

## **Investigating Evaluative Register in Football Texts in Selected Nigerian Newspapers**

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**Abstract:** *The paper investigated evaluative register in football discourse in Nigerian newspapers. It described the evaluative contents of texts and its implication on the textual semantic units of macrostructures and microstructures. This was done with the aim of unravelling the evaluative contents of football texts and its significant roles in providing a better understanding for football register as a sub-genre of language of sports in general. The primary source of data included two Nigerian newspapers namely: Sporting Life and Soccer Star. 80 reports were collected for the study that is, 40 lead reports each were collected from each of the newspapers. Of these 40 lead reports from each of the newspapers, 10 reports were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. Every fourth reports were picked from the data. 20 lead reports which 25% of the data were used for the purpose of the study. Secondary data included textbooks, journal articles and the internet. Analysis of data was done using insight from Van Dijk 1973; 1986 and Olagunju 2014 model of macrostructural and microstructural analysis of texts. The result showed that the text were characterised by evaluative contents of approbative and pejorative elements. The study further confirmed that football reports has evaluative register as one of its main contents and this constitutes one of the main structural and functional properties of football report as a sub-genre of sports.*

**Keywords:** *evaluative register, approbative element, pejorative element, microstructures, macrostructure, functional properties.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The study aims to investigate evaluative register in football discourse. It focuses on the 2010 world cup football match reports in two selected Nigerian sport-based newspapers namely: *Sporting Life* and *Soccer Star*. Given the dearth of research in the area of evaluative language in linguistic scholarship, the study considers the macrostructural and microstructural element of discourse structure and its implication on the evaluative language that characterise football report as a sub-genre of sports. Some of the existing works in the area of evaluative language include Martin and White (2005) Appraisal Theory which was developed from Halliday's Functional Grammar. Martin and White work has its root in the interpersonal function of language because they see evaluative language from the perspective of interpersonal function of language. This study however sees evaluation from the genre and register domain of language and how its feature in a specific discourse structure of a particular text.

### **II. Theoretical Foundation: Register and Genre**

To Martin (1992:505), genre is a staged, goal-oriented, social process realised through register. Ansary and Babaii (2004) explain that both register and genre theories seek to explain variation in texts by reference to variation in context. That is, explicit links are often made between features of the discourse and variables of the social and cultural context in which the discourse is enacted. We can infer from Ansary and Babaii's explanation that the two concepts are interwoven in nature, all centered around context. Martin (1985:250) says that the genres are realised through registers and registers in turn are realised through language. Based on the explanations and descriptions of genre and registers, genre, can then be simply defined as the functional label for groups of texts while register is seen as the formal features of groups of texts.

Goodlier (2008:27), explaining the differences and similarities between register and genre, states that registers impose explicitness constraints at the level of vocabulary and syntax, while genre impose additional explicitness constraints at the discourse level. Goodlier (ibid) states further that genres define conventional patterns of linguistic structure for a complete discourse, and they are intertextual. Unlike register, genre can only be realised in completed texts or texts that can be projected as complete, for a genre does more than specify kinds of codes extant in a group of related texts; it specifies conditions for beginning, continuing and ending a text.

Hasan (1985a), Ventola (1987), Martins (1992) and Eggins (1994:25-36) link genre to context of culture and register to context of situation. Eggins notes that 'both register and genre are realised through language.

This means that we only know that we have a particular genre or register by looking at the way language gets used. It is through the patterns of meanings, words and structures, and of course sounds and language, that these contextual dimensions are expressed'.

### **III. Macrostructures and Microstructures of Texts**

The term macrostructure was introduced by van Dijk in 1973 and further developed into psychological notion of discourse comprehension by van Dijk and Kintsch (1983:242). Macrostructures, which are created by applying macrorules such as deletion, generalization and construction to a sequence of propositions derived from a text are global textual structures that give global meaning. The global meaning of discourse is represented by semantic macrorules. Semantic mappings which are also referred to as macrorules are used in relating microstructure with macrostructures. The function of macrorule is to reduce and organise information. That is, they delete and combine sequences of propositions. They are entailed by the sequence of propositions in the discourse, and also not only generate one but several macrostructures at increasingly more global levels of semantic representation. It is to be noted that no proposition may be deleted which is a presupposition for a subsequent (macro) proposition in the discourse. In essence, microstructures are processed into macrostructures by application of the macrorules. Meanwhile, Sadeghi (2013:1) in his work on fictional discourse states that it is possible to interpret or use many phenomena as 'whole' (macrostructure), as cognitive units of some kind, with respect to the various parts, sections or elements (microstructure) of the whole objects. Sadeghi (ibid) notes further that macrostructure could be considered a plot, summary or a large-scale statement of the content of a text.

Van Dijk (1986: 33 -34) refers to the three macrorules as follows:

**Deletion rules:** At the initial stage, deleting 'all information that is no longer relevant in the rest of the text, such as local details.'

**Generalisation rules:** Replacing a sequence of propositions by one generalisation

**Construction rules:** At the final stage, replacing 'a sequence of propositions that denote the usual event as episode by one macroproposition that denotes the act or event as a whole.

According to van Dijk (1986:32), a macrostructure consists of numerous macropropositions, such that the whole macrostructure is organised hierarchically with each sequence of macro propositions subsumed under a higher level of macroproposition. In essence, some form of summarisation of content of text is involved at the macrostructural level. There are rules guiding the sequence of propositions into smaller sets. These are referred to as macrorules.

According to Louwarse and Graesser (2006:9), macrorules operate recursively which makes the macrorules that are formed to be subject to another cycle of macrorules. Macrostructures are therefore seen as abstract semantic descriptions of the semantic content of the text. In order to dynamify this concept, van Dijk and Kintch (1983) note that in addition to textual macrostructures, there is need for pragmatic superstructure and schematic structure similar to the rhetorical structure of texts.

Macrostructure consists of the internal organisation of texts at a level that is wider than microstructures. Microstructures have to do with the local structure of words, clauses, sentences or turns in conversations. Louwarse and Graesser (2006:9) note that macrostructures may be derived from microstructures by abstracting or summarising specific details, etc. Texts are usually structured both locally (connection between clauses and sentences) and globally (connecting larger fragments of discourse such as paragraphs). The microstructure can also be realised through the syntactic rules, the meaning of the words in sentences etc.

In his work on text structure, Hutchins (2002:3) states the three basic aspects of text structure which are microstructure, macrostructure and superstructure (schemata). To him, microstructure refers to relationships within sentences and between adjacent sentences or clauses. He sees macrostructure as the relationship between blocks of sentences (i.e paragraphs) and large text segments. The superstructure refers to the functions of text segment within the text as a whole and its overall organisation as a coherent text. Superstructures are conventional schemas which provide the global form for the macrostructural content of discourse. In other words, macrostructure deals with content and superstructure with form.

vanDijk and Kintsch (1983:242) however note that the superstructure 'provides a kind of overall functional syntax for the semantic macrostructures'. Examples of these are prevalent in news discourse with superstructural categories such as headlines, lead, context etc. In this work however, we have limited our analysis of the textual and internal configuration of the selected texts to the macrostructure and microstructures.

Olagunju (2014:99) towing the line of Van Dijk and others on the subject matter states. microstructural analysis of texts has to do with interclausal semantic relations which in turn realise the global semantic structure or macrostructures of text. Seven microstructural and ten macrostructural elements are noted in her work. For

the purpose of this study, the discourse notion of evaluation as a macro discourse element of text and the microstructural component at the local level of text structure will be vividly discussed.

1. **Evaluation (Eva):** This is an optional element of generic structure potential (GSP) identified in football genre by Olagunju (2014). Evaluation as a macrostructure of text occurs when there is need to assess the team or individual players and their performance or the opposing team in the tournament. Most of the evaluations were post evaluation because they were meant to evaluate completed activities as against the interm evaluation which zero in on ongoing activities. It is usually a yardstick or standard to measure performance, activity, product plan, services, etc. Evaluation involves using some specific adjectives like fair, good, very good, excellent, etc., when it is on the approbative side. When evaluation is on the pejorative side, words like poor, bad, woeful, very poor are often used. The choice of evaluative register depends on the degree of appropriacy or the ratio, or otherwise the intuitive knowledge or empirical fact of the individual evaluator. Examples from the data shall be presented subsequently to justify the illustration on the nature of evaluation.
2. **Approbative Element (AE):** This is a microstructural element of text which denotes a positive effect. It expresses appreciation, approval, or praise. This element is associated with evaluation in discourse structure. Meanwhile, it is to be noted that evaluation in discourse context has to do with the expression of one’s personal attitude, commentary, perspective or perception.
3. **Pejorative Element (PE):** A pejorative element refers to textual microstructure that is meant to express a negative opinion or evaluation. Pejorative contents are semantic contents of the text. They are usually associated with evaluation at the macro level of textual structure. Pejoratives may involve derogation which may bring offense to the intended target person or group. It is all about expressing negative judgments whose interpretations depend on contextual background belief of the discourse participants.

#### IV. Research Methodology

The primary source of data included two purposively selected Nigerian newspapers namely: Sporting Life and Soccer Star. The study focuses on FIFA 2010 World Cup football matches played in South Africa. For the purpose of the study, 80 lead reports were collected from the two sport-based newspapers. That is, 40 lead reports were collected from each of the newspapers. Of these 40 lead reports, 10 reports were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. Every fourth reports were picked from the data. 20 lead reports which 25% of the data were used for the purpose of the study. Secondary data included textbooks, journal articles and the internet. Analysis of data was done using insight from Van Dijk(1973; 1986) and Olagunju(2014) model of macrostructural and microstructural analysis of texts.

#### V. Analysis and Finding

The key to the symbols

- ER - Evaluative Register
- AE - Approbative Evaluation
- PE - Pejorative Evaluation

**Table 1**

S/ N	Macrostructure	ER	Microstructures	
			AE	PE
1	He saved 20 out of 25 shots faced, a save percentage of 8 only, only the equal 14th best in the group stage which goes a long way to explain his average ranking. With the goalkeepers rating, we try to strip out the effort of defense. It is not how many saves he makes but his performance once you have assessed how good/bad the defense is. This means goalkeepers in good teams have a chance of being top of the Castrol index. Enyeama is an ok keeper in a team that performed disappointingly. (Text B5, <i>Soccer Star</i> , July 8, 2010)	7	2	1

Please note that the underlined lexical items below stand for the evaluative register in the data.

Example 1

“He saved 20 out of 25 shots faced, a save percentage of 8 only, only the equal 14th best in the group stage which goes a long way to explain his averageranking. (PE) With the goalkeepers rating, we try to strip out the effort of defense. It is not how many saves he makes but his performance once you have assessed how good/bad the defense is. This means goalkeepers in

good teams have a chance of being top of the Castrol index. Enyeama is an ok keeper (AE) in a team that performed disappointingly. (PE)

(Text B5, Soccer Star, July 8, 2010)

The textual macrostructure of evaluation is exemplified in this extract. The rating of the player by FIFA’s agent responsible for ranking as regards the Super Eagles performance was the subject matter of the discourse. In the extract, Vincent Enyeama was rated as being an ‘Ok Player’ and that he has a good chance of being at the top to the Castrol Index despite the fact that the team ‘performed disappointingly.’

Table 2

S/ N	Macrostructure	ER	Microstructures	
			AE	PE
1	He said, I was a little bit sorry about all the time wasting. I don’t think it is a fair play. It’s very disappointing and I think the (Nigerian) Players have done really well’. (Text A4, <i>Sporting Life</i> , June 23, 2010)	3	1	3

Example 2

He said, I was a little bit sorry about all the time wasting. (PE) I don’t think it is a fair play. (PE) Its very disappointing (PE) and I think the (Nigerian) Players have done really well’. (AE)

(Text A4, *Sporting Life*, June 23, 2010)

From the extract, Lars Lagerback felt that the opponent, that is the South Korea has played down the clock to let them secure a goal and that the game was considered a waste of time but ironically stated that the players have really done well despite the fact that there were lots of opportunities they missed, most especially, Yakubu Ayegbeni who missed more than four yards out with the entire goal gaping but only succeeded in ‘prodding the ball wide’. Lagerback was not happy and mainly bemoaned Korea’s tactics against the Super Eagles. The eagles could have easily won, they had many chances of scoring goals. Notably, Ayegbeni’s miss of one meter from an open goal was considered the greatest miss of 2010 world cup by the Super Eagles.

Table 3

S/N	Macrostructure	ER	Microstructures	
			AE	PE
1	“My impression of South Korean football since the 2002 World Cup is that they play a very good football. The players have the skills of playing a very fast game. So, when you play with a team like South Korea, you always have to be focused and concentrate on your play because when they want to attack they can do it very quickly and that is what makes them a good team. (Text B, <i>Soccer Star</i> , June 17, 2010).	4	4	0

Example 3

“My impression of South Korean football since the 2002 World Cup is that they play a very good football. (AE) The players have the skills of playing a very fast game. (AE) So, when you play with a team like South Korea, you always have to be focused and concentrate on your play because when they want to attack they can do it very quickly (AE) and that is what makes them a good team. (AE)

(Text B, Soccer Star, June 17, 2010).

This segment of text explains Lagerback’s view about the South Koreans before they played and drew with the Super Eagles. He was not underestimating their tactics and performance at all. He was encouraging the Eagle’s on the task ahead of them, and also trying to build their courage by celebrating the strength of the opponent team based on their past experiences and what he knew about them in the past.

Table 4

S/ N	Macrostructure	ER	Microstructures	
			AE	PE
1	“From what I have seen from the players since the game against Argentina, I can say, they have been very professional in work ethics and their attitude has been very impressive. I have never worked with a bunch of players who have shown stunning approach to what is being taught on the pitch. they are ready to devour the Greeks but we would approach the game with different tactics from what we say against Argentina.” Lagerback stresses. (Text A17 <i>Sporting Life</i> , June 17, 2010).	3	3	0

Example 4

“From what I have seen from the players since the game against Argentina, I can say, they have been very professional in work ethics and their attitude has been very impressive. I have never worked with a bunch of players who have shown stunning approach to what is being taught on the pitch. They are ready to devour the Greeks but we would approach the game with different tactics from what we say against Argentina.” Lagerback stresses.

(Text A 17, *Sporting Life*, June 17, 2010).

This text segment is an example of evaluation. Lagerback was full of hope that the Nigerian team would beat Greece. He was impressed with the professionalism that the Eagles displayed against Argentina. So, he was optimistic of the Super Eagles defeating Greece.

Table 5

S/ N	Macrostructure	ER	Microstructures	
			AE	PE
1	He is good but we pray fervently that he carries what we are seeing in training to the matches. If he does, then we are set. You know for a fact that Kanu is very intelligent on the ball and crafty with his passes. We have been taking aback by his displays. He surely wants to celebrate his World Cup. (Text A14, <i>Sporting Life</i> , June 11, 2010).	3	5	0

Example 5

He is good but we pray fervently that he carries what we are seeing in training to the matches. If he does, then we are set. You know for a fact that Kanu is very intelligent on the ball and crafty with his passes. We have been taking aback by his displays. He surely wants to celebrate his World Cup.

(Text A14, *Sporting Life*, June 11, 2010).

This is another evaluation that centres on a particular player. KanuNwakwo here is rated as a player who has displayed his professional skill and process properly during the training and at the kick-off of the tournament, he was being rated here as being ‘intelligent on the ball’, and that ‘he is good’ professionally. His ability to perform very well in tournament is the concern of the person rating his ability.

Table 6

S/ N	Macrostructure	ER	Microstructures	
			AE	PE
1	We are on the right part and we are representing our continent, which makes us very happy. The Americans, though, are very good team, they expend a lot of energy and are strong physically. But we too have good players. It is for that that we have so much self-confidence, added the Rennes player, whose goals inspired a young Ghana side to the final of the African Cup of Nations final this year in Angola. (Text A30, <i>Sporting Life</i> , June 11, 2010).	3	3	0

Example 6

We are on the right part and we are representing our continent, which makes us very happy. The Americans, though, are very good team, (AE) they expend a lot of energy and are strong physically (AE). But we too have good players (AE). It is for that that we have so much self-confidence, added the Rennes player, whose goals inspired a young Ghana side to the final of the African Cup of Nations final this year in Angola.

(Text A30, *Sporting Life*, June 11, 2010).

This is an evaluation macrostructure that centres on Black Star of Ghana and the United States of American team. Black Star was the only African team that reached the Round of 16. The Super Eagles had been eliminated at the group stage and some others African team. Ghana remained the only hope for the continent that hosted the world cup. They were trying to evaluate the American strength based on their physical strength and also re-affirmed Black Star’s confidence and skills and that they had all what it takes to defeat USA team.

Table 7

S/ N	Macrostructure	ER	Microstructures	
			AE	PE
1	Given Super Eagles unimpressive form of in the recent time. Nigeria is regarded as underdogs in group. Among the six African countries vying for honor in the ongoing global football tournament, Cote d’Ivoire and Cameroon seem to represent Africa’s hope in the one	2	1	2

month championship. (Text B4, <i>Soccer Star</i> , June 12, 2010).		
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**Example 7**

Given Super Eagles unimpressive form in the recent time. (PE) Nigeria is regarded as underdogs in group (PE). Among the six African countries vying for honor in the ongoing global football tournament, Cote d’Ivoire and Cameroon seem to represent Africa’s hope in the one month championship (AE).

(Text B4, *Soccer Star*, June 12, 2010)

Nigeria Super Eagles were eliminated at the group stage and that was considered unimpressive because the expectation of the people and Nigeria government were dashed. That was one of the main issues why Nigeria Super Eagles were banned for some time.

Texts	ER	%	AE	%	PE	%
Text A	46	54.11	18	52.94	6	60
Text B	39	45.88	16	47.05	4	40
Total	85	100	34	100	10	100

**Table 8: Evaluative Resources, Frequency and Percentage Distributions Across Texts**

From Table 8, Text A has the highest frequency of evaluative register with 54.11% while Text B has 45.88%. Talking about the the microstructural realisation of texts, it is to be noted that both texts featured the textual element of evaluative language: approbative and pejorative elements but with different degree of occurrence. That is, Text A and TextB have both approbative and pejorative contents which are hallmark of evaluation.

## VI. Conclusion

The work revealed that some football texts have evaluative register. The evaluative content is realised by approbative and pejorative elements .Text A, *Sporting Life* has the highest frequency of evaluative language usage. Inferences from the work can help shed light on how to develop evaluative register in football texts and further work can be extended to women football world cup reports on electronic media.

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