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**Language of Football Commentators:
An Analysis of Live English Football
Commentary and its Types**

Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

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Author's signature

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1. Introduction

Sport and football in particular have always been a common form of entertainment. In the last decades, with the rise of television broadcast with increasingly better filming technology, football has become commercialized, viewed by millions and a common “form of popular culture” (Richard 2008:193). It is presently considered by many to be the world’s most popular sport. Thus, the role of the commentators is very important. They have to provide commentary about the game and to entertain at the same time. They have to deal with the unfolding events on the pitch linguistically without hesitation. The nature of their job and the unusual linguistic setting is what makes their speech so specific.

The television, although nowadays the most popular medium, is certainly not the only one where football commentary can be heard. The radio broadcasts of football matches have recently lost their popularity significantly, but are still being broadcast on a regular basis. Also, with the rise of modern technology, football simulations on gaming consoles started to appear and their popularity grew to reach millions of sold copies a year. The commentary created specifically for these games is a very unusual type of football commentary, but clearly not an insignificant one. All these types of football commentary have much in common, but each one is also specific in its own way. This thesis will include all these types in its analysis.

The aim of this thesis is to present sports commentary (with the focus on football) as a specific and independent register, to characterize it and to analyse its main features. It will show that the internal structure of the register differs greatly depending on the extra-linguistic events it describes and that most of the features described are a direct consequence of time pressure on the commentators. Moreover, all the aforementioned types of the football commentary are taken into consideration and are

then characterized. Because of the different nature of each of these types of commentary, there are bound to be some differences in the language used in them. I will try to give a delineation of these differences and explain why they emerge as I go with the analysis. Since one of those - the computer game - is a very specific type of football commentary, it seems reasonable to also try and compare it to the real-life commentary and to evaluate its level of authenticity. The whole thesis draws from many works that deal with the topic, but most of my arguments are based on chapters on sports commentary in Crystal / Davy 1969 and in Ferguson 1983, on Müller 2007, where he deals with the causes for the specific nature of football commentary and also on the collection of papers on football language by different authors published in Lavric et al. 2008.

The first part deals mostly with the definition of the register. In the first section, a brief explanation of what commentary is and why it is so specific is given. A delineation of what the commentators' tasks are will be provided. In the next section of the chapter, the register is located and described. In order to locate the register, Ferguson's 1983 method is used, combining with the definition of register by Agha 2004 and 2007. Once sports commentary is shown to have the characteristics of a specific register and the identification of this register has been completed, the focus shifts to football in particular, particularly to its subtypes – the radio, television, and computer game commentary. In this section, the definition and the main differences between these will be given. In the last section the register's characteristic, albeit briefly, is given. The main focus here is on paralanguage, sentence types, formulaic nature of the register, its lexicon and the overall common features of spoken language, all of which are among the typical register markers. All three of the register subtypes are frequently taken into consideration in this description.

The second part of the thesis further describes the two main and inseparable elements influencing the linguistic output – the extra-linguistic reality and the time constraints. In order to fully understand the particular features, which are analysed later, the cause of their verbalisations has to be described in detail. In the first section, the process of the verbalisation of extra-linguistic events is described. Also, a definition of such events, necessary for the analysis, is provided. This definition is based on Müller 2007. The second section then analyses the time constraints that a commentator has to deal with. The findings of Mackenzie 2005 and Müller 2007 are used to present the significance time criticality has on the register.

In the last section, the analysis of the particular features takes place. First, information about the transcriptions that I used to support my claims is presented. The analysis alone is then divided into three parts. Firstly, paralinguistic features of the register are investigated. This is done very generally, since an in depth phonetic analysis is not an aim of this thesis, as it could easily serve as an independent thesis topic. After this, an analysis of syntactic features follows. It is primarily based on the transcriptions and also on the findings in Ferguson 1983. It analyses the specific features of the football commentary such as ellipsis, high incidence of passives, inversions, use of tags and prefaces, use of modifiers or specific tense usage. Lastly, lexical features are briefly covered. The focus here is not on the register-specific vocabulary and phraseology, but rather on the idea of formulaic language as formulated in Kuiper 1996 and also on the omnipresence of metaphors and metonymy in the language of football commentary. Throughout the whole analysis, the commentary in radio, television and the computer game is being compared and the differences pointed out. In the last subchapter, an overview on the authenticity of the computer game in comparison to the real-life commentary is provided.

2. Defining the register

In order to analyse the types of spoken English live football commentary, it is necessary to specify what commentary is, to understand the conditions in which the commentators produce the speech(their tasks) and to identify the register of the sports commentary, or in the words of Ferguson (1983), the sports announcer's talk (SAT). Once this is done, the characteristics of this register and its subtypes, depending on the kind of medium providing it, will be briefly described.

2.1 What is commentary?

The word commentary is generally understood as “a spoken account of events which are actually taking place” (Crystal / Davy 1969: 125). However, this is a rather broad definition that can apply to multiple linguistic activities. In such a situation, perhaps a more fitting term sportscasting will be used, already adapted in this particular context by Ferguson (1983). He describes sportscasting as an oral reporting of an ongoing sporting activity, combined with colour commentary (150). Colour commentary is a vital and requisite part of the genre and thus cannot be omitted in its definition. Colour commentary will be described more in the following section.

2.2 Sportscasters' tasks

First and foremost, sportscasting is a “monolog or a dialog-on-stage” that is aimed at an “unknown, unseen, heterogeneous audience” (Ferguson 1983: 150), who is listening to it voluntarily and even though they do not provide the sportscaster with a reaction of any sort, the fact that the speech is directed at them makes them a clear part of the discourse. This notion then has a major impact on the overall nature of SAT.

It is the sportscaster's duty to report that makes SAT so specific. His duty is to supply the audience with the information about what is happening on the pitch. This reporting has to correspond with the actual events that are happening in real time and since football is a relatively fast sport, the task is often not easy. Furthermore, there are often moments in the game that lack action which necessarily requires description and the sportscaster (particularly on the radio, where there is very little silence) has to retain the flow of speech, often with "quite extensive narrative stretches" (Chovanec 2009: 1855) providing information relevant to the game or current events. They can also feel some background information or opinion relevant enough to be uttered during the match at any moment (apart from those of heated action).

Many scholars that have dealt with SAT (for example Crystal / Davy 1969; Ferguson 1983; Delin 2000; Müller 2007) therefore established SAT's two main levels of language, the play-by-play commentary (PP) and colour commentary (CC).¹ Some scholars have even added other levels, most notably Delin's evaluation and summarizing. Nevertheless, the "description of activity and the provision of background information have been singled out as centrally important parts" of sportscaster's function (Crystal / Davy 1969: 130). The distinction between those two can most clearly be seen when there are two sportscasters commentating on a game, one being the prime (play-by-play) commentator, who speaks more and describes the events and the co-commentator (colour commentator, expert summarizer) who elaborates on the current topic and gives his opinions on the game.

Apart from these two important tasks sportscasters have to deal with further requirements which make their job significantly more demanding. There are points in

¹ A different terminology is often used, for instance Müller's (2007) *description* and *elaboration*. Even though there is a slight difference in their definitions, one level is always providing the audience with the information about what is happening and the other with background information, making it very similar to PP and CC

the game when the sportscaster has to produce a rapid flow of speech to describe the quickly unfolding events. These are the most characteristic parts of SAT. Although many sportscasters have a few prefabricated phrases to help them deal with the recurrent events, only spontaneous speech can sufficiently describe a fast game that is football (Crystal / Davy 1969: 150). Consequently, the sportscasters “need a strongly developed ability to improvise” (Rowe 2004: 119) and are almost exclusively skilled professionals who can effectively deal with extreme situations. Regardless of this fact, SAT is still considered the best example of spontaneous language (Vierkant 2008: 123). This is further illustrated by Anastasia Makarova’s research conducted on speech errors, for which she chose the speech of football commentators because of the “impossibility of internal editing, monitoring, or self-control” due to the time constraints (Makarova 2008: 307).

In addition to the rapid speech production, sportscasters also need to sound interesting, as their task is also to entertain the audience. They often do that through their choice of subject matter and vocabulary during CC or through prosodic features, which are directly related to their emotions.

The knowledge of topic-related terminology and of the game is required on both the sportscaster and his audience. As the extra-linguistic reality being described is very specific and the sportscasters speak spontaneously, their knowledge of what can emerge and what words will they choose to describe it is unambiguous. Once they work with the existing terminology, they can much more easily achieve “economies of grammatical structure”, reduce repetitiveness and increase the “descriptive immediacy on which they so much rely for effect” (Crystal / Davy 1969: 145). In order to achieve this “effect” fully, the audience have to be familiar with the game as well. The sportscasters often need to venture with their commentary to different parts of the pitch

and stop following the movement of the ball, because it is likely that the information will be relevant in the future (the ball will be crossed in that area etc.). It is logical that without this knowledge the audience would not understand the importance of that information.² This shared explicit knowledge is then one of the ways how the sportscasters and their audience unite (Gerhardt 2008: 284-289)

The identification with the audience is another important task sportscasters have to face. During international matches they should include themselves in the imaginary group of people that watch the match by using “we” constructions (Richard 2000: 197), using appropriate phonological effects to convey excitement (Crystal / Davy 1969: 143) and to narrate their team’s actions positively. In case of a league or a cup match, however, positive narration towards one team should not occur and the commentary should remain unbiased. For English commentary it is typical and essential to avoid creation of artificial drama and excitement (Müller 2008: 67), which makes it very different from for instance Hispanic or Arabic commentaries.

2.3 Register identification

Now that the conditions of SAT production and the rules by which sportscasters have to abide were explained, an identification of SAT as a specific register should be performed.

As Haviland put it: “To speak at all is to choose a register which will index the moment” (Haviland 1979: 389). It is quite simply impossible not to speak in at least one register and everything that is uttered by us is indeed a choice of register. Yet to identify a register is a rather uneasy task because the concept is a very flexible one. According to Ferguson (1983), who used the analytical approach of register variation, the variation of

²This applies almost exclusively to radio commentary.

language structure in this particular case is based on social context, in other words on its occasion of use. Any variation based on dialect or on formality or simply any free variation is not what differentiates SAT from other registers. He claims that in order to locate a register of a certain linguistic activity, one must determine its specific purpose and participants, “the body of knowledge and values the participants share”, and also its specific form, which it does not share with other registers. He then describes the form of SAT as very easily distinguishable from other registers. Thanks to the nature of the sport and the aforementioned duties of the sportscasters, the language output is basically dictated by the rhythm of the game, by an extra-linguistic activity, which differentiates SAT from many other registers. Another important factor is the level of voiced excitement, which is again directly influenced by the extra-linguistic activity and also by the social norms of what is considered an activity that deserves such reaction. Excitement influences the paralinguistic features of language, such as speed, intonation or pitch and according to Ferguson these are the most distinctive features of SAT. It is possible for a native speaker to recognize SAT from other spoken registers just by these paralinguistic features, even if the voice was muffled. There is also a specific “body of knowledge” that the participants share - a large amount of context-specific technical vocabulary, phrases, structures and game situations that both sportscasters and their audience (the “social group”) are familiar with. Since the location of SAT’s purpose and participants has been completed in the previous section, it has been successfully specified what SAT does, what role do the participants play and what is its topic (Ferguson 1983: 148-152). It has also been shown how it differentiates from other registers in form.

Drawing on more recent works on register definition written by Agha (2004, 2007), the assertion is that register is a “linguistic repertoire that is associated, culture-

internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices” and that its aim is to offer a stereotypical way of carrying out social acts (Agha 2004: 24). Agha’s claims correspond with those of Ferguson in the question of register variation. Because register is not something fixed or stabilized, its constantly reforming linguistic dimensions are viewed as a “cultural model of action” (Agha 2007: 4). He also reflects on register formation, emphasizing the role of the listeners, whose recognition of the speech as a register is in fact what defines it. The listeners “develop metalinguistic behaviour” through their experience and then associate certain kind of speech with a certain social context (Agha 2007: 147). His definition is being mentioned because it describes well the ever-changing nature of the register, its close relation to the social context and the role of both the sportscasters and their audience in its formation. Conventionalization is indeed essential in the formation of SAT. A broadcast from the early years of radio would certainly differ greatly from that of today.

It was concluded successfully that SAT may very easily be considered a specific and independent register and this register has been identified, therefore the focus will now shift to the linguistic characteristics of SAT. In order to eliminate the breadth of the term “SAT”, its scope is narrowed to its football variation and its further subtypes from now on.

2.4 Subtypes definition

As this thesis is aimed also at exploring similarities and differences between three particular subtypes of SAT, these have to be defined before listing any linguistic

characteristics that are typical for them. The subtypes are determined by the type of medium providing it. The media in question are **radio**, **television** and **computer**³.

2.4.1 Radio and video

The radio and television broadcast share almost all the register-identifying aspects that were explored earlier. The purpose and the participants of the register remain the same – a sportscaster is giving the audience information about a particular extra-linguistic activity, enriching it with colour commentary. The topic of the linguistic activity also does not change. Regardless of the medium, the knowledge the participants have on the game, on the terminology and phraseology is the same. It is important to stress that only this shared “body of knowledge” is in question at the moment. Although the language the sportscasters choose to verbalise the extra-linguistic events is generally very similar, some particular syntactic or lexical differences are still present. This issue will be discussed more in section 4.

The main difference between radio and television commentary is therefore in its form. In both cases, the linguistic output is dependent upon the events on the pitch, so the structure still varies a lot, but the strategies of a radio and a television sportscaster to comment on the events differ significantly. The reason for this is the shared extra-linguistic circumstances of a TV sportscaster and his audience. Since a sportscaster’s primary job is to report on the ongoing events and the television viewers have the pictures of those events at their disposal, his most useful function is at providing information that is not self-explanatory (names of the players, referee decisions etc.), evaluating and giving background information. On the other hand, radio sportscasters are obliged to recreate the events they are witnessing in their own words, to “transmit an instant image of what is happening” (Vierkant 2008:123), because their speech is the

³ A computer is of course only one of the platforms on which football games could be played. Since the commentary does not change, the platform does not play any role. This thesis will deal with the computer version.

only thing providing their listeners with the information about the game. In order to create a sufficient image, radio sportscasters are forced to speak much more than their TV counterparts. As was mentioned earlier, rapid speech is an inherent part of SAT, and in case of radio sportscasters, who need to give a full account of the action, even more demanding. This results in different prosodic and syntactic devices evident in their speech, which will be further analysed in 4.2 and 4.3.

2.4.2 Computer game

To identify the third subtype of SAT in question, the sports commentary in a computer game, is not very simple and so far it was not properly studied by scholars. Theoretically, it is the same as with TV commentary – the players see the images that the sportscaster is commenting on. The form, which differs so greatly in radio and television, thus keeps the pattern of a TV commentary. It seems reasonable to expect that as a player of a football computer game you have the sufficient “body of knowledge” described in Ferguson 1983. Yet the purpose and the participants are different and very difficult to grasp linguistically. The main purpose of the radio or TV sportscaster is to inform the audience about previously unknown information, to give them updates about an event unfolding in real time or to give background information relevant to this real-life event. However, a match played on a computer is a virtual reality, an event that is only simulated and whose outcome depends directly on the skill of the player, who is at the same time the “audience”. Since the player controls the game and is in charge of the action, they do not need to be given the information that the audience of the other two subtypes require. The player sees the names of the football players on the screen. Also, it is quite difficult for the game designers to incorporate any kind of relevant and useful background information into the game, as it is usually

strongly event-specific and rather impossible to simulate. From a certain point of view it seems that the player actually does not need the commentary at all. Therefore, its purpose in this subtype of SAT shifts from the previously established reporting and adding detail to a simple simulation of authenticity. Since football broadcast and the sportscasters are inseparable under the usual circumstances for obvious reasons, it is logical for a computer game that simulates football to also simulate its social context and the social norms which accompany it.

As far as the participants are concerned, the identification becomes even more complicated. The audience is, in most cases, only one or two persons. The sportscasters, strictly speaking, are not there at all. Every commentator's utterance in a computer game has been pre-recorded in a studio long time before we actually hear it in the game. To sound authentic, the sportscasters were given specific contexts and simulated the speech they would use in them. That gives us a very specific linguistic situation, in which a sportscaster pretends to sound spontaneous, this is recorded and then presented to the audience in a virtual context where the spontaneous speech would actually be required. This makes this subtype of the register of SAT clearly the most specific one, and therefore it is dealt with somewhat separately in the thesis.

What should also be pointed out is the fact that this subtype clearly does not meet the aspect of constant change and shifting nature of the register, formulated by Agha. The commentary in one particular version of the game will still be the same after several years or even decades. Although the game developers try to prevent this by creating a new version every year, the register of one particular version is, for its lack of change, rather linguistically stunted.

For all the register subtypes explored have been located and briefly described, the linguistic characteristics of the register will now be explored.

2.5 Register characteristics

As was already mentioned several times, SAT depends greatly on the extralinguistic events it describes, which makes the structure of the register vary a lot. Many utterances remain unfinished, because the sportscaster had to comment on a more immediate event in the middle of it, many appear suddenly and the whole discourse often does not seem very smooth. Nevertheless, certain patterns and linguistic phenomena that characterize the register, and thus serve as “register markers” (Levin 2008: 143), can be found.

2.5.1 Paralanguage

The paralinguistic features of SAT play a major role in its recognition and are perhaps the most reliable register marker. It is the sportscaster’s job to convey emotion and also produce spontaneous speech. Those two aspects together are the reason why the features of paralanguage are so varied and distinctive in SAT. The commentators often make use of changes in tempo, pitch and volume, according to the level of their excitement. A sudden change of action on the pitch results in a sudden and distinctive change in intonation. The so-called feature of “uptalk”, a declarative sentence with a sudden “high-rise contour at the end” (Theodoropoulou 2008: 338), is a good example of that. Unusual stressing is often employed. Also, the segmentation of speech is a very typical thing. Radio sportscasters try to avoid silence as much as they can, and usually pause only when they are out of breath or at a loss with their speech. This gives the radio sportscast its typical form of a rapidly unwinding sequence of speech segments. Also, as the radio sportscasters are the only possible means of conveying information and the excitement for the listener, a change in prosody on their part also becomes an

indicator of action. TV sportscasters make use of pauses much more, because they do not need to comment on everything and so speak less, with their speech reaching the level of segmentation that a radio sportscast has only during very suspenseful situations on the pitch. The same applies to the computer game, which is in terms of pauses very similar to TV broadcast. However, it can happen that two utterances both pre-recorded in completely different pitch or with different intonation are uttered right after each other, making it sound very unrealistic.

2.5.2 Sentence types

All kinds of sentence types are present in SAT, but the overall “high incidence of minor sentences” is also an important register marker (Crystal / Davy 1969: 139). A minor sentence is a sentence which functions independently in speech but is not grammatically complete, lacking necessary grammatical elements, usually a subject or a predicate. Sportscasters use them to present a vital piece of information in a majority of instances. They often take form of a noun phrase or a single noun, often accompanied by an adverbial element. Proper nouns in minor sentences are extremely common. As a matter of fact, their overall high incidence in SAT is also an important register marker. Another scholar, a Russian researcher Olga Lapteva, has called this aspect of spontaneous speech “domination of meaning over form” (Lapteva 2003, 17), as the omitted parts are not those carrying the important information.

There are two main reasons for the number of minor sentences— time constraints and the avoidance of repetitiveness from the sportscasters. The latter seems fairly reasonable, as the sentence sequence during live sportscast looking like this -Rooney has the ball. Now Welbeck has it. He plays it to Lampard. Now Gerrard has it - would carry a lot of redundant components of low informative value (mostly the predicate)and

would soon annoy the audience. Needless to say, the time constraints would allow such articulations only during the dull moments of the game. However, a football game is a series of events, some of which happen quite frequently, so repetitiveness to a certain degree is impossible to avoid.

The large number of minor sentences is present in all the subtypes of SAT explored. In radio sportscasting, the level of repetitiveness is considerably higher than in the other two, because the sportscasters have to provide not only the information about the current events, but also give periodic updates about scores or time (a register marker in itself), because the listeners cannot see them. Also, they need to verbalise more events, so the number of minor sentences is naturally bigger and some appear in situations where a TV sportscaster would not have to use them. In the computer game, the pattern is very similar to that in TV broadcast. In many cases, the use of minor sentence appears unnecessary in the particular context, but the sportscasters use it anyway for authenticity, or perhaps because they did not record a version of such sentence with the missing parts.

The commentary consists mostly of statements, but questions are also a part of SAT. Those that are directly addressed at the co-commentator are a mark of a conversation and are not used to describe the events or a part of PP. An unusual kind of questions is however sometimes present and was detected in all the register subtypes.⁴

R: Can they make something from it?

TV: Can Arsenal go on to win the game?

PC: Now what can they do with this corner?

These questions are not directed at someone, but they are also not rhetorical, as a rhetorical question is uttered from a different reason than to get the answer the question

⁴When giving examples from the transcriptions, R means radio, TV is television and PC is computer game. The necessary information about the transcriptions used is in 4.1.

asks, usually to make a point. These questions are uttered to convey expectation and are usually answered by the game itself very soon. They serve to introduce variety, which is naturally hugely important for the sportscasters (Crystal / Davy 1969: 138).

2.5.3 Fixedness

Levin (2008) states that football language consists largely of “semi-fixed phrases with conventionalized functions” and that these phrases are important register markers (Levin 2008, 143). It is understandable that mostly during PP certain situations frequently repeat and the sportscasters have to develop linguistic strategies to deal with them. Thus a specific way of describing those events comes into existence and is being adapted by various sportscasters, eventually leading to its complete conventionalization. As Kuiper (1996) concluded, recurring events tend to be associated with formulaic language (Kuiper 1996: 22). The formulaic language does not concern vocabulary and phraseology typical for the register, but rather the ways of referring to the event, the constructions inserted to the speech from memory to save time and maintain fluency.

The PP part of the transcriptions from all three register subtypes mostly consists of similar language constructions. It is therefore apparent that formulaic language is present in all the subtypes of SAT and serves as an important register marker. In this case, differences between the subtypes are minimal, only radio sportscasters seem to have a bigger repertoire of formulae used. Given the more descriptive nature of their job, this comes as no surprise.

2.5.4 Vocabulary

Because football is a very distinctive extra-linguistic event, it comes naturally that it has developed register-specific vocabulary. There are many specific words,

phrases and idioms used which differentiate the register from others and exclude the “uninitiated” audience (Kuiper 1996: 96). Certain phrases have become a traditional way of referring to a certain event, serving as register markers. Also, in order to sound interesting, the sportscasters choose very vivid and rich vocabulary, which is otherwise fairly uncommon in spoken language. Naturally, they only get a chance to do that when the urgency to speak fast is not that big, unless they use a memorized phrase. Therefore, vivid expressions are most common during CC or during evaluations. Interestingly enough, the commentators mostly use only “domestic” vocabulary and almost no learned words (if the technical terms are excluded), unless they are intended as humour (Crystal / Davy 1969: 142). The lexical features of the register are of course the same in each of its subtypes, as each refers to the same specific extra-linguistic event.

2.5.5 Features of spoken language

Since SAT is a spoken register, other common features of spoken language should not be omitted in its characteristic. All the subtypes often contain the frequency words and phrases such as *well, I mean* or *yeah* and make extensive use of conjunctions like *and*. Also, an occasional speech error is bound to happen, notably voiced hesitations: *Uhm one of the things is*, and false starts: *Yeah, en-entertaining stuff, isn't it?* Slips of tongue are also quite frequent. Interestingly, such errors appear even in the computer game, where the sportscasters did not face any kind of time related pressure during the recording. Clearly, they have simulated the speech with all its errors for the purpose of authenticity.

2.5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this section was to give a brief linguistic characteristic of the register and to provide the most typical register markers of SAT and also to show how

are they employed in the subtypes of SAT. The particular syntactic, structural, lexical and prosodic features that are characteristic for SAT will be described in more detail in section 4. Before that, however, the two factors which influence the language output the most and cannot be separated – the extra-linguistic reality and time – will be given a closer look.

3. Extra-linguistic reality and time

As was mentioned earlier, SAT is hugely dependent upon some extra-linguistic reality, the events happening on the pitch, and it periodically changes as the game progresses. The time conditions under which the sportscasters are required to verbalise the utterance often vary a lot, but at some points during the game the pressure is high, particularly on the radio sportscasters. This results in many specific features of SAT, particularly syntactic and prosodic. Before engaging in the analysis of these particular features and irregularities, a further knowledge of the cause of their frequent occurrence is required. The verbalisation process of the extra-linguistic events should be understood, together with the impact of the extra-linguistic context of the utterance. Also, a certain amount of linguistic theory on the issue of time constraints appears necessary for fully understanding the cause for the aforementioned language irregularities.

3.1 Extra-linguistic reality

Gerhardt (2008: 283) described the nature of SAT as “accompanying”. This word alone indicates that some other non-linguistic reality plays at least the same role as the language. It is indeed the case, as language and the extra-linguistic reality that is football are strongly intertwined and the relationship between them is that of dependence. However, the orientation of this dependence is strictly unidirectional. The commentary cannot exist without the extra-linguistic reality, whereas this reality is independent of the commentary. Hence, its importance cannot be stressed enough.

It seems indisputable that the impact is on both form and content. The events change and SAT follows their rhythm, its content focusing on those of some

importance. In case of an event of great significance, such as a goal, the sportscasters usually focus on it even long after it has happened, preferring it to the events currently taking place. If the events taking place are not of sufficient importance to be mentioned, the speech often shifts to the CC. The process of putting those events into words, their linguistic representation, must necessarily include a level of perception and a level of verbalisation (Müller 2007: 75). The time constraints usually do not allow any other levels and the lack of inner editing may therefore often result in speech errors or grammatically incomplete utterances. Nevertheless, the level of perception is bound to result in subjectivity, as some selection of an event that will be commented on and its interpretation on the sportscaster's part is inevitable. Under a majority of circumstances this subjectivity would be evident, but in the case of sports such as football, which have a certain fixed interpretation of rules and a conventionalized view of what events are considered important, the subjectivity does not influence the verbalisation to a large extent. In any case, it seems apparent that the level of perception plays the main role in verbalisations of the extra-linguistic activity.

In order to put a continuous flow of action into words, it is necessary to segment the action into events and then choose which to verbalise. The delineation of what possible event types there are is then necessary for a linguistic analysis of their verbalisation strategies, such as that performed in Müller (2007). The actual definition of what performed activity makes up an event is, due to the routine nature of the sport, a rather easy task, as it is obvious that the event type "goal", for instance, is an action in which a player hits the ball in such manner that it crosses the goal line. However, it is necessary to assign all these game situations to the "event types"⁵ (Müller 2007: 78) for

⁵For the full table of event types, check Müller (2007:78)

an analysis such as Müller's⁶, and such definitions can later be of use for many linguistic works dealing with a similar topic. In this thesis, Müller's terminology of event types will be used. It is also interesting to mention the importance of event type recognition for the football game developers, who have to assign each event a specific key on the keyboard.

In the description of each subtype of SAT, it was stated that the main difference between radio and TV broadcast lies in the extra-linguistic conditions which the sportscasters share with the audience. The fact that the TV sportscasters are aware of these shared conditions, the availability of the image, strongly influences their language output. A TV sportscaster can afford to leave out much more information than a radio sportscaster and convey the intended message via, for instance, a single-word utterance without offering additional or clarifying information, because the pictures "speak for themselves". It is quite remarkable that a single proper noun unit, such as "Walcott.", can mean either "Walcott has the ball", "Walcott has a chance" or "Walcott scores a goal". It is obvious that prosody plays a major role in distinguishing between those instances, but in the case of the latter two, some additional information is necessary for the radio listener, whereas a TV viewer or consequently, the game player do not need it.

To conclude, it was clearly shown that the extra-linguistic reality directly influences the language output and that a certain definition of this activity is necessary for a linguistic analysis. Also, the extra-linguistic conditions are the determining factor in the sportscaster's language output strategies in SAT's subtypes.

⁶ In order to assign all the PP utterances made by the sportscasters to a defined extra-linguistic reality, in addition to the event types Müller also defined game *situations*, such as "possession", "identification" or "locating". Even though there might arguably still be certain game events (a clearance, for example) unlabelled, Müller's frame is close to perfection.

3.2 Time criticality

The events on the pitch can also be characterized by a timeline, as time is an inseparable aspect of any kind of activity. It has been explained earlier that the time constraints, together with the extra-linguistic reality, are the two most salient determiners of SAT, and the varying time criticality for an utterance is often the cause of many distinctive features of SAT.

Taking this major impact on the language into account, linguists researching SAT have naturally dealt with this issue. Mackenzie (2005: 113) has characterized four levels of time pressure in a football match. According to him, the first level is no time pressure, for instance during introductions or summaries, when there it is not unusual to hear complex sentences, with combining clauses. Under the low time pressure, usually during action replays or when the game is stopped, the sportscasters venture opinions or evaluate. The clauses are still very common, however some explicit clause combining does not take place. The moderate time pressure, on the other hand, often results in simpler phrasal elements, in other words the aforementioned minor sentences. The sportscasters are under this pressure during play, but without “immediate threat to either goal” (113). The high time pressure is then “reflecting a rapid succession of incidents near either goalmouth during which a goal is likely or actually scored” (113). Mackenzie claims that under this pressure the sportscasters often make use of single holophrastic elements. Of course, it is impossible to assign a specific sentence structure to each time pressure which would apply with no exception, but a certain typicality is clear.

Müller (2007) has gone even further with the analysis of the impact of time on football language. He investigated the PP part of commentary in relation to the extra-linguistic events and established three kinds of reference, in regard of the exact moment

of the utterance relating to the current event. The three kinds are anticipation, on-line reference and off-line reference (Müller 2007: 172). On-line reference is a reference to the event happening at the moment, off-line reference refers to the event with a delay and anticipation refers to it before it happens. Müller chose a one second margin as a reference determining factor – if the “first verbalisation” (Müller 2008: 273) of the event is made 0.28 seconds before the event takes place it is considered anticipation, 0.72 seconds after the event it is considered an off-line reference. Naturally, the first verbalisation made within the one second margin is considered an on-line reference. According to Müller, this one second allows for both mental processing time⁷ and the margin for error in the editing process.⁸ It is of course important to mention that different event types have different durations (the event “long pass”, for instance, takes significantly longer than the event “shot”) and therefore it is rarely demanding to achieve an on-line reference (Müller 2008: 272). Müller’s work is crucial for this chapter because he integrated both the extra-linguistic reality and time into his linguistic analysis. This analysis then systematically proves that those two aspects play a major part in the utterance formation – the off-line references are usually more syntactically complex than the on-line references. This may of course be more or less distinct with each particular sportscaster.

Since all the important factors forming and influencing SAT have been listed and explained, the actual analysis of the distinctive linguistic features of SAT will now take place. Many of those features are a direct consequence of the two aspects listed above.

⁷According to Tomlin (1997: 172ff.), the average reaction time is 150 milliseconds.

⁸ He edited the Picture of certain matches to a radio commentary of those matches, allowing him to see the impact of the extra-linguistic events on the commentary.

4. Analysis of linguistic features

This chapter will first outline certain paralinguistic features of the register and then will proceed to the analysis of particular syntactic features. Then, an analysis of several lexical features will take place. It will also show whether or how do these features appear in the subtypes of SAT, pointing out the differences between them. Lastly, the authenticity of the computer game subtype of SAT will be questioned. However, the information about the source of the examples used needs to be provided first.

4.1 Transcriptions

The examples of football commentary used in this thesis come from various football games. Of course, a corpus containing commentaries from all the three subtypes would suit perfectly, but since such specific corpus does not exist, transcriptions of various commentaries were used, mostly for illustration of the syntactic features. For the radio commentary, an extract from the matches between AC Milan and Arsenal on February 15, 2012, Ajax Amsterdam and Real Madrid on October 3, 2012, and Manchester United and Chelsea on the same day was used. All of those matches were broadcasted on BBC Radio 5.

For the TV commentary, extracts from the matches between Liverpool and Tottenham on March 30, 2014, and Arsenal and Swansea on March 25, 2014, were used. Also, parts of the commentary from the TV broadcast of the latter two matches used for radio were made use of. Moreover, a full match transcription from the game between Everton and Liverpool on April 16, 2001, was used.

Lastly, the computer game transcriptions were acquired from the matches between Arsenal and Tottenham, England and the Republic of Ireland, Liverpool and

Manchester United, and the Czech Republic and Scotland. All the matches were played by a skilled player, whose intentions were to simulate certain events for later analysis of their verbalisations. The game used is FIFA 13.

The sportscasters commentating on the games were Alan Parry, Dave Bassett, Martin Tyler, Alan Smith, Clive Tyldesley, Andy Townsend, Alan Green, Pat Nevin, Mike Ingham, Terry Butcher, Bryan Hamilton and Andy Gray.

4.2 Paralinguistic features

In 2.4.1, paralanguage has been described as the most determining factor of SAT. Also, a brief outline of its common aspects was presented. A full analysis of aspects such as pitch, volume or intonation would require resources, an extensive amount of work and knowledge and would cover a whole another thesis. Also, a majority of linguists dealt only with the syntactic or lexical features of SAT and phonological transcriptions, such as that in Crystal / Davy (1969), are relatively rare. Therefore, prosody is not the primary aim of this chapter and it will be touched on only marginally. It cannot be left out of the analysis completely, as it is an essential part of SAT.

4.2.1 Segmentation

In Chafe 1994, an idea of “intonation units”, the units of spoken language which are based on intonation and have “a direct link with the expression of ideas” (Müller 2007, 136), was presented. In Müller 2007, this idea was fully incorporated into his extensive analysis. The idea is that sentences or clauses are not an ideal unit of spoken language and that intonation is not an “additional layer” (17) to syntax, but is in fact what shapes it. The first noticeable thing in a football commentary is likely to be the

division of the speech into segments, each describing one event. The grammatical linkage between those segments is either none or very loose and they are usually linked only by intonation, by falls and rises in tone. Since they obviously work as independent units, the “intonation unit” is indeed a very fitting unit of spoken language, even for the purposes of this thesis. It needs to be stressed, though, that such segmentation is very common for PP, but virtually non-existent in the CC, as the sportscasters do not need to follow the extra-linguistic events.

Between the intonation units are pauses, which vary in length considerably. It has already been mentioned that the level of segmentation, depending on the rapid speech production and the length of pauses, is the main difference between radio and TV commentary.

Because of its artificial nature, the commentary in the computer game can never reach the fluency performed either by the radio or the TV sportscaster. The rapid speech production and the resulting heavy segmentation are therefore never present. The level of segmentation is thus very similar to that of a TV sportscaster during less eventful moments in the game.

4.2.2 Speed variations

Another easily noticeable aspect of the sportscaster’s speech are changes in speed, influenced by excitement that indicates important events on the pitch. This is carried out by the insertion of clipped syllables or the whole segments. A clipped syllable is “articulated at a more rapid speed than normal” (Crystal 1969, 154). Very common are also drawled syllables, which are lengthened and often accompanied by extra stress, usually for the purpose of emphasis. Held syllables, when “a segment is articulated with the onset of phonation delayed and the remainder of the syllable normal,

or maybe speeded up” (154), is another kind of speed variation, and perhaps the most typical one, as it hardly ever appears in different spoken registers.

R: ..with practically a one-two and he tried to outRUN Antonini and then..

This is a typical example of this phenomenon, the syllable *run* is a held syllable with the added extra stress. Stress also provides variations in loudness and serves to pick out important information about the game or the name of the player (Crystal / Davy 1969: 134).

The speech rate also varies greatly in the course of the match. Müller / Mayr 2007 analysed it in radio commentary by measuring the number of syllables uttered per minute and arrived to a conclusion that the speech rate in English is higher during the CC. This may seem rather surprising, because the sportscasters do not talk as fast as during PP, but given the higher syntactic complexity of the CC with much more words uttered it is understandable.

Because football is a continuous activity “interspersed with many local climaxes” (Crystal / Davy 1969: 135) the paralinguistic features vary significantly and often unexpectedly according to the present state of that activity, with changes in pitch, intonation, volume and speed. This variation is equally present in TV and radio commentary, as the difference between those two is mostly on the level of segmentation. In the computer game, it is obvious that the variation is limited to a large extent. The sportscasters do record certain tone units – mostly names – in four or five various intonations, but they simply cannot do that with every utterance. The number of pre-recorded units is vast, but certainly not enough to cover all the possibilities. For that reason the commentary, when prosody is concerned, sometimes feels artificial.

4.3 Syntactic features

Understandably, the whole grammatical structure of the register is incomparable to that of written English. The clauses are very loosely linked, usually by conjunctions such as *and* or *but*. There is a high incidence of grammatically incomplete sentences, with a lot of phrasal or holophrastic units. Also, grammatical discontinuities, such as insertion of the sportscasters' comments, often take place.

4.3.1 Simplification

The extensive use of minor sentences described in 2.4.2 is a direct consequence of simplification. There are two major types of simplification in SAT – ellipsis and substitution. Ellipsis is the omission of certain necessary parts of a sentence, when they can be presumed by the audience either from previous utterance or from the context. In case of SAT, the omitted material is usually sentence-initial, usually a proper noun, a noun phrase or a personal pronoun. The copula following these often misses as well.

R: (It is) a lucky break as the ball drops to Arteta.

TV: (He was) brought down by Hyypiä.

PC: (Rooney) could make a chance with this tackle.

According to Ferguson (1983), the copula only is also often omitted and in such cases it is usually followed by the progressive form of the verb (Ferguson 1983: 154). There are various examples of this in the transcriptions.

R: Arsenal (is) struggling here in midfield.

TV: Heskey (is) using his strength.

PC: Mesut Özil (is) looking forward with menace.

Delin (2000) also claims that the tone unit consisting of only the name of the player can also be considered a special kind of ellipsis.

TV: Campbell (has the ball now).

Ellipsis is predominantly used only in PP, but in some instances can also be spotted in the CC. Bowman (1966: 66) claims that ellipsis “seems to contribute an air of informality”. Ferguson (1983: 163) adds that the sportscasters use it also to index the moment as “nonleisurely” and “exciting”. The rapid speech production is indeed a factor in this as well.

Substitution is a simple replacement of a certain sentence element, usually a noun or a noun phrase, with a different word or phrase in the same slot, in this case for the purpose of simplification. As football is a game of recurrent events, it would be redundant to keep repeating certain words all the time and therefore the names are often substituted by personal pronouns. Without any other reference, the pronoun *it* often relates to the ball.

R: Wiel heads *it* away

TV: Unsworth played *it* against Biscan

PC: ..and *he* saved *it*, still in play.

Substitution is present in both radio and video broadcast with no noticeable difference in its frequency, mostly because it is a natural way of dealing with the recurrent events. In the computer game, however, the usage of personal pronouns is much higher. On many occasions the sportscasters do not provide the information about who has the ball, who took the shot or who scored the goal and they simply refer to the player as *he*. This extreme case of substitution is clearly due to the impossibility for the sportscasters to pre-record every utterance with hundreds of different names in the place of *he*. Therefore, the whole commentary seems insufficient in its primary task of describing and a whole clause with the name as subject is a relatively rare thing to hear.

Ellipsis is also present in all the subtypes. Its frequency is influenced mostly by the shared extra-linguistic conditions of the sportscaster and the audience. Because the TV sportscasters know that their audience have the images at their disposal, they tend to be more elliptical. For instance in a sequence where players are just passing the ball, a TV sportscaster usually only announces the names (and uses the extreme kind of ellipsis described by Delin), whereas a radio sportscaster uses a more descriptive way of announcement. Nevertheless, ellipsis is employed very similarly overall. In the computer game, the omission of proper nouns at the beginning of a unit is extreme from the aforementioned reasons, but other kinds of ellipsis are very similar to the TV commentary.

4.3.2 Word order

In live football commentary an unusual word order is a fairly common thing. Sportscasters often make use of constructions when the originator of the action, commonly the name of the player, which would normally be the subject of the clause, is at the end of the clause, preceded by the predicate. This is believed to be for identification purposes, as the sportscaster needs time to ascertain the name and therefore places it at the end of the utterance (Green 1980: 586). It is possible that it has become such a common way of referring to the events that the construction is no longer determined only by the time constraints, but also by conventionalization. It is also used as a means of emphasis. There are two ways of achieving it.

The first, and the most common one, is the use of passive construction. This construction is a ubiquitous feature of SAT, easily noticeable in each of its subtypes.

R: Skied in the air by Koscielny.

TV: And that was excellent work by Unsworth.

PC: Positive thinking from the players.

From the examples it is clear that the passive construction can take many different shapes, but in each case the originator of the action is placed at the end, usually introduced with the help of prepositions *by* or *from*.

The other possible way of achieving this is inversion. The subject-verb inversion, also called full inversion, is a construction in which “the subject is preceded by the entire verb phrase” (Biber et al 1999: 911). This construction is more direct, as there is no circumlocution with the passive form of the verb. In a spoken register, this construction is rare and SAT is “one of the few situations where inversions are used in speech with any appreciable frequency” (Green 1980: 584). In the transcriptions, inversion is much less common than passive constructions, but still present in all the subtypes. They always appear during the PP.

R: In goes Rhijn.

TV: Here goes Fowler again.

PC: Here’s a shot!

It’s a bit of a paradox that the subtype in which full inversion is the most frequent is the computer game with five instances. Inversion is a very specific feature of SAT and therefore, in an effort to make the commentary more realistic, the game developers and the sportscasters included inversion perhaps more than it is included in real commentary. This results in it being relatively overused and makes the commentary, paradoxically, less realistic.

4.3.3 Prefaces and tags

Tags, or right dislocation, are a very common syntactic feature of SAT. A tag is a short structure, in this case a noun or a noun phrase, which is added at the end of the clause, with the co-referent pronoun being a part of that clause. Thus, the tag itself is a

part of the clause, as it can replace the pronoun, yet stands outside of it. They are often added to clarify the reference of the noun phrase (Biber et al 1999: 139) and a common feature of SAT.

TV: They're all over the shop at the moment, Tottenham.

PC: He didn't get much time to see that, the goalkeeper, good save.

Prefaces, or left dislocations, are the same as tags, except they lie before the clause with the co-referent pronoun. Their purpose is to “establish the topic first and then attach a proposition” (Biber et al 1999: 138). They are substantially less common in SAT than tags, yet they could still be spotted in the transcriptions.

TV: Well Swansea, they have gone from looking so comfortable to suddenly chasing the game.

There were multiple examples of these features in the TV commentary transcriptions, very few in the game and none in the radio commentary. In this case, however, it is highly unlikely that these features are specific mainly to the TV commentary, but rather to the sportscasters, Martin Tyler and Andy Gray, who were commentating on most the TV games and also in the computer game. The time pressure does not influence it, as it is bigger on the radio sportscasters, and these features also appear in both PP and CC,

4.3.4 Result expressions

According to Ferguson (1983: 155-156), there is a specific way of expressing that a certain action leads to a certain result in SAT. He claims that there are several possible ways of reporting on such action (and so, which makes it, resulting in etc.) but the sportscasters usually choose to use either a “*to + verb*” construction or a “*for +*

noun” construction, thus making it a clear syntactic register marker. This can be easily spotted in the transcriptions.

R: It was Robinho who got in behind the defender *to score* Milan’s second

TV: ..lovely change of pace *to get* himself behind..

PC: Defender working hard *to stay* in position.

R: Ajax are going *for goal!*

TV: Welbeck’s shot turned behind *for a corner*.

PC: And bravely in *for a header!*

Ferguson points out that such expressions might have come into existence in response to the time pressure, but have become so common that now they are an inherent part of sports reporting, even in its written form (156). In this way they are very similar to the extensive use of passives mentioned earlier. They appear both in PP and CC of all the subtypes as well.

4.3.5 Tense

The tense in the sports commentaries has been a common area of research for many linguists, who have tried to find some patterns in its usage. There are two main questions concerning tense usage in SAT – the differences in usage between present simple and progressive and between past simple and present perfect. For football, the most frequent tense used is simple present (Ferguson 1983: 158). Since the sport is a sequence of quick events that are being commented on at the same time, this is a natural way of verbalising them, as present progressive usually reflects on an action that lasts longer than a fraction of a second. Basing on Ferguson’s research and on the transcriptions, the general pattern is this: if the event’s duration is extended, the sportscasters comment on the state of the game or an episode of the game or if they deal

with an unexpected situation (such as injury or hooliganism), they tend to use progressive tense (158). Progressive is therefore much more common in the CC than in the PP and vice versa.

In Müller 2008, he reflects on his previous study and concerns himself with the influence of “temporal proximity” on the “choice of past time markers” (Müller 2008: 276). The temporal proximity is virtually in the definition of the difference between past simple and present perfect – past tense refers to an event which have ended in the past, whereas present perfect to an event which is “recurring” or “indefinite” (Quirk et al. 1985: 192). Therefore, the expectation is that those two tenses would be clearly distinguished in the commentary, as temporal proximity is relevant in the game of football. However, according to Müller’s findings, it does not seem to have any kind of effect. He claims that the past tense is the largely predominant one and that present perfect is used only in a few specific instances in the PP. The analysis of the transcriptions supported this claim in all the subtypes – present perfect is used rarely in PP and predominantly in CC. It is used to formulate information about relevant things that happened earlier in the game or in the season and also to comment on the performance of a player or the whole team in the current match. The past tense is rather common in the PP and reflects on the completion of a certain running action, important enough to be mentioned off-line, or on its evaluation. It is the most common tense during action replays.

The radio and TV sportscasters seem to use the tenses quite similarly, since the tense usage is somewhat natural to native speakers. The computer game, however, offers many discrepancies, as the utterances are generated by a programme with artificial intelligence. Additionally, during the recording, the sportscasters are not familiar with the context of each game and so they record the commentary in a very

general way. As a result, present perfect is virtually absent, as it is mostly used for specific references, which are very scarce, and the present progressive is far more frequent than in real commentary.

4.3.6 Modifiers

The use of heavy modifiers has been singled out as a typical feature of SAT by many linguists interested in the topic (Crystal / Davy 1969; Ferguson 1983; Reaser 2003). Ferguson claims that their proper usage is a mark of a skilled sportscaster (158). They include additional information about a player, usually something characteristic of him or his present performance and are attached to his name in the form of “appositional noun phrases, non-restrictive relative clauses or preposed adjectival constructions”(Ferguson 1983: 157). This is one of the few syntactic features unrelated to the time pressure and rather similar to the syntax of written English.

R: ...clips it off his boot to Miralem *who has been very handy to Ajax so far*.

TV: This is Biscan, *the young Croatian player*, holding on from Nyarko.

PC: They’ve finally beaten the goalkeeper, *who has been in top form*.

Because of their specificity, they are again very rare in the computer game. The whole set of pre-recorded utterances includes a relatively limited number of those “specific” references which are then installed when possible and have a tendency of repeating themselves. They are either very general as with the example above, possible to use for every goalkeeper in the game, or restricted to one particular player. Such comments are only made in regard to the few best players of the game. There was nothing that would suggest any difference between radio and TV usage of heavy modifiers in the transcriptions.

4.4 Lexical features

There is a very rich lexicon used by the sportscasters during the sportscast. Some of the constructions used are formulas, whose verbalisation is made automatic by the sportscasters, some are register-specific terminology and phraseology and many lexical choices are also based on metaphors or metonymies. As was mentioned earlier, the lexical features are an important register marker. Yet, to give a full account on football vocabulary, phraseology and collocations would be a difficult task even for a long book and a list of typical phrases and idioms would bound to be incomplete, so such task will be left to longer works specifically dealing with the topic. Rather, more general concepts and lexical features will be briefly introduced.

4.4.1 Formulae

The first lexical feature, the formulaic phrases, is also considered to be a feature of syntax. The question of what lexical devices are used to describe recurrent events is bound to concern the syntactic structure of the utterance in which they appear. This section is not concerned with showing the syntactic structures that are used to verbalise the events, but rather which words are chosen. It is however important to realize that the two levels are inseparable.

In section 2.4.3 there is an explanation of what formulaic language is and why it emerges. In order to verbalise recurrent events, sportscasters learn to use certain pre-constructed or semi pre-constructed phrases and constructions to achieve efficiency with their commentary. Kuiper 1996 calls these phrases formulae. They undergo very little variation, with usually one slot empty for the name of the player or for whatever the event is, depending on the context. They are considered to be the appropriate way of referring to a particular event and are highly “conventionalized” (Levin 2008: 143).

They appear throughout the whole register, not only in the typical phraseology. To illustrate this, Müller's 2007 research on verbalisations of the most common, recurrent or important event types in football could be used – the event types being 'pass', 'long pass', 'shot', 'goal' and the situation 'possession'. From these, 'possession' and 'pass' are decidedly the most often referred to events in the game, so they should be an ideal example of formulas used in SAT. However, the event type 'pass' has a rather larger variety, as it is possible to use the constructions in different tenses or in passive, with only the lexical choice of the verb relatively fixed (the most common being *play*, *give (back)*, *find* or *lay*). The situation 'possession' is therefore arguably the best example of formulaic language in football from the lexical point of view.

There is a relatively large variety of lexical options when stating that someone is in possession of the ball. Given the time pressure, the number of options significantly drops, but there is still room for creativity. However, when describing such routine events, the sportscasters are rarely creative and choose the following expressions – in the case of 'possession', they use very formulaic expressions like *X has the ball*, *X in possession*, *the ball's with X* or just *here's X*, *it's X*, *it's with X*⁹, or simply just the name (Müller 2007: 248-249). In all these cases, *now* is often added at the end of the unit. There is a small difference between the subtypes in the employment of these phrases. In the transcripts, the radio sportscasters make use of the phrases with the word *ball* slightly more often than TV sportscasters, as they need to create a visual image in the heads of their audience. By contrast, in the computer game it is noticeably more common to hear the phrase with personal pronouns *he* and *him* in the place of *X* because of the imprecise nature of the commentary.

⁹ X being the name of the player, his position (for instance the goalkeeper) or just a personal pronoun.

Overall, however, the presence of formulae appears higher in the radio commentary. This claim is mainly based on the observation of the transcriptions, yet a potential corpus study would likely give it a firmer foundation based on numerical data. Such occurrence is due to the nature of the commentary, when the sportscasters need to talk much more and verbalise more events than their TV counterparts. The information about where exactly on the pitch the ball is at the moment needs to be provided, just as the information about time or about the manner in which something was done. The TV sportscasters can rely on the pictures to provide that information and thus do not make use of phrases like “*on the left hand side*” or “*X minutes gone and*” so often. The radio sportscasters, on the other hand, must necessarily retrieve such phrases from memory in order to retain their flow of speech.

4.4.2 Metaphors and metonymy

In language, metaphors and metonymy are all-pervasive. Cognitive linguistics view “the majority of human concepts as non-literal and based on metaphor” (Kosecki 2014). Naturally, football language is not an exception and a large part of football expressions is based on metaphors or metonymy. These expressions then often serve as register markers.

Levin (2008) analysed certain frequent phrases specific of the register associated with goal scoring and time announcing, and then delineated their metaphoric and metonymic links. The difference between metaphor and metonymy, described by Lakoff / Johnson (1980) is that metaphor is “understanding and expecting one kind of thing in terms of another” (5), whereas metonymy makes one entity stand for another (36). In metonymy, there is a logical connection, while metaphor is based on similarity. Levin then argues that phrases with the word *net* such as *ball in the back/corner/roof of*

the net are based on metonymy, since the net is metonymically linked with goal and therefore such phrase means that a goal was scored (Levin 2008: 147). Same goes for *the final whistle*, a phrase which is linked to the end of the match (146). However, these phrases also have a literal level, as the net is actually being hit and a whistle blown for the last time. Another typical example of metonymy in SAT are utterances such as “*England scores*”, where a whole nation is linked to one footballer.

Metaphors in SAT are omnipresent, because a big number of football-related expressions are based on them. The war metaphors are perhaps the most striking. The “football is war” concept of a structural metaphor can be applied surprisingly well, with the extremely common words like *squad*, *veteran*, *captain*, *target*, *shooting*, *attacking*, *defending*, *campaign*, *friendly* and so on (Kosecki 2014). As can be seen, the joint terminology has very deep roots and further analysis would likely prove to be very fruitful. Actually, shooting and goal scoring is deeply ensconced in metaphors. Common ways of referring to shooting include verbs like *fire*, *blast*, *slice*, *hit*, *strike*, *bullet* or even *arrow*. These are all war or weapon related terms. Levin (2008) also pointed out the time metaphors, where the source domain is space (150). The concept of time being space allows for expressions such as *in the last minutes*, or *in the first half*, which are characteristic of the register.

Obviously, because metaphors and metonymy are entirely semantic concepts and purely lexical features of the register, they are used in all the subtypes in the same manner. The time pressure has no impact on their usage whatsoever. The metaphors and metonymy in football language are certainly a very complex topic and there are countless examples that remain unmentioned. However, with their importance and function illustrated, there is no need for further examples.

4.5 Computer game authenticity evaluation

As was mentioned before, the SAT's computer game subtype is very specific and differs greatly from the other two because of its artificial nature. However, it was identified as an existing register variety and therefore should be treated equally. This thesis, among other things, tried to give an account of the way in which the game treats the specific and typical linguistic features of the register and to what extent could the commentary be considered authentic. The first major question is whether the commentary properly matches the virtual extra-linguistic events. In many cases it does so well, but there are obviously moments in which the sportscasters talk about something that is no longer relevant while more important things are happening or that an utterance which describes something that did not happen appears. Understandably, these are mistakes made by the game developers and do not concern the quality of the utterance. However, certain mismatched utterances, comical changes in pitch or sudden excitement for no reason is what take away from the authenticity the most.

When we look aside from that and focus solely on the linguistic quality of the utterances, the result is much better. As far as syntactic features of SAT are concerned, the game manages to simulate almost all of them well. Ellipsis appears commonly in the game, just as tags, typical result expressions, passives and inversion. Of course, ellipsis of the names is extreme, because of the impossibility to pre-record each utterance with a different name, several hundred times. Also, the tense usage is rather inaccurate and there are almost no modifiers. The overall nature of the utterances is in many cases too general. The frequency of personal pronouns *he* and *they* is extreme, just as the use of demonstratives like *this* and *that*. There is rarely any specific information given about the manner in which something was done or about the players, their habits, their

previous games, or virtually anything concerning something other than the current events. Therefore the CC, which is supposed to provide information or evaluate mostly consists of very general statements which could be applied to dozens of situations. Here is a typical example of such construction:

PC: Yeah, it was an emphatic finish, no doubt about it.

This is of course logical, as it is made to do precisely that, but its original purpose is somewhat lost. The limited number of possible utterances also adds to the overall repetitiveness of the commentary and its formulaic nature, which is greater than in actual commentary. Furthermore, certain features are slightly overused, such as inversion or the usage of fillers like *yeah* or *well*.

Considering the fact that the whole commentary is an effort by the sportscasters to sound spontaneous in the conditions that are staged, their job is really well done. They include pauses, slips of tongue and typical prosodic features, so each particular utterance fits the register well and its authenticity is high. Nevertheless, it is the unrealistically general content of the utterances, the repetitiveness and the mistakes in the programme what lowers the authenticity considerably.

5. Conclusion

Since this thesis is concerned with the whole register of SAT, more particularly with its football branch and its further subtypes, its findings are rather diverse. The first section argues that SAT may be viewed as an independent register on account of its specific form and setting and also on the findings in Ferguson 1983. Its purpose, participants and topic are located and its form established. The same is then carried out with the particular subtypes of the register, the radio broadcast, television broadcast and the computer game. The main differences between those are the shared extra-linguistic conditions in which the sportscasters and their audience are located, and the pre-recorded nature of the computer game. The form of the register is shown to be dependent primarily on the verbalisations of extra-linguistic events under certain time pressure. The higher the time pressure is, the more likely it is for an utterance to be less syntactically complex. Also the extra-linguistic events directly influence the paralinguistic features of the utterance, such as volume, speed and intonation. Therefore the inner variation within each particular type of the commentary is regularly present and directly correlates with the constantly changing nature of the game. Another variation, usually based on the perceived importance of the extra-linguistic events often takes place, and that is the common alternation between play-by-play and colour commentary. The distinctive prosodic and syntactic features are typical mainly for the PP.

The analysis of the particular features was divided into three parts, with the main focus on syntax. In analysing the paralinguistic features, the level of segmentation proved to be probably the main difference between radio and television commentary, due to the radio sportscasters' obligation to verbalise much more events. In the future, an in depth analysis of other paralinguistic features such as intonation, pitch and

volume, similar to that in Crystal / Davy 1969, could prove very fruitful, since these are very diverse in SAT and also very distinctive. A whole register could be recognized just by listening to the speech without understanding the words. In the thesis, many syntactic features typical for the register were recognized, with the most distinctive being ellipsis, substitution, frequent use of passives, presence of tags, result expressions with *to* and *for* and heavy modifiers. It is highly likely that most of these are present due to the time pressure on the sportscasters. Also, all the analysed features are more or less frequently present in both radio and TV commentary, showing that these two subtypes are extremely similar syntactically. The only notable syntactic difference is a higher level of ellipsis in the TV broadcast, where the sportscasters tend to omit more words, since the demands on the level of provided information are lower. As far as lexical features are concerned, there are obviously no differences between the subtypes in vocabulary and phraseology, but there is a slight difference in the number of pre-constructed, formulaic phrases, which are a typical feature of SAT. It appears that the radio sportscasters have a bigger repertoire of these. Similarly to some of the paralinguistic features, a further research regarding phraseology and collocations in football SAT, perhaps with the emphasis on the etymologies of such phrases could bring interesting results. Also, a corpus-based study on the number of formulaic expressions in football would be extremely interesting. To sum up, my analysis, apart from showing the typical features of football SAT, also proved that the radio and TV commentary are very similar on the syntactic level and that their differences are all consequences of the different nature of the sportscasters' job. They differ in their level of segmentation, employment of other paralinguistic features, level of ellipsis and the number and nature of pre-constructed phrases.

The computer game, being the most unusual of the subtypes, was dealt with rather separately. It has clearly more in common with the TV than radio broadcast, as the game is trying to simulate it, so the commentary has a similar level of segmentation and is overall similar in form. Each individual utterance imitates well the paralinguistic, syntactic and lexical features of the language of TV sportscasters, with the exception of the level of substitution, which is considerably higher, with high incidence of inexact personal pronouns or demonstratives. Also most of the utterances are too general. However, since most of the other (mainly the paralinguistic) features are present, each utterance without context is very typical of SAT. Unfortunately, the generality, repetitiveness and mismatching of the utterances makes the game commentary unauthentic as a whole. If the game developers were to make an effort towards a higher level of authenticity, these are the issues they should probably address. However, even with the current technology, the idea of replacing a thought process with pre-recorded phrases in a completely authentic manner is still far from possible.

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7. Summary

The objective of this thesis is to present sports commentary as an independent register and to analyse its distinctive features. With the scope limited to football commentary, it tries to identify the register and its form and to distinguish it from other registers. The main features of the register are briefly described and the three subtypes of football commentary - the radio and television broadcast and the commentary in a computer game - are introduced. The thesis goes on to provide further understanding of the two main aspects influencing the language output of the commentators - extralinguistic reality and time constraints. The analysis then presents the specific paralinguistic, syntactic and lexical features of the register. It also tries to locate the differences between the three aforementioned subtypes of football commentary, basing its arguments on transcriptions of commentary from various football matches. In the last section of the analysis an evaluation on the level of authenticity of the commentary from the computer game is provided.

8. Resumé

Cílem této práce je prezentovat sportovní komentář jako samostatný registr a analyzovat jeho charakteristické rysy. Omezuje se na fotbalový komentář, u kterého se pokouší identifikovat registr a jeho formu a vymezit je vůči ostatním registrům. Práce stručně popisuje základní vlastnosti tohoto registru a kategorizuje fotbalový komentář do tří skupin: rádiový, televizní a komentář v počítačových hrách. Následně se text zabývá rozborem dvou hlavních aspektů, které ovlivňují jazykový výstup komentátorů - extralingvistickou realitou a časovým omezením. Jsou představeny konkrétní paralingvistické, syntaktické a lexikální vlastnosti komentáře. Text se dále na základě textových přepisů fotbalových komentářů pokouší nalézt rozdíly mezi jejich třemi výše zmíněnými variantami. Poslední část práce vyhodnocuje autenticitu fotbalového komentáře v počítačové hře.