

## **A Syntactic Analysis of Commentaries of the Selected European Football Matches**

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### **Abstract**

Language is inherently adaptive as it has the undeniable potential to adapt to every aspect of human endeavours. It is the nexus that binds people and society together. It is undeniably relevant to every field of human endeavours as there is hardly any aspect of human fields where language is not relevant or being used. Every aspect of human endeavours where language is being used can be referred to as context of situations. Language is therefore context-bound, specific and sensitive as it can mostly be understood or interpreted based on the context it is being used. Football commentaries discourse is one of many contexts where language is being used to describe the events on football pitches during football matches. The study therefore identified and discussed the sentence types inherent in the select commentaries of European football matches. It also related the sentence types to the context of selected football commentaries. This was with a view to characterising the soccer commentary genre. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data consisted of commentaries of the following three European Football Matches: the 2005 Champions League final match between AC Milan and Liverpool football club, the 2008 Champions League final match between Chelsea and

Manchester United football clubs and the 2012 Champions League final match between Bayern Munich and Chelsea football clubs. The selected football commentaries were chosen because the commentators were considered good exemplars of the English language usage. The data were downloaded from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). The data were analysed based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. The secondary data include books, journal articles and the Internet. The findings showed that there was a prevalent use of ellipsis, substitutions, non-finite clauses, simple and compound sentences. The findings further showed the use of thematisations in the commentaries. More importantly was the predominant use of minor sentences in a way that made football commentaries a distinct genre. The study concluded that there were inherent linguistic features that made the selected football commentaries distinct from any other discourse.

**Keywords:** Syntactic Functions, Syntactic Analysis, Football Commentaries, European Football Matches

## Introduction

Language is inherently adaptive as it has the undeniable potential to adapt to every aspect of human endeavours. It is the nexus that binds people and society together. It is undeniably relevant to every field of human endeavours as there is hardly any aspect of human fields where language is not relevant or being used. As such, every aspect of human field where language is being used can be referred to as context of situations. Language is therefore context-bound, specific and sensitive as it can mostly be understood or interpreted based on the context it is being used. Football commentaries discourse is one of many contexts where language is being used to describe the events on football pitches during football matches.

In line with the adaptive nature of language, Ademilokun (2010) opines that language continually adapts to every aspect of human life. And it can be best understood when considered in relation to society or context of usage. Thus, he argues that, language, without doubt, is of utmost importance in every society. For him, language can be said to be the nexus that binds people in a society together. It is the medium through which members of a community communicate ideas and feelings with one another. Delin (2000) corroborates this fact when he observes that language plays a central role in everyday life and reflects the society. This shows that it is immensely difficult to divorce language from the society or context and vice-versa. Lamidi (2000) also lends credence to the interrelationship of language and society in the following words:

Language and society are so closely related that we cannot discuss one and neglect the other. Neither does a community exist without a specific form of communication nor does a language exist without some speakers of it. It follows that in discourse situations, there will be an interrelationship between language and its community of speakers (Lamidi 2000, p. 106).

The sensitivity of language to the structure of the society manifests in the relationship between language and context. And this relationship has been greatly explored in linguistic research. Two types of context are recognized in language: verbal and situational contexts. According to Adegbite (2000), verbal context is concerned with the company which a linguistic item keeps. Thus, it falls in the realm of linguistics proper. On the other hand, situational context reflects the relationship between language and society, as it shows how cultural and situational factors impinge on the production and interpretation of utterances. A great deal of research into the functional use of language has shown that language and context are inseparable. Cook (2001) comments on the issue thus:

Discourse analysis is sometimes accused of being rather messy, for it cannot bring to analysis the precision of approaches which isolate one facet of communication from others...however, the precision of such methods is bought at the price of misrepresenting the complexity of human communication. The study of language must take context into account, because language is always in context, and there are no acts of communication without participants, inter-texts, situations, paralanguage and substance (Cook 2001: 5)

The above view indicates that for any linguistic model to be described as adequate, it must be able to account for the relationship that exists between language and context. Mey (2001) describes context as the continually changing surrounding that enables participants in the communication process to interact, and in which the linguistic expressions of their interaction become intelligible. Lamidi (2000) further observes that:

Every language event takes place with some people in attendance. This is the context of situation. The context is the environment in which the text comes to life; it is an environment of language use where every utterance is interpretable given the background to it (Lamidi 2000: 107).

Furthermore, Delin (2000) observes that:

Language is seen as arising from its context of situation, and different situations will predictably give rise to different language features (Delin 2000: 3).

This view evidently shows that language is context-bound and that language has great potential to reflect the context of situation in which it is purposely used. Bryam's (2000) opinion, further affirms that "each domain of language is characterized by distinct terminology, the conceptual structure and rhetorical organization of communication" (Bryam 2000: 239). This evidently confirms that, sport discourse, particularly football commentary, like any other discourse, inherently has its unique and specific linguistic features that make it distinct from others.

Football commentaries discourse as an offshoot of football or sport discourse clearly exemplify the context-sensitivity of language as it is inherently characterized with distinctive language use different from any other discourse. Given this background, this study explored this domain of research by undertaking a syntactic analysis of commentaries of selected European football matches.

### **Football Commentaries**

In the opinions of Crystal and Davy (1969), most commentaries have something to do with description, explanation, or opinion. But the three are not always present in equal proportions. Some forms of written commentary, for instance, by providing the supplementary information which will enable a text to be more fully understood, set out purely to explain rather than describing or giving opinions. In spoken commentary, on the other hand, the need for vivid description is often so strong as to reduce explanation to a minimum. And commentaries are to be found - of the political kind, both spoken and written - in which there is a great deal of opinion but with little that is either described or explained. If it is remembered that the descriptions, explanations and opinions may, on different occasions, relate to an almost unlimited range of subject matter, it becomes obvious that the 'commentary' has to serve for many kinds of linguistic activity, all which would need to be represented in any adequate descriptive treatment, and would presumably require separate labels such as 'exegesis', 'political comment', and so on.

Commentary, given the above view, can therefore, be generally understood as “a spoken account of events which are actually taking place”. It is a linguistic description, in spoken form, of events, not necessarily limited to sport. Commentaries are done generally to give a detailed account of actions that take place during a particular event. Football commentary, which Ferguson (1983) describes as sport casting, on the other hand, is an oral reporting of an ongoing football activity, combined with colour commentary. Colour commentary is a vital and requisite part of the genre and thus cannot be omitted from its definition. Colour commentary, according to Ferguson (1983), involves provision of background information in a given football match. This shows that football commentaries usually involve two commentators—one that focuses on Playby-Play commentary and the other that provides background information in a football match (Colour Commentary).

Ferguson (1983) further opines that football commentary can also be seen as a “monologue or a dialogue-onstage” that is aimed at an “unknown, unseen, heterogeneous audience”, who are listening to it voluntarily and even though they may not provide the sportscaster or commentator 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 football commentary because seeing it from this angle suggests that football commentary, though, is a monologue, it is purposely designed to describe events on football pitch to a given audience (though the audience are assumed to be unknown to the commentators).

Crystal and Davy (1969) also argue that there are points in the game when the sportscaster or commentator has to produce a rapid flow of speech to describe the quickly unfolding events. These are the most characteristic parts of football commentary or Sport Announcer Talk as described in Ferguson (1983). Thus, 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. Consequently, in the opinion of Rowe (2004), the demand of football commentary requires that sportscasters or football commentators “need a strongly developed ability to improvise” and are almost exclusively skilled professionals who can effectively deal with extreme situations.

Therefore, scholars on sport commentaries such as Ferguson (1983); Muller (2007); and Delin (2000) suggest that the nature of football commentary means that it is the duty of football commentators 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, Chovanec (2009) opines there are often moments in the game that lack action which necessarily requires description and the football commentator has to retain the flow of speech, often with “quite extensive narrative stretches”. Football commentators usually provide information relevant to the game or current events. They can also give some background information or opinion relevant enough to be uttered during the match at any moment (apart from those of heated actions).

In sum, the role and place of football commentaries and commentators are justified and inevitable, according to Richard (2008), given that, sport, and football in particular, have always been a common form of entertainment, and more importantly, in recent times, with the rise of television broadcast and increasingly better filming technology, football, which is presently considered by many to be the world’s most popular sport, has become commercialized, viewed by millions and a common “form of popular culture”. Thus, the role of the football 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.

Specifically, the nature of football commentary and its unusual linguistic setting is what makes the language use so specific and context-bound.

### **Scholarly Perspectives**

This section presents some related scholarly perspectives to this study. Following Rowe (1999), information on the nature of the discourse of sport commentating, (the meditation of sport commentaries and social ideologies), which reflects in the language use of sports commentators, is aptly offered. For him, the discourse of sports commentary is highly stereotypical. By this, he means, sports commentaries usually take the same process with little or no significant difference. So, to Rowe, sport commentating is not one of the particularly creative manifestation of language.

However, as a swift response to Rowe's stance on lack of creativity in language use in sport or football commentating, various works that have been done on sport commentaries, such as Ferguson (1983), Crystal and Davy (1969), among others have shown that creative use of language is inherent in sport or football commentary. Rowe also opines that sports commentaries are replete with errors and 'asinine' remarks. By this, he means, sports commentaries are unscripted and instantaneous: sport commentators do not have the opportunity to think deeply, carefully organize their words and correct their errors.

Rowe further remarks that the solecisms that characterize the discourse of sport commentary have made the discourse a subject of great ridicule. This negative perception of sport commentaries, by extension, affects the image of sports commentators. According to Rowe, practitioners of other forms of journalism typically consider sports commentators inefficient and tactically bankrupt. However, this opinion is untenable given that studies in discourse analysis such as Coulthard (1981) and Brown and Yule (1983) have shown that disfluency is a strong feature of naturally occurring language. Rowe (1999) also affirms that although sports commentators are supposed to be objective, they sometimes exhibit subjectivity, particularly when they have affinities with either of the parties involved in a match. This impresses the idea that sports commentaries could be tendentious and this manifests most when sports commentators show patriotic excitements.

Osisanwo (1997) carried out a study of English medium soccer commentaries on radio. The study, which is situated within the realm of register, is purely linguistic as it points out only in the direction of linguistic features such as phonological features, grammatical features and lexical features that characterize soccer commentaries. Under phonological analysis, Osisanwo (1997) selected for analysis, features such as intonation patterns, speed and loudness. He opines that commentators make use of three types of tunes: falling, rising and fall-rise tune. With respect to the speed of speech of soccer commentators, Osisanwo reports that the amount of action or in action in a period during a match determines the speed of the speech of the commentator. Concerning the loudness of soccer commentaries, he opines that moments of crescendo are more pronounced than those of diminuendo. However, stress as an aspect of phonological analysis is not included to show how soccer commentators emphasize certain items in the discourse.

At the grammatical level, Osisanwo addresses himself mainly to features of grammar like sentence types, adverbial groups, tense, ellipsis and transitivity because he considers them to be the most relevant to his analysis. He points out that soccer commentators largely use simple and compound sentences which shows that they do not like long winding expressions. He also asserts that the need for commentators to frequently describe the action and the movement of the ball predisposes them to using adverbial expressions. Under tenses, he reports that there is a preponderance of the present tense in soccer commentaries.

At lexical level, Osisanwo identifies and lists all the high frequency lexical items found in soccer commentaries. He points out that soccer as a field of discourse has some words that are peculiar to it and that these words mainly range from nouns to verbs. However, a closer look at

Osisanwo's lexical analysis shows that he does not make any attempt to give necessary information on the level of formality or informality of lexical items found in the commentaries and the motivations for their usage. Another shortcoming that can be noticed in Osisanwo's work is his neglect of the semantics of the discourse of soccer commentaries. Soccer commentators usually create meaning in varied ways to the delight of their audience through the use of simile and other figurative expressions. Osisanwo's work fails to give information on elements of sarcasm and others, and how they are used in football commentaries to achieve certain effects. Nevertheless, in spite of the various questions which Osisanwo's work raises, it provides a good reference material on soccer commentaries register.

Following Crystal and Davy (1969); Ferguson (1983) and Muller's (2007) works on football commentaries, in addition to the rapid speech production, which is known to be an inherent feature of football commentary, sport casters or football commentators 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 colour commentary (CC), which mainly focuses on providing background information, other than describing events on football pitch, or through prosodic features, which are directly related to their emotions. Crystal and Davy (1969) hold that the knowledge of topic-related terminology and of the game is required from both the sport caster and his audience. As the extra-linguistic reality being described is very specific and the sport casters 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". In order to achieve this "effect" fully, the audience have to be familiar with the game as well. The sports casters, therefore, 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. It is logical that without this knowledge the audience would not understand the importance of that information. Gerhardt (2008), thus, argues that this shared explicit knowledge is then one of the ways the sportscasters and their audience unite.

In all, these scholarly perspectives discussed and reviewed have extensively shown that language is central to football commentaries and that football commentaries discourse is a context-specific discourse which employs distinct language use that makes it different from any other discourse.

## **Methodology**

### **Sources of Data**

Data for this study are football commentaries downloaded from the Internet ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))

### **Method of Data Collection**

The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data are commentaries of the following matches: the 2005 Champions League Final Match between AC Milan and Liverpool FC, the 2008 Champions League Final Match between

Chelsea FC and Manchester United FC and the 2012 Champions League Final Match between FC Bayern Munich and Chelsea FC. The European Football Matches were selected because of their global prestige and recognition; the three matches were selected because they were all epic and recent European football final matches and the commentaries were selected because the commentators can be considered good exemplars of the English language usage. The secondary data were sourced from books, journal articles and the Internet. Insights were drawn from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and Crystal and Davy's book, Investigating English Style.

### **Transcription of Data**

After downloading from the Internet, the spoken or audio commentaries were carefully listened to and transcribed. Although, the data transcription posed a bit of a task due to the fast moving nature of the commentaries given the fact that football is a fast-moving sport, however, the researcher was able to navigate his way through the challenge by carefully listening to the commentaries many times with rapt attention.

### **Procedure for Data Analysis**

The data analysis focuses on the syntacticon features such as substitution, ellipsis, structural parallelism, identification, apposition, sentence types –minor sentence, simple sentence, complex sentence, compound sentence, etc. The data analysis is done with insights from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Analysis in this research was based on Systemic Functional Linguistics. The motivation for choosing this theory hinges on its concern for analysis of texts in relationship to social context in which they occur. Thus, the social orientation of the theory, which allows for adequate description of the relationship of language, discourse and everyday social life, strengthens the choice of the theory for this study.

Following Halliday (1994) "the central notion in Systemic Functional Linguistics is that language is structured the way it is because of its functions in the social structure. Babalola (2007) also opines that the issue of semantics, discourse analysis and pragmatics are all significant parts of the Systemic Functional Grammar. He further recognises stylistics and some aspects of sociolinguistics as significant parts of systemic grammar which is a variant of Systemic Functional Grammar. In addition to the concept of system, the grammar also describes the patterns of English in terms of three other basic concepts: unit, structure and class (Babalola, 2007). Also, Butt et al (1995) opines that Systemic Linguistics is concerned primarily with the choices that the grammar makes available to speakers and writers. These choices relate speakers' and writers' intentions to the concrete forms of a language. Traditionally, the 'choices' are viewed in terms of either the content or the structure of the language used.

### **Analysis of Data**

This section focuses on analysis of syntactic features in the data. The section analysed the various syntactic features by bringing out, for analysis, instances of the identified syntactic features in the

selected football commentaries. The selected football commentaries, having been transcribed from spoken to written texts, are regarded as text A, text B and text C in the analysis.

The features presented below are syntactic features identified in the data:

### **Ellipsis**

Some instances of ellipsis in the data are given and described below:

- (i) Milan in red and white and Liverpool in all-red (text A, line 3)

The verb 'are' is ellipped in both sentences. Syntactically, this can be called verbal ellipsis and verbless clauses (Milan are in red and white and Liverpool are in all-red)

- (ii) Maldini on him (text A, line 7)

The verb 'is' is ellipped (verbless clause) (Maldini is on him)

- (iii) Riise, finding Gerard, a cross to Kewell (text A, line 22)

The verb 'is' is omitted in the first clause while the subject 'he' and the predicator 'makes' are omitted in the second clause (subjectless and verbless clause) (Riise is finding Gerard, he makes a cross to Kewell).

- (iv) Owen Hargreaves at the edge of the six-yard box (text B, line 23)

The verb 'is' is ellipped in the clause (verbless clause)--Owen Hargreaves is at the end of the six-yard box.

- (v) The ball too high for him (text B, line 42)

The verb 'is' is omitted too in the clause (verbless clause)--The ball is too high for him.

- (vi) And we are off, and also Florent Malouda (text B, line 72)

The phrase 'is off' is omitted in the second clause (verbless clause)--And we are off, and also Florent Malouda is off.

- (vii) looks deliberate from Schweinsteiger (text C, line5)

The pronoun 'it' which is the subject of the clause has been ellipped (subjectless clause)

(It looks deliberate from Schweinsteiger)



- (viii) Chelsea standing too deep (text C, line 12)

The verb 'are' is ellipited (verbless clause)  
(Chelsea are standing too deep)

- (ix) Robben trying to find Muller (text C, line14)

Here, the verb 'is' is also ellipited in the clause (Non-finite clause)

(Robben is trying to find Muller)

### Substitution

Instances of substitutions in our data include the following examples given and explained below: (i) Now it's Kewell for Liverpool, Maldini on him (text A, line 7). The pronoun 'him' is substituted for Kewell.

- (ii) Pirlo to Maldini, four wins already to his name (text A, line 15) The pronoun 'his' is a substitution for Maldini.  
(iii) Stam to Shevchenko with a through pass and he is onside (text A, line 20). The pronoun 'he' is used as a substitution for Shevchenko.  
(iv) Harry Kewell is struggling. He's just recovered from injury (text A, line 21) The pronoun 'he' is used for Harry Kewell. (v) Terrific stop by Dudek. Pirlo tried to deceive him (text A, line 86) The pronoun 'him' is substituted for Dudek.  
(vi) Tomasson for Milan and he scores (text A, line 89) The pronoun 'he' is a substitution for Tomasson.  
(vii) Wes Brown picks up the ball in midfield and sends it deep (text B, line 17)

The pronoun 'it' is substituted for 'the ball'.

- (viii) Owen Hargreaves at the edge of the six-yard box, he leaps but can't reach (text B, line 23) The pronoun 'he' is substituted for Owen Hargreaves.

- (ix) ... picking out Patrice Evra on the byline. With Chelsea defence in disarray, the full back over-hits his cross (text B, lines 51- 52)

The pronoun 'his' is a substitution for Patrice Evra.

- (x) Now, it's Chelsea who have the upper hand. They surge

forward again (text B, lines  
54- 55)

The pronoun ‘they’ is used to replace Chelsea. **Apposition**  
Some instances of apposition in the data are italicised below:

- (i) Paolo Maldini, the skipper has scored (text A, line 5)
- (ii) Cafu, the Brazilian captain (text A, line 9)
- (iii) Pirlo, the anchor man in Milan midfield (text A, line 11)
- (iv) Cafu and Kaka, the two Brazilians look to combining well (text A, line 20)
- (v) Kaka, the most magnificent player on the field here (text A, line 39)
- (vi) Tomasson, the former Newcastle player (text A, line 58)
- (vii) The referee tonight is Lubos Michel, a Slovakian (text B, line 6)
- (viii) Ronaldo, the Portuguese, on the far touchline (text B, line 13)
- (ix) Shocking defending from Ferdinand, the Man U captain (text B, line 34)
- (x) Ballack, the German, challenged from behind (text B, line 35)

### **Structural Parallelism**

Instances of structural parallelism in the data are italicized below:

- (i) Every tackle counts, every pass counting in red shirts (text A, line 52)
- (ii) Who would have thought in 1990 we would be in a new Russia for the biggest game in club football? Who would have thought it would be two English clubs? Who would have thought Liverpool would still be waiting to win the league again? (text B, lines 7-8)
- (iii) Drogba is there, Mata is there, Chelsea fans are there (text C, line 91)
- (iv) No Robben, no Muller, no Gomez, has been able to put it away (text C, line 107)
- (v) Absolutely unnecessary, absolutely foolish (text C, line 161)

- (vi) Still everything at stake, still virtually impossible to pick winners (text C, line 172)
- (vii) Three minutes to go, three minutes away from penalty shoot-out (text C, line 202)
- (viii) When things happen,/ when goals are not given,/ when goals are given as offside,/ you/ start /to have doubt (text C, line 125)
- (ix) They've lost their lead, they've lost penalty, they've lost Ribery (text C, line 168)

### Minor Sentences

Some of the instances of minor sentences in our data are given below:

- (i) Gatuso back to Seedorf (text A, line 13)
  - (ii) Now Kewell on the ball (text A, line 13)
  - (iii) Shevchenko, back to Maidini (text A, line 14)
  - (iv) Crespo now (text A, line 16)
  - (v) Throw-in for Liverpool (text A, line 18)
  - (vi) Throw-in for Manchester United (text B, line 18)
  - (vii) deep in Chelsea territory (text B, line 18)
  - (viii) free-kick to Chelsea (text B, line 42)
  - (ix) A set-piece there (text C, line 4)
  - (x) good delivery from a corner (text C, line 49)
  - (xi) another corner for Bayern (text C, line 48)
- SIMPLE SENTENCES The following are instances of simple sentences identified in the data:
- (i) It /is/ quite a breezy night/ in Istanbul (SPCA) (text A, line 1)
  - (ii) The referee/ is/ a Spanish accountant, Manuel Enrique (SPC) (text A, line 2)

- (iii) Liverpool/ are facing/ some big talented players/ tonight (SPCA) (text A, line 4)
- (iv) Paolo Maldini, the skipper /has scored (SP) (text A, line 5)
- (v) Frank Lampard / is /inches outside the United penalty area (SPA) (text B, line 42)
- (vi) It /was /a comedy of errors and no mistakes (SPC) (text B, line 45)
- (vii) Cristiano Ronaldo/ quickly/ takes/ (SAP) (text B, line 47)
- (viii) Chelsea /counter/ in a move (SPA) (text B, line 53)
- (ix) Frank Lampard /sends/ it/ in/ from the left hand side (SPOAA) (text B, line 53)
- (xxviii) Lam /is/ tall enough to get that away (SPC) (text C, line 20)
- (xxix) We/ are/ yet to reach ten minutes mark (SPC) (text C, line 24)
- (xxx) He/ has gone /for the youngster, Bertrand (SPC) (Text C, line 31)

### **Complex Sentence**

Some of the instances of complex sentences in the data are analysed below:

- (i) Paolo Maldini who lifted the trophy two years ago/ has put/ his team in front  
(SPOA) (text A, line 6)
- (ii) It/ looks/ like a farewell appearance for Kewell/ as he comes off (SPCA)  
(text A, line 23)
- (iii) He /is/ unhappy/ that he wasn't awarded a corner/ when he should have been/  
(SPCAA) (text B, line 51)
- (iv) If he had put as much efforts into controlling the game/ he /would have found/  
himself/ in good scoring position (ASPOA) (text B, line 65)
- (v) I /am seeing/ a Chelsea side /that doesn't know what to do/ (SPOC) (text C,  
line 43)

- (vi) When things happen,/ when goals are not given,/ when goals are given as  
offside,/ you/ start /to have doubt (AAASPC) (text C, line 125)

### Compound Sentences

- (i) It/ is/ a volley/ through a sea of players/ and /that/ is/ it (SPCA) (SPC) (text  
A,  
line 5)
- (ii) He/ put/ the ball/ inside the box/ but /the ball /is/ ahead of Kaka (SPOA)  
(SPA) (text A, line 20)
- (iii) Thirty five to forty thousand Liverpool fans,/ they/ have been/ quiet/ all  
night/ but /now /they/ are/ back/ in it (ASPCA) (SPCA) (text A, line 46)
- (v) Ronaldo starts on the left and draws the first foul of the night from Michael Essien  
(SPA) (POA) (text B, line 11)
- (vi) Owen Hargreaves/ gets/ around Ashley Cole/ and /sends /a cross /into the  
Chelsea penalty area (SPA) (POA) (text B, line 16)
- (vii) Mikel/ did /that/ beautifully/ and /he/ has found/ Bosingwa (SPCA) (SPO)  
(text C, line18)
- (x) Bayern/ have dominated/ but /have/ nothing/ to show for it/ (SP) (POC)  
(text C, line 115)

### Compound-Complex Sentences

Instances of compound-complex identified in the data are analysed below:

- (i) There/ will be/ no second chance/ if he misses it/ and /he/ misses/ it/ (SPCIA)  
(SPO) (text A, line 94)
- (ii) This/ is/ actually/ a block to our commentary position/ if we have a tennis ball/  
we/ could throw/ at the back of Mata/ (SPACA) (SPA) (text C, lines 92- 93)
- (iv) When I say he took him out,/ I/ mean /that he knocked him over, he/ didn't kill or  
bring/ him/ to a restaurant and then the cinema/ (ASPC) (SPOA) (text B, line  
48)

### Non-Finite Clauses (-Ing Infinitive)

There are instances of non-finite clause (-ing infinitive) which are peculiar characteristics  
of the selected commentaries. The instances include the following:

- (i) Maldini beating Gerard to it (text A, line 28)  
(-ing non-finite clause with subject)
- (ii) Finding space in front of Liverpool back four (text B,line A)  
(-ing non finite clause with subject)
- (iii) Looking for Shevchenko (text A, line 32)  
(-ing non-finite clause without subject)
- (iv) Carvalho shaking off a back injury (text B, line 3)  
(-ing non-finite clause with subject)
- (v) Paul Scholes walking around (text B, line 32)  
(-ing non-finite clause with subject)
- (vi) dawdling over a headed back-pass to Van Der Sar (text B, line 34)  
(-ing non-finite clause without subject)
- (vii) Bosingwa contesting against Ribery (text C, line 7)  
(-ing non-finite clause with subject)
- (viii) Chelsea standing too deep (text C, line 12)  
(-ing non-finite clause with subject)
- (ix) Robben trying to find Muller (text C, line 14)  
(-ing non-finite clause with subject)
- (x) Mikel looking for Drogba (text C, line 40)  
(-ing non-finite clause with subject)

### **Thematisations or Syntactic Disorder**

The following are instances of thematisations or syntactic disorders in the data, where, for identification purpose, the subject which should normally be at initial position, is put at the end of the clauses. This can also be regarded as unmarked theme.

- (i) in the way is Carragher (text A, line 13)
- (ii) pulled back by Pirlo (text A, line 13)
- (iii) lovely ball from Kaka (text A, line 36)
- (iv) blocked by Liverpool (textA,line 37)
- (v) put away by Carragher (text A, line 37 )
- (vi) pushed away by Nesta (text A, line 55)
- (vii) in the way is David Luis (text C, line 17)
- (viii) cleared by Cole (text C, line 66)
- (ix) timely tackle by Mikel (text C, line 110)
- (x) good challenge by Cole (text C, line 123)

In the instances identified above, prepositional phrases are fronted to displace the Subjects in the clauses and thereby making the prepositional phrases marked themes. In other instances identified above, the Subjects in the clauses are brought to the end of the clauses instead of putting them at the beginning of the clauses through the use of passivisation.

### **Findings**

This section involves the discussions and the interpretations of analysis. This means that it provides a link between those features identified for analysis and the meaning interpretations in relation to the context of the selected football commentaries.

In the selected football commentaries, ellipsis and minor sentences were predominantly used. This is because the commentators can afford to leave out some parts of complete sentences and still make meaning to the audience or the audience can fill up the missing parts by themselves as they are equally aware of the events being

described by the commentators. On justification for the use of ellipsis, Muller's (2007) opines that the frequency of ellipsis is influenced mostly by the shared extra-linguistic conditions of the football commentators and the audience. According to him, commentators tend to be elliptical because they know the audience share the same linguistic conditions with them.

The fast and racy nature of football as a sport also requires the commentators to be economical in their choice of words or to use short sentences in describing the events on the field of play.

Furthermore, the predominant use of minor sentences in the commentaries makes this discourse distinct from any other discourse, for instance, religious discourse or stand-up comedy where the preacher or the comedian has to ensure that the message to be passed across to the audience is detailed enough to be well understood by the audience. Thus, in religious discourse, the predominant use of minor sentences is not required because there is need to give a detailed message through the use of complete sentences unlike football commentaries where minor sentences have to be mostly used to keep up with the pace of football games as a result of time constraints.

Also, there is preponderance use of non-finite clauses (-ing infinitive) in the selected football commentaries. The preponderance use of non-finite clauses in the selected football commentaries can be explained, just like ellipsis, in terms of being able to leave out certain parts that make up a complete sentence, especially, finite verbs, and still make meaning to the audience, because as explained earlier the audience of television-based commentaries of this nature are equally aware of the events being described on the field of play and can as such understand what the commentators are passing across or fill up the missing parts.

The preponderant use of simple sentence is also another finding worth discussing. Simple sentences were predominantly used in the selected football commentaries as opposed to complex, compound and compound-complex sentences which were not mostly used (except where commentators are not under any time pressure or nothing worth commenting on is happening on the field of play). The preponderant use of simple sentence is because the commentators have time constraints to describe the events on the field of play.

Also, structural parallelisms and appositions were equally found as part of features employed in the commentaries. Structural parallelisms were primarily employed to place emphasis, achieve parallelism, and draw attention to particular parts of certain sentences in the commentaries while appositions were used to give a clearer picture or more information about the nouns or noun phrases, namely names of players or teams mentioned in the commentaries.

In addition, there were instances of unusual word order in the commentaries where the originator of an action, commonly names of players or teams, which would normally be the subject of the clause, are put at the end of the clause, preceded by the predicate. This might be for identification purpose given that the commentators need time to ascertain the names of the players.



## Conclusion

The study has been able to achieve its objectives by identifying inherent syntactic features in the commentaries of selected European football matches, analysed the identified syntactic features and relating the identified syntactic features to the context of football commentaries discourse. The study, through its findings, also confirmed the context- sensitivity of language and the capability of language to adapt to every field of discourse. This is shown in the various syntactic features identified in the commentaries of selected European football matches as the identified and analysed features in the commentaries were used in such a way that makes football commentaries discourse to be distinct from any other discourse.

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