only to add information but also to describe a subsequent action of a modified proper noun. Routine is also sparsely identified because its use can be highly context-dependent. Concerning communicative functions, it can be concluded that both narrative and evaluative are viewed as the backbone functions in OFC. Narrative functions to report all the ongoing in a game with an emphasis on footballer and the ball. Evaluative tends to add emotional aspects to a commentary through adjectival and adverbial modifiers. Summarizing and elaborative functions arguably have a secondary role. The former serves to draw a conclusion of a game occasionally at some parts, specifically at the end of time divisions, or immediately after the decisive events. The latter functions in providing the audience with interesting background of player or team, atmosphere, and speculation. The overlap of functions within a commentarial utterance apparently exists with evaluative corresponding with the other three functions at times.



Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the present study's findings showed that the two categories of syntactic features with the most frequent occurrence are the present simple tense and simplification. To a smaller extent, the present continuous tense, result expression, heavy modifier, the past simple tense, and routine were all identified as well, excluding inversion which was totally not found. It was also found that narrative and evaluative were the most and the second most dominant communicative functions in OFC, respectively. Summarizing and elaborative ranked third and fourth in a descending sequence. From the findings, it can be indicated that online football commentary still generally contains certain linguistic features and functional utterances in common with conventional spoken sports commentary. Orally-related syntactic features, predominantly the present simple tense and simplification, are frequently detected. The present simple tense occurs most often since to narrate a chunk of detailed actions via written medium of OFC requires a number of verbs. Likewise, certain sentential constituents are omitted at frequent rate because they are so explicit that the readers can use their contextual knowledge to understand the indented message. At the same time, web-based football commentary shares the principal communicative purposes with televised commentary by giving a detailed running account of the action of a game as well as opinion through narrative and evaluative functions, respectively. The overlap of functions within a written utterance also reflects a cramped nature of spoken commentary. Further research in relation to this study is recommended to: first, collect more data to detect more frequency rates, second, compare data from more varied sources (for examples, www.telegraph.co.uk, www.dailymail.uk.com, www.thetimes.co.uk, and the likes) to figure out

whether or not a syntactic feature's frequency rate differs by news publisher's writing convention, third, further scrutinize other types of linguistic feature; to wit, verb omission, and passive or it-cleft construction, fourth, adopt different theoretical frameworks to analyze communicative functions such as Morris and Nydahl (1983) and Reaser (2003), last, concentrate on the overlapping phenomena of communicative functions. In terms of pedagogical implications, syntactic features and communicative functions could be introduced to students in English translation or English for journalism class.

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