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“ZIDANE, ZIDANE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?” – EMOTIONS ON TV IN SIX LANGUAGES

This article analyses the expression of emotions in television sports commentary in six languages (German, English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian), as illustrated by the famous ‘Zidane incident’, i.e. the foul by Zinedine Zidane against Marco Materazzi, which led to Zidane’s sending off in the 109th minute of the 2006 World Cup final between France and Italy. The transcription starts with the moment of uncertainty, when the only thing that is clear is that something has happened, and it ends with the comments on Zidane’s sending off and the end of his career, where, ex post, a tragic moment is constructed discursively. The phases in the seven versions (there are two German-language versions, one from Austria and one from Germany) are quite similar; this is due to the similarity of the television images, with two emotional peaks corresponding to the first images of the actual foul and to the presentation of the red card. In fact, not only the phases of the event, but also the means of expressing emotions are surprisingly similar in all seven versions, and (nearly) all of them are represented in the fictitious quotation in our title, “Zidane, Zidane, what have you done?”: direct address to Zidane, repetitions, rhetorical questions, exclamations/interjections. The more emotions rise, the more all these means cumulate in each single utterance. At the climax, there is one more means that is added: pauses. This is the only element that marks a real difference between the seven versions, as it is much more strongly represented in the French one. Faced with the unthinkable becoming reality, the French commentators simply remain speechless – witness their even stronger emotional involvement in comparison with the others. Apart from this, there seems to be something of a common kind of ‘emotionese’ in European football/sports commentary.

How are emotions expressed in football commentaries in different languages and cultures? Is there a gradation in the expression of emotion? And is this dependent on the partiality of the commentator(s)? These questions will be addressed in this article, drawing on the example of the ‘Zidane incident’, i.e. the foul by Zinedine Zidane against Marco Materazzi, which led to Zidane’s sending off in the 109th minute of the 2006 World Cup final between France and Italy.

Zidane’s head-butt (in French ‘*coup de boule*’) against Materazzi was certainly the most salient and emotive incident of the whole World Cup, giving rise, for example, to endless comments, web games, satirical programmes and even to a song that stayed in the charts for weeks.¹

¹ To readers who are not familiar with football or who might read this years later when the incident might have been forgotten, it must be explained that Zinedine Zidane was a legendary football star who had already won the World Cup with the French team in 1998 and was, arguably, about to win it again. He had announced that he would retire immediately after the competition. So this World Cup final was his very last game and, when the incident occurred, the game was already in extra time. Zidanese’s foul against Materazzi and the subsequent sending off were decisive insofar as the game

Without knowing beforehand, of course, that such a salient episode would occur, we (i.e. the Innsbruck Football Research Group), wishing to study football commentaries in different cultures, recorded the World Cup final on TV in seven versions and six languages: German (two versions, one from Austria, one from Germany), English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian. We then transcribed the passage corresponding to the famous 'Zidane incident', its preliminaries and consequences (i.e. minutes 108 to 111)² and arranged the seven transcriptions in a parallel table (see appendix).

What we wanted to study initially was the cross-cultural differences and similarities in football commentaries on TV, together with the aspect of involvement or bias due to the nationality of the commentator (comparing the Italian and French versions with the other ones). What we discovered, though, is an unexpectedly high number of similarities between the seven versions. In fact, the differences due to the number of co-commentators are more striking than the differences due to nationality or partiality on the part of the commentator.

The table in the appendix shows that the German and the Austrian versions have only one commentator each, while the English and the Russian versions have two commentators and the Spanish, the Italian and the French versions even three commentators each. This is a significant difference and the most salient aspect of national style we found in our corpus. It has a direct influence on the rhythm of the commentary, as for instance one single commentator is more likely to make pauses in what might otherwise be too pushy a monologue, while with two or three persons the commentary is more like a conversation, all gaps of one commentator tending to be filled by the other participant(s).³ Furthermore, it is a question of the general policy of broadcast stations, as for example in Austria commentators are advised not to speak all the time.⁴ So the balance in the German and Austrian commentaries is between speech and silence, whereas in all other versions it is between the different commentators.⁵

As for the question of national bias, what is striking in the different versions is the fact that none of the commentators, not even the Italian one, takes a hostile stance towards Zidane. This might be due to the fact that Zidane played in Italy for a number of years.⁶ Nor do the French speakers try to defend him. The commentators all condemn Zidane's behaviour but still pay tribute to him as a great player (see appendix).

went into a penalty shoot-out (where Zidane could have made all the difference), and was finally won by Italy.

² Thanks to Catherine Lederbauer, Alfonso Merello-Astigarraga and Angelo Pagliardini for helping with the transcription.

³ This seems to be the reason why some versions are shorter than the others, especially the Austrian and the German ones, where there is only one commentator. Two- or three-commentator versions are in general longer – but the French one isn't: we shall see below why this is the case.

⁴ These details are the result of a discussion we had with Italian, French and Austrian TV commentators (Marco Civoli, Erik Bielderman, Thomas König) on the occasion of a presentation of our results to a wider public, in Vienna and Innsbruck on 17 and 18 April, 2008. We are grateful to our guests for their helpful comments.

⁵ It is important to distinguish this type of silence in the German and Austrian version from the type of silence that will be commented upon later in this article, which is due to speechlessness as a result of emotion.

⁶ Which answers also one more interesting question about the infamous incident: in which language did the verbal exchange between Materazzi and Zidane (and hence Materazzi's alleged insult of Zidane's sister) take place? It must have been Italian, which would be the common language between the two players. For the question of language choices in multilingual football teams, see also Giera et al. in this volume.

The high degree of similarity we found in the different commentaries is true of all seven versions, including the Italian one; the only exception is the French version, which shows the same characteristics as the other ones, but in a much stronger, more pronounced way.

Actually, this high degree of similarity might be due, on the one hand, to the nature of the commentary guided by TV images and, on the other hand, to the incident itself, which produced a strong emotional impact combined with a certain degree of reflection.

First, we found that the phases of the incident were parallel in the seven versions because the TV images were identical for all of them.⁷ In general, it seems that all the commentators, in spite of being in the stadium, watch the match on their TV screens, as all comments are in line with the TV images.⁸ This is important because the incident took place outside the main action of the game, and was not picked up by the main camera. The incident itself was therefore neither seen by the commentators nor by the referee, who had to resort to consulting a linesman.⁹

- The first phase is marked by confusion and uncertainty: something seems to have happened, but the commentators cannot say what. This is shown linguistically in all versions by a large number of indefinites and questions (in *italics* in the transcription).
- The next phase is the incident itself, which will be analysed in more detail below. As for its different phases, it has two climaxes: the first one is the presentation of the incident on video, the second one the showing of the red card and Zidane being sent off.
- After that comes a phase where this incident is reflected on in a larger context, as it obviously means the end of Zidane's career. The commentators look back briefly on the player's background and history and give general evaluations of Zidane as a legendary footballer, as opposed to his momentary lapse and inglorious end. From this contrast emerges the idea of a tragic moment, construed as such by all commentators. The linguistic means involved include all types of antithetical expressions, like concessive clauses, and especially antonyms (often in parallel constructions). They are marked in yellow in our transcription (see appendix).

It is interesting to observe, by the way, how Zidane is referred to by the commentators throughout the different phases of the incident. The neutral, unmarked designation seems to be *Zidane*, while especially in the French version we find the nickname *Zizou* (until the incident), and later, at the climax of emotions, the direct address to *Zinédine*. By contrast, when looking

⁷ In fact, there is a little divergence in the German version, where the slow-motion replay of the incident is played twice rather than only once, as in the other versions.

⁸ Where there is a team of commentators, it seems that one of them might be in charge of watching the game directly, or at least it seems so from a remark in the Spanish version. This is also what reported Marco Civoli reported, who told us that in Italy two of the commentators normally sit in the special commentators' area, while the third one stands 'next to the field'.

⁹ It was the so-called 'fourth man', Luis Medina Cantalejo, who played the decisive role as he had witnessed the incident with his own eyes and was thus able to report it to the referee, Horacio Elizondo. Had the incident only been seen on video, as seemed to be the case at first, it would have been illegal to sanction it, according to FIFA regulations.

back at his career, all commentators refer to him by using his full name, *Zinédine Zidane*. This may be out of a sense of respect for the great player.

As for reflections and rationalizations of emotions and the construction of a tragic moment, here again we find strong similarities in all seven versions, with the only difference being that the general reflections start a little earlier in some versions and later in others – which seems to be related to the involvement and the bias of the commentator (i.e. they come later in the French version).¹⁰

In fact, the idea of the tragic moment is not the only point of reflection. There are also comments of other types in the course of the incident, which are all highlighted in yellow in the transcription. These other themes of reflection are also fairly similar in the seven versions, and they concern:

- the legal or rule-related problem, as the incident had not been seen by the referee and it seemed that it would be judged on the basis of the video recording alone (the 'technology' problem), a point referred to in all versions. For whatever reason, this point receives particular attention in the Italian commentary;
- the question of whether the referee's red card can or cannot be contested (the 'contestation' problem); present in several versions but particularly strong in the French one;
- comparisons with and memories of past incidents of a similar type in Zidane's career, but also in the career of the referee;
- comments on the French trainer (triggered by footage that shows him applauding sarcastically when Zidane is given the red card);
- questions about what the incident and its outcome might mean for the continuation of the game and for the World Cup as a whole.

All these themes can be found in almost all of the seven versions. They mark moments where the immediate expression of emotions is replaced by a more reflective, more distanced stance. The similarity of the themes touched on and the ways they are commented on seems to suggest that there might exist something like a **common European style of football discourse**, where the do's and don'ts of commentary are fairly clear and even similar.

But let us now turn to the incident itself and the way it is commented on. What is striking in all seven versions is the expression of emotions through a series of linguistic means that can be found in a similar way in all languages and that tend to be cumulative.

Emotionality / affectivity in interaction has received comparatively little attention in language and discourse studies until now. For bibliographical reference on this topic, we can cite Fiehler 1990, Marten-Cleef 1991, Niemeyer / Dirven 1996, Battachi / Suslov / Renna 1997, Günthner 2000 and Drescher 2003 (for more titles, see references at the end of our contribution). Fiehler, for example, was one of the first to deal with the manifestation, interpretation and processing of emotions; Marten-Cleef exemplifies emotions through expressive speech acts.

The problem seems to be that emotion or affectivity is difficult to define and can only be dealt with by applying an interdisciplinary or intercultural approach (see Wierzbicka 1999). It is related to the inner nature of individuals, which is difficult to research (but can be done through critical self-reflection).

Therefore scholars like Drescher 2003 have recently confined their research to the way emotional concern is represented in conversations, that is, emotion is seen as something that is socially constructed and enacted in conversation. Certain linguistic and paralinguistic means

¹⁰ These general reflections correspond to what Adelman et al. (2001: 54-55) refer to as the 'narrativization' ("Narrativisierung") of events.

contribute to the affective synchronisation of the participants. These means can be studied through an interaction analysis approach.

Studies of emotion show that the expression of emotion is realized through a combination of various linguistic means. Among the means studied until now, we find, above all, interjections (see Kryk-Kastovsky 1997, Drescher 2003) and reduplications (see Drescher 2003).

We will focus on the whole variety of means present in our corpus and the way they are combined with and relate to each other. Our own findings suggest that there is a significant accumulation and overlap of such means at crucial points (in our corpus, two such crucial points can be identified: the first images of the head-butt, and the presentation of the red card). Moreover, the expression of emotion follows a climactic pattern, with a clear hierarchy existing between the various emotive devices. What is striking here is how similar our seven versions are.

Let us now turn to the details of the linguistic means we have found in our corpus at the crucial emotional points of the Zidane incident. Each of these means has been marked in our transcription by a special colour code:

• **Interjections/exclamations and the corresponding intonation (red)**

The most salient and perhaps most common means of expression in all seven versions are exclamations of all types: there is a great number of interjections, and a general exclamatory intonation pattern (rising, or rising-falling) can be observed in nearly all sentences; the syntax tends to be exclamatory, i.e. it is drastically reduced.¹¹

• **Repetitions and parallel constructions (blue)**

The second and equally salient device includes repetitions and parallel constructions, which are iconic means of intensification. These repetitions concern not only single words (Drescher's 'reduplication'), but also parts of or even whole sentences. At the climax of emotion, sentences are repeated once, twice, or even three times, while parallel constructions give a sense of accumulation.

• **Direct address to Zidane (green)**

One more means that can be found in various versions is when the protagonist, i.e. Zidane, is addressed directly, with the second person singular being used. This is stronger in the French version and seems to be due to the commentators' involvement or even bias. But it is encountered in other versions, too.

¹¹ The most prominent football exclamation – which is not present in our corpus – is of course when a goal is celebrated. In Spanish and Latin American commentary, this often takes the form of an extreme lengthening of the vowel (see Jung in this volume): *GOOOOOOL*, as long as the breath lasts. (The Austrian commentator Thomas König reports that in the Argentinian radio commenting team, there is one special man whose only task is to perform this 'canto del gol'.) This is a national or culture-specific speciality, which shows that, despite the great similarities in expressing emotions, there is still room for national styles. See also the contributions by Gerhardt and Theodoropoulou in this volume.

- **Rhetorical questions (purple)**

Another means strongly related to exclamations as well as to direct addresses is the use of rhetorical questions (see the fictitious quotation in our title).

- **Pauses/silence (speechlessness) (turquoise).**

Particularly striking in the French version is the speechlessness of the commentators. Although there are three commentators, when the incredible incident happens, all of them seem to be at a loss for words. Long pauses of 2–3 seconds occur, not once, but several times.¹² This is something that distinguishes the French version from the other ones, where pauses also occur, but less frequently and they are dependent on the number of commentators. In general, the ‘speechless’ form of silence occurs in versions with more than one commentator, where it is especially conspicuous as pauses normally do not occur in this context.¹³

The use of the colour code allows us to dispense with long multi-version examples in our main text and to refer the reader directly to the multilingual transcription sheet (see appendix). However, there is one problem with this kind of representation, which is at the same time one of our main findings. Let us look at the transcription of the crucial moment in the French version:

1. TG: *Ouhh ! Ouhh ! Zinedine ! Oh ! Zinedine ! Pas ça, Zinedine !*
 [...] *Pas ça, Zinedine, oh non ! Oh non pas ça !*
 (Pause 1’)
Pas aujourd’hui, pas maintenant, pas après tout ce que tu as fait !
 (Pause 2’)
Aieaieaieaieaieaie !
 (Pause 3’)

In this whole passage (as in many others), it is almost impossible to assign one particular colour to each of the elements, as most of them would have to be assigned two or three colours at the same time. The first and the second lines contain exclamation/interjections, repetition, and a direct address to Zidane; the fourth line is exclamation, repetition/parallel construction, direct address, and the beginning of reflection, with a contrast being established between now (the incident) and then (his whole career); at the end comes one more exclamation/interjection with repetition. Note also the long pauses in-between.

This is characteristic of the core moments of emotionality, where all or nearly all possible means of expressing emotion are present simultaneously; they overlap and accumulate in one and the same sentence, or even on one and the same word – while in-between, in the less dramatic moments, colour assignment is easier; this means that between the peaks the emotional means occur in a more isolated way and can thus be

more easily separated. Our transcription shows further that some devices (interjections/exclamations, direct addresses, pauses) tend to occur only at the climax of emotion, while others (repetition, reflection) can be found also in passages where the emotional aspect is weaker and the density of emotional expression not as great. The strongest emotional level seems to be expressed especially through long pauses of speechlessness, as found mainly in the French version.

The following may be concluded from our investigation:

- The expression of emotions follows a climactic pattern, with peaks, valleys and intermediate levels.
- The expression of emotions is cumulative and overlapping, i.e., different emotive devices occur together at emotional peaks. When emotion grows particularly strong, these devices converge on the same linguistic elements.
- There is a hierarchy of emotion signals, some of them (exclamations, interjections, direct addresses) occurring more at peaks and at extremes (speechless silence!), with others (repetitions, parallel constructions) not only at high points, but also at low ones. Reflection, on the other hand, seems to be rather characteristic of slopes, i.e. falling moments of emotion.
- Drawing on this idea of hierarchy and accumulation, we are now able, by analysing the linguistic means described, to **take the temperature** – so to speak – **of a given utterance**. We can thus compare the emotionality of different moments in a comment or of different versions of it, and in general of any moment in a communicative event. This confirms Drescher’s (2003) approach of studying emotions through their linguistic expression.
- Coming back to our first and initial research question, the one about cross-cultural differences, we can now claim that linguistic devices of emotionality are similar in the six languages and seven cultures studied, and that their hierarchy as well as their use of accumulation and climax does not show any significant differences in the various versions of our corpus.
- As for partiality or bias, it can only be found in the French version in the form of intensification of emotion and involvement, shown mostly through long pauses and an even stronger and more intense use of all the means described. The other versions, including the Italian one, are fairly similar.

In conclusion, we would like to ask what it is that is being enacted through the use of the linguistic and prosodic means described? If emotion is a socially constructed category, what is it that is being constructed in our seven commentaries? What is it that commentators enact in order to share with their audience?

The first answer might be: shock and dismay, which is the basic reaction in our seven versions. But how are shock and dismay enacted? Looking at the linguistic means involved, we follow the well-known idea that emotion leads to a loss of control, to an involuntary outcry, where the use of language is strongly affected. Interjections are the simplest form of expression. Exclamatory sentences tend to have very simple syntax, while repetitions and parallel constructions minimize the need for elaboration. Rationality, elaboration, syntax are all suspended when a human being is overwhelmed

¹² For literature about silence and pauses in conversation, see quote Philips 1995, Ghita 1997, Kurzon 1998, Müller/Ingwer 1999, Yakovleva 2004 and Stadler 2007.

¹³ RAI commentator Marco Civoli explained to us that, if in an Italian commentary a longer pause occurs, the audience will immediately think that something must be wrong.

by emotion.¹⁴ At the climax, language ceases to exist and is replaced by animal-like cries (*Aieaieaieaieaieaieaie!*) and speechless pauses as the preferred means of emotive expression.¹⁵

The means of expressing emotions in football commentary are thus surprisingly similar in the six languages and seven cultures we have studied: as illustrated by our title, the German/Austrian, English, French, Spanish, Italian and Russian commentators use repetitions/parallel constructions, interjections/exclamations, direct addresses to Zidane, as well as rhetorical questions and pauses (silence) to express the fact that they are overwhelmed by what is happening. Repetitions/parallel constructions occur throughout the episode, while interjections/exclamations, direct addresses, rhetorical questions and, above all, pauses seem to belong to a stronger register and tend to occur mostly at emotional peaks. As emotion rises, these means tend to accumulate and overlap in each single utterance. The rationalization of emotions (in our case, the construction of a tragic moment), on the other hand, tends to occur later when the emotional excitement is beginning to subside.

We can conclude that a **common emotional language in European football commentary** seems to exist. The ways of enacting and expressing emotions are quite similar in different cultures. This might be due to the fact that with strong emotions and their more or less involuntary expression we are touching on something that is in some way universal. Further studies of other sports and other kinds of emotional situations in other countries and cultures might show that the features we have identified in football commentary are in fact the essentials of a **general human language of emotions**, a kind of universal 'emotionese'.

¹⁴ One interesting sign of this is that commentators tend to make errors, really serious mistakes, due to their emotional involvement: one commentator constantly calls Zidane *Zinidane*, while another keeps referring to *Grosso* instead of *Materazzi*, and the Russian commentator says, the game has been given a 360° twist.

¹⁵ Adelman et al. 2001, who have worked on the enacting of positive emotions in football reporting, dedicate a special chapter to the expression of speechlessness ("Sprachlosigkeit zur Sprache bringen", p.52). They see in "fragmentarischen Äußerungen und sprachlichen Fehlleistungen eine kanonische Form für die Sprachlosigkeit", i.e., mistakes, stammering and fragmentary sentences are standardized ways of staging an emotional peak and of expressing the experience of being overwhelmed by emotion.

Appendix: Transcriptions

Uncertainty, not knowing (indefinites, questions...): *italics*

Mean of expression emotions:

Interjections/exclamations & intonation

Repetitions and parallel constructions

Direct addresses to Zidane

Rhetorical questions

Pauses/silence (speechlessness)

Rationalizing emotionality:

Constructing a tragic moment = an antithesis:

Concessive clauses, anonyms (in parallel constructions), etc.

Ger/Germany (ARD): RB (Reinhold Beckmann): 1 commentator	<i>Friedrich</i> ist auf der anderen Seite passiert <i>irgendwie</i> . Nüggigkeit, ich hoffe, nicht <i>wenigstens</i> . Taktikalität. (Pause 3") Es scheint Materazzi zu sein. (Pause 4") <i>War Zidane da im Spiel?</i> (Pause 8") Buffon geht jetzt auf die französischen Spieler zu, beschimpft sie. (Pause 3") So, da haben wir's noch mal; (Pause 0,5") Zidane (Pause 2") - warum hat er das nötig? Dies!	Ger/Austria (ORF): RS (Robert Seeger): 1 commentator	Na, da bin ich jetzt natürlich bei all diesen Szenen (Pause 1") Die Italiener reklamieren beim Schiedsrichterasistenten. (Pause 3") Was wir <i>branchen</i> , ist die Zeitlupe. (Pause 5") Zidane. (Pause 1") Grosso. [sic] (Pause 1") Oh! (Pause 2") Zinedine Zidane. Als hat er nicht notwendig. (Pause 1") Das hat er nicht notwendig. Das wäre Rot. Ohne	Engl (BBC): JM (John Motson), ML (Mark Lawrenson): 2 commentators	ML: Ah! JM: Oh, hang on! ML: This is interesting. This is Trezeguet we think. Trezeguet with Materazzi, is it? JM: Yes, and the assistant referee has seen something. Buffon has run across to him. There's been an incident here. (Pause 3") I think, I think, it's Zidane, Mark. I think a head may have gone in there. (Pause 2") I think a head went in there somewhere.	Ru (Pervyj kanal 1): BI (Виктор Гусев), H. (Николай): 2 commentators	H: ЧТО ТАМ СЛУЧИЛОСЬ? Бор сейчас бежит поприпарсан Росси к Голововой апарты. Чмо-мо унучен из вуды. Бор коню-мо ирок нечет на поле. Кто оно? BI: Давайце посмотрим, что произошло. Паркет разоборать в этом эпизоде и арпентинский апарты. Ну, инсультный (инва 0,6") так инва 0,6") Захват... Ya, tad! Инсульт себе! Бор то га! Бор то	Sp (Cuatro): CM (Carlos Martínez): 3 commentators, 1 main one (CM)	C2: No, ahí pasó algo. Yo me... se está quejando Buffon de que ha habido una agresión. A la vez... C3: Está diciendo Buffon que el línea lo vio. (Pause 1") CM: Sí. ¿El siete, Trezeguet? C2: No, se si Trezeguet que estaba ahí. (Pause 2") [...] Al línea le están presionando. (Pause 2") Vamos a ver ahí. (Pause 2") CM: Huy - oh - huy, lo	Il (RAI1): MC (Marco Civoli), SM (Sandro Mazzola), CP (Carlo Paris): 3 commentators, 2 main ones (MC, SM)	MC: Ma c'è un giocatore azzurro a terra. (Pause 2") Forse sullo scontro precedente (Pause 1") dovrebbe trattarsi di Materazzi. SM: C'è Buffon che sta parlando con il guardalinee perché Buffon ha visto sicuramente più di tutti noi. (Pause 1") MC: Sì. (Pause 1") Vedremo naturalmente nella riproposizione che cosa è successo esattamente. Probabilmente una scorrettezza, perché se Buffon... SM: Esatto! Buffon anche	French (TF1): 1 main TG (Thierry Giliard) and one secondary commentator JML (Jean-Michel Larqué), plus a third one: 3 commentators	JML: Y'a faute sur Materazzi, il se a quelque chose ici... TG: De l'autre côté on s'est expliqué entre Trezeguet et Materazzi. C'est en tout cas ce que Buffon vient dire à l'arbitre assistant. Que s'est-il passé entre Trezeguet et Materazzi? JML: J'espère qu'il s'est rien passé parce que... TG: Ouais, ouais, ouais. JML: Non le juge, le juge ne semble pas intervenir. Mackele avec Buffon, itens.
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