

# Pragmatic Functions in 2010 World Cup Football Matches in Selected Print Media in Nigeria

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## 1. Introduction

Existing studies on media reports have largely focused on the study of speech acts, ideological constructions, critical discourse analysis and pragmatics. The present study looks into the pragmatic functions of language use in 2010 world cup football reporting in selected Nigerian newspapers. This area has experienced a dearth of scholarly attention in linguistic literature most especially within the Nigerian environment. This study therefore fills this vacuum by using two selected sport-based Nigerian newspapers. These newspapers are *Complete Sports* and *Soccer Star*. The choice of the selected sport-based newspapers is informed by its orientation for sports news reporting while the selection of world cup reports is motivated by the popularity that soccer has gained all over the world in recent years as a useful tool in aiding economic development, bilateral relation among the nations of the world and basically a process of globalisation. This study hopes to contribute to the understanding of players' performances and professional behaviours as well as the kinds of supports nations usually provide to the national teams in assisting the growth of the football as a sport.

## 2. Football Discourse

Several studies have been carried out on football discourse using the different linguistic approaches. Some of these studies on football discourse will be discussed subsequently. Cushion and Jones (2006) carry out a sociological analysis of collective nature of coaching as manifest in the triangular interaction between coach, athlete, and context within English professional youth soccer. The findings show how an authoritarian discourse is established, structured and maintained, how the coaching context is structured, and how behaviours are misrecognised as legitimate by both coaches and players.

Chovanec (2006) is based on the competitive verbal interaction between commentators and readers/other commentators in online minute-by-minute match reports. Online minute-by-minute (MBMs) match reports is a subtype of the genre of sports commentary which has a dialogic and competitive nature. The commentators strive to top the readers through humour or criticism. The study reveals that the relationship between the accessed voices and the commentator is marked by not only harmonious communication and concurring opinions, but also frequent contradictions, strong disagreements, with reactions and even personal offence. The study concludes that the exchanges form an inseparable part of typically male discourse, in which such linguistic behaviour is relatively common as part of 'male gossip' drawing oppositional and negativist attitudes. Also, the ultimate purpose of the dialogism is to foster a sense of community among the discourse participants, that is, to produce social bonding.

Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008) explore ways in which the discourses and their subtexts used by directors of Dutch National sports organisations to talk about their work, sustain homologous reproduction. The study reveals an overlap of various discursive practices related to instrumentality, relationality, emotionality/passion and homogeneity required to strengthen the gendered nature of senior managerial work in large sports organisations. The study concludes that dominant discourses about sports and about managerial work have always been allied with the construction of desirable masculinity and that relationality and emotionality are not configured as discourses of femininity but as masculine practices.

Bush, Silk, Porter and Howes (2013) investigate the pressing social and political issues surrounding paralympic game. The study focuses on disability in sport and discourse. It considers the personal narratives of six current elite paralympic athletes who have participated in at least one paralympic games. The self-reflexive, personal, compelling narrative reflections of these individuals were represented for each of the stories as a composite narrative. The stories deal with questions over fear, despair, freedom, hope, love, oppression, hatred, hurt, terror, inequality, peace, performance and impairment. The study suggests that for a better understanding of disability in sport and discourse, academic works that can cover the sporting bodies and physical activity are needed for shaping human relations, subjectivities, and experiences in particular contextually contingent ways. The study focuses on critical reflection on key and pressing social and political issues that are concerns of the paralympic movement. The study notes in particular the representation of ability, disability and impairment in media coverage of London 2012; legacy and facilities beyond the boundaries of elite sport provision; the intersection of discourse of paralympic disability with class, gender, racialised and sexualised social relations; and explanations of the terms - paralympic, prestige and hierarchies that position 'Super human' or 'Supercrrips' in sports.

### Selected Studies on Newspaper Reports

Peelo, Francis, Soothill, Pearson and Ackerley (2004) investigate the report of homicides in England and Wales in three national newspapers: *The Time*, *The Mail* and *The Mirror* in the period 1993-97. The study explores the contributions of newspapers to the social construction of homicide. That is, how print reporting contributes to the way in which societies frame criminological problems such as illegal killing (act of murder, man slaughter or infanticide carried out on one or more victims by one or more perpetrators at the same time). The study reveals that newspapers are powerful and important contributors to public knowledge and consciousness of crime.

Taiwo (2007b) examines language, ideology and power relations in Nigerian newspaper headlines. The study utilises the critical discourse analysis approach to identify and describe the typologies of headlines in some daily and weekly newspapers in Nigeria as they relate to the themes of discourse. The study reveals that apart from the rhetorical and graphological devices employed in newspaper headlines, there are hidden ideological meanings behind those written words. The study is relevant to the present study because it considers newspaper headlines as very obligatory in any form of newspaper reporting.

Using speech acts, Agbedo (2008) analyses the writings of Bayo Onanuga and Yakubu Mohammed of *The News* and *Newswatch* magazines respectively. The study considers their backgrounds and their professional antecedents as editors of these mentioned magazines and analyses their writings during the reception of the 2005 winner of *Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting*. The study reveals that the illocutionary acts deriving from their individual speech acts fails to meet J.L. Austin's felicity conditions which include sincerity, preparatory, executives and fulfilment conditions. The infelicitous speech acts equally fails to meet Grice's cooperative principles, which participants in any given communicative event are expected to adhere to. The four maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner are violated. The study concludes by suggesting that journalists must endeavour to resist the temptation of lending undue embellishments to the bored existence of the politicians and ascribing credence to their pristine executive rascality and should also aim at factual and sincere reporting, one free from the enslaving manacles of misinformation.

Olaniyan (2011) investigates cohesion and coherence in editors' comments in *Tell Magazines*. The study discusses the implications of the devices to readers of *Tell Magazine* by adopting Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesion and coherence in analysing the discourse. The study reveals that cohesion and coherence standards of textuality are capable of enhancing the unity of meaning of texts. The work concludes that through lexical and grammatical cohesive devices, text producers can generate unified, cohesive texts that facilitate effective communication between them and text consumers. The study also reveals that cohesion and coherence in editors' comments illuminate the discourse value of cohesive ties and can be utilised for discourse pedagogy.

Ashipu (2012) examines the use of cohesive devices in the editorials of Nigerian print media. The study utilises Halliday and Hasan's (1976) approach to the analysis of cohesion and concept of tie to analyse the editorials of *Newswatch Magazine*. The study reveals that news editorials are highly coherent texts as they tend to make use of all cohesive devices in hanging sentences together. The study also concludes that two major types of cohesion namely; lexical and reference cohesion are mainly used on almost equal terms to achieve cohesion in the editorials.

Moreover, none of the existing study on newspaper reports has utilised Searle's speech function model to analyse football report most especially 2010 world cup reporting in Nigerian newspapers

### 3. Theoretical Orientation: Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory, an aspect of pragmatic functions, was developed by J.L. Austin 1962. Thomas (1995:51) states that:

Austin originally (1960:52) used the term 'speech act' to refer to utterance and the 'total situation in which the utterance is issued'. Today the term 'speech act' is used to mean the same as 'illocutionary act' – in fact, you will find the term speech act, illocutionary act, illocutionary force, all used to mean the same thing – although the use of one rather than another may imply different theoretical positions.

The speech act theory was developed in reaction to the belief of the logical positivists like Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore and others that language is imperfect and illogical, and that the illogicalities should be refined and an ideal language created. Austin posits in his posthumously published book – *How to do things with words* that instead of getting rid of language illogicalities and imperfection, it is necessary to understand how it is that people manage with it as well as they do (Thomas 1995:27). Austin stresses further that when we speak, we perform certain action(s). For example, performative is described as when certain verbs correspond to certain actions. Other verbs are seen as descriptive verbs. The differences between performatives and constatives (which Austin also noted) are seen in terms of truth values. Constatives are believed to have truth values because they can be true or false while performatives do not have this value. Austin cites some cases in which an utterance functions as action: for instance, admitting to accept a woman as one's wife by saying, 'Yes, I do,' in the

wedding ceremony; or naming a ship the Queen Elizabeth by saying, ‘I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth,’ with a bottle smashed against the stem. He proposes that uttering a sentence includes actually doing things. Austin makes a distinction between constative and performative verbs.

Furthermore, Austin elaborates on this theory by concentrating on three components of a speech act – locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act has to do with exact utterance of the speaker. Illocutionary act refers to the specific intention of the speaker while perlocutionary act is the effect of the speech on the hearer. For instance, a word that is uttered may have the intention to serve as a warning, request, persuasion, threat, greeting, etc.

Austin also classifies illocutionary act into five groups namely “verdictives”, “exercitives”, “commissives”, “behabitives”, and “expositives”.

Verdictives: These deal with the giving of a verdict by a juror or umpire e.g. acquit, grade, estimate and diagnose.

Exercitives: These involve the exercising of powers, rights or influence e.g. appoint, order, advise, warn, etc;

Commissives: These commit the speaker to do something e.g. promise, guarantee and bet;

Behabitives: These deal with attitude and social behaviour e.g. apologise, criticise, bless and challenge; and

Expositives: These clarify how utterances fit into the course of an argument e.g. argue, postulate, affirm and concede.

The speech act approach to discourse focuses upon the knowledge of underlying conditions for production and interpretation of acts through the spoken or written word. Speech act theory focuses on what people do with language, that is, the functions of language in use. Searle (1969) believes that we cannot account for meaning in the absence of the context of a speech act. For Searle, the basic unit of language is the speech act or illocutionary act. Searle contends that to perform an illocutionary act is to primarily do (rather than to say) and to engage in rule-governed behaviour.

Searle’s (1969) speech act theory is based on Austin’s (1962) speech act theory. Searle (1969:27) notes five main speech acts. These are: (i) Representatives, which are used in making assertions, conclusions, and claims; (ii) Directives, which are used in commanding, begging, requesting and asking the hearer to do something; (iii) Commissives, which require commitment from the speaker like promising, vowing, offering, threatening; (iv) Expressives, which deal with the psychological states of the speaker such as thanking, and welcoming; (v) Declarations, which have to do with actions such as: declaring war, marrying, firing from employment, christening, etc. It is Searle’s (1969) categorisation of Speech Acts that this work hopes to employ as part of the theoretical framework for this study.

#### 4. Analysis and Findings

Five general acts: representatives, directives, expressives, commissives and declarations; and ten sub-acts: describing, informing, asking, ordering, disappointing, thinking, promising, threatening, firing, and declaring account for the pragmatic functions in the data. These were used to report soccer-motivated issues such as performance, commending, elimination, world cup campaign fund, football destroying, sending off player, losing match, ball miscalculation, payment of match bonus, defeating, dismissal and qualification.

##### 4.1 Representatives

The representatives in the data are used in giving information, narrating, explaining, assessing, describing, asserting, stating and concluding, with respect to reporting issue of performance, commending and elimination. Examples are given in the table below.

SN	extual Examples and Sources	General Act	Sub-Act	Reported Issues
1.	The (team’s) performance against Argentina was very good. Our play was fine, although there were some periods in the game when we didn’t play very fine. (Text A17, <i>Complete Sports</i> , June 16, 2010).	Representative	Describing	Performance
2.	Defending the rating of the players, including goalkeeper, Vincent Enyeama, who did very well, the soccer governing body, through its agent responsible for the ranking of players, Castrol, noted that their greatest undoing was crashing out in the group stage. (Text B5, <i>Soccer Star</i> , July 8, 2010).	Representative	Informing	Commending and Elimination

**Table 1: Representative Functions of Texts**

Table 1 shows the examples of the representatives in Text A and B. The representative in example 1 is

realised by sub-act of describing. Lagerback describes the game between Argentina and the Nigerian team. The performance of the Super Eagles against Argentina is described as a good one and he also states that there were times when the players did not play very well. In example 2, the writer informs the reader about FIFA official's rating of players and ranking of the team. Castrol notes that the greatest concern for the Nigerian team is crashing out in the group stage. Vincent Enyeama, the Super Eagles goalkeeper, is rated as a good player. This means Enyeama is one of the players at the top of Castrol's Index. Enyeama bravura performance is noted and commended despite the Super Eagles' defeat.

#### 4.2 Directives

The directive functions in Text A and B are realised by different sub-acts such as asking, directing, warning, ordering and instructing. The directives in both texts are exemplified in the table below.

S/N	Textual Examples and Sources	General Act	Sub-Act	Reported Issues
3.	Questions are now been asked about the 1.9 billion naira (about \$120 million) generated by the presidential Task Force (PTF) for Nigeria's World Cup campaign after the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) claimed they have only received about 300 million thus far from the special committee. (Text A8, <i>Complete Sports</i> , June 28, 2010)	Directive	Asking	Querying
4.	Jonathan and Bio must act now and stop this Cabal from destroying our football completely. (Text B11, <i>Soccer Star</i> , June 21, 2010).	Directive	Ordering	Destroying

**Table 2: Directive Functions of Texts**

The sub-act of asking is used to express the directive function in example 3. The writer reveals how NFF query world cup fund being raised by Presidential Task Force (PTF) headed by Governor Rotimi Amaechi. The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) received an amount different from the money allocated to them for the world cup tournament. In example 4, the directive function is realised by the sub-act of 'ordering'. A group called Nigeria Professionals in South Africa has ordered that the Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, and the Nigerian Sport Minister, Ibrahim Bio, stop the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) cabal from destroying Nigerian Football. The group feels that if there is a re-structuring in the NFF leadership, Nigerian Football would be better. This is born out of the Super Eagles' poor performance at the first two matches with Greece and Argentina respectively.

#### 4.3 Expressives

The expressive functions in the data are realised by different sub-acts. These expression of emotions and psychological states of the speakers in the texts are realised by different feelings such as 'sadness', 'pains', 'shock', 'disappointment', 'unhappiness' and 'thinking', among others. Examples 5 and 6 below show the sub-acts of disappointing and thinking in realisation of expressive function while the reporting issues of sending off player, losing match, and ball miscalculation.

S/N	Textual Examples and Sources	General Act	Sub-Act	Reported Issues
5.	'We are extremely disappointed with the sending off (of Kaita) and the loss. It played a big part in this game because before then we were a goal up and in control of the match. With a man short, they equalized and this affected us. (Text A13, <i>Complete Sports</i> , June 19, 2010).	Expressive	Disappointing	Sending off and losing Match
6.	I was thinking of passing the ball when I should have shot at goal. (Text B3, <i>Soccer Star</i> , June 14, 2010).	Expressive	Thinking	Ball Miscalculating

**Table 3: Expressive Functions of Texts**

The sub-act of disappointing is realised by the expressive in example 5. The assistant coach of the Super Eagles at the 2010 world cup tournament, Daniel Amokachi, said he was extremely disappointed with the sending off of Kaita Sani, a midfielder, at the tournament. The feeling of disappointment is expressed in the extract. In example 6, the excerpt has the expressive realised by the sub-act of 'thinking'. The Locomotive striker, Osaze Odenwinge, describes what he did on the field and also explains what he ought to have done to score a goal instead of relying on Obafemi Martins 'order' of passing the ball to him. He feels as a striker, instead of listening to others, he should have 'shot at goal'.

#### 4.4 Commissives

The only two instances of commissives in Text A are realised by two different sub-acts. They are promising and threatening. Please note that the commissives do not feature in Text B. The two examples of commissives in Table 4 are drawn from Text A.

S/N	Textual Examples and Sources	General Act	Sub-Act	Reported Issues
7.	The Nigeria Football Federation, NFF have promised to pay 30,000 dollars each to each member of the Super Eagles if they beat South Korea on Tuesday and qualify for the Round of 16 of the 2010 World Cup, top team official, Taiwo Ogunjobi revealed to <i>Complete Sports</i> . (Text A4, <i>Complete Sports</i> , June 21, 2010)	Commissive	Promising	Payment (of match bonus)
8.	South Korea were noticeably reeling from their concession of the opening goal as Nigeria threatened to double their lead. (Text A2, <i>Complete Sports</i> , June 23, 2010).	Commissive	Threatening	Defeating

**Table 4: Commissive Functions of Texts**

In example 7, the commissive function is realised by the sub-act of promising. The commissive explains how the Nigeria Football Federation, NFF, promises to pay a certain amount of money to each member of the Super Eagles if they beat South Korea and qualify for the Round of 16. Example 8 is another instance of commissive function. The sub-act of threatening is expressed. The writer informs the readers about the whirling of the South Korea's team after conceding their opening goal at the tournament.

#### 4.5 Declarations

The declarations in the data are realised by two sub-acts of declaring and firing. They are presented subsequently.

S/N	Textual Examples and Sources	General Act	Sub-Act	Reported Issues
9.	The Nigerian Football Federation on Sunday fired its top two officials. (Text A6, <i>Complete Sports</i> , July 7, 2010)	Declaration	Firing	Dismissal
10.	Nigeria's coach, Lars Lagerback, has declared that the Super Eagles stand a good chance of reaching the knock out stage of the 2010 World Cup despite losing their opening Group B match to Argentina. (Text B2, <i>Soccer Star</i> , June 17, 2010) (Text C2, <i>Soccer Star</i> , June 17, 2010)	Declaration	Declaring	Qualification (for the next round)

**Table 5: Declarations in Texts A and B**

The declaration in example 9 is realised by the sub-act of firing. The writer informs the reader on how the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) fired its two top officials. In example 10, Nigeria's Coach, Lars Lagerback, makes the declaration that Nigeria's team still stands a good chance of reaching the net round at the tournament despite losing their opening match of Group B 0-1 to Argentina.

Texts	Rep.	%	Dir.	%	Exp.	%	Comm.	%	Decl.	%
A	322	49.01	15	68.18	28	62.22	02	100	01	33.33
B	335	50.99	07	31.82	17	39.78	0	0	02	66.67
TOTAL	657	100	22	100	45	100	02	100	03	100

**Table 6: Pragmatic Functions in Texts A and B, Frequency and Percentage Distributions**

Table 6 shows the frequency and percentage distributions of pragmatic functions in Text A and B. From Table 6, the representative functions are prevalent across the texts. It has the highest frequency in Text B with 50.99%. In Text B, representatives have 49.01%. The prevalence of the representatives could be as a result of the genre the data belong to. Sport report is a narrative genre and it shares the attribute of narration with storytelling. In narratives, according to Olagunju (2004:75), the writer employs different styles of writing messages across to the readers and this may account for variations in the frequency distributions of functions of texts.

In Text A, the representatives characterise the text. The sub-act of informing, describing, narrating, explaining and discussing realise the representatives. It is to be noted that the expressive is next to the representative in terms of frequency of occurrence. The directive is next to the expressive and next to it is the commissive while the declarations have the lowest frequency of occurrence in Text A.

In Text B, the representatives also predominate the texts and are realised by the sub-acts that Text A have. The main difference between the two texts are (i) In Text A, all pragmatic function feature (ii) In Text B,



the commissives do not feature (iii) The frequency of occurrence of the functions vary across the two texts but both text have representatives as part of their pragmatic functions.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper concludes that a good understanding of the discourse of football match reports with insights from the pragmatic approach reveals the pragmatic functions that characterise the genre of football as a sub-genre of sports. It also sheds light on how best football texts can be understood by carrying out functional analysis via Searles speech function model. The study has a pedagogical implication and it can be a useful tool in developing a register for football report in Nigeria.

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