



Register Variation In European Football

Commentary: A Study Of Language Use In Live

Sports Broadcasting

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Abstract

Register variation, a central concept in sociolinguistics, refers to how language adapts to specific social and situational contexts. This study investigates register as it operates in live European football commentary, a high-intensity communicative environment where language must perform multiple simultaneous functions. Drawing on register theory, the research employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze transcribed commentary from major football matches broadcast on official platforms. The data were coded and interpreted using a framework focused on lexical choice, syntactic structure, tonal modulation, and rhythmic delivery. The findings reveal that football commentators employ a fluid, adaptive register marked by idiomatic expressions, clause fragmentation, evaluative and rhetorical tone, and dynamic pacing. These features serve both narrative and affective purposes, enhancing audience engagement and constructing shared emotional experiences. The study contributes to sociolinguistic theory by situating register within live, performative media discourse, offering insights into how language functions as social action in real-time contexts. The implications extend to sports media, discourse analysis, and broader media linguistics, where understanding register can inform training, content design, and cross-cultural communication strategies.

Keywords: *Register Variation; Live Football Commentary; Sociolinguistics; Media Discourse; Spoken Language Analysis; Performance Linguistics; Multimodal Communication*

Introduction

Language variation is a central concern in sociolinguistics, particularly as it relates to how communicative context, social roles, and discourse modes influence linguistic choices. One such form of variation is register, defined by Halliday (1978) as the configuration of linguistic features that corresponds to a particular situational context, characterized by three primary variables: field (what is happening), tenor (who is involved), and mode (how communication is delivered). Unlike dialects, which are shaped by regional or social identity, register is inherently functional, determined by the speaker's purpose and interactional setting.

This makes register particularly relevant in media discourse, where language must adapt to shifting demands of performance, information delivery, and audience engagement. Within this domain, live football commentary stands out as a vivid site of linguistic performance, where language is shaped by immediacy, emotion, and the multimodal nature of broadcast media. While many linguistic studies have explored informal speech, digital slang, and the dynamics of media discourse, few have systematically examined register variation in the unique context of live football broadcasting.

Prior works such as Rahmaniar et al. (2021) and Budiasa et al. (2021) examined informal language in digital communities, revealing how slang and colloquialism function as tools for identity and solidarity in asynchronous contexts. Similarly, Nuraeni and Pahamzah (2021) studied language use among teenagers, and Diani et al. (2021) investigated how character dialogues in films reflect social roles. These studies enrich our understanding of language variation in casual or scripted environments but fall short of addressing the linguistic pressures and real-time adaptability required in live spoken discourse.

In contrast, Lewandowski (2012) offered a comparative perspective on online sports commentary, yet his focus remained on structural patterns rather than functional register variation in live media performances. This creates an evident gap in sociolinguistic inquiry—specifically, the need to explore how language functions in real-time under the performative and high-stakes conditions of sports broadcasting. The core problem this study addresses is the lack of a comprehensive, register-based analysis of live football commentary.

Despite the genre's global visibility and cultural impact, its linguistic features remain underexplored in academic discourse. How do commentators adapt their language to reflect the pace, emotion, and audience expectations of live sportscasting? What linguistic tools enable them to switch fluidly between narration, evaluation, and dramatization? These questions are not only of theoretical interest but are also practically significant in understanding how public language constructs shared experience, authority, and entertainment value in

contemporary media.

To respond to these issues, this research employs a qualitative, discourse-analytic approach informed by register theory, examining a corpus of transcribed commentary from European football matches. The proposed solution is to conceptualize live football commentary as a form of register—one that is dynamically shaped by shifting communicative functions and contextual pressures. By applying Halliday's (1978) model and Trudgill's (2000) elaboration of register variation, the study systematically analyzes how lexical, syntactic, tonal, and rhythmic features operate in this performative domain.

Rather than focusing solely on slang or metaphor, the approach captures how language structure, pacing, and interactional style work together to produce a coherent yet flexible register that serves both informative and affective functions. This framework moves beyond mere description and towards a functional understanding of how language operates in action, particularly under conditions that demand immediacy, spontaneity, and audience responsiveness. Previous linguistic efforts have tended to isolate specific elements of sports commentary, such as metaphorical expressions (e.g., war or battle imagery), identity construction, or narrative framing.

However, these aspects, while significant, do not fully account for the integrated linguistic performance required during live commentary. Football commentary involves continuous, high-pressure decision-making about what to say, how to say it, and when, all within the constraints of visual events unfolding on the field. In this respect, it bears more similarity to oral storytelling or live reporting than to written journalism or casual conversation. Yet, unlike those genres, commentary must serve a hybrid function: it must narrate, interpret, entertain, and emotionally engage—all in real time. These overlapping roles call for a more holistic analytic lens, which register theory provides.

This study's novelty lies in its reorientation from isolated stylistic elements (like slang) to register as a total linguistic system shaped by situational variables. It draws upon live match broadcasts sourced from official YouTube channels, using purposeful sampling of high-stakes matches such as Liverpool vs Manchester United and Real Madrid vs Chelsea. These events provide rich linguistic data because they are characterized by heightened emotion, shifting momentum, and audience anticipation—all of which pressure commentators to adapt language rapidly. The transcriptions include paralinguistic markers such as pitch shifts, pauses, and emphatic repetition, allowing for an in-depth analysis of how language is modulated moment by moment to suit evolving communicative needs.

The literature most directly supporting this approach includes Trudgill's (2000) assertion that register affects not only vocabulary but also syntax, tone, and rhythm, and Biber and Conrad's (2009) emphasis on identifying linguistic features systematically associated with context. These frameworks are further enriched by

media discourse studies such as those by Allan and Burridge (2006), who classify slang into various affective and social functions. However, as previously noted, these contributions do not examine the simultaneous convergence of lexical, syntactic, and performative elements within the real-time constraints of live sports media. This study addresses that gap by using authentic, time-bound speech as its primary dataset, capturing language as it is performed and received in high-emotion, high-stakes contexts.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the variation of register in live European football commentary, with the intent of understanding how language is shaped by contextual variables and communicative functions. It offers a new perspective on register as a responsive, multi-dimensional linguistic system in action. The hypothesis is that sportscasters adapt register strategically—modulating vocabulary, sentence structure, tone, and rhythm—to fulfill diverse and shifting communicative goals, including narration, evaluation, dramatization, and audience bonding. This approach is justified both by the theoretical framework of Halliday and Trudgill, and by the underexplored status of football commentary within sociolinguistic research. The scope of the study is limited to English-language broadcasts of major European matches, with analysis focused on transcription segments that exemplify spontaneous, emotionally charged commentary. Ultimately, this research aims to advance our understanding of register as a performative linguistic tool and to contribute to broader discussions in sociolinguistics, media studies, and discourse analysis.

Literature Reviews

This literature review aims to establish the theoretical foundation and empirical context for examining register variation in live European football commentary. The central theme guiding this review is the functional nature of language as it adapts to specific social and communicative contexts. It synthesizes insights from register theory, media discourse, and sports linguistics to underscore the significance of analyzing live spoken commentary through a sociolinguistic lens. The review further highlights how prior studies have approached related phenomena such as slang, metaphor, tone, and spontaneity in media and sports language, ultimately identifying a gap that this study addresses.

The theoretical basis for this research is grounded in Halliday's (1978) conception of register, defined as a functional variety of language shaped by three interrelated situational variables: field (the nature of the activity), tenor (the participants and their relationships), and mode (the channel and structure of communication). According to Halliday, language is not only a system of rules but also a resource for meaning-making within specific contexts. This view aligns with

the idea that language variation is purpose-driven and responsive to situational demands. Halliday's model establishes the framework for understanding how commentary in live football broadcasting reflects immediate, emotionally charged events, involves an expert-to-audience relationship, and occurs via real-time spoken media.

Building on Halliday's foundation, Trudgill (2000) offers a more detailed account of how register variation manifests at multiple linguistic levels. He emphasizes that register is shaped by communicative goals and social settings, affecting vocabulary, syntax, tone, and rhythm. Trudgill's framework provides a practical lens for analyzing linguistic features in dynamic speech genres, particularly those marked by urgency and performativity. For example, in live football commentary, short, paratactic clauses and emotionally evaluative expressions are not simply stylistic but serve to maintain audience engagement and mirror the tempo of the match. This approach supports the present study's focus on identifying patterns of lexical choice, syntactic construction, tonal variation, and prosodic features within the register of live commentary.

Biber and Conrad (2009) extend register theory by introducing systematic methods for analyzing linguistic features tied to situational contexts. They propose that register can be empirically studied through grammatical and lexical patterns that recur within particular communicative settings. Their work is particularly relevant for studies like this one that seek to move beyond general stylistic observations and towards a structured, data-driven account of language use. Biber (1995) previously identified dimensions such as narrative versus informational density, frequency of modal verbs, and noun-to-verb ratios as key indicators of register variation. These criteria reinforce the value of transcription-based analysis in mapping how register is realized in live sports commentary.

Media discourse scholars have also highlighted the importance of register in public communication. Trudgill (2000) and Holmes (2013) note that different communicative roles—such as expert, entertainer, or emotional surrogate—require distinct linguistic resources. This is especially evident in live sportscasting, where the commentator must shift between describing gameplay, evaluating performance, and engaging the audience emotionally. Such role fluidity demands rapid register shifts, including transitions from neutral narration to exclamatory or even humorous commentary. Holmes (2013) further emphasizes how register choices help speakers negotiate authority and solidarity, both critical in media contexts where commentators function as both analysts and fans.

Within the narrower field of sports linguistics, prior research has focused on metaphor, narrative, and identity construction. For example, studies have examined how war metaphors (e.g., "attacking," "defense," "battle") structure football narratives and dramatize conflict (Charteris-Black, 2004). While these studies demonstrate the imaginative and persuasive dimensions of sports discourse, they

often overlook the structural and performative aspects of register. Lewandowski (2012), one of the few scholars to analyze online sports commentary, highlighted its informal, expressive, and multi-modal nature. However, his study centered on textual analysis of online posts rather than live spoken interaction, and thus did not fully explore how linguistic features shift dynamically in real-time broadcasts.

Other studies have addressed informal language in digital and entertainment contexts, offering useful parallels but lacking a focus on register. Rahmaniar et al. (2021) examined slang use among K-pop fans on Telegram, finding that informal language facilitated group identity and creativity. Budiasa et al. (2021) analyzed five types of slang on Indonesian social media, showing how digital communication shapes linguistic innovation. Similarly, Nuraeni and Pahamzah (2021) studied how teenagers use slang in peer interactions. While these investigations contribute to our understanding of informal discourse, they are primarily concerned with asynchronous, non-performative contexts. This distinction is critical: unlike text-based or delayed communication, live football commentary is synchronous, performative, and embedded in multimodal media environments that demand immediate linguistic responsiveness.

Additional contributions from Diani et al. (2021) and Aris et al. (2022) examined language in scripted and semi-scripted entertainment formats, such as film and live chat streams. These studies demonstrated the ways characters or streamers adjust speech according to role expectations and audience interaction. However, they do not apply register theory comprehensively, nor do they explore the pressures of real-time spoken commentary. As such, they underscore the need for a more systematic and theoretical approach to spoken media performance. The relationship between these studies and the current research lies in their shared focus on language variation and social meaning. However, none directly address how register variation functions in live, spoken sports broadcasting—a context where linguistic performance is both constrained by time and driven by emotional engagement. The multimodal nature of sportscasting, where voice must complement visual stimuli and narrative arcs, creates a distinctive communicative environment that is still underexplored in linguistic scholarship.

The significance of this literature review lies in demonstrating that while many studies have addressed components of sports and media language—slang, metaphor, identity—few have integrated these within a register-based framework suited to real-time analysis. This creates a theoretical and empirical gap: how does the concept of register account for the dynamic, emotive, and multimodal discourse of football commentary? This study positions itself to fill that gap by treating live commentary as a form of situated language use that blends narrative, evaluative, and expressive functions within a coherent register. By doing so, it offers new insights into how language operates as social action in contemporary broadcast

media.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the foundational theories of register, highlighted their relevance to media and sports discourse, and reviewed related empirical studies. It has shown that while previous research offers valuable insights into specific linguistic features or audience dynamics, it has not systematically addressed the register of live football commentary. This gap presents a compelling opportunity to deepen our understanding of how language adapts in real time to serve complex communicative goals. The present study aims to contribute to this theoretical and empirical endeavor by offering a structured, data-driven analysis of register in one of the most dynamic and widely consumed forms of media language.

Method

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine register variation in live European football commentary. The purpose of this design is to explore and describe how sportscasters adapt their linguistic choices—lexically, syntactically, tonally, and rhythmically—in response to situational and communicative demands. A qualitative method was selected due to the nature of the data: spontaneous spoken language that is highly contextual, performative, and rich in pragmatic nuance. As Trudgill (2000) posits, register is best analyzed through real-world discourse where functional variation manifests clearly in response to social roles and communicative purpose.

Theoretical Framework

The analytical foundation of this research is grounded in Halliday's (1978) theory of register, supported by Trudgill's (2000) elaboration on language variation, and Biber and Conrad's (2009) empirical approaches to linguistic analysis. Halliday identifies register as a variety of language conditioned by three variables: field (activity type), tenor (speaker-hearer relationship), and mode (channel of communication). This tripartite model informs the categorization of register features in football commentary, where the field is defined by the unfolding match, the tenor by the commentator-audience relationship, and the mode by live broadcast speech. Trudgill's emphasis on the role of rhythm, tone, and syntax in spoken media provides operational indicators for analysis. Biber's multidimensional model is further drawn upon to justify the selection of grammatical and lexical variables as markers of register.

Data Sources

The primary data for this study consist of live football match commentaries sourced from official YouTube channels. These include archived broadcasts from

the English Premier League and UEFA Champions League. Matches were selected using purposeful sampling, focusing on games known for their emotional intensity, competitive stakes, and audience significance. This sampling strategy ensures that the language data are rich in expressive and dynamic register features, characteristic of high-pressure broadcast contexts.

Examples of selected matches include: - Liverpool vs Manchester United (Premier League) - Real Madrid vs Chelsea (Champions League) - Barcelona vs Liverpool (Champions League) These matches were chosen not only for their narrative potential but also for the diversity of commentary styles they feature. Each broadcast includes professional English-language commentators with varying degrees of expressiveness, evaluative tone, and lexical creativity, thereby providing a comparative perspective on how register operates across different communicative styles.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection involved downloading selected video segments and manually transcribing commentary excerpts. Each transcript was produced through repeated listening, ensuring high accuracy and inclusion of paralinguistic elements such as pauses, emphasis, pitch variation, and repetition. The transcription followed an adapted orthographic convention to preserve spontaneous speech features, including incomplete clauses, interjections, and rhetorical constructions.

Following transcription, each utterance was coded for its linguistic and contextual characteristics using a structured coding sheet developed based on Trudgill's (2000) register components. The coding sheet included the following categories: - Lexical: slang, idioms, metaphor, evaluative adjectives - Syntactic: clause fragmentation, ellipsis, parataxis - Tonal: interjections, rhetorical questions, emotive emphasis - Rhythmic: pacing, repetition, breath groups, tempo shifts

Each linguistic instance was annotated and linked to the corresponding match moment to retain contextual integrity. For example, a phrase like "He trashes that in!" was classified as metaphorical and evaluative under lexical features, while its spontaneous, breathless delivery was marked under rhythm and tone.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis proceeded through two main stages: feature identification and functional interpretation. First, linguistic features were identified from the transcriptions and classified using the categories in the coding sheet. This was done independently by two researchers to enhance validity through intercoder reliability. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and re-examination of the video context.

Second, each identified feature was interpreted in terms of its communicative function, drawing on Halliday's (1978) field-tenor-mode model. For instance, an interjection such as "Unbelievable!" was evaluated as a tonal and lexical marker of expressive function, typically aligned with heightened gameplay moments. Sentences marked by clause fragmentation were assessed in terms of their rhythm and syntactic economy, indicating how commentators adapt to time-constrained reporting.

The analysis emphasized not just isolated features but their interaction. A holistic approach was applied to reveal how multiple elements—such as vocabulary, tone, and rhythm—coalesce into a coherent register. This aligns with Biber and Conrad's (2009) recommendation that register should be analyzed as a multidimensional construct.

Limitations of the Methodology

While the qualitative design allows for deep contextual analysis, it limits the generalizability of findings. The sample is confined to English-language broadcasts of high-profile matches, which may not represent register features in less prominent games or in other languages. Moreover, the reliance on manual transcription may result in occasional omissions or interpretive variability, although these were mitigated through cross-validation.

Despite these limitations, the methodology is well-suited to capture the real-time, multimodal, and performative nature of register variation in football commentary. The structured yet flexible analytic framework ensures a comprehensive understanding of how language adapts dynamically under communicative pressure.

Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study, derived from qualitative analysis of transcribed commentary segments from selected European football matches. The analysis follows Trudgill's (2000) register components—lexical, syntactic, tonal, and rhythmic—and Halliday's (1978) model of field, tenor, and mode. Each finding is supported by original commentary data and interpreted in the context of live, performative sportscasting. The data are organized into four major sections, each highlighting one dominant linguistic feature of register variation.

Lexical Features in Football Commentary

The commentary corpus revealed a rich variety of lexical items, including metaphors, idioms, slang, and evaluative adjectives. These lexical choices were often emotionally charged and sport-specific, reflecting the field and tenor of the broadcast. For example, the phrase "We'll get a second bite and it falls for Salah —

formidable — he trashes that in, Liverpool are ripping United up” demonstrates a mix of metaphorical (“second bite”), evaluative (“formidable”), and violent figurative language (“trashes that in,” “ripping United up”). These expressions intensify the visual drama and suggest dominance, aligning with the goal of enhancing audience engagement (Trudgill, 2000).

In another instance, “Jones, Salah — he wouldn’t, would he? Salah rolled it in, Firmino, Bobby — seven heavens! It’s madness! These now are crazy numbers,” the commentator employs idioms and exclamatory expressions to reflect astonishment. Phrases like “seven heavens” and “crazy numbers” reinforce the extraordinary nature of the match events. As noted by Allan and Burrige (2006), such slang functions as shorthand to express emotional climax and shared cultural knowledge among fans. These lexical patterns support the theory that register adapts to social function, combining descriptive clarity with expressive force (Halliday, 1978; Biber & Conrad, 2009).

Syntactic Variation and Fragmentation

A second major feature of the commentary register is its syntactic fragmentation, marked by clause stacking, ellipsis, and rapid parataxis. These structures reflect real-time narration where speed and responsiveness override grammatical completeness. Consider the line: “Now then, Fabinho’s gone down and doesn’t get a free kick. And that’s De Bruyne, and Haaland’s coming... And Foden’s there — and scores. Alisson is saying he had hold of the ball, but Manchester City are celebrating. Well, they’re checking the foul, actually. Here comes Liverpool at the other end.” This sequence mirrors the rapid progression of events, using short, declarative phrases, conjunctions, and dashes to reflect visual changes on the field. The syntactic flow prioritizes immediacy over cohesion, with commentators adjusting language in real time to match gameplay intensity.

Another example, “That excellent from Paqueta oh Caicedo debut to forget he says he got some ball John Brooks didn’t see it that way and it goes that will be win for West Ham,” lacks standard punctuation and exhibits speech compression. While ungrammatical in written form, it represents a plausible spoken register where structure is shaped by performance demands. These findings validate Trudgill’s (2000) claim that syntactic choices in spoken registers are driven by tempo and spontaneity, and reinforce Biber’s (1995) notion that live speech exhibits reduced grammatical complexity to enable fluid delivery.

Tonal Shifts and Emotional Engagement

Tone is a critical dimension of register, especially in emotionally charged environments like football commentary. The findings show frequent shifts between neutral description, emotional outbursts, and critical evaluation. For example, the

utterance “Chilwell with another chance to cross — it’s low — it’s Zouma now — chuck on that guy! Lovely shimmy, brilliant! Chelsea level! Big moment for Carney Chukwuemeka as well,” blends excitement and admiration. Interjections like “brilliant!” and “lovely shimmy” are not just evaluative—they signal approval and draw the audience into the moment. Similarly, “Mendy just judged the bounce and he has all eyes on you ref — Chelsea Football Club champions of Europe — it’s happened — it’s real — against the odds!” conveys a shift from critique (“all eyes on you ref”) to celebration. This tonal escalation mirrors audience emotion and marks narrative resolution.

These tonal modulations illustrate the commentator’s shifting role—from objective reporter to fan-like enthusiast—which aligns with Holmes’s (2013) view that register reflects social relationships and communicative intent. Such variation enhances the authenticity and relatability of the performance.

Rhythm and Performative Dynamics

The performative rhythm of commentary is shaped by pauses, repetitions, and pacing, which signal urgency, climax, or transition. These rhythmic choices amplify emotional impact and manage audience attention. In the line “Saka comes forward — Saka to Odegaard — great goal from Martin Odegaard — and Arsenal do get that all-important second — pretty clear player of the month is on absolute fire,” the rhythm escalates as the sequence moves from narration to evaluation. The phrase “on absolute fire” uses hyperbole and pitch modulation to elevate the moment’s drama.

Another rhythmic exemplar is: “Plays a lovely ball over the top — second again is onside — it’s gone in and Bukayo Saka buried it — but for a moment that maybe Hugo Lloris kept it out — that the power, the brilliance of Bukayo Saka — his sensational form continues.” This line exhibits tempo variation and emphatic phrasing (“the power, the brilliance”) to celebrate an individual player’s achievement. Voice rhythm and repetition serve a dual purpose: structuring spoken flow and conveying affect. As Halliday (1978) notes, rhythm is not merely prosodic but semiotic—carrying meaning about mood, emphasis, and alignment with audience emotion.

Integrated Register Analysis Across Data

Analyzing the commentary holistically reveals how the four components—lexical, syntactic, tonal, and rhythmic—coalesce into a dynamic, performative register. The combination of evaluative vocabulary, fragmented syntax, expressive tone, and rhythmic modulation enables commentators to manage shifting narrative demands, from play-by-play reporting to emotional celebration or critique.

For instance, “He’s judged that perfectly! Incredible skill! Would you believe it?!” unites hyperbolic lexis (“incredible skill”), rhetorical questioning (“would you

believe it?”), exclamatory tone, and high-pitched rhythm to dramatize an unexpected turn.

This interdependence of features demonstrates that register in live football commentary is not static but flexibly responsive, reaffirming the multidimensional perspective proposed by Biber and Conrad (2009).

Summary of Findings

Overall, the study identifies distinctive register features in live football commentary, including: - High frequency of metaphorical, idiomatic, and evaluative vocabulary. - Predominant use of syntactic fragmentation and real-time clause chaining. - Frequent tonal shifts aligning with audience emotions and gameplay stakes. - Strategic rhythmic variation to emphasize narrative peaks and player performance.

These elements are not random but context-sensitive, shaped by the field (live gameplay), tenor (expert-fan dynamic), and mode (spoken, performative broadcast). The findings validate the initial hypothesis that live football commentary operates through a unique, multidimensional register designed to inform, entertain, and emotionally engage audiences simultaneously. The analysis affirms Trudgill's (2000) claim that register variation reflects communicative role and purpose, and supports Halliday's (1978) model of functional language variation. It also complements recent work by Lewandowski (2012), while expanding upon it by applying a systematic register-based framework to live spoken data rather than online text. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions in sociolinguistics and media studies by illustrating how linguistic form and function intertwine in high-stakes, real-time communicative environments.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that live football commentary operates as a distinct and dynamic register shaped by the rapid pace, emotional intensity, and multimodal nature of real-time sportscasting. Drawing on Trudgill's (2000) dimensions of language variation—vocabulary, syntax, tone, and rhythm—this research confirms that the language used by commentators is not simply descriptive but performative, adapting fluidly to the shifting communicative roles required by the unfolding match. This supports the foundational claim by Halliday (1978) that language is a resource for meaning-making and social action, tailored by field, tenor, and mode.

One of the most striking features of the register identified in this study is the prevalence of expressive and metaphorical vocabulary. Commentators routinely employ idioms, slang, and figurative expressions such as “on fire,” “trashes that in,” and “second bite,” not merely as stylistic embellishments but as essential tools to

construct affective narratives that resonate with viewers. These findings confirm Allan and Burridge's (2006) view that slang and idiomatic language enhance relatability and emotional identification, functioning as communicative shortcuts that foster shared understanding. Such vocabulary is not incidental; it performs a dual role of information delivery and entertainment, a balance necessitated by the dual responsibilities of the commentator as both reporter and entertainer.

The syntactic patterns found across commentary transcripts further emphasize the spontaneous and pressured nature of live broadcasting. The use of clause stacking, ellipsis, parataxis, and fragmented utterances underscores the commentator's need to synchronize speech with the evolving visual stimuli on screen. Rather than adhering to grammatical completeness, the commentary register prioritizes agility and reactivity. This aligns with Biber's (1995) assertion that spoken registers, especially in real-time contexts, exhibit lower grammatical complexity to accommodate temporal constraints and interactive demands. Trudgill (2000) similarly emphasized that syntactic flexibility is central to spoken performance, allowing speakers to adjust language structure moment by moment.

Equally significant is the tonal variation observed in the data. Commentators move between objective narration and emotionally charged expressions with ease, often within the same utterance. For instance, lines such as "he wouldn't, would he?" or "Chelsea Football Club champions of Europe — it's happened — it's real — against the odds!" illustrate the capacity of live commentary to embody both analytical and celebratory tones. These tonal shifts reflect the hybrid identity of the sportscaster, who must inhabit the roles of expert, fan, and storyteller simultaneously.

Holmes (2013) observed that register can serve to construct solidarity, assert expertise, or convey empathy depending on the speaker's intention and relationship with the audience. In the case of football commentary, this means that tone becomes a critical mechanism for maintaining audience connection and enhancing the entertainment value of the broadcast. The rhythm and delivery of commentary also deserve special attention. The findings demonstrate that pitch modulation, repetition, pacing, and emphatic stress are integral to the register of live football commentary.

Utterances such as "Yes! Yes! Unbelievable!" or "He buried it — the power, the brilliance of Bukayo Saka" show how rhythmic elements help elevate dramatic moments and sustain audience immersion. Halliday's (1978) model accounts for such rhythmic strategies by including prosody and intonation as aspects of mode, arguing that the form of language must align with its delivery channel. In performative spoken contexts, rhythm serves not only to organize information but also to signal emphasis and emotion, effectively turning commentary into a semi-scripted, semi-improvised narrative performance.

Importantly, these linguistic elements do not operate in isolation. The

interdependence of vocabulary, syntax, tone, and rhythm creates a multidimensional register that responds to communicative goals in real time. For example, the phrase “Would you believe it?” integrates rhetorical questioning, evaluative tone, and expressive pitch to dramatize an unfolding event, blending affect and narrative in a single utterance. This convergence supports Biber and Conrad’s (2009) argument that register must be examined as a constellation of co-occurring features rather than as isolated variables. It also illustrates that register is an adaptive system—a point reinforced by the present study’s analysis of how sportscasters shift between descriptive, evaluative, and emotional language depending on gameplay developments.

Compared to earlier studies, this research offers a more comprehensive and systematic examination of register in live sports media. While Lewandowski (2012) explored online sports commentary from a comparative perspective, his focus remained on textual and structural features rather than register as a functional system. In contrast, the present study foregrounds how live commentary’s spontaneity and performativity shape its linguistic profile. Other studies on digital and informal language use, such as those by Rahmaniar et al. (2021), Budiasa et al. (2021), and Diani et al. (2021), provide valuable insights into slang, identity, and creativity in asynchronous contexts. However, they do not address the immediacy and multimodality that characterize live broadcasts. This study thus fills a critical gap by applying register theory to a live, spoken, and emotionally driven form of discourse.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that register in live football commentary is not only shaped by linguistic constraints but also by social performance. The commentator is not a passive observer but an active co-narrator of the match, responsible for shaping how events are experienced by a dispersed, media-saturated audience. This aligns with the view that language is not merely referential but performative, as it constructs reality in the moment of articulation. Register becomes the means through which commentators construct tension, deliver judgment, and foster collective identification with players and outcomes.

The findings also open avenues for future research. Comparative studies could investigate register variation across languages, genders, or broadcasting styles to explore how sociocultural factors influence commentary performance. Additionally, a quantitative dimension could be introduced to measure the frequency and co-occurrence of register features in different match contexts. Such extensions would further solidify the role of register theory in analyzing live media discourse and expand its applicability across domains.

In sum, this discussion affirms the central hypothesis of the study: that live football commentary constitutes a highly specialized register, dynamically shaped by situational demands and communicative goals. The integration of expressive

lexis, spontaneous syntax, tonal modulation, and rhythmic pacing enables commentators to navigate complex narrative roles and emotional intensities. These findings reinforce the theoretical models of Halliday (1978), Trudgill (2000), and Biber and Conrad (2009), while also extending their relevance to the domain of live broadcast linguistics. Ultimately, the register of football commentary emerges not just as a medium for describing sport, but as a form of linguistic performance that reflects, amplifies, and co-creates the spectacle of the game itself.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that live European football commentary functions as a highly specialized register, characterized by dynamic combinations of expressive vocabulary, fragmented syntax, tonal shifts, and performative rhythm. These linguistic features coalesce to fulfill multiple communicative roles—informing, dramatizing, evaluating, and emotionally engaging audiences in real time. The findings confirm that register in sportscasting is not static but fluid, shaped by the immediate demands of live performance, game tempo, and audience expectations. The research advances the field of sociolinguistics by extending register theory into real-time media discourse and offers a framework for understanding commentary as a performative, multimodal act. It invites future investigations into multilingual or gendered variations of commentary register, the role of emotion in media language, and cross-genre comparisons in live broadcasting.

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