



A Systematic Functional Analysis of Cricket Commentary of Pakistan VS Australia One-Day Match

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the linguistic input of language used in cricket commentary and how it contributes to the engagement of viewers, as well as their understanding of the nuances of live sports events. Guided by the Hallidayan Model of Language and Discourse with its three metafunctions ideational, interpersonal, and textual, the research primarily aims to examine the linguistic features that operate in live cricket commentary. It was extracted from LIVE data from the cricket commentary session, where there is a verbal conversation between commentators' face to face. The results mark the functional role of language in commentary to mediate sociomathematical meaning instead of simply describing the meaning. This suggests that ideational metafunction allows commentaries to have a live description of what is taking place on the playing field, thereby facilitating the viewers in understanding the match going on. Commentators were reporting first-hand accounts of events to which viewers would be able to relate, making this interpersonal metafunction connecting commentators and viewers in such a way that it would encourage audience participation and shared experience. The Textual metafunction: This metafunction is responsible for coherence and continuity in the text, it helps the audience keep up with the fast-paced game. Moreover, the study underscores the impact of contextual factors (field, tenor, and mode) on the language used in commentary. The best commentators practiced make watching significantly better by adding humor, suspense, and community, especially during dead time in a game. Overall, the analysis highlights that while cricket commentary the importance of cricket commentary as a complex and dynamic mode of communication enhances the viewer's experience and contributes to making meaning within the discourse practices of live sports. This suggests the importance of language in sports communication as well as its power to either engage or disengage audiences and to influence audience perception.



Introduction

For centuries sport has been a uniting cultural force across societies, and cricket is one of the richest and most cherished examples. Cricket emerged in 16th-century England and evolved from a rural game to an organized pursuit with deep roots in nations like South Asia, the United Kingdom and Australia. The creation of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) in 1787 signaled a change in this trend as the game matured, both legislatively and at a macro institutional level (Allen, 2017; Birley, 1999). As cricket spread throughout the British Empire, it became both a tool of colonial influence and a means of resistance, embedding itself within the social identities of regions such as South Asia and the Caribbean (Guha, 2002). In places like Pakistan and Australia, cricket has transcended its colonial roots to become a powerful symbol of national pride and cultural identity, representing patriotism in Pakistan and resilience and egalitarianism in Australia (Nandy, 2000; Cashman, 2002).

Table 1: The Head-To-Head Statistics Between Australia and Pakistan in Odis

Teams	Matches Played	Win	Loss	Tied	No Result
Pakistan	111	36	71	3	1
Australia	111	71	36	3	1

Cricket commentary plays a vital role in shaping the viewer's experience by creating a dynamic narrative that captures the nuances of the game and builds emotional engagement. Beyond simply describing on-field events, commentary adds layers of meaning, excitement, and tension that enhance the audience's connection to the match (Desai, 2017). This linguistic mediation provides real-time analysis, reflects national pride, and fosters a shared experience, especially in countries where cricket is a significant cultural force, such as Pakistan, India, and Australia (Collins, 2010). The commentary also serves as a cultural artifact, with commentators drawing on regional idioms, humour, and historical references that resonate with local audiences (Majumdar, 2019). Furthermore, cricket commentary can reveal underlying social narratives and identities as language becomes a medium for reinforcing rivalries, building anticipation, and reflecting cultural values (Nandy, 2000). In this way, cricket commentary becomes more than just a verbal description; it acts as a bridge between sport and its cultural significance.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday, is an analytical framework that views language as a social semiotic system, focusing on how meaning is constructed through three core functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The ideational function structures experience and build reality, the interpersonal function builds social relationships and expresses attitudes, and the textual function structures discourse coherently, facilitating understanding (Eggins, 2004). SFL is especially well-suited to the analysis of sports commentary, where language must tell complex events, involve the listeners, and create a collective emotional experience (Bednarek, 2006). By analyzing language in these functional categories, SFL offers insights into how cricket commentary not only reports play-by-play action but also builds excitement and reiterates cultural identity (Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2013). SFL is, therefore, a complete framework to investigate the multifaceted role of language in cricket commentary.

The research issue covered in this research is the necessity of knowing how cricket commentary creates meaning, involves the audience, and represents cultural identities, especially for a Pakistan vs. Australia one-day match. Although a lot has been discussed regarding sports commentary in general, there are not many studies conducted on the linguistic aspects of cricket commentary and how it contributes to audience interpretation of the game (Collins, 2010; Desai, 2017). The current

study aims to investigate how commentators use language to create narratives, express excitement, and shape national identity (Majumdar, 2019). The main questions of inquiry informing this study are: How do commentators employ language to express emotion and tension throughout the match? In what ways does cricket commentary enact cultural and national identities, and more specifically, in Pakistan-Australia contexts? What are the roles of ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions in forming a coherent and engaging commentary? These questions endeavor to fill gaps in the literature by applying Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to the dynamic and culturally rich discourse of cricket commentary (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Eggins, 2004).

The scope of this research is on the commentary of the cricket for one one-day match between Australia and Pakistan, examining how meaning is constructed by language and affects the audience's perception of the game. The analysis will be based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions that are manifested in the commentary. It will focus on how the action is described by the commentators, the way of speaking intensity of emotion and, speaking to the listeners and recounting national identities and cultural qualities. Through a detailed analysis of the linguistic elements that support cricketing narratives, this study aims to take an in-depth look at the nuances and efficacy of the cricket commentary through the lens of a singular match.

This study adds something to the fields of sports linguistic and discourse analysis through a long chapter on cricket commentary analyzed according to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Using the lens of a Pakistan vs. Australia one-day game, it shows how the language of commentary not only tells the story of the game being played out, but also how it appeals to the spectators and reinforces cultural identities. The findings will reveal how the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language become means of excitement and national pride and drive social practices in the context of sports reporting. Furthermore, the study will assist in filling the gaps of existing research regarding the language forms of sporting commentaries, especially in key cultures.

Literature Review

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) presents a useful theoretical framework for understanding how language operates in specific genres and contexts and its application to dynamic, real-time discourse such as sports commentary shows great promise. Sports commentary, as a sophisticated narrative vehicle that requires commentators to report on the development events of a game while providing entertainment for an audience, presents a specialized discourse that allows SFL focus on ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions to come to complement expertise with the subtexts of what gets said. This review highlights how SFL can illuminate the role of language in constructing meaning, reinforcing identity, and shaping audience experience through a review of sports commentary literature and a review of the cultural dynamics of cricket commentary. This analysis becomes even more relevant in high stakes match (e.g., Pakistan vs Australia) where commentary is not only used to report but also, language plays a role in reflecting and nurturing cultural identities.

This literature review explores Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a theoretical model of analyzing language in context, with specific focus on sport commentary. Rooted in Halliday's ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions model, SFL precisely captures the ways in which language builds real-time stories and connects with audiences and is thus well adapted to the study of sports discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Eggins, 2004). Research on sports commentary accentuates its double function of commenting on a live event and creating a compelling story,

engaging the audience and informing cultural identities (Desai, 2017; Bednarek, 2006). Attention is given to cricket commentary's singular ability to articulately express national identity, especially in places where the game is a major cultural phenomenon, like Pakistan, India, and Australia (Guha, 2002; Nandy, 2000). This review ends by highlighting gaps in linguistic studies of cricket commentary, emphasizing the applicability of SFL in investigating the sociocultural aspects of language in high-profile matches.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

SFL, a linguistic model that Halliday pioneered, is a root model in linguistics that sees language as a semiotic system, which has three essential metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational function enables speakers to express their experience of the world, representing reality in language and construe different processes, participants, and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This characterizes language to represent actions and structure knowledge that results in sending the content encapsulated in communication (Thompson, 2013). The interpersonal function deals with the construction and negotiation of social relations and indicates the speaker's attitudes, judgments and roles in interaction. This function grounds language in the act of staking relationships, expressing evaluations, and aligning or opposing oneself with another (Eggins, 2004). Finally, the textual function organizes discourse for coherence and flow, allowing language to be consistent in meaning and contextually relevant (Martin & Rose, 2007). These metafunctions allow for differences in analysis of the use of language at multiple levels, thus making SFL a flexible framework for investigating the construction, organization and contextualization of meaning across a range of types of discourse (Halliday, 1978).

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) gives us a strong framework for the analysis of dynamic, real-time language usage and thus is highly effective for use in environments such as sports commentary. SFL's emphasis on language as functional system accords well with the requirements of live sports narrative, where language needs to quickly communicate evolving events, sustain audience attention, and create emotional connection. The ideational function of SFL that organizes information assists in the dissection of ways in which commentators represent actions and consequences moment-by-moment, facilitating an improved comprehension of the game among viewers (Eggins, 2004). At the same time, the interpersonal function provides scope for examination of the ways commentators convey evaluations, enthusiasm, and social solidarity, influencing the emotional engagement of the audience directly (Martin & Rose, 2007). Finally, the textual function creates coherence, allowing for fluid transitions between a play-by-play narrative, and an overall plot of the game so far, ultimately producing a seamless commentary. This openness to the unpredictability and situatedness of language use demonstrates the forefront of SFL which is adept at capturing the linguistic layering and performative nature of live sport commentary.

There are several different types and areas of potential applications of SFL, but SFL (or Hallidayan linguistics) has been widely used in relation to discourse analysis in fields ranging from news, politics and media, developing a strong methodology to examiners of language use in context-ridden settings. For example, in news discourse, researchers have applied SFL to elucidate how language shapes the public imaginary, aggregating ideologically significant stories (Fowler, 1991; Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Such studies unpack representations of events through the prism of ideational (thematic) choices and foreground certain perspectives, subtly shaping readers' inferences. SFL has been applied in political contexts to explore how the language positions authors in relation to the audience, most notably through choices of interpersonal functions which construct power or invoke solidarity (Martin, 2004). Likewise, SFL has been utilized by media discourse analysis to explore the textual function offering coherence to multi-modal texts, e.g. how visuals and language are brought together to create meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006;

2011). These, alongside much of other work highlighting the versatility of SFL as a theoretical framework, provides a solid methodological basis for examining the linguistic resources involved in constructing dynamic and dynamic forms of discourse: the framework is thus also primed for analysing live sports commentary.

Language of Sports Commentary

As a live form of storytelling used to report and entertain, sports commentary language has long been the subject of academic research into dynamic storytelling. One in the “live performance” category is sports commentary, which intermingles factual content and narrative style to engage viewers in the unfolding drama of the game (Desai, 2017). So-called desk commentary can be hyperbolic and hypervalent, as if invented ad hoc to describe movement during what is typically a fast-paced event; this makes use of colorful metaphor, kinetic verbs and evaluative language to increase interest. Such immediacy and responsiveness are vital to the calling of sports, with a narration that draws audiences in through descriptions of the passing action interspersed with reflective analysis that carries both present and future expectations (Kuiper, 1996). This immediacy born of language plays a central role in determining the way the viewers see and respond emotionally to the event.

Research has also emphasized the double duty of sports commentary in reporting play-by-play information and creating an interesting narrative line. Bednarek (2006) observes that although the main function of commentary is to offer clear and accurate information regarding the progression of the game, at the same time, commentators create a narrative line by sitting at some moments as important or suspenseful. This story construction frequently includes linguistic techniques that highlight specific events, players, or choices, creating layers of drama out of what would otherwise be perceived as mundane action. Through the choice and highlighting of certain details, commentators construct a narrative within the game, engaging the viewer with familiar themes, player histories, and prognostications. This narrative dimension aligns with the ideational function in Systemic Functional Linguistics, where language is used to structure content meaningfully, thereby enriching the audience’s viewing experience.

In addition to conveying information and narrative, sports commentary plays a significant role in building excitement, tension, and identity, all of which impact audience engagement. Collins (2010) explores how language choices in commentary heighten excitement and create tension, particularly during pivotal moments in the game. Through expressive intonation, heightened pace, and selective word choice, commentators evoke the emotional highs and lows of the competition. Majumdar (2019) adds that commentary also serves to reinforce national and cultural identities, particularly in international matches, where the discourse often emphasizes national pride and shared values. This aspect of commentary builds solidarity among fans, fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity. Thus, sports commentary not only serves a descriptive function but also contributes to the broader cultural and emotional context of the sporting event, intensifying audience engagement and making the experience of watching sports more compelling and memorable.

Cricket Commentary and Cultural Identity

Cricket commentary holds a unique role in countries where the sport is intertwined with cultural and national identity, serving as a medium through which cultural values, patriotism, and collective identity are both reflected and reinforced. Research indicates that in countries like Pakistan, India, and Australia, cricket is not merely a sport but a cultural phenomenon that has historically contributed to a sense of national pride and unity (Guha, 2002; Nandy, 2000). In India

and Pakistan, cricket commentary tends to extend beyond game facts, situating the sport within stories of colonial history, past rivalry, and regional identity. Commentators tend to position cricket as a continuation of past and national struggle, underscoring the association of players' achievements with the nation's strength and spirit (Gupta, 2004). Cricket has also, in Australia, become a manifestation of fundamental Australian cultural values and hence commentary also speaks to ideals of egalitarianism, hardness, and sporting prowess, deeply intertwined with national identity (Cashman, 2002). Here, commentary for cricket also goes beyond play description; instead, it acts as a vehicle to express and reaffirm nationhood.

Language in cricket commentary sustains cultural values and patriotism, particularly in matches played between culturally evocative teams like Pakistan and Australia. Commentators' choices of words tend to generate a shared sense of pride and belonging, depicting players as national symbols and wins as national successes. Nandy (2000) brings to the foreground how cricket in South Asia is a symbolic "battleground" on which commentators cite tenacity, toughness, and loyalty as reflections of the cultural climate of the countries whose players take part. Likewise, Majumdar (2019) contends that commentators tactically position the game within narratives of kinship and rivalry, thus heightening each match's cultural significance. This commentary-based narrative construction connects strongly with people who experience their cultural identities and values enacted in the performance of the players. Cricket commentary is, therefore, a narrative of national identity, as cultural stories are constructed and performed dynamically.

Literature describing cross-cultural comparison of sports commentary discusses how the style of commentary differs remarkably from region to region, with an accent on local attitudes and values. Cashman (2002) examines such regional variations and finds that Australian cricket commentary traditionally gives prominence to direct, unvarnished speech, as the culture respects openness and egalitarianism. Conversely, South Asian commentary tends to use more expressive and dramatic language, conveying the high levels of enthusiasm and passion cricket elicits in the region. Such linguistic differences highlight how commentary not only mirrors but also reinforces cultural outlooks, as commentators adopt a style that appeals to local audiences consciously or unconsciously. The difference in styles of commentary from various cricket-playing nations indicates that sports commentary language is culturally adaptive and performative, deeply rooted in the cultural and social context of the respective audience.

Despite significant research into the language of sports commentary, notable gaps remain in the literature on cricket commentary, particularly in terms of linguistic analyses that explore the deeper cultural and social dynamics at play. Most existing studies on cricket commentary have focused on broad descriptive or historical aspects, often overlooking the linguistic mechanisms through which commentary constructs meaning, identity, and engagement. Although some work has focused on sports commentary as a particular type of narrative (Bednarek, 2006) or cultural significance in specific cricketing countries (Guha, 2002; Cashman, 2002), few studies have utilized a linguistic framework such as SFL to identify the functional use of language in specific instances of commentary. Furthermore, relatively little work has explored cricket commentary across different cultures and in the context of tense contests between culturally significant teams, such as Pakistan and Australia. This research gap calls for a dedicated linguistic study investigating how language in cricket commentary acts as a vehicle for societal and cultural representation.

This application of SFL to cricket commentary also represents a novel contribution that may redress some of these shortcomings by providing insights into the methods employed and functions served by language in this distinctive narrative context. We apply SFL's ideational, interpersonal and textual categories in understanding Western sports commentary as they relate to how it organizes content, its function to bring emotion or emotional connections, and how it builds

subcultural identity, all of which are present in live sports commentary. For example, the ideational function provides an opportunity to analyze the ways in which commentators describe events and sequence actions, whereas the interpersonal function focuses on the use of evaluative language to build a relationship with the audience and connect with them (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Through SFL, this research can provide a heuristic that accounts for the ways in which bat-bowl cricket commentary acts as a performance of culture and identity, specifically in the case of a Pakistan vs. Australia context, where nationalism, rivalry and common values are often configured and reframed around language.

As such, this analysis of SFL in the context of a cricket match between Pakistan and Australia serves to highlight the cultural significance of this model in elucidating the meaning potential of commentary. Since both nations place considerable pressure on their cricketers to perform well, the performance of commentary as a genre serves to reflect and reproduce moments of national identity, patriotism, and memory to varying degrees in each country during these high-stakes matches. By analyzing how commentators mobilize the discourse in embodying these cultural functions, SFL paves the way for a nuanced exploration of how language is used to construct narratives, forge tension, and establish solidarity with the listening audience. Hence, this study used SFL to address a critical gap in literature specifically in relation to cricket commentary, providing insight into the linguistic functions of language in relation to social and cultural life as they unfold within a real-time sporting environment.

The emergence of this literature review highlights the importance of understanding the nuances of cultural exchanges and linguistic strategies seen in previous literature written around sports, and commentaries in cricket. Although the role of sports commentary in building narrative and in audience engagement has been well documented, there have not been extensive attempts to explore these functions from a linguistically analytic perspective, particularly in relation to an SFL perspective. As an effective framework in the purpose of analysing and describing cricket commentary particularly in the culturally significant (to Pakistanis, at least) context of matches between Pakistan and Australia, SFL offers novel insights into the ways in which language shapes both live narrative and a collective sense of identity. Overall, this review lends credence for the applicability of SFL in reflecting the multi-dimensional function of commentary language, to illustrate a deeper understanding of how live sports commentary serves important social and cultural functions.

Methodology

The study aims to shed light on the sociolinguistics of sports commentary, specifically how it serves to engage and energize audiences while being a crucial vehicle for sociocultural identities. The analytical trends followed in this research were established through a qualitative research design based on a systematic functional analysis of commentary from a one-day international (ODI) match played between Pakistan and Australia. This study was also guided by theoretical principles drawn from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the three distinct metafunctions of language described by M.A.K. Halliday: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions.

The data for the study was drawn from the live commentary of a selected ODI (Pakistan vs. Australia) match selected for its significance in the context of cultural identity and audience engagement. Audio-visual recordings of the commentary were transcribed to capture accurately the linguistic features of the commentary. The transcription process followed strict criteria to

ensure the integrity of the initial commentary and to make the linguistic analysis capable of a thorough examination of the material.

As for the analysis part, Halliday's model of SFL was used, focusing on the three main metafunctions: ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. For that part, we relied on the ideational metafunction, analysing how commentators represented experiences, the participants (players and teams), processes (the actions performed during the match) and circumstances (contextual elements around the game). This made sense since the analysis pursued discovering several verbs, nouns, or phrases showing what happens in the match, so it was also going to make sense to look for logical meanings (e.g., when reading, a logical meaning is given by looking for good, what is the relationship between the clauses), how they relate ideas and events, for example, things that they start to tell each other, cause x causes y, contrast.

The interpersonal metafunction looked at the social interactions formed within the commentary. This meant classifying the different modes of interaction — declarative, interrogative, and imperative — and studying how these modes impacted levels of audience engagement. In addition, the study examined modality to see how commentators used certainty, obligation, or permission in relation to players' performance and game outcomes. It was important to deconstruct evaluative language because it highlighted the way commentators expressed attitudes and judgments about players and happenings, which in turn, influenced the emotions of the audience and instilled national pride.

The textual metafunction, which looked at how cohesion and thematic structure created effective commentary, was also explored as one of the metafunctions. Cohesion was analyzed by considering the linguistic devices, such as pronouns and conjunctions, that established connections and continuity within the commentary to keep the information and audience focused. Because each piece of commentary is a succession of topically dynamic segments you can see their structural layering, where you can separate the theme (the topic) and rheme (the new information) in each leading segmentation and how such segmentation is used by all of the commentators to channel audience understanding of what was going on.

This also addressed analysis of the context in which the characters operate as the framework for examining the relationship between language and the context through field, tenor, and mode. Field aspect: This specifies the subject of the commentary including key actions and events captured in the match. The tenor examined the dynamics between commentators and the audience, showing how writers' choices reflected social relationships, authority, and engagement levels. Lastly, the mode accounted for the spoken form of the commentary, considering how this modality affected linguistic choices and audience interpretation.

These findings were contextualized with prior research on how commentary language manifests cultural importance by weaving together national identities, feistiness, and sociality at various junctures of match play. The study hoped to add to the literature on sports commentary by examining the linguistic features that successfully captured the interest of the audience and created meaning in important cultural sites. There were ethical considerations — a commitment to fully attribute all sources, including the commentators and analysts who contributed and analyzed the original commentary material in its context. The aim of the study was to expose the dynamics of language use and the linguistic attributes that contributed to establish audience engagement and cultural identity within sports commentary using such thorough methodology through qualitative data collection and analysis.

Data Analysis

The model of language and discourse proposed by Halliday and his colleagues in this chapter served as a comprehensive framework to understand the complex functions of language in different communicative genres including, as in the present case, sports commentary. The model below identifies three main areas: Language as a Tool (Functionality), Three Metafunctions and Contextual Dimensions. As a result, the model offers some useful insights into the use of language as a means of information transfer, emotional control, and generation of meaningfulness for the audience in the context of live cricket telecasting.

In sports commentary, too, the Three Metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—play integral roles. The ideational metafunction is responsible for representing events, activities, and participants in the game, and the commentator describes these processes to viewers and provides explanations in a real-time manner. The interpersonal metafunction concerns the relationship between the commentator and the listeners, such as the way the commentator talks to listeners, the generation of excitement, and the establishment of a communal experience. Given this metafunction your commentary will be structured in a logical way. Using this model of reiterated meaning, we can look at how the language of sports commentary achieves more than simply broadcasting the game. It defines the viewer's experience, alerts them, and builds emotional context.

Language as a Functional Tool: Moving Beyond Simple Narrative

Language in cricket commentary is not merely a vehicle for what is going on but also an instrument that plays the role of an intermediary between the action out there and the listeners or viewers, rendering the game in a form that can be reached by those who are not seeing it before their eyes. It educates, engages, and amuses, leading the audience through the technicalities and emotional twists and turns of the game. But a close analysis reveals that the functional roles of language are not merely passive but actively create the audience's experience of the game.

Informative Function: Creating Impressions Based on Detail

Cricket is a game of numbers, strategy, and fine details, and the commentary usually mirrors the same. Commentators do not just tell the audience what is happening in the field but also give the right context. For instance, Daniyal's statement, "What's happened to the pace in this pace attack? Shaheen is hardly in the 130s, and Naseem hasn't reached 140s either?" Not just tells the audience about the slower speeds of the bowlers but also leaves the door open for extraneous reasons, like injuries, to play a role in their performance. It suggests to the audience that they are supposed to observe the game critically, and not just as a series of events.

Similarly, Paul's rhetorical question, "Who's the 5th bowling option? Salman, who averages nearly 100 with the ball in ODIs?" serves to convey statistical data while indirectly questioning the wisdom of the team's choice. This function of language—informing while inviting critical thought—allows the commentator to engage listeners at a higher level, challenging them to think about the game analytically.

Moreover, during moments of high tension, language enhances the feelings of the readers. For example, "Babar seals the win with a six! Rocks back and hammers a drag-down over midwicket," uses active verbs such as "rocks" and "hammers," which enhance the emotional value of the event. The use of exclamation marks in such a scenario also tells the readers that the event is of high value, making the game even more dramatic and exciting.

Engagement and Entertainment: A Dual Function

The dual function of language to entertain and involve the audience is most critical in sports commentaries. As a slow-moving sport, cricket needs commentators to think creatively about language to sustain the audience's interest. The well-timed joke, for instance, Paul's sarcasm "Who averages nearly 100 in ODIs?" provides a moment of levity to the commentary, engaging the audience in a moment of collective laughter. It is not just entertaining but creates a common experience of watching sport between the commentators and listeners, respecting the collective nature of watching sport.

Besides this, commentary is also used as a medium to create suspense. For instance, in describing the possibility of a review procedure: "Haris Rauf to Cummins: Short ball outside off, Cummins tries to pull but edges it to Rizwan. Review indicates a spike on Snicko," the usage of words like "spike on Snicko" injects a touch of doubt into the description. It creates suspense, leaving the listener waiting to hear the outcome of the review. The usage of such words makes the commentary interactive and lively because it involves the listener to be an active participant in the drama being enacted before their ears.

The Three Metafunctions: A Multilayered Approach to Commentary

The three ideas, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions are key to understanding how commentary constructs meaning in the moment. By analyzing the functions critically, we can uncover the different layers of language that underlie the spectator's experience.

Ideational Function: Symbolizing Reality and Building the Game's Story

The ideational function of language is in terms of the way that reality is represented. The ideational function of language in cricket commentating is relevant as this allows the listener to gain a comprehensive account of what is happening. When the commentator says something like, "Naseem Shah to Starc: Three-quarter length angling away, Starc tries to drive on the up and gets an edge to the keeper," it is not merely putting the court occurrence but a clear description of the technicalities of the game. Words like "three-quarter length" and "angling away" are used to build an accurate picture of what is happening — so the listener can picture the movement.

In addition, the commentators, using technical jargon, create a representation of reality accessible to cricket-educated listeners while also managing to educate the less-aware listener (the A-listeners the commentators themselves speak of) through their use of jargon. e.g. a change will be the term reverse sweep which will speak to an aware audience but is an opportunity for students to learn about differing batting etiquette

Similarly, the example "Haris Rauf to Maxwell: Full ball on off stump, Maxwell goes for it, caught at deep square leg," enhances the ideational function to depict the event in greater detail. It isn't just a simple reference that Maxwell will get out; it is a ball-by-ball account of the ball, the batsman's shot and the ensuing dismissal.

Interpersonal Function: Building Relationships Through Language

The social function of language relates to the relationship between the commentator and audience. The most relevant aspect of the social role of language for cricket commentary occurs in the generation of rapport and emotional identification. The game's emotional weight has a companion in the register of the commentary. Like Daniyal's rhetorical question, "What's happened to the

pace in this pace attack? does not simply convey information but offers the audience to share his interest and concern, and thus participate.

Besides, language is used to express admiration and emotional involvement in the players' performances. Like "Test-quality Jaffa to disperse a Test specialist!" is an indicator of respect of the player's prowess. A distinct example of this is where the level of implicit excitement and respect also distorts a text as well: the reference to the informal term for a ball that is deemed unplayable, "Jaffa"; this is seen as a "Jaffa!", this injected excitement distorts the reading of the audience that is influenced by the capability of the player. The use of the exclamation mark also raises the commentator's emotional investment, enabling listeners to share the amazement of the performance.

This aspect of language also serves to generate humour and playfulness in the broadcast. When Paul says, "Who averages almost 100 with the ball in ODIs?" it brings about a lighthearted, sarcastic tone that is used to loosen up the atmosphere and enhance the rapport between the commentator and the audience. Playfulness is particularly required in live broadcasts, in which the factuality of the situation tends to compel the commentator to walk on a thin tightrope between seriousness and playfulness.

Textual Function: Structuring the Commentary for Clarity and Coherence

The textual function refers to the organization of the commentary and the development of the message. Since live cricket is a fast sport, the textual function is useful to maintain coherence and ensure that the listeners can track the game. The continuous application of ball-by-ball commentary is an explicit format where listeners can keep up with the action as it happens.

For example, "Over 10.2: 6 runs - Cummins to Saim Ayub: Shortish ball pulled with flair. A flat six," not only tells us what is happening but situates it in a formatted timeline. Through this process, the listener is able to follow the direction of the match and not become lost in the details of the game. Use of end of over summaries, such as "End of Over 15: 4 runs," serves as a checkpoint, providing the listener with an appreciation of the score and the larger context with the match.

The textual function also includes connecting individual moments to a larger story. When a commentator utters, "Haris Rauf to Cummins: Short ball outside off, Cummins tries a pull but edges to Rizwan. Review shows a spike on Snicko," it is a part of a developing story in the match. The review creates suspense, and the commentary keeps the viewer's constantly aware of the stakes and context of each moment.

Contextual Dimensions: Teaching Language Depending on Field, Tenor, and Mode

Field, tenor, and mode contextual dimensions are vital in determining how language is used in commentary. The dimensions influence the choice of vocabulary and the presentation of events.

Area: The Technical Domain of Cricket

Teaching Language according to Field, Tenor and Mode

These are directly related to the contextual dimensions of language such as field, tenor and mode. These dimensions affect the language selected and the sequencing of events.

Sector: Cricket as a Technical Subject

Field isg the subject or subject matter of the discussion, and in cricket commentary, the field is specialized. Words like “bouncer,” “swing,” “reverse sweep” and “dug in short” dominate the vocabulary, and they set the scene as to how things go down. The commentary thus has to question the regulars who know them and still serve enough back stories for newcomers.

For example, when a commentator says, “Shaheen Shah Afridi to Maxwell: Full and fast, Maxwell leans into it and drives beautifully through the covers,” here we can understand the technical knowledge of the game by using words such as “full” “drives beautifully”. These words also tell the audience how the players are driving their shots, which in turn deepens the audience’s expertise in the game.

Tenor: The Relationship Between Commentators and the Audience

Tenor: It deals with the roles and relationships between the participants in the discourse. Grassroots Cricket commentary theory in the world of cricket commentary, the relationship between the commentator and the listener/viewer can be said to be a relationship of expertise, authority, and camaraderie. Commentators serve as guides, providing insight and analysis while keeping a warm, engaging voice.

The tone of the commentary varies with the emotional heat of the match. In the thrilling moments, commentators may take on a more exuberant tone; “Maxwell with a stunning six!” which encourages the audience to join in on the delight. During more tense moments, the tone shifts and is notably more serious and analytical given the nature of the situation.

Mode: Real-time, Oral Communication

As cricket commentary is oral and real-time by nature, there are certain hurdles for the commentator. Commentary needs to be instantaneous to keep the audience attuned to the action. That immediacy is echoed in the present tense and active verbs like “Babar hits it for six!” creating a sense of immediacy and letting listeners feel like they are seeing the action unfold in front of their eyes.

Conclusion

This study, within the framework of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), explored the language of the cricket commentary in order to explicate its detailed multidimensional status in capturing the attention of the audience and co-constructing the meaning. The ideational metafunction observed that certain characteristics can successfully narrate an event or activity and that it is those characteristics that make sequences of a game tangible (in an essential and memetic way). This interpersonal metafunction emerged through the way language established connections between commentators and audiences, generating a connection, which affirmed opinions and evoked a more intense level of emotional response. Conversely, textual metafunction oriented on coherence and informational flow in formats of live commentary, granting an accessible and followable experience to the public. The findings make clear that sports commentary is far more than a descriptive device — it is a force actively shaping the viewer’s experience, a cocktail of entertainment, education and cultural reinforcement. The presentation shows how an analysis of field, tenor and mode helps us reflect on the choices made in commentary and how this evolves according to the audience and context, working towards a more audience-oriented and enjoyable option/choice to viewing. Adopting the recommendations mentioned above would greatly improve the standards of cricket commentary in sports Television broadcast, making it far more interesting, inclusive and culturally relevant. It contributes to the existing literature within this

niche field and reinforces the notion of the purposeful use of language to create an unforgettable experience for fans.

Recommendation

Although lush and traditional, cricket commentary still has a long way to go to catch up with the wider world for one, guided training for commentators drawn from Halliday's metafunctions — ideational, interpersonal, textual— to understand how to produce meaningful, coherent, structured narratives. Cultural context can also be imbued in commentary, particularly during matches that affect another country, to enhance emotional engagement and stir national pride. It is entirely valid to incorporate pop culture references and larger social themes that allow your audience to relate to and claim ownership over your branding. Accessibility should be written in the mission statement. The commentators must also pepper the discussion with dense crickets but also with layman's phrases to keep both the seasoned fans and the newer ones entranced. Similarly, broadcasters can use digital tools to get immediate feedback, enabling commentators to correct their tone, style or focus on the fly to better match audience preferences. And the emotional balance is key for something like this. Enthusiasm can complement match coverage, but must co-exist alongside sound, incisive stuff that promotes understanding. Portrait with a Broad focus: Commentators with training in sports psychology can attune more both to players' and viewers' psyche, adding nuance to their storytelling and, as a result, making it human-centered. Through this, the commentary can go a step beyond and become more personable, engaging and in tune with the cultural zeitgeist of a larger number of audiences which only helps bring another level to the overall viewer experience.

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