The Production of Stance Triangle in Sport Discourse

Asst. Prof. Mahdi Mohsin Mohammed

Fatima Rasoul Abdullah
Department of English
College of Education for Human Sciences
University of Basrah

Abstract

The current study is set out to present the theoretical concept of stance, as an aspect of interpersonal meaning, into the discourse of sports and to explore the production of stance in sport press conferences. It seeks to provide an account of how patterns of stance are conveyed in such conferences. It detects lexical and grammatical stance markers used by interlocutors in the chosen soccer conferences to achieve what is known as the stance triangle. The study is divided into two sections. The first section provides the theoretical framework of the study. It tackles corpus linguistics, stance-taking, stance markers, and the discourse model of the study (Appraisal Theory by Martin and White, 1999). The second section is dedicated to the practical analysis of the three chosen soccer transcripts. It illustrates the numbers, percentages and instances of stance-taking arriving at the conclusions.

Key Words: Stance-taking, Stance Markers, Stance Triangle, Soccer Press Conferences.

مثلث الموقف اللغوي في الخطاب الرياضي

أ.م. مهدي محسن محمد
الباحثة فاطمة رسول عبدالله
جامعة البصرة- كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية-قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

الخلاصة

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تقديم المفهوم النظري للموقف اللغوي باعتباره جانبا من جوانب المعنى الشخصي في الخطاب الرياضي واستكشاف اتخاذ الموقف في المؤتمرات الصحفية الرياضية المختصة بكرة القدم. وتسعى الدراسة إلى تقديم وصف لكيفية نقل أنماط المواقف في مثل هذه المؤتمرات. واستخراج الأنماط المعجمية والنحوية المستخدمة من قبل المحاورين في مؤتمرات كرة القدم المختارة لتحقيق ما يعرف بمثلث المواقف اللغوية.تنقسم الدراسة الى قسمين. يوفر القسم الأول الإطار النظري للدراسة. ويتناول المتن اللغوي واتخاذ الموقف وأنماط الموقف ونموذج الخطاب في الدراسة (نظرية التقييم لمارتن ووايت ١٩٩٩).إما القسم الثاني فهو مخصص للتحليل العملي لنصوص كرة القدم الثلاثة المختارة. ويوضح هذا القسم نتائج التحليل الحاسوبي من الأرقام والنسب المئوية وصولا إلى الاستنتاج.

Literature Review

There no studies about stance within sport discourse; however, the subject of stance is dealt with in multiple studies:

- Al-Shunnag, M. (2014). Stance in Political Discourse:Arabic Translations of American Newspaper Opinion Articles on the 'Arab Spring'
- Florea, A. (2006). Patterns of Adverbial Stance Marking in United Nations Political Discourse: A Corpus-based Study.
- Johnstone, B. (2009). Stance, Style, and the Linguistic Individual

Section One: The Theoretical framework

1.1. Introduction

This section first presents the theoretical framework of the research. The subject of corpus linguistics is presented with its definition, advantages, purpose, and development. Then, it dives deeper into the lexico-grammatical framework of the study starting from the main topic which is stance-taking. It further explores Du Bois's (2007) stance triangle and its three components (evaluation, positioning, and alignment). Also, it sheds the light of the stance markers in both lexical and grammatical marking. Finally, this section offers an introduction into the Appraisal theory perspective with the spotlight focused on the ideas of James Martin and Peter White (1990).

1.2. Corpus linguistics

According to Paltridge (2006), a corpus is generally a group of authentic texts that are either spoken or written. Based on its size and composition, it represents a specific range of language use. Thus, a corpus is a collected parts or bits of language which are ordered and chosen depending on certain linguistic features that one may use them as samples of the language. A corpus is often computer readable and analyzed electronically. They are assessed according to certain linguistic features and the occurrence and the reoccurrence of these features in the discourse. They could be calculated with tools of concordance and frequency of particular items (p.156).

Actually, there are number of advantages of using corpora in discourse studies. One is that of reducing researcher bias. Empirical aspect is reached when removing the researcher bias in favor of objectivity and empiricism. Discourse analysts aim at uncovering how language is used and employed in different underlying discourse. This is done by collecting diverse supporting examples (language samples) of discourse construction to reveal what is typical and what is not so as to see the cumulative effect. Those meanings are not only personal and individual centered but they are shared by a discourse community (Baker, 2006, p.13).

Moreover, the fundamental purpose of a corpus is to validate a hypothesis concerning language by providing real life authentic evidence from everyday language. At first, corpus linguistics started its focus on English language and then

new interest emerged on comparative studies across languages. Recently, corpus linguistics approached the use of the World Wide Web as a corpus. Language teaching, political science, and translation studies are all fields that began to use corpora beside linguistic (Mahlberg, 2005, p.14).

1.3. Sport Discourse

Sport is one area of culture. Language is one of the most essential ingredients of the uniqueness and cultural identity of sport. Consequently, its spread and social range is established by it as shown by the phenomenon of sport media. Sport produces many professional and trade jargons (e.g. coaching jargon, the language of sport sciences, sport medicine, and sport fans' slang). To some extent, each such variety is linked with national language and involve phonetic, stylistic, and morphological features. Multiple values of sport outside the domain of sport are expressed through language. These values are ethical, philosophical, physical, health-related, and artistic (literature and fine arts) (Liponski, 2009, p.19).

From the point of view of the language of sport, the world of sport is seen as a specific linguistic reality in which certain protagonists are given multiple linguistic roles. The referee employs expressions with a short, concise style reinforced with the right symbolic gestures and commanding power. Different registers and styles are used by the coaches. In informal conversation and between one another, players also use a specialized jargon. A scientists and a physician also use a different language. Despite having common characteristics, these language varieties pose distinct intonation, stylistics, terminologies, and dialectal features. For instance, a referee expressing his ideas on the pitch is different from a supporter screaming "We got screwed" (Liponski, 2009, p.20).

1.4. Stance- taking

In everyday interaction, people engage in multiple conversational activities. It was noted that people do not only finish these activities but also express them with a stance. Stance taking can be defined as "taking up a position with respect to the form or one's utterance". It is considered to be central and important in the area of linguistic subjectivity because it represents a normal act of communication. It is claimed that there is no neutral position, neutrality is said to be a stance or a position by itself. A clear example is presented by the choice of verbs and how it mirrors our stance towards that particular speech. For instance, the choice of the verb "alleged" indicates doubt (Jaffe, 2009, p.1).

Social actors take stances, thus they are evaluating simultaneously 'positioning'. Accordingly, every act of evaluation is an act of stance taking hence making assessments towards actions or participants involved in an action. For instance, a study based on public and media discourses about obesity was quite evaluative since it reveals good and bad views within the range of moral discourse about overweight and, self-control and the influence of obesity on a particular society. Thus, the views of people involved in the study showed their stance in a social

perspective (Jaffe, 2009, p.4).

To conclude, an interaction is not only about the interchange of information and ideas but it is also about negotiating subjectivity. Human beings can never read minds or thoughts but they realize that others have minds, opinions, and beliefs. Thus, the human language organization displays shared attention and orientation. It is amazing how humans use language to create multiple kinds of meanings and stance is one type of these meanings (Jaffe, 2009, p.6).

1.5. The Stance Triangle

The framework of stance that is intended to be reached is one where stance is observed as "A single unified act encompassing several triplet sets of distinct components and processes". Three components of stance need to be tackled here: evaluation, positioning and alignment. Evaluation is "The process whereby a stancetaker orients to an object of stance and characterizes it as having specific quality or value". Positioning is the process in which the stancetaker displays his/her affective stance (e.g. I am glad) and epistemic stance or declares to changing degrees of certainty or knowledge. Additionally, alignment is "The act of calibrating the relationship between two stances, and by implication between two stancetakers". The following diagram was designed by Du Bois to further illustrate his point of view (p.165):
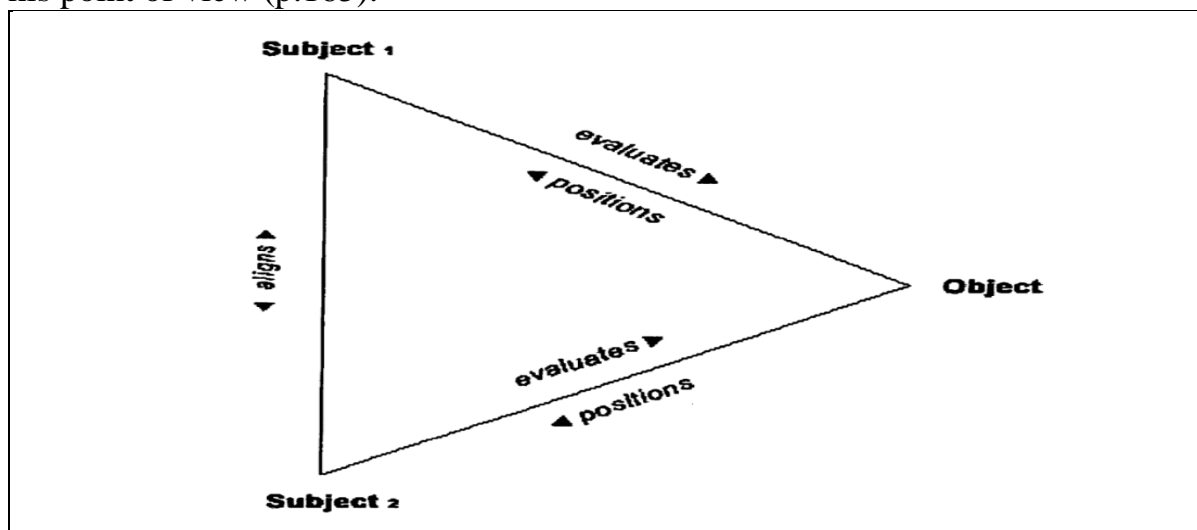
The Stance Triangle (Du Bois, 2007)

According to Du Bois (2007), stance is seen as three acts in one "tri-act". In the dialogic stance, these elements (evaluation, positioning, and alignment) come together to form a single unified stance act. "In taking a stance, the stancetaker (1) evaluates an object, (2) positions a subject (usually the self) and (3) aligns with other subjects". In a more informal way, "I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and thereby align with you".

1.6. Stance Markers

Stance markers can be divided into: lexical and grammatical markers.

41

1.6.1. Lexical Markers

The most common words in English are considered value-laden and stance can be inferred from the use of these evaluative and affective word choices. These lexical markers include adjectives, verbs, and nouns. The emotional or attitudinal conditions of individuals are attributed through such expressions. Evaluative adjectives give an opinion on the amount, value or quality of something such as (difficult, nice, etc.). Evaluative verbs carry a particular meaning which conveys the writer's attitude of something. Their use helps the reader to understand what weight, authority, accuracy or relevance the writer attaches to the source material being reported - i.e. if, or how strongly, the writer endorses it. They include such verbs (need, love, etc.). Keep in mind that these lexical expressions rely on the context and shared background for their explanation or interpretation. (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999, p.968).

1.6.2. Grammatical Markers

Grammatical markers include two types: stance adverbials and modals.

1.6.2.1. Stance Adverbials

Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan (1999), state that Stance adverbials are used to demonstrate emotions, express judgments, or attitudes towards a propositional content. Stance adverbials can convey some semantic distinctions. Accordingly, it is useful to bring together stance markers into three main semantic groups: epistemic, attitudinal, and style of speaking. First of all, epistemic stance markers are employed to demonstrate speaker's remarks on the status of knowledge or information in a preposition. They can show the meanings of doubt or certainty, truthfulness, limitation, or precision (p.973).

Second of all, there is the attitudinal stance which is the second semantic category that is used to show feelings, emotions, and personal attitudes. Style of speaking is the third semantic category for stance devices. Style of speaking stance means showing the speaker's or writer's comments on what is communicated and the manner of delivering these comments. The grammatical stance adverbials are illustrated in the table below (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999, p.974).

Table (1): Stance Adverbials (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999)

	Epistemic Stance						Attitude Stance	Style Stance
	Doubt & Certainty	**Actuality & Reality**	**Source/ Evidence**	**Limitation**	**Viewpoint or perspective**	**Imprecision**	**Evaluation; Judgment; Assessment of expectation**	
SINGLE WORD ADVERB	Certainly, definitely, maybe, obviously, of course, perhaps, probably, absolutely, possibly	Actually, really	Apparently, evidently, reportedly	Generally, mainly, typically		About, approximately, kind of, like, roughly, sort of	ironically, sadly, wisely, Extremely, Perfectly, hopefully	honestly, literally, truthfully, personally
PREP. PHRASE	without a doubt	For a fact, in fact	According to	In general, in most cases	in my view, for me		To my surprise	with all due respect
FINITE CLAUSE	I think, , I guess, I bet, , it seems					If you can call it that	As might be expected	if you don't mind my asking

1.6.2.2. Modals

Modals express two types of meanings. The first type of meaning is called deontic or intrinsic which shows the interlocutor's commitment towards a proposition. The deontic category encompasses those modals that involve "Actions under the direct control of an animate subject, specifically modals of permission, obligation, volition, and intention". Thus, actions or events controlled by humans directly. The second type of meaning is called epistemic or extrinsic that indicates the interlocutor's confidence or certainty towards a proposition. The epistemic category comprises modals that deal with "logical status of events or states, usually relating to assessments of likelihood: possibility, necessity, or prediction". Accordingly, we can distinguish three semantic groups of modals: modals of permission, possibility, and ability (can, could, may, might); modals of obligation and necessity (must, should, ought to); and modals of volition, intention, and

prediction (will, would, shall) (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan. 1999, p.485).

1.7. Appraisal Theory

Appraisal theory deals with those linguistic aspects used to express, initiate, and naturalize a specific inter-subjective and eventually ideological positions "Appraisal framework, a particular approach to exploring, describing and explaining the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt stances, to construct textual personas and to manage interpersonal positioning and relationships". It investigates how judgments, attitudes, emotive responses are explicitly stated, implied, or presupposed. More specifically, it is concerned with the language of evaluation, attitude and emotions. (White, 2015, p.1).

Table (2): An Overview of the Appraisal Framework (Munday, 2012, p.24)

Domain of Appraisal	Parameter	value	Illustrative Realization
Attitude	Affect	Through feelings and emotional reactions	Happy, sad
	Judgment	Of ethics, behavior, capacity	Wrong, brave
	Appreciation	Of things, phenomena, reactions	Beautiful, authentic
Graduation	Force	Raise	**Extremely** unwise
		Lower	**Slightly** corrupt
	Focus	Sharpen	A **true** father
		Soften	An apology **of sorts**
Engagement	Monogloss	Contraction	Demonstrate, show
	Heterogloss	Expansion	Claim, nearly, possibly

1.7.1. Attitude

Aspects of feelings are the main concentration of the system of attitude. Attitude incorporates "Our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior and evaluation of things". It focuses on the semantic meanings related to emotions, ethics, and aesthetics. The first semantic region is related to emotion and is known as **affect.** It includes references to positive and negative responses and reactions (e.g. cheerful, pleased, and confident). The second semantic region is known as **judgment**. It deals with attitudes towards others and their behavior. It is divided into two categories: judgment of social esteem and judgment of social sanction (e.g. odd, powerful, and loyal). **Appreciation** is the third semantic region of attitude. It comprises meanings related to the value of things and natural phenomena. Accordingly related to "Things we make and performances we give" and "What such things are worth and how we value them" (e.g. remarkable, irregular, worthless) (Martin and White, 2005 as cited in Al-Shunnag, 2014, p.153).

1.7.2. Graduation

Graduation system gives value to both attitude and engagement because it provides a scalar strength to the interlocutors' evaluations and stances. It includes two major categories: force and focus. **Force** is concerned with positive and negative assessments of intensity and amount. Intensifications or assessments of

intensity are concerned with qualities (e.g. very, extremely) and processes (e.g. slightly hindered). On the other hand, quantifications or assessments of amount are concerned with entities (e.g. few, many). The second category of graduation is **focus** which is related to prototypicality. It deals with ways to sharpen (scale up) the chosen category (e.g. a true mother, a true friend) and to soften (scale down) the chosen category (e.g. he is kind of crazy) (Martin and White, 2005 as cited in Al-Shunnag, 2014, p.162).

1.7.3. Engagement

When taking stances, speakers or writers position themselves in accordance "to the value positions being referenced in the text and with respect to those they address". Engagement is divided into two categories: contract and expand (Martin and White, 2005 as cited in Al-Shunnag, 2014, p.155).

Contract resources are "directed towards excluding certain dialogic alternatives from any subsequent communicative interaction or at least towards constraining the scope of these alternatives in discourse". Contact is further divided into: disclaim and proclaim. Disclaim comprises viewpoints or alternative positions to reject them directly, i.e. deny (e.g. this is **not the case**) .As for the proclaim category, it includes patterns that focus on the joint knowledge and agreement between the addresser and the putative addressee, i.e. concurrence (e.g. of course, certainly (Martin and White, 2005 as cited in Al-Shunnag, 2014, p.157).

Besides contract, expand is the second category of the engagement system. **Expand** concentrates on resources that provide an opining or a dialogic space for other alternative positions or outside voices. It has two semantic groups: entertain and attribution. Entertain refers to the meaning of likelihood. It is achieved through the use of modal verbs (e.g. may, might), adverbs (e.g. probably, perhaps), besides using some mental verbs (e.g. I think, I believe)(Martin and White, 2005 as cited in Al-Shunnag, 2014, p.159).

Section Two: Research Methodology

2.1. Introduction

This section aims to introduce the practical analysis of the selected corpus. It contains the methodology of analysis concentrating on the manual and computerized analyses. The analyses are presented within the lexico-grammatical and appraisal theory framework. Thus, the lexical and grammatical markers are demonstrated in addition to the stance function drawn from these markers depending on the appraisal systems. Furthermore, the stance triangle is tackled within the analysis.

2.2. The Methodology

The methodology chosen for the purposes of the study is a combination of corpus- and discourse-analytical methods. The former is drawn from the lexico-grammatical framework of stance (Biber et al., 1999; Biber, 2006), while the latter is drawn from appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2005). The corpora of the study

consist of three texts collected from the ASAP sport website. First, to ensure its validity, the corpus is manually analyzed based on the lexico-grammatical framework (Biber, 1999). Second, the results obtained from the manual analysis are used as inputs to the computerized analysis using the Wordsmith software (version 4). Wordsmith helps in identifying the markers and in counting them for the final results which are interpreted according to the discourse model of analysis (appraisal theory). The chosen transcripts are illustrated below:

Table (3): The transcripts that make up the corpus of the research

The Conferences	Sports Figure
University of Wisconsin Soccer Media Conference (2015)	Paula Wilkins
Toronto FC Media Conference (2016)	Greg Vanney
New York RED Bulls Media Conference (2017)	Jesse Marsch

2.3. Corpus and Discourse Analyses of Lexico-grammatical Marking of Stance

The analysis in this study starts with a corpus analysis for the purpose of identifying the patterns of stance in the chosen discourse. The analysis is based on the consideration of occurrences of the lexico-grammatical markers through which stance is expressed. The stance markers identified in the corpus are the value-laden words (adjectives, verbs, and nouns), and grammatical markers (stance adverbials and modals). The table below illustrates the distribution of stance markers in the corpus:

Table (4): The stance markers

Type of stance marker	Number of occurrences	Percentage of Total frequency%
Stance adverbials	80	43.71%
Value-laden words (evaluative adjectives, main verbs, and nouns)	70	38.25%
Modals	33	18.03%

The table shows an obvious preference for using grammatical stance markers represented with the highest frequency of the stance adverbials. Both modals and stance adverbials are part of the grammatical markers with a total number of (113) which corresponds to 61.74% of the total frequency. This percentage is much higher than value-laden words 38.25% total frequency. This indicates that there is a clear preference for using stance adverbials more than using value-laden words or modals in sport discourse. This indicates that sport speakers tend to use adverbial stance markers more often than any of the other stance markers and this is probably attributed to the idea that they index stance indirectly.

As mentioned earlier, stance adverbials fall into three types: epistemic stance adverbials, attitude stance adverbials, and style of speaking. Each type expresses certain semantic meanings and thus owns semantic categories. The following table illustrates the type and number of occurrences of the stance adverbials in the corpus:

Table (5): Stance adverbials found in the corpus

	Stance Marker	occurrences	Type		Stance Marker	occurrences	Type
1.	I think	26	Epistemic	**10.**	obviously	3	Epistemic
2.	Like	15	Epistemic	**11.**	Clearly	1	Style
3.	Kind of	7	Epistemic	**12.**	Hopefully	1	Attitude
4.	Sort of	7	Epistemic	**13.**	Actually	1	Epistemic
5.	Really	5	Epistemic	**14.**	Possibly	1	Epistemic
6.	For me	4	Epistemic	**15.**	Certainly	1	Epistemic
7.	Definitely	4	Epistemic	**16.**	maybe	1	Epistemic
8.	Honestly	1	Style	**17.**	Probably	1	Epistemic
9.	I guess	1	Epistemic		**Total : 80**		

As it is clear from the table above, the most recurrent stance type is the epistemic stance with 77 occurrences. If turned into percentages, it makes 96.25% of the total frequency of adverbials. As far as the epistemic stance categories, the most frequent adverbials are those expressing doubt and certainty, such as *I think*. This indicates that sport discourse of the selected corpus use doubt and certainty adverbials more frequently than other adverbials. It is all related to the fact that they are expressing their status of knowledge towards a proposition and the entire atmosphere of uncertainty surrounding sport. Style adverbials take the second place after the epistemic adverbials with only 2 occurrences. This does not mean that they are careless about their style or manner of communication but spontaneous speeches and interviews often rank low in the presence of these features. Attitude adverbials are the least used in the corpus with only 1 occurrence (see table 5). This low percentage (1.25%) displays a kind of discourse that is characterized by formality and the little display of the personal aspects.

Doubt and certainty adverbials express the speakers' certainty or doubt towards a proposition. Their range includes absolute judgments of certainty to various levels of probability (doubt). Adverbials like certainly, definitely, maybe, No doubt, I think, I believe, I guess are within this category. Throughout the course of interaction in the chosen discourse, interlocutors are doubtful towards certain propositions. There are two reasons behind using doubt adverbials. The first reason is because they are uncertain of their position for instances related to games results or an upcoming plan. The second reason could be related to removing personal responsibility for a certain comment, mistake, or a proposition. The most frequent form within this category is (I think) with 26 occurrences through the entire corpus (see table 5). *I think* has the highest frequency of the other stance adverbials.

Table (6): Example (1), University of Wisconsin Soccer Media Conference (2015)

Statement with Stance Pattern	Stance Marker	Stancetaker	Stance Object	Stance Function
I think the coaches that they have changed here, their attitude, their mentality, all that, they've changed all the that, and it's great to be a coach and be a part of, because obviously without our ups and downs.	Epistemic Adverbials (I think, obviously) + Evaluative lexical item(great)	Paula Wilkins	Winning the Big Ten championship.	Engagement: Entertain + Attitude: Appreciation

Screibman (2001) illustrates that "I think" expresses the speaker's opinion, degree of belief, or subjective evaluation of a position. Thus, it marks a strong epistemic position. Du Bois (2007) through his view of the stance triangle describes stancetaking as a triplet set of three components: evaluation, positioning, and alignment. The employment of *I think* shows the speaker's evaluation or further elaboration of a proposition depending on the context of interaction. During the evaluation, the speaker positions himself on changing degrees of certainty. As for the alignment, it corresponds here to the engagement entertain system of appraisal since it opens the dialogic space for more than one opinion and this is illustrated with the use of (I think). The use of (I think) shows the speaker's doubtfulness and as a result assigns the statement into the range of likelihood rather than certainty. Thus, comes the significance of using (I think) within the aspects of alignment and disalignment because it functions as a softening or face saving act. This demonstrates that epistemic doubt adverbials help the speaker sounds less direct. The lexical item (great) shows coach Wilkins's attitude towards being part of the winning experience and how he values such efforts.

Moreover, (I think) is not the only epistemic doubt adverbial to occur in the corpus. Other instances that indicate the meaning of doubt include: definitely with 4 occurrences, probably, possibly, and maybe with 1 occurrence. They demonstrate likelihood and less certainty about a proposition. The speakers' evaluation of likelihood is mitigated through the use of such adverbials. Imprecision adverbials take second place after the doubt and certainty adverbials with markers like (like) with 15 occurrences, (kind of) and (sort of) with 7 occurrences. Imprecision adverbials express the meaning of inconclusiveness and inexactness. Spoken language, like the one adapted in the corpus is considered less precise than formal and academic language. Actuality and reality adverbials are another type of epistemic stance adverbials. They signify that what is stated is a true reflection of reality and not just an opinion about a proposition. The adverbial of reality that is

identified in the corpus is (really) with 5 occurrences.

Table (7): Example (2), University of Wisconsin Soccer Media Conference (2015)

Statement with Stance Pattern	Stance Marker	Stancetaker	Stance Object	Stance Function
I think that made a huge difference, so at the end of September I didn't really see that, but you could feel the momentum building, and I think it's something they have done quite well.	Epistemic Adverbials (I think, really) + Evaluative lexical items(huge, well)	Paula Wilkins	Whether she expected to win the Big Ten at the end of September.	Engagement: Entertain + Attitude: Appreciation

The example above shows different degrees of certainty through the use of the two epistemic adverbials (I think and really). The reality and actuality position presented in the statement is realized through the use of the adverbial (really). The stancetaker presented the reality of not expecting to win the whole championship. The entertain type of engagement is used with (I think) which opens the space for more than one opinion and thus sets an alignment with what is stated. The attitude of Coach Wilkins is revealed through the use of the evaluative lexical items (huge and well). These evaluative lexical items are used to describe their performance and the differences the team have made in order to win the championship.

Moreover, Lexical marking of stance takes second place after the stance adverbials discussed earlier. They constitute 38.25% of the total frequency with 70 occurrences. Lexical marking is set in certain evaluative value-laden words and these include verbs, nouns, and adjectives. The speaker expects the listener to understand the intended meaning of these words because of the shared knowledge, background, and context. Each word has its own expressive and evaluative known meaning. The corpus as taking from normal sport conferences conversations is filled with evaluative lexical items that are used to establish a stance. The language used by the sport speakers is very evaluative and stance-filled. So, it is normal that this language usually include subjective and affective content like the thought, intentions, personal comments, and overviews of performances. Most of the lexical items are related to physicality and performances (e.g. strong, great, and excited). Understanding the purpose of using an evaluative lexical item helps in detecting the stance function.

Furthermore, modals take third place after lexical marking of stance. Modals are part of the grammatical marking and are divided into three semantic categories (possibility, prediction, and obligation). The following table demonstrates the occurrences of modals found in the corpus:

Table (8): The Distribution of Modals in the corpus

Semantic Categories	Number of Occurrences
Prediction Modals	16
Possibility Modals	17
Necessity Modals	0

This table above shows that prediction possibility modals are the most frequently used type of modals with 17 and 16 occurrences. The reason behind this is that sport as stated before is related to the state of uncertainty depending on the fact that it is a competition and nothing is 100% guaranteed. In addition to that, people in normal conversations tend to soften their statement for politeness-related reasons and not wanting to be too direct or too committed to what they are saying. The table further illustrates that the modals of necessity are not used in the corpus. These modals show the meaning of obligation and they are considered stronger in meaning than other modals. Necessity modals permit a large degree of certainty and thus, they have the least frequency in sport discourse. Instead, stancetakers try to replace such certainty with forms that denote possibility and doubt. The modals (can) and (will) have the highest frequency with 10 occurrences.

Table (9): Example (3), New York RED Bulls Media Conference (2017)

Statement with Stance Pattern	Stance Marker	Stancetaker	Stance Object	Stance Function
They will come in here with a great team. They will be ready to push the game. They will be flying high.	Evaluative lexical items(great, ready, high) + Modal Auxiliary (will)	Jesse Marsch	Marsch's opinion on the Toronto team which his team is competing with.	Attitude: Judgment + Engagement: Entertain

Predictions are expressed widely in sport discourse because of the nature of sport itself with the competition, points, and players' performance. Predictions indicate uncertainties because the predicted future actions or events may or may not take place. Since predictions are uncertain and other possibilities may occur, the stance function is that of the engagement entertain system (other alternatives are possible). The stancetaker's attitude of judgment is expressed by the use of the evaluative lexical items which index the stance function directly. Marsch is judging the Toronto team as a great team and thus, is considered as a huge challenge to his team.

Table (10): Example (4), Toronto FC Media Conference (2016)

Statement with Stance Pattern	Stance Marker	Stancetaker	Stance Object	Stance Function
We try to build depth into our roster. That's the only thing we can do. Create over this preseason and early season and develop a system where we can kind of plug guys in and it makes sense for the vast majority of our guys.	Epistemic Adverbial (kind of) + Evaluative lexical items(vast) + Modal Auxiliary (can)	Greg Vanney	Developing the team's performance and how this helps in overcoming difficult times.	Attitude: Judgment + Engagement: Entertain

The table above shows how the stancetaker used the modal auxiliary (can) in two different senses. The first (can) is followed by the verb (do) and as a result, it is in a context of ability. However, the second (can) is used in a context of possibility. This is clear from the combination of the epistemic adverbial of Imprecision (kind of) and the modal auxiliary (can) illustrates the stancetaker's uncertainty and possibility that are linked to sport discourse. This further open the dialogic space for more than one opinion and this gives a stance that functions within the entertain engagement system.

2.4. Conclusions

As stated before, one of the significant things we do with language is to take a stance. This section has examined the conveyance of stance in three soccer conferences based on instances found in the corpus. The corpus analysis has proven that the lexical and grammatical stance markers have different distributions throughout the corpus instances.

The analysis shows a preference for using adverbials in the expression of stance, as the adverbial stance markers have been found to be the most frequently used stance markers (43.71% of the total). The second place goes to the evaluative lexical items, as the value-laden words are also frequent in the corpus (38.25% of the total). Finally, modals are found to be the less frequent as they stand at about 18.03% of the total. Modals of possibility are found to be most frequently used rather than modals of prediction and necessity. This gives more prominence to the idea of uncertainty and how this technique of indirectness is used to express a status of knowledge, politeness, and less commitment to a proposition. However, This indicate that sport speakers tend to use the adverbials stance markers more often than any of the other stance markers and this is probably attributed to the idea that they index stance indirectly.

Moreover, the analysis shows that the engagement entertain level of appraisal is the most frequently used since it is linked to the adverbial (I think) and the whole state of possibility. It shows that the stance takers leave the dialogic space open for

more than one alternative opinion or assessment instead of being extremely sure. This is called the 'dialogic expansion' in which the speaker provides his own voice along with other possibilities. Certainty expressions are thought to be too direct or too socially harmful since they cancel other opinions and voices and in conversations, speakers often try to achieve alignment with the person they are interacting with. As a result, with the stance triangle, stance takers' languages reveal more than just their attitude. Interlocutors do not only evaluate and position themselves to propositions but they also try to achieve alignment with the person they are interacting with. Thus, the three sides of the triangle as proposed by Du Bois are found in sport commentary.

Bibliography

Al-Shunnag, M. (2014). *Stance in Political Discourse:Arabic Translations of American Newspaper Opinion Articles on the 'Arab Spring'.* Salford, UK: University of Salford, College of Arts and Social Sciences.

Baker, P. (2006). *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis.* london: Continuum.

Biber, D. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English.* England: Longman.

Bois, J. W. (2007). *The Stance Triangle.* Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins B.V.

Jaffe, A. (2009). *Stance: Sociolinguistic Perspectives .* New York: Oxford University Press.

Mahlberg, M. (2005). *English General Nouns. A Corpus Theoretical Approach.* John Benjamins B.V.

Martin, J. (2005). *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English.* London & New York : Palgrave/Macmillan.

Munday, J. (2012). *Evaluation in translation: critical points of translator decision-making.* Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Paltridge, B. (2006). *Discourse Analysis .* New York: continuum.

Screibman, J. (2001). *Local patterns of subjectivity in person and verb type in American English.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V.

White, P. (2003). *Beyond Modality and Hedging: A dialogic View of the Language of Intersubjective Stance.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

White, P. R. (2015). *Appraisal Theory .* Australia: John Wiley & Sons.