A Discursive Representation of the Winner and Loser: The Case of Sports Reports

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Abstract
Communicating ideas/news is the primary function of language. However, language does not usually fulfill this as it is expected to. To Dellinger (1995, p. 3) language, "can never appear by itself-it always appears as the representative of a system of linguistic terms, which themselves realize discursive and ideological system." The present study, analyzing sports articles, aims at investigating the nature and importance of discourse in representing the desired players/ or teams. In other words, it is to examine the ways in which different teams are discursively constructed. More specifically, it shows how 'our' team versus 'other' (rival) team is shaped discursively. To do this, Hodge and Kress' (1996) model for Critical Discourse Analysis provides the framework with which the following texts have been approached. Four sport extracts, selected from two different issues of two different sport editorials, comprised the corpus of the study. The texts are analyzed with regard to three important properties of texts, i.e., grammar (with regard to two properties: syntagmatic models and transformations), vocabulary (functioning as adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, with their ideological significance), and modality (the degree of authority and certainty of an utterance). The study has revealed how the reporters, while apparently providing the readers with the information about the matches and important events, represent 'ours' and 'others' in the

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selected texts the way they like and, thereby, influence the ideology of the reader.

Key Words: Critical Discourse Analysis, sports reports, language ideology, soccer

Introduction

One of the primary functions of language is to communicate news or/and ideas. Language use, along with discourse, is a social practice which is strongly under the influence of the ideology of a society, context or genre (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, n.d.). Van Dijk (n.d., para. 12) also adds that "much of our discourse, especially when we speak as members of groups, expresses ideologically based opinions."

In the same line, Hodge and Kress (1996) state that the reality expressed through language may not be something like the original reality perceived by the speaker/writer. They believe that we perceive everything through our expectations about the world. Indeed, what we see is only a part of what we could have seen because it is limited by the position taken up by the speaker/writer. Then, depending upon the intention of the speaker, part of the reality/event will be coded in language. This is what is referred to as 'perspectivisation' by Wodak and Van Dijk (cited in Khosravinik, 2008). In this regard, Gee (1999) states that speakers /writers "always take a particular perspectives on what the "world" is like. He continues by asserting that we are always "taking perspectives on …what is the 'way things are' and not" (p.2). Concerning language and its social perspective, Boutain (1999, p. 7) points out that "a pragmatic view of language and a critical study of discourse joins the study of language to the study of society". As a result, it can be claimed that our perception of the reality is socially constructed by language. This reality is more fixed and stable than the initial perception (Hodge and Kress, 1996). Little by little, it takes its place in our consciousness and becomes what we think we have seen, and perhaps not what we have really seen. Finally, since this socially constructed reality is constantly communicated, the gap between the

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original reality itself and its socially constructed version is gradually reduced and what we see actually becomes what we can say.

Dellinger (1995) also points out that, "the mode in which an action is presented, either as transactive or nontransactive, is not a matter of truth or reality but rather a matter of the way in which that particular action is integrated into the ideological system of the speaker, and the manner in which such an action is therefore articulated in a specific discourse" (p. 3).That is why Hodge and Kress (1996) assert that "languages are systems of categories and rules based on fundamental principles and assumptions about the world" (p. 6). They go even further and consider language as "the practical consciousness of a society" (p. 6). However, they believe this consciousness is "partial and false." (p. 6). That is, the socially constructed reality, gone through the processes of storage and codage, may be quite different from the reality itself depending on how the speaker/writer perceives and represents it .This howness, considered as ideology by Hodge and Kress, 1996, Van Dijk (n.d), among others, in turn, draws from the speaker/writer's attitude and worldview, which is expressed mostly through language. Accordingly, the language--the words and expressions-the speaker uses is by no means *innocent*, since he/she chooses it out of several different options available in the language. It is in this sense that language can be considered as ideology (Hodge and Kress, 1996; Halliday, 1994).

Ideology, according to Hodge and Kress (1996), is defined as "a systematic body of ideas organized from a particular point of view" (p. 6) or elsewhere, "ideology involves a systematically organized presentation of reality" (p. 15). That's why they add that a group of people getting together in the street can be described by an observer as *demonstrators, rioters, hooligans,* etc. Any one of these terms can provide the listener/reader with a different picture of the mentioned people. In this regard, language can be considered not only as an instrument of communication but also an instrument of control and manipulation. In other words, one can disguise or perpetuate certain

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information and/or idea while communicating it. As a result, the listeners/readers are being manipulated while they suppose they are being informed (Hodge and Kress, 1996). They are, of course, being informed, but they see the reality through the eyes of the speaker/writer.

This ideological use of language can be observed in a variety of texts, both written and spoken, including advertisements, politics, sports, etc. In each case, the writers apply different properties of texts such as vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, implicature, etc., to manipulate the reader, to make him/her see things through their perspectives. Then, it is important to see how ideology is at work. The notions 'perspectivism,' elaborated by Gee (1999), and/or 'favoritism' (Clayman, 2002) have shown to be very effective in winning the audience consent. Accordingly, sometimes, analyzing the text, the reasearcher, as argued by Clayman (2002, p. 1388), can show the reader how "ideological favoritism is at work". By favoritism, the writer means when a person (the interviewer, reporter, etc.) fails to observe neutrality and shows a sort of bias toward one of the parties, a phenomenon referred to as "unprofessional favoritism". Such a person is usually expected not to display his/her own opinion (Heisterkamp, 2006). Hence, discourse analysist are invited to dig up the possible favoritism/bias found in a text as Fairclough (1995) states,

> in my view, particular representations and constructions of the world are instrumental (partly in discourse) and important in reproducing domination. They do call for investigation and critique, and the force and specificity of the concept of ideology has come from its deployment in the critique of these particular processes. If the concept of ideology is to be used, it should be used critically (p. 5).

Thus, the aim of critical discourse analysis is to analyze texts and delineate the features used to control and manipulate the reader.

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Fairclough (1995) presents a comprehensive definition of critical discourse analysis:

> The development of an analytical framework--a theory and method--for studying language in its relation to power and ideology... . Power is conceptualized both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed (and hence the shapes of texts) in particular sociocultural contexts. A range of properties of texts is regarded as potentially ideological, including feature of vocabulary and metaphors, grammar, presuppositions and implicatures, politeness conventions, speech-exchange (turn-taking) systems, generic structure, and style (p. 2).

As mentioned above, the ideological use of language can be seen in different genres. Sports articles, particularly those reporting soccer matches and giving commentaries on them, are of no exception. Although there are numerous sports news released everyday, most of them are left unexamined while in these texts, like others, the writer/speaker may depict the events as he wants, not as they have really happened. Hence, the purpose of the study is to uncover the strategies taken in order to cover the events, the linguistic realizations of such strategies and their possible ideological implications.

The Present Study

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze four newspaper articles taken from *Pirouzi* and *Esteqlal Javan*, each supporting one of the two most popular soccer teams in Iran, i.e., Persepolis and Esteqlal, respectively. The aim of this paper is to analyze the reports and editorials of two newspapers critically by focusing particularly on the

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representation of the social actors of the event described and their actions. It is to see how these two newspapers depict the same event and in doing so what linguistic and discoursal strategies they use. In fact, the main objective of the present study is to see whether the reports of the game appearing in two rival newspapers have systematically used the language to attain certain pre-determined goals. The study, hence, aims at finding answers to the following questions:

1. How are the actions performed by the two teams represented linguistically?
2. What traits and features are attributed to each team? That is, how is the favorite/ home team vs. the rival team represented?

Methodology

Corpus

Four sports extracts, two selected from two different issues of *Pirouzi* and two from *Esteqlal Javan*, comprised the corpus of the study. The first two articles were the reports of the match between the two teams, resulting in Persepolis's 2-0 win. The next two articles were commentaries--one by the caretaker coach of Esteqlal and the other presented in Pirouzi newspaper-- on the second leg of the two matches between Esteqlal and their Arab rival--Alettehad--in the second round of the Asian Clubs Championship, resulting in a 1-1 draw, leading to the advancement of the Arab rival to the next round.

Procedure

Each pair of extracts (the match reports and the commentaries) were critically analyzed and compared with regard to the particular properties of the texts, i.e., grammar, vocabulary, and modality to see how the two opposing newspapers have depicted the same event and what strategies they have used.

Theoretical Framework

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In the analysis of how the first two texts have represented the two matches, the study has applied Hodge and Kress's (1996) framework. According to this model, a text is critically analyzed with respect to three aspects, i.e., grammar, vocabulary, and modality. Each aspect is briefely explained below.

Grammar

Regarding grammar, each text is analyzed with reference to two properties: syntagmatic models and transformations. With respect to syntagmatic models--categories and processes describing the interrelation of objects and events--, according to Hodge and Kress (1996), there are two basic categories, i.e., *actionals* and *relationals (R)*. The former describes the occasions where one or two objects are related to a verbal process (an action). The latter, however, deals with relational and existential processes and can be classified as either *equative* or *attributive.*

The actionals can be divided into two categories: *transactives (T)* and *nontransactives (NT)*. In transactives, there are two entities (or objects) related by a verbal process. In this category, one of the entities affects another one. For instance, *John shot the ball out.* This model is used when the speaker/writer is going to clearly show the actor and the affected. In nontransactives, only one entity is related to a process. In this case, it is not clear if the entity is affecting or being affected, e.g., *the ball went out.* Unlike the previous example, here, the actor is not mentioned because the writer is just going to show *what* happened but not *who* did it. This contributes to blurring the distinction between the actor and the affected. Thus, the reader who is reading the report rather superficially does not go into deep to think who is responsible for the event.

The relationals, too, can be divided into two categories, i.e., *equatives* and *attributives*. In equatives, no action is performed; rather, two entities are related to a verb. In attributives, on the other hand, there is one entity related to a quality. The following sentences are examples

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of the equatives and attributives repectively: *John is a football player*; *the football player is excellent*. The attributive model brings out the act of judgment. So, in the text in which there are a high number of attributives, the writer is judgmental. The equative model, however, is the articulation of the logic of a system.

Regarding transformations, the texts are analyzed in terms of nominalization (N). Nominalization is the case when actions are turned into objects, and verbal processes are turned into nouns. It is a method of representing an action or a process as a noun, blurring agency, causality, and/ or the time of the event. For instance, *John's header* means *John hit the ball with his head.* When we use nominalization, the real entity of the actor and the affected is lost. In this case, our attention is directed to what is present and directed away from what is no longer there, so the focus of the expression has been altered by the speaker. Further, our vision has been channeled and narrowed.

Vocabulary

In discourse, one of the influential elements revealing the writer/ speaker's ideology is the word he/she uses to describe an event or action. Due to its importance, lexicalization has been under scrutiny in many studies (Van Dijk, 2002) to root out the underlying structure of a text, written or spoken. Since, it is not possible to draw a clear-cut line between the vocabulary used and its grammatical function in the text, the texts are analyzed with regard to the lexicogrammar, in which the lexicon, its function and morphology are taken together as one unit (Halliday, 1985), with their potential ideological significance. In other words, in some occasions, the writer/the speaker may use a special word to overestimate or underestimate an event or an action, and thus, affect the perception of the reader, which would otherwise be different. For instance, the sentence, *His heavy shot shook the crossbar severely,* containing the adjective *heavy,* the adverb *severely,* and the verb *shook,* has a quite different effect on the reader than the sentence, *His shot hit the crossbar.* The former senetence emphasizes the severity of the attack as well as the strength of the player in shooting the ball. The latter,

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however, provides the reader with a rather neutral picture of the shot, showing no power or strength on the part of the attack. Accordingly, the present study has analyzed the lexical items used in the above-mentioned articles to see what perspectives the reporters have taken to represent the *reality*.

Modality

In order to see how the texts inform the identification of the two competing teams, they are analyzed for such aspects as modality, adverbs, verbs and time. Modality establishes the degree of authority of an utterance. It can be shown by the modal auxiliaries (*may, must, can, etc.*), adverbs (*probably, quite, better, etc.*), some particular verbs having modal status *(hope, think, etc.)* and time (*present, past,* and *future*). A speaker usually uses modalities to protect his utterances from criticism. A large number of modalizers indicate considerable fear on the speaker's part, rather than intellectual uncertainty. Thus, a speaker/writer using a high number of words or sentences with modal status is talking rather conservatively to justify his flaw and avoid any further criticism. For instance, a sentence such as *If we had not acted emotionally, we could have won the match* shows that the writer is going to make excuses to justify the loss. Or, the sentence *I think we can win the next match* shows that he is not so sure of their future performance. This emphasizes the importance of the contribution of modality to the meaning of the text, written or spoken.

Results and Discussion

Articles 1 and 2

The first two articles are typical reports of the match between Persepolis and Esteqlal held on Feb., 27, 2006, extracted from *Pirouzi*--the newspaper supporting Persepolis-- and *Esteqlal Javan*--the newspaper supporting Esteqlal. In this match, Persepolis beat Esteqlal with two goals in a relatively one-sided game. Below, the two articles are critically contrasted with regard to the text properties explained above.

Grammar

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Table 1 presents the number of grammatical features of the articles excerpted from *Pioruzi* and *Esteqlal Javan*.

Table 1
Discoursal features of articles 1&2

	Syntagmatic				Transformation
Articles	**T**	**NT**	**R**	**Total**	**NOM**
Pirouzi	16 (66.6%)	4 (16.7%)	4 (16.7%)	24 (100%)	15
Esteglal Javan	6 (31.5%)	11 (57.9%)	2 (10.5%)	19 (100%)	6

Table 1 exhibits several differences in the representation of the event, namely, transformation. There are more than twice as many occurrences of *nominalization* (NOM) in the article supporting the winners than the one supporting the loser, i.e., 15 and 6, respectively. Table 1 also shows that *transactives* (T) comprise the most frequently used modals supporting the winner team- Persepolis (66.6%), whereas *nontransactives* (NT) and *relationals* (R) each form just 16.7% However, things are quite different in *Esteqlal javan* article, supporting the loser team (and thus underestimating the performance of the winner team); one can see only 6 (31.6%) *transactives*, 11 (57.9%) *nontransactives*, and 2 (10.5%) occurrences of *relationals.*

This may be due to the fact that the first article is extracted from the newspaper supporting the winner team, i.e., Persepolis, who has been the superior team and attacking its rival most of the match time. Then, the number of *transactives* predominates that of *nontransactives* (more than twice as many). This is probably because the writer sees no reason to *mystify* any process and *to distort the reality* when reporting the attacks made by the players of Persepolis. He may prefer to present the events as clearly as it happened and sometimes even exaggerate the performance and the power of playes. This strategy is referred to as *intensification and mitigation* by Wodak (cited in Khosravinik, 2008). Thus, as it is evident in the report, in most cases, the *actors* have been the players of Persepolis and the *affected*, those of

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Esteqlal. As examples, clauses 4 and 5 from Article 1 clarify the above point:
Estili sent the ball over Esteqlal's goal (T).

Interestingly, among the 16 *transactive* cases used in Article 1, there are only 3 cases in which the *actors* are the players of Esteqlal. However, they all refer to the occasions when Esteqlal players have made a foul or when the goalkeeper has denied a shot, e.g.:
But, Tabatabaei sent it to corner with trouble.
This makes the reader believe that the only effective actions performed by the players of Esteqlal have been defensive acts. This strategy is used to invite the reader to interpret the report in a way the reporter desires.

In the same article, out of four nontransactives, there are 3 cases in which the agents are the players of Persepolis. In these cases, the writer has used a nontransactive, along with a nominalized form. For instance look at the following clause,
Rafat's beautiful header was a bit high and went out over Esteqlal's goal.

As you can see, the reporter has nominalized the action made by Persepolis' attacker, i.e., Rafat's beautiful header, because the attempts made by Rafat have not been quite successful. This can contribute to playing down the player's role in making the event. In this regard, the writer has mystified the processes and depicts the action as a trivial one, diverting the reader's attention from the creator of the event.

It is worth mentioning that there is just one nontransactive case, representing the players of Esteqlal as an agent. Here, the players of Esteqlal have committed a foul. Again, it tends to give the reader the idea that the only effective move made by the players of Esteqlal has been committing a foul or, at most, defending. It is usually expected from a sports reporter to report the game in a neutral fashion. However, the percentage of transactives assigned to the players of the winner team by its supporter, compared to that found in the rival team report, clearly

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demonstrates how the issue of neutrality is diminished in the report (66.6% vs. 33.58%). Van Dijk (2008), in this regard, states that one should find out "who may speak or write to whom, about what, when, and in what context, or who may participate in such communicative events in various recipient roles,…" (p. 67).

In a similar vein, Fairclaugh (1992) argues that in order to analyze a text, one should see who the producer of the text is. This issue is well exemplified in Article 2 (in *Esteqlal Javan*) in which the same event is depicted differently. Although, most of the time, the players of Persepolis are attacking and while one expects an article reporting this game to contain a large number of transactives to describe the actions performed by the players of Persepolis, this article employs only 6 transactives, only three of which are used to cover Persepolis players' actions. For example, the clause, **Rafat's header hit the bar**, is transactive but the agent has not been directly mentioned; rather, the process caused by the actor has become his possession, thereby downplaying his role in the creation of the event. There are only two transactives in which the players of Persepolis are the direct actors, i.e., **Estili positioned the ball and sent it** and **Estili sent the ball**, the use of transactives has been inevitable because it is a convention in reporting football matches to mention the name of the person who, for instance, sends a ball toward the goal.

In addition, the higher number of *nontransactives,* most of which describing the actions performed by the players of Persepolis*,* indicates that the reporter has tried to downplay the action and make the reader believe that these events have either happened by chance or the players of Persepolis did not play a great role in scoring that goal, attack or the like. Just compare the way the two article report the goal event:
Esteqlal Javan: **Hashemi Nasab's header went into the goal** (Nontransactive).
*Piruzi***: Hashemi Nasab, by right positioning and a precise header, put the ball in the corner of the Esteqlal's goal** (Transactive).

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In the same article (in *Esteqlal Javan)*, there are two cases in which the actors are the players of Esteqlal and the writer has used transactives to depict a positive picture of Esteqlal. For instance,

The defenders of Esteqlal sent the ball away quite timely.

Here, the reporter is showing the capabilities of the defenders of Esteqlal whose job is defending the ball by using a transactive.

Concerning transformation, nominalized forms in both articles are mostly used in occasions where the processes caused by the actor have become his possession. However, the two articles have different reasons for employing them. In Article 1, such nominalized forms are used to describe the situations when the attempts of the players of Persepolis have not been quite successful; for instance,

Rafat's beautiful header was a bit high and went out over Esteqlal's goal.

As this example shows, the players made some dangerous moves that did not result in a goal. Thus, the writer, by using a nominalized form wants to suppress responsibility of the player and directs the reader's attention away from the doer of the action. Therefore, the reader is led not to blame the players. The above example would make the reader just think about the header going out without considering the actor and the person who has done it. In this case, the process is mystified and the reader just sees a ball being shot toward the goal and going out.

In Article 2, also, we can see the same technique but with a different purpose and in different occasions. In almost all cases, when a critical situation has been created in the penalty area of Esteqlal, the reporter has used a nontransactive, representing the actor just as the possessor of the action. A likely explanation for this may be the fact that since the writer has tried to neutralize the involvement of the actor in unsuccessful actions to the extent possible, suppressing the presence of the actor. As a result, he has transformed the action into a nominalized

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form. However, since in a sports report it is a convention to mention the name of the actor in each action, he has used the actor as the possessor of the action, not the doer of the action. In so doing, he has reduced the role of the actor in creating that action to the extent possible. In fact, showing less means seeing less on the part of the reader, and seeing less , in turn, leads to thinking less.The follwoign example clarifies the issue:
Hashemi Nasab's header went into the goal.

Here, since the whole process accomplished by the Persepolis player is mystified, the reader just sees a ball going into the goal, not the person who has hit the ball with his head and the person who has received the goal.

In addition to factors, mentioned above, relational verbs also contribute to creating the player/team's identity. Regarding the relationals in Article 1, among the four cases, three refer to the players of Persepolis. The reason might be the fact that since the relationals are the most straightforward models for making a comment or judgment, the writer has used them before reporting the unsuccessful attempts made by the palyers. See the example below:
Bezik's heavy shot *was* as beautiful as a goal.

As you can see, the writer has used the relational to make the reader believe that though the shot has not resulted in a goal, it has been as beautiful and valuable as a goal. Thus, the reader might not be affected so much by the next report in which the ball has been rejected.

There are also two cases of relationals used in the second article. Here again, the reporter has used relationals to pass judgment. One case refers to the player of Persepolis; however, unlike the previous article, it is not used to appreciate them; rather it underestimates the skill of the player of Persepolis:
Thanks God, Bezik was <u>not a goal scorer</u> forward.

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Here, the writer has used the relational to show that the player of Persepolis is not a good striker and not able to use the good situations provided for him.

Vocabulary

Table 2 presents the number/percentage of ideologically-loaded vocabulary items used in the first two articles, excerpted from *Pioruzi* and *Esteqlal Javan*.

Table 2

Ideologically-loaded vocabulary used in articles 1&2

Article	**Article 1(*Pirouzi*)**							**Article 2 (*Esteqlal Javan*)**						
Load	+		-		Neutral		total	+		-		Neutral		total
Team	P	E	P	E	P	E		P	E	P	E	P	E	
No.	32	0	1	11	3	4	51	0	5	10	3	5	3	26
%	63	0	2	21	6	8	100	0	19	38	12	19	12	100

As it is evident in the table, in Article 1 appearing in *Pirouzi,* all the positively loaded words (63%) refer to Persepolis. In other words, all the words referring to the players of Persepolis have more or less positive loads intensifying and exaggerating the actions performed by them. For example the words *heavy*, *precise*, *beautiful*, and *a bit* all refer to the players of Persepolis and attempt to exaggerate what they have done. All these words and the similar ones in the other clauses make the reader think that the performance of the players of their favorite team has been quite perfect and it has been because of the bad luck or the struggle of the players of Esteqlal that some of them have not resulted in goals. As a whole, the words chosen may produce maximum effect in the reader. Reporters select words "to make meanings with each other as they carry out the activities of their social lives. They do this through their selections from the set of choices" (Rogers, 2002, p. 8).

In contrast, in the same article, almost all negatively loaded words refer to Esteqlal (21%). For instance, the phrase *with difficulty*, in **But Tabatabaei sent it to corner with difficulty**, describes the way the goalkeeper of Esteqlal has denied the shot by the striker of Persepolis. This exhibits the shot positively by using the word *heavy* and how the shot put the goalkeeper in trouble. Also, using the word *shock* in another

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clause (**Esteqlal players were still in shock**) indicates that the situation of the rival team has been so terrible and they have been in a quite drastic state. Further, words such as *flustered* and *intentional* are employed to create negative effects in the reader.

In Article 2, on the other hand, the words with an ideological significance are significantly fewer. The reason might be the fact that the writer has used the simplest possible words and sentences to show that the events created by the players of Persepolis have been quite simple and ordinary and they have just happened. As you can see in Table 2, surprisingly, no positively loaded words have addressed Persepolis, while 38% negatively loaded and 19% neutral ones refer to this team. The relatively large number of neutrals, as compared with Article 1, implies that the writer has collapsed a complex action into the surface form to make it seem extremely simple. In so doing, he has avoided using adjectives, adverbs, and other words which may add to the meaning of a sentence. One instance of such simplicity is the use of such verbs as *went* and *hit* in the following clauses:

Rafat's header went out
Rafat's header hit the bar

Actually, these verbs are the simplest possible ones for describing the actions, whereas, in the first article, the writer has used such verbs as *shook*, *put the ball in the corner of Esteqlal's goal* and so on.

Another interesting point over the vocabularies used in these articles is that, *Pirouzi,* when giving a report on the weakness of one of the players of Persepolis resorts to some justification by using relational statements and then an NT to imply that he is not responsible for the wrongdoing. See the example below:

Rafat who, as usual, was one of the outstanding palyers on the pitch (R), run away from the offside trap of Esteqlal (NT)

The verb "run away" is not a positive verb but in this context it is used positively because the Persepolis player runs away from the trap of

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Esteqlal. Hence, the Persepolis player is shown to be very intelligent, not being caught in the trap, while Esteqlal, as a whole, does not play 'a fair play' and 'lays a trap'. Now, compare the above statements with the following, reported by *Esteqlal Javan:*

The ball passed by Tabatabaei. Thanks God, Bezik was <u>not a goal scorer</u> forward (R).

In the above clause, the reporter is underestimating Tabatabei's inability to take the ball or to stop it. Here, again, one may compare how one single action is reported by the reporters of the rival teams.

Articles 3 and 4

These articles, too, are taken from *Esteqlal Javan* and *Pirouzi*, respectively. Article 3 gives comments on a return game held in Tehran between Esteqlal and a team from Saudi Arabia, Alittehad, in the Asian Soccer Clubs Championship. The result was a 1-1 draw, resulting in the advancing of Alittehad to the next round and the elimination of Esteqlal. Article 3 is, in fact, the comments made by one of the caretaker coaches of Esteqlal on the game, excerpted from *Esteqlal Javan*; Article 4, presents a commentary printed in *Pirouzi*.

Grammar

Table 3 presents the grammatical features of Articles 3 and 4, respectively.

Table 3

Discoursal features of articles 3 & 4

	Syntagmatic				**Modality**	**Transformational**
Feature	T	NT	R	Total	MOD	NOM
Article 3	5 (17.8%)	11 (39.3%)	12 (42.9%)	28 (100%)	14 (50%)	2
Article 4	4 (22.2%)	13 (72.3%)	1 (5.5%)	18 (100%)	4 (22.2%)	7

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As Table 3 shows, the two articles use different strategies representing the same event. While transactives and relationals outnumber in Article 3, nontrasactives and nominalization are found more frequently in Article 4. The percentages of transactives in both articles are approximately the same and in both articles, especially Article 4, they are considerably lower than nontransactives. However, since the articles are about a match, one expects to see more transactives showing causal relations.

Now, it is important to consider that the situation here is somewhat more complicated than the previous articles. Regarding Article 4, the reason for the predominance of nontransactives over transactives might be the fact that, on the one hand, since the writer belongs to the rival magazine (*Pirouzi)*, and hence not supporting Esteqlal, obviously, he has not used transactives with the players of Esteqlal functioning as agents. However, since the rival of Esteqlal in that particular match has been a foreign team, he has preferred not to bluntly use transactives with the players of Alittehad as agents, not to offend the Iranian readers. As an alternative, he has preferred nontransactives to blur the distinction between the actor and the affected. In this way, he, quite conservatively, in deep, supports the foreign team and criticizes Esteqlal, without creating a negative attitude in an Iranian reader. For example, see the following clause:

In this game, the Arabs played <u>better</u> than us both individually and tactically (NT).

In the above clause, although the writer introduces Alittehad as the superior team of the match, he does not candidly appreciate it. Neither does he sharply criticize Esteqlal and describe them as a weak and inferior team. Rather, he has just made a comparison and used the word *better*, which indicates that Esteqlal was good too, but not as good as Alittehad.

In the following clause, too, the writer has appreciated Alittehad implicitely, and has considered planning as the underlying cause of the

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success of Alittehad. This indicates the lack of planning on the part of Esteqlal.

Alittehad had a very good planning for the game.

As a whole, among all the nontransactive clauses, in 6 cases, the agents are the Arabs, and only in 4 instances the players of Esteqlal are the agents. With respect to the latter, all the cases are expressed with a modal and negative status, and in none does the writer talk of an action in which the players of Esteqlal have achieved some success. In any case, when the writer talks of a relative success, he rejects it with a sentence using a modal or a negative status. Look at the following clauses:

Of course, in some occasions during the game, Esteqlal apparently played better (NT). However, it was just because of sending long balls over the goal of the rival team not pre-planned tactics (R).

In Article 3 (by *Esteqlal Javan*), too, the number of transactives is in minority. This may be due to the fact that Esteqlal has not had a good performance in the game and, hence, the coach has not been able to use transactives to talk about the players of Esteqlal as agents. Nevertheless, unlike Article 4, the predominant syntagmatic forms are those of relationals and nontransactives. In the case of the latter, in almost all sentences, except for two, again unlike Article 4, the agents are the players of Esteqlal. Indeed, since Alittehad was the winner team (and in fact the actor) and they had the match in their control throughout the game, had the writer used transactives, he should have used the player of Alittehad as the agents. Thus, he has used nontransactives in which there is no need for an affected and, at the same time, he has been able to show the players of his team as the agents. In this way, though the reader cannot see any action, he can see the players of his favorite team as the agent of all the actions in the article. See the clauses, below:

our young players acted a bit immaturely(NT) and because of the atmosphere of the stadium played emotionally(NT).

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With regard to relationals, two functions can be discussed here. Firstly, using realtionals allows only a limited realization of transparent causal processes. The result will be the mystification of these processes. Thus in Article 3, the coach, instead of directly showing the actor and the affected, and the performance of the actor in an actional form, has used relationals to mystify the process, for instance:
Although our rival was a very good team, we were able to lead the game in Tehran until the 90th minute.

Furthermore, another function of using relationals is passing value judgment. In the case of Article 3, the high number of relationals indicates that the writer has been rather judgmental. He has used a high number of relationals and the adjectives that overestimate the ability of the rival team. Moreover, the coach, in sentences that present Esteqlal players as young and emotional, has actually tried to justify the loss:
However, Esteqlal is a rather young team.

With regard to nominalization, in Article 4, you can see 7 cases (*presence, brilliant performance, ball maintenance, creating good opportunities, supporting each other, individual and team play,* and *sending)* which are mostly used to describe the actions of the players of Alittehad for the same reason as the writer has used nontransactives. That is, he has used nominalization to appreciate the foreign team but in a way not to offend the Iranian readers. In fact, using nominalization has the same function as agentless passive, i.e., deletion of the actor and thus reducing his effect on the action. In Article 3, however, one cannot see a significant number of nominalized forms.

Modality
The presence of the modal verbs expressing uncertainity and ambiguity, as shown below, appears to be very important and functional in carrying out the intention of the text producer. In Article 3, among the total number of clauses (28), in 14 clauses the writer has used modality, comprising 50% of all clauses. In contrast, in Article 4, this number is four, making up 22.2% of all cases (see Table 3).

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In the case of Article 3, modal status is mostly indicated through modal adverbs such as *probably, certainly*, and verbs having a modal sense like *think*, and *hope*. There are also some instances of the use of the modal auxiliary *could*, especially used in conditional sentences.

The large number of modalizers in Article 3 indicates considerable fear on the speaker's part. Thus, in this article which is a commentary given by the caretaker coach of Esteqlal, the loser, instead of giving the reasons for this loss and apologizing to the fans, through using modality, has tried to justify the loss and to protect his utterances from criticism. In other words, he has tried not to accept the blame and make excuses for the loss. Look at the following clauses:

And maybe, if we had not played emotionally at the last minute, we could have defeated our rival in the extra time.

As you see, three modals, i.e., *maybe*, *could*, and *certainly,* have been used by the coach. Here, instead of saying, *we played emotionally, and thus, we lost the game*, he has used these modalizers to increase the complexity and ambiguity of his speech and, thus, mystify the process and avoid any criticism. As a result, the reader does not put the blame on him and his team.

Unlike Article 3, in Article 4, there are just 3 cases of modality expressed through the use of *would, could*, and *can*. The first two refer to the effect of the presence of the spectators. Here, the writer, in order not to offend the spectators who are mostly the readers of the papers, does not directly state that spectators have not had any positive influence on the performance of the players of Esteqlal; rather, he has used modality to state it in an indirect way.

Some of the Blues [color of the jersey of Esteqlal team] had imagined that the presence of a huge crowd in the stadium would negatively affect the performance of the Arabic team.
The presence of more than 70000 spectators could not hinder the brilliant performance of Alittehad.

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Vocabulary

Table 4 presents the number/percentage of ideologically-loaded vocabulary items used in Article 3 and Article 4.

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Table 4
Ideologically-loaded vocabulary used in articles 3&4

Article	**Article 3 (*Esteqlal Javan*)**							**Article 4 (*Pirouzi*)**						
Load	+		-		neutral		total	+		-		neutral		total
Team	Al	E	Al	E	Al	E		Al	E	Al	E	Al	E	
No.	3	9	0	8	3	23	46	8	1	0	5	9	9	32
%	13	39	0	35	13	8	100	25	3	0	16	29	29	100

As Table 4 reveals, about 40% of the words referring to Esteqlal, used by the caretaker coach of the team, are positively loaded, while only 13% of those addressing the Arab team, who has been the winner, are positive. In fact, one expects the adjectives referring to the Arab team to have a negative load and those referring to Esteqlal a positive one. However, things are not that straightforward. That is, the only two adjectives referring to the Arab team, i.e., *very good* and *the most serious*, both overestimate this team and exaggerate about it. The reason might be the fact that the coach has exaggerated about the Arab team to justify the loss of his team. In other words, he has tried to convey to the reader the idea that since the Arab team has been so powerful and skillful, one cannot put the whole blame for the loss on his team, i.e. Esteqlal.

Likewise, the words referring to Esteqlal are not exactly what one might expect. In fact, some of them cannot be clearly classified as being positive or negative; *emotional*, *young*, and *a lot of*, for example. This ambivalence, on the one hand, helps the coach to use the relatively negative side of the meaning of the adjectives to justify the loss, and to use the positive side, on the the other hand, not to offend the players and the fans of this team. For instance, in the clauses below, he actually means that the players of Esteqlal acted quite illogically and unskillfully, but since these words have quite negative loads, he has preferred to use such words as *immaturely* and *emotional*.

Our young players acted a bit immaturely and because of the atmosphere of the stadium played emotionally.

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There are words with more or less positive loads in Article 3, but they are used in the sentences with a modal status; for example, the adjective *easy* and *good* in the following clauses:

We could have had an easy way up.
I hope we can acquire good result in the next year matches.

In fact, since Esteqlal has not won the game, the coach is so carful in employing these adjectives. Nonetheless, in order to reduce the bad effect of the loss on the part of the fans--the readers of the newspaper--he has used positively loaded adjectives but in an ambiguous way. The only adjective which has some negative load is *immature*. However, it is an adjective which, in spite of having an apparent negative sense, does not convey a negative idea to the reader because immaturity is an inevitable characteristic which is not stable and can be reduced with the passing of the time.

In contrast, in Article 4, 25% of the words with an ideological significance, all with more or less positive loads, refer to Alittehad; for instance, words such as *better*, *pre-planned*, *brilliant*, and *logic*. Words like these, which are mostly adjectives, all indicate the superiority of the Arab team. However, what is of utmost importance here is that since the writer does not want to evidently support a foreign team against a national one, he has used these adjectives in a very conservative way. For example, the adjective *better* is a comparative adjective; it may apparently show the reader that Esteqlal also played well but the Arabs were better, instead of saying that the Arabs played well and the Iranians badly. In addition, such adjectives as *pre-planned*; that is, in spite of appreciating the rival team, again in a conservative way, could indicate the fact that Esteqlal did not have a good plan for the game. Nonetheless, it does not evidently indicate that the Arabs were better than Esteqlal in all aspects. In this way, the writer appreciates the Arabs, shows the weakness of Esteqlal, but does not offend the readers at the same time.

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Moreover, in Article 4, other words, some with positive (only 3%) and some with relatively negative loads (16%), refer to Esteqlal. Those with positive sense are used in the sentences with modal and, at the same time, with a negative concept. For instance, the positive effect of the word *good* in the following clause is immediately overruled in the following clause by using the disclaimer *but*;

Of course, Esteqlal had a couple of good chances (R), (3) but they did not use them

Conclusions

Examining the ways the articles exercise control over the perception of the readers, the researchers have noticed that sports texts, like other texts can be ideologically loaded to manipulate and/or control the audience. In such texts, the reporters, indeed, do provide the readers with the information about the matches and important events that happen in them. However, their perception of the events may be very much different from the original event.

In this study, the selected texts turned out to be different from each other with respect to their accounts of the events. Both texts tend to share information about the event and claim that they possess the required information about the event and wish to communicate it with the readers. However, after analyzing the texts, it is understood that they are not just sharing information, but are attempting to make the readers take their approach of representing the reality.

As noticed above, in the discourse concerning Persepolis and Esteqlal, the rival teams, is depicted as the *weak* one*,* while 'ours' is *active* and *careful*. The discourse points to the responsible agency of 'our' team when it wins, but blames other circumstances to justify the loss. Such a discourse displaces attention from what really happened to the reporter's intention of what he wishes to pose. Indeed, this drives the audience away from the real cause of winning or losing the game. Van Dijk (2008), in this regard, asserts that one of the prominent elements in producing/reproducing power relation is to have "access to discourse

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and communicative events."(p. 167). As noticed above, depending on who the reporter is, i.e., who has access to the communicative event, the home and rival teams may be represented differently.

The plenty of examples, drawn from the texts, show how both sides use formal linguistic features to encode their respective ideological positions. Consequently, they show the events as they themselves perceive them and want the reader to see them in a similar way. As a result, the readers ' perceptions of the events are usually expected to be formed on the basis of what the writer has conveyed, not on the basis of what it has really been.

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