



REVIEW ARTICLE

A FUNCTIONAL STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH SPORTS NEWS

*Yuan Xiaowei

Jining Normal University, Inner Mongolian, China

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 10th July, 2025
Received in revised form
19th August, 2025
Accepted 27th September, 2025
Published online 30th October, 2025

Keywords:

Functional Analysis; Stylistic Analysis;
English Sports News.

*Corresponding author:

Yuan Xiaowei

Copyright©2025, Yuan Xiaowei. 2025. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to deeply explore the functional stylistic characteristics of English sports news reports, specifically covering multiple dimensions such as the lexical, syntactic, discursal, semantic, and pragmatic levels. Through a systematic analysis, it clearly presents the unique patterns of English sports news in language use, as well as how these linguistic features serve the functions of news reports—including information transmission, emotional expression, and cultural communication. It is hoped that this study will provide strong theoretical support and practical guidance for the production, translation, teaching, and other related aspects of sports news.

Citation: Yuan Xiaowei. 2025. "A Functional Stylistic Analysis of English Sports News." *International Journal of Current Research*, 17, (10), 35086-35089.

INTRODUCTION

With the international development of the sports industry, sports news, as a key medium for disseminating sports information, has become increasingly prominent in its role. As the universal international language, English occupies a central position in the dissemination of sports news. Through various media forms such as television, the Internet, newspapers, and radio, English sports news conveys information about global sports events, athletes' updates, and sports culture to hundreds of millions of audiences around the world. Whether in developed or developing countries, people can rely on English sports news to stay updated in real time on the latest sports match results, athletes' brilliant performances, and hot topics in the sports world. According to statistics, globally, the number of audiences who obtain sports news through English media exceeds hundreds of millions every day. Among them, the daily visit volumes of well-known English sports media platforms such as ESPN and BBC Sport are all in the tens of millions. Therefore, an in-depth study of the functional stylistics of English sports news reporting holds significant practical significance. Based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, Functional Stylistics has core theories that hold significant guiding significance for news discourse analysis. The Foregrounding Theory posits that linguistic deviation and prominence are crucial means to achieve stylistic effects. In news discourses, journalists attract readers' attention and enhance the news' appeal and persuasiveness by using language in unconventional ways. Specifically in sports news reporting, journalists may adopt novel lexical collocations, unique sentence structures, or hyperbolic rhetorical devices to make the news content more eye-catching. The three metafunctions of Systemic Functional Linguistics—namely the ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function—also play a key role in news discourse analysis. The ideational function is manifested through the transitivity system, which serves to describe

people's experiences and cognition of the world. In sports news reports, the transitivity system can be used to analyze various activities, participants, and environmental factors involved in sports events. The interpersonal function is realized through means such as mood and modality, reflecting social relationships and interactions between individuals. In sports news, journalists can use different moods and modal expressions to convey their own attitudes and evaluations towards sports events, while also influencing the emotions and attitudes of readers. The textual function relies on elements like thematic structure and cohesive devices to ensure the discourse is semantically coherent and cohesive, forming an organic whole. In sports news reporting, the rational application of thematic structure and cohesive devices can make the organization of news content more systematic, facilitating readers' understanding. This paper will analyze English sports news reports from three perspectives: functional aspects stylistic features and application based on the above theory.

Functional Analysis of English Sports News Reports

Ideational Function: The transitivity system is an important manifestation of the ideational function in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. It describes people's experiences and cognition of the world through different process types. In English sports news reports, various process types of the transitivity system play a crucial role, vividly demonstrating the various activities, participants, and environmental factors in sports events. The material process is the most common type of process in sports news reports. It mainly describes specific actions and behaviors, reflecting the physical activities and event developments in sports competitions. In a football match report, the sentence "Messi dribbled past three defenders and shot the ball into the net" is a typical example. In this sentence, the two verbs "dribbled" and "shot" clearly present the specific actions Messi took during the game, allowing readers to feel as if they were witnessing his brilliant performance firsthand. The use

of the material process makes the scenes of the competition more vivid and intuitive, and accurately conveys key information about the game. The mental process is used to express mental activities such as perception, emotion, and cognition. In sports news, it is often employed to describe the inner feelings and thoughts of athletes, coaches, or spectators. Take the sentence "The coach was disappointed with the team's performance in the first half" as an example. Here, the phrase "was disappointed" reflects the coach's mental state, enabling readers to gain a deeper understanding of the coach's attitude and feelings towards the game situation. This not only enriches the content of news reports but also enhances the news' appeal and readability. The relational process mainly expresses the relationships between things, including aspects such as attribution, characteristics, and quantity. In sports news reports, it can be used to introduce relevant information about athletes, teams, and match results. The sentence "LeBron James is one of the greatest basketball players in the world" clarifies the relationship between LeBron James and "one of the greatest basketball players in the world" through the relational process, conveying important information about the athlete to readers. Another example, "The final score of the game was 3-2," uses the relational process to explain the game's result, presenting the key information of the match concisely and clearly. The verbal process involves acts of speaking and communication. In sports news, it is often used to quote the words of athletes, coaches, or other relevant personnel, thereby enhancing the news' authenticity and credibility. For instance, "The player said, 'We gave our all in this game, and we are proud of our performance.'" By directly quoting the player's words, readers can more authentically perceive the player's attitude and emotions, while also making the news report more vivid and specific.

The behavioral process describes physical and psychological actions such as breathing, coughing, and smiling. Although it appears relatively infrequently in sports news, it can still play a unique role in specific contexts. In reports of post-match interviews with athletes, the sentence "The exhausted athlete gasped for breath and smiled weakly at the camera" is a typical case. Here, "gasped for breath" and "smiled" reflect the athlete's physical state and facial expression after the game, indirectly highlighting the intensity of the match and making the news report more detailed and rich. The existential process expresses the existence or emergence of things. In sports news, it can be used to report situations such as the emergence of new athletes and the organization of new events. For example, "There is a young and talented tennis player emerging in the international tennis arena." This sentence conveys the information about the appearance of a new player through the existential process, attracting readers' attention to the newcomer and adding new topics and highlights to the sports news. Different process types cooperate with each other in sports news reports to jointly construct diverse and vivid competition scenarios and character images. The use of the material process clearly presents the actions and behaviors in competitions, allowing readers to feel the intensity and excitement of the game; the mental process delves deeply into the inner world of athletes and relevant personnel, enhancing the emotional resonance of the news; the relational process provides readers with basic information about athletes, teams, and match results; the verbal process improves the credibility and vividness of the news by quoting real remarks; in specific contexts, the behavioral process and existential process enrich the content of news reports from different perspectives, enabling readers to comprehensively and in-depth understand all aspects of sports events.

Interpersonal Function Analysis: Analysis of Interpersonal Function Mood and modality are important manifestations of the interpersonal function in Systemic Functional Linguistics. In English sports news reports, they play a unique role: they not only convey the media's attitudes and evaluations towards sports events but also facilitate interaction between the media and readers. In English sports news, the declarative mood is the most commonly used type of mood. It is employed to objectively state facts and information about sports events, such as match results and athletes' performances. For example, "The Lakers won the game with a score of 110-105." This

type of mood can accurately and concisely convey the core content of the news, allowing readers to quickly grasp the basic situation of the event, and thus reflects the objectivity and authenticity of sports news. The interrogative mood also appears from time to time in sports news, mainly used to provoke readers' thinking and discussion and enhance the interactivity of the news. "Can the young striker continue his goal-scoring form in the next game?" By raising such questions, the media guides readers to think about and predict sports events, stimulates their interest and participation, makes readers pay more attention to sports news, and strengthens the interaction between the media and readers.

The imperative mood is relatively less common in sports news, but it can still play an important role in specific contexts, such as the promotion of sports events and encouraging athletes. "Let's cheer for our national team and wish them good luck in the upcoming Olympics!" This kind of mood can arouse readers' emotional resonance, strengthen readers' support for sports events and athletes, and create a positive sports atmosphere.

Modal verbs and modal adverbs are used in sports news to express the media's attitudes and judgments towards sports events, as well as their assessment of the possibility of events occurring. "The team might win the championship this season." The modal verb "might" expresses the media's speculation about the team's possibility of winning the championship and reflects the media's cautious attitude. "Surely, this is one of the most exciting games in recent history." The modal adverb "surely" emphasizes the media's high evaluation of the excitement of this game, conveys the media's strong attitude, and guides readers to tend to agree with this view. In some sports news reports, different degrees of modality are also used to express the media's standpoints and perspectives. "The coach should make some tactical adjustments to improve the team's performance." The modal verb "should" expresses a kind of suggestion and expectation, reflecting the media's demands on the coach and its concern for the team's future performance. When expressing a stronger attitude, modal verbs such as "must" may be used: "The players must show more determination and fighting spirit in the next game." "Must" emphasizes necessity and urgency, conveying the media's strict demands and high expectations for the players. The use of mood and modality in English sports news transforms news reports from mere simple information transmission into content that incorporates the media's attitudes, emotions, and judgments, thereby enhancing the news' appeal and guiding role. Through the rational use of different types of mood and modality, the media can establish a closer connection with readers, promote readers' attention to and participation in sports news, and ultimately achieve better communication effects.

Discourse Functional Analysis: The thematic structure is an important component of discourse function, and it plays a crucial role in information distribution and readers' comprehension in English sports news reports. In English sports news, the thematic structure exhibits certain characteristics. The use of simple themes is relatively common—here, a theme consists of a single simple element, such as a noun, pronoun, or adverb. Examples include "Lionel Messi" and "Yesterday," both of which can serve as simple themes. This type of thematic structure is concise and clear, allowing it to focus readers' attention on key information quickly. In news reports, sentences like "Lionel Messi scored a hat-trick in the crucial game" take "Lionel Messi" as the theme, directly introducing the core figure of the news. This enables readers to quickly grasp that the main content of the news is related to Messi. Multiple themes also appear in sports news, and they are composed of a combination of elements, including textual themes, interpersonal themes, and ideational themes. Textual themes are used to connect the context and reflect the coherence of the discourse, such as "However" and "Therefore". Interpersonal themes involve elements that express attitudes, evaluations, and similar aspects, such as "Fortunately" and "Surprisingly". Ideational themes, on the other hand, include elements related to the content of the event. In the sentence "However, the home team, fortunately, managed to turn the game around in the second half," "However" is a textual theme, which serves a transitional function to connect the

context; "fortunately" is an interpersonal theme, expressing a sense of relief; and "the home team" is an ideational theme, identifying the main subject of the event. Sports news reports highlight key information through theme selection. Typically, the most important information—those most likely to grab readers' attention—is placed in the theme position. When reporting the result of a football match, using "The decisive victory" as the theme can immediately grab readers' attention and allow them to quickly grasp the key information of the match result. In the case of "The thrilling final match between Barcelona and Real Madrid", the theme consists of the two competing teams and the nature of the match, emphasizing the importance and public attention of the game. The thematic structure exerts a significant impact on the information distribution of news discourse and readers' comprehension. A well-organized thematic structure can make the arrangement of news content more systematic, which conforms to readers' cognitive patterns. When reading news, readers first focus on the thematic information, and then the rheme expands and supplements the theme, enabling readers to gradually understand the meaning of the entire sentence and discourse. If the thematic structure is disorganized, it will lead to poor information transmission and increase the difficulty for readers to comprehend. In a news report, if the theme changes frequently and there is a lack of logical connection between themes, readers will find it hard to grasp the core content and overall context of the news. Take a specific news example: "In the first half of the basketball game, the visiting team took the lead with excellent three-point shooting. But in the second half, the home team made a strong comeback by strengthening their defense and increasing their fast-break opportunities." In this discourse, the first sentence takes "the visiting team" as the theme, highlighting the main performer in the first half; the second sentence takes "the home team" as the theme, emphasizing the change in the situation in the second half. Through such theme selection and transition, the progress of the game and the performance of both sides are clearly presented, allowing readers to easily understand the news content. In English sports news reports, the thematic structure, through reasonable theme selection and arrangement, realizes the highlighting of key information and the coherence of discourse. This helps readers understand the news content accurately and quickly, thereby enhancing the communication effect of sports news.

Analysis of the Stylistic Features of English Sports News Reports

Extensive Use of Sports-Specific Terminology: In English sports news reports, the extensive use of sports-specific terminology is one of its prominent lexical features. Such terminology plays an irreplaceable role in accurately conveying professional information and reflecting the professionalism of sports events. Different sports have their own unique professional terms, which serve as professional identifiers in the sports field and can precisely describe various actions, rules, tactics, and other elements in competitions. In football matches, "offside" is a key professional term that clearly defines an illegal positional situation: when an attacking player, at the moment the ball is passed, is closer to the opponent's goal line than both the second-to-last defending player (excluding the goalkeeper) and the ball, and is involved in active play, they will be ruled offside. This term concisely and accurately defines a specific rule scenario in football, which is crucial for understanding the progress of the match and the referee's decisions. In news reports about basketball games, professional terms such as "dunk", "block", and "assist" appear frequently. "Dunk" vividly describes the spectacular move where a player leaps high and forcefully slams the ball into the basket, showcasing the power and passion of basketball; "block" refers to the action where a defending player knocks down an attacking player's shot in mid-air, embodying the defensive confrontation in basketball games; "assist" is used to describe the act of a player helping a teammate score through a pass, emphasizing the importance of teamwork in basketball. These terms accurately convey various technical moves and tactical collaborations in basketball games, allowing readers to clearly understand the details of the game and its exciting moments. In tennis match reports, professional terms like "ace", "love", and "deuce" also have unique meanings and uses. An "ace" reflects the serving player's strong ability and precise serving

skills—it can score a direct point and put enormous pressure on the opponent; "love" is used to represent a score of zero, and unlike its daily meaning of "affection", it has become a commonly accepted terminology in tennis; "deuce" describes the critical moment in a match when the scores of both sides are tied, heightening the tension and suspense of the game. These sports-specific terms are indispensable in English sports news reports. They convey professional information about sports events in a concise and accurate manner, embodying the professionalism and authority of sports news. This enables readers to gain a deep understanding of the characteristics and charm of different sports, and meets the needs of sports enthusiasts for professional sports information.

Neologism Creation, Lexical Abbreviation, and Blending: In English sports news reports, neologism creation, lexical abbreviation, and blending are important features of vocabulary use. The emergence of these linguistic phenomena is closely related to the continuous development and innovation in the sports field, and they play a significant role in enriching the expression of sports news and improving the efficiency of information transmission. As new sports phenomena and events continue to emerge, a large number of neologisms have been created in sports news to accurately describe these new things. "E-sports" (electronic sports) is a typical neologism. It originated with the development of competitive electronic gaming and refers to a competitive activity that uses electronic devices as sports equipment, combining the intellectual and physical capabilities of participants in human-to-human competition. This term concisely summarizes the characteristics of e-sports as an emerging sports field and is widely used in sports news to cover various e-sports events, updates on players, and other related content. "Parkour" is another neologism derived from a new form of sports activity. It emphasizes participants quickly navigating obstacles in urban environments through movements such as jumping, climbing, and rolling, demonstrating physical agility and athletic ability. In sports news, the term "parkour" is used to introduce aspects such as parkour techniques, competitions, and activities of enthusiasts, allowing readers to understand this dynamic and challenging emerging sports discipline.

Lexical abbreviation is extremely common in sports news. By simplifying longer words or phrases into concise forms, it enhances the efficiency of information transmission. "NBA" (National Basketball Association) is the abbreviation for the National Basketball Association, the professional basketball league of the United States. This abbreviated term is well-known to sports enthusiasts around the world and frequently appears in sports news reports, used to refer to information related to the league's various events, teams, players, and more. "F1" (Formula One) is the abbreviation for Formula One, which represents the highest-level motorsport competition in the world. The abbreviation "F1" concisely conveys information about this top-tier motorsport event, allowing readers to quickly understand that the content of the news is related to Formula One racing. Blended words also appear from time to time in sports news. They combine parts of two or more words to form a new term with a distinct meaning. "Athleisure" (a blend of "athletic" and "leisure") is a blended word that merges sports and leisure styles, referring to clothing or a lifestyle that combines athletic functionality with fashionable casual elements. In sports news, when covering trends in sports fashion, athletes' daily dressing styles, or new products launched by sports brands, the blended word "athleisure" can accurately describe this emerging phenomenon of integrating sports and fashion, enriching the expression of the news. "Brunchathlon" (a blend of "brunch" and "marathon") combines the concepts of brunch and marathon, used to describe a casual sports activity that integrates running with a brunch gathering. This innovative term vividly conveys the characteristics of the activity, adding interest and a sense of modernity to sports news. In English sports news reports, neologism creation, lexical abbreviation, and blending enrich the vocabulary pool, enabling news to convey various types of information in the sports field more accurately, concisely, and vividly. They reflect the development, changes, and innovations in the sports industry, and meet readers' diverse reading needs for sports news.

The Application of Old Words with New Meanings in Sports

Contexts: In English sports news reports, some common words are endowed with special meanings in sports contexts. This phenomenon of "old words with new meanings" enriches the expression of sports news, makes the language more vivid and expressive, and brings readers a fresh reading experience. In daily life, "campaign" usually means "movement; campaign; activity" and other senses. However, in sports contexts, it is often used to refer to "the entire schedule or season of a sports event". "The team had a successful campaign this season, winning most of their games." Here, "campaign" no longer refers to an activity in the ordinary sense, but specifically to the entire course of a sports competition. The use of this word concisely summarizes the team's performance throughout the season, allowing readers to quickly understand the team's competition results over a period of time. In daily English, "drive" commonly means "driving; urging; driving (mechanical)" and so on. In the sports field, especially in golf, "drive" means "tee shot; stroke"—referring to the action of a player hitting the ball forcefully when teeing off. "Tiger Woods' powerful drive sent the ball soaring down the fairway." In this sentence, the sports-specific meaning of "drive" allows readers to clearly visualize the exciting moment when a golfer takes a tee shot. It vividly depicts a key action in golf and adds professionalism and vividness to the sports news. In ordinary contexts, "run" has a wide range of meanings, such as "to run (on foot)", "to operate (a business)", and so on. In sports news, especially in sports like track and field and baseball, "run" takes on special meanings. In track and field competitions, it can refer to "a race" or "a race distance". For example, "The 100-meter run is always one of the most exciting events in the Olympics." Here, "run" clearly identifies the event as a race. In baseball, "run" means "a score". For instance, "The team scored three runs in the bottom of the ninth inning and won the game." Such usage endows "run" with distinct special meanings across different sports.

Application of Functional Stylistic Study on English Sports News

Reporting: The unique functional stylistic characteristics of English sports news reporting exert a significant multi-faceted impact on translation work. Translators need to flexibly employ a variety of translation strategies based on these characteristics to achieve accurate and fluent translation effects. The presence of a large number of professional terms in sports news requires translators to possess solid professional knowledge, accurately understand the meanings of the terms, and find corresponding expressions in the target language. Applying English sports news reports as teaching materials in English teaching can provide students with an authentic and vivid language learning environment, and play a positive role in improving their language proficiency and intercultural communication competence. In terms of vocabulary teaching, the rich specialized terminology and vivid lexical expressions in English sports news offer students a great deal of learning materials. In grammar teaching, sports news reports feature diverse sentence structures. Teachers can select sentences with different grammatical structures, such as simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences, for grammar explanation and analysis.

In reading teaching, English sports news reports, with their rich content and strong timeliness, can stimulate students' interest in reading. Teachers can choose sports news articles of moderate difficulty, design reading comprehension questions, and guide students to obtain key information through reading, thereby improving their reading speed and comprehension ability. In writing teaching, the linguistic style and structural characteristics of English sports news reports provide students with excellent writing models. Teachers can guide students to analyze the writing structure of news reports, such as the "inverted pyramid" structure, helping them understand how to organize the introduction, body, and conclusion of an article and highlight key information. In summary, this study profoundly reveals the functional stylistic features of English sports news reports, covering multiple levels including lexical, syntactic, textual, semantic, and pragmatic aspects. Through systematic analysis, it clearly presents the unique laws of language use in English sports news and how these linguistic features serve the functions of news reports such as information transmission, emotional expression, and cultural communication, providing a more comprehensive and in-depth theoretical basis for the creation, translation, and teaching of sports news. This thesis is the research outcome of the scientific research project titled "Study on the Functional Stylistics of English Sports News Reporting" at Jining Normal University(jsky2024107).

REFERENCES

- Halliday, M. A. K. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2nd ed.). London: Edward Arnold. 1994.
- Han Haihua. Research on the characteristics of English news headlines. *News Research Guide*, 2018, 9(5):1.
- Hu Zhuanglin. *Modern linguistics*. Shanghai: Higher education press. 2020. P 105.
- Jiang Wenxin. Research on rhetoric and translation in English news headlines. *Editor*, 2017(1):2.
- Wang Xiaoqin. Lexical features of English sports news reports. Zhejiang: Zhejiang University. 2009.
- Liang Siyu. Research on the standardization of sports terminology in my country. *Popular Sports*, 2016, 6:145-146.
- Paluanova Kh.D. Derivative semantic principles of ecological terms in English, Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak languages. *Philol. science. dis.autoref. - Tashkent*, 2016. - 231.
- Shi Xuanzhi. On the translation of sports terminology from the perspective of translation acceptability. *Journal of Minjiang University*, 2014, 3:35.
