

James Arthurs

LEXICOGRAPHY AND LINGUISTIC CHANGE: CANADA AND THE WORLD CUP

Introduction

A fundamental concern in the editing of a general language dictionary is that of adequacy of coverage within the various lexical fields that have been proposed for the dictionary. Defining and then achieving such adequacy are not simple tasks in themselves, straddling as they do, for instance, the curious 'boundary' between lexicography and terminology. They may be complicated further, in the case of a bilingual dictionary, by sociolinguistic factors peculiar to one or both of the linguistic communities under study or even to a particular lexical field as it pertains to those communities. Considered in this dual sociolinguistic perspective, the decision of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and its counterpart Francophone network Radio-Canada (R-C) to present full-network, live television coverage of the complete 1982 World Cup competition presaged an unusual lexicographic opportunity.

At a time when the country's two official languages are under scrutiny as perhaps never before, this series of broadcasts offered a quite unprecedented opportunity to observe and characterize at first hand the response of the two languages vis-à-vis not merely a particular lexical field but one which, in the Canadian context, is distinguished by a number of linguistically interesting peculiarities. Not the least of these is that the field is extraordinarily poorly served by the existing major bilingual dictionaries. Moreover, the fact that currently all of these dictionaries originate in Europe - what one might term the 'import factor' - gives rise to interesting questions of dialect differences and their outcome in the specific context of the CBC/R-C broadcasts. I propose to present in some detail the sociolinguistic peculiarities which together mark the broad context, from which those questions take their significance and the broadcasts their importance. In the second part of the paper, I shall present instances of the data obtained, with the aim of showing their significance from a methodological point of view above all.

Soccer, as Association Football is regularly known in Canada and the USA, enjoys wide distribution but low visibility on the Canadian scene. It is an increasingly popular game at the amateur level but, in spite of the efforts of the fledgling and struggling North American Soccer League, the professional game is still not established on a wide scale, drawing most of its personnel from abroad and its supporters from small geographical pockets around Vancouver, Toronto and Montréal. The appeal that the game exerts upon the Canadian general public in both of the language communities is therefore minimal, as a rule. Accordingly, that public's awareness of soccer is very limited indeed, especially in comparison with the more familiar Canadian games such as ice hockey, football, baseball, lacrosse, curling and even golf. In fact, it is fair to say that, for many, soccer is simply regarded

as an import, favoured and practised above all by immigrants from Europe. The boldness of the CBC/R-C decision to present the entire World Cup series to such a national audience is obvious.

### Sports reporting

The game's lack of prominence is regularly confirmed and reinforced by the scant interest in soccer displayed by those segments of Canada's media responsible for sports reporting. As a general rule, sports reporting, not merely of soccer and not merely in the press, typically presents only statistics and gossip - scores, standings, predictions, transfers, resignations, firings and assorted mishaps - and even the exceptions to the rule tend to concern the kind of event that is of only very circumscribed local interest. These facts have important implications for the lexicographer, since - aside from a few special-interest publications small in circulation and unfamiliar to all but the soccer coterie - there are virtually no journalistic descriptions of, for instance, individual matches available in the Canadian media. Thus the public at large, like the lexicographer, has neither frequent nor regular access to any general type of documented repertoire of the linguistic resources and practices appropriate for talking at length about soccer. It is essential to note here that, given that situation, the reporter also has no evident, professional need to have acquired those resources and practices and, typically, will not have done so.

If I may posit a distinction (not necessarily authentic) between sports reporting on the one hand and, on the other, sportscasting in the sense of presenting on television<sup>1</sup> a complete match or game, then the difference is, in terms of the purview of this paper, very significant. In sportscasting, since a lengthy, usually live commentary is an integral part of the presentation, both viewer and commentator share the need for a common modality of narration and description appropriate to the visual perceptions they also share. From common experience, we know that the responsibility for triggering that modality lies with the sportscaster, as the initiator of the description, but we know also from our previous discussion that, in the case of soccer in Canada, he faces something of a quandary in that regard, since he faces an audience he knows is largely untutored in the 'appropriate' modality. For our part, given the fact that virtually all Canadian soccer sportscasters are erstwhile sports reporters cast into a new role, we realize that the commentator's own mastery of the appropriate resources and practices may well be, at the outset, only marginally better than that of his audience.

Instead of speaking of 'appropriate resources and practices' etc., I shall refer henceforth to 'soccer talk', a term that not only is more convenient but also is intended to remind us of what I think are two important points. First, with soccer in Canada a largely unwritten topic, so to speak, its linguistic resources must be sought at the oral level above all. Not only do people, initiates and non-initiates alike, talk about soccer as the occasion arises, they talk about it quite a lot overall: it is they who engage in what one may thus regard as authentic soccer talk, however that may be characterized. Included in their number, theoretically anyway, is the sportscaster, about

whom more in a moment. The second point to recall is that soccer talk, like any number of what are often called special-purpose languages, is not comprised merely of ordinary language directed towards a special topic, nor is it characterized principally by a recourse to what may properly be regarded as 'terms'. It is rather a combination of the two, producing what I would describe as a jargonizing parlance of predominantly oral style, marked by lexical innovations that compete with and often replace established norms (reference books, e.g. Larqué and Mahé 1976, show a striking contrast between the language of the text and that of the rules). In other words, it is an idiom, into and out of which it is possible to slip at will. I emphasize that because a principal concern of the lexicographer, with specific reference to the CBC/R-C broadcasts in the light of what has been said here about sportscasters, is whether they constitute an authentic instance of soccer talk.

Now, in a certain sense, the sportscaster's perceived need for linguistic information is comparable to that of the lexicographer, but with the major difference that the sportscaster is committed, willy-nilly, to actually producing a commentary on a given day, for a given audience, regardless of the certainty of his knowledge of soccer talk. Therefore he does with whatever he has. In so doing, he produces - as the outcome of an undetermined variety of influences and factors - an eventual repertoire of resources and practices that stands, for his compliant public in the first instance, but ultimately for the lexicographer too, as a de facto instance of an authentic soccer talk, thus affording the lexicographer an object of study that was simply unavailable before. Keeping in mind the question I raised earlier concerning the authenticity of such data, I have referred here, carefully, to 'an authentic soccer talk'. Clearly, it is not necessarily the soccer talk of the 'people', as referred to earlier, but should it recur in subsequent sportscasting, then there is little doubt that it will indeed come to be thoroughly authentic, if not necessarily exclusive, even among the soccer coterie: such is the power of television, as any émigré sports fan can amply attest. Of course, this may prove to be a controversial view. I do not propose to press the point but merely to say that it is of central interest in this study, the theme of which is the form that soccer talk might take in Canada when destined for a very large general public that, as a rule, hears little and reads even less about the game of soccer. As such, the theme does not include any form of qualitative evaluation or, obviously, of comparison other than for dialects.

At this point, before turning to more specifically linguistic matters, it would be useful to present briefly the narrow context of the broadcasts themselves. In general, their arrangement followed a well-established pattern for on-location sportscasting: for each network, two two-man teams, one in the studio handling presentation, half-time and wrap-up duties and the other on location with responsibility for the whole of the play-by-play commentary. In each case, a team consisted of an 'anchor-man' - a Canadian native-speaker - and a 'colour-man' - a native-speaker of the European dialect of his language, resident in Canada for a number of years already and so not 'just off the boat'. The anchor-man in each case, the one with the principal role, was a

sports reporter and/or sportscaster, a regular employee of the network and, therefore, not specifically a soccer initiate. The colour-man, on the other hand, was intimately associated with the game, in Europe and/or Canada.

Within this format, the import factor referred to at the outset clearly comes into play, with the presence of the colour-man and his imported knowledge of both the game itself and the idiom associated with it in the European setting. The anchor-man, on the other hand, corresponds in the main to the sociolinguistic parameters that have been outlined. It is to be noted that he, as a regular employee of the CBC/R-C, cannot be thoroughly accustomed to sportscasting soccer, since a virtual monopoly of NASL presentations is presently held by the rival, independent network (CTV).

Thanks to the format employed, the broadcasts offer the lexicographer a bilingual series of original and, in effect, 'parallel texts' of a spontaneous, oral character. Such material lends itself to inspection from a number of points of view: contrastive analysis, dialect differentiation, language contact, lexical variation and innovation, phraseology, style, syntax and translation (cf. Hartmann 1980). My own main interest in the texts was to learn something that would assist me on the general question of adequacy of coverage for a Canadian bilingual dictionary, rather than just for soccer, and I hoped to discover, in addition, to what extent and in what ways the commentaries were distinctively Canadian and how they addressed certain of the difficulties described in the earlier part of this paper.

### Terminology

A notable feature of the texts is the surprising lack of a number of what one might have regarded as indispensable soccer terms. The names of the player's positions are a striking example of this: the only ones to be heard regularly were gardien (de but) /goalkeeper, goalie; wing(er)/ailier, latéral and, less specific, arrière/back; demi (de milieu de terrain)/midfield(er) but never, for instance, intérieur gauche, demi-droite, etc. This no doubt reflects a characteristic of the more current approach to the game, but it appears that certain terms may now be practically obsolete or at least outmoded. Other terms still occurred, of course, but often as merely a simple variant: le but, les buts, la cage, le filet, les filets, le cadre/goal; la barre, la transversale/(cross)bar, horizontal; upright, post/le poteau; le soccer, le football/soccer; penalty (kick, shot)/le penalty, le coup de pied de réparation, le tir de pénalité; nil, none, nothing, zilch, zip/zéro; half, period of play/la mi-temps [spoken only], la demie [on-screen: spoken only once]; (penalty) area, (penalty) box, penalty zone/la zone (de réparation), la surface (de réparation), les seize mètres; round [i.e. of competition]/le tour, la ronde, la manche; (yellow) card/la carte (jaune), le carton (jaune); ball/la balle, le ballon; la défense, la défensive/défence, defensive squad: corner (kick)/le corner, le coup de pied de coin, le coin [infrequent]; score/la marque, le score, le compte.

Still in the general area of terminology, there is an aspect

that brings into consideration a further sociolinguistic peculiarity of the Canadian scene. The province of Québec, through its Bill 101, has established French as the official language of Québec and has created certain agencies to ensure and enhance its establishment. One of these, the Office de la langue française, has responsibility for linguistic (=terminological) standardization and the promulgation of the new norms, though without responsibility for enforcement.<sup>2</sup> As a result, there can sometimes be seen a certain awareness or self-consciousness on the part of Francophones at various levels of society, as they struggle with the question of preferring the 'norm' to the usual, especially if the latter smacks of an Anglicism.

It would be easy to make too much of this, of course, but it is interesting all the same to note in the R-C commentaries a distinct preference for the official rather than the common variant of some frequently occurring items. Thus, the consistent use of metric terms of distance (not found in the CBC texts); le coup de pied de coin rather than le corner; le tir, le lancer, le coup (de pied) rather than le shoot; le coup de pied de réparation, le tir de pénalité rather than le penalty. The case of the last example was very evident early in the series, when the anchor-man in Spain said: "...penalty - coup de pied de réparation, excusez-nous!" a very clear case of self-consciousness at the lexical level.

On the other hand, le tacle, tacler/tackle, to tackle seemed readily to pass muster, although clearly derived from English. The likely explanation is found in the pronunciation in this case: /takl/ as opposed to /takəl/ (which one would regularly find in the case of a direct borrowing from Canadian English) establishes the pair as a borrowing from European French and, as such, an acceptable variant of le plaquage, plaquer or la mise en échec, mettre en échec.

All this suggests the possibility that the conscious conservatism alluded to here may prove to be a distinctive feature of soccer talk in Canadian French as compared with European French. Further study is necessary, however, to determine whether such is the case.

If we take it that the 'concept' pre-exists and generates the 'term', then the observed absence of certain terms may betoken the disappearance or obsolescence of the corresponding concepts.<sup>3</sup> The CBC/R-C data offer some support for this, as in the case of the names of the player positions discussed earlier: there are other names that have succeeded the 'lost' terms but whose occurrence is predicated on concepts that are no longer the same. In particular, items such as striker, sweeper, stopper and their more or less regular counterparts le buteur, le libero (or libéro), le stoppeur refer to the functions of certain players rather than their positions. That they must still retain a certain novelty for the general public was presupposed in one of the R-C half-time presentations: the colour-man, in a chalk-talk, introduced, explained and illustrated precisely the above names, along with arrières, demis and attaquants de pointe, with reference to their roles. They clearly refer to a certain, contemporary approach to strategy and tactics and one is perhaps reluctant to regard

them yet as terms. They correspond rather better to the notion of 'jargon', presented earlier, being lexical innovations that count unquestionably as components of contemporary authentic soccer talk. They occur, however, without variants and for this reason are rather more like terms ('pseudo-terms?') than are other elements of the jargon.

In general, the texts offer a jargon consisting essentially of a subset of general-language items marked by an unusual frequency of occurrence in that context. They are not without variants but, in the context, tend to be the most frequently used. They constitute a kind of *écriture*, whose use is mandatory in authentic soccer talk but which, in this particular case, is comprised in large measure of items that are recognizable as belonging also to a generalized *écriture* of sports talk as practised in North America.

In the English texts, one recognizes immediately: ball carrier, ball game, to blank, to break (away, out), break-out, call s.o. (on the foul, play), come from nowhere, \*challenge from behind, \*check, come away, come off (a foul, etc.), \*cross, deke, defence ([di:fens]), \*draw (a foul, the man), to elect (to shoot, etc.), even-Stephen, foul on the play, \*get a shot away, (work the) give and go, (at the) half, \*headman (the ball, the play), \*head man (on the play), hook, highlight, lay (the ball) off, \*(make, put) a move on (s.o.), \*one on one, \*overlap, \*(off, on the) rebound, \*run out of space, set piece, \*shaken up (on the play), \*strip (s.o. of the ball), \*take it to (the opposition), \*three on two, (etc.), tied at (two, three), trail (1-0), \*trailer (on the play), zilch, zip.

The French offers a similar selection: accorder, accrocher, (faire une action, appeler (une) faute, (prendre) l'avance, \*armer (son tir), \*arrêt (du gardien), arrêt de jeu, auteur (des buts), (une longue) balle, blocage, bousculade, \*se cantonner (derrière la ligne), concéder, contrer, dégagement, défense, défensive, déjouer, démarqué, déviation, \*dribbler, \*échec (sur qqn), encaisser, enlever, fait saillant, faute (sur, par, contre qqn), (ligne de) fond, hors cible, (en) infériorité numérique, intervention, (faire, jouer un) jeu, laisser jouer, \*lancer (un tir), latéral, marquage, marque (finale, nulle), \*mettre en échec, \*mise en échec, percée, percution, \*plaquage, \*plaquer, plongeon, \*(de, en) pointe, poteau, se présenter, presser (l'attaque), \*(prendre) à contre-pied, prolongation, \*rater (son tir), réception, \*(faire un) relai, \*relancer (l'attaque), remise (en jeu), renvoyer, retourné, se faire sécher, serré, siffler, (être) sifflé, soigneur, talonnade, terrasser, tir, tirer, touche, transversale, (faire) trébucher, zone.

Certain items from the preceding lists, when figuring in soccer talk specifically, are likely Canadianisms: they are, above all, those borrowed from customary ice-hockey talk. The hockey lexicon has proven pervasive in this respect, as can be seen from the starred items in the lists above. A particularly transparent example is the Canadian French equivalent of shoot or take a shot, lancer un tir. Semantically transparent in hockey, given the action to which it refers, it has been carried over as a metaphor to soccer, where the relevant action is quite

different, so that in the texts we see the lexical subset shooter (Fr.), tirer, lancer, lancer un tir (Can.).

The importance of lexical items within a particular 'talk' is well established and, for the most part, clear. Less clear usually and less acknowledged is the importance of syntax and phraseology. It is on these two that authenticity depends, in my view, as much as on lexical items and perhaps more: yet they are usually sadly lacking in bilingual dictionaries and glossaries. Instances were numerous in the broadcasts, but my examples are limited to a few, for reasons of space. Some of them display recognizable dialect differences:

ON:	two on one (a rebound ) (a foul ) (overlap ) on the play (a trailer ) (shaken up )	SUR:	une tête de X sur Y échec sur qqn appeler faute sur qqn sur une marque nulle
OFF:	come off a foul off a rebound lay, give (the ball) off	CONTRE:	faute contre X tirer contre le but deux contre un
TO:	take it to (the oppon- ents) lay the ball off to s.o.	PAR:	faute par X par le compte de 1-0
IN:	stoppage in play	EN:	en pointe mise en échec en défensive en infériorité numérique
DRAW:	draw a foul	DE:	de pointe une belle tête de X
WORK:	work the give and go	AU:	tir au 2ième poteau
TAKE:	take a shot take a dive	DANS:	2-0 dans le match dans la surface dans les seize mètres
MAKE:	make a run	A:	1 à 1 dans le match l'amortir à poitrine
		FAIRE:	faire un shoot faire un relai faire une tête
		HORS:	hors cage
		POUR:	X talonne pour Y

### Conclusion

In this paper I have examined an unusual source of data in the light of the problem of adequacy of coverage of particular lexical fields in a bilingual general dictionary and in the aim, secondarily, of acquiring in the process certain ancillary knowledge that might be latent in the data. In the latter case, I have

been able to identify at least tentatively a number of Canadianisms and to demonstrate the importance of a general écriture of sports talk within which soccer talk takes its place and the importance of syntax and phraseology within that écriture. All of these matters bear directly on the question of coverage, especially insofar as there seems reason to play down the role of traditional terms in soccer talk, at least as exemplified in the data. For these reasons, it seems fair to say that the value of such broadcasts as those examined here is substantial and that the broadcasts are a useful instrument of lexicographic research, if properly handled.

This leads to the question of proper use. In the present case, all data were acquired 'on the fly', as they say in baseball: they were noted directly from television during actual transmission. It is quite obvious they would be even more useful if recorded: there is a certain amount of ambiguity that might be resolved with repeatability, especially of the visual record. A simple example will show why: does buteur mean striker (a pseudo-term) or goal-scorer (in the sense of auteur du but) or both from time to time? My data indicate the third case but it needs to be checked and the dictionaries do not really help.

Recording would produce a similar enhancement of methods in the area of contrastive studies, for stylistic as well as translation purposes. Neither of these has been treated directly here but they should be, especially in regard to the remarkable frequency of lexical items more usually ascribed to female speech, e.g. lovely, pretty, beautiful, gorgeous, beau, joli, etc.

Alternatively, if recording is not available, access to a longer series of broadcasts would undoubtedly help the process of checking observations. In my own case, I shall turn next to ice-hockey broadcasts, since they are readily available, extremely frequent and, most often, truly parallel texts.

Finally, I mention a problem that may not be avoidable in the future, any more than it has been already: the question of whether the stylistic attributes peculiar to the restricted number of available commentators tends to distort the value of the kind of data I have discussed. For the reasons presented in the early part of this paper, I feel there is not significant distortion. But the question remains.

#### Notes

- 1 Such sportscasts have now almost completely disappeared from national radio in Canada: they have left, however, a legacy of commentators' resources and practices that have been taken up, in large part, by television. In similar vein, when, in one of the R-C broadcasts, Jean Pagé was heard to shout "Le tir! Le but!", it was a reminder of Foster Hewitt's famous "He shoots! He scores!" from the earliest days of television sportscasting.
- 2 Another agency has the job of 'policing', in a certain sense only, the implementation of the Bill's measures, which impose



French and forbid English in specific ways: the agency has therefore become known to some Anglophones as the 'tongue depressors'.

- 3 One French term appeared widely in the broadcasts but found no English equivalent in any of them. It is débordement, which typically is translated by 'outflanking' (manoeuvre). In soccer, however, it refers to a play or move for which there appears simply to be no common equivalent English term. The nearest, in my texts, is a run down the wing - hardly an exact equivalent. Furthermore, my own experience in soccer tells me that the move specified by débordement does not figure as a concept in the Anglophone view of the game and therefore needs no denomination. Identical events occur, of course, but the Anglophone sees no need to isolate them conceptually. Had it not been for another chalk-talk by Francis Millien, I would not have understood this term properly myself. If anyone feels this is a wrong view, I should be happy to be enlightened.

### References

- Hartmann, R.R.K. (1980) Contrastive Textology. Heidelberg: Groos  
Larqué, J.-M. and Mahé, P. (1976) Le football en dix leçons.  
Paris: Hachette