A Critical Discourse Analysis of Iranian Sport Media: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Sport media can go beyond reflecting sport events and shape and direct public opinions. However, few, if any, studies have addressed this area in an Iranian context. Therefore, the present study sought to critically analyze Iranian sport media texts by focusing on a particular subject. To do so, a corpus of sampled texts, which reflected official and semi-official stances on the two Iranian footballers' act of playing against an Israeli team, was analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The findings of the study indicated how speakers use linguistic means to highlight the desired points of view, establish power relations, and control readers' mind and thinking. The findings also revealed that sport media can be used to strengthen dominant ideologies already legitimatized and approved by sportspeople.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Sport Media, Ideology, Power, Iran

INTRODUCTION

Media as the "Fourth Estate" (as cited in Johnston, 2013, p. 15) of democracy or legitimacy are resources through which one can gain so much information about his/her self and others. Additionally, one is influenced by what media have chosen for him to watch, hear, and read. Thus, media have the potential to create and shape social points of view.

Importantly, these media use language as a "social practice". This means that texts build meanings and meanings change minds (Hasan, 2010). That is, texts and discourses are viewed as instruments to control minds. That way, groups in power can enforce or reproduce the desired ideologies and establish or strengthen the desired power structures.

Therefore, media are thought of as "social institutions or domains" in which media discourse conveys the ideologies of members in those institutions (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 28). It is also a place where language becomes an instrument for dominance and social force (Habermas, 1974, as cited in Wodak, 2001). That is, through language, public opinions are managed and directed.

This shaping role or instrumental function of language deserves to be critically studied. A key goal of most media discourse analyses is to record any existence of biases or ideologies in language or to address power relations in society (Cotter, 2001). As Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2001) notes,

through exact study of language it is possible for us to not only describe and interpret representations, but also to explain the forms of relations, structures, and processes affecting the people involved in the discourse.

Obviously, this holds true of all types of media including sport media. Given that very few, if any, studies have addressed sport media in an Iranian context, the present study sought to critically analyze this domain and shed some light on Iranian sport media in general. To do so, this study focused on two Iranian footballers' act to play against an Israeli team on 4 August 2017 which caused so much controversy in the Iranian society and media. By focusing on this, this study sought to find a solution to the following question: How are power relations and ideology reproduced and strengthened in sport-related texts? Such a study would, among others, reveal that to what extent sport media reflect or shape dominant discourses and ideologies of groups in power.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many researchers have critically analyzed sport domains and sport media from various angles. Unfortunately, very few Iranian researchers have conducted studies in these areas, and with the exception of one, the remaining studies reported here are authored by non-Iranian authors. The only Iranian study is of Eshaghi and Bye (2014). The more recent non-Irani-

an studies are Stevensen (2002), Adams et al. (2010), Kelly (2010), McDowell and Schaffner (2011), and Pia Lundquest Wanneberg (2011) which are summarized below.

To begin with, Eshaghi and Bye (2014) examined the strategies used by the Iranian premier league coaches in the post-match press conferences to avoid the aftermath of defeats, and matched them with the van Dijk's suggested pattern and his predictions. They concluded that though van Dijk's ideological schema has the potential to explain how a social group is formed by the coach, technical personnel, club management, and fans, it has deficiencies when it comes to predict certain behaviors. To solve this, the authors suggest a concept called "encounter structure" which is of two types: (a) a 'decremental encounter' for political discourses, and (b) an 'incremental-decremental encounter' for sport discourses. Moreover, they suggested a level called 'meta-discourse' to explain some discourse practices for which van Dijk's ideological square cannot make a prediction.

In a different study, Stevensen (2002) explored how a women global sport is localized for a particular audience. Based on the media coverage of the 1999 Australian open tennis competition in Australian written media, the author holds that a representation of the participating sportswomen should be studied with regards to women a) as honorary Australians, b) as hyperfeminine, and c) as powerful. The first means an insider-outsider distinction among non-Australian sportswomen. The second means that which of the sportswomen have more female attributes such as body, dress, etc. The third means that some women are too strong and play like men (casting doubt on being a woman).

Furthermore, Adams et al. (2010) examined how coaches and players construct and regulate masculinity in sport. Based on participant observation, they highlight two main discourses: a) masculinity establishing discourse and b) masculinity challenging discourse. The former means that a sport like football is for men, and notions like homophobia, gynophobia, and severe violence are employed by coaches to instigate a warrior attitude among players. The latter is used as a disciplinary strategy, and means that coaches use terms like *playing like girls*, *tarts*, *gay men*, etc. to stimulate players to perform better. The authors conclude that the athletes' sport and social identities are two distinct things, and the potential of sport to socialize men through orthodox notions of masculinity has declined.

Also, Kelly (2010) presented a critical discourse analysis of Scottish newspaper reports relating to football and 'sectarianism' in Scotland. The author claims that sections of the Scottish press have been dominated by a latently power-laden, longstanding ideological 'framing' of sectarianism. Based on this, this discourse seeks to create and confirm a "unified non-sectarian core identity" that 'real' Scots, compared with a group of sectarian 'others', should have.

Moreover, McDowell and Schaffner (2011) examined how the creation of masculinity and femininity undermines most women's access and acceptance into American football. Using a critical discourse analysis of The Gender Bowl (Jordan et al., 2005), which featuring an American football between men and women, they revealed that how men sought to preserve the social relations of football which were conservative and based on asymmetrical traditional relations depicting women as physically, intellectually, and culturally deficient, and how women sought to challenge this masculine domain partly via insults being typically masculine linguistic practices.

Additionally, Pia Lundquist Wanneberg (2011) investigated the representation of athletes in terms of objectification, sexualization, and pornification over a long period of time. For the 1960s and 1970s, she concludes that men are depicted based on physical attributes and dimensions using terms like *powerful* and *superman*, while women are depicted like an object and based on attributes irrelevant to sport, often using diminutive terms like *little girl*. From the 1970s onwards, depictions based on superficial attributes decrease and more emphasis is placed on their sport performance. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, men's powerful physical attributes and women's superficial beauty are re-emphasized. In the beginning of the 21st century a sexualized depiction increase which is reflected in the increased number of sexual images of sportswomen. The author concludes that because pornification affects women to a greater extent, the media image of Swedish elite sport is a way to reproduce inequality.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sampling

To select texts for analyzing, first, the relevant texts from various Iranian news agencies including statements and interviews dating back to August 2017 were divided into two groups of in favor (in support of the players) and against (in condemnation of the players). However, the texts in favor were all personal remarks from sportspeople and celebrities with a sympathetic theme, and since none held an official position in the government and did not reflect any official stance, they were excluded from the study. In contrast, the texts against the act were views from decision-makers and authorities which could reflect official stances. Therefore, for the sake of consistency, merely these texts were included in the corpus. Additionally, a restriction was placed that solely those texts are allowed in the corpus that have been issued either by important concerned institutes (like the Youth Affairs and Sport Organization or the Football Federation) or by high-rank authorities (like Members of Parliament). In total, ten texts were selected from Iranian online news agencies to be included in the corpus of the study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for analyzing the data is Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse (1989, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2003). This model focuses on discoursal events. An event is an "instance of language use, analyzed as text, discursive practice, and social practice" (Fairclough, 1993, p. 138). Therefore, a discoursal event includes texts, discoursal practices (text production and interpretation), and social practices (such as institutional practices). A textual dimension focuses on how discourses are linguistically realized. A discoursal practice explores how text producers

create texts based on pre-existing discourses and how text receivers interpret them based on pre-existing discourses. This level of analysis intermediates between texts and social practices. A social practice dimension explores how texts produce or challenge wider aspects of society.

Additionally, Fairclough (1995) notes that discourse can be found in different levels in socio-cultural practices: personally, institutionally, and socially. In brief, Fairclough's CDA model is comprised of the following three levels:
1) Description
2) Interpretation
3) Explanation

The description part deals with the linguistic and formal aspects of texts such as lexicon, grammar, cohesion, etc. This part is typically analyzed using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) (see below). Genres and styles are also taken into account. The interpretation part, which deals with participants' cognitive processes (Fairclough, 1989), explores the relation between discoursal processes of text production and interpretation. Generally, in this part, the focus is on the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption (Fairclough, 1995), and interdiscursivity and intertexuality are among aspects to be analyzed. Finally, the explanation part deals with the relations between processes (production and interpretation) and social conditions. In other words, relations between transient social events (interactions) and more established social structures, which are shaped by these events and shape them, are focused (Fairclough, 1989).

Halliday's SFG

As pointed earlier, a key descriptive tool used by Fairclough in CDA is Halliday's SFG. In fact, the SFG is an approach to linguistic description which aims to provide a thorough examination of how language is used in context for communication, and Fairclough uses the SFG to reveal that how linguistic choices are employed as a tool to establish and maintain power relations made in a broader socio-cultural context (Gravells. 2017). The systemic dimension used in the name of the approach means that Halliday views language as a network of systems rather than an abstract system (Baker and Ellece, 2011), and the functional dimension refers to the uses of language in real-world contexts.

Moreover, Halliday (2004) views language as being composed of three metafunctions or layers of meaning: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction deals with the speaker's experience of the world (Halliday, 2004). This metafunction is subdivided into two metafunctions: experiential and logical. The logical meta-

function refers to the propositional content being formulated as processes, events, participants, etc., while the logical metafunction has to do with the organizational relations of elements (Teich, 1999).

Further, in the interpersonal metafunction, a clause is regarded as an exchange in which the speaker assumes a speech role for himself and also assumes a role for the listener and expects him to adopt it (Halliday, 2014). In fact, the interpersonal metafunction is concerned with establishing and maintaining social relations which include the speaker's evaluation of an event and the relevance of a message. More precisely, the interpersonal metafunction serves to establish an exchange between participants by assigning speech roles or supplying or demanding goods, services, or information. These roles are demonstrated in the table below (Table 1).

The textual metafunction regards text as a message (Halliday, 2014). This metafunction not only enables the speaker/writer to write texts but also helps with organizing the message in clauses. In other words, it is involved in text cohesion and coherence. In fact, the textual metafunction provides linguistic means for the realization of the other two metafunctions, namely experiential and interpersonal. Accordingly, Halliday (1974, as cited in Hasan and Fries, 1995) perceives an instrumental, rather than autonomous, role for it.

On the other hand, the three ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions are represented in clause structure through the following systems: (a) transitivity, (b) mood, and (c) theme. Transitivity system is a powerful tool in analyzing the meanings expressed in clauses. In fact, transitivity system represents our experience of phenomena in the world by describing experiential meanings in terms of participants, processes, and circumstances. Typically, processes are realized through verbal groups, participants through nominal groups, and adjuncts through prepositional groups. Additionally, there are six types of processes, three of which are major and the other three are minor.
1) *Material*; it has to do with our experience of the material world and tangible processes, such as make, cook, produce, etc.; it consists of an actor and a goal; e.g.: She [actor] cooked [material process] the food [goal].
2) *Mental*; it has to do with our experience of the inner world and the self, such as feel, think, imagine, like, etc.; It consists of a senser and a phenomenon; e.g.: I [senser] feel [mental process] he will come [phenomenon].
3) *Relational*; relational verbs identify an entity and assign an attribute to it, such as be, have, etc.; it consists of a carrier and an attribute, or an identified and an identifier depending on the definiteness of the nominal group; e.g.: He [carrier] is [relational verb] clever [attributive].

Table 1. Roles in the interpersonal metafunction (adopted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 136)).

	Commodity exchanged	
role in exchange	(a) goods-&-services	(b) information
(i) giving	'offer' would you like this teapot	'statement' he's giving her the teapot
(ii) demanding	'command' give me that teapot	'question' what is he giving her?

4) *Behavioral*; they straddle between material and mental processes, such as laugh, smile, etc.; they consist of a behaver; e.g.: He [behaver] cried [behavioral process] all night.

5) *Verbal*; processes of "saying"; such as state, express, etc.; they consist of a sayer, a receiver/target, and a verbiage; e.g.: She [sayer] said [verbal process] this [verbiage].

6) *Existential*; verbs of existing, such as exist; they consist of an existent; e.g.: there exists [existential process] a tree [existent] in the garden.

As noted earlier, the mood system belongs to the interpersonal metafunction of language. In Hallidayan grammar, mood is a system through which interpersonal meanings are realized in linguistic interactions.

Moreover, textual meanings are represented through theme-rheme system. Theme-rheme choices reflect the speaker/writer's angle towards the interpersonal and ideational views of clause. That is, theme system bridges the interpersonal and ideational systems. Theme is, in fact, the point of departure of the message (Halliday, 2014). Anything other than theme is rheme. Rheme is, in fact, a part in which the theme is developed. In an unmarked circumstance, the theme corresponds to the subject, and the rheme to the predicate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description

The experiential metafunction

One of the layers of meaning based on Halliday's theory is the experiential metafunction: language as a representation of the world, whether it be the outer world such as events, or the inner world such as feelings and thoughts. In this metafunction, transitivity system plays the main role.

Transitivity

The experiential metafunction has to do with processes, roles of participants, and circumstances (like temporal, spatial, etc.). As Fairclough (1989, p. 120) notes, "there is often a choice between different grammatical process and participant types, and the selection that is made can be ideologically significant". The following table (Table 2) gives the frequencies and percentages of the six processes observed in the study's corpus.

Regarding the processes used in the analyzed texts, the most frequently used process is relational, accounting for 32 percent of the total. In relational process, the process makes a relation between the participants. In these processes, the participant does not undergo any change, but a fact is conveyed or a quality is attributed to the participant. Here both types of the process namely attributive process consisting of a carrier and an attribute, and identifying process consisting of the identified and identifier were taken into consideration. The most frequent relational verb was *boodan* [to be]. As an example,

Ex. 1: *Shojaee va Hajsafi namayandeh_ye Iran boodand*
[Shojaee and Hajsafi were the representatives of Iran]
IDENTIFIED   IDENTIFIER   RELATIONAL VERB

Here, by naming two particular athletes, the attribute of being representatives of Iran is ascribed to them, and, in fact, they are reminded of their heavy responsibilities. That is, the main focus is on the identifier (Thompson, 2000). The following is another example:

Ex. 2: *In eqdam_e vaqihaneh tahteh hich sharayeti qabel_e egmaz va baxshesh nist*
[This flagrant act is in no way condonable and excusable]
CARRIER   ATTRIBUTE   RELATIONAL VERB

In general, in the texts being discussed, relational processes are implicitly used to ascribe negative attributes to "the other", to remember the Islamic Republic of Iran's policies, and to draw boundaries between "us" and "them". The following samples indicate these:

Ex. 3: *Regim_e Sahyonisti doshman_e daraje aval va sarsaxt_e bashariyat va Mosalmanha hastand*
[The Zionist regime is the number one and implacable enemy of humankind and Muslims]

Ex. 4: *Ma xat_e qermezeman be lahaze eteqadi va amniyati rejim_e Sahyonisti ast*
[Our red line, with respect to ideology and security, is the Zionist regime]

Ex. 5: *Chon Iran_e eslami parchamdar_e mobarezeh ba rejim_e Sahyonisti ast*
[Because Islamic Iran is at the forefront of fighting against the Zionist regime]

On the other hand, material processes rank second, representing 31 percent of the total. In material processes, an actor carries out an action on a target. Here, the most frequent events and actions have to do with 'playing' (like *be meidan raftan* [coming on the pitch], *naqsh-afarini-kardan* [playing a role], *reqabat kardan* [competing], etc.), 'occurring of an unexpected act' (playing against an Israeli representative), and 'doing'. These verbs, as material processes, have been employed to highlight the act performed by the Iranian players (namely playing against the Israeli representative) as well as the reaction the concerned officials should make (*qadam bardashtan* [take a step], *barxord kardan* [address], and *vorood kardan* [step in]). In other words, since these material processes are more tangible than any other, and, on the other hand, they have an actor responsible for the action and a goal as the resultant, they are more digestible to the readership, and, consequently, they can more easily create, positively or negatively, the desired response in the readership. This indicates that material processes can be used as an instrument to support or denounce the actor in public opinion. For example, in the following two examples, the 'illegitimacy' of the

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of different types of processes

Transitivity	Relational	Material	Mental	Verbal	Behavioral	Existential
184 (100%)	60 (32%)	58 (31%)	28 (15%)	23 (12%)	7 (3%)	1 (0.5%)

two players' act is represented through material processes, paving the way for disciplinary action:

Ex. 6: *Do nafar az bazikonan_e ma dar qaleb_e tim_e xareji ba Sahyonistha bazi-kardand* [Two of our players played against the Zionist for a foreign team]

ACTOR CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT GOAL MATERIAL PROCESS

In the example above, the use of the tangible process 'playing' has caused the act involving 'legitimate' actors like *two of our players* and 'illegitimate' actors like *the Zionist* to have a contradictory sense, and this is perceived as an 'own-goal'. In the following,

Ex. 7: *Feraksion_e Varzesh niz bayad dar in mozu vared shodeh va (pro) qadami mohkam bardarad* [Additionally, the Sport Fraction must step in and take a firm step]

ACTOR CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT MATERIAL PROCESS (ACTOR) GOAL MATERIAL PROCESS

which is somehow a reaction to the previous act, the material process 'taking' (a firm step) implicitly presupposes that the "breach" is certain, and it must be addressed. From another point of view, the tangible processes "step in" and "take" are implicitly loaded with a sense of violence. On the whole, one can say that, in a sense, material processes have been employed to create a negative representation of the athletes in question.

Additionally, mental processes and verbal processes narrowly rank third and fourth in frequency, accounting for 15 and 12 percent of the total processes respectively. Among mental processes, verbs like *barresi kardan* [address/consider] and *etexaze tasmim* [make a decision] have the highest frequencies. These verbs have predominantly co-occurred with subjects like the "breach" committed and "the concerned officials", implying that the "breach" should be addressed, and the person who should deal with the committed "breach" is the concerned institute. Because mental processes have a human actor being characterized by emotions, feelings, and wisdom, these human attributes can deeply impact the readership's thinking and cause one to put himself in someone's shoes. Below are examples of mental processes:

Ex. 8: *Eqdam_e in do bazikon bayad be-soorat_e daqiq va mooshekafaneh Barresi shaved*

[These two players' act must be considered accurately and thoroughly]

PHENOMENON CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT MENTAL PROCESS

Ex. 9: *Mas'oolan ... tasmimi manteqi dar in bareh etexaz konand*

[Authorities … make a logical decision regarding this]

SENSER PHENOMENON CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT MENTAL PROCESS

Meanwhile, verbal processes are predominantly used for citation, whether directly or indirectly, and approval of assertions. In fact, the interviewers are predominantly the concerned authorities, sporting officials, or Members of Parliament themselves, and, consequently, are reliable sources for influencing the readership. In so doing, the sources themselves sometimes refer to other sources to approve their views. For example, to call the act performed by the two

players into question, views from other Iranian athlete champions are cited:

Ex. 10: *Qahremanan_e Iran_e Eslami niz dar mayadin_e bein-ol-melali yari va hamrahi qateh_e xod az mardom_e setamdideh_ye Felestin ra pahevananeh e'lam kardeand* [Islamic Iran's athlete champions have ethically announced their firm support of the oppressed people of Palestine in international tournaments]

SAYER CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT VERBIAGE CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT VERBAL PROCESS

Other common uses of verbal processes are verbs like *matrah kardan* [ask], *soal kardan* [question], *pasox dadan* [respond], etc.

Nominalization and passivization

Nominalization and passivization are also taken into consideration in studies seeking to reveal the ideology hidden in texts. In nominalization, because of the omission of participant and tense, the time of the occurrence of the process is unknown. However, an example to demonstrate this was not found in the corpus.

The use of passive structure, in case it is not used to avoid redundancy, can be employed for obfuscation (Zheng, 2014). In that case, having the actor omitted, nobody is responsible for the act, so the assertion becomes more objective. For example,

Ex. 11: *Nazar_e man be onvan_e yek namayandeh in ast ke bayad namayandeh'ha axol'amal anjam dahand va in mozooh dar sahn_e alani_ye majles matrah shaved*

[My opinion as an MP is that the MPs must react, and this issue be addressed in an open session of the Parliament]

Here, the speaker has asked for "the issue to be addressed in an open session of the Parliament". However, he objectifies the issue by omitting the actor, who is him, and generalizes it. In another example,

Ex. 12: *Ama rejim_e Esrail be farmoodeh_ye Emam namashroo' ast va nabood bayad shaved* [But the Israeli regime, as Imam says, is illegitimate and must be annihilated]

Here, though the view that Israel is an illegitimate regime is ascribed to Imam Khomeini, the speaker has obfuscated who is to annihilate the country by omitting the actor.

The interpersonal metafunction

In the interpersonal metafunction, the issue of demanding and supplying goods and information is discussed. Here the speaker assumes a role for himself and expect the listener to assume a role for himself as well. In the interpersonal metafunction, mode and modality are of significance.

Mode

The type of mode indicates the relation between the speaker and the listener. All the texts being discussed are interviews with sporting and non-sporting officials regarding their stances on the two Iranian football players' act of playing against an Israeli team. Therefore, there is a one-sided relation between the speaker and the listener, and the speaker is

giving information as well as his stance and view, whether it be institutionally or personally. In all the texts being discussed, the speakers are high-rank officials in the government, so they regard themselves entitled to order and expect the listener to obey.

Modality

Modality reflects the speaker's evaluation of the realities of the external world. This is realized through modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts. The following table (Table 3) gives the type and frequency of modal auxiliary verbs.

As evident from the table, the modal element *bayad* [must] ranks first in frequency with 32 occurrences. *Bayad* indicates obligation and certainty, and implies that the speaker has a higher position, and thus demonstrates an imbalance of power between the speaker and the listener. As previously noted, all the individuals being interviewed are persons with responsibilities in supreme sport and non-sport organizations, so they are entitled to order, and the listeners are obliged to execute the orders. On the other hand, the addressees of the 'musts' and 'mustn'ts' are both athletes and the concerned officials being obliged to handle the "breach" committed:

Ex. 13: *Feraksioon_e Varzesh niz bayad dar in mozoo vared shaved va qadami mohkam bardarad va xotoot_e qermez va nabayadha ra moshazas kardeh va bazikonan va varzeshkaran_e Irani ra qabl az hozoor dar timha_ye xareji tojih kardeh va charchoobha, osool va entezarat_e xod ra be vozooh baraye bazikonan matrah namayand va in eshtebah_e bozorg_e footbalistha_ye Irani bayad az sooye xodeshan tojih shavad* [Additionally, the Sport Fraction must step in and take a big step and specify the red lines and musts and mustn'ts, and justify Iranian athletes and players before they join foreign clubs, and clarify frameworks, principles, and their expectations of the players, and this big mistake must be justified by the Iranian football players themselves]

In the assertion above, *bayad* at one point addresses the Sport Fraction, requesting the concerned organization to handle the issue, and at another point it addresses the athletes in question, obliging them to make up for the mistake. In fact, the speaker of this assertion is a Member of Parliament who, clearly, has a higher position relative to the listener. In another example,

Ex. 14: *Footbalistha va varzeshkaran_e ma agar qara ast dat timhaye xareji naqshafarini konand qaedatan bayad montabeq bar yek qararad bashad va an qararad bayad ba hamahangi dar vaqeh asatid_e fan va motexasesin_e in herfe bashad yani nezarat bar fedrasion va lozooman bayad ancheh ra ke ma be onvan_e xat_e qermez az an nam mibarim dar an qararad mora'at*

beshavad [If our football players and athletes are to play in foreign teams, it must principally based on a contract, and that actually must be in coordination with experts and professionals; that is, surveillance over the Federation, and necessarily whatever we name as the red lines must be observed in the contract]

Again, the modal element *bayad* here indicates an imbalanced power relation between the speaker and the listener. The speaker of this assertion is the spokesman for the Cultural Commission of Parliament, so he sees it in his authority to order the subordinate officials that specific considerations be included into the contract.

Modal adjuncts

Modal adjuncts, including mode and comments adjuncts, reflect speaker's view toward realities. Altogether, 18 modal adjuncts have been used which are as follows: *bedoon_e shak* [no doubt] (twice), *motasefaneh* [unfortunately] (twice), be *hich vajh* [by no means] (twice), *hamisheh/hamvareh* [always] (twice), *qaedatan* [principally], *lozooman* [necessarily], *dar vaqeh* [actually], *aslan* [at all], *be nazar_e man* [in my view], *taht_e hich sharayeti* [under no circumstances], *nahayatan* [ultimately], *omidvarim* [hopefully], *baz-ham* [again], and *yek bar_e digar* [once more]. It is interesting that the majority of these modal adjuncts underscore the speaker's absolute certainty (like *no doubt*, *by no means*, *under no circumstances*, *necessarily*, *at all*, and *always*) rather than relativity (using moderators like *somewhat*, *relatively*, etc.) towards his assertion. That is, the speaker uses these modal adjuncts to emphasize the non-negotiableness of the issue being discussed.

The textual metafunction

In the textual metafunction, the main issue is that how speaker/writer organizes contents. A key concept in this metafunction is theme-rheme. Theme-rhem order is by no means neutral and implies something. The following table (Table 4) gives the frequencies of both unmarked and marked themes.

As evident from the table above, speakers have remarkably used unmarked themes (92 percent). Unmarked themes of highest frequencies are *melli-pooshan* [National Team players], *varzeshkaran* [athletes], *qahremanan* [champions], *in do varzeshkar* [these two players], *Vezarat_e Varzesh va Javanan* [Ministry of sport and Youth Affairs], *mas'oolan* [officials], *Fedrasion_e Footbal* [Football Federation]), *melat_e Iran* [the nation of Iran], *mardom_e Iran* [the people of Iran], *Jomhoori_e Eslami_e Iran* [the Islamic Republic of Iran], *Iran_e Eslami* [the Islamic Iran], *Regim_e Sahyonisti* [the Zionist regime], *Esrail* [Israel], *rafter* [behavior] and *amal* [act]. Based on these themes, one can infer that a "wrongdoing" has been committed by Iranian players, and

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of modal auxiliary verbs

Modality	bayad/nabayad [must/mustn't]	bayestan [should/shouldn't]	tavanestan/natavanestan [can/can't]	momken boodan [may]	xastan [will/won't]	total
Frequency	34	0	2	0	5	41
Percentage	82.6	0	4.8	0	12.5	100

Table 4. Frequencies and percentages of themes

Unmarked theme	Marked theme	Total clauses
171 (92%)	15 (8%)	186 (100%)

the Ministry of Sport as the concerned institute should handle it. Additionally, the unmarked themes are used to foreground athletes' and the concerned institutes' roles as the examples below demonstrate:

Ex. 15: *Bazikonan_e mellipoosh_e Irani ham nabayad bazi mikardand* [The Iranian National Team players shouldn't have played]

Ex. 16: *Vezarat_e Varzesh va Javanan bayaniyehi dar in xosoos sader kardeh* [The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has issued a statement regarding this]

Ex. 17: *Bana-bar-in mardom_e Iran anha ra naxahand baxshid* [Therefore, people of Iran won't forgive them]

Ex. 18: *Regim_e Sahyonisti doshman_e darajeh aval va sarsaxt_e bashariyat va mosalmanha hastand* [The Zionist regime is the number one and implacable enemy of mankind and Muslims]

Ex. 19: *In harakat_e anha mahkoom ast* [Their act is condemned]

It is remarkable that the speakers assign positive attributes to the players when they use the word "athletes" in its general sense, and assign negative attributes to them when they refer to the two "breaching" players. That is, the "unacceptable" behavior of the two players is viewed as "exceptions" and is not generalized to all athletes. In this way, these two particular athletes are sharply contrasted with other athletes at a micro level and with "the nation of Iran" at a macro level as evident from the following:

Ex. 20: *In bazikonan nabayad maslehat_e mamlekat va donyaye eslam ra fadaye manafe_e fardi mikardand* [These players shouldn't have sacrificed the government's and the world of Islam's expediency for personal interests]

Ex. 21: *Raftar_e in bazikonan_e mellipoosh_e Irani yek rafter_e namotaref va mahkoom ast* [These Iranian National Team players' behavior is uncommon, and condemned]

Ex. 22: *Bedoon_e shak varzeshkaran_e por eftexar_e Iran zamin hamvareh neshan dadehand ke [pro] hich alaqeh'I be rooyaroo'I ba rejim_e qaseb_ va eshgalgar_e Sahyonisti hatta dar avardgah_e bozorge_e olampic va jahani nadashteh, [pro] nadarand, va [pro] naxahand dasht* [The Iranian honorable athletes, no doubt, have always shown that [they] have no interest in playing "Zionist regime" or "Quds occupying regime" even in a big tournament like Olympic or world championship]

Additionally, in few cases in which marked themes have been used, they have either underscored time period or have referred to a minor topic as a background to the main topic. Below are examples:

Ex. 23: *Dar saliyan_e bad az enqelab_e eslami ta be emrooz rejim_e Sahyonisti va har ancheh ke motealeq be an mibashad dar tahrim_e mardom_e Iran va Nezam sharik boodeh ast* [Since the post-revolution period up to now, the Zionist regime and its associates have been involved in boycotting people of Iran and the government]

Ex. 24: *Ba tavajoh be inke bazi moghabele timhaye Regim_e Sahyonisti dar har radeh'I va reshteh'I dar keshvar_e Iran mansoox ast ...*[Given that playing Israeli teams at any level and in any sport is illusory in Iran,…]

Ex. 25: *Va ba tavajoh be inkeh qarardad ra hamisheh aval_e fasl mibandand …* [And given that contracts are always signed before a season begins,…]

Interpretation

Having explored the "what" of the text, it's time to address the "how" of text interpretation. At the interpretation level, the relation between text and discoursal processes is taken into account; that is, text both as the end-product of a text production process and as a source for interpretation. More specifically, at this level, one should respond to the following four questions which correspond to the four main dimensions of a context: 1) What is going on?; 2) Who is involved?; 3) In what relations?; 4) What's the role of language?

(1) What is going on?

All the texts are statements or interviews with sporting and no-sporting officials who have taken stances with regards to the two Iranian football players' act of playing against an Israeli team. All the interviewers have condemned the act and a high majority of them have stressed the necessity of addressing the players' "breach".

(2) Who is involved?

The majority of the individuals involved are high-rank officials and Members of Parliament who are somehow concerned with the issue. The addressee/readership of the texts includes a wide range of people so that the texts not only address the "breaching" players but also address the concerned officials, calling on them to make a decision.

(3) In what relations?

There is an inequality in power and hierarchy between the speakers and the listeners. The speakers are in power and entitled to order, and the addressees, whether they are the listeners or the concerned officials, are committed to execute their orders. In so doing, the frequent uses of "bayad/nabayad" [must/must not] indicate an imbalance of power between the speakers and the listeners.

(4) What is the role of language?

Here language has a social function, and serves as a tool not only for giving information but also for ordering. In fact, the functions of supplying (giving information) and demanding (ordering) are simultaneously observed in these texts, because the speakers (including Members of Parliament and sporting officials) are standing in a position to play both roles. That is, language is an instrument to exercise power and control.

Explanation

Here, the "why" of the text production is addressed. Doing so requires linking the texts to their broader socio-political contexts to reveal the meanings behind the literal meanings of the words. That is to say, how ideology and power rela-

tions shape texts and/or are reproduced and established by them. These can be explained in the light of Halliday's three metafunctions as follows.

With respect to experiential (ideational) aspects, informational is encoded in a manner which the speaker's meaning is implicitly conveyed, and in so doing, relational processes for attributing a quality to a participant (e.g. examples 1 to 5), material processes for ascribing an event to an actor (e.g. examples 6 and 7), and verbal processes for documentation (e.g. example 10) transmit ideological meanings more than any other processes. Here, these three important processes have been employed frequently to reproduce and strengthen the government's discourse of not recognizing Israel as a state.

Regarding interpersonal aspects, the speakers use modal elements such as *bayad* as an indication of power hierarchy to tell not only the players but also the concerned authorities what to do, hence calling their independence into question (e.g. examples 13 and 14). This suggests that the Football Federation in Iran cannot be independent of other senior sectors. This contrasts with the fact, as specified by the IOC rules, that sport federations are recognized as government-independent organizations and shouldn't be influenced by politics.

In terms of textual aspects, theme-rheme structures, whether predominantly through unmarked themes (e.g. examples 15 to 19) or sometimes through marked themes (e.g. examples 23-25), draw the reader's attention to what the speaker underlines. Underscored by the speakers are alienating from the act performed by the players and convicting it in a sense. This means that something contrary to the Islamic Republic of Iran's interests has occurred, and that is the invincible principle of denying Israel being challenged.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate sport media in an Iranian context to reveal how power relations and ideologies are reflected and strengthened. By employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model on sporting texts, this study revealed that Iranian mass media use language to reproduce and legitimatize dominant ideologies associated with groups in power, and to challenge and deligitimatize opposite views. Language was also found to be an instrument to exercise power and control. And, at a broader level, as the findings indicate, sport and sportspeople are seen as ways to strengthen dominant ideologies (such as the Iranian government's invincible principle of not recognizing Israel as a state). This is by no means accidental because "today, sport has the loudest voice in the world and can function as a messenger of the Islamic revolution"[1].

Limitations of the Study

The conclusions from this corpus-based study are based on a particular subject, so they cannot be generalized further. As a result, further research need to be conducted to confirm the findings.

END NOTES

1 Ghafoori-fard, H. In Donya_ye Varzesh. 1990, 21 (967): 3.

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