‘WORKING YOUR WORDS’
APPRAISAL IN THE AFL POST-MATCH INTERVIEW

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This paper explores the language used by Australian Football League (AFL) footballers and Australian Broadcast Corporation (ABC) journalists in their post-match interviews broadcast on ABC (774 Melbourne) radio. From Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Appraisal is used to investigate the evaluative language expressed by the AFL footballers in their exchanges with ABC journalists. Despite the many applications of linguistics to media discourse, especially within SFL, this research is the first to analyse the language of Australian athletes in their post-match interviews. It is found that irrespective of the result of the game, ABC journalists and AFL footballers maintain a neutral stance by countering expressions of positive Attitude with negative Attitude, as well as employing Graduation and Engagement resources that reduce authorial endorsement. These findings are summarized and discussed, including reference to neutralism from Conversation Analysis. The paper goes on to claim that the tenor between AFL footballers, ABC journalists and the broadcast audience makes it difficult for AFL footballers to express authoritative evaluations. The ultimate aim is to show that AFL footballers do well to negotiate a particularly challenging register.

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Football League (AFL) is one of the largest sectors in Australia’s elite level sports industry. ‘The game is Australia’s premier spectator sport attracting more than 14 million people to watch all levels of the game across all communities’ (AFL, 2006). With the emergence of professionalism in the AFL there has been an increasing emphasis on the development of the footballers’ performance in interviews for the mass communication media. To date however, no academic research has focused on the language of AFL footballers in the media. This is also despite a growing interest in the application of linguistics to sports commentary (see Owens, 2006 for an overview).
Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (e.g., Halliday, 1978; Halliday, 1994) seeks to explain language by reference to the social context in which it operates. SFL has been successfully applied to a range of linguistic contexts, including media discourse. In fact Cotter (2001) notes that SFL provides the basis of much current work in both oral and written media texts. Following Halliday’s metafunction hypothesis, this paper will focus on the interpersonal metafunction of language: the linguistic resources speakers use to construct roles and relationships. Appraisal, from SFL, offers an ideal analytical framework to systematically identify interpersonal meanings. As defined by Martin and Rose (2003), Appraisal is concerned with evaluation: ‘the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned’ (Martin and Rose, 2003, p. 22).

Evaluation is a major feature of the post-match interview. As the interviewee, AFL footballers are expected to evaluate their performance, the performance of their team, the performance of the opposition, the opposition coach, the umpires and so on. This paper will use Appraisal to describe and quantify the evaluations expressed by both AFL footballers and ABC journalists. The Appraisal findings will then be summarized as an evaluative ‘stance’ of AFL footballers and ABC journalists (Martin and White, 2005). These findings will also be briefly discussed in relation to journalistic neutralism from Conversation Analysis (e.g., Greatbatch, 1998). The final section will explore the dialogic nature of the post-match interview, highlighting the problematic social context AFL footballers are expected to negotiate.

Overall, the paper has three aims: to contribute to research in media discourse by investigating an uncharted register; to contribute to studies of neutralism using Appraisal; and ultimately, to show that AFL footballers perform well in an interpersonally challenging register.

SUBJECTS

There are two groups of subjects whose language is analysed in this paper: AFL footballers and ABC (774 Melbourne) Radio Sport and AFL Journalists. The AFL footballers participating in this sample of post-match interviews are: Brent Harvey (BH), Jason Johnson (JJ), Andrew Kellaway (AK), Justin Longmuir (JL), Jade Rawlings (JR) and Nathan Thompson (NT). The ABC journalists participating in this sample of post-match interviews are: Stan Alves (SA), Paul Callery (PC), Tim Lane (TL) and Jim Stynes (JS).

The post-match interviews were obtained from the ABC’s (774 Melbourne) Radio Sport and AFL Department. The data were interviews from rounds twelve, thirteen and...
fourteen of the 2001 AFL season. These rounds were chosen because they are undertaken in the middle of the AFL season and therefore carry more significance than the earlier rounds, but do not have the intensity of the final rounds. The sample for this paper comprises six interviews between ABC journalists and an AFL footballer. Three interviews involve a footballer from a team that won the game broadcast prior to interview (w) and three interviews involve a footballer from a team that lost the game broadcast prior to interview (l). The duration of each interview is approximately four minutes.

**APPRAISAL**

Lead by Martin (e.g., Martin, 2000, 2003; Martin and White, 2005), Appraisal is an analytical framework designed to identify evaluation in language, or more specifically, ‘the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations’ (Martin, 2000, p. 145). Appraisal is a superordinate term that comprises three main systems: Attitude, Graduation and Engagement (see Martin and White, 2005, p. 38 for a system network). In short, Attitude concerns the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements, and valuations, while Graduation and Engagement concern the resources that amplify and engage with Attitude.

The Appraisal framework was chosen for several reasons. First, Appraisal is grounded within a theory of language in which meanings are systematically related to the context in which they are expressed. In this case, the interpersonal meanings of Appraisal relate to the contextual variable of Tenor. Second, Appraisal incorporates two fundamental types of evaluation, which are often studied separately by linguists (see Thompson and Hunston, 2000): a speaker’s/writer’s opinion as ‘entities’ (Attitude), and a speaker’s/writer’s opinion as ‘propositions’ (Graduation and Engagement). Finally, the Appraisal literature provides a small corpus of evaluative language in English to assist in analysis.

The Appraisal system of Attitude is classified as expressing either positive or negative feelings and then according to three basic types: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation. The three basic options can be summarised as follows: Affect concerns the semantic resources used to construe emotions; Judgement concerns resources deployed for construing evaluations of behavior; and Appreciation construes the ‘aesthetic’ quality of things, for example:

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Extract 1 (l)

AK: Oh yeah I suppose he was disappointed [-Affect].
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Attitude is also simultaneously classified as either inscribed or invoked. Under the inscribed category, a single lexical item contains the positive or negative value and can be further classified according to the three main Attitude types, for example:

In contrast, invoked Attitude is realised by ‘tokens’ of neutral ideational meanings that invoke a positive or negative evaluation. In Extract 5, tokens such as ‘missed a few easy goals’ invoke a negative evaluation of the speaker’s team:

Analyzing for Attitude, especially invoked Attitude, is generally considered a challenging task (Martin, 2003, pp. 172–173). For this paper, the method of analysis of Attitude is deliberately basic so as to try and avoid any complications. Inscribed Attitude is coded as Affect, Judgement or Appreciation and will not include the more specific classifications prescribed by Martin and White (2005, pp. 50–57). In order to avoid any multiple coding, this paper will only code invoked Attitude according to positive and negative polarity and not specify the three major types of Attitude. In addition, invoked Attitude will be coded as positive or negative with respect to the footballer being interviewed. In Extract 6, the invoked Attitude is not coded as a positive evaluation of the Fremantle Football Club even though ‘they kicked the first four’. Instead, the invoked Attitude is coded as a negative evaluation of the Essendon Football Club because that is the team of the footballer being interviewed; the implication being, his teams’ performance was in some way inadequate so as to allow the opposition to score four goals:

The Appraisal systems of Graduation and Engagement can be generally classified as intersubjective resources. The Graduation resources Force and Focus work alongside
Attitude to indicate how strongly the speaker or writer feels about that Attitude. In extracts 7 and 8, the speakers raise the intensity and sharpen the ‘focus’ of their expressions of positive, inscribed Attitude. In this way, they increase their commitment to that Attitude:

**Extract 7 (l)**

TL: You’ve battled **very** [raise] hard [+Appreciation].

**Extract 8 (w)**

NT: He’s a **real** [sharpen] uh team leader [+Judgement].

In contrast, extracts 9 and 10 illustrate Graduation lexemes that lower the intensity or soften the ‘focus’ of expressions of inscribed and invoked Attitude. These resources function to decrease the speakers’ commitment to their Attitude:

**Extract 9 (w)**

JS: Were you a **little bit** [lower] worried [-Affect] when you went in,

**Extract 10 (l)**

AK: Whereas uh we sort of [soften] stopped running, [-Attitude]

Engagement resources also work alongside Attitude. However, unlike Graduation, Engagement resources do more than reflect individual states of certainty or commitment. The Engagement system developed by White (2000, 2003) follows Bakhtin’s dialogic perspective of language. According to White, Engagement resources are used by speakers to ‘negotiate a space for particular attitudes and points of view within the diversity of value positions operative in any speech community’ (White, 2000, p. 71). White’s system of Engagement distinguishes between utterances which do engage with dialogic alternatives or ‘points of view’: heteroglossic, and those which do not: monoglossic.

The heteroglossic proposition is classified into two broad and opposed categories: dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion. Dialogic contraction acts to directly reject or challenge alternate propositions and is categorised as Disclaim and Proclaim. The expressions of invoked and inscribed Attitude illustrated in extracts 11 and 12 are ‘closed down’; there is little or no dialogic space for contrary Attitude without interpersonal threat:
In contrast, dialogic expansion is ‘open’ to alternate propositions and Attitudes and is categorised as either Entertain or Attribute. The expressions of invoked and inscribed Attitude in extracts 13 and 14 are ‘open’ to contrary Attitude from an interlocutor without risking the interpersonal relationship:

Extract 11 (l)
AK: and we came through there, [+Attitude]
   but [Disclaimer] um.
   (H) Today <ct> it just didn’t [Disclaimer] work for us, [-Attitude]

Extract 12 (l)
TL: I mean [Proclaim] there was a feeling of shock [-Affect].
   And (H) obviously [Proclaim] real excitement [+Affect] among them.

In contrast, dialogic expansion is ‘open’ to alternate propositions and Attitudes and is categorised as either Entertain or Attribute. The expressions of invoked and inscribed Attitude in extracts 13 and 14 are ‘open’ to contrary Attitude from an interlocutor without risking the interpersonal relationship:

Extract 13 (w)
JJ: Probably [Entertain] the reason why they did get off to a good [+Appreciation] start,
   ’cause we didn’t man up, [-Attitude]

Extract 14 (w)
JR: I think [Entertain] the blend worked well [+Appreciation].

FINDINGS

ATTITUDE IN THE POST-MATCH INTERVIEW

Table 1 illustrates the total number of expressions of positive and negative inscribed Affect, Judgement and Appreciation as well as invoked evaluations made by the ABC journalists and AFL footballers. Table 1 (and all subsequent tables) also compares those interviews in which the AFL footballer being interviewed won the match (w) with those interviews in which the AFL footballer lost the match (l).

Table 1 shows only a small difference between the total frequencies of positive Attitude compared with negative Attitude. There is a slightly higher frequency of positive Attitude than negative Attitude expressed by both journalist and footballer when the footballer interviewed won the match (w) with those interviews in which the AFL footballer lost the match (l).

Table 1 shows only a small difference between the total frequencies of positive Attitude compared with negative Attitude. There is a slightly higher frequency of positive Attitude than negative Attitude expressed by both journalist and footballer when the footballer interviewed won the match (w) with those interviews in which the AFL footballer lost the match (l). Similarly, footballers that lost the game expressed slightly more negative Attitude compared with positive Attitude. However, the difference in frequency between expressions of positive and negative Attitude was minor given the contrasting results of the game.
Table 1 also shows that all four types of speakers in the post-match interview invoked evaluations more frequently than they expressed inscribed Attitude. Many of the invoked evaluations were simply descriptions of the game broadcast prior to interview that then invoked either positive or negative Attitude. The following extract is indicative of the kinds of invoked Attitude frequently expressed in the post-match interview:

In this example, journalist Tim Lane (TL) recalls the number of possessions (or ‘touches’ of the football) had by North Melbourne footballer, Brent Harvey. For those unfamiliar with the AFL, Tim Lane’s observation would appear to be a neutral description of a footballer’s performance. However, to receive over twenty possessions, especially in a losing side, is generally considered a successful individual performance.

As illustrated above, the footballer being interviewed was usually the target of the invoked Attitude. In fact, with the exception of a brief exchange to do with a footballer’s inability to perform karaoke, all of the targets of Attitude expressed by the ABC journalists and AFL footballers were specific to the institution of the AFL. It was found that the ABC journalists and AFL footballers also targeted more general participants from the broadcast game such as the footballers’ team, his opponents and the game itself. Coaches, umpires and other AFL specific people or institutions to do with the game were occasionally the target of invoked Attitude.

Of the inscribed expressions of Attitude, journalists and footballers most often expressed positive Appreciation. Again, the most frequent target of that positive Appreciation was the performance of the AFL footballers that participated in the game. Instead of ‘judging’ the capacity or tenacity of a footballer, ABC journalist Paul Callery (PC) evaluates the ‘quality’ of the footballers’ performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>journalist (w)</th>
<th>footballer (w)</th>
<th>journalist (l)</th>
<th>footballer (l)</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invoked</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Attitude totals in ABC post-match interviews with AFL footballers
NEGOTIATION OF ATTITUDE IN THE POST-MATCH INTERVIEW

Table 2 illustrates the frequency of exchanges between the ABC journalists and AFL footballers. The exchanges are classified according to the journalists’ initiating moves (I) and the footballers’ responding moves (R) and the Attitude expressed within those moves. Each move is classified into four types: moves that contain positive Attitude only, negative Attitude only, no Attitude and a combination of positive and negative Attitude.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude:</th>
<th>I: journalist (w)</th>
<th>R: footballer (w)</th>
<th>I: journalist (l)</th>
<th>R: footballer (l)</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no Attitude</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combination</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Exchanges and Attitude in ABC post-match interviews with AFL footballers

Table 2 shows a total of eighty-eight eliciting exchanges between the ABC journalists and AFL footballers. Of those exchanges, and irrespective of the result from the game, a high frequency of the journalists’ initiating moves comprised both positive and negative Attitude and an even higher frequency of the footballers’ responding moves comprised both positive and negative Attitude. Extracts 17 and 18 are representative of the ways in which AFL footballers, and to a lesser extent ABC journalists, managed to express both positive Attitude and negative Attitude within a single turn at talk:

Extract 16 (w)

PC: And Jason your work.

Thirty odd possessions, [+Attitude]

a fantastic [+Appreciation] performance.

(H) And you looked angelic [+Appreciation],

Extract 17 (l)

JS: I don’t know <what> what was wrong with.

Carey didn’t look like he was ready to play? [-Attitude]
In Extract 17, AFL footballer Brent Harvey (BH) responds to an invoked negative evaluation of his teammate Wayne Carey. In response, Harvey concurs with the journalists’ evaluation and expresses his own negative Appreciation of Carey’s performance: ‘wasn’t too flash’. However, Harvey immediately counters that negative Attitude using the adversative ‘but’ and a positive Appreciation of Carey’s performance: ‘thought he did ok’. Harvey then expresses more positive evaluations, although the target shifts from Carey to another teammate: ‘Spider’.  

Excerpt 18 (l)

BH: No umm.

Carey **wasn’t too flash** [-Appreciation] up forward obviously, that’s why he got moved down back.

but I thought he did **ok** [+Appreciation] down ^back.

(H) And uh I thought Spider was really **good** [+Appreciation] actually.

**He rucked all day**. [+Attitude]

and um.

So Spider done real **well** [+Appreciation] I thought.

In Extract 18, ABC journalist Jim Stynes (JS) expresses an invoked negative evaluation directed at his interviewee’s team, the Richmond Football Club: ‘you guys seem t’ (H) fall over…’. In response, AFL footballer Andrew Kellaway contradicts that negative
evaluation by recalling a recent performance in which they were victorious: ‘and we came through there’. However, Kellaway immediately counters that positive Attitude by conceding that his team was nevertheless defeated in the most recent game.

**GRADUATION IN THE POST-MATCH INTERVIEW**

Table 3 compares the frequency of Graduation resources that raised and sharpened the speakers’ propositions with Graduation resources that lowered and softened the speakers’ propositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation:</th>
<th>journalist (w)</th>
<th>footballer (w)</th>
<th>journalist (l)</th>
<th>footballer (l)</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>raise &amp; sharpen</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower &amp; soften</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Graduation in ABC post-match interviews with AFL footballers

Table 3 shows a far higher frequency of Graduation resources that decrease both the ABC journalists’ and AFL footballers’ commitment to their propositions. To varying degrees this finding is consistent with the four different types of speakers classified in Table 3. This finding is especially noteworthy since Martin and Rose explain that ‘in English we seem to have more resources for turning the volume up than down, and use them more often’ (Martin and Rose, 2003, p. 38). In Extract 19, both the footballer (JR) and journalist (TL) use the quantifications ‘little’ and ‘bit’ to distance themselves from their negative invoked Attitude:

**Extract 19 (w)**

JR: probably lacked a little bit [lower] of a target down there. [-Attitude]
So um, I’m not sure <what> what the extent of his injury is though.

TL: Were you a bit [lower] light on for men towards the end? [-Attitude]

There was also a high frequency of Graduation resources such as ‘sort of’ and ‘just’ that were used to soften the ‘focus’ of gradable categories. In Extract 20, the high frequency of these resources function to almost ‘blur’ the impact of the invoked negative Affect:
ENGAGEMENT IN THE POST-MATCH INTERVIEW

Table 4 illustrates the frequency of the heteroglossic categories of Disclaim, Proclaim, Entertain and Attribute in the post-match interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>journalist (w)</th>
<th>footballer (w)</th>
<th>journalist (l)</th>
<th>footballer (l)</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disclaim</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proclaim</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertain</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Engagement in ABC post-match interviews with AFL footballers

Table 4 shows that of the four categories of heteroglossic Engagement, speakers most often ‘entertained’ their propositions. Again, to varying degrees, this finding is consistent with all four different types of speakers classified in Table 4. In particular, it was found that the AFL footballers most often ‘entertained’ their propositions. Moreover, many of those propositions were aligned with expressions of Attitude, for example:

Extract 21 (w)

NT: <> I **suppose** [Entertain] they uh --
They **might** [Entertain] have wanted [+Affect] uh,
(H) one of their better back men ... on me up forward, [+Attitude]

In Extract 21, AFL footballer Nathan Thompson (NT) uses several expressions to ‘entertain’ or ‘leave open’ the possibility of potential rejections to his invoked, positive self-evaluation. In Extract 22, footballer Brent Harvey (BH) expresses much positive Attitude targeted at his teammate. In this case, the cognitive verb ‘think’ functions to ‘entertain’ his positive Attitude so that it is ‘open’ to any contrary, negative Attitude:
Table 4 also shows a high frequency of expressions that Disclaim or ‘close down’ the potential for alternate Attitude, most of which were the adversative conjunction ‘but’. As illustrated earlier, the main function of this adversative in the post-match interview is to contrast positive Attitude with negative Attitude and vice versa in a single turn at talk.

**THE NEUTRAL STANCE**

The stance of the ABC journalists and AFL footballers has been defined as ‘neutral’. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989, p. 356) defines neutral as ‘taking neither side in a dispute, disagreement, or difference of opinions; not inclining toward either party, view, etc.; assisting neither of two contending parties or persons’. The concept of neutralism has also been explored thoroughly in Conversation Analysis (e.g., Greatbatch, 1998; Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Rendle-Short, 2007). It is beyond the scope of this paper to review all the linguistic techniques of neutralism identified by these scholars. In short though, the focus has mainly been on turn-taking, questions and attribution. According to Greatbatch (1998, pp. 167–168), neutralism describes a manner or style of interviewing that enables interviewers to escape formal charges of bias by attributing evaluative statements to third parties, as well as producing utterances that are recognizable as questions. It is hoped the following list of Appraisal findings reveals some additional ways in which ABC Journalists and AFL footballers ‘neutralize’ within a single turn at talk.

The interpersonal ‘stance’ (Martin and White, 2005, p. 164) of both ABC Journalists and AFL Footballers in the post-match interview is presented in Figure 1.

The analysis of Attitude showed that both the ABC journalist and AFL footballer, irrespective of the result from the game, generally expressed the same amount of positive and negative Attitude. In fact, it was found that for most of the participants’ turns at talk, they would ‘counter’ expressions of positive Attitude with negative Attitude and vice versa. In essence, the journalists and footballers were able to remain neutral and avoid aligning themselves with either side by ‘taking up’ both sides. Speakers also preferred

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**Extract 22 (I)**

to express invoked Attitude so as to avoid more direct expressions of inscribed Attitude. Furthermore, of the expressions of inscribed Attitude, most were Appreciations of the footballer’s performances rather than Judgements. In this way, the speakers were able to avoid explicitly judging the character of individual footballers.

**Figure 1. The neutral stance of ABC journalist and AFL footballer**

**Attitude profile:**
- high probability of equal frequency of positive and negative Attitude
- high probability of invoked Attitude
- median probability of inscribed Appreciation

**Intersubjective profile:**
- high probability of ‘distance’ Graduation
- high probability of dialogically open Engagement
- median probability of ‘counter’ Engagement

From an intersubjective perspective, the participants often used Graduation and Engagement resources that distanced them from their expressions of Attitude, reinforcing a neutral stance. The findings show that participants more frequently expressed Graduation resources that lessened their commitment to their propositions. Similarly, the journalists and footballers most often used dialogically ‘open’ Engagement resources that lacked the speakers’ commitment and, from a dialogic perspective, enabled respondents to contradict their Attitude without serious interpersonal threat.

**CONCLUSION**

An Appraisal analysis of the AFL post-match interview has revealed a rhetoric of ‘neutrality’ in the language of both ABC journalist and the AFL footballer. The neutral stance is primarily accomplished through the technique of countering positive and negative Attitude in a single turn at talk; Graduation resources that function to reduce a speaker’s commitment; and Engagement resources that are dialogically open.

According to the ABC Code of Practice (section 4.2 and 4.3), an ABC journalist is required to be impartial, and therefore must maintain a level of neutrality (ABC, 2004).
Furthermore, the ABC journalist’s primary role is to elicit information. As such, they maintain a high level of neutrality so that the AFL footballer can feel free to respond without risking the interpersonal relationship.

This paper has shown however that the AFL footballer maintains a similar level of neutrality in their response, despite the fact that the ABC journalist never accepts or rejects their attitude. A possible explanation as to why the AFL footballers avoid making definitive evaluations is achievable through the application of SFL and a dialogic analysis of the language. In other words, we need to further consider the tenor of the post-match interview in light of these findings. Given that the ABC journalists pose no serious interpersonal threat, it is presumably the broadcast audience as overhearers whom the AFL footballers consider as interpersonally significant. But why would AFL footballers need to conform to the same neutral stance as the ABC journalists for the broadcast audience, particularly as they pose no immediate interpersonal threat since they are merely overhearers?

It is the supposition of this paper that AFL footballers are constrained by a culture inherent in Australian team sports. Within such a culture, AFL footballers must neutralise their attitude. AFL footballers are not inclined to make single, defiant positive evaluations of their own performance or that of their teams because the broadcast audience may perceive them as conceited and arrogant. Conversely, single, defiant negative evaluations of their own performance, or that of their team would potentially be perceived as a weakness and a sign of vulnerability. This ethos is inverted when evaluating the opposition. When AFL footballers evaluate the opposition’s performance as positive it is potentially perceived as pessimistic and a sign of resignation. Conversely, when the AFL footballers evaluate the opposition’s performance as negative, it is potentially perceived as arrogant. Clearly the broadcast audience cannot immediately and verbally reject an AFL footballer’s breach of this ethos. However, in time, they can respond to and reject such a breach. In this way, they can be seen as the ‘construed hearer’ (Martin and White, 2005, pp. 92–97).

In a recent radio interview broadcast on the Sports Entertainment Network (SEN), Western Bulldogs footballer Ryan Griffen was widely criticised by both the media and his own teammates for accusing his opponents, the Richmond ‘Tigers’, of ‘giving up’ and fighting amongst themselves during the game. Griffen’s negative evaluation was seen as a breach of the ethos, and the response, although not immediate, was far greater than any immediate verbal rejection from an interlocutor. Several newspaper articles were published following Griffen’s interview including: ‘Tigers deny infighting, as Eade defends and counsels Griffen’ (Wilson and Connolly, 2006, p. 3). This article provided the
Richmond Football Club with an opportunity to respond to Griffen’s comments, which they then denied. In addition, the authors of the article criticised Griffen, saying his comments ‘had offered Richmond unnecessary motivation next time the teams meet’ (Wilson and Connolly, 2006, p. 3). It was even reported that Griffen’s coach, Rodney Eade, had to counsel Griffen over the incident:

> I just said to him: “You’ve just go to learn how to work your words next time.” He hasn’t had any training or practice at it, and that’s something we’ve got to get better with and help him through that. I was more worried about how people are going to perceive him because what he said wasn’t meant to come out in that context. It wasn’t a malicious thing, just naïve (Wilson and Connolly 2006, p. 3).

It is clear that most AFL footballers are aware of the dialogic nature of the post-match interview. As discourse analysts, and applied linguists more generally, it is fundamental to foreground the social function of language. Only then can we see that AFL footballers actually do well to negotiate the post-match interview.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS (FROM DU BOIS ET AL., 1993, 45–91)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carriage return</th>
<th>Intonation unit</th>
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<td>--</td>
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<td>Word</td>
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<td>?</td>
<td>Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>Accent (stress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Lengthening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Medium pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H)</td>
<td>Inhalation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hx)</td>
<td>Exhalation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Initial</td>
<td>Restart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;&gt;</td>
<td>False start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'</td>
<td>Phonemic/orthographic symbols</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPRaisal ANALYSIS

[ ] Appraisal

+ positive Attitude

- negative Attitude

underline invoked Attitude

REFERENCES


