

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In This chapter, the writer presents some points related to this research. These point cover background of study, research problems, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of Study

Football is the world's most popular sport, uniting people across countries, languages, and cultures. As an internationally celebrated game, football attracts millions of viewers, with live commentary playing a crucial role in enhancing the spectator experience. The English Premier League (EPL), one of the most-watched football leagues globally, serves as a rich field for sociolinguistic studies, particularly in terms of language use in commentary. Commentary not only informs the audience about the game's progress but also conveys excitement, emotion, and regional identity through the language and dialects used by commentators.

In the UK, dialects vary significantly by region, and football commentary in the EPL offers a reflection of these linguistic variations. Each match is often broadcasted by commentators from different regions, who bring their unique linguistic flavor to the game, using a specific register known as Sport Announcer's Talk (SAT). SAT is a distinct form of language, characterized by rapid speech, high levels of information, and a combination of formal sports terms with colloquial language (Ferguson, 1983). This unique linguistic register becomes even more interesting when examined through the lens of dialectal variation.

The study of British English dialects in EPL commentary is particularly relevant in sociolinguistics. British dialects, such as Cockney (London), Scouse (Liverpool), Geordie (Newcastle), Brummie (Birmingham), and Mancunian (Manchester), each carry a distinct set

of phonological, lexical, and syntactical characteristics that reflect the speakers' regional identities (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998). These dialects are often recognized by the audience, creating a bond between the commentator and the viewers from similar regions.

The influence of dialects on football commentary has not been widely explored, especially in the context of the EPL, where commentators' linguistic choices may reflect broader social and cultural meanings. For instance, commentators from Liverpool might use the Scouse dialect, while those from Manchester might employ the Mancunian dialect. These linguistic choices can serve as markers of regional pride and identity, making the commentary more relatable for audiences from those areas (Trudgill, 2000).

The importance of studying dialect in football commentary goes beyond just linguistics. It involves the analysis of how language conveys regional identity, cultural context, and social connection. According to Coupland (2007), language use in media, especially in high-profile domains like sports commentary, has the power to shape public perceptions of dialects and accents. Media representation, including live football commentary, plays a role in either reinforcing or challenging stereotypes associated with certain dialects. Understanding the impact of dialect on football commentary, therefore, provides insights into broader issues of language, identity, and social status in contemporary British society.

In addition to the sociolinguistic significance, the practical implications of analyzing dialect in sports commentary are worth noting. In the fast-paced world of football, where emotions run high, the ability of a commentator to connect with the audience is essential. Research by Ochs (1996) indicates that the use of familiar dialectal features in broadcast media helps in creating a sense of community and immediacy with the audience. This means that commentators who use regional dialects may be more effective in maintaining audience engagement, as they resonate with the regional identities of their listeners.

Previous studies on sports commentary have largely focused on general aspects of language use, such as turn-taking, narrative structure, and evaluative language (Gerhardt, 2008; Kuiper, 1996). While these studies provide valuable insights, there remains a significant gap in the literature when it comes to examining the role of dialect in shaping the register of football commentary. The present study aims to address this gap by analyzing the use of British dialects in EPL commentary, with a focus on how these dialects influence the delivery, tone, and effectiveness of the commentary.

Based on the previous explanation, football commentary in the English Premier League offers a unique opportunity to explore the intersection of language, culture, and sport. The use of British dialects in this context not only adds richness to the linguistic landscape of the commentary but also reflects the social and cultural diversity of the UK. This study, therefore, seeks to understand the role of dialect in shaping the language of EPL commentary, with the aim of contributing to both the fields of sociolinguistics and sports media studies.

B. Statement of Research Problem

1. What are the British dialects used in football commentary during English Premier League matches?
2. How do the dialects influence the style and delivery of the football commentary register?

C. Objective of the Research

1. To identify the British dialects commonly used in English Premier League football commentary.
2. To analyze how these dialects shape the language style and delivery of football commentary.

D. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the field of sociolinguistics by providing insights into the intersection of language, culture, and sports. Understanding how British dialects influence sports commentary can deepen our appreciation of language diversity in media. Additionally, this research may help commentators and broadcasters better understand their audience, enabling them to maintain authenticity while reaching a wider, more diverse audience. Finally, for learners of English, especially those interested in football, this study offers a practical application of dialectal differences in real-world settings.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Research

This research focuses on British dialects used in live football commentary of English Premier League matches. The study is limited to analyzing commentary from select matches broadcast in the UK, involving a few key commentators known for their regional accents. It does not include commentary from international broadcasts or analysis of written sports commentary, such as match reports.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Dialect

A dialect is a variety of a language that is specific to a particular region or social group, distinguished by its own unique set of phonological (pronunciation), grammatical (syntax), and lexical (vocabulary) features. Dialects are influenced by geographical, historical, and social factors and are often perceived as markers of regional or community identity. In the context of British English, dialects such as Cockney (London), Scouse (Liverpool), Geordie (Newcastle), Brummie (Birmingham), and Mancunian (Manchester) are well-recognized for their distinct

features. For example, the Scouse dialect is characterized by unique vowel sounds and intonational patterns, which set it apart from other regional dialects in the UK (Cheshire, 1982). Similarly, the Geordie dialect from Newcastle is noted for its non-standard grammar and pronunciation of certain vowel sounds, which contribute to the dialect's distinctiveness (Wells, 1982).

2. Football Commentary

Football commentary refers to the live oral description and analysis of football matches, typically delivered by sports broadcasters or commentators during a game. The primary purpose of football commentary is to provide a real-time narrative of the action, keeping the audience informed and engaged. Football commentary is characterized by its unique language register, known as Sport Announcer's Talk (SAT), which involves rapid speech, specific terminology, and emotionally charged language designed to capture the excitement of the game (Ferguson, 1983).

3. English Premier League Match

Vincent and Harris (2020) stated that, Premier League has been described as “a global sporting phenomenon, where not only the players but also the broadcasters' linguistic styles hold sway in maintaining viewer engagement”. The English Premier League (EPL) is the top tier of the professional football league system in England, contested by 20 clubs. The EPL operates on a system of promotion and relegation with the English Football League (EFL). Each season, which runs from August to May, each club plays 38 matches (both home and away) for a total of 380 matches. The EPL is known for its high level of competition and has become one of the most popular and commercially successful football leagues globally. The league's broad international viewership and media coverage make it a prime platform for linguistic analysis, particularly through football commentary. The commentary accompanying

EPL matches is broadcast in various dialects of British English, reflecting the diversity of the commentators' backgrounds. As a global sporting event, the EPL's audience includes millions of people worldwide, and thus, the language used during the commentary has an important cultural and communicative impact.