A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Sports Announcer Talk in Manchester City vs. Queen Park Rangers Match

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the linguistic techniques used by sports announcer, emphasizing traits, euphemisms, nicknames, and how space and time are handled in sports commentary. Ronald Wardhaugh is a scholar whose book "An Introduction to Sociolinguistics" (2006) serves as a model for this study. His classifications, opinions and analyses are used to extract the elements mentioned above from the match between Manchester City and Queens Park Rangers. The words used by sports announcer during a specific game—the thrilling Premier League final (2012) between Manchester City and Queens Park Rangers—are the main subject of this study. Examining the precise wording employed in this crucial game offers important new perspectives on how sports commentary affects viewer perception and involvement. Through a close examination of nicknames, euphemisms, and the way time and location are handled, viewers may better comprehend how broadcasters create anticipation, communicate the intensity of the game's emotions, and establish a cultural connection with the audience.

Keywords: **Sport Announcer Talk, nicknames, euphemisms, spaces and time.**

دراسة لغوية اجتماعية للتعليق الرياضي لمبارة مانشستر سيتي وكوينز بارك رينجرز

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الملخص

يسعى هذا البحث لتقصي التقنيات اللغوية التي يستخدمها معلقو المباريات الرياضية، مع التركيز على السمات، والتعبيرات الملطفة، والألقاب، وكيفية التعامل مع المكان والزمان في التعليق الرياضي. يعتمد البحث على كتاب رونالد واردو "مقدمة في علم الاجتماع اللغوي" (٢٠٠٦) كنموذج لهذه الدراسة. تُستخدم تصنيفاته وآراؤه وتحليلاته لاستخراج العناصر المذكورة أعلاه من المباراة بين مانشستر سيتي وكوينز بارك رينجرز. الكلمات التي يستخدمها معلقو المباريات الرياضية خلال مباراة معينة – نهائي الدوري الإنجليزي الممتاز (٢٠١٢)- هي الموضوع الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة. إن التمعن في الصياغة الدقيقة المستخدمة في هذه المباراة الحاسمة يقدم وجهات نظر جديدة مهمة حول كيفية تأثير التعليق الرياضي على إدراك المشاهد ومشاركته. من خلال الفحص الدقيق للألقاب والتعبيرات الملطفة، والطريقة التي يتم بها التعامل مع الوقت والمكان، قد يفهم المشاهدون بشكل أفضل كيف يخلق المعلقون الترقب، وينقلون شدة مشاعر اللعبة، ويقيمون صلة ثقافية مع الجمهور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لغة التعليق الرياضي، الالقاب، التلطيف، المكان والزمان.

1. Introduction

Sports announcers serve as a vital line between the action on the field or court and the watchers, whether they are watching from home or at the stadium, due to their substantial role in sports broadcasts. When games are played at locations hundreds of miles away, the audience's only possible point of interaction is usually through the telecast, where sports announcers provide context, interpretation, and entertainment (Alzawaydeh and Alghazo, 2018:118).

In sports broadcasting, announcers are the domain that influences views with their ability to shape their perception and engagement with the game. Their talent extends beyond just narrating the event, they furthermore offer comments, stories, and analysis that a viewer would find desirable. Their skill in conveying the stakes, suspense, and feelings of players on turning points is essential to establish an identity with the audience (Rowe,1999:xi).

To understand how sports announcer discourse functions, it is essential to investigate diverse linguistic elements of this speech, such as the used vocabulary, sentence constructions, and discourse strategies. Additionally, the socio-cultural context in which these communicators operate constitutes a significant factor in their communication styles. Factors like audience demographics, regional variations in language, and broadcasting standards contribute to colour and variation in the manner in which the sports announcements are presented for various sporting events going on different media platforms (Hedrick, 2000:18-19).

This study investigates the linguistic strategies used by sports announcers to portray the uniqueness of their discourse. Using a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates linguistic insights, the study examines the discourse of a sports announcer. Clarifying the intricacies and significance of sports announcer talk is its goal.

2. Sports Announcer Talk

Sports announcers are more than just voices narrating the action on the field. Their commentary shapes the understanding and experience of athletic events, providing not only play-by-play descriptions but also analysis, historical context, and emotional framing. While their primary function is to inform viewers about the game, announcers also play a crucial role in analyzing strategies, player performance, and key moments, deepening viewers' appreciation for the complexities of the sport. Besides, their use of humor, storytelling, and dramatic language adds an element of entertainment, drawing audiences into the emotional rollercoaster of athletic competition (Hutchby, 2006:9).

However, the influence of sports announcer talk extends beyond mere entertainment and carries significant cultural weight. Research has shown that despite their prominent role in sports media, female announcers continue to face challenges and biases not experienced by their male counterparts. This includes underrepresentation in high-

profile sports, a persistent credibility gap, and gendered language that reinforces traditional stereotypes and undermines the achievements of female athletes (Cooky et al., 2015:1).

Furthermore, sports announcer talk can shape public perceptions of athletes, teams, and even broader social issues. Studies have found instances of racially coded language used by announcers, potentially reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices. Additionally, the framing of sporting events within a nationalistic narrative, while fostering a sense of shared identity, can also lead to the exclusion and marginalization of those who do not identify with the dominant narrative (Rowe, 1999:13). Finally, the intertwining of announcer talks with advertising and sponsorships contributes to the increasing commercialization of sports, raising concerns about conflicts of interest and the prioritization of profit over the integrity of the game (Wenner, 1998:4).

As the media landscape evolves and sports announcer reaches a global audience, it is crucial to continue critically examining the role and impact of sports announcer talk. This includes investigating how new media platforms and alternative commentary styles are influencing the field, exploring how announcers can use their platform to promote social justice and inclusivity, and considering how cultural differences and language barriers affect the framing and discussion of sporting events. By deepening the understanding of the functions, biases, and cultural influence of sports announcer talk, the work towards improving sports broadcasting and ensuring it serves a diverse and engaged audience while promoting fair and inclusive representation within the world of sports (Hedrick, 2000:29).

2.2 Characteristics of Sports Announcer Talk

Sports announcer talks are characterized by the following:

1. Knowledge and Expertise: Possesses deep understanding of the sport, its rules, strategies, history, and current events (Hill & Cahill, 2017:211).

2. Preparation and Research: Dedicates significant time to studying teams, players, statistics, and storylines before each broadcast (Albert & Reilly, 1993:21).

3. Clear and Concise Communication: Delivers commentary in a clear, concise, and easily understandable manner, using vivid language to paint a picture of the action for the audience (Tuite, 1976:52).

4. Objectivity and Fairness: Provides unbiased commentary, avoiding favouritism towards any particular team or player, while offering fair and balanced analysis (Stephenson et al., 2009:207).

5. Enthusiasm and Passion: Demonstrates genuine excitement and passion for the sport, engaging the audience and enhancing the viewing experience (Hill & Cahill, 2017:63).

6. Ability to Ad-lib: Skillfully handles unexpected situations and fills time during lulls in the action with relevant information and insightful commentary (Stephenson et al., 2009:211).

7. Professionalism and Integrity: Maintains high ethical standards, avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring accuracy in reporting (Albert & Reilly, 1993:144).

8. Teamwork: Collaborates effectively with co-commentators, producers, and other members of the broadcast team (Stephenson et al., 2009:215).

9. Adaptability and Versatility: Adjusts commentary style to suit different sports, audiences, and broadcasting mediums (radio, television, online) (Hill & Cahill, 2017:212-213).

10. Strong Work Ethic: Willingness to work long hours, travel frequently, and handle the demands of a fast-paced and competitive industry (Stephenson et al., 2009:206).

11. Continuous Improvement: Regularly evaluates performance and seeks ways to enhance skills and knowledge (Hill & Cahill, 2017:218).

12. Respect for the Audience and Participants: Treats athletes, coaches, and fans with respect and avoids making offensive or insensitive remarks (Albert & Reilly, 1993:144).

3. Nick Names

Names are employed in both formal and informal languages, according to Mehrabian and Piercy (1993:755-758), but when they are used in commercial and professional contexts, they convey a professional image. They are sufficiently formal to be successful on a scale. However, nicknames exceed the benefit of being widely recognized by most members of any community. As a result, it functions as both a formal name and an informal nickname in social situations. As a result, a person is identified by his name at work and by his nickname among his friends.

Gladkova (2002:1) points out that the construct of nicknames allows them to be added to their real names whenever they so want. Certain names are temporary and apt to disappear. Gladkova asserts that a person's nickname highlights distinctive physical characteristics, which serve to illustrate their character. For example, "Dan" is a nickname for Daniel that comes from shorter forms of names. As in "Jamie" for James or "Stevie" for Steve, denominatives change names by adding "w" or "ie" at the end to denote kindness or spoiling. Both good and bad implications can be found in these nicknames, which highlight the close relationship between the speaker and the designated individual and frequently allude to informality or social equality.

Celebrities often have multiple names bestowed upon them by both fans and critics. Fans tend to give them heroic nicknames, while critics assign villainous ones. Yet, these nicknames often stem from shared community perceptions and behaviors toward the celebrity. For instance,

Luis Figo, a beloved player for Barcelona, earned the nickname "Lion King" before his controversial move to rival club Real Madrid, where he was then dubbed "The Traitor" by Barcelona fans (Obeid, 2018:22). Nicknames are real indicators that take into account personal characteristics, fondness, and familiarity. They help people grow in social proximity, which leads to group affiliation. No matter if a person chooses their own name or is given one by mistake, nicknames provide additional nuances that deepen and complicate relationships.

4. Euphemism

Euphemisms are expressions used to replace terms considered too harsh, blunt, or unpleasant. Often employed to discuss sensitive topics like death, sex, bodily functions, or other personal matters, euphemisms aim to soften the impact of the message and maintain social politeness. For example, "elderly" is used instead of "old people," and "downsized" replaces "Fired " in everyday conversation. The evolution of euphemisms over time reflects changing societal attitudes and sensitivities, with older terms becoming taboo and replaced by newer, more acceptable alternatives. By clarity of euphemistic language, the audience gains insight into which topics are deemed uncomfortable or inappropriate for direct discussion within a particular society (Garner, 2016:352).

Euphemism spans various discourses—social, religious, linguistic, and political— deserving scrutiny due to its pervasive and influential nature. Serving as a linguistic tool for indirect communication, euphemism holds significant emotional power over listeners across languages. It functions as a means for speakers to convey sensitive topics with reduced offense or discomfort to their audience (Kaplan & Sadock, 1993:55).

According to Lakoff (1975:46), sports announcers often use euphemisms, milder or indirect expressions substituted for harsher or more blunt terms, to describe various situations on the field. This can be

done for reasons such as avoiding offense, maintaining a family-friendly atmosphere, or downplaying negative aspects of the game.

Examples of Euphemisms in Sports Commentary:

● Injury: Instead of saying a player is "injured" or "hurt," announcers might say they are "banged up," "a bit sore," or "questionable" to return to the game.

● Poor Performance: Instead of stating a player is performing poorly, announcers might say they are "having an off day," "not at their best," or "struggling to find their rhythm."

● Mistake/Error: Instead of directly saying a player made a mistake or error, announcers might use phrases like "misplayed the ball," "made an uncharacteristic error," or "it wasn't their finest moment."

● Loss: Instead of saying a team "lost" or was "defeated," announcers might use softer terms like "came up short," "fell to the opponent," or "didn't get the result they were hoping for."

● Controversial Call/Decision: Instead of directly criticizing a referee's call or a coach's decision, announcers might use phrases like "a questionable call," "an interesting decision," or "it could have gone either way."

5. Treatment of Space and Time Expressions

Time and place expressions highlight the vital role of context in social interactions, emphasizing that the appropriateness of actions or utterances is highly dependent on the situation at hand. Common phrases such as "there's a time and a place for everything," "read the room," and "pick your battles" serve as reminders to consider factors like setting, audience, and overall atmosphere before speaking or performing. By understanding and applying the concept of time and place, individuals can navigate social situations and avoid causing unintended offense or trouble (DeVito, 2016:214).

6. The Model

According to Wardhaugh (2006: 1), sociolinguistics delves into the detailed relationship between language and society, investigating how social factors influence and affect people speak and how language use shapes social networks. It goes beyond merely describing the structure of language to understand how language operates in various social contexts. Sociolinguistics employs various concepts, as follows:

● Euphemism: The use of indirect or less offensive language to refer to taboo topics or sensitive subjects, like death, sex, or bodily functions. Euphemisms allow us to discuss these matters while maintaining social decorum. For example, saying someone "passed away" instead of "died" (p. 238).

● Nicknames: Informal names used to address individuals, often indicating a closer relationship or familiarity. They can be terms of endearment, reflect personal characteristics, or signify membership within a specific group. For example, using "Bobby" instead of "Robert" or calling a friend "Red" because of their hair color (p. 268).

● Treatment of Time and Place: The ways in which different cultures conceptualize and express time and space through language. This includes how languages mark tense, aspect, and spatial relationships, which can reveal cultural values and perspectives. For example, the Hopi language emphasizes the ongoing nature of events and processes, while Standard Average European languages (like English) tend to focus on distinct time frames and spatial boundaries (p. 224).

7. Data Analysis

This part of the study concentrates on analysing the English Premier League match between Manchester City and Queens Park Rangers on the last day of play in 2011–2012 when Manchester City won the championship. Alan Smith and Martin Tyler served as the match's announcers on Sky Sports.

Table (10) contains the data analysis in which the words/phrases are presented, categorized in addition to the utterance time and explanation. It is worth noting that the words/phrases are presented according to the time uttered.

Words/Phrases	Concepts	Time in The Match	Explanation
QPR	Nicknames	Introductory	Naming of football team Queens Park Rangers
29th birthday	Treatment of Time and Place	Introductory	Yaya Touré, on his 29th birthday
Player of the year	Nicknames	Introductory	Naming of the best player in Primer League, i.e., Sergio Aguero
City's player of the year	Nicknames	Introductory	The title given to the best player in the team throughout the year.
Who has played for City in the Premier League this season	Treatment of time and place	Introductory	He refers to the fact that the player Nedum Onuoha had previously played for the opposing team (Manchester City) before the mid-season transfers opened.
Away	Nicknames	Introductory	A term that refers to the team playing away from their home ground at the opponent's stadium.
Premier League	Nicknames	Introductory	Refers to the top-tier English football league, which consists of clubs from England and is the highest football league in the country.
Bench	Nicknames	Introductory	Refers to the substitutes sitting on the bench ready for substitution.

Formula Who starts for the first time for two months	Nicknames	Introductory	It's a name that symbolizes the team's formation, organization, and the coach's suitable plan during the game.
	Treatment of time and place	Introductory	It refers to the last time this duo played together in defense, which was two months ago.
Late winner last weekend against Stoke Blues	Treatment of time and place	Introductory	He refers to the fact that the player of QPR secured his team the winning goal last week against Stoke.
	Nicknames	Introductory	The title refers to Chelsea Football Club.
A long day ahead	Euphemism	Min 1	It's an indication that QPR is under heavy pressure and might concede a goal.
Out of that desperate	Euphemism	Min 10	To indicate that Manchester City is going through a tough time and needs to score.
	Nicknames	Min 12	Kit is an English term refers to the uniform or jersey that a team wears during a match.
Kit	Nicknames	Min 13	The main kit of Queens Park Rangers.
Blue and White	Nicknames and Treatment of time and place	Min 13	Refers to Queen's Park Rangers' alternate uniform, which they had worn in round 36 against Chelsea, losing by six goals. This has made the club doubtful about the kit's effectiveness.
	Nicknames	Min 13	The bright blue refers to Manchester City, while the red and white represent Queen's Park Rangers.

Red and White Bright blue against red and white. Stadium of Light	Nicknames	Min 20	The Stadium of Light is Sunderland's stadium
	Euphemism	Min 20	To indicate, Manchester United's scoring in the other game and Manchester City's failure to score might deprive City of the league title.
It will make it more nervy for Manchester City Golden Boot	Nicknames	Min 21	This is a prize awarded to the player who scores the most goals in their league from the top five major leagues during the season.
Old Trafford	Nicknames	Min 21	The name of Manchester United's stadium is "Old Trafford."
See the trophy end up at Old Trafford For a 13th time	Euphemism	Min 21	To indicate that Manchester City's continuation in the same situation will lead to their loss of the title and its award to Manchester United.
Last 12 away games. Penalty area	Treatment of time and place	Min 21	If Manchester United wins the title, it will be their thirteenth title in their history.
	Treatment of time and place	Min 23	In the last 12 games for Queen Park against Manchester City at the City's ground, only two points were earned.
	Nicknames	Min 24	The area surrounded by white lines in front of the goal.
80% Manchester City, 20% QPR	Nicknames	Min 28	Refers to possession percentage or ownership of the ball by a team from the beginning of the match until the time the term is mentioned. For example, Manchester City has an 80% possession, while Queen's Park

			has only 20%.
Box	Nicknames	Min 29	It's another term for the penalty area
Around in 1968	Treatment time and place	Min 30	The last time Manchester City won the league before winning this one.
Offside	Nicknames	Min 37	(Especially in soccer, rugby, or hockey) occupying or taking place in a position where playing the ball or puck is not allowed, especially (in soccer) in the attacking half ahead of the ball and having fewer than two defenders nearer the goal line at the moment the ball is played.

A to Z of Manchester City's season. Aguero to Zabaleta.	Nicknames	Min 39	The season of Manchester City from its beginning to its end was remarkable.
Sub	Nicknames	Min 40	Substitution" and "bringing in players from the bench" refer to making changes in the lineup by replacing players on the field with those on the substitute bench.
Injury	Euphemism	Min 45+1	The person who suffers a serious or severe injury that prevents him from continuing the match
Etihad	Nicknames	halftime break	The name of Manchester City's stadium.

Tries to flick it back	Nickna mes	Min 48	A reference to Queens Park Rangers coming back in the match.
Anxious times	Euphe mism	Min 51	To express the poor performance of Manchester City during this time and the possibility of them losing the match.
Linesman	Nickna mes	Min 53	"Assistant referee" or "linesman" is the name referring to this role.

Well, there's still 25 minutes or so for those who expected to come here shedding tears of joy.	Treatment of time and place and Euphemism	Min 66	The remaining time in the match is 25 minutes, and the team needs two goals to win or they will lose the title.
Wembley	Nicknames	Min 73	It's a national stadium located in London, designated for national matches and important games.
England failed to qualify for the World Cup in 1974.	Treatment of time and place	Min 73	He indicates that England failed to qualify for the World Cup that year.
so far not long left now for him to be the hero	Euphemism	Min 85	It's just a matter of minutes left for Manchester City to lose the title
Red part of manchester	Nicknames	Min 85	Refer to the other side of Manchester, which is Manchester United Football Club.

Conclusions

This research project has illuminated the fascinating world of sports

announcer talk, specifically within the context of the dramatic (2012) Premier League finale between Manchester City and Queens Park Rangers. By analysing the announcer's use of nicknames, euphemisms, and references to time and place, we've gained a deeper appreciation for the power of language in shaping the audience's experience of a sporting event.

Nicknames, like "Blues" for Chelsea and "Lion King" for Luis Figo, not only identify individuals or teams but also evoke emotions, histories, and shared cultural understanding. Euphemisms, such as "banged up" for injured or "came up short" for losing, demonstrate how announcers navigate sensitive topics while maintaining a positive and engaging atmosphere. The treatment of time and place, referencing past events and future possibilities, adds layers of context and drama to the unfolding narrative.

This study highlights the multifaceted role of sports announcers as storytellers, analysts, and cultural commentators. Their language choices contribute significantly to how viewers understand and connect with the game, building excitement, conveying emotions, and creating a sense of shared experience. While limitations exist in generalizing findings to all sports and contexts, the research underscores the importance of language in shaping our perception of athletic competition and its broader cultural significance.

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