"East Fife, four... Forfar, five": Intonation of the Classified Football Results

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1. Introduction

Outline

• Introduction to the classified results
• Methodology
• Introduction to the British School transcription model
• Results and discussion
• Conclusion
The classified results

• Originally part of BBC’s radio coverage: ‘Sports Report’

• James Alexander Gordon - reader of the classified results from 1974 to 2013

• Widely-discussed use of intonation to convey meaning
• Classified Results take the form:

[home team] [their score] - [away team] [their score]

e.g. Crawley Town 3 - Chelmsford City 0

Ebbsfleet United 1 - Grimsby Town 1
“Manchester United, he would say with an eager upwards inflection suggesting the home side had won, before adding five. Then he lowered his voice to indicate bad news for the next team: Liverpool, nil.”

– The Guardian, 2014
“He pioneered the much-mimicked technique of raising his tone for the winning side's score, and dropping it in sympathy for the loser’s.”

– BBC News, 2013
“Such was James's unique style of reading the classifieds, his wonderful inflections and stresses, that even non-believers of the sport knew the result after the home team's score.”

– The Mirror, 2013
“Sportingly, he [Tim Gudgin] indulges me with a quick sample of the special intonation that is handed down like a Masonic ritual from one Final Score man to the next.”

– The Telegraph, 2011
Aims of the study

- Investigate perceptual ability
  - Testing the claim that match results are predictable based on the preceding intonation

- Discover the intonation patterns assigned to each type of match result
  - Investigate the extent to which English can convey meaning through intonation

2. Aims
3. Methodology

Methodology
The matches

• Audio recordings taken from BBC Final Score

• Fifteen matches between December 2012 to April 2013

• Measures taken to limit external influence on predictions

• Fourteen from lower leagues of English football, one from the Scottish league
3. Methodology

The intonational analysis

- Qualitative analysis of intonational contours in Praat using the British School transcription model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prehead</th>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Nucleus</th>
<th>Tail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was re-</td>
<td>-ˈmarkably</td>
<td>\textit{ex-}</td>
<td>-cellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Head** - from the first accented syllable up to (but not including) the nuclear accent

- **Nucleus** - the final, and most prominent accented syllable
3. Methodology

Types of head

- Low level
- High level
- Low rising
- High falling
3. Methodology

Types of nuclear accent

- Fall

- Rise

- Fall-rise
The questionnaire

• Audio clips trimmed to exclude the away team’s score
• Distributed via a questionnaire to 30 males and 30 females
• Respondents asked to predict match result
• Attitude towards football
  • Scale from 1 (not at all interested) to 5 (extremely interested)
• Degree of exposure to classified results
  • Never - Rarely - Occasionally - Most weeks - Every week
Results

Part I - Intonational Analysis
4.1 Results - Intonational Analysis

Home Wins

- **High falling head** on home team name
- **Falling nucleus** on home team score
- **High falling head** on away team name
- **Falling nucleus** on away team score
4.1 Results - Intonational Analysis

Home Wins

Home team: 252Hz ~ Away team: 134Hz

Absolute pitch level
Away Wins

- **High falling / Low level head** on home team name
- **Fall-rise nucleus** on home team score
- **Fall-rise nucleus** on away team name
- **Falling nucleus** on away team score

**Implicational fall-rise**
Away Wins

238Hz  178Hz  220Hz

Average elsewhere: 137Hz
Draws

- High falling / Low level head on home team name
- Rise / Fall-rise nucleus on home team score
- Fall nucleus on away team name
- De-accented away team score
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Away</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>High falling head</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>High falling head*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall-rise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away</td>
<td>High falling head</td>
<td>Fall-rise</td>
<td>Fall-rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level head</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rise</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw</td>
<td>High falling head</td>
<td>Fall-rise</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*slight pitch movement
Results
Part II - Perception Test
Yes!

Overall 74% prediction success rate
• *Interest in football* as a significant factor (*p* = 0.006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• *Exposure to results* as a significant factor (*p* = 0.008)

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<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>-0.080</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptual Cues

- Home wins were predicted with most success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction Success</th>
<th>Home Win</th>
<th>Draw</th>
<th>Away Win</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Win</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p < 0.01$

$p = 0.18$

$p < 0.01$
### 4.2 Results - Perception Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Away</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home Win</strong></td>
<td>High falling head</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>High falling head*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall-rise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Away Win</strong></td>
<td>High falling head Low level head</td>
<td>Fall-rise</td>
<td>Fall-rise Fall</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Draw</strong></td>
<td>High falling head</td>
<td>Rise</td>
<td>Fall</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low level head</td>
<td>Fall-rise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*slight pitch movement

- Possible perceptual cues for home wins:
  - Absence of a nuclear accent on away team name
  - General lack of variation within home win intonation
• Are variant intonational patterns more difficult to perceive and associate with a particular match outcome?

• The only variant home win - 70% prediction success (cf. canonical 85% prediction success)

• The variant draws - 64% prediction success (cf. canonical 85% prediction success)
Conclusion

- Relationship between intonation and meaning
- Iconic choice of contours and accentuation:
  - information structure
  - effort code
  - implicational fall-rise
- Match results are predictable based on intonation
  - motivated by interest and exposure to the classified results
  - perceptual ability suffers when variant patterns are used
References

