

INTRODUCTION

Football is the most widespread sport in the world and frequently becomes an emotional escape for its supporters. Many individuals view football not merely as entertainment but as an integral part of their lives. The atmosphere surrounding a match, including crowd chants, collective excitement, and particularly the voice of the commentator, plays a crucial role in shaping how viewers experience the game. Commentators explain and respond to events on the field, and their linguistic authority can subtly influence viewers' emotions and interpretations without them being consciously aware. The way commentators select words, employ metaphorical expressions, and construct tension creates a sense of presence, allowing audiences watching from home to feel as though they are part of the stadium experience. This phenomenon highlights the importance of examining how commentary language develops, what types of figurative language are utilized, and how commentators' backgrounds shape their speaking styles. Commentary language often emerges spontaneously as a result of habit, professional training, and repeated experience. Such language tends to intensify the atmosphere of the match and foreground players' actions, ultimately forming a distinctive commentary style. From a linguistic perspective, football commentary offers valuable insight into how language functions creatively under fast-paced and high-pressure conditions. This study employs three main theoretical frameworks to analyze football commentary.

The theory of diction is used to examine commentators' lexical choices and their emotional effects on viewers. The theory of figurative language is applied to identify metaphors, hyperboles, and personification that enhance dramatic impact. Pragmatics is used to understand the intentions behind particular expressions, including how commentators create tension, guide audience perception, and respond to unfolding match situations. The study also considers commentators' backgrounds as a factor influencing their stylistic and linguistic choices. Several previous studies have investigated language use in sports commentary. (Rawian et al., 2024) examined ideological representation in sports commentaries and analyzed how language constructs meanings related to race, culture, and national identity.

Their study contributes to understanding ideological tendencies in sports discourse but focuses primarily on representation rather than emotional intensity, diction, or figurative language. Importantly, the research does not analyze a single match in depth. (Fadillah, 2023) explored pragmatic functions in European and Indonesian football commentary, providing insight into cross-cultural differences in commentary styles. However, the data were drawn from various matches and commentators, making it difficult to observe stylistic consistency or emotional development within a single match context. Another relevant study by (Setya et al., 2017) analyzed stylistic features found in Indonesian football commentary during the AFF U-18 tournament. The study identified rhetorical patterns such as climax, antithesis, repetition, and figurative devices including metaphor and hyperbole. Although the research offers a detailed classification of stylistic tools, it remains largely descriptive and does not examine how these linguistic features contribute to emotional tension, atmosphere, or narrative development within a single match. Furthermore, the study does not explore how real-time match conditions influence commentators' linguistic choices. In addition, (Wuri Syaputri et al., 2024) emphasized that sports commentary is not merely descriptive but also performative, highlighting how commentators employ creative diction and metaphorical expressions to dramatize sporting events and construct memorable narratives for audiences. Beard's study demonstrates that language in sports broadcasting plays a central role in shaping audience perception and emotional engagement. However, the analysis is conducted across various sports contexts and does not focus on emotional escalation or stylistic development within a single football match. Similarly, (Abdulmajeed R & Abdulmajeed A, 2019) examined the pragmatics of amusement in British

football commentary and found that commentators strategically use exaggeration, evaluative expressions, and rhetorical devices to entertain and emotionally involve viewers during live broadcasts.

Nevertheless, the study does not specifically analyze diction and figurative language in relation to match dominance, historical significance, or evolving scorelines within a single high-pressure football match. Despite the valuable contributions of previous studies, existing research tends to analyze sports commentary across multiple matches or from ideological and pragmatic perspectives without closely examining the interaction between diction, figurative language, and commentators' backgrounds within one specific and emotionally intense football match. Moreover, limited attention has been given to how commentators' stylistic choices evolve as emotional intensity escalates throughout the course of a match. There is also no existing research that specifically analyzes the commentary of the Liverpool versus Manchester United match on March 5, 2023, a match widely recognized for its dramatic scoreline and historical significance. Therefore, this study fills the gap by focusing on a single iconic match and examining how diction, figurative language, and commentator background interact to construct emotional intensity and narrative significance throughout the game. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does diction used by football commentators shape emotional intensity during the match?
2. What types of figurative language are employed to build dramatic tension?
3. How does the commentators' background influence their stylistic choices?

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method because it focuses on meaning, language use, and stylistic features rather than numerical analysis. The purpose of this approach is to describe how the language used by football commentators is able to evoke excitement, emotion, and match intensity as experienced by viewers.

The data source of this study is the live commentary of the Liverpool versus Manchester United match held on March 5, 2023. This match was selected because, over the past five years, Liverpool and Manchester United have been recognized as two of the most significant rivalries within the English Premier League. In addition, the match carried a considerable emotional pressure, particularly because Liverpool defeated Manchester United with a 7–0 scoreline. This result attracted widespread attention, as it occurred following internal issues at Manchester United involving Cristiano Ronaldo, the former number 7 player who had departed from the club. The scoreline was later interpreted symbolically by some Liverpool supporters, which further contributed to the heightened emotional atmosphere surrounding the match.

The research data were obtained from the audio transcript of the match commentary taken from the extended highlights video on the official Premier League YouTube channel. The commentary audio was transcribed into written form to facilitate linguistic analysis. Only the commentators' utterances were included as data, while background noise, background music, and other non-verbal elements were excluded.

The data were selected for analysis based on specific criteria. Only utterances containing strong and engaging diction, figurative language, and pragmatic functions such as the construction of tension, emotional intensity, and dramatization were included. The analysis focuses on diction, figurative language, pragmatic aspects, and the commentators' background as factors influencing their stylistic choices in football commentary. The transcribed video data were analyzed through several stages. First, the data were read and reviewed repeatedly in order to obtain a general understanding of the context of the commentary

presented during the match. Next, the utterances delivered by the commentators were classified based on the focus of analysis, namely diction, figurative language, pragmatic functions, and the commentators' background. Each data item was then connected to the match situation, such as the scoreline, match timing, and key moments occurring during the game. The analysis was subsequently framed using theories of diction, figurative language, and pragmatics, while also considering the commentators' background in order to address the established research questions.

The validity of the data in this study was maintained through contextual interpretation and consistency of meaning. Data interpretation was conducted by taking into account the match situation, flow of the game, significant events, and emotional pressure present at the time the commentary was delivered. Each data item was analyzed using consistent theoretical criteria, ensuring that the analysis remains systematic and does not rely on subjective interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The commentator is one of the elements in football that appears both important and unimportant at the same time. They can be considered one of the most underrated elements in the sport. The atmosphere of a match can become beautiful or even tense, especially for viewers watching from home, as they rely more on the voice of the commentator than on the visual experience alone.

The Liverpool versus Manchester United match in 2023 was also highly iconic, as it marked a historic demolition between two major teams, a result that had rarely, if ever, occurred before. Manchester United has long been recognized as one of the biggest clubs in Europe, which made the outcome of this match even more extraordinary. The commentator analyzed in this study is Peter Drury. He is a well-known English football commentator who frequently covers Premier League matches and is widely recognized for his distinctive, poetic, and expressive style of commentary. Based on available information, he is known as a supporter of Watford, and several sources also mention his association as a fan of West Ham United. These affiliations indicate that he does not have a direct connection to either Liverpool or Manchester United, suggesting an absence of bias toward either team in this particular match. The sequence begins with a quick attacking build-up from Alisson to Robertson. At this moment, Peter Drury simply utters "Robertson," indicating a neutral and descriptive tone. However, when Robertson delivers the pass to his teammate Cody Gakpo, Drury's diction becomes more expressive as he states, "That's a super ball, and Gakpo is on to it, it's CODY GAKPO!" which is immediately followed by a goal. The expression "that's a super ball" is used to emphasize the quality of Robertson's wide pass, which is directed toward Gakpo in a wider channel to bypass the opposing full-back.

The pass successfully splits two defenders who were simultaneously closing down both Gakpo and Robertson. For this reason, Drury describes the pass as a "super ball," highlighting its precision, vision, and tactical effectiveness. After the goal is scored, Drury states, "A Kop explosion! They must beat United. Liverpool lead United!" This expression can be classified as a form of figurative language, specifically a metaphor combined with hyperbole. The phrase "A Kop explosion" metaphorically compares the reaction of Liverpool supporters in the Kop stand to an explosion, suggesting a sudden and overwhelming surge of sound and emotion. At the same time, it functions as hyperbole, as the word "explosion" exaggerates the intensity of the crowd's celebration to emphasize its scale and emotional force. Through this expression, Drury draws attention to the collective euphoria felt by Liverpool fans, portraying their reaction as uncontrollable and powerful rather than literal. This choice of diction amplifies the emotional atmosphere

of the moment and allows viewers watching from home to experience the intensity of the supporters' response. Following the opening goal, the commentator's language begins to shift as Liverpool score for the second time, reflecting a rising sense of control and confidence. The second goal originates from a quick passing sequence involving Salah, Elliott, and Núñez, and is followed by Peter Drury's expression "red utopia for them." The phrase "red utopia" represents Liverpool as a club symbolized by the color red, while the term "utopia" refers to an ideal and almost impossible condition.

This expression reflects a situation long anticipated by Liverpool, both by the players and the supporters, in which everything unfolds perfectly. Through this metaphor, Liverpool is positioned in a state of complete control and dominance. Peter Drury employs this metaphor to convey that the match is no longer portrayed as a balanced competition, but rather as an ideal world belonging to Liverpool, where events proceed entirely according to their will. As Liverpool extend their lead with a third goal, the commentator's language becomes increasingly emphatic, reflecting a growing sense of inevitability. During the build-up to the third goal, Peter Drury states, "Salah's bike is the quick one," which metaphorically refers to Salah's rapid foot movement and technical agility. The term "bike" functions as a figurative expression that evokes the image of swift pedaling, emphasizing the speed and sharpness of Salah's movement before he delivers the pass to Gakpo. Following the goal, Drury exclaims, "What a beautiful goal, what a sight, what a sound!" to convey the emotional reaction of Liverpool supporters. This utterance employs repetition and evaluative diction, functioning as a form of hyperbole that amplifies both the aesthetic quality of the goal and the intensity of the atmosphere inside the stadium. Peter Drury further states, "what a moment for his young life," referring to Cody Gakpo, who was still at an early stage of his career at the time. This expression emphasizes the significance of the goal as a defining and memorable moment for a young player. Through this evaluative diction, the commentator highlights Gakpo's opportunity to shine on a major stage, framing the event not merely as a goal but as a milestone in his personal and professional development. As Liverpool continue to dominate the match, the fourth goal further reinforces the commentator's portrayal of the game as overwhelmingly one-sided. During the fourth goal, Peter Drury remarks, "Will he get a second bite?" which functions as an idiomatic expression referring to the possibility of a second chance after an initial opportunity. As the ball eventually falls to Salah and the goal is scored, Drury describes the strike as "formidable," employing evaluative diction to emphasize the power and authority of the finish. Peter Drury delivers this expression in response to the manner in which Salah scores the goal. The shot is struck with significant power and without hesitation, hitting the crossbar forcefully before entering the goal. This physical intensity reinforces Drury's choice of the phrase "he thrashed that in," as the metaphor reflects not only the aggressive technique of the strike but also the release of accumulated emotion within the moment. Peter Drury further states, "Liverpool are ripping United up," employing a metaphor of destruction to describe the psychological and emotional collapse experienced by Manchester United. This expression suggests that the scoreline has gone beyond tactical superiority, portraying Liverpool's dominance as mentally and emotionally damaging to their opponents. With the fifth goal, the commentator's language reflects a sense of disbelief, as the match moves beyond dominance into outright humiliation.

The fifth goal occurs at an extremely rapid pace, leaving the commentator little time for elaborate description. Peter Drury articulates, "Lifted in by Henderson, five. Darwin Núñez, the most remarkable day of his life." The phrase "day of his life" is employed to contextualize the moment as an extraordinary event within the framework of the match itself, underscoring the intensity and emotional significance of the occurrence rather than the player's broader career narrative. This heightened atmosphere is further

reinforced by Drury's assertion, "a story quite unforetellable," which frames the match as an unpredictable and almost implausible narrative. Through this articulation, the game transcends its depiction as a conventional football contest and transforms into a dramatic and unexpected spectacle shaped by the rapid escalation of goals and rising emotional tension. Drury further introduces the rhetorical inquiries "who saw it coming?" and "who could have dreamed this up," which serve to emphasize disbelief and highlight the extreme unpredictability of the scoreline, suggesting that the unfolding events surpass reasonable expectation and enter a realm that feels almost unimaginable. Furthermore, Drury's statement "United are in shreds" utilizes an element of hyperbole to convey the extent of Manchester United's collapse, exaggerating their condition to emphasize how thoroughly their mental and emotional state has been dismantled by the 5-0 deficit. As the match progresses toward its final phase, Liverpool adds a sixth goal, thereby reinforcing the complete imbalance of the contest.

The sixth goal marks the peak of Liverpool's dominance and is accompanied by an intensified shift in Peter Drury's language. As the goal unfolds, Drury exclaims "Firmino, Salah!", a fragmented utterance that prioritizes rhythm and immediacy over detailed description. This form of diction reflects the pace of the attacking sequence and suggests a sense of inevitability, as the goal appears almost effortless. Drury subsequently states, "Liverpool flex their muscles, to the power of six," employing metaphorical language to portray collective dominance. The expression "flex their muscles" operates as an idiom indicating a deliberate display of superiority, while "to the power of six" invokes mathematical imagery to emphasize that Liverpool's strength has multiplied alongside the scoreline. Through this formulation, Liverpool are positioned not merely as victors, but as a team exerting total control over the match. The commentary reaches its emotional zenith with the expressions "intolerable" and "inconceivable," which function as evaluative language rather than mere descriptive commentary.

These terms amplify the magnitude of the situation, framing the scoreline as something beyond reasonable expectation and reinforcing the perception that the match has moved outside the confines of a normative competitive encounter. As the match advances toward its concluding stages, Liverpool's dominance remains unrelenting, culminating in the seventh and final goal of the match. The seventh goal emanates from Curtis Jones' pass to Salah, during which Peter Drury articulates, "He wouldn't, would he?", a rhetorical question that serves to momentarily suspend the narrative and cultivate anticipation. This expression reflects uncertainty and speculation, particularly concerning the possibility of Salah accomplishing a hat-trick. Instead of finishing the opportunity himself, Salah delivers the ball to Firmino, resulting in the final goal. In response, Drury exclaims, "Bobby, seven, heaven," a connected phrase that employs phonological play and hyperbole. The term "heaven" is used metaphorically to depict the moment as an almost transcendental experience, suggesting a state of joy and perfection felt by both the players and Liverpool supporters. This sense of emotional excess is further reinforced by Drury's statements, "It's madness!" and "this now is crazy number," which exaggerate the situation to underscore how the scoreline has exceeded rational expectation. Through these expressions, the seventh goal is framed not merely as a statistical conclusion, but as an emotional climax that encapsulates the extraordinary essence of the match. Overall, Peter Drury's diction evolves in tandem with the scoreline, transitioning from neutral description to metaphorical exaggeration and emotional judgment. As Liverpool's dominance escalates, the commentator's language becomes progressively more expressive, employing metaphors, hyperboles, and rhetorical questions to construct a dramatic narrative that transforms the match from a competitive event into an extraordinary spectacle.

CONCLUSION

This academic research investigates the role of figurative and evaluative language in the Liverpool versus Manchester United match, which concluded with a 7–0 victory, as analyzed by Peter Drury. In the preliminary phase of this analysis, the background of the commentator was examined briefly to ensure that the interpretation was centered on the occurrences on the pitch, thereby minimizing possible bias or discrimination toward either team. The results indicate that Drury’s commentary consistently utilizes language that denotes dominance and spectacle, marked by an extensive application of metaphor, hyperbole, frequent rhetorical questions, and evaluative judgments. Noteworthy instances of wordplay and interconnected phrases like “Bobby, seven, heaven” significantly enhance the construction of a sense of inevitability, elation, and historical importance throughout the course of the match.

Initially, Drury’s commentary adheres to conventional patterns of praising goals typical of football matches; however, as the score increasingly escalates, his language denotes an escalating sense of disbelief, culminating in moments where he appears transiently speechless in reaction to the unfolding events. This transformation underscores his proficiency as a commentator, as his meticulously selected diction not only encapsulates the extraordinary nature of the match but also invigorates players, supporters within the stadium, and audiences viewing from various locations globally.

Moreover, this study accentuates that sports commentary operates as a performative discourse rather than merely a neutral narrative. Through emotionally laden diction and stylistic embellishments, the commentator plays an active role in shaping the audience’s perception of the match, thus reinforcing collective enthusiasm and shared emotional reactions. In conclusion, Peter Drury’s commentary exemplifies how linguistic elements in sports broadcasting function as an authoritative communicative mechanism that amalgamates factual information, emotion, and artistry, ultimately enhancing the viewing experience beyond the mere visual aspects of the game.

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