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11 **Q5** “Mayhem! Absolute Mayhem!” Exploring the promotional  
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## ABSTRACT

With an accumulated number of over 190 min of the Persian and English sportscasts of the 2014 FIFA World Cup semifinal between Brazil and Germany analyzed, this study focused on the promotional metadiscursive features used by the commentators while reporting this game in their respective languages. The transcribed sportscasts were first examined in order to reveal the different constituents modified by existing promotional elements and to discover the functions they fulfilled in the context. A careful analysis of the data yielded 8 different general categories that were modified by promotional components, namely players, coaches and their staff and referees comprising the first group, accompanied by spectators, competitions, institutions, the media, venues, the weather and miscellaneous features constituting the other seven categories. The functions observed in the reports were illocution markers, attitude markers and commentary. The study provides evidence that promotional metadiscursive features are an integral part of soccer sportscasts, and it can also be considered as a platform on which to further develop similar research prospects in less appreciated areas of inquiry.

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## 1. Introduction

A significant and inseparable part of sports is the commentary that accompanies them. The sportscaster not only reports the game, but also adds a certain touch of information, opinions and emotions to that which is being broadcasted. In a way, the commentator acts as a link between the audience at home and whatever is relevant to the competition taking place – to the essence of the game. Soccer broadcasting can be considered as an attempt made by the reporter to simultaneously describe the game to the viewers in real time while staying true to the game (Beard, 1998). This entails that the sportscaster not only tries to describe the events in the best way possible, but also attempts to engage the audience in the game, keeping them intrigued (Whannel, 1992). This makes sportscasts an amalgam of ordinary, everyday speech and professional assessments and comments (Stiehler and Marr, 2002).

The fact that this type of discourse is spontaneous and based on unscripted events adds to the excitement (Beard, 1998). The unscripted and unpredictable nature of soccer helps the commentator go beyond the usual technical soccer language, leading

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to the on the spot, creative and exhilarating use of language (Leigh and Woodhouse, 2004). This is especially noticeable in international tournaments (Georgalou, 2009), where the commentator may find it difficult to be impartial in reporting the matches because of factors pertaining to the teams involved and the commentator's interpretation of whatever is related to those teams, whether sports related or otherwise. This emphasizes one thing: the metadiscursive features of sportscasts.

According to Vande Kopple (1985 p. 83), metadiscourse is “discourse that people use not to expand referential material” but what they use to assist their audience “connect, organize, interpret, evaluate, and develop attitudes toward that material”. Metadiscourse may be referred to as a linguistic device employed to transfer attitudes utilizing various discursive elements. This makes it a key element and a tool, in this case, for the reporter to use to convey ideas, feelings, beliefs, possible biases and so forth, affecting their audience in a subtle and sometimes open way. Among the different metadiscursive aspects present in sportscasting, promotional aspects seem ever-present.

Metadiscursive research has relied on different models, such as those presented by Vande Kopple (1985), Crismore et al. (1993) and Hyland (2005), but these models have largely centered on academic discourse. Due to the fact that the focus of this study is on the discursive features of soccer sportscasts – the promotional

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aspects in specific – models such as those mentioned above may lack the adequacy needed to be applied to this type of discourse.

Considering this inadequacy and the relatively unexplored realm of sports commentary – especially in Farsi – and acknowledging sports as an integral and inseparable aspect of modern life, there is a need to fill this void through endeavors uncovering what different promotional metadiscursive elements modify and the possible functions they fulfill outside the properties of academic English; findings that can be implemented to the discourse that all people, educated or not, are in contact with. The fact that the promotional language is an essential part of sports commentary makes it a sensible choice to explore in this genre. Thus, this study attempts to compare the promotional features existing in the Persian and English sportscasts of the world's favorite sport, soccer, on its largest stage, the FIFA World Cup. The premise alone is intriguing considering what the findings of this type of inquiry potentially promise to contribute to metadiscourse research in general and promotional language research in specific.

### 1.1. The FIFA World Cup, Brazil 2014 and research on soccer

As far as soccer is concerned, there is no bigger event than the FIFA World Cup. This tournament has been held every four years since the first tournament in 1930, with the exceptions of 1942 and 1946 when it was not held due to the Second World War. The senior men's national teams from FIFA's 208 Member Associations from the six confederations – the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) in Africa, the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (CONMEBOL) in South America, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) – compete to qualify for the month-long final competition. The number of countries which participate in the finals is 32, which includes the automatically qualified host nation(s).

### 1.2. Metadiscourse

Recent endeavors in discourse analysis emphasize the interpersonal functions of texts (Hyland, 2004b). This entails that language is not just used to convey information, but to ensure the use of understandable and acceptable language. Hence, the addresser must be able to anticipate the audience's expectations to help involve them in how to comprehend the intended message, thus emphasizing the social and communicative processes between the addresser and the addressee (Hyland, 2004b, 2005; Hyland and Tse, 2004).

Emphasizing how language is actually used in social interactions, metadiscourse, which literally translates to beyond discourse, is believed to play an important role in how discourse is organized and involves the audience and how writers or speakers express their attitude (White, 2012). Therefore, "metadiscourse embodies the idea that communication is more than just the exchange of information, goods or services, but also involves the personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who are communicating" (Hyland, 2005, p. 3). Metadiscourse is the "linguistic material in texts, written or spoken, which does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret and evaluate the information given" (Crismore et al., 1993, p. 40).

Studies on metadiscourse have explored casual conversation (Schiffirin, 1980), science popularizations (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990), school textbooks (Crismore, 1989), undergraduate textbooks (Hyland, 2004a), postgraduate dissertations (Bunton, 1999) and company annual reports (Hyland, 1998b). Rhetorical differences in the writing of people with different native languages

have also been the subject of metadiscursive studies (Crismore et al., 1993; Mauranen, 1993; Valero-Garces, 1996). Metadiscourse has also been observed in early English medical writing (Taavitsainen, 2000) and is of the characteristics of good ESL and native speaker student writing (Cheng and Steffensen, 1996; Intaraprawat and Steffensen, 1995). It is also a fundamental aspect of persuasive and argumentative discourse (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990; Hyland, 1998a). Obviously, the majority of the above mentioned studies have academic orientations—written or spoken.

Promotional (meta)discourse is a combination of a number of very similar genres with the goal of promoting a phenomenon to an intended audience. In other words, promotional discourse offers "a positive description and evaluation of the product, service or idea being promoted" (Bhatia, 2004, p. 133). Of the most obvious examples of this genre are advertisements, promotional letters, book blurbs, job application letters, and here, sportscasts. Research on promotional discourse includes press releases (Maat, 2007), sales letters (Bhatia, 2014; Vergaro, 2004), job applications (Connor et al., 1995; Henry and Roseberry, 2001), grant proposals (Connor and Mauranen, 1999; Connor and Upton, 2004), academic introductions (Bhatia, 1997) and book blurbs (Basturkmen, 2009; Gea-Valor, 2005, 2007; Gea Valor and Inigo Ros, 2009).

On the other hand, research regarding soccer sportscasts has investigated in different ways. Live soccer commentary regarding historical aspects (Haynes, 1998; Sandvoss, 2003; Whannel, 1992), gendered, racial, nationalistic, and ethnic discourses (Barnfield, 2013; Billings and Tambosi, 2004; Georgalou, 2009; McCarthy et al., 2003; Richard, 2008; Sterkenburg et al., 2012), as well as language styles and components (Chapanga, 2004).

What can be taken from the above mentioned argument is that, compared to academic and business discourse, especially with regard to promotional features, sportscasts have not been subject to the same amount of respect and soccer in this case has been a relative outcast. If the argument is true that people gain a great amount of information from the media (Fowler, 1991) and that television is arguably one of the most influential and accessible types of media and adding the claim that soccer is the most popular sport worldwide (Palacios-Huerta, 2004), it is only sensible that research on soccer sportscasts be acknowledged by academia as well. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge the gap between soccer and promotional (meta)discourse, acknowledging the world's most popular sport through investigating the promotional metadiscursive features existing in the live commentary of the 2014 semifinal match between Brazil and Germany. The smallest contribution of this kind of investigation is in broadening of our view towards metadiscourse and exploring its features outside academic and commercial texts. Given that the promotional aspects of soccer commentary fall into the neglected extreme of metadiscursive research, this attempt can be seen as an opportunity to see how metadiscourse is embodied in such texts. To achieve this, the sportscasts of the chosen game in Farsi and English were analyzed to see how these elements are utilized in the two languages. This study thus attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What do the promotional metadiscursive elements modify?
2. What are the functions of these elements?

## 2. Methodology

Because of the scarce attention paid to promotional features of this nature, the literature lacks a framework to follow regarding the characteristics and categorization of these elements. Therefore, to fulfill the objectives of this study, this research implemented a qualitative approach to the analysis of the elements under study.

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