



A Comparative Analysis of English Discourse Markers in British and American Football Commentary

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Article Info

Article History:

Accepted 20

September 2023

Approved 11 January
2024

Published 15 March
2024

Keywords:

discourse markers,
native speakers, non-
native speakers,
football commentary

Abstract

There are plenty of ways to utilise discourse in the field of language, for example in football commentary. It is natural, unplanned, free of scripts, and spontaneous. However, football discussion and commentary differ significantly from regular speech. The aim of this study is to compare the use of English discourse markers in sport-casting or football commentary by the British and American football commentators. This study used a qualitative study. The data were collected through a spoken discourse analysis from two (2) football match videos produced by British and American football commentators, which were transcribed into a text analysis and then determined the functions, types, and frequency of discourse markers. The finding showed that British commentators used discourse markers more frequently than the American commentators.

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p-ISSN 2087-0108

e-ISSN 2502-4566

INTRODUCTION

People use communication in a number of ways. This is what Akmajian (1968) noted, distinguishing between the use of language in accomplishing something and the use of language to convey something. While the first stage may be used to consider doing anything in general, the second pertains to how a person utilises words in specific settings (i.e., the goals, aims, beliefs, and desires stated while speaking). Thus, language as a mode of communication is recognised in terms of how individuals communicate with one another. According to Akmajian (1968), this occurs in a rather well-defined social setting in which the speakers have shared knowledge. Rather of stating everything out directly, the speaker uses common understandings to improve communication in this case.

These many interpretations of language in communication include discourse. However, discourse is vital in the use of language. Discourse pertains to the examples of communication facilitated through language. "Discourse" refers to the real occurrences of conversation using language. A discourse is a collection of meanings shared by a group of people to discuss a given topic. The notion that language, particularly discourse markers, may be used at several levels in different situations, as recent study has shown, is an important component of artistic variety.

Studies on English discourse markers have predominantly focused on classroom interactions, providing valuable insights for researchers in the fields of academics and education. Some previous studies have discussed how non-native speakers use discourse markers in different context. Consequently, there is increasing interest in researching discourse markers. The rising fascination with this topic has resulted in a heightened focus on the particular elements of linguistic structure that appear crucial in linking individual statements.

In previous study, which examined the role of discourse markers (Collewart & Castelee, 2013) noting that they are considered crucial for guiding conversation and enhancing Spanish language learners' communicative skills.

Learners of the Spanish language tend to use discourse markers less often and with less confidence compared to native speakers. Since discourse markers are considered vital for facilitating communication, mastering them is essential for achieving communicative competence. Communicative competence involves the ability to effectively use and interact with the language. Research on the use of discourse markers in these written compositions by American learners, compared to native speakers, revealed that both groups used discourse markers with similar frequency.

Additionally, another scholar (Asuman & Tefvik, 2013) examined discourse markers and spoken English among non-native speakers, highlighting the significance of analyzing their use compared to native speakers. Certain unspoken guidelines govern interactions, and native English speakers apply these effortlessly, often without realizing it (Crozet, 2003). They unconsciously follow these rules, determining what elements to include or exclude in their conversations. Specifically, in spoken interactions, native speakers instinctively use specific conversational units. It suggested that the range of discourse markers used by non-native speakers has been decreasing over time. This underscores the need for non-native speakers to become more conscious of discourse markers in their spoken English, which has implications for teaching English as a second language.

Moreover, natural Spanish speakers effectively and appropriately use discourse markers in both Spanish and English (Cristina, 2002). The research provides an initial look into how learners of a foreign language utilize these markers. Findings indicate that participants frequently used discourse markers and showed proficiency in their use. However, significant differences were noted among participants in several key areas. Despite the widespread use of discourse markers, the approaches varied considerably among individuals.

Another discourse markers' research, discovered that non-native English speakers might be instructing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes (Marcela, 2009). This

research analyzes classroom interactions in the context of teaching English as a foreign language, with a particular emphasis on the role of a non-native English-speaking instructor. Most current research on discourse markers has concentrated on native English speakers or bilingual individuals who acquire pragmatic skills early in life. This focus highlights the need for further research and a more systematic examination of how non-native English teachers use language.

Furthermore, a different study was carried out on the use of discourse markers in teaching (Hernandez & Rodriguez, 2013). This research investigated how learners of Spanish as a second language (L2) acquire discourse markers under explicit versus implicit learning conditions. Discourse markers pose a considerable challenge for second-language learners in classroom settings. Although they play a vital role in spoken communication, educational resources seldom emphasize them as key instructional objectives. Their acquisition is tough, primarily because they often go unnoticed by even proficient L2 learners and are viewed as having less communicative significance compared to other linguistic elements. Ultimately, the research revealed that both experimental conditions led to an increase in the use of discourse markers by participants, with no significant differences between the two groups on the post-tests.

Another previous research explores the use of discourse markers in speeches by comparing native and non-native speakers (Yulita, 2021). It highlights both the similarities and differences in how these groups utilize various types of discourse markers. Discourse markers are commonly used by native speakers, English language learners, teachers, and others because they can aid in effective communication. Summary, that discourse markers are valuable in English speech for both native and non-native speakers.

Discourse markers are valuable in various contexts, especially in educational environments. A scholar from Universitas Negeri Semarang investigated the use of discourse markers in student's oral presentations (Saputri, 2019). According to her, English discourse markers in

these presentations to better understand their usage and impact on students' oral fluency. Discourse markers serve as linguistic tools that connect segments of speech, and they are applicable in any language. The research revealed that students' use of discourse markers in their presentations was relatively limited. Analysis showed that micro markers were the most frequently used by students, while macro markers were the least common.

Discourse markers can function as a form of interactivity in academic environments (Rido, 2010). Particularly, the role of the markers in scientific lectures conducted in English as a second language (L2) in Malaysia, where English is used for instruction in science and technology faculties. This highlights the importance for both lecturers and students to grasp the linguistic and discourse structures, as it aids in delivering well-organized and effective lectures.

Moreover, in Second Language Learners (SLL) also use discourse markers in their essay writing (Yunus, 2014). These students employ discourse markers and to gauge instructors' perspectives on their usage. The application of discourse markers in secondary school students' essays, identifying issues such as misuse, overuse, and effective use. This topic is significant and should be addressed with care. While individuals can write about a variety of subjects, articulating and conveying meaningful insights is a less common skill. Differences in interpretation between writers and readers stem from varied cognitive processes, highlighting the need for writers to ensure their intended message is communicated effectively.

Abdulhafeed (2012), argues that given English's role as a global lingua franca, it is crucial for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to develop strong writing skills to meet academic requirements effectively. A deep understanding of discourse markers (DMs) can significantly improve the quality of writing for both English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL learners. His research revealed that, these learners tend to overuse elaborative markers and use causative, contrastive, inferential and topic-relating markers less frequently. They also appear

to rely heavily on a limited set of markers, such as “and,” “also,” “so,” and “but,” which may be emphasized in their teaching materials and instruction.

According to Tehrani (2012), the use of discourse markers in teaching impact on students' written compositions. He examines whether incorporating discourse markers in lectures improves the coherence of students' texts in two lecture books on "Science and Technology". It indicates that some of the students used cohesive devices more frequently in their writings, leading to more coherent compositions. The use of discourse markers in lectures enhanced students' understanding and contributed positively to the coherence of their compositions.

Furthermore, Sabry and Albeshir (2013) argued the use of discourse markers in paragraph writing should be highlighted the necessity for more extensive research to understand the misuse of these markers among students of different language proficiencies and academic backgrounds. They suggested that a thorough comprehension of the use and impact of direct messages (DMs) could greatly improve the quality of communication for English language learners. Additionally, they revealed that students in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) struggle with using discourse markers and are unaware of how to incorporate them effectively into their writing. The findings underscore the importance of developing students' proficiency in using discourse markers to improve writing fluency. Moreover, they emphasized the critical role of writing instructors in addressing the gaps in current writing textbooks by recommending necessary supplementary materials.

However, Awni and Salim (2016) utilized a functional approach in their study to investigate the use of discourse markers (DMs) in expository essays written by Jordanian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), who have different levels of English proficiency. Their study sought to explore how students' competence levels at the University of Jordan influence their use of discourse markers in written discourse. Its focus is on contrastive discourse markers, which signal that the information in the discourse segments

they introduce contrasts with the preceding segments, either directly or indirectly. Contrastive markers are the second most commonly used type of discourse markers, followed by causal and inferential markers. It is concluded that Spanish students employ a wide variety of discourse markers, with varying frequencies.

The other related research indicated that the investigation of discourse marker preferences has demonstrated that learners predominantly use listing and result markers (Alsharif, 2017). This research aims to perform a comparative analysis of discourse marker usage between Saudi learners and native speakers, with the goal of identifying potential similarities and differences between these two groups. The frequency distribution analysis of discourse markers in the corpus shows a tendency to selectively modify certain types of markers to avoid redundancy, while maintaining consistent semantic functions across markers. As a result, it showed that Saudi learners tend to overuse discourse markers. Learners often overuse connectors, believing that increased use of these linguistic devices improves the overall coherence of the text.

Ashikin and Nadia (2016) indicated that students' struggles with their coursework are exacerbated by their limited English proficiency, particularly in writing. Many ESL learners often misuse or underuse discourse markers (DMs) because they do not fully understand them. Between the four language skills, writing is the most challenging for ESL learners to master. For university students, writing effectively is essential, as much of their academic success depends on their ability to express their ideas clearly in written form. This is because their academic performance is primarily evaluated through papers, reports and other written assignments.

Writing can be tough; even native speakers may struggle, and for nonnative speakers, it can feel nearly impossible. Writing requires a large vocabulary, language proficiency, and the ability to create coherence and cohesion. Clarity aids beginners in grasping the material, while cohesion is achieved by seamlessly connecting

phrases and sentences within paragraphs. A crucial aspect of meeting these writing demands is the effective use of discourse markers.

Recent research has yet to thoroughly investigate the use of discourse markers in football commentary. This section examines earlier studies in discourse analysis, with a focus on sports commentary. One key study by Humpolik (2014) aimed to present sports commentary, particularly football commentary, as a distinct and independent register, outlining its characteristics and exploring its primary features. The study found that the internal structure of this register varies significantly based on external events and that many of its features stem from the commentators' time constraints. This section argues that Sports Announcer's Talk (SAT) can be regarded as an autonomous register, supported by Ferguson's 1983 study. It identifies the study's objectives, participants, and focus, and outlines the study's format. The goal was to provide a clear linguistic description of the SAT register and highlight the common markers used within it, as well as how these markers function across different SAT subtypes.

A study by Adams, Anderson, and Mark (2010) examines how discourse shapes and governs the construction of masculinity among coaches and players within a semi-professional British football (soccer) team. The study identifies two main types of discourses: one that reinforces traditional masculinity and another that challenges it. Their findings reveal that these discourses have minimal impact beyond the sports context, highlighting a separation between athletes' social and athletic identities and diminishing the traditional role of sports in shaping narrow definitions of masculinity. Coaches often used narratives related to gender, sexuality, and conflict to provoke aggressive and violent behavior under the guise of enhancing performance.

The research by Abdullah and Al-Saifi (2022) examines the language used in football commentaries in both British and Egyptian contexts through a contrastive study. By comparing English and Arabic football commentary, the study identifies varying levels of

interpretation based on lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic features, in that order. The analysis demonstrates how these components interact to achieve specific discourse functions. The comparative analysis reveals similarities between the English and Arabic commentaries, particularly in the use of certain linguistic strategies to meet discursive goals. Despite the language differences, commentators rely on specific linguistic patterns to assist with their roles.

Luque and Sterkenburg's study (2020) examines how ethnicity and race are discussed in Spanish football commentary. Their research reveals that, similar to findings from studies in other countries, football broadcasters often employ racial or ethnic stereotypes when talking about athletes. They utilized a thorough qualitative approach to analyze the content of 10 Spanish football commentary shows from post-game broadcasts. Rather than relying on the common Black-White dichotomy, they approached race and ethnicity as complex and multifaceted, considering the specific context of Spain. Their analysis uncovered evidence of certain dominant discourses that reinforce an "us" vs. "them" narrative but did not reveal evidence of prevailing discourses.

Nevertheless, despite the previous studies, there remains a gap in research focusing on more specific objectives. The context in which football commentary is delivered impacts how it is constructed. To be impactful, a speaker needs to align with the event's context. Consequently, language is adapted in different ways to make better decisions regarding the use of discourse markers to convey the intended meaning. However, this study explores the use of discourse markers in football commentary by both British and American English commentators.

There are distinct differences in the way British and American commentators discuss a football game, particularly in their choices of words and phrasing within a short span of time. This needs to be examined through the lens of linguistic comprehension, especially concerning the use of English discourse markers in direct

conversation. Therefore, this analysis is essential to maintain accuracy and coherence.

This present research aims to uncover and elucidate the various functions of discourse markers in football commentary to enhance its effectiveness in communicative and linguistic studies.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach, specifically spoken discourse analysis, and then converts it into text analysis. The analysis unit is the spoken discourse markers found in football commentaries from British and American commentators. It emphasizes the processes of data collection and text analysis, focusing on two segments of televised football commentaries.

This study focuses on the football commentaries from specific matches. It examines the commentaries provided by British and American commentators. There are some variations of phrases that used by both commentators in commenting football match. Their distinct languages and occupation have resulted in a very unusual language. Additionally, the football cultures of two countries (England and America) differ significantly. The matches selected are: (1) 2018 FIFA World Cup Final match between France and Croatia, and (2) 2018 FIFA World Cup Round of 16 match between France and Argentina. The commentaries are primarily sourced from sports media platforms on YouTube.

The data was gathered online through two football commentaries broadcast on television. Football matches were watched at various times, with the commentary captured using a tape recorder and an audio-visual recorder. After recording, the commentaries were transcribed. Then, the transcribed text was categorized into British and American scripts. A sampling method was used to identify the different discourse markers present. At the end of the sampling process, two commentary tracks, one British and one American, were selected for analysis of their

discourse markers. Those discourse markers were analyzed by referring to Schiffirin's (1987) theory, which divided into six types of discourse markers, and then calculated the frequency of using them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis reveals that ten discourse markers are employed by both British and American football commentators. These markers include *and*, *but*, *or*, *oh*, *well*, *so*, *because*, *now*, *then*, and *you know*. They serve various functions depending on their usage. The markers can be categorized into six types: *discourse connective*, *marker of information management*, *marker of response*, *markers of cause and result*, *markers of temporal adverb*, and *information and participation*.

According to the findings, the frequency in using discourse markers between British commentators and American commentators are quite different. The analysis showed that discourse markers are frequently utilized by both British and American commentators in the realm of language, particularly in football commentary. Both groups of commentators employ these markers to convey their interpretations of the game. They aim to provide a clear depiction of the events on the pitch to their audience. The usage of discourse markers varies depending on their specific function in different contexts.

This variation in usage can be attributed to several factors, including cultural communication styles to sport commentary in British and American. For example, during high-stakes moments, such as goals or penalties, discourse markers serve to enhance excitement and urgency. This is very important in live commentary which maintaining fluidity and spontaneity. This aspect becomes particularly important in football live commentary, where maintaining fluidity and spontaneity is essential.

The choice and frequency of these markers are therefore not just linguistic tools but also reflect the commentator's strategy to connect with the audiences and maintain narrative continuity throughout the match. The result of those frequency was shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Discourse Markers and Its Frequency

Discourse Markers	Classification	Function	British Commentators	American Commentators
And	Discourse Connective	Continuation	188	142
But	Discourse Connective	Contrast	35	38
Or	Discourse Connective	Options	4	5
Oh	Marker of Information Management	Exclamation	10	8
Well	Marker of Response	Response	8	16
So	Markers of Cause and Result	Result	9	4
Because	Markers of Cause and Result	Cause	5	4
Now	Markers of Temporal Adverb	Time deictic	27	52
Then	Markers of Temporal Adverb	Time deictic	16	11
You know	Information and Participation	Interactive transition	3	1
TOTAL			305	281

Additionally, British and American commentators used discourse markers for different purposes. According to Schiffrin's initial classification, discourse connectives include words like *and*, *but*, and *or*. In football commentary, the word *and* functions as a discourse marker to link the commentator's ideas, actions, identifications, definitions, or explanations.

Moreover, the next category of discourse connective is the marker *but*. In football commentary, *but* serves as a contrastive marker, signaling that the following segment will present opposing ideas or actions.

Furthermore, the final type of discourse connective is the marker *or*. In football commentary, 'or' is used by commentators to present alternative options to the audience. In arguments, it mainly serves to indicate various pieces of evidence supporting a particular stance.

Another classification noted is the information management marker, which includes just one marker: *oh*. In football commentary, *oh* is usually regarded as an exclamation or interjection.

The classification of discourse markers in football commentary includes their use as response markers. The marker *well* serves as a response tool that functions as a pre-closing

device, allowing speakers to either revisit a previous or unexplored topic or to start a new speaking turn before the conversation concludes.

The next category of discourse markers includes those indicating cause and effect, specifically *so* and *because*. In football commentary, these markers express causal relationships, which can be based on facts, knowledge, or actions. *Because* indicates a cause or reason, while *so* denotes a result.

It has also been noted earlier that in football commentary, there are various temporal adverb markers, specifically *now* and *then*. *Now* indicates the speaker's or commentator's movement through the discourse by highlighting the focus on an upcoming idea, orientation, or participation framework, whereas *then* shows the chronological relationship between previous and subsequent statements.

The final classification is information and participation, which includes two markers; however, only one is present in this study. The discourse marker *you know* serves a role in the context of knowledge during conversation. It indicates interactive transitions in shared knowledge.

Discourse markers in football commentary are influenced by cultural differences, with British and American styles differing significantly in this regard. British commentators often favor subtle, understated discourse markers that align with a more reserved communication style, while their American counterparts tend to employ more expressive, energetic markers that resonate with a more enthusiastic broadcasting culture. These differences shape not only how commentary is delivered but also how audiences engage with and interpret the game. Unfortunately, there is a lack of cultural diversity and variety in communication styles between British and American commentators, particularly concerning their use of discourse markers.

Furthermore, the majority commentary falls into these two dominant paradigms,

which limits the presentation of alternate discourse strategies from other cultures or regions. This lack of diverse linguistic influences limits the evolution of commentary styles, resulting in a more equal scenery in which British and American commentator's rule, particularly in the selection and use of discourse markers.

Nonetheless, the cultural difference has a number of effects that affect how both British and American commentators employ discourse markers. The positive impacts of discourse markers include aiding in comprehension, enhancing coherence, and facilitating smooth transitions. For instance, markers like *but* and *or* can clarify contrasts and present alternatives effectively. However, excessive use of discourse markers can lead to negative outcomes such as cluttered commentary, reduced clarity, and audience fatigue. Overuse of markers like *so* and *because* can make communication seem redundant, while markers like *now* and *then* can contribute to a high-stress environment if overused. To maximize the effectiveness of discourse markers in football commentary, it is crucial to strike a balance.

The findings of this research aligned with the findings of Oghogho (2016), who discovered discourse markers are utilized at various points in European and African football commentary. In several cases, the discourse markers used also performed varying functions in some contexts. Another finding from Ab Manan (2016) also agreed with this research findings in classified discourse markers' categories. The finding showed that there are similarities of using contrastive markers and temporal markers.

However, the final results of this research did not align with the findings of a previous study performed by Humpolik (2014), which reported the usage of register by several football commentators. Furthermore, there was no correlation found between the results of this research and the research done by Luque and Sterkenburg (2020), who

investigated discourse markers related to race and ethnicity in football commentary.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that even while these earlier studies are not specifically addressing the present research findings, they do highlight the potential advantages of using discourse markers when teaching English, particularly to non-native speakers and English language learners.

Therefore, the findings showed that utilising discourse markers in football commentary helps organise speech, convey a speaker's attitude, and manages the flow of conversation. Discourse markers in football commentary are critical for steering the narrative, facilitating comprehension of the game, and improving the entire viewing experience by making the analysis more structured, clear, and entertaining.

Besides that, using discourse markers in English teaching carries multiple key consequences for language learning and developing students' communicative skills. Integrating discourse markers into English teaching has the potential to greatly improve students' overall language competency, making them more successful speakers in spoken and written communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research reveals that there are ten discourse markers which play a significant role in football commentary, influencing the clarity and flow of communication. They are "and", "but", "or", "oh", "well", "because", "so", "now", "then", and "you know". British football commentators use discourse markers more frequently than their American counterparts, with *and* being the most prevalent. Each discourse marker serves distinct functions, categorized into six classifications: discourse connectives, markers of information management, response, cause and result, temporal adverbs, and information and participation. There are several differences reflect the cultural tendencies of British football commentary and American football

commentary. British commentators tend to favor a more reserve, minimalist, and descriptive style. On the other hand, American football commentators are more likely to adopt an energetic and narrative-driven style, filling much of the air time with analysis, opinions, and storytelling. However, it results several impacts that influences the use of discourse markers by both British and American commentators. Discourse markers had a positive effect upon understanding by improving coherence and providing smooth transitions. For example, markers such as *but* and *or* are able to clarify contrasts and provide substitutes properly. Yet, overbearing use of discourse markers can have negative effects such as cluttered commentary, decreased clarity, and audience tiredness. Excessive consumption of markers such as *and*, *so*, and *because* can render communication appear redundant, whereas markers like *now* and *then* can contribute to a high-stress environment if overused. In order to maximise the efficient use of discourse markers in football commentary, it is essential to use such markers in moderation.

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