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Turn-by-turn and move-by-move: a multimodal analysis of live TV commentary

This paper describes the interplay between live football commentary on television, and the accompanying pictures. It demonstrates how the commentators manage play-by-play announcing (PP) and colour commentary (CC) in the light of the ever-changing events on the pitch. Despite a number of studies on sports announcer talk (SAT), a micro-analysis of multimodality in this setting has so far not been undertaken. This paper traces the unfolding nature of SAT in its dependency on the players' moves on the pitch.

Since there is no one-to-one relation between the actions on the field and PP/CC, 'Ball Out of Play' does not automatically lead to CC, or a player kicking the ball does not mechanically result in PP. Instead the commentators have to coordinate the two phases of commentary with the evolving talk and the game in progress. A number of strategies which the broadcasters use in this setting will be delineated, direct results of the ever-changing pictures and the problem that the journalists are always lagging behind, due to the nascent nature of the players' moves, and mental processing time. These factors result in different functions of SAT realized by the sportscasters for the audience.