

**2180 Richard Lappin**

**44215 South Hunsley School**

**AQA English Language (Advanced) 4111**

**Component Language A: Language Investigation**

**Investigating the lexical, syntactic and stylistic features of television and radio  
football commentaries**

**Completed March 2000**

## Contents

3	Introduction
4	Methodology
6	Analysis
15	Conclusion
17	Bibliography
19	Transcripts

## Introduction

For my language investigation I will be examining the structural features of radio and television commentary. My investigation will consider lexical, syntactic and stylistic features in television and radio commentaries on two football matches. I will be looking for ways in which the use of these features reflects the listener's or viewer's experience, specifically in terms of being able or unable to see the action.

Sports commentary is a form of unscripted commentary which requires the commentators to speak "off the cuff" as they describe and comment upon events as they happen. The main difference between television and radio commentary is that whilst the television viewer can see what is happening, the radio listener can not. Therefore the radio commentator must provide everything that is necessary for understanding and enjoyment, using only words.

"Although commentators have individual styles, they have a great deal in common in their use of English, which is why unscripted commentary can be described as a variety of spoken English"<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Dennis Freeborn, *Varieties of English*, P.126, Paul & Co. Pub. Consortium, 1997

## Methodology

To come to any meaningful conclusions at the end of my investigation it was imperative that I made full use of all the resources and sources available to me.

The first step I took was to write letters/e-mails to a number of authorities<sup>2</sup> who might help me in some way with my investigation. I sent eight requests via e-mail to universities<sup>3</sup>, of which three replied<sup>4</sup>. The replies were useful insofar as they gave me a wide range of reading material that the writers felt would be beneficial to me in my investigation.

The letters which I sent to Media companies differed slightly from those which I sent to universities<sup>5</sup>. In these letters I asked questions more specific to the commentator, inquiring about models, formats and policies that may be used. In total I sent six letters and received three replies<sup>6</sup>. Two were unable to offer any help, but I did receive a useful reply from John Helm of Yorkshire Television.

During this period I also collected my language data. I chose the first two football matches which were available to me and were broadcast on radio and television. I chose two matches not only to increase my data but to see if there were any differences regarding the context of a match, e.g. the frequency of incidents. I transcribed a five minute period from each broadcast on both radio and television. Thus, I had four transcripts. I chose the time period of twenty to twenty-five minutes in each game.

Following the transcription of the football matches and background reading, I decided upon further methods which would help me to examine my data. These included:

---

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 5

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 6

<sup>4</sup> Appendixes 12,13 and 14

<sup>5</sup> Appendix 7

<sup>6</sup> Appendixes 15,16 and 17

1. A total word count for all the transcripts.
2. Word counts for one radio and television commentary on the following; nouns, pronouns, proper nouns, adjectives and verbs. In this instance I only selected two transcripts because of time constraints.
3. Listings of the 1000, 2000 and 3000 most common words according to the Longmans Language Corpus<sup>7</sup>. Again only using two transcripts because of time constraints.
4. Dividing the transcripts up into 'play-by-play' and 'colour adding' commentary according to the definitions of David Crystal<sup>8</sup>.
5. Making a list of all the words specifically related to football.
6. Adding up the number of pauses in each transcript.

All of which will be discussed further, with the results that they brought, later on.

---

<sup>7</sup> Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, third edition, 1995

<sup>8</sup> David Crystal, The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language, P.386, Cambridge University Press, 1999

## Analysis

My first task was to carry out a word count on each of the transcripts. Using *Microsoft Word* to analyse the data I was able to gain the following statistics:

<b>Match (5 minute period)</b>	<b>Total Word Count</b>
Manchester United v Chelsea (TV)	746
Manchester United v Chelsea (Radio)	1217
England v Belgium (TV)	614
England v Belgium (Radio)	1234

I found the results a little surprising but ultimately helpful. I expected there to be a higher word count in a radio commentary compared to one on the television, but I did not expect such a marked difference. For example, in the England v Belgium game, there was over double the amount of words in the radio commentary compared to the television one. You would predict the radio commentary to contain more words primarily because it has to describe everything as the listener can not see the events that are taking place. But also because if there is nobody is speaking on the radio, what is the point in listening to the radio? thus silence is anathema on the radio. Meanwhile on the television, the commentator can allow himself to be quiet for a short period of time, as the viewer is still aware of what is happening in the match. This is often welcomed by the viewer, however, on the radio it is imperative that this does not happen and that is why there are three commentators on the radio compared to two on the television.

On both of the radio commentaries there was never a break in speech and the only reason why there is a difference in the total word count is because of the speed of the commentators speech. I do not believe that any other contextual factor could have influenced this. However, in the case of the television commentaries there was numerous occasions in which there were pauses in the speech, as you can see in the table below.

<b>Match</b>	<b>Total Time Of Pauses</b>
Manchester United v Chelsea (TV)	67 Seconds
England v Belgium (TV)	44 Seconds

Thus, not only were there less words said in the England v Belgium match, but there was also an additional 23 seconds, compared to the Manchester game, in which there was no speech. Both matches were presented by the same commentators, Martin Tyler and Andy Gray, so why the difference? On this occasion I believe it is because of contextual reasons. If we are to look at the amount of incidents in the five minute period of each game, we can see that the Manchester game had much more happening in it than the England match. The Manchester game featured a sending off, a booking, two goal mouth incidents, and a goal that had just been scored prior to my five minute period. In comparison the England match had a free kick and one goal mouth incident. Although there are bound to be differences in the number of incidents in a match it does illustrate how variations in incidents have an impact on commentary. It is therefore clear that the Manchester match had a great deal more to comment on and that is the reason for the difference in word counts and time lost through pauses. The amount of incidents is irrelevant to radio transcripts as the commentator will describe everything that is happening regardless of how important it is.

David Crystal distinguishes two separate forms of commentary naming them ‘play-by-play’ commentary and the ‘colour-adding’ commentary<sup>9</sup>. He defined ‘colour-adding’ as “pre-event background, post-event evaluation, and within-event interpretation”. In contrast ‘play-by-play’ is the method used to describe actual events that are happening as the commentator sees them. To investigate this theory further, I divided each of my four transcripts into the two categories. The results were the following:

<b>Match</b>	<b>‘Play-by-Play’</b>	<b>‘Colour-Adding’</b>	<b>Total Word Count</b>
Man v Che (TV)	452	294	746
Man v Che (Radio)	1183	34	1217

<sup>9</sup> David Crystal, *The Encyclopaedia of the English Language*. P.386, Cambridge University Press, 1999

Eng v Bel (TV)	396	218	614
Eng v Bel (Radio)	1084	150	1234

The differences are somewhat clearer if you look at the graph in appendix 8. In television commentary, roughly a third of all speech is ‘colour-adding’, whereas in radio commentary, at best, it makes up a sixth. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Firstly, on the radio, the primary objective is to describe what is happening and so the only time when the commentator can ‘colour-add’ is whilst there is a break in play. In football, there are very few breaks, hence the short amount of ‘colour-adding’ on the radio. Meanwhile, on the television, it is not necessary for the commentator to describe and comment upon every piece of action that takes place during the game as the viewer can see for themselves. This is not to say that the commentator abandons ‘play-by-play’ commentary, it is just that he can be more selective on what he comments upon. This gives him more spare time, and although he does not use it all as indicated in the amount of time lost in pauses, he can now do a lot more ‘colour-adding’ For example, in the England v Belgium television transcript<sup>10</sup>, there is a spell from the end of line 33 to line 47 which is all purely ‘colour-adding’.

One immediately noticeable feature of sports commentary is its specific lexicon. There are many words contained in the semantic field of football (those found in the transcripts are listed in appendix 11). Although all the words are related to football, not all are exclusive to it. Indeed, this is one of the main problems that semanticists face - grouping words under a particular category. Nevertheless, all the words listed, have specific football related meanings despite having other meanings. Lets for example take wall. Its most common meaning is that of a “vertical construction made of stone, brick, wood etc....used to enclose, divide or support.”<sup>11</sup> However, in the semantic field of football it refers to a line of footballers used to protect their goal from an opponents free-kick.

---

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 2

<sup>11</sup> Collins English Dictionary, P.1681, third edition, 1992



Also noticeable in the list are collocations. These often link two or more common words together to provide a technical term. Examples of this include free-kick and penalty-area. Both, when separated into their original words have a separate meaning to that of when they are joined together. When put together in the context of football, they form a lexical item with a meaning particular to football.

Indeed many of the player and place names are also “context bound”. For example, “England” and “Chelsea” do not unconditionally refer to the football sides, without knowing the context they could relate to any number of things. The same is true of player names, for instance, without knowing the context “Adams” does not necessarily mean Tony Adams of England and Arsenal FC. It could in fact mean Gerry Adams, leader of the IRA, as both are topical figures.

Although the register adopted by commentators contains many specific words, they still have to talk in an understandable manner as their audience is a wide and varied one. Shirley Russell refers to this demotic speech as the “common register”<sup>12</sup>. However, it is not enough to just say that the commentator is using simple and easily understood language. Objective evidence is needed. I therefore used the *Longman Corpus Network*<sup>13</sup>, to find out if the words used by the commentators were common (see appendixes 18 and 19). The corpus lists the 1000, 2000, and 3000 most common words in speech and writing, from a corpus amassed in the last decade. If a word is located in any of these collections than it is in the ‘common register’. For this I took a 100 word sample from both a radio and television transcript of the same match. To use a bigger sample would not only have taken up too much time, but it would be inefficient. The corpus claims to be extremely accurate and so a 100 word sample should be enough to gain an accurate picture of the commentators choice of words. My results where the following:

---

<sup>12</sup> Shirley Russell, *Grammar, Structure, and Style*, P.36, Oxford University Press, 1997

<sup>13</sup> *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, third edition, 1995

England v Belgium (Radio)

<b>Category (most common words)</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Words</b>
1000	79
2000	5
3000	2
3000+	14

England v Belgium (TV)

<b>Category (most common words)</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Words</b>
1000	83
2000	6
3000	3
3000+	8

Although it would appear that television commentators use plainer English, it is not necessarily true. The sample is relatively small and I believe a larger inspection would reveal that there is little difference in the popularity of the words used by both radio and television commentators. Nevertheless, this does illustrate that, for most of the time, both radio and television commentators use a “common register”.

Commentators also regularly use metaphors to add excitement to their commentary and bring the viewer/listener deeper into the game. This is especially important on radio because if the commentator does not establish a rapport with the audience then they will lose interest and switch off. There are many examples of this, including; “Belgium mop it up nicely”<sup>14</sup> (a domestic metaphor) and “net bound”<sup>15</sup> (a navigational metaphor). These examples are very vivid and add life to the commentary. However, if over used they can degenerate into dead metaphors or clichés, because their original meanings are lost. Commentators regularly use and as a result these become something of a habit. For example, “Strupar smashes a volley”<sup>16</sup> and “stabbed by Lampard”<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> Appendix 1, line 20

<sup>15</sup> Appendix 1, line 16

<sup>16</sup> Appendix 1, Line 6

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 1, Line 10

Yet this is not the distinguishing feature of sports commentaries. Such characteristics can be found in press reports and everyday chat. There are other factors which make this variety of English more distinctive. For instance, where normal conversation is marked by hesitations, self-corrections, false starts, fillers, and incomplete sentences, sports commentary is very fluent. This would suggest that it is an acquired skill and although it sounds spontaneous, it has to be learned and practised. John Helm of Yorkshire Television is in agreement stating that although there is no formal training, “most commentators pick up the basics by listening to other commentators and develop their own style and technique using bits of those they admire most”<sup>18</sup>. Nevertheless, I did find some examples of non-fluency. For example in the Manchester (radio) transcript, Mike Ingham says “so far f-what a ball”<sup>19</sup>, which is an example of a false start. Also in the same commentary Alan Green and Bryan Hamilton speak at the same time and this leads Green into saying “sorry Bryan”<sup>20</sup>, which disrupts the fluency. There are a few further examples, but in general all the commentaries retain a high degree of fluency throughout.

This fluency is greatly assisted by the highly formulaic style of presentation which the commentators adopt. By formulaic, Crystal<sup>21</sup> means sentence structures that do not permit the usual range of grammatical variation. This is beneficial as it reduces the memory load on the commentator, which is quite considerable in a football match, with up to twenty-eight players, and so increases the fluency. Sometimes there may be something obstructing the commentators view or they may not be sure what exactly is going on. In radio especially it is imperative that the commentary goes on and formulaic language provides a partial solution. For example, in the England (radio) match Alan Green says “ Tanghe to, on the near side, Deflandre”. Presumably the commentator was having some trouble in identify the person that Tanghe had passed the ball to. Thus, the formula “X to Y” was interrupted by another formula, “on the near side”, giving the commentator enough time to work out who exactly the ball had been passed to.

---

<sup>18</sup> Appendix 15

<sup>19</sup> Appendix 3, Line 33

<sup>20</sup> Appendix 3, Line 77

<sup>21</sup> David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, P.386, Cambridge University Press, 1999

There many other types of formula found such as the scoring formulae. For example, “one one” or “two nil”. In radio commentary every so often we are reminded of the time, the score and the radio station. There is a cyclical pattern which starts with this, then goes on to describe a period of play, then there is a short analysis of the game (usually by the specialist commentator) and then it is back to the time, score-line, and radio station. This still occurs on the television commentaries but the pattern is less rigid because the viewer can see the score and time on the screen. This pattern exists because it offers the listener/viewer a ‘state of play’ summary which is crucial if you have just switched on or if you have simply lost track of what is happening.

A common feature of ‘play-by-play’ commentary is the way in which the commentator omits words. For example, “Deflandre to Van Meir”<sup>22</sup>. In conventional written English this would read , *Deflandre passes to Van Meir*. The commentator is able to omit certain words because his intended audience is an interested and knowledgeable one and so he only has to describe the most important features of the play; player (Deflandre), direction (to), and receiver (Van Meir)

The commentator does not have to mention passing because everybody understands what is going on. Furthermore, if he was to describe every piece of action fully, the next piece of action would be over before he could begin to describe it.

Verbs are also frequently omitted by commentators and it is usually a form of the verb “to be”. This can occur as main verbs, for example, “Babayaro down the left hand side”. Instead of, *Babayaro is down the left hand side*. Here the verb “is” is dropped. It also happens when the verb is being used as an auxiliary to help form the present continuous tense of another verb. For example, “Beckham trying to usher Nicky Butt off”. Instead of, *Beckham is trying to usher Nicky Butt off the pitch*. In these examples when the commentator is presenting an action, he is pointing to its existence as a fact. He is stating the fact without the existential “is”. This is a reoccurring characteristic found in all my transcripts.

---

<sup>22</sup> Appendix 1, Line 43

In ‘play-by-play’ commentary the commentators describe what is going on as they speak. Therefore, they tend to use the simple present tense a lot. Examples are numerous of this including, “Zola flicks the ball on”<sup>23</sup> and “Ince stabs it back to Seaman”<sup>24</sup>. This may appear obvious, but in ordinary conversation, the norm is the present progressive tense. This is still used in commentary but not to the same extent as the simple present tense. An example of this is “Beckham trying to usher Nicky Butt off”. When referring back to an incident that has just happened the commentator normally uses the simple past tense. For example, “Butt lost his cool and kicked out” The present tense is used far more often than the past tense. Not only does the commentator do this because he is describing events as they happen, but it also adds drama, life and excitement to the viewing/listening experience.

To determine if there were any differences in the use of grammar between television and radio commentaries I decided to measure the frequency of word categories<sup>25</sup>. Due to time constraints I used only the England match. My results were the following:

<b>Word Category</b>	<b>Radio</b>		<b>Television</b>	
	<b>Words</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Nouns	218	18%	111	18%
Pronouns	66	5%	39	6%
Proper Nouns	161	13%	91	15%
Adjectives	135	11%	58	9%
Adverbs	16	1%	9	1%
Verbs	111	9%	65	11%
Total Words	1234		614	

As you can see there are very few differences between television and radio commentary in any of the word categories. I had expected to find a higher proportion

---

<sup>23</sup> Appendix 3, Line 22

<sup>24</sup> Appendix 1, Line 49

of qualifiers to be used on the radio, as there would be a greater need to describe events more precisely as the listener can not actually see what is happening. However, the differences are so slight that no meaningful variations can be justified. It is therefore apparent that there is a remarkable uniformity between the mediums in terms of types of words used.

There are a number of other interesting features that I found in my transcripts. Firstly, it would appear that a common way for commentators to commence speaking is to start by saying “well”. This happens on several occasions by most commentators on both mediums, acting as a “start” button for the beginning of speech. Secondly, a difference between radio and television commentary is what they can report on. For instance, on television they comment upon a highlight as it is played to the viewer<sup>26</sup>, whilst on the radio they go to other grounds to get updates on other matches<sup>27</sup>. Although, this fundamentally reporting policy, it may have an influence on the type of language used by the commentator when introducing the feature and commenting upon it.

---

<sup>25</sup> Appendixes 9 and 10

<sup>26</sup> Appendix 4, Line 4

<sup>27</sup> Appendix 3, Line 62

## Conclusion

My findings suggest that football broadcasting has distinct language forms which means that it can therefore be "described as a variety of spoken English"<sup>28</sup>.

Football commentary on both the television and radio has a number of features which allows it to convey an appropriate sense of action. This is chiefly because of the high degree of fluency it maintains due to its formulaic language and omitting of unessential words. Both mediums also use a similar, "common", register, which is based on the same specific lexicon. Furthermore, commentators on both the radio and television revert to "colour-adding", which is critical in an uneventful match. Yet it quickly disappears as soon as play becomes eventful again.

Nevertheless, there is considerably more "colour-adding" on the television in proportion to the radio. There is also a greater number words spoken in a given five minute period on a radio commentary compared to a television one. These two pieces of evidence support the "common-sense" view that there would be differences because of what the audience can or can't see.

However, the most significant finding is that football commentary in general is a distinct form of the English language. As Charles Ferguson has stated, it is "a monolog or dialog-on-stage directed at an unknown, unseen, heterogeneous mass audience who voluntarily choose to listen and provide no feedback to the speaker"<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, the real significance lies in football commentary itself, not between the mediums that it is transmitted on.

---

<sup>28</sup> Dennis Freeborn, *Varieties of English*, P. 126, Paul & Co. Pub. Consortium, 1997

<sup>29</sup> Charles Ferguson, quoted in, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, P. 386, Cambridge University Press, 1999

Although in my investigation I have been unable to record the linguistic use of pitch loudness, tempo, and rhythm. Prosody is still a feature which should not be ignored in the investigation of commentary. In all my examples there was a wide range of pitch and loudness depending upon what was happening in the match. There was also varying idiosyncrasies from one commentator to another. For example, Alan Green tended to ask many rhetorical questions to bring in a topic which he wished to discuss further. He did this by raising the intonation in his voice towards the end of the question.

Word-count: 3,675 words (counted by Microsoft Word; excludes title page and appendixes)



## Bibliography

- |                 |   |                               |      |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------------|------|
| David Crystal   | The Cambridge<br>Encyclopaedia of the<br>English Language | Cambridge<br>University Press | 1999 |
| Shirley Russell | Grammar, Structure,<br>and Style                          | Oxford University<br>Press    | 1997 |
| Dennis Freeborn | Varieties of English                                      | Macmillan                     | 1986 |
| J.J. Weber      | The Stylistics Reader                                     | London: Edwin<br>Arnold       | 1996 |

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, third edition, 1995

Collins English Dictionary, third edition, 1992

## Additional Key To Transcripts:

Pauses	=	(-)
Words spoken at the same time	=	<u>underlined</u>
Nouns	=	pink highlighting
Pronouns	=	purple highlighting
Proper Nouns	=	[----]
Adjectives	=	green highlighting
Verbs	=	yellow highlighting

## Transcripts

**Game:** England v Belgium (International Friendly)  
**Date:** 10/10/99  
**Medium:** Radio  
**Channel:** BBC Radio 5  
**Commentators:** Mike Ingham (A), Terry Butcher (B), Alan Green (G)  
**Time:** 20:00 to 25:00 (approx.)

**A:** twenty minutes gone, one one, five live, Sunday sport and Belgium, well they may fancy this one. Two players over the ball at the moment, one of them is Strupar, the other is Wilmots who has scored fifteen times for his country. And er well Struper looks er business like here, with Wilmots. England setting up a little wall on the edge of the area. Seaman in the shade by his right hand post, and er here comes Strupar, right footed, into the wall, back again to Strupar, smashes a volley. Might still be in play, it is down this near side. Sits up well for Deflandre, Deflandre's ball in is controlled well by Southgate but it's back with Belgium. Near side, Tanghe, in it goes, a bit more height this time. Keown heads it away not very far. In goes Van Kerkhoven, Strupar's looking dangerous once more. It's stabbed out by Lampard, Shearer trying to control an awkward ball. Lampard also controls an awkward ball and flicks it down the left hand side to Guppy and Guppy plays it off a defender for a throw-in.

**B:** Well good spell of play by Belgium, they really do knock the ball around well. They've got Strupar who comes off well, very strong. Orin on the left hand side. They've had two good efforts on goal, well blocked by England defenders because they were net bound.

## England v Belgium (Radio)

**A:** England one Belgium one. Shearer with a goal after five minutes, England haven't built on it. As Guppy had his shirt pulled but the referee once again plays a good advantage and Dyer of course much happier in attacking situations. In goes the ball from Dyer aimed towards Shearer. Belgium mop it up nicely inside the penalty area and a big long clearance from Van Meir is back inside the England half. Keown was looking towards Adams there, but in the end with the back pass finds his Arsenal goalkeeper Seaman. Seaman's long high ball back inside the Belgium half and a foul by Shearer, free kick to Belgium. Coming up to twenty two minutes gone here at the Stadium of Light, its one one, and following the free kick it's a long one from Wilmots, that'll be offside against De Bilde, and a free kick to England.

**B:** well the movement is good from er the Belgium forwards and er England at the back look a little bit rattled, they've had to er throw themselves and block one or two efforts on goal lately and er its not been as comfortable as it was in the first five or six minutes for England. But er England have er stopped passing the ball and er erm containing the Belgium's, they've just literally given the ball away too needlessly and er have then had to work hard to get it back. So if er England were to keep the ball a bit better, get the width down the left hand side where they've had a lot of joy then they will er stand a chance.

**A:** Shearer header on, looks for Phillips, out comes the goal keeper and eventually he gets there. Well after England scored I posed the question how much appetite would Belgium have for the game, to be fair to them they've come back well here, it's England one Belgium one, its the half way point of the first half already here, and here with Terry Butcher is Alan Green.

## England v Belgium (Radio)

**G:** Well at least its quite tasty for a friendly. Philips not getting too much change out of the Belgium defence at the moment, who's just hacked at Peeters, the referee I think spotted it but the Belgium's have possession so play is allowed to continue. Deflandre to Van Meir, Peeters just checking his left boot and the state of his left leg. And Van Meir clips it to the far side to Oyen whoa er been very influential for Belgium on that left flank so far. In field to Van de Haeghe. And now its taken up by Tanghe, Tanghe to the near side and Deflondre, yard in from the right touchline. In field to Wilmots the captain and pressure coming in from Redknapp, wins the ball back for England and then Shearer almost caught in possession, its with Ince, and Ince stabs it back to Seaman. And then er Seaman just tees the ball up and then slides it to his right. And now its with Martin Keown his Arsenal colleague, in his red boots which go very snazzily with the red outfit, I can't begin to understand why England are wearing red today, unless its a tribute to Sunderland, or more likely some commercial reason. But Belgium's normal colours are all red, there in all white this afternoon. Bright sunlight afternoon on wearside, England one, Belgium one and your listening to Five Live sport on the BBC. The ball is played carelessly down the Belgium left, straight out of play, and its going to be a throw in to England. Its funny Terry, you said earlier how England were reverting to a three today, but for many years I always thought our defenders were more comfortable with a four.

**B:** Well under Glenn Hoddle er Glenn played a three all the time er er and the personnel hasn't really changed that much Sol Campbell is the only one really missing from the er threesome at the back and er and England possibly look a bit more comfortable with a three although today their not because as soon as Belgium get the ball and make advances, then Belgium leave it two on two at the back, they play a very

## England v Belgium (Radio)

cagey game with Phillips and Shearer they leave the two centre halves two and two and the fullbacks push down and the two wider players of the midfield four push on so they force Kieron Dyer back on the right hand side and force Steve Guppy back on the left hand side and then the fullbacks come and join in, then England were they have the numerical advantage in the middle of the pitch is no good because the balls are going to the wider players which are the fullbacks and England are constantly being stretched.

**G:** A few England substitutes just running up and down the near touchline, including two Manchester United players, Phil Neville and Paul Scholes. There's not a Manchester United player in the England starting line up today, I can't remember the last time that happened. England one, Belgium one and Belgium look the better team at the moment. Here's Oyen down the far side and it's slipped to the goalscorer Strupar. Back to the halfway and Belgium are pacing. Willmotts back to Van Meir and Van Meir puts it left. And a few groans around the Stadium of Light as England are being made to chase the ball at the moment. Wilmots, left footed, great ball but the flag is up for offside, against De Bilde and it's a free-kick to England just a few yards outside their penalty area. Adams takes it quickly to Southgate, or to Redknapp, all three club captains there. Adams, Redknapp and Southgate and of course they've got Shearer upfront as well. So there are plenty of men who can do the talking out there. Southgate towards Shearer it's knocked away by the defender.

## England v Belgium (TV)

**Game:** England v Belgium (International Friendly)

**Date:** 10/10/99

**Medium:** Television

**Channel:** Sky Sports

**Commentators:** Martin Tyler (M), Andy Gray (A)

**Time:** 20:03 to 25:13

**M:** Strupar is placing the ball, I think he's the man hoping to strike it, he's having a word with his captain Wilmots

**A:** well you don't usually take out a striker out of the penalty for a free-kick round about here if he aint going to hit it.

**M:** well he hasn't hit it very well, second time

**A:** good ball though

**M:** not sure who he was aiming for but Deflandre makes it awkward for England and in particular Southgate. Back from Tanghe and here's Van Kerkhoven and Strupar is in there again. Touch from Lampard was of an accurate nature (3) Guppy and it was a good idea to steer it forward quickly into the path of Phillips, Deflandre just able to lean across and divert it out for an England throw. (4) Guppy and Peeters is the man who expects a cross but he doesn't get one that time, he was forced infield. The delivery though comes from Dyer or he shaped for it (4) cleared by Van Meir (5) Belgium were slow to push out that time (3) free-kick given against Shearer, twenty - eight international goals now, as I say only five England players have ever reached the thirty mark or more. Bobby Charlton leading the way forty-nine, Gary Lineker forty-eight, Jimmy Greaves forty-four and two on thirty, Tome Finney and Nat Lofthouse so er

England v Belgium (TV)

**A:** thirty goals is definitely gettable, whether he'll ever get in the top trio (3)

**M:** well he was asked that this week and of course it is rightly an ambition, but he's got to maintain his position what for four or five years one would have thought. Shearer, it's Phillips

**A:** He's done well to get between them, Peeters and the keeper, they got a little close and Phillips was always threatening. Look at the prey on the little flick through, looking to run behind, anything goes his way, but its good goalkeeping, kept his eye on the ball (4)

**M:** little trip on Peeters by Philip, Belgium had possession (4) Van Meir played in Casablanca just before the World Cup finals of ninety-eight, a match which Belgium won on penalties, they've only ever beaten England once over ninety minutes and that was back in the nineteen-thirties. They've already looked capable of giving England a really hard work-out here Wilmots (3) insteps Southgate, Shearer deep, pursued by Van de Haeghe

**A:** Good pressure from the midfield player, Van de Haeghe (3) confident this Belgium side Martin, I'll say that, in possession, look accomplished, know what they're doing. Trying to work the ball, left side if they can and then try and transfer it across when England over commit. Kept possession pretty well (3) Pretty even. England had a really good ten minutes in this game, since then the Belgians have been rather in the ascendancy a little (6)

**M:** The match in Morocco incidentally was the graveyard game for players like Gascoigne, Phil Neville, Nicky Butt and Dion Dublin within forty-eight hours they had all been left out of Glen Hoddle's squad for France.(3) the target for these players and



England v Belgium (TV)

for Kevin Keegan is to get in the squad for the play-offs, home and away remember, next month.

**A:** When's the draw, Wednesday

**M:** Yes in Arkham (Aachen?)

**A:** A day for our shores (6)

**M:** That's the Newcastle Sunderland partnership for England (4) Van der Haeghe getting the better of Lampard in the air, it runs away from Jamie Redknapp.(3) Tanghe who likes to play behind the front two. Wilmots

**A:** Well this has been there out ball all half, left side

**M:** Strupar, Van Kerkhoven lets it run (6)

**Pauses = (-)**

## Manchester United v Chelsea (Radio)

**Game:** Manchester United v Chelsea (Premiership)  
**Date:** 03/10/99  
**Medium:** Radio  
**Channel:** BBC Radio 5  
**Commentators:** Mike Ingham (A), Bryan Hamilton (B), Alan Green (G),  
Steve May (S)  
**Time:** 20:00 to 25:00 (approx.)

**A:** As Poyet glances the ball on and Berg is there to sweep it back towards the Chelsea half. Babayaro down the left hand side, Beckham really not in the game yet. The ball eventually out of play for a Chelsea throw in. They're winning everything at the moment Chelsea, they're winning the balls in the air, they're winning the tackles on the floor and now Babayaro controls an awkward one on his chest, looks for Sutton, Sutton going to try and turn with Henning Berg, former team mates at Blackburn and Berg is forced into conceding a free-kick and the free-kick is touched off to the captain Wise, across it goes with great accuracy to Ferrer who is in space, Ferrer now to Deschamps, Deschamps to Dennis Wise, might think about the shot. Plants it into the area instead and in fact Wise, well 25 yards out doesn't score many goals that wasn't a bad position for him, but he tried to set up Poyet and it's gone away for a goal-kick.

**B:** Yeah I think your right, I think there was good play, good inter-passing er between Deschamps and him, he got the ball and and normally I would have expected Dennis Wise because he had ten yards of green in front of him to touch it in front and smack it for goal, but I think he really fancies Poyet on this far side against Dennis

## Manchester United v Chelsea (Radio)

Irwin, he hung it up for him and of course after his early success he's going to try it again, but I I agree with you I think he should maybe have had a shot from there.

**A:** Well all over the pitch at the moment, Chelsea in these opening twenty minutes are superior, in every position really, they're working very hard and they seem to be fired up maybe even more than Manchester United so far, but things of can change of course dramatically in matches, Manchester United have all that fire power down there, and the ball is with Babayaro, he'll hit this ball long and Zola flicks the ball on and Ferrer will get there first ahead of Nicky Butt and then he goes down under the challenge from Nicky Butt and that's a free-kick to Manchester United, twenty-one and a quarter minutes gone in the first half at Stamford Bridge. Chelsea two, Manchester United nil, your listening to five live and Chelsea give the ball away from the free-kick and Bryan Hamilton is with us today.

**B:** Yes they haven't given to many away and er I think one thing that is very important for Manchester United, is they are very experienced, they've just to keep their cool, at this moment in time there's one or two just lost their discipline a little bit and to get back into this game they've got to keep that.

**A:** Beckham as Irwin goes on the outside and then Beckham just gives the ball straight to Wise its that kind of a game so far f-what a ball by Wise to find Zola, controls the ball in the air and then Silvestre just manages to get a second bite at that one and turns it back to Tai-every time Taibi gets the ball the Chelsea fans are jeering him. Hoping he'll make a mess of a back pass and now it's a free kick to Chelsea short of the halfway line, Wise to take it. Well an explosive start to the game here, halfway point of the er of the first half, still loads of time to go and here's Alan Green, two nil to Chelsea.

Manchester United v Chelsea (Radio)

**G:** Gianluca Vialli today in the programme notes said welcome to the best team in Europe, there not the best team in Europe this afternoon at Stamford Bridge. Manchester United's contribution so far has been very very poor. Defensively er unsound to say the least. Outplayed and out-thought in midfield. I feel sorry for the two upfront Yorke and Cole because they haven't got a ball.

**B:** Yeah Yeah your quite right the service hasn't been very good

**G:** Oh but what's going on here between Scholes and Wise, er there was free kick awarded inside the centre-circle, oh there's a red card been produced.

**B:** Yeah Nicky Butt, I think it's Nicky Butt has gone

**G:** oh now what is going on here, Wise has lost his boot, Andy Cole is getting involved, there's a there's a sort of handbags at six paces there a lot of unhappy Manchester United players, and er David Beckham is er trying to usher Nicky Butt off the pitch. Nicky Butt has been dismissed here at Stamford Bridge, things go from bad to worse for the European Cup holders and the Double holders. Manchester United down to ten men and two nil down, Bryan Hamilton.

**B:** Yes it was a rash tackle by Dennis Wise in the middle of the park, his boots were too high that's for sure, but just as the referee had given the incident, er Nicky Butt was on the ground, he appeared to get up there seemed to be contact and er the referee appeared to have no option but to send him the red card. It was the one area of concern for me that I felt that Manchester United had lost that little bit of discipline after that er bad start they had made and it was so important for them to keep that discipline, they lost it and they're now down to ten men.

**G:** Penalty at Tottenham, Steve May

Manchester United v Chelsea (Radio)

**S:** and it's gone to Leicester, Muzzy Izzet about to take it against Walker and he's scored. Muzzy Izzet has scored his sixth goal of the season. Leicester one Spurs nil, its er if you like come against the run of play because for the opening exchanges Spurs very much dominated although Leicester did get the ball in the net through Heskey, but we had a penalty when Heskey was brought down by Tarrico and Izzet has converted. It's Leicester one, Spurs nil.

**G:** Ed de Goey has just made a great save from Paul Scholes, so Manchester United down to ten men in this dramatic game at Stamford Bridge, this is five live football, it's Chelsea two, Manchester United nil. Oh, interesting little game, its busy out there isn't it. I mean I have got to admit I didn't see the incident with Nicky Butt, I just did not see the incident with Nicky Butt. Er there was a replay on a far flung monitor which suggested that Wise's foot was a little bit high as well, but er I don't know, but the referee saw it that's for sure and Butt's off. Manches..

**B:** I think that's what

**G:** Sorry Bryan

**B:** I think that's what happened Alan, er I think it was just a rash tackle by Dennis Wise in the middle of the park, Nicky Butt was on the ground, he took exception to it, but now Chelsea are coming at them again.

**G:** Here they come again, there's a cross in, Sutton went to head the ball, missed it, headed away by Berg, still inside that United penalty area but its with Taibi, and there's been another goal at Spurs, Steve May.

## Manchester United v Chelsea (TV)

**Game:** Manchester United v Chelsea (Premiership)

**Date:** 03/10/99

**Medium:** Television

**Channel:** Sky Sports

**Commentators:** Martin Tyler (M), Andy Gray (A)

**Time:** 20:07 to 25:12

**M:** twenty minutes gone on the Ferguson watch (3) he's going down maybe to change things. Deschamps. Now Wise not closed down, he opts for the pass. Just to run it in, a little chip he hoped to land beyond Irwin but it didn't stop ran on. (4)

**A:** well it gives us a little chance to look at this fantastic header from Sutton and it really was a great header. Well look at the space he has, no one comes to him, no one presses him as soon as that ball has bypassed the best headerer, Stam, Sutton knows he has a chance and my goodness he finished it well.

**M:** his first goal in the Premiership for virtually a year, missed a lot of football over the second half of last season with Blackburn. (4) Chris Sutton one of three Chelsea players in the England squad, long time Chelsea supporters have been struggling to remember the last time that that happened. Wise and Le Saux the other two

**A:** what would you be thinking if you were Vialli. You know you'd be thinking about what a chance. I've talked about the respect and admiration that they have. Two nil up with twenty minutes gone. Do they hold on to it, or do you try and get the players to get another.

Manchester United v Chelsea (TV)

**M:** He might be thinking lets get the crosses continuing from right to left (3) a method that's produced two goals (3) Beckham capable of doing the same for Manchester United (3) Zola drifting away from Philip Neville but Silvestre managed to stop the Italian from settling into possession. Chelsea get a free kick.

**A:** Well they need a goal. I know we've talked about the changes they could make and I know ere only 22 minutes into the game, a quarter of the game Martin but I think I wonder now if Alex and Jim McClaren are having a chat because what they might do, I'd play Dwight Yorke left side and Sheringham up alongside Cole that is another option and remember they finished the game against Leeds, I think it was this season, in that system.

**M:** Neville tidies up in the centre of midfield and it might just be that they're going to put him in there without marking responsibilities now (3) well Nicky Butt he didn't like the challenge, a delayed reaction but a very stupid reaction from Butt because the referee

**A:** He's off Martin

**M:** really given (3) Manchester United already in dire problems, that's a suicidal moment.

**A:** well it's all going off here if were not careful I'll tell you (3) its all going off here, every single player except the two goalkeepers involved in this and this will take some sorting by the referee. Yorke's furious Cole's furious and both of them at Dennis Wise, I don't know what Dermot Gallagher can do, he gave a free kick, whether he's going to give him a yellow card for the challenge I can't imagine anymore than that Martin.

Manchester United v Chelsea (TV)

**M:** It is Yellow, Wise on bended knee, almost beseeching the referee not to do anymore, but Butt is off and that is what he took exception to. He waited and while he waited and recovered Dermot Gallagher was coming in to sort it all out and then Butt lost his cool, kicked out and now whatever changes Alex Ferguson was planning involving Nicky Butt, he's got to think again. (3)

**A:** well that's just what they didn't want.

**M:** and there's a mistake that Chelsea didn't want from Ferrer, and Scholes, great stop by Ed de Goey. The goalkeeper hasn't conceded a goal at all at Stamford Bridge so far this season.

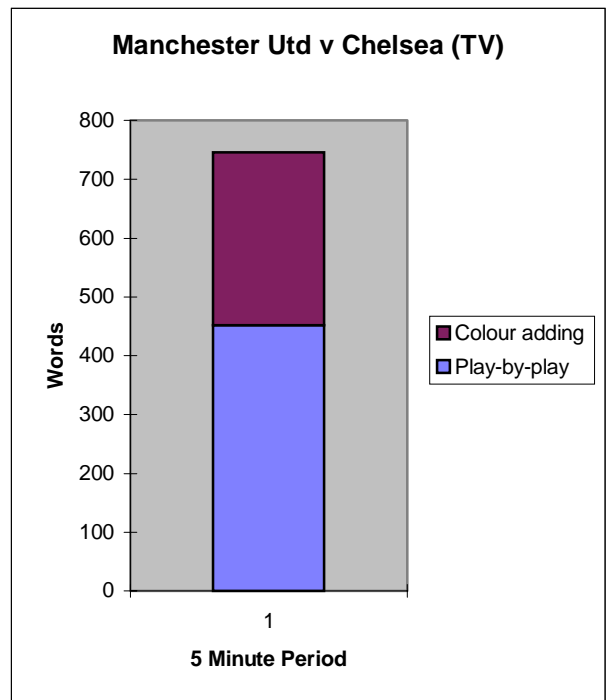
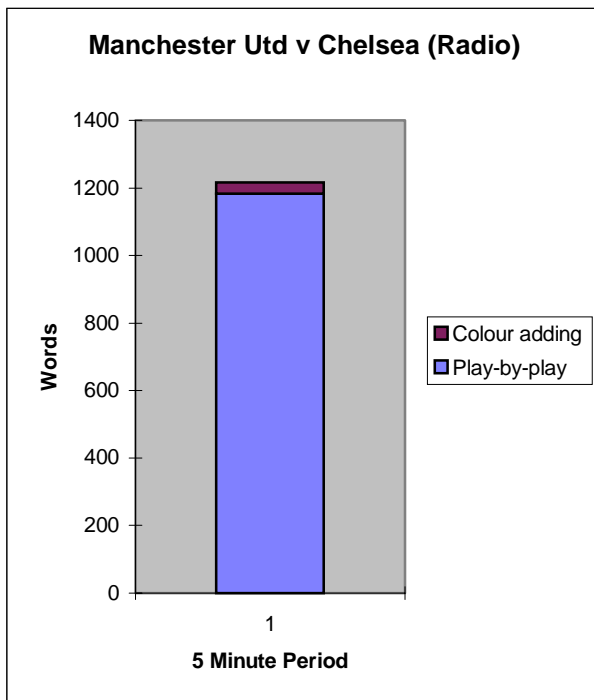
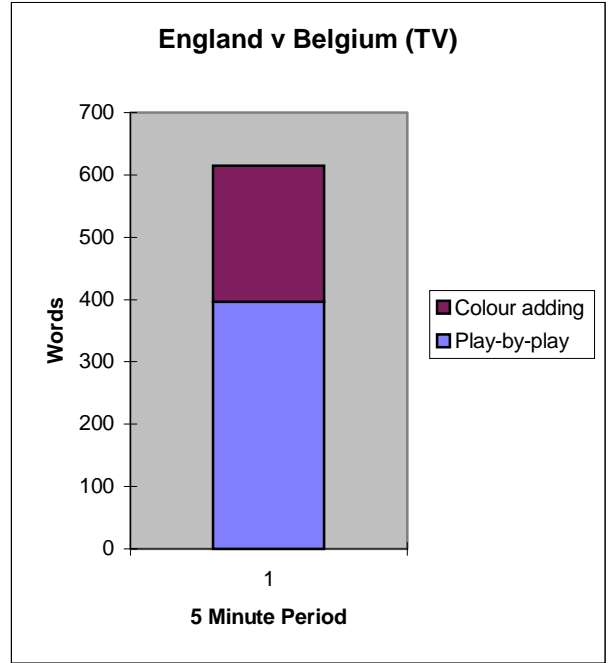
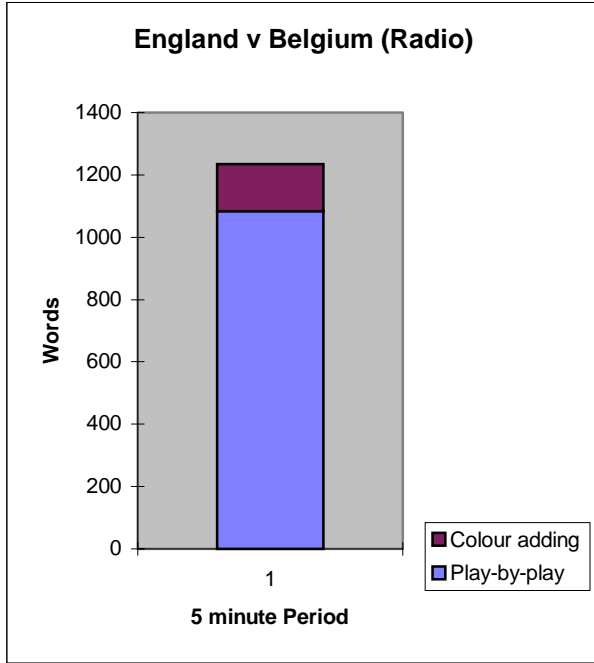
**A:** well for twenty four minutes he's done nothing but watch the game Ed de Goey. I hardly think he's had a touch of the ball, but what a strike by Scholes arrives right on cue, just tries to guide it with his instep. It's on target but a little too close to Ed de Goey. (4)

**M:** Well much has been made of this disciplinary debate, particularly last weekend when nine players were sent off in the Premiership. But you have to say that when players are as Nicky Butt was, the referee has no choice (5) and Chelsea really with their tails up (3) Deschamps. Well the only surprise from Petrescue's cross was that nobody from Chelsea got a head on it.



# Chart: play-by-play vs. colour adding

## PLAY-BY-PLAY vs. COLOUR ADDING



## **Contacts**

### ***Universities:***

1. Newcastle
2. Nottingham
3. York
4. Warwick
5. Loughborough
6. Lancaster
7. Sheffield
8. Birmingham x3

### ***Media:***

1. BBC
2. ITN
3. Sky TV
4. Channel 4
5. Channel 5
6. Yorkshire

## Statistical analysis

### *MANCHESTER UNITED v CHELSEA (TV)*

#### Summary of statistics

Total word count	= 746
Play-by-play	= 452
Colour adding	= 294

#### Brief Outline of each passage of speech

1. play-by-play
2. colour adding; referring to previous action
3. colour adding
4. colour adding
5. play-by-play
6. colour adding
7. play-by-play
8. play-by-play
9. play-by-play
10. play-by-play
11. play-by-play
12. play-by-play
13. play-by-play
14. play-by-play
15. colour adding

- “on the Ferguson watch”
- “opts for the pass”
- refers back to earlier action when an action replay comes on
- “no one” x2 = repetition
- “headerer”
- colour adding commentary by Tyler

## ***Summaries for comparison***

### **Manchester United v Chelsea (TV)**

Total word count = 746  
Play-by-play = 452  
Colour adding = 294

### **Manchester United v Chelsea (Radio)**

Total word count = 1217  
Play-by-play = 1183  
Colour adding = 34

### **England v Belgium (TV)**

Total word count = 614  
Play-by-play = 396  
Colour adding = 218

### **England v Belgium (Radio)**

Total word count = 1234  
Play-by-play = 1084  
Colour adding = 150

## Football Related Words

ball	player names	team names	wall	post
volley	throw-in	goal	defender	net
referee	advantage	penalty area	half	back pass
goalkeeper	foul	free-kick	stadium names	offside
forwards	pass	friendly	defence	left side
right side	near side	possession	boot	far side
flank	touchline	captain	manager names	fullbacks
midfield	substitutes	goalscorer	left footed	flag
upfront	striker	cross	penalties	squad
play-offs	home	away	draw	tackle
goal-kick	shot	halfway line	red card	European Cup
Premiership	season	replay	save	header
yellow card	players			

## Letters

Richard Lappin  
23 Southfield  
Hessle  
East Riding Of Yorkshire  
HU13 0EL  
23/10/99

*Title*

*Address*

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of my GCE Advanced Level work in English Language, I am conducting a Language Investigation. I have chosen to research the structural features of radio and television commentary. The investigation considers lexical, syntactic and stylistic features in television and radio commentaries on a football match.

I would therefore be grateful for any insights that you may be able to provide in terms of background reading, research findings or indeed any other key points of contact that you consider would be beneficial in respect of my research.

I would like to thank you for reading this brief request and look forward to receiving relevant information in due course.

Yours faithfully

RICHARD LAPPIN

Richard Lappin  
23 Southfield  
Hessle  
East Riding Of Yorkshire  
HU13 0EL  
23/10/99

*Title*  
*Address*

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of my GCE Advanced Level work in English Language, I am conducting a Language Investigation. I have chosen to research the structural features of radio and television commentary. The investigation considers lexical, syntactic and stylistic features in television and radio commentaries on a football match.

I would therefore be grateful for any insights that you may be able to provide, with particular emphasis on the following questions; Does the presenter or broadcaster work to a script or given format? Does the broadcasting or production company have any guidelines or policies? Are there models used for teaching commentary?

I would like to thank you for reading this brief request and look forward to receiving relevant information in due course.

Yours faithfully

RICHARD LAPPIN

---

© Copyright Richard Lappin 2000