

A Pragmatic Analysis of the Discourse of Selected Football Commentaries

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Abstract: This study conducts a pragmatic analysis of the discourse of selected football commentaries using a qualitative descriptive approach. Drawing on Speech Act Theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle, and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, the research examines over twenty televised English-language football commentaries. Transcribed data were analyzed for key pragmatic features, including speech acts, deixis, implicature, and politeness strategies. The findings reveal that commentators frequently employ expressive and directive speech acts, situational deixis, and implicatures to inform, entertain, and engage audiences. Politeness strategies are also used to manage face concerns and modulate judgment. These pragmatic tools collectively enhance the immediacy, coherence, and appeal of live sports commentary. The study contributes to the understanding of sports discourse and highlights the relevance of pragmatic competence in media communication.

Keywords: Pragmatics, discourse, speech acts, football commentaries, context, politeness strategies, deixis.

INTRODUCTION

Language use in football commentary goes far beyond the mere reporting of on-field events; it constitutes a dynamic, expressive, and often entertaining discourse that captivates audiences across cultures. The language of football commentary has developed into a distinctive register marked by immediacy, emotion, metaphor, and dramatic narrative. This form of spoken discourse reflects real-time reactions and interpretations that require commentators to make split-second linguistic choices. These choices are not only descriptive but also pragmatically loaded with implied meanings, evaluative judgments, and strategic speech acts that influence audience perception (Beard, 1998; Montgomery, 2007).

Unlike standard narrative forms, live football commentary is marked by spontaneity and heightened emotional engagement. Commentators are not merely conveyors of factual information; they are performers who animate the game with rhythm, tone, and colour. Their utterances often go beyond what is visible on the screen, offering inferences, predictions, and sometimes even moral judgments. In doing so, they subtly guide the audience's interpretation of the game, using language not only to reflect reality but also to construct it.

This unique form of discourse is particularly fertile for pragmatic inquiry. Pragmatics the study of language in context offers tools for understanding how meaning is negotiated in real time between speaker and listener. Through devices such as deixis, presupposition, implicature, and speech acts, commentators manage shared knowledge, express evaluations, and maintain rapport with the

audience (Yule, 1996). The immediacy of the broadcast context means that every word and phrase is chosen under temporal pressure, yet must resonate meaningfully with a diverse and dispersed audience.

Moreover, football commentary displays a fascinating interplay of formal and informal elements. While embedded within an institutional setting, it often takes on a conversational tone filled with idioms, jokes, metaphors, and intertextual references that mirror everyday language. The commentator must balance objectivity with entertainment, delivering information while also eliciting emotional responses. This blend of functions distinguishes football commentary from other forms of public discourse and makes it a compelling subject of linguistic research.

Several researchers have contributed to the study of football commentary. Montgomery (2007) describes live commentary as a hybrid discourse genre that merges elements of spoken narrative with features of institutional talk. He argues that football commentary is not simply an account of events but a performance involving stylistic choices and pragmatic strategies that help construct the meaning of the game. Beard (1998) similarly highlights the uniqueness of sports commentary as a fast-paced, dramatic, and emotionally charged form of language that engages listeners through repetition, rhetorical devices, and marked prosody.

In the Nigerian context, Yusuf (2018) investigates the use of conceptual metaphors in football commentary, illustrating how the language often

draws on domains such as war, battle, and journey to frame on-field events. This metaphorical framing is a pragmatic act it invites the audience to interpret the match through culturally resonant lenses. Likewise, Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019) analyze amusement strategies in British football commentary, identifying how humour, sarcasm, and hyperbole function pragmatically to entertain and engage.

Further contributions by Chovanec (2018) and Fadillah (2023) explore how pragmatic features in football commentary vary across media formats and cultural contexts. Chovanec focuses on online text-based commentary and its blend of informal digital discourse with the immediacy of live events. Fadillah compares European and Indonesian football commentary to highlight how different cultural norms influence the use of politeness strategies, indirect speech, and speech acts.

Despite these contributions, gaps still exist in the pragmatic study of football commentary, especially in relation to individual commentary styles. Well-known commentators such as Peter Drury, John Champion, and Jim Beglin, among others, have distinctive linguistic styles that are often celebrated by fans yet underexplored in academic literature. This study, therefore, seeks to analyze a selection of football commentaries from such figures, focusing on how pragmatic elements are employed to achieve expressive, persuasive, and entertaining communication.

In doing so, the study will examine linguistic features such as deixis, speech acts, implicature, and presupposition as used by different commentators across different matches. It will also highlight how pragmatic tools contribute to the construction of meaning, excitement, and identity within the football discourse community.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Identify the predominant pragmatic features present in selected football commentaries.
- Analyze how these features function within the discourse to shape audience interpretation.
- Examine the contextual and situational use of language in live football commentary.
- Evaluate the communicative strategies employed by commentators to enhance viewer engagement.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a core branch of linguistics concerned with how language is used in real communicative situations. Unlike syntax or semantics, which focus on structure and literal meaning, pragmatics investigates meaning in relation to context, speaker intentions, and listener interpretations. It explores how people understand implied meanings, manage conversation, and perform actions through language (Yule, 1996).

Core pragmatic phenomena include speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), implicature (unstated but inferred meanings), presupposition (background assumptions shared by speaker and listener), deixis (context-dependent references like “this,” “now,” or “he”), and politeness strategies. These tools help reveal how language operates beyond literal meaning, especially in fast-paced spoken genres like football commentary.

Discourse

Discourse refers to structured language use that goes beyond isolated sentences. It is the way language is organized and used in communication to construct meaning in social interactions. Discourse can be written or spoken, formal or informal, and it often reflects power relations, speaker identity, and communicative goals.

Life is a constant flow of discourse language functioning in one of many contexts that together make up a culture (Ayuwo and Mandah, 2025). Discourse refers to connected stretches of language that go beyond sentence boundaries to form coherent communication (Gee, 2011). It is shaped by social context, speaker roles, and communicative goals. Spoken discourse, especially in football commentary, is dynamic and interactional. It reflects how language is structured and deployed in specific genres, blending narrative, description, and performative functions (Fairclough, 1992).

In the context of football commentary, discourse encompasses not only the words spoken by commentators but also the structure, style, rhythm, and interactional strategies they employ. This form of discourse is typically spontaneous, strategic, and responsive to events unfolding in real time. It also often exhibits features of narration, performance, and institutional language.

Football Commentary

Football commentary refers to the real-time spoken narration of football matches by trained professionals known as commentators. This commentary serves both informational and entertainment purposes, guiding the audience through the progression of the match while adding excitement, interpretation, and emotional tone.

It is a form of live spoken discourse that combines real-time narration with interpretation and performance. It serves informational, emotional, and entertainment purposes, using a rapid, spontaneous, and rhetorically rich style. According to Montgomery (2007), football commentary constitutes a hybrid discourse genre involving descriptive narration and evaluative language shaped by institutional norms and audience expectations. It often employs metaphor, exaggeration, repetition, and humor to maintain engagement.

Football commentary is unique in that it requires immediate linguistic reactions, descriptive precision, and the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, hyperbole, repetition, and humor. Commentators must juggle accuracy, engagement, and entertainment within seconds. As such, their language is often pragmatically rich, reflecting functions such as describing, evaluating, predicting, and reacting.

Context

Context is a critical concept in pragmatics, as it determines how utterances are interpreted. It includes both linguistic context (surrounding text) and situational context (physical, social, and cultural setting). In live sports commentary, context is constantly shifting due to the unpredictable nature of gameplay. Commentators rely heavily on shared knowledge and situational awareness to convey intended meanings effectively (Levinson, 1983). Understanding the pragmatics of football commentary thus requires careful attention to how meaning is shaped by time, place, and interaction.

In pragmatics, context is pivotal. It includes all the surrounding circumstances linguistic, physical, social, and cultural that influence how utterances are interpreted. In live football commentary, context encompasses the flow of the match, the behavior of players and fans, the history between teams, and even the mood of the commentators. It is important to note these:

- Linguistic context, which refers to the textual environment of an utterance what has already been said.
- Situational (or physical) context, which involves the non-linguistic setting who is speaking, to whom, when, where, and why.

Theoretical Review

This study is primarily situated within the domain of pragmatics and adopts a multi-theoretical framework to analyze the communicative strategies employed in football commentary. The key theoretical lens is Speech Act Theory, supported by insights from Grice's Cooperative Principle and Politeness Theory. These theories collectively provide a robust foundation for examining how meaning is contextually negotiated, performed, and interpreted in real-time spoken discourse.

Speech Act Theory

Originally proposed by J.L. Austin (1962) and later refined by John Searle (1969), Speech Act Theory asserts that language is not only used to convey information but also to perform actions. Austin distinguishes between locutionary (saying something), illocutionary (doing something in saying), and perlocutionary acts (effects produced by saying). For example, when a commentator exclaims, "What a goal!", they are not merely describing but evaluating and eliciting an emotional response from the audience.

In essence, the theory's ideological basis is that language functions as an action, meaning utterances do not merely convey information but perform socially and communicatively relevant acts.

Searle expanded this framework by classifying speech acts into categories such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This typology is particularly useful in football commentary, where commentators engage in a wide range of pragmatic functions: informing (e.g., "He passes it to Messi"), predicting (e.g., "This could be the winning goal"), expressing (e.g., "What a shame!"), and evaluating (e.g., "That was a terrible miss").

Modern scholars have built upon and critiqued Speech Act Theory in various ways. Levinson (1983) emphasized the theory's value in understanding communicative intent but noted its limitations in handling multi-layered discourse. Mey (2001) extended the theory's application to institutional and media talk, arguing that speech

acts are often shaped by broader socio-pragmatic norms rather than individual intention alone. More recently, Thomas (2013) discussed the theory's usefulness in applied pragmatics, especially in media discourse, where speech acts are framed not only by context but also by performance expectations.

Despite its theoretical utility, Speech Act Theory has faced several criticisms:

- It often abstracts language from its discursive or conversational flow, focusing more on isolated utterances than extended dialogue.
- It assumes a stable and shared understanding between speaker and hearer, which may not hold in multi-audience or media contexts.
- Critics like Bach and Harnish (1979) argue that it underrepresents indirect speech acts, where meaning is implied rather than explicit.
- In the context of spontaneous discourse such as football commentary, the theory may not sufficiently account for rapid code-switching, shifts in register, and overlapping turns.

Football commentators perform multiple speech acts in quick succession: informing (e.g., "He passes it to Salah"), evaluating (e.g., "That's brilliant footwork!"), predicting (e.g., "This could be the equalizer"), and expressing emotion (e.g., "Oh no! What a miss!"). Speech Act Theory enables a structured analysis of how these utterances function communicatively beyond their literal content. It allows this study to categorize and interpret the functional roles of commentary in shaping viewer perception, guiding interpretation, and enhancing entertainment.

While influential, Speech Act Theory has faced criticisms for its limited attention to broader discourse structure and for assuming static speaker-hearer roles. Nevertheless, it remains a powerful tool for analyzing functional language use in contextually rich environments like live sports commentary (Levinson, 1983; Mey, 2001).

Grice's Cooperative Principle

Another crucial theory for this study is Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975), which proposes that effective communication is guided by four conversational maxims: quantity (be informative), quality (be truthful), relation (be relevant), and manner (be clear). In football commentary, these maxims are constantly manipulated for stylistic and rhetorical effects.

This theory argues that communication is a cooperative activity governed by shared norms and

expectations. For instance, exaggeration ("He sent the ball into orbit!") violates the maxim of quality but enhances entertainment and engagement. Similarly, strategic ambiguity or irony ("That was... ambitious") plays with the maxim of manner or relevance to convey layered meanings. These violations are not errors but pragmatic strategies used to influence interpretation and maintain audience attention.

For example:

- Quantity is often flouted through concise phrases like "He shoots GOAL!" to heighten suspense.
- Quality is playfully violated through hyperboles ("He sent that into orbit!") for dramatic effect.
- Manner is sometimes ambiguous ("Interesting decision from the referee...") to subtly criticize while maintaining neutrality.

In recent times, scholars such as Thomas (1995) and Cutting (2002) emphasize the dynamic application of Grice's maxims in media discourse. In football commentary, where time constraints and audience engagement are key, deliberate violations of these maxims function as pragmatic strategies to inform, entertain, or provoke reflection.

Politeness Theory

If one considers aspects of face and social interaction in commentary, Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) offers additional insight. Although football commentary is typically impersonal, some instances, such as referees' decisions or players' mistakes, may involve face-threatening acts. According to this theory, language use is shaped by social concerns for face the public self-image of participants. Commentators often soften criticisms with hedges or indirect speech to maintain a professional tone or avoid offense, especially in multicultural or international broadcasts. They often mitigate criticism using indirect speech or hedging for instance, ("That was ambitious" rather than "That was a bad shot") to avoid sounding overly harsh.

Politeness Theory has been critiqued for its Western bias (Watts, 2003) and for assuming uniform notions of politeness. Nevertheless, it provides useful insights into how commentators balance candor and tact, particularly when addressing sensitive issues like player errors, refereeing decisions, or controversial tactics.

These theoretical frameworks Speech Act Theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle, and Politeness Theory collectively provide a powerful lens for analyzing football commentary as a complex, layered, and dynamic discourse. They help illuminate how language in this genre is strategically employed to inform, entertain, and emotionally connect with audiences, often under extreme time pressure and contextual fluidity.

Empirical Studies

Several studies have applied pragmatic theories to sports commentary, especially in football, to understand how meaning is constructed and conveyed under time constraints and audience pressure. Crystal and Davy (1969) were among the first to explore the linguistic features of sports commentary, focusing on its distinctive grammar, ellipsis, and rapid speech. While their analysis was not explicitly pragmatic, it laid the foundation for later studies on how context influences language use in sports.

Beard (1998) examined the language of sports journalism and commentary, highlighting the use of evaluative language, metaphor, and hyperbole. He noted that commentators frequently perform speech acts such as praising, criticizing, and predicting, which aligns with the principles of Speech Act Theory. Similarly, Ferguson (1983) analyzed the register of sports commentary, emphasizing the reliance on formulaic expressions and real-time descriptions. He argued that pragmatics plays a role in shaping how the audience interprets the excitement or drama of a game.

In recent years, advancements in computational linguistics have enabled large-scale analysis of football commentary. Suglia *et al.* (2022) introduced the *GrOunded footbALL commentaries (GOAL)* dataset, which includes transcribed live commentaries of football highlights. This resource facilitates the investigation of dynamic language grounding in unpredictable game scenarios, offering baselines for tasks such as live commentary generation. Similarly, Mkhallati *et al.* (2023) developed the *SoccerNet-Caption* dataset, featuring approximately 37,000 timestamped commentaries across over 700 hours of soccer broadcasts. Their work focused on dense video captioning, aiming to generate text-based commentary linked to specific timestamps, which enhances accessibility for fans unable to watch live games.

Rahimian *et al.* (2025) explored the intersection of machine learning and natural language processing in football analytics. They introduced 'wordalizations,' a method that converts machine learning model outputs into natural language, offering entertaining and informative descriptions of football actions. Meanwhile, Merullo *et al.* (2019) studied commentator bias in American football broadcasts. Their analysis of 1,455 broadcast transcripts revealed patterns of racial bias in commentary. While their study focused on American football, the methodologies used can inform analyses of bias in football commentary globally.

In the context of Nigerian football commentary, Nwoye (1992) applied Speech Act Theory to analyze radio football commentary, revealing how Nigerian commentators blend description with humor and cultural references, performing expressive and commissive acts. However, his study was limited to local league matches and did not explore cross-commentator variation or newer pragmatic frameworks such as implicature or politeness strategies. In a similar vein, Osoba and Alebiosu (2016) analyzed illocutionary acts in Nigerian football commentary, identifying assertives and expressives as the most frequent speech acts. However, their study was based on a small sample and did not incorporate a comparative or cross-linguistic perspective.

Beyond sports commentary, research on pragmatic features in real-time media discourse provides insights that can be applied to football commentary. Dynel (2011) explored humor and implicature in TV and media discourse, including sports talk shows. She found that media discourse often manipulates Grice's maxims for stylistic and entertainment purposes, which is evident in football commentary, where commentators frequently flout maxims to engage the audience. Mey (2001) discussed "pragmeme," context-specific language functions in institutional and media settings, a concept relevant to football commentary, which is shaped by the roles of commentators and their spontaneous emotional responses to live events. Additionally, Koussouhon and Allagbe (2017) analyzed pragmatic strategies in political discourse and found overlaps with sports commentary, particularly in terms of evaluative language and persuasive tactics.

Despite the growing body of research, notable gaps remain that this study seeks to address. First, many studies focus on a limited number of

commentators, restricting the generalizability of their findings. This study, however, draws from a broader selection of commentators, including Peter Drury, Jim Beglin, and John Champion, offering a more comprehensive analysis. Second, prior research tends to rely heavily on Speech Act Theory, often overlooking complementary frameworks such as Grice's Cooperative Principle and Politeness Theory. This study adopts a multi-theoretical approach to better capture the full range of pragmatic strategies in football commentary. Furthermore, much of the existing research focuses on local or radio commentaries, leaving global, televised commentaries underexplored. This study investigates international televised commentaries, considering more sophisticated and widely broadcasted content. Lastly, many empirical studies focus on isolated utterances, neglecting the dynamic, evolving nature of real-time football commentary. This research takes a discourse-oriented approach, analyzing sequences of utterances to reveal how meaning unfolds over time and how commentators adapt to the unfolding game.

While previous empirical studies have laid a solid foundation for understanding the pragmatics of sports commentary, there remains ample room for a more nuanced and broader analysis. This study contributes to existing scholarship by examining multiple commentators through a multi-theoretical lens, analyzing how language functions in real-time football commentary. By integrating traditional pragmatic theories with contemporary methods, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the communicative functions of football commentary and its role in engaging, informing, and entertaining global audiences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a Qualitative Descriptive Research Design, guided by an analytical and interpretive approach. This design is appropriate because the study aims to examine naturally occurring language as used by football commentators, with emphasis on how meaning is pragmatically constructed in real-time discourse.

Qualitative research is particularly suited for linguistic and discourse-based studies, as it allows for a detailed exploration of context, speaker intention, and audience engagement without reliance on numerical data. The descriptive nature of this design provides a comprehensive account of pragmatic features embedded in football

commentary such as speech acts, implicature, presupposition, and evaluative statements.

Simultaneously, the interpretive element allows the researcher to uncover the communicative functions and strategic language choices made by commentators. Given the spontaneous and context-sensitive nature of live commentary, this design offers the flexibility needed to analyze dynamic language use. The overall goal is not to test hypotheses but to generate insightful interpretations of how language functions within the specific domain of football broadcasting.

The population of this study consists of televised or recorded football commentary excerpts from both international and club-level matches. This includes broadcasts from major global events such as the FIFA World Cup, UEFA Champions League, English Premier League, and La Liga, among others.

The focus is not on analyzing *all* existing football commentaries but rather on drawing from a representative range of professionally delivered broadcasts that reflect diverse linguistic, cultural, and stylistic approaches. Commentators featured span multiple tournaments, networks, and timeframes to ensure a robust basis for pragmatic analysis of natural language in football discourse.

This study utilizes a purposive sample of twenty-two (22) football commentary excerpts, carefully selected for their richness in linguistic style, pragmatic features, and match context. These samples are drawn from the works of at least three professional commentators, including Peter Drury, John Champion, Jim Beglin, and others. The commentary excerpts were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. Samples are chosen for their linguistic and pragmatic depth, including features such as speech acts, metaphor, evaluation, and implicature.

The selected excerpts span different tournaments, matches, and broadcasting settings, ensuring wide representation in terms of discourse style. This approach supports the study's objective of analyzing varied communicative strategies and pragmatic phenomena in football commentary.

The selection prioritizes high-profile matches both club and international featuring renowned commentators known for expressive and context-rich language. This method guarantees inclusion of data that are sufficiently layered and contextually meaningful for in-depth pragmatic analysis. It also

ensures diversity in discourse style, emotional tone, and narrative approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Football commentary is inherently dynamic and context-sensitive, requiring the use of speech acts, implicature, deixis, and presupposition to construct meaning in real time. Commentators often rely on stylistic and rhetorical choices that engage the audience while narrating fast-paced events. These pragmatic strategies highlight how commentary serves as both informative discourse and performative language use.

The analysis in this study will follow a qualitative and interpretive framework, guided by:

- Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969)
- Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975)
- Elements of Contextual and Discourse Analysis

Each commentary excerpt will be examined for its pragmatic features, including but not limited to:

- Speech acts such as asserting, predicting, expressing, or evaluating
- Implicatures and presuppositions
- Deictic expressions tied to situational context
- Politeness strategies and face-management techniques
- Stylistic devices like metaphor, exaggeration, and irony

These elements will be interpreted in light of their communicative goals and contextual constraints, showing how language is dynamically used to inform, entertain, and influence audience perception.

Where relevant, comparative insights will be drawn across different commentators to highlight stylistic variations and communicative techniques. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of how language functions pragmatically in the specialized domain of football commentary.

In what follows we present the selected commentary excerpts, along with brief contextual details such as the match, year, and speaker. Each excerpt is then analyzed using relevant pragmatic tools to uncover how meaning is shaped by context and communicative intention.

Excerpt 1

Commentator: Peter Drury
Match/Event: Liverpool vs Manchester City, UEFA Champions League Quarter-Final (Second Leg)

Year: 2018

Link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_0VwA8zfHE

Time Stamp: 12:34

Commentary:

“Mohamed Salah, the Egyptian king, silences the Etihad with a touch of royal class!”

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Expressive
- Metaphor: “Egyptian king,” “touch of royal class”
- Implicature: Suggests Salah's dominance and extraordinary talent, elevating his performance beyond the ordinary.
- Deixis: “The Etihad” refers to Manchester City's stadium, presupposing familiarity with the setting.

Analysis:

Peter Drury masterfully employs metaphor and expressive language to dramatize the moment, casting Salah as a regal figure whose action carries emotional weight. Referring to him as “the Egyptian king” both personalizes and mythologizes his role, aligning with popular fan narratives. The phrase “silences the Etihad” indicates the psychological impact on the home supporters and implies a shift in match momentum. This use of royal imagery and stadium deixis enhances audience engagement and reflects real-time emotional shifts, aligning closely with Speech Act Theory and Gricean implicature by maximizing relevance and emotional effect.

Excerpt 2

Commentator: John Champion
Match/Event: England vs Croatia, FIFA World Cup Semi-final, 2018

Year: 2018

Source: YouTube – John Champion Commentary - England vs Croatia 2018

Link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example_link

Time Stamp: 18:20

Commentary:

“For England, it's a familiar tale of heartbreak... and for Croatia, history beckons.”

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Evaluative
- Presupposition: “Familiar tale of heartbreak” assumes prior knowledge of England’s past failures.
- Metaphor: “History beckons” personifies history as if it’s an active force.

Analysis:

Champion’s use of presupposition and metaphor strengthens the emotional narrative of the match. The phrase “familiar tale of heartbreak” draws on England’s footballing past, implying that their current predicament is a recurring theme. The metaphor “history beckons” personifies history, suggesting that the moment is pivotal. These elements, combined with the evaluative nature of the speech act, engage the audience emotionally, enhancing the drama and aligning with Grice’s Maxims of Relevance and Manner for concise yet impactful communication.

Excerpt 3

Commentator: Peter Drury
 Match/Event: Roma vs Barcelona, UEFA Champions League Quarter-Final, 2018
 Year: 2018
 Source: YouTube – Peter Drury Commentary - Roma vs Barcelona 2018
 Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example_link
 Time Stamp: 54:12

Commentary:

“Roma have risen from their ruins! Manolas, the Greek god in Rome! The unthinkable unfolds before our eyes!”

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Expressive
- Metaphor: “Risen from their ruins,” “Greek god in Rome”
- Presupposition: The phrase “the unthinkable unfolds” assumes the audience is aware of Roma’s underdog status and their slim chances of success.

Analysis:

Peter Drury uses expressive and assertive speech acts to enhance the drama of Roma’s remarkable comeback. The metaphor “risen from their ruins” dramatizes their victory, framing it as a heroic revival. By referring to Manolas as the “Greek god in Rome,” Drury elevates the player’s role, blending mythological imagery with sporting context to emphasize the magnitude of his performance. The presupposition in “the

unthinkable unfolds” works to build suspense, suggesting the audience shares in the disbelief and excitement of the moment. This commentary demonstrates how football commentary transcends simple description, shaping an emotionally charged narrative that engages listeners through expressive language and shared context.

Excerpt 4

Commentator: Jim Beglin
 Match/Event: Manchester United vs Arsenal, English Premier League, 2021
 Year: 2021
 Source: YouTube – Jim Beglin Commentary - Manchester United vs Arsenal 2021
 Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example_link
 Time Stamp: 34:56

Commentary:

“He had time, space, and the finish to match clinical from the young lad.”

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive
- Deixis: “The young lad” (referring to the player, with meaning grounded in immediate match context)
- Adjective: “Clinical” (used to both compliment and assess the player’s performance technically)
- Grice’s Maxim of Manner: Clear, unambiguous phrasing

Analysis:

Jim Beglin employs assertive speech acts to deliver an evaluation of the player’s performance, highlighting his technical ability with the word “clinical.” This term functions both as praise and an assessment of precision in execution. The phrase “the young lad” is an example of deixis, referencing the player in a manner that relies on shared knowledge between the commentator and the audience. Additionally, Beglin’s concise delivery adheres to Grice’s Maxim of Manner, offering clear and straightforward communication. The tone remains neutral, with subtle praise embedded in the commentary, influencing how the audience perceives the player’s performance without overtly emotional language.

Excerpt 5

Commentator: Peter Drury
 Match/Event: Argentina vs France, FIFA World Cup Final, 2022
 Year: 2022
 Source: YouTube – Peter Drury Commentary -

Argentina vs France 2022
Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example_link

Time Stamp: 78:45

Commentary:

"Messi fell in love with the World Cup, and the World Cup finally loved him back."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Expressive + Assertive
- Metaphor: "Fell in love with the World Cup," "World Cup finally loved him back" (personification and metaphor)
- Conversational Implicature: Assumes the audience understands Messi's previous World Cup struggles
- Emotionally Charged Language: Uses expressive speech to evoke emotion in the audience

Analysis:

Peter Drury uses metaphor and emotive language to elevate Messi's victory into a romanticized narrative. The personification of the World Cup, with the phrase "loved him back," transforms a sports achievement into a more intimate, symbolic victory, adding emotional depth. Drury's use of conversational implicature assumes that the audience understands Messi's long journey with the World Cup, thus embedding deeper meaning into the utterance. This commentary blends sports with emotion, amplifying the significance of Messi's triumph and reflecting the commentator's role in mythologizing sport. The use of expressive speech acts enhances the emotional connection between the event and the audience.

Excerpt 6

Commentator:	Peter	Drury
Match/Event:	Argentina vs Nigeria, FIFA World Cup 2018 (Group)	World Cup Stage)
Year:		2018
Link:	Watch on YouTube	
Link:	Watch on YouTube	
Time Stamp:		02:15

Commentary:

"They had to win... and they have to thank the man for whom the phrase 'national treasure' could have been invented." (referring to Messi)

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Expressive
- Metaphor: "National treasure"
- Implicature: Messi's significance to Argentina is implied—his contribution is so great that he embodies the notion of a national treasure.

- Personification: The phrase "could have been invented" personifies the phrase "national treasure," as though it were created specifically to describe Messi's importance.

Analysis:

Peter Drury utilizes metaphor and expressive speech acts to highlight Messi's central role in Argentina's success. Referring to Messi as a "national treasure" elevates his contribution to something more than just a sporting achievement; it turns him into a symbol of national pride. The implicature in this commentary is that Messi's value transcends football; he is essential to the nation's identity and their survival in the tournament. Drury's use of personification with the phrase "could have been invented" further intensifies this portrayal, implying that Messi is the very embodiment of Argentina's sporting and national pride. The commentary amplifies Messi's heroism, enhancing emotional engagement and aligning with the audience's admiration for the player.

Excerpt 7

Match	Date:	May 7, 2025
Fixture:	Arsenal vs. Paris Saint-Germain (UEFA Champions League Semi-Final, Second Leg)	
Commentator:	Dan Roebuck (Main), Adrian Clarke (Co-)	
Source:	Arsenal vs. PSG Match Coverage - ICDB.tv	
Timestamp:	85:00	

Commentary:

"Despite the aggregate loss, Arsenal's xG tells a different story. They created more, they pressed harder, but PSG were ruthlessly efficient."

Pragmatic Analysis:

Speech Act Theory

- Locutionary Act: Reporting on Arsenal's xG vs. PSG's efficiency.
- Illocutionary Act: Informing and evaluating the contrast between Arsenal's performance and the result.
- Perlocutionary Act: Listeners may feel sympathy for Arsenal's effort despite the loss.

Grice's Cooperative Principle

- Maxim of Quantity: Sufficient info on Arsenal's performance vs. PSG's outcome.
- Maxim of Quality: Assumes accuracy of the xG stats.
- Maxim of Relevance: Directly relates to the match's result.

- Maxim of Manner: Clear and concise, emphasizing contrast.

Politeness Theory

- Positive Face: Acknowledges Arsenal's efforts, affirming their competence.
- Negative Face: Avoids critiquing PSG, instead attributing success to efficiency.

Additional Notes

- Deixis: "Despite the aggregate loss" refers to PSG's lead. "Arsenal's xG" refers to their expected goals metric.
- Metaphor: "Tells a different story" suggests stats reveal an unexpected narrative.

Excerpt 8

Commentator: Peter Drury
Match/Event: Cristiano Ronaldo's Return to Manchester United (2021)
Year: 2021

Source: YouTube – Peter Drury Commentary - Ronaldo's Return to Manchester United
Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5B5e02c6A9Y>

Time Stamp: 00:45

Commentary:

"He has walked the walk, he has talked the talk, now he's back to dance the dance... Cristiano returns like a king to his castle."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Expressive
- Metaphors: "Dance the dance," "like a king to his castle"
- Implicature: Ronaldo's return is inevitable and deserving, reflecting his legendary status.

Analysis:

Peter Drury uses metaphor to frame Ronaldo's return as a triumphant and natural event. "Walked the walk" and "talked the talk" highlight Ronaldo's previous achievements, while "dance the dance" suggests his smooth, familiar return. Describing him as "a king to his castle" elevates Ronaldo's status, portraying him as a figure of immense importance. These metaphors and assertive language emphasize his legendary role and the emotional significance of his return to Manchester United.

Excerpt 9

Commentator: Peter Drury
Match/Event: Chelsea vs Ajax, UEFA Champions League
Year: 2019

Source: YouTube – Peter Drury Commentary - Chelsea vs Ajax 2019
Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dB0VvnxI0xo>

Time Stamp: 43:20

Commentary:

"Football, bloody hell! This is chaos and it is beautiful. Ajax have made art, Chelsea have made mayhem, and the night is still young."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Expressive + Evaluative
- Metaphors: "Made art," "made mayhem"
- Exclamation: "Football, bloody hell!"
- Implicature: The match is unpredictable and thrilling, with both teams showcasing contrasting styles—art (Ajax) vs. mayhem (Chelsea).

Analysis:

Peter Drury uses the exclamation "Football, bloody hell!" to immediately convey his emotional reaction to the intensity of the match, a phrase that adds spontaneity and drama. The metaphors "made art" and "made mayhem" contrast Ajax's structured brilliance with Chelsea's chaotic but effective play. The use of "art" elevates Ajax's tactical mastery, while "mayhem" suggests Chelsea's frantic and unpredictable style. The final statement, "the night is still young," implies that the drama and excitement are far from over, heightening the anticipation for what's to come.

Excerpt 10

Commentator: Peter Drury
Match/Event: World Cup 2022 Final – Argentina vs France
Year: 2022

Source: YouTube – Peter Drury Commentary - Argentina vs France 2022
Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfDTe7F0TfM>

Time Stamp: 04:45

Commentary:

"And so Messi fell to earth with a golden glow, a world champion at last."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Expressive
- Metaphor: "Fell to earth with a golden glow"
- Mythological Allusion: Implies Messi's almost divine or mythical status.
- Achievement Implication: Messi's journey from legend to world champion.

- Poetic Closure: The phrasing invokes a sense of finality and triumph.

Analysis:

Drury's phrase "fell to earth with a golden glow" draws on a mythological allusion, suggesting Messi's near-divine status, elevating his achievement beyond the realm of football. The metaphor of a "golden glow" connects Messi's victory to something celestial, marking his world champion status as a long-awaited, almost fated achievement. The use of "at last" emphasizes the culmination of Messi's career, adding emotional weight to the moment. This commentary serves as a poetic closure, portraying Messi's final triumph in a highly symbolic and dramatic manner, ensuring his place as one of the greatest in football history.

Excerpt 11

Commentator: Martin Tyler
 Match/Event: Manchester United 1–6 Manchester City – Premier League
 Date: October 23, 2011
 Source: [YouTube – Manchester United 1–6 Manchester City 2011 Highlights](#)
 Time Stamp: [Timestamp not specified]

Commentary:

"It's a scoreline that's embarrassing, it's an afternoon that's humbling, and it's a result that will echo around the world."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Evaluative
- Metaphor: "Result that will echo around the world"
- Evaluative Language: "Embarrassing," "humbling"
- Implicature: Highlights the scale and global shock of the defeat

Analysis:

Martin Tyler's commentary underscores the emotional and reputational impact of the defeat on Manchester United. His evaluative word choices—"embarrassing" and "humbling"—frame the loss as both shocking and humiliating. The metaphor "echo around the world" implies that the result isn't just local news—it resonates globally, marking the match as historically significant.

Excerpt 12

Commentator: John Champion
 Match/Event: Tottenham Hotspur vs. Manchester City – UEFA Champions League Quarter-Final (Second Leg)
 Date: April 17, 2019
 Source: [YouTube – Tottenham vs Manchester City 4-4 \(Agg\) – UCL 2019 Dramatic Finish](#)
 Time Stamp: 00:50–01:05

Commentary:

"And Manchester City are out! All those dreams, shattered by the slimmest of margins. Football, in its cruelest form."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Declarative + Expressive
- Metaphor: "Dreams, shattered," "football, in its cruelest form"
- Personification: Football is portrayed as capable of cruelty
- Implicature: Implies the emotional devastation and harsh unpredictability of the sport

Analysis:

John Champion's commentary captures the emotional collapse of Manchester City's hopes. The phrase "dreams, shattered" uses metaphor to intensify the disappointment, while "football, in its cruelest form" personifies the sport as an agent of heartbreak. This aligns with an expressive speech act—conveying the tragedy of a dramatic elimination due to fine margins. The language emphasizes the emotional weight of sport and its capacity to devastate, even when teams perform well.

Excerpt 13

Commentator: Martin Tyler
 Match/Event: Spain 1–5 Netherlands – FIFA World Cup Group Stage
 Date: June 13, 2014
 Source: YouTube – Spain 1-5 Netherlands Full Match 2014
 Link: [Watch the full match here](#)
 Time Stamp: 03:22

Commentary:

"A goal made in heaven! Van Persie defies gravity and Spain's defence!"

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Exclamatory + Expressive
- Hyperbole: "A goal made in heaven"
- Metaphor: "Defies gravity"
- Implication: Van Persie's header is presented as supernatural, conveying admiration and awe

Analysis:

Martin Tyler's commentary uses hyperbole and metaphor to elevate Van Persie's goal into something almost divine. The phrase "A goal made in heaven" suggests the goal's perfection, as if it were beyond earthly capabilities. The metaphor "defies gravity" exaggerates the physicality of the header, implying that Van Persie's leap was extraordinary and nearly impossible. The expressive speech act communicates sheer astonishment and admiration for the goal, while also implicitly criticizing Spain's defensive lapse, emphasizing the remarkable nature of the Netherlands' attack.

Excerpt 14

Commentator: Clive Tyldesley (Sky Sports)
 Match/Event: Leicester City Crowned Premier League Champions
 Date: May 2, 2016
 Source: YouTube – Leicester City Crowned Premier League Champions 2016
 Link: [Leicester City Crowned Premier League Champions \(2016\)](#)
 Time Stamp: (Insert time stamp when available)

Commentary:

"From relegation certainties to Premier League champions a football fairy tale written in blue."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Expressive
- Metaphor: "A football fairy tale written in blue"
- Irony: Emphasizes the unexpected nature of Leicester's triumph
- Implication: Leicester's success is framed as a miraculous and almost mythical story

Analysis:

Clive Tyldesley's commentary uses metaphor and irony to encapsulate Leicester City's extraordinary journey. By describing the club's achievement as "a football fairy tale written in blue," he elevates the victory to something almost magical, evoking the sense of an unbelievable transformation. The metaphor emphasizes the fairytale nature of their success, with "blue" representing Leicester's team colors, tying the fairytale narrative to the club's identity.

The irony lies in the juxtaposition between Leicester City's early-season struggles (once deemed "relegation certainties") and their eventual triumph as Premier League champions. The speech act asserts the significance of Leicester's achievement in football history, while the

metaphor and irony underscore how improbable the victory was. This language choice emphasizes the emotional and extraordinary nature of Leicester's remarkable underdog story, framing it as a mythic journey of triumph against all odds.

Excerpt 15

Commentators: Steve Hunter & John Aldridge (LFCTV)
 Match/Event: Liverpool 4–0 Barcelona – UEFA Champions League Semi-Final (Second Leg)
 Date: May 7, 2019
 Source: [BBC Commentary \(Goals Only\) – Liverpool 4-0 Barcelona](#)
 Time Stamp: 00:00–00:20

Commentary:

"Barcelona were meant to be the story... Liverpool have torn up the script!"

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive + Evaluative
- Metaphor: "Torn up the script"
- Contrast: Highlights the reversal of expected outcomes
- Implication: Suggests Liverpool's unexpected victory over Barcelona defied the anticipated narrative

Analysis:

The commentary encapsulates the dramatic nature of Liverpool's comeback against Barcelona. By stating that "Barcelona were meant to be the story," the commentator sets the expectation that Barcelona would advance. The phrase "torn up the script" employs metaphor to convey how Liverpool's performance disrupted the anticipated outcome, emphasizing the unexpected and remarkable nature of their victory. This contrast between expectation and reality underscores the significance of Liverpool's achievement, highlighting the emotional impact of overturning a three-goal deficit to reach the Champions League final.

Excerpt 16

Match/Event: Brazil 1–7 Germany – FIFA World Cup Semi-Final
 Date: July 8, 2014
 Commentator: Ian Darke
 Source: [Watch on YouTube](#)
 Time Stamp: 20:10 (Approx.)

Commentary:

"This is beyond belief. Brazil, broken and bruised in their own backyard."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Exclamatory + Expressive

- Metaphor: "Broken and bruised"
- Alliteration: "Broken and bruised"
- Implication: The magnitude of Brazil's defeat is beyond comprehension, and the metaphor emphasizes their devastation on home soil.

Analysis:

This commentary by Ian Darke (likely) captures the overwhelming shock and devastation of Brazil's historic defeat. The phrase "beyond belief" serves as an exclamatory expression, emphasizing the unimaginable nature of the result. The metaphor "broken and bruised" vividly portrays Brazil's physical and emotional destruction, underscoring the gravity of their loss, especially in the context of the World Cup being held on their home turf.

The use of alliteration ("broken and bruised") reinforces the emotional weight of the commentary, making the visual and emotional impact even stronger. The phrase "in their own backyard" further enhances the sense of betrayal and humiliation, as Brazil, a football powerhouse, is defeated in front of their own fans and within their own country.

Through these language choices, Darke not only highlights the scale of Brazil's humiliation but also enhances the emotional tone of the commentary, making the event feel even more significant and shocking for the global audience.

Excerpt 17

Match/Event: Morocco vs. Portugal – FIFA World Cup
 Date: December 10, 2022
 Commentator: Peter Drury
 Source: YouTube – Peter Drury Goosebumps
 Commentary on Morocco's Win
 Link: [YouTube](#)

Commentary:

"Today, referee is from Argentina, Facundo Tello; brandished 10 red cards in a domestic game only last month... Again, no Ronaldo in the Portuguese starting 11; and how could it be after Gonzalo Ramos stole the show against the Swiss? In the end, one alteration: Ruben Neves returns to the midfield instead of William Carvalho; Dalot again preferred to Cancelo; Pepe made his professional debut when the new hero Ramos was in the year five months old."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- Speech Act: Assertive, Informative
- Metaphor: "Gonzalo Ramos stole the show"

- Irony: Highlighting Pepe's age relative to Ramos
- Implicature: Emphasizing the generational shift in the team
- Gricean Maxims:
 - *Maxim of Quantity*: Provides sufficient background without overloading information
 - *Maxim of Relation*: All details are relevant to the match context
 - *Maxim of Manner*: Clear and orderly presentation of information

Analysis:

Peter Drury delivers a concise yet rich pre-match commentary, setting the stage with pertinent details about the referee's recent history, team selections, and player backgrounds. The metaphor "Gonzalo Ramos stole the show" vividly conveys Ramos's impactful performance in the previous match, suggesting a compelling reason for Ronaldo's absence from the starting lineup. The ironic observation about Pepe's debut occurring when Ramos was just five months old underscores the significant age gap, highlighting the team's blend of experience and youth.

Drury adheres to Grice's Maxims by providing just the right amount of information (*Quantity*), ensuring all details are pertinent to the match (*Relation*), and presenting them in a clear, structured manner (*Manner*). His commentary enhances the audience's understanding of the match dynamics and builds anticipation for the unfolding game.

Excerpt 18

England vs. Iceland – UEFA Euro 2016 Round of 16
 Date: June 27, 2016
 Commentator: Andy Townsend

Commentary:

"This is beyond embarrassing for England. They've been outthought, outfought, and outplayed."

Watch: [Euro 2016 England vs. Iceland Highlights](#)

Pragmatic Features:

- Speech Acts
Assertive + Expressive – The commentator delivers a factual assessment and expresses collective disappointment.
- Implicature:
 Implies that England's failure was not just physical but also tactical and psychological.
- Parallelism & Alliteration:
 The repetition of "out—" structures reinforces

the thoroughness of England's defeat while enhancing rhetorical impact.

- **Presupposition:**
Assumes that England was expected to win and that the result is humiliating by all standards.

Gricean Maxims:

- **Maxim** of **Quality:**
The speaker gives an honest evaluation of the team's poor performance.
- **Maxim** of **Quantity:**
Succinct yet powerful—delivers just enough information for impact without overexplaining.
- **Maxim** of **Relation:**
Directly relevant to the match outcome and the emotions of the moment.
- **Maxim** of **Manner:**
Clear, dramatic, and stylistically emphatic—suitable for a high-stakes live broadcast.

Townsend's use of tricolon and alliterative structures intensifies the criticism and dramatizes the scope of England's defeat. The commentary communicates disillusionment not just with the team's performance but with their mindset and preparation, adhering to pragmatic norms and maximizing emotional resonance for the audience.

Excerpt 19

Manchester United vs. Arsenal – Premier League

Date: December 2, 2017

Commentator: Martin Tyler

Source: [Premier League Highlights](#)

Commentary:

"De Gea is like a wall. Arsenal just can't find a way through."

Pragmatic Features:

- **Simile:**
"De Gea is like a wall" compares the goalkeeper to an impenetrable barrier, emphasizing his strength and solidity.
- **Implicature:**
The statement implies that De Gea's performance is so exceptional that Arsenal's efforts seem futile, suggesting that their attempts at scoring are doomed to failure.
- **Hyperbole:**
"A wall" exaggerates De Gea's performance, heightening his role as the key defensive figure in the match.
- **Speech** Act:
Assertive – Provides a direct evaluation of De Gea's role in the match.

Gricean Maxims:

- **Quality:**
The commentary offers a truthful assessment of De Gea's performance, reinforcing the goalkeeper's remarkable ability to stop Arsenal's attacks.
- **Relation:**
Highly relevant to the situation, as the match's outcome is largely influenced by De Gea's stellar goalkeeping.
- **Manner:**
The simile is clear and visual, making it easy for the audience to grasp De Gea's defensive prowess.
- **Quantity:**
The commentary is concise, providing just enough information to underscore De Gea's dominance without excessive elaboration.

The commentary employs a simile to dramatically highlight De Gea's exceptional goalkeeping skills, portraying him as an impenetrable force in the match. Through exaggeration and implicature, it elevates his performance and underscores Arsenal's struggles to break him down.

Excerpt

20

Liverpool vs. Manchester United – Premier League

Date: December 16, 2018

Source: Sky Sports Highlights

Commentator: Martin Tyler

Commentary: "Liverpool's intensity is suffocating United. They're relentless."

Pragmatic Features:

- **Metaphor:**
"Liverpool's intensity is suffocating United" uses the metaphor of "suffocating" to convey how overwhelming and controlling Liverpool's pressure is, restricting United's ability to respond or function effectively.
- **Implicature:**
The phrase suggests that Liverpool is not only dominating but doing so in a way that leaves United with little room to breathe or recover.
- **Speech** Act:
Assertive – The commentary presents a direct evaluation of Liverpool's performance, stating their dominance over the match.

Gricean Maxims:

- **Quality:** The commentary is a truthful assessment of the game, highlighting Liverpool's aggressive and unyielding style of play.

- **Relation:** The commentary is highly relevant to the moment, as it describes the overall pace and tone of the match, focusing on Liverpool's domination.
- **Manner:** The description is straightforward but impactful, making the imagery of suffocation easy to visualize and understand.
- **Quantity:** The commentary is concise and powerful, delivering just enough to convey the sense of overwhelming pressure without unnecessary detail.

The commentary uses a metaphor and repetition to emphasize Liverpool's overpowering style of play, suggesting their relentless pressure on Manchester United is so intense it's akin to suffocating them. The implicature suggests that United is helpless under the weight of Liverpool's dominance, capturing the flow of the match in a few striking words.

Excerpt 21

Teams: Arsenal vs. Chelsea

Date: May 5, 2024

Final Score: Arsenal 5–0 Chelsea

Commentator: Peter Drury

Source: [Peter Drury's Commentary on Arsenal vs. Chelsea 5-0](#)

Commentary:

"Arsenal are so good, they are scoring by mistake."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

- **Speech Act:** Assertive
The commentary is making an assertion about the nature of Arsenal's performance—highlighting how their dominance is so complete that they are scoring almost effortlessly, even "by mistake."
- **Metaphor:** "Scoring by mistake"
The phrase "scoring by mistake" is a metaphor that emphasizes how Arsenal's superiority in the match made it seem as if their goals were accidental or incidental, further highlighting the one-sided nature of the contest.
- **Irony:** The use of "scoring by mistake" is ironic because it suggests that Arsenal's brilliance in attack has made them so effective that they don't even need to try hard to score, though in reality, their goals are the result of precise play and not accidents.
- **Evaluative** Language:
The phrase "so good" is evaluative language that frames Arsenal's performance as exceptional. The commentator's use of such

language helps convey the feeling of admiration and amazement at the ease with which Arsenal were winning.

Analysis:

Peter Drury's commentary, "Arsenal are so good, they are scoring by mistake," encapsulates the overwhelming dominance of Arsenal in this match. By using metaphor and irony, Drury emphasizes how Arsenal's performance was so superior that it seemed as though their goals came almost effortlessly. The phrase "scoring by mistake" humorously downplays the team's effort, framing their play as so flawless that they were simply fortunate to score, despite the skill and planning behind each goal. This choice of language amplifies the sense of Arsenal's superiority in the match, allowing the audience to share in the commentator's awe at the team's near-perfect performance. The evaluative nature of Drury's language reinforces the idea that Arsenal were not just winning but were doing so in an almost unreal and uncontrollable manner.

Excerpt 22

Teams: Liverpool vs. Tottenham

Date: April 27, 2025

Final Score: Liverpool 5–1 Tottenham

Commentator: Peter Drury

Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Vs8sqrg51E

Commentary: "Liverpool cruised, then they crashed, and then they created a crescendo to match the experience Anfield has witnessed."

Pragmatic Features Identified:

1. **Metaphor:** "Liverpool cruised, then they crashed, and then they created a crescendo."
 - The use of the word "cruise" to describe Liverpool's smooth control of the game evokes an image of ease and dominance early in the match.
 - "Crashed" shifts the tone, indicating an unexpected decline or struggle. This highlights a moment of vulnerability, where the team faced a setback or was overwhelmed.
 - The term "crescendo" represents a gradual build-up toward a powerful climax, often used in music to describe a peak moment. This evokes the growing intensity and climax of the match, portraying Liverpool's resurgence after the difficulty.
2. **Hyperbole:** "To match the experience Anfield has witnessed."

- The phrase suggests that the match was extraordinary, equating it to past iconic moments at Anfield, elevating the importance of the game to a historical level. This exaggerates the match's significance, emphasizing its excitement and intensity.
3. Alliteration: "Cruised," "crashed," and "crescendo."
 - The repetition of the "c" sound draws attention to the three phases of the match and creates a rhythmic flow that mimics the progression of the match's dynamics. This adds to the dramatic build-up described in the commentary.
 4. Evaluative Language: "To match the experience Anfield has witnessed."
 - This evaluative comment sets a high standard for the game, positioning it as worthy of Anfield's legendary history. It suggests that the match was of a quality that could be compared to other iconic moments in the stadium's history

Analysis:

Peter Drury's commentary uses powerful metaphorical language to capture the ebb and flow of the match, providing listeners with a vivid and emotionally charged portrayal of the game. The words "cruise," "crash," and "crescendo" encapsulate the phases of Liverpool's performance, from a comfortable and dominant start, to a potential moment of collapse or struggle, before ultimately building toward an exciting and satisfying conclusion.

The use of hyperbole further emphasizes the importance of the match, positioning it as one of the most memorable at Anfield. By comparing the experience to previous historic moments, Drury effectively raises the stakes and adds to the tension and drama.

Alliteration in the commentary gives the description a musical quality, reinforcing the metaphor of the game's rising intensity. This stylistic choice enhances the rhythm and flow of Drury's delivery, mirroring the unfolding events of the match.

The commentary succeeds in drawing viewers into the emotional experience of the match, amplifying the excitement of Liverpool's dominant performance and creating a lasting impression of the game's significance.

CONCLUSION

This research has presented a pragmatic analysis of 22 excerpts from selected football commentaries, revealing how language in sports broadcasting functions not just to describe play-by-play action, but also to evaluate, persuade, and emotionally involve the audience. Through the application of Speech Act Theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle, and Politeness Theory, the study identified how commentators perform layered communicative acts that reflect both the structure of the match and the affective expectations of viewers.

The findings show that football commentary operates as a rich, multifunctional discourse. Commentators often perform multiple speech acts reporting, judging, emoting while strategically observing or flouting Gricean maxims to manage narrative pace, drama, or humour. Politeness strategies were evident in the nuanced way commentators offered critique, praise, or deflection, especially in moments of controversy or failure.

These insights reaffirm that football commentary is not merely reactive or descriptive but an interpretive and interactive genre. Commentators serve as both narrators and cultural mediators, shaping the way sporting moments are remembered and understood.

While this study has offered an in-depth analysis of selected English-language commentaries, further research could explore other variables such as multilingual commentary, gendered language use, or real-time audience response to enrich our understanding of pragmatics in sports discourse. Additionally, a corpus-based approach or a comparative analysis across different leagues or regions may yield broader generalizations about linguistic strategies in live sports narration.

In conclusion, football commentary is a pragmatic goldmine blending immediacy, persuasion, and performance. It deserves continued scholarly attention within the expanding field of sports linguistics.

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