

4 Personal Assistants, Community Interpreting and Other Communication Strategies in Multilingual Football Teams

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4.1 Introduction: Do Feet Speak Louder than the Tongue?

Football players are likely to appear to us as rather silent people: while the supporters in the stadium scream and shout, the main protagonists tend to express their skills and intelligence through non-verbal movement and combinations. When we watch them on TV, we sometimes see them open their mouths—but we never perceive what exactly they say to each other.

However, verbal communication between players can become crucial in a decisive game. Remember, for example, the ‘Zidane incident’ in the 2006 World Cup final between France and Italy: Zidane’s headbutt (in French ‘*coup de boule*’) against Materazzi could be *seen* by everybody on the screen—but the provocative words of the Italian could not actually be *heard*, and it took some time until newspapers partly revealed what Materazzi had actually said. In fact, nobody² ever asked the question relevant to us linguists: *in which language* did Materazzi actually malign Zidane’s sister? That is exactly where our research comes in, as our study centres on the use of foreign languages and other communication strategies in the world of football, specifically, within multilingual football teams.

There are cases where foreign language skills or the lack thereof can really work as an asset or as a drawback in the realm of football. To quote two examples: the German Otto Rehhagel winning the 2004 European Championship with the Greek team, though he did not speak Greek, thanks, in part, to his brilliant interpreter Ioannis Topalidis (Ehrmann 2012). More recently, Pep Guardiola taking over Bayern München and spending half a year intensively learning German (Bundesliga 2012) so that he could give his first press conference in the very language of the club. These are just two examples that show how languages in football really matter and how research about multilingualism in football teams can provide us with essential insights into how the game functions.

4.2 Research Questions and Former Studies

We might ask, for example, whether in football clubs the language of the home country is always the ‘unmarked language choice,’³ or if some teams resort to a ‘lingua franca’;⁴ whether the mother tongue and language skills play a role when opting for a new team member, and then, of course, starting with the arrival of a new player who perhaps lacks the required language competences, how the club provides for his linguistic and cultural integration. Do they hire an interpreter for him? Do they systematically provide him with language courses? How do they deal with the different time spans? Because, as we know, learning a language requires much more time than a player is usually allowed until he has to exhibit concrete results in terms of full functionality in training sessions and matches. Will the language skills or non-skills have an impact on his integration within the team, and on the actual well-being of the newcomer? In a multinational team, do we have the formation of small subgroups according to the different mother tongues? Will players with similar languages cooperate better? Will the co-players help a newcomer to assimilate the language? Will they translate for him? What will be the most urgent language needs and the most noticeable shortcomings of a player with linguistic difficulties? Which factors and modes of behaviour will be helpful for him? Going beyond the newcomer integration issue, who on a football team actually needs verbal communication? That is, which playing positions have the strongest communication needs? And who else in the club desperately needs language skills? This is, of course, where the head coach comes in—the one who has to convey his messages to every single one of his charges. How does he provide for this? Does he always make sure he has been understood, or is it seen as the player’s own responsibility always to understand the message?

The Innsbruck Football Research Group⁵ have concerned themselves with elucidating these issues since 2007.⁶ This began starting in 2009 with a research seminar resulting in a master’s thesis (Steiner 2009/2011), which investigated multilingualism in football through a series of qualitative interviews with thirty players and four coaches of eleven clubs in Austria, Germany and Italy, as well as three national and international referees. Although this resulted in some interesting insights (Lavric and Steiner 2011a and b; Lavric 2012), it was apparent that the issue needed another methodological approach because qualitative interviews cannot avoid the bias attached to any kind of self-reporting method.

4.3 An Empirical Study about the Linguistic Integration of Foreign Players

The opportunity for a methodologically more ambitious study arose when Steiner was offered a role as an interpreter and personal assistant to some newly transferred Spanish-speaking players at the Austrian A-league club

FC Wacker Innsbruck. This role allowed her to explore from the inside the ways and means of dealing with multilingualism in a club which employed quite a few foreign players, or 'legionnaires,' as they are called in Austria and Eastern Europe. The FC Wacker management was open to Steiner's project. In addition to her daily participant observations, she carried out extensive video and audio recordings of a whole series of relevant situations—namely, training sessions (with instructions and execution), games, joggings, tactical one-on-one conversation, physiotherapy sessions (medical and general non-football conversation) and German classes/units (with lessons and organisation).

Although she was not able to record during real matches, Steiner ascertained that the training matches included in her corpus were similar to league matches in nearly all aspects. The corpus comprised 17.5 hours of audio recordings and 7 hours of video recordings, was transcribed with conversation-analytic methods (see Sidnell and Stivers 2013) and was completed by retrospective interviews with the participants involved. The participant frameworks which were studied comprised the following:

- coaching staff and football team
- coach and foreign player
- head coach and assistant coach
- local player and foreign player
- foreign player and foreign player
- head coach and foreign player and personal assistant
- physiotherapist and foreign player
- personal assistant and foreign player

Non-verbal communication channels were included in the study, as well as all kinds of verbal means—e.g. the use of different languages and/or dialects, various forms of code switching and, finally, verbal/non-verbal combinations. Successful communication strategies were documented as well as all kinds of communicative dysfunctions, barriers and misunderstandings. The findings have the potential to be developed into a guidebook and a collection of advice that could help FC Wacker, as well as many other clubs, to improve their cooperation with foreign players. This chapter will present the main results from this research (Steiner 2014).

The study approaches the issue of languages and communication in football from the perspective of a foreign player newly joining an existing team,⁷ which works in a language unknown to him and already includes other foreign players with different mother tongues. In this case, the situation will very much depend on the language repertoire of the other players. If there is a player with the same mother tongue (or a similar one, e.g. Spanish-Portuguese) as the newcomer, and who has been there for a time long enough to learn the team's language, this colleague will act as an interpreter for him in all kinds of situations. In translation science, this is known

as 'community interpreting'—i.e. interpreting by non-professionals, often in immigration or social work settings (see Slapp 2004). For the club, it is an optimal solution, as it is cost-effective, and the player/interpreter will be invariably engaging with the player off *and on* the field.

The situation is different for the newcomer if he is the first and only player with a different language—i.e. if there is no fellow player capable of translating for him. In this case, the club will often hire a special 'personal assistant,' whose function is to translate for the foreign player in professional as well as in private situations and to teach him the local language. Steiner, in this role worked with two different hispanophone players and one Portuguese (lusophone) player who had joined the team at FC Wacker Innsbruck, as a personal assistant and as a German teacher.

4.4 First Findings

Steiner's study sheds light on issues such as the specificity of language courses for football players, the level of competence needed during a game and beyond (in everyday life) and the communication barriers that may arise during trainings and that might well remain undetected.

What do language courses for football players look like? They are mostly individual courses—though some clubs also organise language learning groups—and the teachers have to create their own curriculum, as the topics to be treated differ largely from those of usual language syllabuses. An example would be Wiemann (2003), a milestone in didactics dealing with foreign players. Wiemann developed materials for teaching German to foreign players, in collaboration with the German Premier League club Bayer 04 Leverkusen. This was the first course book which focused exclusively on the relevant football grammar and football vocabulary sections of the German language and, as far as we know, of any language. One specificity of football language courses is that they are constrained by extreme time pressure. In the space of a very short time, the player has to master all the relevant football terminology in order to understand the coach's instructions. *Forwards, backwards, high, low, right, left, quickly, slowly, up, down, short pass, long pass, corner, foul, goal, winger, team, kick-off, gym, exercise, offside, football field, artificial grass/turf, ball possession, centre circle, to counter, man-to-man marking*—all these terms that are essential during a match have to be learned immediately. Once he can cope with these basics, the player can operate within the team (although many continue the course beyond the minimum training). This, however, does not mean he has additional language competence beyond the specific context of football (e.g. ordering food in a restaurant, filling out an administrative form or exchanging views with his colleagues or neighbours). Moreover, and what is more relevant, it often does not mean he is able to understand the coach's instructions during the training sessions. Steiner regularly observed foreign players watch the others for a while in order to understand what the current

exercise was about and join in only after a short period of adaptation. This is a problem that, not unexpectedly, disappears as soon as the coach—as he sometimes does—accompanies his instructions with gestures. We, therefore, recommend that coaches should systematically add this non-verbal component to their instructions in order to reduce communication barriers.

Furthermore, participant observation showed a significant fact: players never or rarely dare to complain about not understanding, or even to admit communication problems. The authority of the head coach is actually such that it is regarded as the player's own problem if he fails to comply with the given requirements. Coaches, perhaps because of a lack of awareness, do not really seem to acknowledge the problem or worry seriously about it. It is only to the personal assistant that the player will confide his communication problems.

4.5 Main Finding: The Dialect Problem

We have just touched upon very quickly two noteworthy findings of this study—i.e. the fact that coaches should make sure to use gestures when they explain what to do and the difficulty for the players to broach the issue of communication problems with the head coach and other managers. The main focus of this chapter is a third consideration: when providing language training to foreign team newcomers, the club should consider very carefully exactly which language they should teach. 'The working language of the team,' will be the commonly agreed upon answer. However, what is, in fact, the real working language of the team? In Innsbruck, the managers of the club were slightly mistaken when they told the personal assistant that she should teach the Hispanic players nothing but Standard German. Actually, the video and audio recordings reveal very clearly that Standard German is hardly ever spoken in the Tyrolean club. It is used only for football terminology and in the case where one foreign player speaks to another who has a different mother tongue (e.g. the Spanish and the Czech player training together) and also, of course, during German lessons, as it is the standard language foreign players are being taught. But in their daily situations, training sessions, match preparation, instructions and so on, the everyday language of the club is actually not Standard German, but the Tyrolean regional German dialect, or at least a common vernacular with strong dialectal elements in it. Whoever has been to Tyrol will know that this vernacular may diverge considerably from Standard German. Therefore, a considerable part of the language barriers for foreign players at FC Wacker Innsbruck stem from the fact that everyone in that environment speaks a rather different variety of German than the one they

are being taught. Neither the club management nor the personal assistant were really aware of this fact before being presented with the recordings from the Steiner (2014) corpus.

It was when she tried to transcribe her corpus that Steiner understood she could not realistically transcribe what she heard in terms of Standard German orthography and morphology, not even in the specific south Standard German variant.⁸ This use of Tyrolean dialectal German is the main source of communication problems experienced by the foreign players. The corpus offers evidence of a whole series of critical incidents occurring because of the difficulty of the Spanish player—even at a point where he has reached a fairly good level of competence in Standard German—in coping with the specificities of the Tyrolean variant. Examples 4.1 and 4.2 show long explanations given by the coach in Tyrolean dialect (lines 1–4, respectively) and then a question (in Standard German) by the Spanish player addressed to one of his colleagues (line 5 in both examples) that shows that he has not understood what he is expected to do. In example 4.2, the co-player first answers in Tyrolean (line 6), which leads to a new question by the Spaniard (line 7) until he finally is given the answer in Standard German (line 8).

Example 4.1 (2nd training, 15/01/2013)

[1] [22:00.2]

head-coach burschen drei stück die wos koan ball ham also de mit die bälle laufen da in der

Boys, three of you, those who have no ball, those with the balls run around in the

[2]

head-coach gegend ummadum mir machen drei sprints sprints nu schnellere laufs i laff hin

area, we make three sprints, sprints, faster runs. I run to one

[3]

head-coach zu den wos in ball hat zack und geh wieder ober such ma an dritten an zwoaten

who has the ball, quickly, go back and I look for a third one, a second one

[4]

head-coach und an dritten und dann wechseln ma durch.

and a third one, and then we go changing through. (Lines 1-4 are in Tyrolean)

[5] [23:40.6]

Span. player wie wechseln, wer muss mit wem wechseln?

How do we change, who needs to change with whom? (Standard German)

Example 4.2 (2nd training, 15/01/2013)

[1]	[37:05.6]	GEMMA ZWOA BÄLLE EGAL OB DE A LEIBERL HOM EGAL
		<i>Come on, two balls, no matter whether they have a shirt, no matter,</i>
[2]		ZWOA BÄLLE DO INNEN- KREISEN LASSEN BEWEGUNG
		<i>two balls, here inside – let them circulate, movement,</i>
[3]		BEWEGUNG ZUSPIELEN SCHORFES ZUSPIELEN MAXIMAL ZWOA
		<i>movement, play, quick interplay, a maximum of two</i>
[4]		KONTAKTE- MAXIMUM ZWOA KONTAKTE GEMMA KUMM!
		<i>contacts, maximum two contacts, come on! (Lines 1-4 are in Tyrolean)</i>
[5]	[37:37.3]	wieviel kontakt?
		<i>How many contacts? (Standard German)</i>
[6]		oan kontakt.
		<i>One contact. (Tyrolean)</i>
[7]		wieviel?
		<i>How many? (Standard German)</i>
[8]		einen kontakt!
		<i>One contact! (Standard German)</i>

There are also some less common examples where a foreign player resorts to Tyrolean dialect for very simple expressions, such as *geht nit* (this doesn't work), *gemma gemma* (come on, come on), *ummi laufen* (to run over), *komm emi* (come inside) and even one sequence where two foreign players (who usually speak Standard German together) exchange some hyperbolic evaluations in Tyrolean dialect (Example 4.3).

Example 4.3 (3rd training, 16/01/2013)

[1]	[63:10.7]	dreißig minuten laffn oder, * bist du deppat*
		<i>ja, brutal.</i>
Span. player		
Czech player		

* Thirty minutes to run, isn't it crazy

- Yes, madness

However, in general, the Tyrolean dialect is a real problem for the players. How should a club deal with this kind of issue? One solution might be to completely ban the use of the regional dialect and impose the respective standard language (in our case, Standard German) at all club levels as soon as the team hires some foreign players. But is this really feasible? And is it constructive? Actually, it seems that football is paradoxically a highly international sport, but also a sport with very strong regional roots for each of the clubs, reflected both in the club fan-base and hiring of local players. To deny these regional roots in everyday practice would potentially pose a serious identity problem. Though some 'global players' among the clubs might already have adopted an 'all standard' language policy (further research in this area is certainly necessary), the regional background to a club such as FC Wacker Innsbruck fully justifies the use of a regional dialect in everyday practice.

What is required, therefore, is an increase in sensitivity and awareness on the part of all participants, plus a slight shift in the language courses to include not only the standard but also the regional variety of the language. Furthermore, fellow players could be instructed to act as 'community interpreters' for the foreigners, as an interface between the regional variant and the standard language. As this double competence is widespread in diglossic communities such as Tyrol, many of the colleagues could take over this role for the newcomer. This would also enhance the cohesion of the group and the idea of collective linguistic responsibility for the foreigner. The foreign player, in turn, might thus feel more welcome and better integrated, which, in the opinion of many football managers, could contribute a lot to his sporting performance. See the following quotation: "When [player NN] came to the club, he had communication problems with the others. He did not feel good and his performance was bad. As soon as he learned the language, his performance became much better" (Manzoni 2009, translation E. L.).

4.6 Multilingualism: The Wacker Innsbruck Linguistic Landscape

Having addressed the main problem arising in FC Wacker because of language issues, we turn to the multifaceted nature of multilingualism. What follows is a short description and some examples of the plurality of language choices that occurred in the FC Wacker Innsbruck corpus. We will illustrate the code choice habits, the language shifts and mixes and the complex yet meaningful patterns of their functioning—language by language, variant by variant—and so explain the whys and hows of their occurrence in the Wacker Innsbruck linguistic landscape.

As previously noted, the Tyrolean dialectal variety of German is the general, unmarked language choice: it is used for communication among coaches, between coaches and team, between local players and foreign players, between two foreign players and also between the head coach and the

personal assistant in situations such as training instructions, instructions during the football games, running sessions and during the tactical single conversation.

The domain of Standard German is in football terminology and in one-to-one conversations between foreigners of different mother tongues (see Steiner and Lavric forthcoming). It is also adopted when a coach addresses the foreign player personally, although the corpus also includes a situation of the kind where the conversation is translated by the personal assistant. Likewise, Standard German is the means of communication between the Spanish player and his physiotherapist, although in this case, it is only the base language which is mixed with other languages occasionally.

This is indeed the most prominent situation where code switching occurs. The player and the physiotherapist communicate basically in Standard German, but when the physiotherapist wants to make something clear (Example 4.4) or when there is a word the player does not understand (when a linguistic 'gap' occurs, see Poplack 1988, 227; Pütz 1994, 231), as in Example 4.5 with the German word *langweilig*, the physiotherapist tries the equivalent in English, and even more often the equivalent in Italian, as he hopes that Italian and Spanish are fairly similar so that the other one will understand.

Example 4.4 (1st session, 18/06/2013)

[1] [05:41.7]

Span. player physiother.	at the ankle could be the blood, es könnte hier sein!	ja, das kann sein.
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Yes, this could be. it could accumulate here.

Example 4.5 (1st session, 18/06/2013)

[1] 26[27:31.6]

Span. player physiother.	was ist langweilig? noioso? langweilig?	nicht noioso? boring!	ah
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what is boring? not boring (it.)? no boring (en.)

[2]

Span. player physiother.	aburrido! Nein, nicht langweilig- ist besser als stabilisation!
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boring (sp.) No, not boring- it is better than stabilisation!

This practice is not always successful, but it has to be acknowledged as a reasonable strategy. What is really surprising is the fact that the two do not communicate in English, which is after all a language that both master very well and hence would represent the most 'efficient/natural' language choice.⁹ We noted that any attempt on the part of the physiotherapist to

switch to that common language was intercepted by the Spanish player, who immediately switched back to German: a patent example of the language choice factor 'wish to practise' (see endnote 9), which in language learning situations can often be seen to overrule the 'naturalness/efficiency' factor. It is striking that in the corpus data, English only functions as one 'default supporter' language¹⁰ among others in the case of a lexical gap. The pervading *lingua franca* in our data is definitely Standard German.

The other language is of course Spanish, the player's mother tongue.¹¹ When and to whom does the Spanish player actually speak in his first language? Not unexpectedly, he speaks Spanish to his personal assistant, who is not only his translator and German teacher but also his closest confidante and the only person in the new environment with whom he can speak his native language. He even sometimes uses it during the German lessons, although the 'practice' factor (see endnote 9) would suggest he should adhere to the target language as much as possible. There are two other more surprising areas where the Spanish language is applied: first, for polarity particles such as *sí* or *no*, which everybody, even a non-Spanish-speaker, certainly understands, as in Examples 4.6 and 4.7.

Example 4.6 (3rd training, 16/01/2013)

[1] [11:08.3]

Span. player	<i>sí</i> ja das ist klar das ist klar.
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Yes, yes, that's clear, that's clear.

Example 4.7 (3rd training, 16/01/2013)

[1] [12:18.7]

Span. player	<i>no no no no no</i> carlos schiefst immer nicht.
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No, no, no, no, no, Carlos shoots always not.

Second, he uses Spanish during the match for a speech act that everybody understands without knowing the language or understanding the exact words—namely, for cursing! (See Examples 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10; Allan and Burridge 2006).

Example 4.8 (2nd training, 15/01/2013)

[1] [89:24.5]

Span. player	joder- puta madre.
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Damn, son of a bitch.

Example 4.9 (5th training, 18/01/2013)

[1] [20:07.5]

Span. player	:hostia!
	Damn.

Example 4.10 (5th training, 18/01/2013)

[1] [21:58.0]

Span. player	*vaya putas mierdas me como dios mio*
	Bloody hell, I'm going crazy.

This direct expression of an intense emotion rushing through, in the middle of a game, cannot wait for complicated sentence building in the foreign language! Thus *joder!* and other expressions emerge spontaneously and are perfectly understood by everybody in the context.

4.7 Conclusion

Steiner's (2014) research into multilingualism in football teams, in particular at FC Wacker Innsbruck, offers a number of valuable findings about this fairly frequent kind of situation. In the multilingual working environment of the football team, the club's language strategy for a foreign newcomer often consists of hiring a personal assistant for him, who will help him not only as a translator/interpreter but also as a language teacher. In such a language course, rapid assimilation of the basic football terminology in the new language is necessary for the foreign player in order to be able to operate quickly during matches. However, better forms of competence, which need more time to be developed, are indispensable for a successful integration in the club and for trouble-free communication with the head coach. The latter is often not aware of the language barriers that may exist for the foreign players, and he regards it as the newcomer's own problem to survive linguistically.

At FC Wacker Innsbruck, the main communication problem consists in the fact that the Tyrolean dialect, and not Standard German, is the unmarked language choice. This repeatedly causes misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication that could be documented through the study's video and audio corpus.

Apart from these problematic issues, the practice of multilingualism generally appears in the FC Wacker team through the use of code switching in the case of lexical gaps. The default supplier language is more often Italian than English, which confirms the small role of English as a *lingua franca* in this particular environment. The real *lingua franca* is in fact Standard German, which is used for football terminology and as the 'wish-to-practise' language choice of the foreign player with his colleagues. The

player's mother tongue, Spanish, also has a small role to play—namely, for universally understood speech acts, such as saying *sí* or *no*, and especially for cursing.

We hope to have given an impression of the richness of linguistic insights to be gained through the empirical study of multilingual football teams. In contrast to much of the current sociolinguistic research on diglossic regions, or on multilingual practices in business communication, this football study focuses on an environment where language does not seem to be at the centre of interest. Players are in general not chosen with regard to their language skills.¹² 'Feet Speak Louder than the Tongue' is the title of the only publication on the subject prior to the work of the Innsbruck Group (Kellermann et al. 2006). Even so, communication, and specifically plurilingual communication, has a crucial role to play in the process of forming a group of individual players with very different backgrounds into a harmonious, effective, successful football team.

Additionally, for the individual player, language skills achievement may increase their value at the time of the next transfer. As Frank Ditgens, special manager for foreign players at Bayer 04 Leverkusen notes, "If a player speaks German, he will be a better player. This increases his value, and when we transfer him, we make money" (Replinger 2005, translation E. L.).

Let us pay respect, at this point, to the many players and managers whose international careers have led them through a whole variety of languages and cultures, and who every single time have started anew and made the effort to acquire the new language (see Soccer Players 2016). Thus, in the course of their professional lives, they have accumulated an incredible wealth of linguistic competence of often very different languages and can later on work as 'integration managers' in their club, welcoming and helping new generations of young foreign players.

To return to our initial example, if Zinedine Zidane had not played for several years in Italy for Juventus Turin and had not learned the Italian language thoroughly, Marco Materazzi would have had to formulate his infamous insult in French, and not speaking it well might have sounded so ridiculous, that Zidane instead of headbutting him might simply have laughed at him, and football history might have been changed.

Notes

- 1 Many thanks to Carmen Konzett, Andrew Skinner and Gerhard Pisek (yes, there were three!) for correcting our English.
- 2 Nobody but us, the Innsbruck Football Research Group in our 2008 publication (Lavric et al. 2008).
- 3 That is, the language it would be 'normal' to speak; see Myers-Scotton (1983) and *passim*.
- 4 That is, a language which is mother tongue for neither of the participants and is chosen as a kind of compromise.
- 5 Irene Giera, Erika Giorgianni, Eva Lavric, Gerhard Pisek, Andrew Skinner, Wolfgang Stadler, Jasmin Steiner.

- 6 See the outline of our 'Multilingualism in Football' project in our 2008 publication (Giera et al. 2008).
- 7 As did already Steiner and Lavric (forthcoming).
- 8 Hence the title of the study: "Inaki, du musch ummi laufen!—Empirische Analyse von Mehrsprachigkeit und Kommunikationsstrategien in einer Fußballmannschaft," an instruction ("you have to run to the other side") uttered in broad Tyrolean dialect, while the name of the addressee (Inaki) shows that he comes from a completely different language and culture, in this case, the Basque region and linguistic community in Spain.
- 9 An interesting point within multilingual environments is the motivation that accounts for the choice of a particular language as a means of communication. In their spontaneous choice of language, speakers follow four main types of motivation (see Lavric 2000; 2001):
- Natural choice: the use of their common native language or of the language for which the product of the competences of both partners is the greatest (cf. Myers-Scotton's 1983 "unmarked language choice").
- Language practicing: the wish to practice a language one might not master so well.
- Prestige: the desire to impress through one's language competences, and its opposite, the fear of losing face by making mistakes.
- Compliance: the selection of the code that speakers believe to be preferred by their interlocutor.
- 10 This term was coined by Williams and Hammarbergt (1998) for a language a learner resorts to when he lacks a word in the foreign language.
- 11 Although in fact, he has two of them: Spanish and Basque (see endnote 8). But for understandable reasons, the latter plays no role in communication at Wacker Innsbruck.
- 12 Franceschini (2010) points out that this type of multilingual environment has hardly ever been studied before.

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5 'I Didn't Know You Were Allowed Two Goalkeepers' How Football Managers Negotiate Invitations to Criticise Referees in the Media

Kieran A. File

Sometimes if I had said what I thought about referees I could really have been in trouble—I might have been sued—but there are still ways you can put your point across.

Gordon Strachan (2004), manager of the Scotland national men's team

5.1 Introduction

The role of the football manager has been subject to research attention in a range of fields (Carter 2006; Carter 2007; Kelly 2008; Kelly and Harris 2010; Llewellyn 2003). However, despite the fact that football managers perform a lot of their professional duties through interaction, the discourse of football managers has received very little attention. In this chapter, I concentrate on the language professional football managers in England's Premier League use when conducting media interviews—a largely discursive aspect of their role. In particular, I focus on questions regarding the referee and refereeing decisions, as these can pose a significant issue for managers to negotiate.

Applying an interactional sociolinguistic lens, I explore linguistic features managers draw on when negotiating invitations by interviewers in post-match interviews to criticise referees and their decisions and account for these choices in the wider social context in which they are operating. This context seems to be defined by a desire by managers to be able to criticise referees for bad decisions, while simultaneously needing to negotiate (1) the potential social repercussions of being labelled a 'criticiser' or 'complainer' in the minds of the addressed television audience and (2) the code of conduct managers are subject to regarding public comments about referees. The complexity surrounding the use of language in this context makes it an interesting topic for sociolinguistic inquiry.

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