

LINGUISTIC AND COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF SPORTS DISCOURSE

Khaydarova Gavkhar Abdukadirovna,

International School of Finance Technology and Science(ISFT)

E-mail: gavharmoon1984@gmail.com

Abstract. The article examines the interaction between language and thought in the stressful context of sports interviews. It investigates how athletes and coaches simultaneously control speech, memory, emotions, and public image using concepts from linguistics and cognitive science. Moreover, it emphasizes typical linguistic elements such as fillers, repetition, short or incomplete sentences, and polite strategies that reflect mental effort.

Key words: sports interview, cognitive linguistics, fillers, repetition, working memory, athlete communication, theory of mind

Sports interviews are real-world context for studying how language and ideas interact in emotionally charged or high-pressure situations. These interviews, which are frequently done right after a game, show how coaches and athletes simultaneously manage memory, communication, and public perception. We may examine how these elements influence what is said, how it is spoken, and what it means by using the perspectives of linguistics and cognitive science.

Linguistically, the use of jargon, clichés, and syntactic shortcuts in sports interviews displays their own unique characteristics. These characteristics reflect both the content of the conversation and the cognitive demands placed on the speaker.

Athletes commonly use sport-specific language:

"We executed our plays well in the red zone." (American football)

"He had a great first serve percentage today." (Tennis)

Fans and insiders are able to understand complex behaviors through such expressions. The intention is that the interview language used by coaches and athletes should be clear and obvious. As Chomsky claims "Language is purposive "in that there is nearly always in human speech a definite intention of getting something over to somebody else, altering his behavior, his thoughts, or his general attitude toward a situation."(Chomsky, 2002)

"Language is a mirror of mind," notes linguist Noam Chomsky, and in sports, it reflects not only strategy but also culture (Chomsky, 2006). Sports cultures utilize phrases like "play hard," "stay focused," and "we left it all out there" to reinforce virtues like discipline, effort, and teamwork.

The Use of Syntactic Simplicity and Ellipsis

Athletes frequently use elliptical constructions because of their fatigue or excitement:

"Tough loss. Tried everything."

“Happy with the result. Just need to keep pushing.”

Although these statements are lack of grammatical components, they have context and meaning. According to linguist Deborah Tannen, *“conversation is more than the exchange of information—it’s a negotiation of relationships.”* (Tannen, 1986) Even half-formed statements might convey assurance, modesty, or leadership.

The Use of Repetition, Filler, and Face-Saving Strategies

Here is a good example for repetition from Marc Muniesa, Spanish professional footballer, in his interview in Premier League.

“Every every... sports.... sports player...”

He repeats "every" and "sports" while formulating his answer, indicating processing and emphasis.

Fillers such as "you know," "like," or "I mean" serve as discourse markers or cognitive placeholders. They soften blunt comments and give the speaker time to reflect. For instance:

“You know, they really put us under pressure, but we handled it well.”

Following example is to show positive politeness:

“Credit to the other team—they were phenomenal today.”

Maintaining a positive public image requires humility and sportsmanship, which are reflected in this type of discourse.

Sports interviews require complex cognitive processes, including memory recall, attention management, emotional regulation, and perspective-taking, in addition to language production.

Working Memory and Recall

Athletes must recollect recent, fast-paced events in order to answer post-match inquiries like "Walk us through that last play." Alan Baddeley, a cognitive scientist, defines working memory as "a system for temporarily holding and manipulating information necessary for complex tasks." (Baddeley, 1992) This is what happens when working memory is activated.

Example:

“I saw the defender shift left, so I took the shot early—luckily it went in.”

Emotion Regulation and Self-Presentation

Athletes frequently have to control their evident emotions during interviews that follow a victory or defeat. This may result in:

- **Controlled expressions:** *“Disappointed, obviously, but proud of the team.”*

- **Suppressed anger:** *“I won’t comment on the referee’s decision.”*

Daniel Goleman, a psychologist, believes that emotional intelligence—the ability to identify and control emotions—is essential to effective public speaking. In interviews, successful athletes frequently demonstrate strong emotional control, particularly when tactfully answering contentious or thought-provoking questions.

Theory of Mind and Awareness of Audience

Athletes change their answers according on their comprehension of the expectations of the audience. Theory of Mind, or the capacity to deduce the feelings and thoughts of another, is involved here.

Relevant example from Serena Williams:

“I just tried to stay calm and remember why I play this game—for the love, for the fans, and for myself.” She talks about both public connection and personal motivation at the same time, demonstrating an understanding of how her remarks would affect the audience.

Examining how language and cognition interact in sports interviews helps us better understand players' intellectual ability and communication skills in addition to their athletic abilities.

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