A Comparative Study Of After-match Reports On 'Lost' And 'Won' Football Games Within The Framework Of Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

In spite of the obvious differences in research styles, all critical discourse analysts aim at exploring the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power relations within social structures. Nowadays, after-match written reports are prepared immediately after every football match and provide the readers with the apparently objective representations of important events and occurrences of the game. The authors of this paper analyzed four after-match reports (retrieved from Manchester United's own website), two regarding their lost games and two on their won games. Hodge and Kress's (1996) framework was followed in the analysis of the grammatical features of the texts at hand. Also, taking into consideration the pivotal role of lexicalization as one dimension of the textualization process (Fairclough, 2012), vocabulary and more specifically the choice of specific verbs, nouns, adverbs and noun or noun phrase modification were examined. The results indicated that reporters, consciously or unconsciously, foreground and highlight their team's strengths and advantages when the team wins. On the other hand, they try to mitigate or euphemize their losses by backgrounding their weaknesses or bad performance. In addition, in both cases (winning or losing a game), the focus is almost exclusively on one's own team.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, after-match report, football, winning, losing

1. Introduction

A paper usually begins with 'Introduction', but it may have a subsection titled 'background to the study' although tastes differ and this paper does not have one (This is our understanding, and we may be wrong).

The study of language can be approached not in a single way. More specifically, linguists have studied the formal properties of different languages for a long time and this has resulted in the compilation of numerous volumes of grammar books. But, one cannot overlook the functions or uses of language. In other words, language can also be analyzed in use. More precisely, the analysis of language in use is the analysis of discourse (Brown & Yule, 1983). However, "the term "discourse" is used in various ways within the broad field of discourse analysis". (Fairclough, 2012, p. 453). Hence, it is not surprising that "the term 'discourse analysis' has come to be used with a wide range of meanings which cover a wide range of activities". (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. viii). Notwithstanding the wide range of activities undertaken by different discourse analysts, such an analysis, "looks at patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. (Paltridge ,2006,p. 2). Also, "it takes us beyond description to explanation and helps us understand 'the rules of the game' that language users draw on in their everyday spoken and written interactions". (Paltridge, 2006, p. 20)

Discourse analysis is the analysis of who said what, where, when, how, etc., but as soon as one begins to analyze why someone said what, when, where etc., then, they start to step into critical discourse analysis. In other words, description gives way to explanation. As Van Dijk puts it,

> Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (Van Dijk , 2001, p352)

Or, according to Fairclough (2010, p. 417):

> Critical discourse analysis (CDA) developed as a response to the traditional disciplinary divide between linguistics, with its expertise in the micro analysis of texts and interactions, and other areas of social science such as sociology, with expertise in exploring macro issues of social practice and social change. The challenge CDA has raised and addressed for linguists is what the empirical linguistic analysis of patterns in talk and writing can

potentially contribute to, for instance, sociological questions and claims about social and institutional discourses and social change. The challenge it has raised and addressed for sociologists is how their claims about social discourses and social change can be grounded in the actual empirical analysis of language in use.

Like discourse analysis that comprises a wide range of activities, critical discourse analysis (CDA) "subsumes a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse (…) which differ in theory, methodology, and the type of research issues to which they tend to give prominence".(Fairclough, 2012,p. 452)
Nevertheless, in spite of the obvious differences in research styles, all critical discourse analysts aim at exploring the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power relations within social structures. Above all, they put emphasis on the ways in which "discourse sustains and legitimizes social inequalities. In this, CDA begins with a clear political agenda"   (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 138). In addition, the ways in which we talk and write about the world reflect wider ideological pressures and, ultimately, particular constellations of power relations . Discourse, then, is the site of power (Wooffitt, 140).
On the other hand, "critical literacy and critical discourse analysis provide the tools to look closely at the language of written and spoken texts". That is to say, "these analytic tools provide the means to critically interrogate print, written and visual texts for the ways in which they both draw on particular social meanings to create texts and in doing so help to (re)produce and in some case transform those meanings".(Wright, 2004,p. 8)
The ideological use of language can be observed in a variety of texts, not only written but also spoken, to mention but a few advertisements, politics, sports, and so on. Among these, "as a social institution, sport has the capacity to both challenge and reproduce dominant social values". (Wright, 2004, p. 3). Also, "it is through media coverage of sport and related activities and products that particular meanings and values associated with physical culture are produced and most widely disseminated both nationally and globally in contemporary societies".(Wright,p.3)
Nowadays, sport is seen, practiced and played in various forms round the world, but football is most likely "the most popular sport in the present century. It has established itself not only as the most prestigious club and national sport, but also as one of the most lucrative sports(consider player contracts, transfers, club take-overs, television transmission rights, sale of T-shirts, etc.)" Lavric , 2008, p.8). Taking into consideration the significance, popularity and status of football in the world, football has its own language which

> … offers many rewarding topics for linguistic research. One such topic is the lexicographic analysis of football vocabulary. Since, on the one hand, a football match is made up of a relatively small number of ever-recurring events (shots, passes, referee interventions, etc.), but, on the other hand, myriads of texts (written reports, spoken commentary, etc.) are produced every day which describe these events, a vocabulary has been developed in many languages which abounds with synonyms, with fine-grained semantic distinctions and with subtle stylistic variation. (Lavric, 2008, p. 5)

After-match written reports are prepared immediately after every football match and provide the readers with the important events and occurrences of the game. These reports are available at various football clubs' respective sites. Therefore, every football club writes reports or a summary of the most important events for all its matches. But, a team wins some games and, on the contrary, loses some games, too. Or, the game may end in a draw. At this juncture, taking into account the fact that the events of the matches and the performance of the players of one's own team and the rival team are obviously not the same when one's own team wins a game or loses another game and that common sense dictates that the reports should reflect and present what actually happened throughout a game, a question comes to mind: Does this actually happen in after-match reports?
Despite the popularity and the undeniable role and influence of football in many spheres of life in almost any part of the world, the work having been done, at least with regard to football reports from the critical discourse analysis perspective, seems to be not satisfactory and adequate.
The authors of this study could find only one study in this connection. Rahimi, M. , Amal Saleh, E., and Saadat, M.(2008) in 'A Discursive Representation of the Winner and Loser: The Case of Sports Reports', selected four sport extracts from two different issues of Pirouzi and Esteqlal Javan, each supporting one of the two most popular soccer teams in Iran, i.e., Persepolis and Esteqlal, respectively, as the corpus of their study. They analyzed the texts as regards three important properties of texts, i.e., grammar, vocabulary, and modality. The study revealed how the reporters, while seemingly providing the readers with the information about the matches and important events of the games, represent 'ours' and 'others' in the selected texts the way they like and, by this means, influence the ideology of the reader.

2. The Present Study
The researchers in this study aim to analyze four after-match reports, two regarding lost games and two on won games. It should be added that all four reports belong to the same team, i.e. Manchester United. When comparing and contrasting the same game from the perspective of two rival teams, it is somehow easy to notice the differences at various discursive levels, but this paper examines only the reports of a single team on its own won and lost games. It goes without saying that the analysis results of only four reports cannot be easily generalized, so the presumption is that sufficient analyses of after-match reports are required in order to have reliable generalizations. Hopefully, this analysis will provide answers to the questions which follow:
1. Are there any similarities/differences between after-match reports released on a football club's own website on their lost versus won games?
2. If yes, what are those similarities/differences?

3. Methodology

Methodology comprises 3 sections: corpus, procedure, and theoretical framework. Each is explained in a separate part below.

3.1 Corpus

We hope the explanation in the previous section (before the questions of the present study) applies to this part, too.

Four written after-match reports, two regarding Manchester United's lost games (Stoke 2 United 1 and Chelsea 3 United 1) and two on its won games (United 2 Swansea 0 and Manchester United 2 Cardiff City 0) , retrieved from Manchester United Sports Club's own website for games played in the 2013-2014 premier league season comprise the corpus of the present study. The reports have been written by three different reporters and this point should be taken into account.

3.2 Procedure and Theoretical Framework

The four reports mentioned in the preceding section were analyzed(the model(s) have been explained in the respective sections) to see if there were any similarities and/or differences between them with regard to lexicalization, linguistic features and structures, and specific rhetorical structures of discourse.

Analysis of text involves linguistic analysis in terms of **grammar, vocabulary semantics, the sound system, and cohesion-organization** above the sentence level (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 57).

3.2.1. Grammar

CDA relies largely on the tenets of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to show how linguistic forms can be systematically related to social and ideological functions. Hence, Hodge and Kress's (1996) framework was followed in the analysis of the grammatical features of the   texts at hand.

 In the above-mentioned model, syntagmatic models and transformations are the two features considered in the analysis of the text. Syntagmatic models refer to categories and processes which describe the interrelation of objects and events and here there are two basic categories, namely actionals and relationals (R). Actionals, as 'actioal' speaks for itself, cover the occasions when one or two objects are related to a verbal process (an action). The actionals themselves have been divided into transactives (T) and nontransactives (NT). Two entities (or objects) are related by a verbal process in transactives. In other words, one of the entities affects the other. 'Jack kicked the ball' is a case in point . In contrast, in nontransactives, only one entity is related to a process. In this case, whether the entity is affecting or is being affected is not clear. 'The injured player left the game' can be an example for nontransactives.

Relationals were mentioned above, but were not explained. They are classified into equatives and attributives. Here, again as can be guessed, only two entities are related to a verb and unlike actionals, no action is performed. In the former, a verb is the link between two entities (e.g. Jack is a manager), but in the latter (attributives), a quality is attributed to an entity (e.g. That player is brilliant), so when a writer uses a host of attributives in a text, it cannot be by accident. Rather, for the critical discourse analyst, it has implications and implicit meanings.

With regard to the second feature in Hodge and Kress's (1996) model, transformations in this model are a series of operations such as substituting, deleting, combining ,which are performed on basic forms or reordering a system or its elements. Passivisation (P) and nominalization (N) are two kinds of transformations. Nominalization happens when actions are turned into objects, and verbal processes are turned into nouns. The essence of the passivization and nominalization is that choosing noun phrases over verbs and the passive voice over active voice is often ideologically charged. As a case in point, a headline writer could systematically omit information about the agents of the action by using a noun such as 'attack' ('Attack On Protesters'), or by using a passive verb: 'Protestors Attacked'. On the other hand, a sentence, which used 'attack' as an active verb, would need to identify who was doing the attacking: e.g. 'Police Attack Protestors'(Billig,2008). We should add that in our analysis, we focus mainly on syntagmatic models and transformations.

3.2.2. Vocabulary

Another central assumption of CDA and SFL is that speakers make choices regarding vocabulary and grammar, and that these choices are consciously or unconsciously "principled and systematic "(Fowler et al., 1979, p. 188).Also, lexicalization "is a major and well-known domain of ideological expression and persuasion as the well-known terrorist versus freedom fighter pair suggests". (van Dijk, 1991a). Another point is that lexical patterning relates to word choice and word creation devices deployed by the football reporter for some purposes. The reporter has an arsenal of vocabulary items under his/her belt, so which words are chosen when a choice can be made must not be accidental and random. Hence, words are powerful tools and much more powerful when writers do not explicitly elucidate their roles in representing the world to their readers (Alo & Ogungbe, 2012). Taking into consideration the pivotal role of lexicalization as one dimension of the textualization process(Fairclough, 2012), vocabulary and more specifically the choice of specific verbs, nouns, adverbs and noun or noun phrase modification has been examined and analyzed in the reports under consideration.

4. Results and Discussion

Report 1

Chelsea 3 United 1

> Manchester United left Stamford Bridge empty-handed after Samuel Eto'o's hat-trick had put Chelsea three goals ahead just four minutes into the second half. Substitute Javier Hernandez pulled one back with 12 minutes remaining, but a bad day for United was complete when captain Nemanja Vidic was shown a straight red card late on following a lunge on Eden Hazard.

> The Reds dominated the opening passages of play and could have been ahead when Ashley Young, playing on the left after a spell out with injury, forced goalkeeper Petr Cech into a low save. But United were unlucky in conceding the first goal, when Eto'o eluded Phil Jones to cut in from the right and shot goalwards, the ball hitting Michael Carrick's foot to loop up and over the stranded David De Gea.

David Moyes' men took their time to get back into the game but did carve out more chances before the hammer blow of Eto'o's second. Adnan Januzaj was the main threat, but Danny Welbeck's shot straight at Cech from six yards, having been found by Januzaj, proved telling when the Blues doubled the lead just before half-time.

Ramires collected a cleared corner to feed Gary Cahill on the right, and the defender's cut back was clinically despatched by the Cameroon striker. The break provided little respite for the Reds, who fell three behind when De Gea blocked a Cahill header only for the lurking Eto'o to poke the ball home from point-blank range.

Hernandez provided much-needed spark from the bench, reducing the arrears when diverting Jones' low effort past Cech. But there were no late heroics, only Vidic given his marching orders from referee Phil Dowd in stoppage time, compounding the day's disappointment with an instant three-game ban.

4.1 Analysis

Table 1 below depicts the statistical results of the grammatical analysis of Report 1.

Table 1. Syntagmatic models and transformations of Chelsea 3 United 1

Team	Syntagmatic				Transformation
	transactional	nontransactional	relational	total	nominalization
Chelsea	6 (75%)	2 (25 %)	0 (0 %)	8 (100%)	6 (43%)
Manchester	11 (50 %)	6 (27 %)	5 (23 %)	22 (100%)	8 (57%)

A glimpse at the table shows that everything sides with Manchester United, except the result of the match which sides with Chelsea, not Manchester United. For example, if we look at the 5th column (total), and if we calculate the percentage for the two totals, we will have 27 as the percentage of 8 and 73 as the percentage of 22.Seemingly, these two numbers (27% and 73%) are very revealing. In other words, they indicate that it was Manchester which had a performance better than its rival, but why does the result not confirm this? Or if we look at the second column (transactional), 11 is almost two times 6. Again, these numbers apparently prove the power and superiority of the Reds. Even the other columns testify that Manchester was the dominant team in the match and it has lost the game by accident.

However, if we look more closely at the content of the report, we will notice what has happened. Consider the following clauses selected from Report 1:

➢ Substitute Javier Hernandez[Manchester's player] **pulled** one back … (para 1, L3)

➢ The Reds **dominated** the opening passages of play……(para 2, L1)

➢ David Moyes' men **took** their time to get back into the game but **did carve out** more chances……(para 3, L1)

➢ The break **provided** little respite for the Reds,… …(para 4, L2)

➢ Hernandez **provided** much-needed spark from the bench,… …(para 5, L1)

As these examples show, the reporter has concentrated mainly on one team (in this case, Manchester), and regardless of the result of the game, has reported what he has supposed to be important, not what has actually happened. In other words, he has **foregrounded** some events and, in contrast, has **backgrounded** other events, ones which should have been foregrounded.

It is not wrong to claim that the reporter has left no stone unturned in order to write as much as possible about Manchester and as little as possible about Chelsea. More precisely, where it has been possible, he has availed himself of transactional models. If not, nontransactional models have been used. And as a last resort, relationals have served this purpose.

The writer has also availed himself of **passivization** in order to **thematize**(Brown and Yule,1983) (and through that strategy foreground or highlight) Manchester-related information. The following cases confirm this claim:

➢ **Nemanja Vidic** was shown a straight red card late on …(para 1, L3)

➢ but **Danny Welbeck's shot** straight at Cech from six yards, having been found by Januzaj, …(para 3, L2)

➢ only **Vidic** given his marching orders from referee Phil Dowd, . …(para 4, L1)

Regarding the vocabulary of this report, the first point is that football enjoys its own vocabulary, although they may be limited and not large, and in this report, we can pinpoint a number of them(e.g., hat trick, a lunge, a spell, a save, cut in, loop up, hammer blow, the lead, cut back,…). These words strengthen the **lexical cohesion** of this text which is a typical football text.

According to Paltridge (2006), "cohesion refers to the relationship between items in a text such as words, phrases and other items such as pronouns, nouns and conjunctions."(p. 131) And **lexical cohesion** is defined as "relationships in meaning between lexical items in a text and, in particular, content words and the relationship between them."(p. 133). Repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocation are the main types of lexical cohesion.

Another example of lexical cohesion (in this case, **synonymy**) in this report can be observed in the following phrases and clauses:

- ➢ **Manchester United** left Stamford Bridge …(para 1, L1)

- ➢ a bad day for **United** …(para 1, L3)

- ➢ **The Reds** dominated …(para 2,L1)

- ➢ But **United** were unlucky …(para 2, L2)

- ➢ **David Moyes' men** took their time … (para 3,L 1)

- ➢ The break provided little respite for **the Reds,** … (para 4, L2)

We see that in a 5-paragraph report, the writer mentions Manchester United 6 times. In contrast, there are only 2 times when a reference is made to the opposing team:

- ➢ … Samuel Eto'o's hat-trick had put **Chelsea** …(para 1, L1)

- ➢ …when **the Blues** doubled the lead …(para 1, L1)

A striking point regarding the lexical items in this report concerns the scarcity of adjectival description and particularly the use of **positive adjectives**. The reason for this may be the fact that the players of Manchester United did not perform as expected, so the reporter was empty-handed in this regard. On the other hand, he did not like, or indeed did not want, to praise and highlight the possible good performance of Chelsea's players and, in particular, the Cameroon striker, Samuel Eto'o'.

The last, but not the least point about Report 1 is related to the following extracts:

- ➢The Reds **dominated** the opening passages of play and could have been **ahead** … (para 2, L 1)

- ➢But United were **unlucky** in conceding the first goal, … (para 2, L 2)

- ➢David Moyes' men …. did carve out **more chances** … (para 3, L1)

- ➢Adnan Januzaj was **the main threat**, but **Danny Welbeck's shot straight at Cech from six yards**, having been found by Januzaj, **proved telling** … (para 2, L 2)

These sentences have been used by the reporter not by accident, but more than likely to serve a specific purpose, perhaps so as to **euphemize** the defeat. That is, over- and understatements, hyperbole (exaggeration), euphemism and mitigation "may be a function of ideological control when information that is unfavourable to us is made less prominent" (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 29) whereas information that is favorable to us is highlighted and overstated.

Report 2
Report: Stoke 2 United 1

Manchester United slipped to defeat at Stoke as two goals from Charlie Adam either side of Robin van Persie's equaliser gave the home side all three points.

Both sides struggled to deal with the blustery conditions early on, and United were forced into a change after just 10 minutes when Rafael replaced the limping Jonny Evans. United, with the wind at their backs in the first half, had the majority of possession but rarely threatened the Stoke goal, while the hosts were reduced to long-range shots that failed to hit the target.

But just as the Reds looked to be gaining control, they fell behind in unlucky circumstances when Adam's long-range free kick took a deflection off Michael Carrick's right knee to send the ball to David De Gea's right when the keeper looked to have it covered.

To make matters worse, the back four was rejigged again before the break when Phil Jones was carried off on a stretcher following a blow to the head, but after a welcome respite at half-time, United were soon back on level terms. Juan Mata's deft touch gave van Persie the time and space to place the ball past Asmir Begovic for the equaliser, but Adam's fierce half-volley five minutes later put the home side back into the lead.

United struggled to force their way back against their fired-up hosts until the closing stages, with their best chance a Wayne Rooney free-kick that Begovic brilliantly turned onto the post. Tom Cleverley blazed the ball over following the ensuing melee, before the final whistle ensured the Reds were beaten at Britannia Stadium for the first time.

Analysis

Table 2 summarizes the grammatical information about the report of the match between Manchester United and Stoke in which the former was defeated by the latter.

Table 2. Syntagmatic models and transformations of Stoke 2 United 1

Team	Syntagmatic				Transformation
	transactional	nontransactional	relational	total	nominalization
Stoke	4 (57 %)	3 (43 %)	0 (0 %)	7 (100 %)	4 (36%)
Manchester	4 (25 %)	11 (69 %)	1 (6 %)	16 (100 %)	5 (64%)

Again, in this report, like Report 1, the figures and percentages imply that the Reds had a better play in comparison with Stoke, especially if we take a look at the fifth column. Converting 7 and 16 to their respective percentages gives us 30 and 70, respectively. These percentages apparently make many things clear. Put another way, in terms of syntagmatic models, Manchester United has had a performance more than twice as good as the opposing team. In trems of transactionals, they performed equally well, but nontransactionals suggest something very different. That is, the nontransactionals of the United outweigh outstandingly those of Stoke (approximately four times). Let's have a look at some of these nontransactionals:

> Manchester United **slipped to defeat** at Stoke …(para 1, L1)

> United, … **had** the majority of possession …… (para 2, L2)

> But just as the Reds **looked** to be gaining control, they **fell** behind in unlucky circumstances …(para 3, L1)

These examples indicate that the report revolves around only one team and the other team is mentioned only where it is indispensable. To make this point more clear, consider the following transactionals concerning the Reds:

> …when Rafael **replaced** the limping Jonny Evans …(para 2, L2)

> … but rarely **threatened** the Stoke goal,… (para 2, L3)

> Juan Mata's deft touch **gave** van Persie the time and space to place the ball past Asmir Begovic for the equaliser, but … (para 4, Lines 2,3)

> Tom Cleverley **blazed** the ball over … (para 5, L 2)

The boldfaced verbs in the above sentences are all the transacionals used by the reporter on the part of Manchester United, but they contribute nothing whatsoever to the result of the match. Nevertheless, they are instrumental in realizing what the reporter had in mind.

Another important grammatical point in Report 2 is the use of 5 cases of **agentless passives**, four of which concern the United:

> and United **were forced** into a change … (para 2, L 1)

> while the hosts **were reduced** to long-range shots … (para 2, L 4)

> the back four **was rejigged** again … (para 4, L 1)

> when Phil Jones **was carried off** on a stretcher … (para 4, L 2)

> the Reds **were beaten** at Britannia Stadium for the first time. … (para 5, L 4)

In these clauses, the writer has adopted the strategy of **topicalization,** through which he has given prominence to (or has foregrounded) the underlined elements by positioning them at the beginning of the sentence.

Regarding the lexical items used in the report, as in Report 1, 'Manchester United', along with its synonyms, and 'Stoke', in addition to its synonyms, have acted as **lexical cohesive ties** in the text. It is important to note that there are 7 references to 'Manchester United', whereas this number equals 5 for 'Stoke'. In this respect, too, the reporter has shown favoritism toward 'the Reds'. More importantly, notice the position of the rival team in the respective clauses:

> **Manchester United** slipped to defeat at **Stoke** as two goals from Charlie Adam either side of Robin van Persie's equaliser gave **the home side** all three points. … (para 1, L 1)

> **United** were forced into a change after just 10 minutes … (para 2, L 1)

> **United**, with the wind at their backs in the first half, … (para 2, L 2)

> while **the hosts** were reduced to long-range shots … (para 2, L 3)

> But just as **the Reds** looked to be gaining control … (para 3, L 1)

> **United** were soon back on level terms … (para 4, L 2)

> Adam's fierce half-volley … put **the home side** back into the lead. … (para 4, L 3)

> **United** struggled to force their way back against their fired-up **hosts** … (para 5, L 1)

> the final whistle ensured **the Reds** were beaten … (para 5, L 1)

In all clauses above, 'United' is the **theme**, while 'Stoke', except in one clause, occupies the **rheme** position. That is why it is of great significance to know from whose perspective an event is represented and who owns the medium.

The reporter has used adjectives in general and positive adjectives in particular infrequently and sparingly in this report (like Report 1).The following clauses contain adjectival modification:

> Both sides struggled to deal with the **blustery** conditions … (para 2, L 1)

> when Rafael replaced the **limping** Jonny Evans… (para 2, L 2)

> they fell behind in **unlucky** circumstances … (para 3, L 1)

> after a **welcome** respite at half-time, United were soon back … (para 4, L 2)

> Adam's **fierce** half-volley … put the home side back into the lead. … (para 4, L 3)

> United struggled to force their way back against their **fired-up** hosts … (para 5, L 1)

The adjectives boldfaced above are not so positively or negatively loaded, and do not require much discussion and can be taken a blind eye on without any detriment.

Now consider the following extracts from Report 2:

> Both sides struggled to deal with **the blustery conditions** early on, and **United were forced into a change after just 10 minutes** when Rafael replaced **the limping Jonny Evans**. (para 2)

> But just as the Reds looked to be gaining control, they fell behind in **unlucky circumstances**… (para 3)

> To make matters worse, **the back four was rejigged again before the break** when **Phil Jones was carried off on a stretcher** following a blow to the head, … (para 4)

The Reds have lost the match, and more important than that they 'were beaten at Britannia Stadium for the first time'. Needless to say, this loss was not expected at all and it was unbelievable for the fans. Therefore, it should be **mitigated** or **euphemized** in one way or another. It is interesting to remember that **'unlucky'** has also been used in Report 1(para 2, L 3).

As the last point, mention should be made of **'but'** which has been used four times in this report consisting of five short paragraphs. Also, in report 1, the writer has used **'but'** five times in his five-paragraph report.

Report 3
United 2 Swansea 0

Manchester United returned to winning ways and avenged last weekend's FA Cup third round defeat to Swansea City after goals from Antonio Valencia and Danny Welbeck sealed an important 2-0 victory.

The Reds started brightly and could have taken an early lead through Nemanja Vidic, who volleyed over from six yards, before the impressive Adnan Januzaj struck the crossbar with a delicious free-kick moments later.

With just over half an hour on the clock, a lovely passing move on the edge of Swansea's area led to Darren Fletcher slicing high and wide, before Welbeck dragged another effort wide of goal, missing the first half's best chance following some neat approach play from Valencia and Rafael.

David Moyes didn't make any changes at the break, though his side returned for the second half with renewed urgency and immediately scored via Valencia, who slotted in at the far post after Shinji Kagawa's header was parried into his path by Gerhard Tremmel. Welbeck doubled the lead on 59 minutes, much to the delight of a relieved Old Trafford crowd, by expertly clipping Patrice Evra's speculative shot into the net for his ninth goal of the season.

Chris Smalling, playing at centre-back, missed an excellent opportunity to score a third when his close-range volley sailed over the bar, while Kagawa should have opened his account for the season on 77 minutes when his delicate effort was cleared off the line after a superb counter-attack involving Januzaj and Rafael.

It may not have been a classic, but a first victory of 2014 was all that mattered for United.

Analysis
In contrast to Report 1 and Report 2, Report 3 reports a match in which Manchester United was the winner, so one expects to read a different report. The grammatical features of this report are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Syntagmatic models and transformations of United 2 Swansea 0

	Syntagmatic				Transformation
Team	transactional	nontransactional	relational	total	nominalization
Manchester	10 (42%)	12 (50 %)	2 (8 %)	24 (100 %)	18 (100 %)
Swansea	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	0(0 %)	0 (100 %)

A casual glance at the table reveals that it is a completely one-sided account of a football match. One cannot help remembering that "after you've heard two eyewitness accounts of an auto accident, you begin to worry about history" (anonymous). Wasn't there really anything on the part of the opposing team which deserved mentioning (e.g., a yellow

or a red card, a change, a long-range shot, a half volley, a free-kick, a lunge, a foul, a shoot toward the goal, a low save, any chance to score a goal,…). Neither any syntagmatic models nor any transformations!

The transactionals in this report, unlike those in the previous two reports, seem to have a direct effect on the result of the game. Consider the clauses that follow:

➤ goals from Antonio Valencia and Danny Welbeck **sealed** an important 2-0 victory. … (para 1, L 2)

➤ the impressive Adnan Januzaj **struck** the crossbar … (para 2, L 2)

➤ Welbeck **doubled** the lead on 59 minutes, … (para 4, L 3)

➤ Chris Smalling, …, **missed** an excellent opportunity to score a third…(para 5, L1)

With regard to passivization, there are only two passive sentences in this text, while there were four in Report 1 and five in Report 2. Like the passive sentences in the previous reports, the reporter has taken advantage of this strategy to thematize Manchester:

➤ when **his[Kagawa's]** delicate effort was cleared off the line … (para 2, L 2)

➤ **Shinji Kagawa**'s header was parried into his path by Gerhard Tremmel. … (para 5, L 3)

Unlike the preceding reports, adjectival description of the head nouns means and says a lot in this report. At least, 20 adjectives have been used to modify the nouns. Also, most of these adjectives (that is, 12 of them) have positive implications which have been used to describe 'the Reds'. The writer has used not only adjectives but also adverbs to achieve **positive self-presentation** to the utmost degree possible. Consider the following as the tip of the iceberg:

➤ The Reds started **brightly** … (para 2, L 1)

➤ before the **impressive** Adnan Januzaj struck the crossbar with a **delicious** free-kick moments later. … (para 2, L 2)

➤ a **lovely** passing move on the edge of Swansea's area … (para 3, L 1)

➤ by **expertly** clipping Patrice Evra's **speculative** shot into the net for his ninth goal of the season … (para 4, L 4)

➤ Chris Smalling, playing at centre-back, missed an **excellent** opportunity … (para 5, L 1)

➤ after a **superb** counter-attack involving Januzaj and Rafael. … (para 5, L 3)

Another interesting point concerns the frequent and repeated references to 'the Reds' (23 references, approximately),functioning as **lexical cohesive ties** linking the different parts of the text together. Interestingly enough, unlike the previous reports in which the players were mentioned infrequently and the term 'Manchester United' and its synonyms acted as a cohesive device, in this report, the former comprises the lion's share of cohesive ties (16 cases), but the latter contribute comparatively little (3 cases).Even more interestingly, there are merely 2 references to Swansea altogether. Look at the following:

➤**Manchester United** returned to winning ways and avenged last weekend's FA Cup third round defeat to **Swansea City** after goals from **Antonio Valencia** and **Danny Welbeck** sealed an important 2-0 victory.

➤ **Chris Smalling**, playing at centre-back, missed an excellent opportunity to score a third when his close-range volley sailed over the bar, while **Kagawa** should have opened his account for the season on 77 minutes when his delicate effort was cleared off the line after a superb counter-attack involving **Januzaj** and **Rafael**.

Report 4
Report: United 2 Cardiff 0

Robin van Persie and Ashley Young grabbed the goals as Manchester United picked up a welcome three points with a 2-0 victory against Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's Cardiff City.

Despite the boost of an early breakthrough, the Reds were unable to kill off the visitors in the first half. Van Persie netted at the second attempt, after David Marshall saved his initial effort superbly, when Antonio Valencia's header came back off the bar.

Debutant Juan Mata was close to finding Ashley Young with a deep cross and van Persie screwed agonisingly wide but the Welsh side had clear-cut chances of their own. Craig Noone fired over after a promising run and David De Gea had to keep out a Mark Hudson header with an outstretched boot.

Cardiff also enjoyed a decent spell of possession after the interval but Young doubled the lead with a moment of individual brilliance, drifting inside onto his right foot and burying an unerring low drive into the bottom corner of Marshall's net.

It sparked more attacking play from David Moyes' men with Mata's first shot in a red shirt saved by Marshall and Jonny Evans bending wide after galloping forward with purpose. Wayne Rooney came on for van Persie and went close with a deflected drive.

Marshall parried a Valencia drive onto the woodwork after the Ecuadorian delayed his shot and turned Declan John before Mata, his replacement Adnan Januzaj and Rooney all had decent efforts. However, the visitors were competitive until the final whistle on a night when respect was paid to their manager.

Analysis

Report 4 like the last one is about a match in which Manchester was able to defeat the rival. Table 4 sums up the relevant grammatical data:

Table 4. Syntagmatic models and transformations of United 2 Cardiff 0

	Syntagmatic				Transformation
Team	transactional	nontransactional	relational	total	nominalization
Manchester	8 (44 %)	8 (44 %)	2 (12 %)	18 (100 %)	18 (82 %)
Cardiff	2 (29 %)	4(57 %)	1 (14 %)	7(100 %)	4 (18 %)

The first thing that catches a reader's attention at first glimpse is that this report, although not in a fair manner, alludes to the competing team, and it is not **heavily biased**. Nevertheless, the figures in the fifth column indicate that 'the Reds' outnumber 'Cardiff' by nearly 3 to 1, and this superiority increases to more than 4 to 1 in the case of nominalization. According to the table, Cardiff had only two transactionals, as shown below:

➢ after David Marshall[Cardiff's goalkeeper] **saved** his initial effort … (para 2, L 2)

➢ Marshall **parried**[Cardiff's goalkeeper] a Valencia drive onto the woodwork … (para 6, L 1)

Now compare these with some transactionals of 'the Reds':

➢ Robin van Persie and Ashley Young **grabbed** the goals as Manchester United **picked up** a welcome three points with a 2-0 victory against … Cardiff City. … (para 1, L 1)

➢ Young **doubled** the lead with a moment of individual brilliance, … (para 4, L 1)

Passivization, as in Report 3 but unlike Report 1 and Report 2, is on the periphery. That is, only two passives can be found in this report:

➢ Mata's first shot in a red shirt **saved** by Marshall … (para 4, L 1)

➢ on a night when respect **was paid** to their manager. … (para 4, L 1)

On the whole, the writer has employed 21 adjectives (the Reds: 17; Cardiff: 4) in his report .It is crystal clear that in this respect, too, the Reds outnumber Cardiff by 4 to 1, but the interesting point is that the overtly positive adjectives (unlike those in the previous report) are very rare, i.e., **first**, **second**, **deep**, **right**, **bottom**, **individual**, **initial**, **early**, **deflected**, **close** are neutral, not so positive. On the contrary, all four adjectives describing Cardiff are positive:

➢ but the Welsh side had **clear-cut** chances of their own. … (para 3, L 2)

➢ Craig Noone[Cardiff's player] fired over after a **promising** run … (para 3, L 2)

➢ Cardiff also enjoyed a **decent** spell of possession … (para 4, L 1)

➢ the visitors were **competitive** until the **final** whistle… (para 6, L 3)

Even in one case, the reporter lauds the performance of David Marshall (Cardiff's goalkeeper):

➢ David Marshall saved his initial effort **superbly**, … (para 2, L 2)

Also, we can add the following to what went before in order to come to a conclusion:

➢ Despite the boost of an early breakthrough, the Reds **were unable to kill off the visitors** in the first half.   … (para 2, L 1)

➢ but **the Welsh side had clear-cut chances of their own**. … (para 3, L 2)

➢ **Cardiff also enjoyed a decent spell of possession** after the interval but Young doubled the lead with a moment of **individual brilliance**, … (para 4, L 1)

➢ However, **the visitors were competitive until the final whistle** on a night when **respect was paid to their manager**. … (para 6, L 3)

And remember that1) Manchester United was the champion of the last season ,2) now it was in the seventh rank in the table, 3)this was their 23rd match(out of 38 matches during a season) of the season, 4) Cardiff City earned promotion from the 2012–13 Football League Championship. They returned to the top division after being absent for 51 years, so they should not have been a tough rival for Manchester, 5) On 29 March, 2014, a flypast was staged by United fans with the banner displaying "Wrong One - Moyes Out" in seven-foot high lettering during a match against Aston Villa at Old

Trafford (Wikipedia, 2013), 6) the club fired Moyes before the final four matches of the season. All these confirm this feeling that the reporter is not satisfied with Manchester's rank in the table, and most probably the manager is responsible for this, so he implicitly, but not explicitly conveys his dissatisfaction in this regard.

Besides the above-mentioned arguments, the references to each team in the report are revealing, too. Manchester United (along with synonyms) has been mentioned 3 times (2 times in theme position and 1 time in rheme position). Cardiff (along with synonyms), however, has been mentioned 5 times (3 times in theme position and two times in rheme position).

5. Conclusion

If we look again at the research questions of this study, that is

1. Are there any similarities/differences between after-match reports released on a football club's own website on their lost versus won games?

2. If yes, what are those similarities/differences?

And if we review the analyses of the four reports presented in the previous pages, we can say that there are certainly similarities and differences between after-match reports released on a football club's own website on their lost versus won games. But those similarities and differences include the following:

a) After-match written football reports are rich in football terminology, since football has its own terms.

b) In after-match written reports prepared by football teams' respective websites, like other discourses, some events are foregrounded at the expense of backgrounding other events.

c) To illustrate the preceding point, when a team wins a game, it is the reporter's day, since he can freely and generously highlight and overstate his respective team's strengths, goal scoring chances, and, in a word, everything that makes the team's fans and supporters delighted and proud. On the other hand, the rival team is thoroughly neglected, or else does not receive as much attention and coverage as it may deserve.

d) However, when a team loses a game, the reporter faces a very difficult task. On the one hand, his favorite team has not had a praiseworthy performance, so the reporter's hand is empty and does not have much to talk about at length. On the other hand, the good play of the rival team is not to be reflected in a deserving manner. Seeing himself in a difficult dilemma, the reporter decides to highlight his favorite team's small goal chances, being unlucky in conceding the first goal, carving out goal chances, the immaterial occurrences (like player change, bad weather, bad luck, a player being carried off on a stretcher, the team's red cards, and so on), and in a nutshell, to mitigate and euphemize the loss. When it comes to the rival team, their good and laudable performance is understated and backgrounded rather than being treated and given coverage to in a fair manner.

In closing, it should be noted that more and more analyses of after-match written football reports are needed before any generalizations can be made with certainty regarding the findings of this study. Also, the number of analyzed reports should be sufficient in number in order to reach better and stronger conclusions.

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