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# **Participation & Identity**

**Empirical Investigations of States and Dynamics**



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Jan Chovanec

# **‘Nice try, loser’: Participation and Embedded Frames of Interaction in Online Sports Commentaries**

**Abstract:** This article develops the theoretical notion of embedded participation frameworks found in some new genres of digital media communication. Based on data from live online sports commentary, it identifies how several recursively embedded interactional frames are employed in the text. The analysis concentrates on utterances that constitute ‘vertical’ interactions, cutting across the boundaries of the frames. Attention is paid to discourse representation and synthetic addressivity, which concerns the vertical transposition of real or hypothetical utterances from the lower-level interactional frames (typically the sports field or the stadium) into the media frame, and the journalist’s production of utterances addressed to participants located in the other frames. It is argued that while such vertical utterances can be speculative and fictional, the reconfigurations of the participant roles enhance the ‘pseudo-dialogism’ of the text and contribute to an internally variable and dynamic structure of the live text coverage.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest among linguists in the study of participation frameworks (Brock 2015; Chovanec 2016, 2017; Clark 1996; Dynel 2011; Haugh 2013), i.e. the interactional arrangement of the speech event, broken up into various speaker and hearer roles (Chovanec & Dynel 2015; Goffman 1981). Scholars have proposed increasingly complex models for various forms of authentic as well as fictional discourses (Brock 2015; Babel 2008; Dynel 2014), paying attention to the multiplicity of participant roles on the production as well as the reception side of communication (Bell 1991; Goffman 1981; Haugh 2013; Irvine 1996; Levinson 1988; O’Keeffe 2006). Research has shown that many specific media formats have innovative participation arrangements, both in the broadcast media (e.g. candid camera; Brock 2015), online news sites (e.g. live text commentary; Chovanec 2015, 2018) and the social media (e.g. message reposting on Twitter; Draucker 2015). However, most of the research considers participants who are – in one way or another – present in the interactional frame, and the communication is thus organised, metaphorically speaking, in a horizontal manner.

Yet, relatively little attention has been paid to the vertical complexity of participation frameworks, i.e. situations when certain participation roles and positions become ‘imported’ into the current context by means of various forms of intertextuality, resulting in the recursive transposition of multiple embedded frames. As Goffman observed in his pioneering study on footing, “we not only embed utterances, we embed interaction arrangements” (1981: 153). In other words, when people report prior utterances made by other discourse participants, they do more than merely reproduce the original utterances: They actually transplant an aspect of the original situation involving the original interlocutors. No matter whether the utterances are recontextualised or put to new uses, traces of the original interactional arrangement in which the utterances appeared remain and come to be reflected in the new text as a result of the process of embedding. This way, a participation framework can be conceptualised as a set of potentially multiple frames with a number of embedded interactional arrangements (Chovanec 2015: 74), multiple layerings (Goffman 1981: 154) or discourse levels (Culpeper & Kytö 2010). This is an extension of the more common conceptualisation of broadcast and telecinematic talk on two communicative levels (also known as dual articulation), involving talk between the in-frame participants (e.g. speakers in a studio or characters in a film scene) and the television audience (Brock 2011; Fetzer 2006; Scannell 1991).

To this end, the present paper sets out to probe such embedded interactional arrangement in the digital media genre of online sports commentary, identifying ways how utterances produced in other interactional frames (e.g., in the pitch among football players) are incorporated into the live text commentary. More specifically, it traces how real and hypothetical utterances from embedded frames are discursively represented in the media text, and how addressivity is used to construct fictitious interactions across media frame boundaries.

## **2. Live Online Sports Broadcasting**

Live text commentaries (LTCs) constitute an innovative genre of online sports broadcasting that appeared in the early 2000s. Providing live coverage of unfolding events in the written mode, these texts have become characteristic of modern journalism on many Internet news sites. Some of the typical features of live text commentaries include the incremental production in time-stamped posts (Chovanec 2018; Jucker 2006), with the text being produced in a ‘live’ manner, i.e. contemporaneously with the event that it describes (cf. Marriott 2007; Scannell 2014). This has a significant effect on the narrative structure of the text. LTCs deviate dramatically from standard news coverage: Since the outcome is not known at the time of production of the news text, the live news report

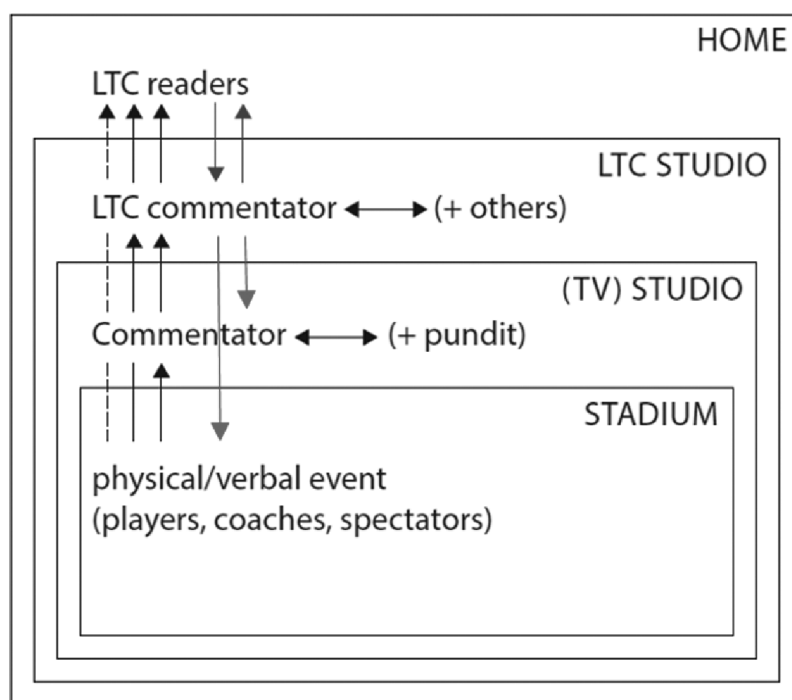
cannot have the familiar inverted pyramid structure<sup>1</sup> characteristic of standard news articles written after the termination of the news event (Chovanec 2010; Jucker 2010). Thus, it presents the reported reality in a linear and iconic manner, i.e., with its structure corresponding to the unfolding news event.

Although live text commentaries are produced in the written mode, they contain many typical features of spoken language, such as expletives, exclamations and emotive expressions (Chovanec 2008, 2018; Jucker 2006; Lewandowski 2012; Meier-Vieracker 2021; Steensen 2011). Such linguistic characteristics are also attested for other languages than English (Pérez-Sabater et al. 2008; Werner 2016, 2019). Some forms of online sports broadcasts incorporate reader comments, as well as draw on other sports commentators' verbalisations of the event. This results in intricate pseudo-dialogical structures (Chovanec 2015, 2018) that surpass the usual two-level participation framework typically found in media broadcasts (Fetzer 2006), represented by the canonical news interview where one communicative frame consists of the interviewer and interviewee (and possibly the studio audience), and another includes the non-present TV audience positioned into the role of the overhearer (Goffman 1981; Heritage 1985).

Due to the reasons specified above, online sportscasting represents a particularly suitable locus for the investigation of what specific interactional frames are established and how various pre-existing and embedded interactional arrangements are discursively reflected and realised in the text of the sports commentary. This will enable us to see how horizontal interactions occurring within lower-level frames are incorporated into higher-level frames, and how utterances produced by sports commentators can be designed as vertically oriented speech acts, i.e., those that cut across the boundaries of the frames whenever they become directed at or explicitly addressed to participants in the embedded frames (see the downward facing arrows in Figure 1 below). Understandably, the latter do not have an actual reception footing in the overall participation framework, yet utterances may be directed at or addressed to the audience, giving them the status of pseudo recipients or addressees. This research then allows us to gain insight into the juxtaposition and the interplay of the voices and identities of the non-present and pseudo (or even fictitious) participants on the one hand and those who occupy actual production and/or reception roles in the participation framework.

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1 The pyramid structure is characterised by the presence of all the important information (who, what, when, where, how) at the beginning of the text. Such an initial 'summary' is to be found in the journalistic lead and the headline. This pattern of text organisation contrasts with standard narrative texts that manifest a gradual linear development of the story, leading to a final culmination (Labov & Waletzky 1967).



**Figure 1:** Vertical (across-the-frame) and horizontal interactions in online sports commentary (Chovanec 2018: 116, modified)

### 3. Material and Analysis

The material analysed in this article comes from a corpus of online sports commentaries from the British online newspaper *The Guardian*. The data include all LTCs produced by the paper's professional sports journalists during two international football championships (Euro 2008 and World Cup 2010). The data, which comprise the live online coverage of all 93 matches during those two events, were retrieved from the newspaper's website immediately after their online publication and remain publicly accessible in its web archive. While the entire data set, consisting of 324,194 words, has been used for a comprehensive pragma-linguistic characterisation of the new genre (Chovanec 2018), the qualitative analysis presented in this article draws on a subset of four match reports that are, arguably, the most important ones in the entire data set.

These four reports cover the final four matches of the 2010 World Cup, thus marking the culmination of the entire sports event as well as of its coverage in the *Guardian* newspaper: (1) Germany vs. Spain (Ger vs. Spa; semi-final), (2) Uruguay vs. Netherlands (Uru vs. Neth; semi-final), (3) Uruguay vs. Germany (3<sup>rd</sup> place play-off), and (4) Netherlands vs. Spain (final). The respective live commentaries, amounting to a subset of 19,823 words, are representative in terms of the discursive features and strategies found throughout the corpus, though their

average length of 4,956 words is – presumably due to the key importance of the matches covered – somewhat longer than the average length of a LTC during the 2010 World Cup (3,833 words).

The data were manually processed to identify those posts where the commentator<sup>2</sup> goes beyond merely describing action on the pitch, making utterances that contain traces of verbal interactions outside of the commentator's own interactional frame. Typically, this involves the commentator mediating speech that either originates in other interactional frames or goes across the boundaries of such frames. The analysis has indicated five major categories of how such embedded frames are included in the live text commentary. They include: the commentators' mediation of spectators' reactions (Section 3.1), of players' mutual reactions to each other (Section 3.2) as well as of other utterances made in the field without being addressed to any specific addressee (Section 3.3). However, attention is also paid to instances when the commentators actually produce utterances directed to addressees outside of their own immediate interactional frame, namely to fictional recipients (Section 3.4) and the players on the pitch (Section 3.5).

### 3.1 Mediating Spectators' Reactions

The interactional frames embedded in the online sports commentary frame include various forms of verbal interaction, including communication which occurs between (a) players of the same team, (b) players from the two opposing teams, (c) players and referees, (d) players and coaches, and (e) players/referees/coaches and the audience (cf. Gerhardt 2014). Another distinct participation status and corresponding identity, however, belongs to the spectators at sports events. While they might be viewed as having a role akin to that of the first-frame audience in television programmes such as interviews and talk shows, they occasionally have a production status as well because they have not only physical but also audible presence in the stadium. Their verbal and emotional reactions, thus, form an inseparable part of the most deeply embedded participation framework, and can be mediated by means of various forms of discourse representation in the media broadcast frame.

A classic example of how such spectator reactions are mediated occurs when sports commentators describe the atmosphere of the match or the audience's reactions, cf.:

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2 Since all the commentators in the data analysed in this article were written by male commentators, I use the generic pronoun "he" to refer to the professional position of a "sports commentator".

Example 1 **ET 11 min:** The keeper's on his backside and stranded, but the ball sails right off the post and into the side netting. Most of stadium thought that was in. The corner... nah. (Neth vs. Spa, extra time, 11 min)<sup>3</sup>

Here, after observing the mass reaction of the audience and, based on the audience's vocal response, the commentator has inferred that the spectators in the stadium mistakenly thought a goal had been scored ("Most of stadium thought that was in"). The inclusion within the media frame of a description of the spectators' involvement from the embedded first frame could, in this case, be interpreted as a compensation for the online media audience's inability to see what is going on in the field since their experience of the sports event is based entirely on the textual commentary in the written mode. This dependence on the textual representation of events is a feature shared with spoken radio broadcasts, where some degree of background noise from the spectators in the stands is typically audible, adding colour to the radio commentator's spoken words.

Written online and spoken radio commentaries thus verbally encode selected aspects of the audience's behaviour belonging to or originating in the first frame. The media reporting includes references to the audience's involvement in order to provide a full account of the sports event because what matters in such spectator events is not only the players' performance but also the surrounding reactions, as well as the relationship between the two. The participation status of the first-frame audience, physically present at the location of the event, is evidenced through various means that attest to the fact that the production role of the spectators, albeit very limited, needs to be acknowledged. Thus, the stadium audience participates verbally as well as non-verbally, e.g., through shouting, applauding, booing, chanting, singing, waving banners, playing musical instruments, performing Mexican waves, etc.<sup>4</sup>

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3 In LTC, the commentator's posts typically open with the time stamp highlighted in bold, but sometimes (particularly before and right after the match) with a textual element (see Examples 4 and 5 below). The posts here are reproduced as they appeared on the Guardian news site.

4 Spectators' banners and other elements of a textual and non-textual nature can also be framed by their authors as communicative acts that specific spectators intend as vertical (across-the-frames) interactions between themselves and unspecified absent recipients, e.g. hoping they will be selected in the crowd by the camera and be included in a broadcast to the media audience in the media frame. In other words, some spectators thus strive to achieve a participation status in the media frame and penetrate into a frame that is otherwise closed to them and beyond their control. In this way, they force themselves to 'leak' into the media frame.



Two additional examples of how the production role of the audience (i.e., in this case, the spectators in the stadium) is represented for the benefit of the media audience in the commentaries are reproduced below. These extracts differ in the addressivity of the spectators' reactions; in the first, the commentator mediates the spectators' vocal involvement in the first frame (namely "booing") that is directed at the referee – as the addressee of their reaction – who failed to spot an apparent foul:

Example 2 **31 min**: More controversy! This is turning into quite a spiteful encounter. Van Bronckhorst seemed to catch Cavani in the face with his hand as the Uruguayan awaited a cross. The ref saw nothing awry but many fans did, and their [sic] booing vociferously as [sic] the failure to award a penalty. (Uru vs. Neth, 31 min)<sup>5</sup>

As the commentator's formulation makes it clear ("The ref saw nothing awry but many fans did"), the spectators' vocal reaction discursively represented in the commentator's post is supposedly meant to communicate their disagreement and dissatisfaction with the referee ("booing vociferously"). Such collective booing expresses a highly disaffiliative reaction and has been found to be a common and coordinated reaction among audience members in various contexts (cf. Clayman 1993).

In the second extract, the spectators direct their communication at a specific player, once again in a collective display of negative evaluation and disagreement. Significantly, the commentator's description of the match in this post exclusively concerns what is happening in the stands (rather than on the pitch), to which his speculation about a hypothetical future frame is added, in which he may enjoy the status of a recipient of the sound of the musical instrument produced by local audiences:

Example 3 **34 min**: Suarez is getting dog's abuse from the crowd whenever he touches the ball, by the way. Everyone stops playing their vuvuzelas in order to boo. I'm going to miss the vuvuzelas. Unless they start turning up at British grounds, in which case I'll sit back and enjoy the indignant blustering they'll cause. (Uru vs. Ger, 34 min)

The audience collectively assumes the author role in the first frame by shouting verbal abuse, playing (and not playing) vuvuzelas and making booing sounds. The players in the field are positioned as the intended addressees of these

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5 Original spelling preserved, including two obvious spelling mistakes in the commentator's post.

disaffiliative acts, which are further mediated through live broadcast to other recipients (audiences) through the media frame. While the audience's behaviour becomes the subject of subsequent talk in the higher-order frames (i.e., the audience's reactions directly inspire further talk by the commentator(s) and other recipients), it also occasionally incites the reaction of the other participants who are physically present in the first frame. After scoring a goal, for instance, some players will perform a goal celebration that may comprise some verbal and non-verbal content they directly address to the spectator audience in the stadium. For instance, when a player puts a palm behind his ear, the gesture conventionally signals the player's reply to either the audience's boos previously received as criticism or the audience's verbal abuse directed at the player for whatever reason (cf. Turner 2012). All those are phenomena that constitute a frame of interaction between the participants – a frame in which numerous semiotised meanings are exchanged both iconically and symbolically, i.e. through behaviour, gestures and language.

### 3.2 Mediating Players' Reactions

The nature of the sports event, which unfolds within the interactional frame between the sports people (football players in this case), is predominantly physical. While some verbal utterances are produced between the players, they do not constitute the core of the event, and thus typically have a marginal and only incidental role.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, they do not get reported, and thus re-mediated into the media frame, simply because there is rarely direct access to the verbal interactions between players; cameras transmit the image but typically not the words.

However, there are cases when first-frame verbal interactions become so prominent that they not only affect the physical interaction but also become the actual focus of extensive subsequent talk in the media frames and beyond. A classic example here is the incident from the 2006 football World Cup final

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6 Different kinds of media events assign different importance to either the verbal or the non-verbal interaction between first-frame interactants. Thus, in sports events, the audience's primary interest lies in the observation of the physical (non-verbal) interaction; the verbal interaction between players does not constitute the core of the event and is merely an accessory. By contrast, in some other media genres, such as the news interview (Clayman & Heritage 2002), the verbal interaction is of primary interest and physical interaction (if any) is usually marginal. Yet another arrangement is found in talk shows (Thornborrow 2015), where the audience is positioned as a recipient of both verbal and non-verbal interaction: Much humour, for instance, depends on the way it is performed on stage (or acted out between characters in sitcoms).

between France and Italy, during which an altercation between the French football player Zinedine Zidane and the Italian Marco Materazzi resulted in Zidane's infamous headbutt that earned him a red card. The incident was provoked by verbal abuse from Materazzi but, since there is no access to the first-frame verbal interactions between players in the field, widespread speculation instantly emerged about what the offending utterance may have been, with commentators and speech experts even trying to lip-read Materazzi's words. Since none of the players commented on the utterance subsequently and the actual utterance remained unknown at the time, the mysterious nature of the verbal interaction between the first-frame participants was heavily discussed by sports commentators (see the analysis of the coverage of the incident in several national TV broadcasts in Lavric et al. 2008). Interestingly enough, it also stimulated the possible reconstruction of the interaction in various other frames, with one of the most unusual being Materazzi's own book published later that year and listing dozens of possible utterances (Materazzi & Bantcheva 2006).<sup>7</sup>

As regards first-frame verbal interactions between players and referees, these are also likely to be picked up by the media and commented on in other frames, even though, as mentioned above, the content of the verbal exchanges is typically open to speculation due to the lack of direct access to the words spoken. Often, the interactions are little more than emotional outbursts over pointed moments of a game, e.g., when players protest a disallowed goal or demand that an opponent be booked for a violent tackle. The audiences (i.e., stadium spectators and TV viewers) witness such interactions and are left to infer from the situational context what the content of the utterances may have been.<sup>8</sup>

Such speculation is found in the following examples, where the commentator describes the emotional outbursts of denial of the result (Example 4) as well as

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7 While Materazzi stated that the genuine utterance that was made in the field was indeed included in the book, he failed to specify which one of the many possibilities it actually was. In a 2007 interview, he conceded that he had said "I prefer the whore that is your sister" in response to Zidane's ironic statement "If you want my shirt so much I'll give it to you afterwards", motivated by Materazzi pulling his shirt shortly before (Coggin 2014).

8 Such interactions, while often merely ritual displays of emotions, are, nonetheless, kept within some limits. They are constrained and regulated by the rules of the game: Certain abusive utterances and excessive protestations constitute bookable offences. There are also cases of alleged racial abuse that are subject to more serious punishments (Chovanec in print).

the discussions between players over the result and the progression of the match (Example 5):

Example 4 **AND THAT'S IT!!! SPAIN ARE THE WORLD CHAMPIONS!!!** Van Bommel and Sneijder are screaming at the officials, but it's not going to matter. (Neth vs. Spa, 90 min)

Example 5 **Full-time:** Holland are into the World Cup final. There's a bit of a ruckus as they celebrate and some Uruguayan players express their displeasure with a few of them as well as with the referee. No doubt they are unhappy about van Bommel's persistent fouling and Holland's second goal. [...] (Uru vs. Neth, full-time)

In Example 5, on the basis of the argumentative and emotive behaviour of the players ("a bit of a ruckus"; "express their displeasure"), the commentator speculates about the reasons for such behaviour (cf. "No doubt they are unhappy about"), adding his own evaluation of the match ("about van Bommel's persistent fouling and Holland's second goal"). In this way, the verbal reactions are speculative, and the commentator uses the imaginary utterances of the players to pass his own final assessment of the match. Thus, such speculative utterances are employed in the media frame with a different function: to provide opinionated commentary, rather than describe the match events.

A similar situation occurs in Example 6, where we find the commentator's speculation about the content of a player's squabble with a linesman that led to his punishment shortly before:

Example 6 **ET 28 min:** Mathijsen is booked for smashing the ball into the ground in a fit of pique with the linesman. I wonder if he mentioned Robben's free kick and the phantom corner. (Neth vs. Spa, extra time, ET 28 min)

Clearly, a particular frame can be represented even if no information about its actual content is available. Thus, while in the vuvuzela extract above (Example 3), the commentator discursively constructs a fictional future frame in which he might appear as the recipient of fans' musical productions, here he reports on an actual frame of interaction that has just occurred. Since commentators are left to their speculations only, the epistemic status of the embedded utterances that belong to the first frame is mostly that of possibility (and hardly ever certainty). While commentators as well as all other spectators can observe that a first-frame verbal interaction (at the stadium) is occurring, they have no way of knowing what exactly is going on, save what appears as relevant in a given situational context.

### 3.3 Mediating Non-addressive Utterances

Another type of utterances mediated by sports commentators from the embedded participation frame includes verbal reactions which are not addressed to any specific addressees present in the player's immediate participation framework. Typically, such utterances are purely expressive rather than referential. They include emotive utterances that, despite being "performed" in front of an audience, do not presuppose a potentially reciprocating and interacting interlocutor. Such non-dialogical utterances can include shouts, screams and other articulated sounds (and even gestures) accompanying a person's expression of emotions, as in the following example:

Example 7 **90 min:** Blatter and Zuma edge across to the platform and give the keeper the prize. He lifts it into the air, screams with joy for a few seconds, then hands it over in order to sob a while. Scenes of pure joy, as you'd imagine. (Neth vs. Spa, 90 min)

Here, the sports commentator describes a non-dialogical verbal outburst by a first-frame participant ("screams with joy for a few seconds"). Although the utterance made by the player is purely expressive, it is observed simultaneously by multiple recipients present in the various communicative frames (in the field, in the TV studio, as well as in the TV viewers' homes). While not addressed to any specific addressee, similar emotive reactions and accompanying utterances seem to be designed in a universal way, namely as reaching out to all potential recipients regardless of their participant status. Such utterances may, thus, result in a local re-configuration of participant roles and the suspension of some of the boundaries between the mutually embedded interactional frames.

### 3.4 Producing Addressive Utterances to Fictional Recipients

While all of the examples above illustrate utterances made within the embedded frame where the physical action of the sports event takes place, commentators – as well as any other speakers – can also include in their talk other utterances from non-present, sometimes pre-existing frames. Thanks to such intertextuality, utterances made in different contexts can be transplanted into new texts in order to suit the commentator's purposes.

An extensive example of such an intertextual transfer is documented in Example 8, where the sports commentator – while providing a historical overview of several World Cup final matches – uses two direct quotes and addresses

two distinct addressees in his brief account of the memorable 1938 match between Italy and Hungary. As a result, he constructs a text that is complex not only with regards to its intertextually but also the multiple interactional frames that are skilfully integrated in the overall participation framework:

Example 8 **1938**: Italy 4-2 Hungary. Bumbling Benito Mussolini sent a message to the Italians before this game. “Vincere o morire!” it read. Win or die. After the game, Hungary’s defeated keeper Antal Szabó said: “I may have let in four goals but at least I saved their lives.” Nice try, loser, but the note was just a rallying cry in the vernacular along the lines of “win or bust”. In other news, will you look at the lift on Pozzo’s bouffant! (Neth vs. Spa, preamble)

In the first of the two direct quotes embedded in his text, the commentator mentions a telegram message sent by Mussolini to the Italian national team (“Vincere o morire!”). The message belongs to a communicative frame constituted by a one-way verbal interaction occurring before the game in question between specific participants: Mussolini, as the Goffmanian author, and the Italian football players, the ratified recipients, to whom the words were addressed. Despite being sent by telegram, the message was of a public nature, i.e., apart from the ratified addressees (the players), other recipients were anticipated on the reception side of the participation framework. In the heated pre-WWII atmosphere of the rising fascist movement in Italy at that time, the utterance “Vincere o morire!” is alleged to have been intended in an equal measure for the footballers as well as the Italian public (and, by extension, possibly also meant as a politically motivated message for the international public).<sup>9</sup>

The other quote in the extract is an utterance made by the Hungarian goalkeeper Szabó. It is a trace from another public frame, namely a post-match evaluation of the event in which Szabó gave his opinion on his match performance to the public. Even though the quotes originate in different frames, the two utterances – by Mussolini and Szabó – are often cited side by side and their post-hoc juxtaposition generates the impression of some connection between them. The simultaneous presence of the two external voices in the text in the form of direct quotes is a basic device for representing discourse that is intertextually embedded in another text.

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9 The utterance is generally understood to have been more than a rallying cry and has been interpreted in various ways, including as a threat (Durham 2013; cf. also Amidon 2012: 110–111). There also appears some indication that the message was communicated to the Hungarian team during the match and that the Hungarians deliberately threw the game because of the possibility that the utterance may indeed have been a genuine threat rather than a hyperbolic pre-match boost of the players’ morale.

What is significant, however, is that the online journalist goes on to juxtapose the two citations with his own authorial voice by pretending to address the Hungarian goalkeeper – who has been dead since 1958 – and expressing a negative evaluation of his behaviour (“Nice try, loser...”). In this way, the commentator establishes a communicative pseudo-frame between himself as the author and the goalkeeper as the pseudo addressee of his words, while positioning the readers of the current sports commentary – in the role of the mass audience – as the real recipients. Clearly, speakers can fashion their communicative acts by designing pseudo recipient roles for interactants who are not only removed in space and time (or even dead) but also unable to physically receive the message or get involved in any way. This frame is unattainable – it is a mere rhetorical ploy. Here, it is used consciously by the commentator as an intentional discursive strategy to make his text lively, dynamic, entertaining and enjoyable for the real audience within the frame of interaction constituted by the LTC.

Last but not least, the example above also contains yet another interaction, this time between the commentator and the audience. With the utterance “...will you look at the lift on Pozzo’s bouffant!”, the commentator directly addresses the mass audience and explicitly constructs the readers as addressees by urging them to consider the accompanying photograph of the Italian team and its coach Vittorio Pozzo (not reproduced here). In this way, the commentator constructs a pseudo conversation with the audience by carving a distinct participation role for them in the message, as is common in many media contexts (cf. Chovanec 2011; Talbot 2007; Tolson 2006).

Needless to say, the use of address terms is a linguistic strategy whereby the speaker typically focuses his or her utterance on some co-present participant, at the expense of some other participants. As observed by Clayman (2010: 180; orig. emph.) in connection with their use in media interviews, address terms “*explicitly* disattend the media audience for whom the interaction is ostensibly being conducted”. In both of the above instances when the utterances are addressed to physically non-present participants (“nice try, loser [Antal Szabó]” and “will you [the readers] look”), there is no way to see how recipients – explicitly positioned as addressees through vocatives, imperatives, requests, etc. – actually react and they are thus unable to establish a true communicative frame involving a reciprocal, two-way interaction.

### 3.5. Producing Staged Addressivity

As shown in the previous section, a speaker can design his utterances for addressees who are located in frames different from the one in which he has

a production role. In that sense, the utterances are designed to cut across the boundaries of the speaker's own frame in a "vertical" manner (indicated by downward arrows in Figure 1). In the case of the live text sports commentary analysed here, the true recipients of such quasi-addressive utterances are, of course, the readers of the commentary.

The next example illustrates a relatively common strategy of such an utterance design: the production of an utterance that addresses the players in a staged one-way interaction. Here, the commentator is critical of the progression of the game to the extent that he rhetorically steps out of his frame to address the players. Communicating in the written mode, he chooses to type in capital letters to add emphasis to his words, as is the established convention in various kinds of computer-mediated communication:

Example 9 **ET 9 min**: At this rate, surely Spain will score sooner rather than... no, I'm not going to tempt fate. **WILL ONE OF YOU CLOWNS PLEASE SCORE A BLOODY GOAL???** (Neth vs. Spa, extra time, 9 min)

The use of direct address ("one of you clowns"), combined with a request for action ("please score a bloody goal") underlines the commentator's redefinition of his own communicative frame. He strategically extends it to co-opt participants who are located within another communicative frame. Obviously, the expansion of the commentator's space is only rhetorical because the boundary of the frames cannot be transgressed: There is no way that the commentator's utterance could make it through to those to whom it is explicitly addressed. This phenomenon is the result of the recursive embedding of frames: In standard communication formats, an utterance can be communicated and received within the same or a higher frame but not within any of the embedded frames. The hierarchical organization of the frames thus privileges the recontextualisation of an utterance on the higher levels, resulting in a one-way flow from lower-level to higher-level frames but not vice versa.

The possibility to formulate utterances in a way that fictionally addresses non-present participants attests to the creativity that authors apply when designing the reception format of their utterances. Thus, they can include in the reception format of their utterances two types of recipients: (a) actually existing recipients who are capable, in one way or another, to receive or access the message; and (b) those entities that are only construed as pseudo recipients, and they do not have an actual participation status. Such recipients are either (1) located in different communicative or temporal frames (and, thus, incapable of realizing their participant status as recipients of the said utterances), or (2) are entirely fictional



or non-living entities. While addressing the players (in Example 9) falls into the former type of recipient, addressing non-present and other-frame participants (in Example 8) is representative of the latter category of recipients.

#### 4. Conclusions

The data analysed in this article indicate that sports commentary, represented here by its online textual format (LTC), is grounded within a complex participation framework that involves the hierarchical embedding of several interactional frames. Since the commentators have only limited (and mediated) access to lower-level frames, the utterances produced therein are typically not known, being subject to speculation. As a result, they are typically recreated (rather than re-mediated) for the benefit of the audiences of the media text. The mediation of spectators' reactions in the stadium and the players' mutual reactions to each other often enable the commentator to pass comment on various event-related issues in an indirect way. Particularly interesting are situations when the commentator assumes the fictional production role of author on lower-level frames, addressing participants in the embedded frame. Such staged interactions cannot be directed to their recipients (whether real or not) because such recipients are located in other frames (or do not exist at all), hence they are pseudo-dialogical. Consequently, they are designed for the audience of the media texts as the primary recipients, though positioned in the reception role of bystanders.

As illustrated by the article, two dimensions of communication between interlocutors in participation frames can be distinguished: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension concerns communication on the level of participants within a given frame, while the vertical dimension cuts across the boundaries of the interactional frames (Chovanec 2015). The latter form of interactions occurs, for instance, when an interlocutor explicitly addresses his or her utterances to participants who are inaccessible (no channel link) – on account of being present in the other frames. Importantly, those utterances not only cross the boundaries of the frames but they also reconfigure the participation framework by realigning the interaction in new directions. The participation framework, representing the configuration of the diverse participant roles with respect to a given media programme, is not some static, institutionally-predetermined construct. Instead, it is shown to be a fluid, active arrangement in which roles are readjusted in the course of a media programme as a result of the speakers locally designing the communicative situation according to their aims.

Last but not least, it appears that the speaker's projection of their utterances by addressing them to specific interlocutors in the other frames leads us to the

necessity of rethinking the recipient status of some participants. Studio speakers, for instance, can speak “out” of their media production frame in two directions. First, they can synthetically address (cf. Fairclough’s 1989 notion of ‘synthetic personalisation’) the audience in order to enhance the impression of mutual contact; such utterances are duly received by their intended recipients who may or may not be able to reciprocate. The second subtype of vertical interactions appears to be more interesting: speakers can position as addressees even those persons who are participants within the embedded frame and thus do not have any opportunity of actually receiving, let alone reciprocating, the utterances that are manifestly addressed to them. Likewise, speakers can position as addressees even non-living persons or non-human entities, who are, nevertheless, accorded a specific – if only unreal or fictional – participant status within the overall participation framework as pseudo participants.

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