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**Register of Cricket Commentary: Variation Across Spoken and Written Sportscasting**

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This corpus-based comparative study explores two modes of cricket commentary, that is, television commentary (SAT) and online written commentary (OWC), from the register perspective. The data collected from the ICC Twenty-20 World Cup, June 2009: Final Match, Inning 1 is analyzed in the light of Biber and Conrad (2009) framework. The results substantiate that, in comparison to OWC, the situation of SAT occasions more versatile and diverse functions thus compelling for more resourceful and frequent linguistic features. Although the relatively formulaic nature of OWC substantially limits the variety and productivity of linguistic features owing to more impelling situations, it strives to replicate SAT, which places it intermediate between the play-by-play and color versions of sportscasting. A lesser known and less-noticed (in register studies) register has been placed on record, which is envisaged as a healthy contribution to the studies on register variation.

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**INTRODUCTION**

One looking for research studies on the register of sports commentary (referred to as 'sportscasting' and 'sports announcer talk' (hereafter, SAT) by Ferguson (1983)) is faced with serious scantiness of scholarship on the subject. To the researchers' best of knowledge, there are hardly around a dozen studies which looked into the register character of sportscasting. This oblivion on the part of linguistics is no longer desirable for reason such as; 1) sports has matured into a multibillion industry and is taken as a vocation in its own right, 2) it enjoys a huge following around the world, and, most important, 3) with the advancement of information technology and mass media, sportscasting has developed into a full-grown 'electronic' (Davis and Brewer, as cited in Lewandowski, 2012) and media discourse.

Although register studies have largely moved to comparative and cross-register studies; the studies on SAT are still short of being comprehensive and wholesome. Even where SAT has received attention, most of the studies are devoted to football commentary and radio as its medium, for instance, Ferguson (1983); Lefkowitz (1996); Reaser (2003); Lewandowski (2012); Humpolík (2014); and Balzer-Siber (2015). Almost all the studies available are either devoted to registers in isolation, or comparisons between different sports registers or different media as their channel. A review of studies on sportscasting below vindicates this claim of scholarly inattention.

Ferguson (1983) in his descriptive study of radio sports commentary characterized its occasion of use and established its standing as a register different from other media broadcasts. The linguistic characteristics he selected for this study were: copula deletion, omission of sentence initial nominals, inversions, routines, result expressions and modifiers. The study established that the selected linguistic features were part of an accepted norm which the listeners expected of every sportscaster to master. Contrary to traditional descriptive

approach, Reaser (2003) studied the Radio and TV basketball broadcasts by taking a quantitative route. This study found the functional differences between the features of the two sub-registers: SAT features were found indispensable and arising out of inevitability in the radio broadcast, while out of stylistic need in the TV broadcast. The researcher suggested the full exploitation of quantitative studies in order to better understand the inter-register variations. Lewandowski (2012), in his study of the registers of English language online electronic sports commentary (OSC), tested the hypothesis that "the online sports register shared the features of spoken and written commentary". The study compared OSC with SAT and written sports discourse. It found that the OSC shared linguistic features (such as simple present verb forms and copula deletion) with the SAT. Features such as salutations, occasional questions, closings, and informal vocabulary were found to be shared between OSC and TV commentary. The syntactic patterns of OSC were found resembling that of the written sports commentary. The study vindicated its hypothesis by concluding that OSC neither fully confirmed to the features of SAT, nor did it completely resemble the written commentary. Humpolík (2014) attempted a descriptive study of the language of football commentary. The study introduced three sub-categories of football commentary namely: radio broadcast, TV broadcast and pre-recorded computer game commentary. The findings revealed a close tie between the computer game and TV commentaries. But at the same time, it challenged the authenticity of the pre-recorded computer game commentary as it was short of being a substitute of the real thought process.

## Cricket

Cricket is one of the worlds' most popular sports; rated the fourth biggest in the world, a dominant sport in the Indian Subcontinent, and a huge sport in the UK and Australia ([www.biggestglobalsports.com](http://www.biggestglobalsports.com)). The international cricket is governed by the International Cricket Council (ICC), while each member country has its domestic governing body for the national game. The game exists in three formats: test, one-day and twenty-twenty. A test match can last at maximum for five days of ninety overs each. Each contestant in this version has two batting turns. A one-day game, as the name indicates, is a relatively shorter version which offers each team fifty overs of an inning. Still shorter is the twenty-twenty format in which an inning lasts for twenty overs (for details see [www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/hosking/cricket/explanation.htm](http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/hosking/cricket/explanation.htm)). The sportscasting of the game is relayed through Television, Radio, Internet and Short Messaging Service on cellular networks. Radio used to be the dominant medium before the expansion of TV and cyber-media. Television, with its induction, took over as the most dominant mass medium for cricket broadcasts and greatly marginalized the radio.

The limited studies overviewed above do not provide any evidence of the investigation of cricket commentary as sub-register of SAT. The few studies on SAT cited here are almost all either concerned with SAT or commentary of particular sports and media as independent registers. The comparative studies also limit themselves to the comparison of either SAT of different sports or different media. Studies meant to show variations within the sportscasting of cricket are utterly non-existent, let alone the SAT or online written commentary (OWC) of cricket. The current study stems from the need to filling this gap in the scholarship on sportscasting, particularly that of a global sports, that is cricket. At the first place, the study will establish the nature of cricket commentary from the register perspective. Second, the comparison of two varieties of cricket sportscasting will help understand the degree of variation across the two speculated (sub) registers. The researchers deem their study pertinent to fit within the ongoing larger discourse and bring to attention a relatively neglected element of the discourse alongside encouraging further studies in the same line of inquiry.

## METHODOLOGY

This study sampled the television (herein SAT) and online written commentary (herein OWC) of the final match (inning 1 only) of the ICC T-20 World Cup 2009, played between Pakistan and Srilanka at Lords, England. Transcribed (in simple English orthography) spoken commentary and the online written ball-by-ball commentary serve as the data of this study.

The television commentary was extracted from the video recording of the sampled cricket match. Simple orthographic transcription was employed to compile the MS word transcript and was named *SAT commentary*. The role of commentators was worked out and the commentary of the main and color commentators was segregated to compile two separate MS word files entitled *SAT sub PbP* and *SAT sub Col* respectively. The online written commentary was taken from [www.espncricinfo.com](http://www.espncricinfo.com), and after pruning it of any unnecessary graphical features, the text was saved as MS word file named OWC commentary. In this way we got four MS word files: three for SAT and one for OWC.

Each MS word file was loaded into the online program, CLAWS 7 grammatical tagger ([Ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html](http://Ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html)) for the tagging of grammatical features. The output was saved as .txt files so as to make it processable for subsequent analysis. This gave us four .txt corpora namely: *SAT corpus* for television commentary, *PbP corpus* for play-by-play commentary, *Col corpus* for color commentary, and *OWC corpus* for online written commentary. CLAWS 7 Tagset was drawn from the website of CLAWS 7 for later referencing during the data analysis.

### Description of Corpus

The major corpus of this corpus-based study comprised of 11,977 words. The corpus was split into four sub-corpora keeping in view the levels of analysis as per the requirements of the study. The total word count in the SAT corpus was 7,286 words, while that in the OWC corpus was 4,691 words. Table 1 shows the breakdown of this word count.

**Table 1.**  
**Breakdown of word count in the SAT and OWC sub-corpora**

No.	Sub-corpus	Total number of words
1	SAT	7,286
2	OWC	4,691
	<b>Total</b>	11,977

As the SAT corpus was split into two sub-corpora, the total word count in the PbP corpus was 4,028 words and that in the Col corpus was 3,258 words. This can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2.**  
**Breakdown of word count in the PbP and Col sub-corpora of SAT**

No.	Sub-corpus of SAT	Total number of words
1	PbP	4,028
2	Col	3,258
	<b>Total</b>	7,286

## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study exploits the analytical framework for register studies proposed by Biber (1988), and refined by Biber and Conrad (2009). The framework provides a comprehensive range of

situational features and necessitates to functionally linking the linguistic features with their situational counterparts; hence, it is well suited to operationalize the description of registers.

The framework suggests that typical register studies have three components: description of situational characteristics of a register, description of the linguistic characteristics, and analysis of functional associations between the situational and linguistic features (Biber and Conrad, 2009).

Situational features of the texts were described using the situational framework given by Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 40-47). The linguistic features were decided on the basis of their pervasiveness in the register and relevance to the topic of the study. The linguistic features, depending on the size of corpus and expertise of the researcher, can be quantified either manually or through grammatical analysis software. Adopting the latter strategy, the texts were tagged using CLAWS7 ([Ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html](http://Ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html)) and were processed through AntConc, Version 3.4.4 for the quantification of the linguistic features. The frequencies of the selected linguistic features were worked out of the two texts and quantification was carried out. The linguistic features were compared with the situational features to interpret the functions.

### Situational Features of Sportscasting of Cricket

We make use of the set of seven situational characteristics for register descriptions proposed by Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 40-47). The situational features of the SAT and OWC of cricket sportscasting are compared. Where applicable, the features of play-by-play and color SAT commentators have also been presented separately for the subsequent analysis.

### Participants

There are a total of seven SAT commentators in the data. They interact in pair-form in which each pair has five overs of talk. The SAT corpus comes from the twenty overs (first inning of the game). Thus for three turns of five overs each we have three pairs, while for the last five overs we have one new commentator and one in his second spell of talk.

SAT of cricket is addressed by a formation of two commentators who are sitting at a particular studio set for commentators outside the playing field. The addressers talk on their turns in such a way that when one pair-part is the addresser, other is the addressee. These roles are frequently reversed and the talk resembles the natural conversation in this regard. So, SAT is generated by a singular addresser. The commentators follow the game through a TV screen erected in front of them. They produce spoken text and there is no particular requirement of education, class and gender. However, the experience of playing for an international team is preferred. In the data, all seven commentators are male and had played ample international cricket for their countries. They are regarded as experts in the domain of cricket although the level of expertise may vary. All of them have been in the field of sportscasting for quite some time. Although their roles frequently overlap, a fixed pattern of roles has been observed for the TV SAT of cricket, that is, one member of the pair appears as the play-by-play commentator, while the other as the color commentator. Their particular roles are:

**Play-by-play commentator:** factual reporting of the game

**Color commentator:** exposition and analysis of the cricket, particularly the ongoing match and things related to it

The TV SAT of cricket is simultaneously addressed to the fellow commentator (henceforth referred to as the addressee) and innumerable viewers (henceforth referred to as the audience). The addressee is a cricket specialist and announcer while the audience are the

cricket fans following the game through the medium of TV. Virtually, there are no noticeable onlookers and the speakers rarely receive the attention of the cameraman.

The OWC, in the written form of text, is typically generated by a single typist who follows the game on the television screen. He reports the ball-by-ball action of the game and also adds description whenever he finds breaks between the balls or overs. Sometimes, the typist is assisted by other addressers who are at the actual venue of the game and serve to add to the color of the game like the color-commentators in the spoken commentary. However, such instances are rare once the match is underway.

The OWC is addressed to an innumerable audience who follow cricket match online. Their choice of these particular medium stems from many factors such as comfort, time-saving, absence of TV, radio, etc. There are no particular requirements of social factors such as age, gender or education for the typist. An expertise in typing is required so that he can catch up with the pace of the ongoing action and update the audience.

### **Relations among participants**

In the SAT section of our data, there is no interaction between the speakers and the audience. The floor completely belongs to the speakers and it is one-way traffic where the audience doesn't have an opportunity of instant rebuttal or comment. On the other hand, there is a great deal of regular and consistent interaction between the addresser and the addressee. The two commentators communicate on their turns like the real life conversation. As for the social roles of the participants, the addressers are regarded as the experts in the field of cricket, while the audience can be of diverse constitution, that is, from naïve to experts, amateurs to professionals, etc. The general standing of the audience is that of the fans of cricket. The participants do not enjoy any personal relationship, while there is quite good an amount of personal and specialist knowledge shared between them.

The OWC exhibits limited interactiveness when the audience post their views or feedback on the game. The addresser is an informer and entertainer while the addressees are the fans or the receivers of information. At large, the flow of information is completely unidirectional, although the addressees have a limited opportunity to express themselves. The typist is believed to be an expert in the field of cricket. In principle, any kind of personal relationship does not exist between the addresser and the audience. The addresser, however, attempts to affiliate himself with the audience. Quite good an amount of knowledge is shared between the addresser and the audience, such as about the tournament, teams, past records, players, their performance, etc.

### **Channel**

The text of SAT is produced in the audio visual mode and is relayed to the audience through Television networks. It is the natural and extempore talk of the commentators that dominates the audio section of the broadcast, while the camera primarily focuses the ongoing proceedings of the match in the playing field. The talk of commentators is primarily dictated by the camera as they talk about what the audience watches on its TV screen. In addition to their talk, they have some graphical and visual aids at their disposal which are displayed on the TV screens by the technical aides. The nature of text is permanent as it is simultaneously audio- video recorded by various agencies for variant purposes. The OWC is generated in the written mode by the typist and relayed instantaneously through the internet and posted on the website. It is stored in the archive section of the website and can be reached any time later.

### **Production circumstances**

The SAT commentators produce spoken language in real time, which is relayed instantaneously to the TV network. The transmission may cause some delay but it is not pertinent in our present context and is in fact negligible. The play-by-play commentator works under immense pressure of time as his report is expected to follow the movement of camera and the action of the game. He, practically, has no time to plan or edit his speech. On the other hand, the color commentator comes in during the intervals between two events of the actions, that is, between two successive balls or overs and thus enjoys relatively more time to plan his speech. However, this liberty of time is only relative to his co-commentator and is nominal as compared to that for the written interaction.

The typist of OWC types the ball-by-ball action of the game which has to be posted immediately on the website. As distinguished from other written registers, the addresser works under immense time constraint and has far less opportunities to look back, revise or review his comments. It is for this reason that typing errors can easily be found in the text. The language proficiency and typing speed along with accuracy are important factors in this regard.

### **Setting**

The addresser of SAT does not share time with the audience, while he does with the addressee. However, the TV broadcast creates the illusion of shared place by the visual frame and the audience feels as if it were actually first-hand eyewitness to the ongoing action of the game. The communication is public and an innumerable audience is witness to it. The speakers are located at a specific studio set for them at the stadium, while the viewers can follow the talk on their TV sets, personal computers, tablets or even on mobile phones through internet. The time is shared by the participants. However, it should also be noted that the broadcast is recorded for later reference and is kept in the archives by various agencies. It can be accessed through internet or through data storage devices such as CDs or DVDs. In this case, time is not shared between the addresser and the audience.

The place is not shared between the participants in online written commentary whereas the two share the time of production of this register. Sine OWC is permanent and is stored in the archives of websites, it can be reached any time later. Resultantly, for such achieved OWC, time is not shared between the participants. The communication in OWC is open to an innumerable public.

### **Communicative purposes**

The general purpose of SAT of cricket is as multifarious as reporting, exposition, explanation and demonstration of action. The commentators, particularly play-by-play, attempt to factually report the ongoing action of the game and describe its nature. In addition, they also explain and demonstrate the cricketing techniques. Their role is also that of entertainers and analysts. Moreover, they also reveal their stance, attitude and personal evaluation of the game, teams and players. The commentators may show alignment to one of the playing teams or the players as their favorite and, at the same time, may also undermine the others.

The primary purpose of OWC typist is to cover ball-by-ball action of the match, however, he does not restrict himself solely to this job. He describes the happenings in such a way that the reader gets involved in the game. A number of linguistic devices are used to keep the reader's attention alive. Moreover, personal attitude, opinion, evaluation of the game and predicted result of the game are also revealed by the commentator. Factuality of report is emphasized in the register.

### **Topic**

The general topical domain of SAT of cricket is the sport of cricket. Specifically, there is a wide range of topics, such as the tournament, teams and players, their performance and career, weather conditions, playing field, technology in cricket, likely outcome of the game, possible implications of the results on the teams' standing and their ranking, etc. In fact, there is no definite limit to the specific topics of SAT of cricket as long as they are related to the domain of sports and cricket. The topics also vary with the different sections of the match, for instance, pre match announcements, toss, proceedings, drink breaks, inning breaks, post-match presentation, etc. The persons being referred to are mostly the players who enjoy the same social status. Occasional references are made to the Umpires who are, of course, regarded as the symbol of authority and integrity. Also, sometimes the team management, coaches and commentators are referred to but such references are infrequent in comparison to those made to the players.

The topic of OWC, in general, is cricket and the ongoing game. In particular, there can be a variety of topics ranging from the ongoing game itself to the individual players to the spectators and weather. However, once the proceedings of the game begin, the ball-by-ball report remains the overwhelmingly dominant topic. Other topics are supplementary and are a matter of leisure and time. They are mostly brought in before the beginning (preview) or after the culmination (conclusion) of the game. The players being referred to enjoy almost the same social status with the exception of factors, such as fame, experience, records, etc. which, of course, are negligible in the treatment of the commentary. A breakdown of the situational features is given in the following table.

**Table 3.**  
**Situational Features of SAT and OWC**

No.	Feature	Sub Feature	SAT	OWC	
1	Participants	<b>Producer</b>	Addresser	Singular	singular
		Social characteristics		Nil	Nil
		<b>Receiver</b>	Addressees		
		Audience		Singular	Nil
2	Relations among participants	<b>Onlookers</b>		innumerable	innumerable
		<b>Interactiveness</b>	Addresser-Addressee	No	No
			Addresser- Audience	yes	Nil
		<b>Social roles</b>	Addresser-Addressee	Nil	Nil Nil Nil
		<b>Personal relationship</b>	Addresser- Audience	Addresser-Addressee same colleagues	Nil Nil
		<b>Shared Knowledge</b>	Addresser- Audience	Addresser- Nil yes	Nil Yes
3	Channel	<b>Mode</b>	Speech	writing	
4	Production circumstances	<b>Specific Medium</b>	TV	online	
			real time	real time	
5	Setting	<b>Place of Communication</b>	Public	public	
		<b>Time</b>	Live Archived	contemporary historical	
6	Communicative purposes	<b>General purposes</b>	describe, exposit, inform, entertain	describe, exposit, inform, entertain	
		<b>Specific Purposes</b>	report, update, comment	ball-by-ball report	
		<b>Factuality</b>	factual	factual	
7	Topic	<b>Expression of stance</b>	yes	yes	
		<b>General domain</b>	sports	sports	

### Linguistic Features of SAT and OWC of Cricket

This section is devoted to the analysis of the linguistic features of sports announcer talk (SAT) and online written commentary (OWC) sportscasting of the selected cricket match. The rates of occurrence of each linguistic feature are normalized per one thousand words of the text.

**Table 4.**  
**A comparison of the linguistic features of SAT and OWC**

No.	Linguistic Feature	SAT	OWC
		Normed Rates Per 1000	Normed Rates Per 1000
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Pronoun	10.3	6.6
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Pronoun	6.0	2.6
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Pronoun	50.1	35.6
4	Intensifier	8.8	9.0
5	Possibility Adverb	2.7	0.9
6	Locative adverb	8.9	7.0
7	Adverb of time	9.3	5.1
8	Present Tense	66.0	55.4
9	Past Tense	18.5	14.9
10	Questions	1.9	1.3
11	Incomplete Utterances	1.1	0.0
12	Personal Pronoun + mental verb	8.6	2.8
13	Deictic Expressions	35.4	11.1
14	Syntactic Ellipsis	26.2	96.4

#### First Person Pronouns

One of the communicative purposes of the addressers in both SAT and OWC is to reveal their self for which they employ the first person pronouns like I, we, me and us. Following are the excerpts from our data that exemplify the use of first person pronouns.

(i) .....now what **I** saw at the shot of Mubarak when he went down and across the stumps. **I** was wondering why? (SAT corpus)

(ii) Here comes Pakistan's, and **we**'re nearly underway here. (ESPN)

The relatively high occurrence of 1<sup>st</sup> person pronouns in the SAT corpus is attributed to the presence of two commentators who talk on their respective turns. There is quite high an amount of interactiveness between the two pair-parts and thus the high use of 1<sup>st</sup> person pronouns. On the other hand, OWC is generated, for most of its part, by a single typist who employs lesser 1<sup>st</sup> person pronouns.

#### Second Person Pronouns

For the SAT corpus, again, the reason for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun stems from the paired

interactiveness between the commentators. The addressee is frequently asked questions by the addresser as shown below.

(iii) This seventeen year old Wasim, what are **your** thoughts on him and his ascent into his team? (SAT corpus)

They also tend to develop rapport with their audience by frequently addressing them as reproduced below.

(iv) **You** can see these two fielders on your screen. (SAT corpus)

The OWC typist also attempts to affiliate himself with the audience and makes a direct address to get them involved in the game as shown below.

(v) Hope **you**'re all glued to your screens. (ESPN)

The rationale for the lesser use of 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns in the OWC corpus is the singularity of the addresser who does not have a fellow typist to make an address to.

### **Third Person Pronouns**

The occurrence of the third person pronoun in both of our corpora is markedly high than most of the linguistic features; in fact, it is the second most frequently occurring feature in the SAT corpus and the third most frequent feature in the OWC corpus. Such high occurrences qualify this particular feature as the pervasive feature in both of the sub-registers under investigation.

The primary communicative purpose of the SAT commentators is to report the ongoing action of the game. This report takes the form of the narrative that employs third person pronouns in great number. There is also a great deal of shared knowledge among the participants of this sub-register. The SAT commentators are assisted by the visual display of the action. So, the viewers can readily identify the referent of the third person pronouns used by the commentators from their television screens. In addition, SAT is momentary and instantaneous which is produced in real-time and requires the speaker to use minimum possible words. Thus, this particular pronoun serves as a tool of economy as well. In addition, it spares the speakers the monotony of using the same names again and again.

Third person pronoun is used in both cataphoric and anaphoric forms as illustrated from the SAT corpus below;

#### **A. Cataphoric use:**

(vi) **He** is playing instinctively Mahela Jayewardene. (SAT corpus)

Such instances are sometimes meant to create suspense for the audience and are also used for topicalization as the information presented first is of more significance than the identity of the player as shown below.

(vii) **He** has got his revenge, Razaq, he was down but it's Jaysuria who is out. (SAT corpus)

#### **B. Anaphoric use:**

In the example below the player is named and then a series of sentences follow about him in which his name is replaced by the corresponding pronoun.

(viii) Good work today as well from the captain **Younis Khan**. **He** has kept the slip in on a number of occasions. **He** has rotated **his** bowlers. **He** has not gone to the obvious Umer Gul too early. **He** had a good day. (SAT corpus)

The action of cricket moves with the ball. It is the most vital element of all the mechanics employed in the game. Simply, the action is incomplete without it. The commentators devote themselves to follow the ball and report the consequence of every ball bowled by the bowler. The bowler bowls the ball, the batsman hits or misses it and the fielder chases or catches it. Resultantly, the mention of ball occupies a huge portion of the cricket sportscasting, thus an abundant use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person neuter pronoun. An example is reproduced below:

(ix) He has attempted the yorker but Sangakara has made the most of **it**. Just got **it** on the full. (SAT corpus)

The announcement of team score at the closing of each over is quite formulaic with the sportscasters and the linguistic construction is also stereotypical as shown below.

(x) **It** is twenty-six for three. (SAT corpus)

The frequent use of the third person pronoun in the OWC corpus is tied to its primary communicative purpose. Typically, and as evident in our corpus, the OWC typist produces ball-by-ball report of the game. The following example illustrates this.

(xi) **It** appears mistimed - **it's** more of a wellied shot - but in fact **he's** placed **it** perfectly for two. (ESPN)

However, the OWC typist does not announce scores in the formulaic manner similar to the SAT commentators. They have score board-like templates which display score in the tabular form as reproduced below.

<b>End of over 1</b> (wicket maiden 0.00)	<b>Sri Lanka 0/1</b> (RR:	(ESPN)
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**Figure 1.**  
**OWC scoreboard as displayed on the website**

Lewandowski (2012) reports, with reference to Ghadessy's investigation of the written sports commentary that the register exhibits the feature of formal language. He states that it makes use of abundant nouns instead of personal pronouns.

The current study, however, displays a different trend. The occurrence of personal pronouns has been found high for the spoken commentary than the written commentary. Also, the third person pronouns occur at a very high rate in the written commentary so much so that it is the second most frequent linguistic feature of the OWC.

This sharp incongruity between the studies owes to the difference of production circumstances in their data. Ghadessy (as cited in Lewandowski, 2012) investigated the pre-match and post-most written accounts of the sports, which are planned and not extempore. For this reason, his data exhibits the formal features of written language. On the other hand, the current study explored the real-time data with virtually no time for revision.

Our study confirms the findings of Lewandowski (2012) who carried out a comparison of online sports commentary with its spoken and written variants. The study concludes that the

pronouns are more frequent in spoken registers than the written registers.

### Intensifiers

The intensifiers exhibit a good deal of similarity in SAT and OWC corpora. They are accounted for the communicative purpose of entertainment and exposition. In addition, both the SAT and OWC sportscasters endeavor to involve the addressees in the game. They also reveal their personal evaluation of the game and players using this particular linguistic feature. The examples of this feature in both SAT and OWC are given below.

(xii) Why did he do that when they were a wicket down **pretty** early in the piece?

Look at the leg-side fielder. There is a man **just** deep down the left of screen at the long-leg position. (SAT corpus)

(xiii) ...gesturing that he didn't mean to bang it in **so** short (ESPN)

### Possibility Adverbs

The difference in the occurrence of this linguistic feature across both the corpora is attributed to the participants. The SAT has plural addressers, that is, each at a turn, while the OWC has singular addresser. Both the addressers in SAT reveal their evaluation and stance about the likelihood of events in the game as evident below.

(xiv) Well, he has got Mathews on strike now and he would **probably** revert back to these yorkers. The yorkers, these deadly straight eighty seven eighty eight miles an hour.

(SAT corpus)

The total instances of possibility adverbs used by each addresser in SAT corpus, when put together, give the higher frequency than a single speaker would produce. A speaker tries to avoid repeating same kinds of expression again and again, expect for the situations where the repetition has some definite function to perform. Repeating the similar expressions sound monotonous and drab. This attempt to avoid monotony accounts for the lesser occurrence of possibility in the OWC corpus. The single typist generates a number of possibility adverbs, but this number is incomparable to the one generated by plural addressers in the SAT corpus.

### Locative Adverbs

A good deal of commentary is devoted to description of situations and objects. The use of locative adverbs stems from this communicative purpose. The following excerpt demonstrates this use.

(xv) Sri Lanka-we have talked all the way through this tournament that they are little gobbled in their batting order. Dilshan has held this **together** and Pakistan, Umer Gul and company, will know, Fawad Alam, that they need to get a couple more breakthroughs to put pressure on that middle-order that has been suspect, Jayewardene **apart**. (SAT corpus)

(xvi) ...that could have gone **anywhere!** (ESPN)

### Adverbs of time

Their occurrence of these adverbs stems from the sportscasters' job of describing the ongoing action and the situational feature of the shared time. The description employs the temporal placement and sequential movement of action through the adverbs of time. The shared time allows the addressees to easily interpret the temporal adverbs used by the

addresser. The following excerpts exemplify this linguistic feature.

(xvii) I have seen him do it **before** with the angled bat. (SAT corpus)

(xviii) That's his tactic it seems **today**. (ESPN)

The producers of text in sportscasting attempt to attract and involve their followers. The audiences are aligned in time repeatedly by the commentators to keep their awareness of the action alive as evident in the examples above.

The results are in very much agreement with that of the study by Lewandowski (2012), who found that adverbs of time and place are far more abundant in spoken commentary than the written one.

### The present tense

The present tense in its various manifestations like simple, progressive and perfective combined is the most frequent linguistic feature in the SAT corpus, while it is the second most frequent feature in the OWC corpus. Such occurrences make it the most frequent and persistent feature in not only the two corpora dealt in here but the register of sportscasting in general. The examples below demonstrate the occurrences of the present tense in our data.

(xix) He **has been** good in bowling and batting and **has** got to be aware that Sri Lanka **need** to bat the overs. Seven overs left and someone **has to** stay with Sangakara. What **is** there? He **has** made- oh wrong bat that he **has** taken out. (SAT corpus)

The choice of the present tense in SAT corpus is motivated, at the first place, by the production circumstances. The SAT commentators produce momentary report of the game a large section of which is devoted to the ongoing action of the game. The ongoing and on-screen action is reported using primarily the present tense.

At the second place, communicative purpose of the TV commentators is another significant factor behind the use of this tense. The commentators try their level best to portray their report as fresh as news. Such an impression of newness and spontaneity is conveyed by the present tense. It helps getting the audience involved in the game.

The production circumstances are far more responsible for the use of present tense in OWC than in the TV commentary. The OWC typist has to generate his report instantaneously under quite massive time pressure. The time constraint keeps him largely devoted to the ball-by-ball report of the game, which he reports using the present tense as illustrated below:

(xx) Boom, boom. Afridi **(is)** into the attack and the crowd **declare** their undying love for the big man. Here he **comes...** (ESPN)

### The past tense

The past tense also exhibits a regular pattern across both of our corpora. The primary motivation for such use comes from the communicative purpose. Both the SAT and OWC commentators tend to report the ongoing action using the present tense. Moments later, when they elucidate its manner and details, usually between the moments of no or lesser activity, they do so using the past tense as evident below.

(xxi) Goes short again and a punch through mid-wicket. This is a very quick out-field and in fact, it **gets** there. Anything that **was** perfectly timed by Sangakara. Amir **scratches** away at the foot-holes. He **looked** immediately at his boot as if to say, "I **slipped** and **didn't** intend to drag it that much short". (SAT corpus)

In the excerpt reproduced above, the nature of delivery, the shot, the outfield on which the ball travels and the resultant boundary are reported instantly in the present tense. Such instances are given in italicized form. When the commentator turns back to describe the shot and the timing involved, he switches to the past tense. This is evident in the above bold-faced instances. Immediately after, the camera turns to the bowler and captures his reaction which the commentator reports in the present tense. Again, the tense is shifted to the past when the commentator reports what happened immediately after the shot was played. This confirms that the present tense is preferred while reporting the on-screen and on-going action while the past events, no matter how immediate, are preferred to be reported in the past tense. The following is the demonstration of this fact.

(xxii) Amir to Dilshan, no run, a quick, sharp bouncer! That **was** seriously lively! Absolutely **flew** through to the keeper. (ESPN)

The results of this study for the present and past tenses also agree with that of Lewandowski (2012), who reports a close association of tenses across SAT and OWC.

### Questions

The occurrence of questions also presents similar trend across the SAT and OWC corpora. This linguistic feature is tied to the plurality of participants in the TV commentary, and situational features like interactiveness in both of our corpora. The plurality of addressers in SAT accounts for the higher occurrence of questions as illustrated in the example reproduced below:

(xxiii) This seventeen-year-old Wasim, what are your thoughts on him and his ascent into his team? (SAT corpus)

Although there is no interaction between the TV commentators and the audience, the commentators attempt to draw the latter into the communication by asking questions as if they would respond to them. The following excerpt illustrates this phenomenon.

(xxiv) That is a good shot from Sangakara. Will the fielder cut it off? No, a much needed boundary. (SAT corpus)

The data revealed another interesting instance of questions which are not directed to anyone. Such questions are usually never answered by anyone and the answers are left on the proceedings of the game to unfold by themselves.

(xxv) He is surprised, Dilshan. Could it be this man's turn now? (SAT corpus) This helps creating suspense in the game by arousing the audience's curiosity.

The relatively lesser instances of questions in the OWC corpus are occasioned by the singularity of the addresser. However, like the SAT commentators, the typist also affiliates with the online readers by asking the questions even though the opportunity of an immediate response is non-existent. The striking fact is that the difference of occurrence across the two corpora is not very significant in spite of the fact that the OWC does not enjoy the addresser-addressee interaction that the SAT has. These results differ from those predicted by the researchers. The following example demonstrates the occurrence of questions in the OWC corpus.

(xxvi) So then, a good over thus far for Sri Lanka. Can they make it a big one? (ESPN)

Balzer-Siber (2015) substantiates the use of question-answer pattern in the television soccer commentary as a mean of floor passing between the commentators. Our results show that the questions are not merely the tool of floor passing, but they display an internally-interactive

nature of the television commentary. This linguistic tool also functions as a means of building rapport with the audience in both of our registers.

The results also corroborate the study by Humpolík (2014) that reports the instances of unanswered questions as source of bringing variety in the TV commentator's speech.

### Incomplete utterances

The SAT corpus exhibits the incomplete utterances at the normed rate of 1.1, while no such occurrence was recorded in the OWC corpus. This is attributed to the production circumstances and channel of our corpora. The OWC, being produced through the written channel still retains this feature of the written registers although the opportunity of careful revision and edification is negligible. On the other hand, this linguistic feature is very natural to unplanned spoken registers and thus our spoken text (SAT) is a fairly good exhibition of the same. The incomplete utterances are marked with '-' in the following examples.

(xxvii) He has scooped it to short fine-leg and it- The catch is taken. (SAT corpus)

(xxviii) Ian Chappael, or Ian Chapel even, called it any- if you get anything like wide, you are going for four down there. (SAT corpus)

Thus, the incomplete utterances are occasioned by the real-time spoken production of the television commentary. This is attributed to the rapid nature of the on-field action. The camera moves with the action. The commentator has to synchronise his speech with the action displayed on the TV screens of the audience. The camera, in turn, follows the action. So, on occasions, the sudden shift of camera from one object to the other compels the commentator to cut-short the utterance and come to what the TV screen shows.

### Personal pronoun + mental verb

A combination of personal pronoun and mental verb occurs at higher rate in SAT as compared to OWC. This is ascribed to the communicative purposes and participants of the registers. As for the communicative purpose, both the SAT and OWC commentators reveal their stance, attitude and personal evaluation of the game, teams and players, etc. The evaluation of stance, attitudes and opinions is accomplished by the combination of personal pronoun (overwhelmingly 1<sup>st</sup> person singular) and mental verb. However, the plurality of the addressers in SAT occasions a greater use of this combination as compared to that in OWC. Also, the ball-by-ball report of the game dominates the online written commentary which accounts for the low occurrence of the linguistic feature discussed here.

(xxix) **I think** Younis got it right to start off and gave him the ball from the right end, pavilion end, downhill. (SAT corpus)

(xxx) Saeed Ajmal to Silva, FOUR, well, **I think** that's well played rather than edging it.(ESPN)

### Deictic expressions

This feature exhibits sharp contrast in its occurrence across the two corpora. It occurs at the normed rate of 35.4 in the SAT corpus while at the normed rate of 11.1 in the OWC corpus. This feature owes to the setting of the two registers. These expressions are used when the time and place are shared among the participants.

As far as the time is concerned, both television and online written commentary are relayed with a gap of few seconds. However, this gap is negligible and the commentators make a considerable use of temporal deixis to create an impression of shared time as given in the

example below.

(xxxi) You can see these two fielders on your screen. And **now** fine-leg is going towards square-leg. Square-leg fielder has gone to short-fine-leg. Good thinking because **now** he will be thinking to pull. So, good start by Muhammad Amir. (SAT corpus)

This excerpt presents a glaring example of shared time among the addresser, addressee and the audience in the television cricket commentary. The commentator first brings the audience's attention to the television screen and then makes a temporal reference about the change in field. Yet another deictic expression is used to tell the change in batsman's plans.

Similarly, the OWC typist also makes use of temporal deixis to establish the impression of shared time. The following example demonstrates this use.

(xxxii) Two slips in place **now**. (ESPN)

Although place is not shared in either of the registers in question, the television commentary has an advantage of visual report of the game and thus the place deixis are more frequent in this register. The commentators make recurrent references to situations and entities. The example below illustrates such use.

(xxxiii) He gets **this** one to the left of **that** man at long-leg. He won't get **there**. (SAT corpus)

OWC typists also make use of deictic expressions pointing to space and entities as illustrated in the following examples.

(xxxiv) Afridi demands **this** is given out. (ESPN)

Interesting to note, however, is the fact that the OWC corpus does not present any instance of deixis with multiple references, that is, these and those. The possible explanations for this aberration are: 1) plural deixis would lead to vague references 2) distal deixis like 'those' are more of a matter of background information and game replays and the online typist does not have this privilege at his disposal. Although he reports the action from the television screen, he does not have the maneuverability to backtrack at his will. Even where he has the access to the past events with the help of replays, his audience do not have it.

### Syntactic ellipsis

Omission of some part of syntactic construction presents the most striking contrast across the television cricket commentary and online written cricket commentary. This linguistic feature occurs almost three and half times greater in the OWC corpus than the SAT corpus with the former having the normed rate of 96.4 while the latter having 26.2.

The principle motivation for this feature comes from the situational feature 'production circumstances'. The text of both registers is produced in real-time and the addressers work under immense time pressure. Ellipsis is based on the principle of economy. Since the action of the game is rapid and the commentator has to catch up with the pace of action, he prefers to produce words that carry the most content and drops out the understood functional items. The ellipsis is exhibited in the following manner. The deleted element is presented in the square brackets.

#### a. Subject deletion

(xxxv) [This/It] could be the most effective over for Srilanka. (SAT corpus)

#### b. Copula deletion

(xxxvi) Spinners [are] doing a good job. (SAT corpus)

### c. Subject + copula deletion

(xxxvii) [It/This/That is/was the] danger area. (SAT corpus)

Ellipsis occurs as the fourth largest feature in the SAT corpus which owes to the aid of the context and visual display of the ongoing action. The resultant simplified utterances can be easily understood by the addressees from the previous utterances or context.

Ellipsis is employed in the similar manner by the OWC typists and all three types are found in the corpus as reproduced below.

### a. Subject deletion

(xxxviii) [He] steps across to the off side and works it to mid-on. (ESPN)

### b. Copula deletion

(xxxix) Mubarak's [is] at the crease now. (ESPN)

### c. Subject + copula deletion

(xl) [It was/is] flicked to leg with wristy intent. (ESPN)

However, the extent of ellipsis is far greater in this register and is attributed to the time pressure. The typist generates formulaic simplified utterances at every delivery. For instance, the constructions as below occur invariably at every ball bowled:

(xli) Mohammad Amir [bowls] to Mathews. (ESPN)

(xlii) Abdul Razzaq [bowls] to Mubarak. (ESPN)

Such constructions in the OWC corpus present examples of verb deletion, which is very rare in the television commentary. Such utterances are ascribed to the primary communicative purpose of reporting ball-by-ball action of the game in the online written reports. Everything else is secondary. The OWC typist generates such fixed and formulaic patterns, as exemplified above, while reporting every delivery because their primary purpose is to keep the readers updated of every single ball bowled on the field. This accounts for immensely large occurrence of ellipsis in the online written commentary. Television commentators, however, do not have to speak of every single happening as the viewers can themselves identify from their television screens.

The results for ellipsis are partially in line with Ferguson (1983) and Lewandowski (2012). To the former, ellipsis is the result of the commentator's attempt to sound non-leisurely, informal and exciting. The latter attributes it to the production circumstances.

The present study takes the position that the instances of ellipsis in SAT and OWC owe to its formulaic nature occasioned by the need of economy due to the real-time production of commentary. The need of economy is more compelling in OWC than in the SAT. For this reason, OWC displays a dominantly greater occurrence of ellipsis.

## Where do the (Sub) Registers Stand in Comparative Perspective?

This section looks into the standing of the online written commentary with respect to the two sub-types of television cricket commentary, that is, play-by-play and color commentary. It also attempts to make sure that the two television commentators have distinct roles to perform.

The following table gives the comparison of the two sub-types of television commentary (play-by-play and color commentary) and the online written commentary.

**Table 5.**  
**A comparison of play-by-play, color and OW commentary**

No.	Linguistic Feature	Play-by-Play Commentary	Color Commentary	Online Written Commentary
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Pronouns	8.9	12	6.6
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Pronouns	5	7.4	2.6
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Pronouns	51.1	48.8	35.6
4	Intensifiers	8.9	8.6	9
5	Possibility Adverbs	2	3.1	0.9
6	Locative adverbs	9.7	8	7
7	Adverbs of time	8.4	10.4	5.1
8	Present Tense	50.1	51	42.6
9	Past Tense	37.5	31.3	28.1
10	Questions	2.5	1.2	1.3
11	Incomplete Utterances	1.5	0.6	0
12	Personal Pronoun + mental verb	6	12	2.8
13	Deictic Expressions	38.2	31.9	11.1
14	Syntactic Ellipsis	29.5	22.1	96.4

Online written commentary more closely resembles the play-by-play commentary in terms of the occurrence of the first person pronouns, second person pronouns, intensifiers, possibility adverbs, quasi-nominal adverbs of time, questions and personal pronoun + mental verb. These features total into seven and make half of the linguistic features selected for this study.

On the other hand, the OWC is closer to the color commentary in term of the occurrence of the only two linguistic features selected for this study, that is, locative adverbs and the past tense.

These results prove that the online written commentary is more focused on reporting the ongoing action of the game and so does the play-by-play television commentary. Although the primary purpose of online written commentary is reporting the ongoing action of the game, the online commentator does not restrict himself to this role alone. The frequencies of linguistic features exhibited by the OW typist lie in-between those for the play-by-play and color commentators. It is a safe assertion to make that the online written version of cricket commentary is a fusion of play-by-by and color versions of television commentary.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the syntactic ellipsis, the present tense and third person pronouns are the typical feature of the online written commentary owing to its extempore nature and the written mode. Along with its usual forms like *subject deletion*, *copula deletion* and deletion of *subject + copula*, a rare kind of ellipsis is exhibited by OWC, that is, *verb deletion*, which is motivated by the need of economy under the impelling time-constraint and formulaic nature of ball-by-ball report of the game. It also marks informality in the OWC as contrasted to most of the written registers. The commentators retain an element of freshness in their report using the present tense. It, being the most frequently occurring feature of the SAT, is the only second most frequent feature of the OWC. The play-

by-play commentator, like the online typist, adheres more to this endeavor than does the color commentator. Cricket commentary also embodies narrative-like feature vindicated by the overwhelming use of the third person pronouns in our corpora. It is employed well alike by the play-by-play, color and online commentators. It is the second most pervasive feature in SAT and the third most in the OWC.

The shared time between the addressors and audience in the cricket commentary occasions the occurrence of deictic expressions as one of the stand-out linguistic features. Both SAT and OWC commentators make an abundant use of temporal deixis. Although the participants do not share place in either of the two registers, the SAT commentators, being assisted by the visual report of the game, attempt to create impression of the shared place by employing a good number of spatial deixis. Online written commentary, despite being real-time and extempore, retains the feature of the written registers in the sense that it does not present any example of incomplete utterance while the television commentary does so in quite good an amount. This discrepancy owes to the difference in mode of the two registers, one being written and the other spoken.

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