Challenges Faced by Non-Native Speakers of English Understanding the Metaphors, Similes and Idioms in English Football Commentary

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Abstract
While idioms are relatively low in usage, football commentators largely use both similes and metaphors in football commentaries. English commentators' use of similes and metaphors distinguish World Cup, English Premier League (EPL) and Union of European Football Association (UEFA) from others in live football commentaries. Hence, the current study aims to explore how metaphors and similes complement English football commentaries and evaluate the extent of similes and metaphors expected to describe football events. The study investigates the lively impact and descriptive power of similes, metaphors and idioms in European live football matches commentaries. The adopted approaches include that observations were made; interviews were conducted; and questionnaires were distributed among participants. The study underscores a significant use of similes and metaphors on one hand, and a rare introduction of idioms in English football commentaries on the other hand. The findings highlight examples of similes and metaphors utilized in the football commentaries.
Keywords: Football Commentator, Simile, Metaphor, Idioms

Introduction
Similes, metaphors, and idioms could either be used in a contextual or situational form of communication since commentaries are reported by commentators in accordance with the context of the audience. For the sake of audience comprehension, commentators mostly introduce similes and metaphors in football commentaries. Commentators are expected to use audience background to select preferable choice of figures of speech between similes and metaphors. The usage of both figures of speech is largely linked to pragmatics and relevance

theory in linguistics (Al-Zawaydeh & Alghazo, 2018). It is from these two theories that the implication and usage of similes and metaphors became understandable.

Pragmatics deals with specific acts and utterances of the speaker in places and times. It focuses on the context of communication, the rules of expressions and how they are combined together. Relevance theory in the opposite direction, is concerned about the relevancy of the speaker's utterances and makes the audience decode suitable and relevant information among others in the commentaries. Therefore, pragmatics and relevance theory could be regarded as the main appropriate theoretical framework of the study.

In European football competitions, commentators make matches lively and interesting. Commentators prefer similes, metaphors, and idioms to express football actions since people with diverse ages and cultural backgrounds easily get a better understanding of the football activities. Commentators' cultural background affects the choice of metaphors and similes to be used accordingly.

The present study views similes, metaphors, and idioms as linguistic devices that enhance learning and communication (Carston, 2006). Factors like audience, communication situation, topic of discussion and English language fluency determine speaker's choice of similes, metaphors, and idioms usage (Al-Zawaydeh & Alghazo, 2018).

Problem Statement

Finding the usage of similes, metaphors, and idioms in football commentary from the perspective of relevance theory has been a rare concern of linguistic researchers. Insufficient analysis of the pragmatic use of similes, metaphors, and idioms has been noticed by the researchers. This study observes that the implication of similes, metaphors, and idioms usage on language and audience understanding is yet to be studied. It is still unclear whether commentators' use of similes, metaphors, and idioms adhere to the pragmatic use of language (Beard, 1998). Hence, there is an urgent need to understand why commentators use far more descriptive objects to express happenings on the football pitch.

Undoubtedly, non-native English speakers would know the essence of this research topic and problem. This is because this set of people basically struggle with cultural nuances and English figurative language intricacies, which in turn, pose challenges on their understanding and effective usage of figurative expressions (Petrone, 2021). Exploring this research problem would provide an adequate understanding to non-native English speakers about football commentaries.

Purpose of the Study

The English commentators' use of similes, metaphors and idioms pose challenges for non-native English speakers to comprehend live football commentaries. Commentators' usage of figures of speech solely satisfy commentary objectives, but fail to put non-native audiences into consideration. A number of studies observed that commentators mostly prioritize their respective native backgrounds over non-native audience backgrounds. Absence of specific linguistic rules in live commentaries give room for commentators to adopt any figure of speech in football commentaries to reduce repetition and create amusement. Hence, the

current study focuses on linking football actions with figures of speech (Aston, Goldstein & Markowitz, 2023).

Understanding the relevancy of figures of speech to football languages and terminologies is essential as it is established that commentaries are viewed from a lively and interesting perspective than educational point of view (Wilinski, 2015). This study purposely attempts to analyze linguistic rules in live commentaries, and confirm whether the intended interpretation was applied to the comments or not. The importance of the study could be figured out in exploring the pragmatic functions of metaphors, similes and idioms inside and outside live football matches.

The significance of this study is visible through understanding the essence, values and communication efficiency of figures of speech in football commentaries. It would assist future researchers and readers to know the reason why among others, similes, metaphors and idioms largely occupy commentators' minds in football commentaries. This is in addition with the fact that the study aims to elucidate how information is being transmitted and how communication is being made easy through figure of speech (Ross et al, 2019). Essentially, the current study explains how commentators create entertaining contents and commentaries through similes, metaphors and idioms.

Objectives of the Study
 The study intends to:
1) Highlight why similes, metaphors and idioms are often opted for in the European live football matches.
2) Explore the challenges faced by non-native English speakers in interpreting and comprehending similes, metaphors and idioms in live football commentaries.

Football Commentary and Related Terms
Football commentary is a branch of the arts of sports, and sports historian Amin Saati defined it as "the conscious study of all the influences surrounding the match, which necessarily includes an analysis of the roles of everyone who contributes to making sports matches through radio or television, in an optimal way that fully supports what the viewer sees about the events of the meeting, in addition to being supported by information and statistics with neutrality of description" (Al-Za'alook, 2017).

Football commentator has an important and direct role in the success and coverage of sporting events through its basic tools, most notably sports media, whether audio or visual, as the media is a basic factor that helps in the success of the role of the football commentator and its spread, as the football commentator analyzes the matches quantitatively by providing the recipient with complete and direct information to live the atmosphere of the match. The presence of a commentator is important to complete the enjoyment of the viewer by giving him an additional flavor to the match through information related to the team, players, coaches, referees, audience and the stadium in general.

Some believe that the job of a football commentator and a football analyst is the same, but the football commentator differs fundamentally from the football analyst. The football commentator covers the course and events of the match on the field, and transmits them to

viewers and listeners during the match directly, and from a place outside the field where the match is taking place, compared to the football analyst who monitors and expresses his opinion on the positives and negatives of the players, referees, audience and stadium. He is technically minded, and his style is characterized by calmness.

Football analysts have the ability to express their opinions on the work of the football commentating during the former's commentary, and they can also express their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses regarding the commentary process. The most important thing that distinguishes their work is that they are considered the audience's assistant to determine the correctness or incorrectness of the referees' decisions during the match.

The task of a football critic is to show the advantages and disadvantages of actions that actually occurred during the match. His style is often somewhat harsh, and is characterized by aggression and extreme emotion when the mistake of the player, referee, or coach is major. His role emerges after the end of the match, and the critical speech he directs is often written. The football critic works with an arsenal of sports critical concepts, and his work is mostly similar to that of the football analyst, but it differs fundamentally from that of the football commentator. Football critic differs from the football commentator in other aspects, as he presents his opinion, experience, art, skills, vision, and evaluation within an acceptable, convincing, and logical framework before the reader's eyes. He also seeks to reveal the truth objectively, with all its honesty, integrity, and transparency.

Conditions of Football Commentary

Most scholars, specialists, practicing media professionals and those interested in the world of football believe that the art of football commentary is not just an existing science, nor a talent without knowledge, refinement or training. However, for a commentator to succeed in performing his mission, both must be combined. Amer Abdullah confirms that commentary is essentially "instinct", and is supported by four other elements: voice talent, eloquence, and presence, which means acceptance by viewers and recipients. Then comes the role of refining the talent in a practical and not academic way (Farouk, 2019).

Some scholars stipulate that the commentator must have some skills and academic qualifications, such as obtaining a bachelor's degree in one of the following specializations: journalism and media, or radio and television, in addition to some personal and functional traits to shine and excel in this work, such as intelligence, having a social personality, speaking and dialogue skills, to search for the correct sources of information, the ability to joke and tell jokes and draw a smile on the viewer's face, and have a good writing skills in summarizing and writing sports press releases (Farouk, 2019).

Theories Related to the Study
Relevance Theory

Relevance theory is one of the theories of cognitive pragmatics, which represents the actual embodiment of the cognitive perspective in studying the communication process. This theory is based on cognitive psychological data from cognitive psychology, and dialogical data derived from Grice's theory. Its principles are summarized in researching encoding and reasoning in the process of interpreting discourses. Both Wilson and Sperber (2004) believe that there is a discrepancy between the semantic representations that make up a sentence

and the ideas that the utterances carry during the communication process, meaning that the meaning implied by an utterance is not identical to the meaning that was encoded through linguistic processes, as the grammatical and lexical components of a sentence do not necessarily convey the overall meaning of this sentence. Here the role of contextual factors in expressing the intended meaning appears (Okasha, 2013).

The context is considered a cognitive concept that refers to part of the cognitive environment. In addition to the above, this theory examines the way in which the communicative process takes place and the way in which linguistic signs acquire their meanings within a specific context (Yousuf, 2018). When the sender issues a statement or text, he intends to pass on some information, the linguistic characteristics of the statement or message help the recipient to infer the speaker's intention. Human communication is summarized in the correct and effective use of a code, and communication ends in failure when the encoding or decoding process is not done correctly. The idea of encoding is based on the fact that the speaker's thoughts are encoded in the statement, then produced again by the listener through decoding. Linguistic encoding and the speakers' reasoning together contribute to human communication, but they are independent of each other, and the encoded communication process is suitable as a source of hypotheses and data that reveal the second communicative process which is the inferential process (Ramus, 2014).

Sperber and Wilson (1995) adopted the idea of inference and pointed out that understanding is a non-deductive inferential process that uses all the information present in the conceptual memory. Sperber believes that the human mind uses all the inferential rules that play a fundamental role in non-deductive inference. He also believes that a precise description of the non-deductive inference process illuminates the role of relevance in communication and understanding. "Wilson and Sperber believe that there is a discrepancy between the semantic representations that make up a sentence and the ideas that the utterances carry during the communicative process, i.e. the meaning implied by an utterance is not identical to the meaning that was encoded through linguistic signs" (Hadim, 2013).

This communicative process is revealed through a specific vision, which is that the encoded meaning of the sentence is compatible with a number of different interpretations in the same context. These interpretations are classified in terms of accessibility. Listeners rely on a strong criterion when choosing the most appropriate interpretation. This criterion allows for the selection of one interpretation from a set of possible interpretations, to the extent that the first interpretation is considered a candidate that matches the intended interpretation (Yus, 2015a). This theory is based on two principles: a cognitive principle and a communicative principle. The first principle is that human perception is best at maximizing relevance. The communicative principle is that words create expectations of optimal relevance. Relevance is a potential property not only of utterances and other observable phenomena, but of thoughts, memories, and inferences. Any external stimulus or internal representation that provides input to cognitive processes may be relevant to individuals at a given time in accordance with relevance theory (Wilson & Sperber, 2004).

This theory is based on the cognitive assumption that humans have an evolved tendency to seek out the most relevant information from incoming stimuli. In order to achieve the optimal level of relevance, relevance is seen as positively related to the cognitive effects

that can be achieved through processing and inputs, and negatively related to the processing efforts required to achieve these effects. Inputs (scenes, sounds, and speech) are relevant to the individual when their processing in the context of available assumptions results in a positive effect. Positive effect is a useful difference in the individual's representation of the world. Incorrect inferences are cognitive effects, but they are not positive. The most important type of cognitive effect achieved by processing inputs in a context is contextual significance, which is an inference that can be drawn from the inputs and context together, but not from the inputs and context alone. Other types of cognitive effect work to strengthen, review, or abandon available assumptions. The idea of positive effect is needed to distinguish between information that only seems relevant to the individual, and information that is actually relevant (Wilson & Sperber, 2004).

"Humans, through their cognitive competence in processing information, seek to achieve a long-term goal of improving their knowledge of the world to the extent possible, within the available resources, while the short-term goal is to achieve the optimal distribution of central processing resources, as resources must be allocated to processing information that is likely to achieve the greatest contribution to serving the general cognitive goals of the mind, and at the least cost in processing" (Fatak, 2019).

Based on the above, it could be noted that the theory of relevance depends on main concepts represented by inputs, processing, external stimulus, and available assumptions. All of these concepts depend on the context; in order to be processed in the correct manner. "The listener's (cognitive) task is to identify the hypothesis that best answers the speaker's intentions from among many other hypotheses that are wrong, or that give rise to bad interpretations. As for the senders, the task of each sender is to produce a statement that allows the hidden intentions in it to emerge clearly and guides the news carried in it with awareness of the most relevant news processing in the given circumstances".

Sperber and Wilson (1995) also call this ostension, so the processing of the received news in an act of manifestation is exposed to risks and requires effort, and the risk lies in not knowing which assumption specifically among the many assumptions resulting from a communicative act are those which the sender seeks to have the receiver deal with, and the effort of selecting an issue and dealing with it after comparing it with the information already stored in the individual's memory. Likewise, every act of manifestation carries within it a guarantee of relevance, that is, the sender is aware of the cognitive effort that his interlocutor must make, and assumes in advance that despite everything he has done, it will be worth the effort.

For each listener, there is an initial context of the conversation that is essentially formed by the previous statement, but this context can change or expand in search of relevance of the statement, and this change/expansion can be positive or negative in search of relevance. "Sperber and Wilson look at the context according to the levels that each one consists of within the other, and it has been shown that cognitive, linguistic, social and cultural contexts are not separate categories, and that the context is the responsibility of the listener to recall the information required to understand the utterance (Al-Maashito, 2018). Therefore, they focus on the listener's encyclopedic knowledge; for the purpose of linking the utterance to its context, thus listeners differ greatly in the same interpretation according to

the type of knowledge that they possess and what they consider more important than others".

Challenges Faced by Non-Native Speakers In Understanding Metaphors, Similes and Idioms in English Football Commentary

The language in sports commentary, and football commentary in particular, must be characterized by clarity, attractiveness, brevity, and flexibility, with the ability to develop. However, ease does not mean drowning in localism and colloquial dialect and the use of vulgar language (Al-Desouki, 2022).

It is understandable that the majority of football comments are based on languages that all viewers understand, despite the overwhelming presence of technical terms in its eloquent mode, such as: shooting, penalty kick, offside..... All of which are deeply rooted terms, and no one doubts their antiquity. They are also accompanied by the use of foreign terms that invade English sentences suddenly (Khalaf, 2022). Perhaps due to the oral nature of sports commentary and in view of its linguistic material, it quickly slips into pragmatic functions, and becomes a rapid series of speech acts that alternate between charging for determination, criticizing the opposing team, motivating players, and encouraging the determination of competitors.

Clear and serious linguistic errors are frequently made by football commentators in matches, which should not be accepted to be committed by those describing the matches, and promoted among the football audience following these matches, which is estimated in the millions of viewers, for each match separately. These are common errors, and are almost repeated frequently, in any description, commentary, or even analysis of each football match. Among these common mistakes is the use of the word "claim", when it is said, for example: The referee whistles to announce a penalty kick, claiming, or alleging, that the defender touched the ball with his hand, or brought down the attacker in the penalty area. Although the defender's mistake is clear and beyond reproach, or his touching the ball with his hand appears obvious to the eye and in slow motion, the football commentator says that the referee announced the penalty kick, claiming the mistake made by the defender, or claiming that he touched the ball with his hand. Using the word "claim" in such cases is incorrect, because this usage indicates that there was no mistake that required announcing a penalty kick, and that the referee did not make good judgment in making the announced decision, and that he wronged one team and sided with another (Abou Bakr, 2022).

The fact is that the referee's decision is correct, and the use of the word "claim" in the description by the commentators is a mistake, and it is what must be reviewed, as it is more appropriate to say that the referee announced a penalty kick, because the ball touched the hand of the defender or because he committed a foul against the attacker. The use of the words "claim" is what turns the meaning of the event taking place before us, and depicts it in a distorted way, and in a way that is not its reality, as it makes the referee unjust, and the ruling issued by him unfair, while the matter is neither this nor that, but rather the use of the term "claim" in the football commentary is what was incorrect and out of place (Abou Bakr, 2022).

One of the common linguistic misunderstandings in football commentary is to say that "the ball is in your court" (Bekar & Takovski, 2019). The football interpretation of this phrase is to tell a player that it is his turn to make the next action and move on the football ground. Phrases like "do not change the rules in the middle of the game" is construed as ensuring that specific rules are maintained throughout the football match. Similarly, "don't hit a man when he is down" is a famous commentator's speech used to caution opponents to avoid striking a player when he is hurt (Bekar & Takovski, 2019).

Another example of football commentaries which may not be easily understood for non-native speakers is the phrase "don't put the cart before the horse". Non-native speakers may face challenges in digesting the actual meaning, meanwhile, native speakers would easily interpret it as ensuring that things are not done in the wrong order (Yolanda & Maulyna, 2018). In a similar vein, comments like "the game is not worth the candle" are mostly found in commentators' commentaries. The phrase represents a situation when efforts are more than the gain in the game (Yolanda & Maulyna, 2018).

"It is not over till it is over" is another example used by commentators in football matches. According to Yolanda & Maulyna (2018), the phrase "it is not over till it is over" means that there is still hope in a football game till the last seconds (Yolanda & Maulyna, 2018). One does not know why commentators and match descriptions cling to this word, and why they insist on inserting it in their coverage of matches, by using it out of context? What do they like about it? Is it difficult to change it with other words that are understandable for non-native speakers and appropriate for the event and perform the required function correctly?

For example, the saying "you cannot beat a man at his own game" may pose challenges for non-native speakers, while English native speakers may quickly understand it as bearing it in mind that it would be difficult for a stranger of an environment to win the owners of that environment. In other words, you cannot surpass people in their territory, most especially, if they are competent (Titelman, 2000).

Therefore, undoubtedly, these confusing interpretations would indeed produce misleading consequences for non-native English audiences. The main objective of language would not be achieved since the audiences are ignored in the contents of the communication. The bottom line is that commentaries are incomplete if non-native English speakers have no connection with the live football commentaries in English language.

Concluding Thoughts

The study elucidates the connections between similes, metaphors and idioms on one hand, and football commentaries on the other hand. Emphasis was made on linguistic features related to football commentaries. Speakers' intention, audience interpretation, listeners' comprehension and contextual appropriateness of figures of speech were the major focus of the study. The study emphasizes how linguistic inputs and contextual factors shape meanings; and how Relevance Theory serves as linguistic features in football commentaries. Relevance Theory provides a systematic approach that helps in analyzing the pragmatic aspects of figures of speech like simile, metaphor and idioms in live football match commentaries. Through the review of literature, it is established that pragmatic interpretation of linguistic

features affect audience's perception, understanding and engagement of football commentaries. In fact, audience enjoyment and comprehension satisfaction are considered the key components of pragmatic interpretation.

The pragmatic role of similes, metaphors and idioms is to create rhyme in one's speech. While commentators use metaphors to substitute serious words with jokes, similes enable the commentators to introduce comparative sentences to appeal to the audiences. Commentators largely use metaphors in football commentaries because it simplifies complicated comments. Idioms on the contrary are rarely used by the commentator because it requires knowledge, proficiency and understanding from audiences to comprehend.

In live football matches, commentators prefer using figures of speech to express football actions than plain language because the latter entertain bias and injustice. Similes, metaphors and idioms make football commentaries easy-reaching for the audience. These figures of speech strengthen audience positive connections with game and football reporting. In a nutshell, they are used to captivate the attention of the audiences at the football pitch and listeners outside the sport areas.

Non-native speakers might find similes, metaphors and idioms boring in the absence of knowledge and understanding about these figures of speech. This study is an advocate encouraging the use of similes, metaphors and idioms in football commentaries, but discouraging the neglect of non-native audiences in consideration. Commentators need to break football commentaries down to non-native English speakers' level. As a matter of fact, they should not be left out in the whole football reporting process.

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