



The Poetic Voice of Football: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Commentaries of Peter Drury

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Abstract- Football commentary is a distinctive form of spoken discourse that does more than report events as they unfold. Through diction, sentence structure, imagery and figurative expression, commentary can give football events heightened emotional and aesthetic meaning. This expressive dimension is referred to in this study as the poetic voice of football, meaning the distinctive stylistic voice through which a commentator narrates, interprets and gives expressive meaning to the game. Although previous studies have examined register, figurative language, pragmatics and other linguistic features of football commentary, less attention has been given to how lexical, syntactic and figurative resources work together to construct this poetic voice, particularly in Peter Drury's commentary. This study therefore examined the stylistic features contributing to the poetic voice in selected commentaries of Peter Drury. A qualitative design was adopted, and 20 commentary excerpts delivered between 2010 and 2026 were purposively selected and analysed using Leech and Short's (2007) model of stylistic analysis. The findings revealed distinctive lexical choices, varied syntactic patterns and extensive use of figurative devices, which together create rhythm, imagery, emotional intensity and dramatic effect. The study concludes that Drury's commentary demonstrates how football narration can move beyond factual reporting to become an expressive and poetic form of discourse.

Keywords- Football commentary; poetic voice; stylistics; Peter Drury; lexical features; syntactic patterns; figurative devices.

I. Introduction

Football commentary occupies a distinctive position within sports discourse because it converts the movement and uncertainty of a football match into an unfolding verbal narrative. Although its immediate purpose is to tell audiences what is happening on the pitch, commentary also involves interpretation, evaluation, description and emotional response. The commentator therefore does more than identify players, actions and scores. Through carefully selected words and expressions, the commentator can intensify an event, establish its significance and influence how the audience experiences the unfolding match. Abou Bakr et al. (2022) regard football commentary as a form of monologic discourse whose linguistic organisation can be examined through lexical, syntactic and pragmatic features. Similarly, Mehdi (2025) observes that sports commentary is distinguished by its real time reporting of events, making its linguistic organisation different from ordinary narrative discourse. Football commentary is consequently both an account of sporting action and a constructed form of narration.

This narrative character becomes particularly significant when commentators move beyond conventional football terminology and factual description. The language of commentary can compress action, evaluation and emotion into brief expressions while



drawing on metaphor, comparison, exaggeration, repetition and other stylistic resources. Such choices allow an ordinary goal, save, pass or defeat to acquire meanings that extend beyond its immediate physical occurrence. Mehdi (2025) demonstrates how metaphorical language in sports commentary contributes to the conceptualisation of players, teams and sporting events, while Rawian et al. (2024) show that stylistic choices in sports commentary can also construct particular representations and meanings. The expressive possibilities of commentary therefore make the commentator's language an important part of the audience's experience of football.

It is within this relationship between football, language and narration that the poetic voice of football becomes relevant. The phrase captures the capacity of a commentator's language to give sporting action an expressive and aesthetically memorable form. It concerns the commentator's distinctive voice as it emerges through diction, sentence patterns, imagery, figurative expression, rhythm and evaluation. The term "poetic" is therefore used not to classify football commentary as poetry, but to recognise the ways in which commentary can acquire qualities associated with poetic expression. A commentator may turn a moment of play into an image, a player's action into a metaphor, or a decisive event into a dramatic narrative. The poetic voice is consequently located in the stylistic transformation of football action into language that is vivid, imaginative and emotionally resonant.

This quality is particularly noticeable in the commentary of Peter Drury. His commentary has attracted scholarly attention for its distinctive lexical and figurative choices. Harisma and Ramadhani (2024) examine the figurative language employed in his commentary, while Maduekwe and Ofoegbu (2025) identify notable lexico semantic features in his famous football commentaries. Azra and Fitrawati (2024) similarly examine figurative expressions in Drury's commentaries on World Cup final matches. These studies demonstrate important aspects of his linguistic style, but they leave room for a broader examination of how different stylistic resources operate together in constructing his distinctive narrative voice. The present study therefore examines selected commentaries by Peter Drury, focusing on lexical features, syntactic patterns and figurative devices in order to investigate how these resources collectively produce the poetic voice of football.

Who is Peter Drury?

Peter Donald Drury is a British football commentator known for his work in radio and television football broadcasting. Born on 24 September 1967 in England, Drury studied at the University of Hull and began his broadcasting career with BBC Radio in 1990. He later worked with ITV from 1998, where he covered major international competitions, including the FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Championship. He subsequently worked with Premier League Productions, BT Sport, Amazon Prime Video and other international broadcasters. Since 2022, he has served as the lead Premier League play by play commentator for NBC Sports, while he joined Sky Sports in 2023 to cover Premier League football.



Figure 1: Photograph of Peter Drury

Drury is particularly relevant to this study because his commentary demonstrates how football narration can extend beyond the immediate description of events. His use of carefully selected vocabulary, figurative expressions, varied sentence structures and emotionally charged language has attracted attention in studies of football commentary. Sky Sports has also described his commentary as poetic, while NBC Sports identifies his role as that of a narrator of the Premier League's unfolding story. These features make Drury's commentaries suitable for examining how lexical, syntactic and figurative choices contribute to what this study refers to as the poetic voice of football.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the stylistic features that contribute to the poetic voice in selected football commentaries of Peter Drury. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the lexical features employed in the selected football commentaries of Peter Drury



2. examine the syntactic patterns used in the selected football commentaries of Peter Drury.
3. examine the figurative devices employed in the selected football commentaries of Peter Drury.

II. Literature Review

The Concept of Poetic Voice of Football

The concept of the poetic voice of football can be understood through the expressive and interpretive possibilities of football commentary. Football commentary is a distinctive discourse genre because it does more than report events as they occur. Mehdi (2025) explains that sports commentary combines the reporting and interpretation of unfolding events, while the commentator also provides evaluation and contextual information. This communicative function creates space for language to move beyond straightforward description.

The poetic quality of football commentary emerges when linguistic choices give sporting events heightened expressive force. Leech and Short (2007) associate stylistic analysis with the examination of linguistic choices and their effects, making diction, sentence structure and figurative expression important to the study of expressive language. In football commentary, these resources can create imagery, intensify emotion and shape the audience's perception of particular moments. Mehdi (2025), for instance, demonstrates how metaphor can construct imagery and produce emotional effects in sports commentary.

The poetic voice of football, therefore, does not refer to football possessing a literal poetic voice. It refers to the distinctive stylistic voice through which a commentator narrates, interprets and gives expressive meaning to football events. This concept provides the basis for examining how Peter Drury's lexical choices, syntactic patterns and figurative devices contribute to his distinctive commentary style.

Football Commentary as a Distinctive Discourse

Football commentary is a specialised form of discourse shaped by the immediacy, unpredictability and technical demands of live football. Ferguson (1983) identifies sports announcer talk as a distinctive register with recurrent syntactic patterns, demonstrating that commentary differs from ordinary spoken interaction. Beard (1998) similarly situates sports language within a specialised communicative context in which linguistic choices respond to the demands of sporting events. More recent studies extend this understanding by examining commentary at different linguistic levels.

Abou Bakr et al. (2022) show that football commentary involves distinctive lexical, syntactic and pragmatic features across British English and Egyptian Arabic, while Ayodabo et al. (2024) demonstrate that football commentary performs discourse functions beyond the immediate description of match events. Ningsih et al. (2021) further identify specialised football terminology as an important feature of football-related discourse. These studies establish commentary as a structured linguistic practice rather than spontaneous talk. However, attention to register, discourse function and linguistic structure does not fully explain how commentators create distinctive



expressive voices. The present study therefore considers football commentary not only as specialised discourse but also as a site of stylistic and poetic construction.

The Art and Expressive Nature of Football Commentary

The artistry of football commentary emerges from the ways commentators transform sporting events into vivid linguistic experiences. Beard (1998) demonstrates that the language of sport possesses distinctive expressive possibilities, while Abou Bakr et al. (2022) show that football commentary involves lexical and syntactic choices that extend beyond simple event reporting. Recent stylistic research gives greater attention to this expressive dimension. Rawian et al. (2024) approach sports commentary through critical stylistics, showing how linguistic choices can construct particular representations and meanings. Mehdi (2025) further explains that sports commentary combines reporting, interpretation, evaluation and entertainment, while metaphor can create imagery and emotional effects (Mehdi, 2025).

Studies focusing specifically on Peter Drury also demonstrate the prominence of figurative language in his commentaries (Azra & Fitrawati, 2024; Harisma & Ramadhani, 2024), while Maduekwe and Ofoegbu (2025) examine his lexico-semantic choices. Although these studies establish the expressive richness of football commentary, much of the existing work concentrates on individual linguistic features. A more integrated examination of lexical choices, syntactic patterns and figurative devices is therefore necessary to explain how such resources combine to construct the poetic voice of football.

Studies on Peter Drury's Commentaries

Studies focusing specifically on Peter Drury have largely examined the figurative and semantic dimensions of his commentary. Ramadhani (2023) identifies metaphor, irony, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole and litotes in selected Drury commentaries, showing the wide range of figurative resources in his narration. Harisma and Ramadhani (2024) similarly find six major figurative categories, with hyperbole occurring most frequently. Azra and Fitrawati (2024), examining Drury's commentaries in the 2014, 2018 and 2022 World Cup finals, identify metaphor as the dominant figurative device, accounting for 32 of 53 instances, while also relating figurative language to connotative meaning and audience immersion.

Maduekwe and Ofoegbu (2025) shift attention to lexico-semantics, showing how Drury manipulates lexical forms and expressions to construct figurative and metaphorical meanings across commentaries from 2010 to 2023. These studies establish the linguistic richness of Drury's commentary, but their primary emphasis remains on individual semantic or figurative features. Less attention has been given to how lexical choices, syntactic patterns and figurative devices interact within a single stylistic framework. The present study addresses this gap by examining these features collectively as resources through which Drury's distinctive poetic voice is constructed.

Theoretical Framework: Leech and Short's (2007) Model of Stylistic Analysis

This study adopts Leech and Short's (2007) model of stylistic analysis as its theoretical framework. The model provides a systematic approach to examining how linguistic choices produce particular meanings and effects in a text. It identifies four major



categories of analysis: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context. Lexical analysis examines word choices, while grammatical analysis considers sentence structure, clause patterns, tense, voice and other syntactic features. Figures of speech cover devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, irony and hyperbole. Cohesion and context address relationships among linguistic elements and the contextual factors that shape interpretation.

The model is relevant to the present study because football commentary depends on deliberate linguistic choices to narrate and intensify sporting action. It provides a basis for examining how diction, syntactic arrangement and figurative expression work together in Peter Drury's commentaries. These features are particularly important to the study of his poetic voice because they show how ordinary descriptions of football events can be transformed into expressive and imaginative narration.

III. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design because it sought to examine the stylistic features in selected football commentaries of Peter Drury through detailed textual analysis. The data comprised selected commentary excerpts delivered by Peter Drury between 2010 and 2026. The commentaries were purposively sourced from publicly available videos and highlight clips on YouTube, as well as TikTok videos and other user-generated content that featured or reproduced excerpts of Drury's commentary. The sources were selected based on the availability of clear commentary excerpts and their relevance to the objectives of the study. Twenty (20) commentary excerpts were purposively selected for analysis based on the presence and richness of relevant lexical, syntactic and figurative features. The selected excerpts were transcribed where necessary and treated as the textual data for analysis.

The data were analysed qualitatively using Leech and Short's (2007) model of stylistic analysis. The analysis was organised according to the three objectives of the study. First, the selected excerpts were examined for lexical features, with attention to the choice and use of words and expressions. Second, the syntactic patterns were examined to identify notable patterns in sentence and clause construction. Third, the excerpts were analysed for figurative devices, including the use of metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, irony and other relevant forms. Relevant excerpts were presented as textual evidence for each identified feature, followed by interpretation of how the linguistic choices contribute to the distinctive and expressive quality of Peter Drury's commentary.

IV. Analysis

This section analyses the stylistic features that contribute to the poetic voice in selected football commentaries of Peter Drury. Drawing on Leech and Short's (2007) model of stylistic analysis, the analysis examines how lexical choices, syntactic patterns and figurative devices are used to give his commentary its distinctive expressive quality. The analysis therefore considers not only the linguistic features present in the selected commentaries, but also how these features work together to transform the narration of football events into vivid, expressive and memorable discourse.



Lexical Features in the Selected Football Commentaries

Drury's lexical choices combine technical football vocabulary with evaluative, descriptive and repetitive expressions. These choices give his commentary precision, emotional force and distinctive stylistic character.

Specialised Football Vocabulary

Football commentary operates within a recognisable lexical field shaped by the rules, practices, competitions and institutional structures of the game. Specialised vocabulary enables commentators to identify events precisely while maintaining the speed required for live narration. In Drury's commentaries, this technical register is evident in expressions such as:

- "stoppage time"
- "penalty spot"
- "group stage"
- "free kick"
- "elimination"
- "World Cup Quarter Final"
- "semi-finals"
- "Champions League Hattrick"
- "Nou Camp"

The lexical pattern shows that Drury's commentary is grounded in the conventional language of football, but his use of this vocabulary has wider stylistic implications. Terms such as "stoppage time," "penalty spot" and "free kick" provide technical precision, while "group stage," "quarter final," "semi-finals" and "elimination" situate individual actions within larger competitive narratives. "Champions League Hattrick" foregrounds achievement, whereas "Nou Camp" invokes a recognisable football setting with cultural significance.

This supports Ningsih et al. (2021), who identify specialised terminology as a significant feature of football discourse. However, their focus on football terms in online news primarily establishes their referential function. Drury's usage operates within live, dramatic narration, where technical vocabulary also contributes to the progression and framing of the event. The findings therefore suggest that specialised football vocabulary provides the technical framework within which his more expressive and poetic lexical choices become meaningful.

Evaluative and Emotive Lexical Choices

Football commentary does not merely describe what happens during a match; it also communicates the commentator's evaluation of events and constructs an emotional response to them. Drury's lexical choices frequently intensify the significance of particular moments through strong evaluative adjectives, emotionally charged adverbs and expressions of disbelief or celebration. The selected commentaries contain examples such as:

- Sensational adjectives: "Staggering! Just staggering!", "extraordinary scenario"
- Extreme evaluation: "Inexplicable, illogical, irrationable, scarcely digestible, barely conceivable"



- Emotional escalation: “improbably, miraculously, impossibly”, “The unthinkable unfolds”
- Polarised tone: “bittersweet lockdown triumph”, “joyful outpouring”

The examples demonstrate how evaluation becomes a central resource for transforming match events into emotionally charged narratives. “Staggering” and “extraordinary” construct particular events as exceptional, while the sequence “inexplicable, illogical, irrationable, scarcely digestible, barely conceivable” intensifies disbelief through cumulative evaluation. Similarly, “improbably, miraculously, impossibly” progressively heightens the sense of improbability, whereas “The unthinkable unfolds” presents an unexpected event as a dramatic revelation.

The contrast between “bittersweet” and “joyful” also shows how Drury accommodates different emotional positions within football narratives. This supports Mehdi’s (2025) observation that sports commentary involves not only reporting but also evaluation and interpretation. However, the present findings indicate a stronger lexical intensification than simple evaluative reporting. Drury’s accumulation and sequencing of evaluative expressions contribute to the heightened emotional and poetic character of his narration.

Descriptive and Expressive Diction

The descriptive quality of football commentary depends partly on the commentator’s ability to select words that represent sporting events in ways that extend beyond ordinary factual description. Drury frequently employs elevated nouns, carefully constructed characterisations and evocative expressions that give players, performances and match situations a heightened linguistic representation. The selected commentaries contain:

- Elevated nouns: “zenith”, “nadir”
- Poetic characterisation: “Vintage beyond valuation, beyond forgery or imitation”, “immaculate maturity”
- Evocative imagery: “storied stage”, “shimmered spectacularly”, “effortless athleticism”

The examples show that Drury’s diction can transform football performances into broader images of achievement, decline and distinction. “Zenith” and “nadir” position victory and defeat at contrasting extremes, giving individual results a metaphorical sense of elevation and collapse. The expression “Vintage beyond valuation, beyond forgery or imitation” further constructs excellence through a comparison with something authentic and beyond reproduction, while “immaculate maturity” compresses judgement about quality into an elevated noun phrase. Similarly, “storied stage” gives the football venue a narrative dimension, while “shimmered spectacularly” and “effortless athleticism” create visual and aesthetic impressions of performance. This extends Mehdi’s (2025) finding that figurative language in sports commentary can create imagery and emotional effect. The present data, however, show that such effects also arise from individual lexical choices and descriptive collocations, demonstrating how diction contributes directly to Drury’s distinctive poetic voice.



Repetition and Lexical Patterning

Repetition in football commentary can serve more than a grammatical or rhetorical function. In live narration, repeated words and structures can mark emphasis, reproduce the intensity of an unfolding moment and give the commentary a recognisable rhythm.

Drury's commentaries contain several forms of lexical patterning:

- Anaphora and name repetition: "Messi on a million backs, Messi for a million flashbulbs"
- Substantive duplication: "one kick of the ball, one kick of the football"
- Dramatic exclamatory repetition: "Lionel Messi, no no no no no no", "Beautiful, Beautiful!"
- Patterned modifiers: "restored faith, restored verve, restored appetite", "there are days... there are days"

These patterns demonstrate how repetition contributes to emphasis, rhythm and emotional intensity. The repeated "Messi" establishes a strong rhythmic focus while expanding the player's significance through parallel phrases. "One kick of the ball, one kick of the football" reinforces a single decisive action through lexical duplication, whereas "no no no no no no" reproduces the immediacy of an emotional reaction rather than simply describing it. The sequence "restored faith, restored verve, restored appetite" combines repetition with parallel structure to present a cumulative restoration of collective enthusiasm. These findings complement Syaputri et al. (2024), who identify repetition and other patterned linguistic features as resources in sports commentary. However, Drury's examples suggest that repetition is not merely a feature of spontaneous spoken discourse. Its patterned use creates rhythm and foregrounds key moments, contributing to the memorable and poetic quality of his commentary.

Syntactic Patterns in the Selected Football Commentaries of Peter Drury

Drury's syntax varies in length, structure and arrangement to reflect the pace and intensity of football action. These patterns also create rhythm, emphasis and dramatic effect. His commentary moves between compressed utterances, expanded clauses, unusual word order and patterned structures, allowing syntax to participate in the construction of a distinctive narrative style.

Sentence Length and Structural Variation

Sentence length and structural complexity are important features of Drury's commentary. His syntax shifts from extremely brief utterances to extended multi-clause constructions, allowing the linguistic form to correspond with different stages of sporting action. The selected commentaries contain:

- Ultra-short isolated utterances: "Seven..", "Staggering!"
- Brief exclamatory clusters: "Bukayo Saka!, such poise! Such noise!..."
- Complex multi-clause narration: "It was here nearly a fortnight ago now that they outwitted Belgium and alerted the world to the predatory Atlas Lion"
- Periodic sentence structure: "From Europe western extreme, from Africa's Northernmost tip, a sporting event of inestimable global significance"

The variation demonstrates that Drury does not rely on a uniform sentence pattern. Very short utterances compress information and create immediacy, while longer structures



allow him to incorporate background, evaluation and dramatic description within a single stretch of narration. The brief exclamatory forms are particularly effective in moments of heightened action because their reduced length mirrors the speed of the event. The longer constructions, in contrast, slow the pace and create a more reflective and ceremonial tone. This structural flexibility supports Mehdi's (2025) observation that sports commentary employs distinctive syntactic patterns, including ellipsis, inversion and varied sentence constructions. Drury's usage extends this function by making sentence length itself a resource for controlling pace, emphasis and dramatic progression. Syntax therefore contributes significantly to the expressive and poetic character of his commentary.

Ellipsis and Sentence Fragmentation

Ellipsis and sentence fragmentation allow Drury to compress grammatical structures while maintaining communicative force. Such forms are particularly suited to live football commentary, where the commentator must respond rapidly to events and cannot always produce complete sentences. The selected commentaries contain:

- Staccato geographical lists: "Madeira, Manchester, Madrid, Turin and Manchester again"
- Nominal appositive fragments: "A walking work of art", "Manolas, the Greek god in Rome!"
- Verbless exclamations: "Goal for South Africa! Goal for all Africa!"
- Condensed match summary notation: "Gakpo 2, Nunez 2, Salah 2, Firmino to put the cheering on the icing..."

These structures demonstrate how grammatical incompleteness can become a stylistic resource rather than a weakness in expression. The geographical sequence compresses a wider narrative into a rapid succession of place names, while the nominal fragments provide immediate characterisation without requiring full predication. The repeated goal declarations similarly foreground the event itself and give the utterances a forceful, celebratory rhythm. The condensed scoring sequence adopts the economy of match notation but places it within a more expressive narrative context. This finding agrees with Mehdi's (2025) identification of ellipsis as a characteristic feature of sports commentary. However, Drury's use of fragmentation shows that omission can also contribute to rhythm, emphasis and dramatic pacing. The resulting syntax enables his commentary to remain responsive to live action while acquiring a compressed and stylistically marked quality.

Inversion and Unusual Word Order

Drury also manipulates conventional word order to foreground particular elements of an utterance. Inversion and fronting enable locations, times, participants and circumstances to receive prominence before the main proposition is completed. The selected commentaries contain:

- Fronted locative/temporal adverbials: "Here, finally, is a Nation's new throne of immortals"
- Preposed prepositional phrase: "Twice now for Allison too..."
- Inverted auxiliary construction: "So recently have they one more punch where that one came from"



- Fronted participial clause: “Eight minutes from elimination, and Di Francesco does not know where to go...”

The unusual ordering of elements gives Drury greater control over information focus and dramatic emphasis. Fronted expressions can establish a setting, temporal condition or evaluative frame before the central event is revealed. This creates a sense of anticipation, particularly where the syntactic arrangement delays the main proposition. Inversion also distinguishes the commentary from ordinary conversational speech and contributes to its heightened rhetorical quality. The findings are consistent with Mehdi's (2025) observation that inversion is among the marked syntactic patterns found in sports commentary. However, Drury's examples suggest that unusual word order performs more than a structural function. It helps organise attention, delay information and give important moments a ceremonious or dramatic presentation. Syntax thus becomes part of the stylistic construction of his poetic voice.

Parallelism and Repetitive Structures

Parallelism and repetitive structures provide another important syntactic resource in Drury's commentary. Repeated grammatical patterns can establish rhythm, create balance and intensify an idea, particularly when the commentary moves from description towards evaluation or reflection. The selected commentaries contain:

- Juxtaposed dual verbs: “denied, defied”
- Balanced parallel clauses: “he was beautiful, he was the point of difference...”
- Clause-level anaphora: “always those who argue, always those who debate”
- Multi-prepositional stacking: “for their continent, for their culture, on behalf of Africa, on behalf of the Arab world”
- Chiasmus / balanced reversal: “he replaced a legend and he became a legend”

The patterns demonstrate how syntactic repetition can organise meaning while also producing a strong rhetorical rhythm. The paired verbs compress related actions into a balanced structure, while parallel clauses create equivalence between successive descriptions. The repeated clause openings establish rhythmic continuity and give the statement greater emphasis. Similarly, the accumulation of prepositional phrases expands the scope of reference from a specific group to wider cultural and continental identities.

The final reversal creates a circular relationship between replacement and achievement, giving the statement a memorable rhetorical form. Such patterning supports the view that sports commentary can contain highly marked linguistic structures rather than functioning solely as spontaneous description. In Drury's case, parallelism and repetition allow syntax to acquire rhetorical force, making the narration more rhythmic, emphatic and memorable. These structures therefore strengthen the poetic quality of his commentary by turning grammatical arrangement into a resource for expression.

Figurative Devices in the Selected Football Commentaries of Peter Drury

Figurative language enables Drury to move beyond literal description by creating vivid images, emotional intensity and symbolic meanings. Metaphor, simile, personification and related devices strengthen the poetic quality of his narration.



Metaphor

Metaphor is a prominent resource in Drury's commentary because it enables football events to be represented through concepts drawn from everyday life, art, religion, nature and achievement. Rather than describing events literally, metaphor allows him to construct alternative images through which particular performances and moments acquire greater symbolic significance. The selected commentaries contain:

- Celebratory metaphor: “popped the first cork of their day of days!”
- Artistic/aesthetic metaphor: “A walking work of art”
- Sacred and transcendental metaphor: “shaken hands with paradise”, “pitched up in heaven”, “climbs into a galaxy of his own”, “conquered his final peak”
- Playful/domestic metaphor: “kicked over Brighton Sandcastle good and proper”, “Liverbird back on its perch”

The metaphors demonstrate the breadth of conceptual domains Drury draws upon when representing football. Celebration, artistic excellence, spirituality, astronomy, geography and domestic imagery become resources for interpreting sporting action. The transcendental expressions particularly elevate football achievement beyond its immediate material circumstances, while the artistic metaphor presents performance as something to be appreciated aesthetically. The domestic and playful metaphors, in contrast, introduce familiarity and humour into the narration. Mehdi (2025) similarly demonstrates that metaphor in sports commentary can construct imagery and produce emotional effects. Drury's usage extends this function through the range of conceptual associations attached to players, teams and events. Metaphor therefore enables his commentary to operate simultaneously as description, interpretation and imaginative narration, strengthening its distinctive poetic quality.

Simile

Simile provides explicit comparison between a football-related subject and another entity, making qualities such as emotional intensity, scale or performance more visually accessible. Unlike metaphor, which presents one thing in terms of another, simile marks the comparison directly through expressions such as “as” and “as ... as”. The selected commentaries contain:

- Geographical comparison: “smile is as wide as the Hudson River”
- Comparative adverbial pattern: “pushed back its boundaries as boldly, as ambitiously as Morocco did”

These comparisons extend the representation of football beyond the immediate field of play. The reference to the Hudson River gives emotional expression a geographical scale, making the player's happiness appear unusually expansive. The second comparison associates sporting achievement with the boldness and ambition of another team, thereby establishing a comparative standard for performance. The effect is not simply decorative.

The comparisons make abstract qualities such as happiness, ambition and achievement more concrete and imaginable. This supports the broader observation that figurative language in sports commentary can create vivid mental representations and emotional effects (Mehdi, 2025). In Drury's commentary, simile also contributes to the poetic voice by allowing sporting qualities to be understood through striking external points of comparison.



Personification

Personification gives human qualities, actions or intentions to teams, places, institutions and abstract concepts. This device enables Drury to represent collective football entities as active participants with emotions, intentions and physical capacities. The selected commentaries contain:

- Architectural and spatial personification: “the Emirates braces itself”, “Roma have risen from their ruins!”
- Symbolic animal personification: “the predatory Atlas Lion... has since sunk its teeth into Spain, and now it licks its lips...”
- Abstract concept personification: “the love affair goes on”, “a Nation will tangle all night long”

These expressions animate otherwise inanimate or collective entities and give football narratives a human or living presence. The stadium becomes a participant anticipating an event, while Roma is represented through the physical action of rising from ruins. The Atlas Lion metaphor combines animal imagery with human-like intention and movement, constructing Morocco's progress as a predatory advance. Similarly, abstract relationships and national identities are presented as active forces. The effect is to enlarge the narrative beyond individual players and immediate actions, allowing places, teams and collective identities to participate in the drama. This use of personification complements Drury's wider reliance on metaphorical imagery and contributes to the poetic quality of his narration by turning football entities into expressive narrative actors.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole involves deliberate exaggeration for emphasis and emotional effect. In football commentary, it can magnify the importance of a player, achievement or match by presenting it on a scale that exceeds literal measurement. Drury frequently employs such exaggeration to communicate the exceptional nature of particular sporting moments. The selected commentaries contain:

- Numerical exaggeration: “Messi on a million backs, Messi for a million flashbulbs”, “desire of millions of billions who identify with them”
- Magnitude exaggeration: “a sporting event of inestimable global significance”
- Temporal exaggeration: “this party will last all night, all week, all month, all year”

The exaggerated quantities and scales in these expressions are not intended as literal measurements. Instead, they communicate the perceived magnitude of football's emotional and cultural significance. Numerical exaggeration constructs an image of an enormous collective audience, while the temporal sequence progressively expands celebration beyond the immediate match. The description of global significance similarly places a particular sporting event within an almost limitless frame of importance. Hyperbole therefore allows Drury to represent football as an event of extraordinary collective consequence. The device reinforces the emotional intensity of his narration while demonstrating how lexical and figurative choices work together to enlarge the significance of sporting events. In this respect, exaggeration becomes a stylistic means through which the poetic voice transforms moments of football into expansive cultural narratives.



Irony

Irony creates meaning through a contrast between expectation and actuality, between what appears to be the case and what subsequently occurs, or between an expression and the situation it describes. In football commentary, this contrast can capture sudden reversals, disappointment and unexpected developments. The selected commentaries contain:

- Situational reversal: “United's game was over, they had it, they've had it stolen back”
- Litotic/understated irony: “that is Manchester United as they would rather forget”
- Paradoxical real-time irony: “This was not meant to happen; this could not happen, this is happening!”

The first example presents victory as something apparently secured before immediately reversing that expectation, thereby reflecting the uncertainty of football. The second uses understatement to communicate disappointment without directly stating the extent of the failure. The final example places incompatible expectations beside the unfolding reality, producing a sharp contrast between impossibility and actuality. These structures show that irony in Drury's commentary is closely connected to the unpredictable nature of sporting events. Rather than merely adding humour, it enables him to dramatise reversals and expose the distance between expectation and outcome. The use of irony consequently strengthens the interpretive dimension of his narration, allowing the commentary to capture the tension of football through carefully structured contrasts.

Alliteration

Alliteration involves the repetition of initial consonant sounds across neighbouring or closely related words. In Drury's commentary, sound patterning contributes to rhythm, emphasis and memorability, particularly where repeated sounds occur within descriptive or celebratory expressions. The selected commentaries contain:

- Plosive alliteration: “Bafana Bafana”
- Alveolar alliteration: “trembling teenager of touch and tease”
- Nasal alliteration: “Madeira, Manchester, Madrid”, “Moroccan Marvel”
- Sibilance: “shimmered spectacularly”
- Labiovelar alliteration: “wary and watchful and wondering”

The examples demonstrate that sound selection can reinforce meaning alongside lexical and syntactic choices. Repeated consonant sounds give particular phrases a rhythmic quality, making them easier to notice and remember during rapid spoken narration. The repetition in the geographical sequence creates a flowing cadence, while the repeated sounds in descriptive expressions intensify their rhetorical effect. The sibilant pattern produces a softer but noticeable sonic texture, whereas the repeated /w/ sound in the final example creates a measured sequence of description. Alliteration therefore shows that the poetic quality of Drury's commentary is not produced through meaning alone. Sound organisation also contributes to the rhythm and aesthetic character of his narration, allowing linguistic form to complement the drama of the football event.



V. Conclusion

This study examined the stylistic features that contribute to the poetic voice in selected football commentaries of Peter Drury. The analysis shows that his distinctive style is shaped by the interaction of lexical choices, syntactic patterns and figurative devices. His use of specialised, evaluative and expressive vocabulary gives football events emotional and descriptive depth, while varied sentence structures, ellipsis, inversion and parallelism create rhythm, emphasis and dramatic progression. Metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, irony and alliteration further transform match events into vivid and memorable narratives. The findings demonstrate that football commentary can extend beyond factual reporting to become an expressive form of discourse in which linguistic choices shape how sporting moments are represented and experienced. Drury's commentary therefore illustrates how stylistic resources can give football narration a distinctive poetic voice.

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