

Reacting to “Failure and Triumph” among Iranian Soccer Coaches: A CDA outlook of the sports media language

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Abstract

The importance of sport as a social, psychological, and cultural agenda in today's world can by no means be denied. This is, as a rule, reflected in all its aspects through the language of media. The present descriptive study has thus tried to investigate how the language of sports media shape sport consumers such as coaches, players, the audience, and sporting officials at large. For this purpose, fifty soccer games were investigated during an eight-month period. The data collected from TV interviews, newspaper reports, and a sporting talk show called Navad (i.e. 90) were transcribed and analyzed with a CDA perspective in view, for the coaches, players, the audience, and officials. As a result, twelve categories were extracted based on the coaches' reactions to their failure, from which the most salient was referees' judgments. A close look at these categories reveal a circular relationship among sports media, coaches' reactions to their failure or triumph, the audience interpretation of their favorite teams, and macro decisions of the officials in this field. The findings of this study can contribute to the development of a better and more appropriate environment among the four mentioned groups involved in soccer game in Iran.

Keywords: Soccer coaches, sports media, Critical Discourse Analysis, failure, referee's judgments

Introduction and Background to the Study

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) regards 'language as social practice' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997), and takes consideration of the context of language use to be crucial (Wodak, 2000; Benke, 2000). Moreover, CDA takes a particular interest in the relation between language and power. The term CDA is used nowadays to refer more specifically to the critical linguistic approach of scholars who find the larger discursive unit of text to be the basic unit of communication. This research specifically considers institutional, political, gender and media discourses (in the broadest sense) which testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict (Wodak, 2001).

Critical discourse analysis emphasizes the necessity of establishing methods for empirical investigation of relations between discursive and non-discursive practices. In this sense it distinguishes itself mainly from discourse theory. The work of Norman Fairclough is central. For Fairclough, discourse is a communicative act, but also a social practice. Discourses constitute social phenomena, but are also constituted by social phenomena in the form of social (or political) practice. Any use of language (a communicative action) therefore consists of a discursive practice where discourses are produced or consumed; and a social practice or an institutional context of which a communicative action is a part. The communicative action can draw on (consume) or create (produce) discourses, but will always be part of an order of

discourse, where several discourses are articulated simultaneously. The communicative act is linked to social practice through the use of genres or conventional text types; the news media can, for example, draw on interviews as a genre, while the family can use the dinner table conversation in the same manner (Pederson, 2009).

While critical discourse analysis attempts to uncover the ideologies which contribute to the production and reproduction of power, it also has a political aim: It looks for how a discourse limits our understanding of the world (i.e. function as an ideology) but also for how they contain several competing discourses and therefore the possibility of dominant ideologies to be contested. Ideology is understood to be embedded in discursive practice, and discourses to be more or less ideological, where the ideological discourses are those which contribute to maintaining (or establishing) a power relation.

Thus, CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse) (Wodak, 2001).

CDA and media

As individuals we are all influenced, our opinions shaped, reinforced and altered by our exposure to the media (Sanchez Macarro, 2002: 13). Media discourse is a broad term which can refer to a totality of how reality is represented in broadcast and printed media from television to newspaper. It is becoming more and more difficult to analyze discourses in modern times, as the contradictions and the complexities have grown many folds. The complexity of discourse is to be understood in terms of the complexities of the societies, their cultures and their polity. The discourses of Mass media are even more difficult to analyze.

Thus far, a primary objective of most media discourse analysis (from linguistic to the sociological) is often the registering of the presence of bias or ideology in language, or the problematizing of power relations in society. As such, social theory has often been more a basis for analysis than linguistic theory. The literature as a body tends to focus variously on the ideological implications of language in the media, and thus critiques of the approaches are organized around the validity of findings of bias, whether instigated through linguistic or sociological means (Cotter, 2001a).

Currently, as more work is done in both social theory and linguistic-situated framework, the interdisciplinarity of media research is more firmly established. Indeed, the multidisciplinary ethos that undergirds existing research can be extended to even more holistic scholarly endeavors. Ideally, developing an ethnographic component is a logical next step, one which would work to explain communicative behaviors from the perspective of the community in which the discourse is situated. This approach means looking at the “community of coverage” – the audience, readers, listeners, consumers, users – as well as the community of practice. A process or practice-oriented approach would allow new insights into the integrated examination of news practice, news values, and audience role (Cotter, 1993, 2001b).

Regarding journalism in particular, CDA recognizes that ‘the news’ is “the outcome of specific professional practices and techniques, which could be and can be quite different with quite different results” (Fairclough, 1995:204), appreciating that news discourse occurs in social settings (of production and consumption) and the construction of discourse “relates systematically and predictably to [these] contextual circumstances” (Fowler, 1991:36).

At this point, the relevance and value of ethnography comes into the picture. In contrast with traditional highly text-dependent approaches to media discourse, ethnography assigns a much more active role to the language user and communicative participant. Ethnographers consider an exclusive focus on the text to be problematic because it leaves out of the communicative process the active work done by participants as well as the cultural context that underpins the action. Rather than an “agency implied in the text”, ethnography brings speech-community members into focus as real people with actual identities who actively construct social meaning.

Combining ethnographic interpretation with fine-grained or text-dependent analyses of meaning draws the participants into the investigation and helps researchers gain analytic leverage to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of institutionalized discourse processes. In that sense, we consider our approach to be part of a larger plea for accepting a participant-oriented approach in media discourse analysis, building on seminal work by Bell (1991) and Verschueren (1985), and recent ethnographic work by Briggs (2007), Perrin and Ehrensberger (2008) and Cotter (2009).

CDA and register analysis

Every text reflects complex social routines and, both within Systemic \functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), important advances have been made regarding the interconnections between texts and the context where they occur. For example, within SFL, The Context of Situation (register) and its sub-variables Field, Tenor, and Mode, and the Context of Culture with its link to larger sociocultural aspects of human activity have successfully been used to discuss important ramifications of language and context as they relate to register (Halliday, 1978), genre (Egins, 1994; Butt, et al. 2001), and the notion of contextual configuration (Halliday and Hasan, 1989; Hasan, 1996).

There is a consensus in both SFL and CDA that context has crucial bearing on the analysis of language use and language change. In 1978, in his classic sociolinguistic proposal *Language as Social Semiotic*, for instance, Halliday (1978: 35) emphasized that the criteria for describing context should be sociological, i.e. ‘based on some theory of social structure and social change’.

A multidisciplinary study interconnecting social psychology, communication, media, culture studies, and sports as a register within this media is the focus of this study. A question might arise as to why sports?

There is no question that the significance of sport as a wider topic of serious scholarly research remains somewhat sidelined. Although it is taken seriously within specific areas of research (e.g., the focus on athlete performance in Sport Psychology; the organizing of sport in Sport Management), the wider psychological, social, and cultural significance of sport continues to be underestimated. Yet the centrality of sport has been noted by many distinguished authors, from a diversity of disciplines, for many years (e.g., Bourdieu, 1978; Geertz, 1973; Lyotard, 1984). Moves has been made in conducting studies on sports and its various aspects from among the most recent ones the investigation of masculinity by Adams, et. al. (2011), athletes’ self-talk by Tovaes (2011), racism by Sanderson (2011), audience responses by Westerman and Tamboroni (2011), stereotypes and commentators by Desmarais and Bruce (2011), and gender in media sports by Angelini and Billings (2011) can be named.

The continued dismissal of the role and influence of sport, and its value as a site for systematic academic inquiry, has been attributed to a number of underlying rationales; from amusing stereotypes of nonathletic scholars eschewing sport from envy, jealousy, and lack of

comprehension to its trivialization as being *merely* entertainment. However, it is because sport is so widely practiced and consistently present in family life, in the media, in educational settings, as leisure, as entertainment, for identity construction, and as a widely adopted intertextual and metaphoric referent, that it is seen as *naturally occurring* rather than as *constructed* and *constructing* identities, culture, and related practices (Meân, 2001).

Sport has typically been studied at the micro (individual), meso (organizational), and macro (social and cultural) levels, yet it is the intersections and interconnections of these levels that increasingly hold promise for future search (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). Although there are many ways in which sport, language, and culture intersect and interconnect across these levels, there are two in particular that speak directly to the research articles in this special issue: identities and media.

These intersections are evident in research that explores how sport as media is produced and reproduced, viewed and consumed, using shared cultural and/or organizational categories and understandings to guide meaning making in ways that also affect behavior, performance, and identities (Desmarais & Bruce, 2011; Scherer, 2007; Tovares, 2011; Wenner, 1991).

Sport, language, and culture

Sport is itself characterized as a major cultural and socializing force (Creedon, 1998; Sklair, 1991) and a cultural industry (Horne, 2006). Halone and Mean (2010) define the dynamics of sport, language, and culture using three terms; formative, additive, and cyclical. An additive approach to sport, language, and culture indicates that the combination of the two regulates the third (culture + language = sport). The formative approach fosters a constitutive assumption, which means a combination of two dynamics gives rise to the presence of the third (sport + language = culture), and finally, the cyclical assumption tries to show a reciprocal assumption meaning all three dynamics mutually give rise to the production and reproduction of the other (sport.....languageculture.....sport ...).

With the above-mentioned literature in view, the main focus of this study was on soccer. Soccer is believed to be the most popular sport in Iran, having fans of all ages and social levels. Soccer fans in Iran have very strong feelings about their favorite teams, and following their favorite teams' latest news is considered to be their main hobby. Sources of the news on sports and seemingly soccer are the sports papers, sports news on TV three times a day, and some sports talk shows. Actually, this study sought to investigate the possible effect of the language used in these media sources on reactions to failure and triumph among players, coaches, and referees, to see how these assumptions and reactions shape the sports culture among the audience and finally, how this culture bounces back to soccer itself.

Based on above objectives the following three research questions were addressed:

- Q1. Does language of sports media shape Iranian soccer coaches' reactions to failure and triumph?
- Q2. Does language of sports media shape soccer fans' interpretation of their favorite teams' failure or triumph?
- Q3. Does language of sports media shape top level sporting organizations' decision-making about referees?

Methodology

Materials

For the purposes of this descriptive study, fifty soccer games in a play-off series were observed during a period of 8 months, and 10 soccer coaches were under study to be investigated

for their reactions to winning or failing after each soccer game. It was and is a custom for both coaches and players in Iran, as in almost all other countries in the world, to have interviews with the media (radio and television) after finishing the game. The interviews are then played on TV in sports news or another TV program in Iran, a talk show under the name Navad (i.e. 90, which ceased to continue in 2019 for political reasons). The show was on every Sunday night at around 10 pm for three to four hours. Most materials analyzed in this study were collected from the content of this show. Navad was considered to be the most popular show among sports fans in Iran with an estimated three to four million viewers for each show. The show's most common theme was the events related to soccer games during the week, and almost all the well-known figures of soccer including the players, coaches, referees, and the officials of all related organizations were occasionally invited. One almost fixed part of every week's show was the analysis of the referees' judgments in each week's soccer matches. During this episode, the controversial foul scenes were played back and the host asked questions such as "was it really a foul?" or "was it really a penalty?" "Do you think this player had to be sent out?" "Are you sure about the foul? Let's watch it again". The expert guest invited to the show, who was usually an experienced soccer referee, tried to provide reasons for the judgments of the game's referee and convince the host that the judgments had been flawless. The host of the show was a young soccer reporter expert in almost all rules and regulations of the game.

Another portion of the materials used in this study was a number of close real time observations (10 games) made as the games were going on to analyze the reactions of the audience during each game. It is worth mentioning that the reactions of the audience as well as the sporting organizations' decisions about referees were also covered in Navad. Also, the fans' comments right after each event and reflected on sport web sites comprised another part of the materials.

Analysis Framework

The pattern mostly of concern in the present study was more of a cyclical one through which it has been tried to reveal how culture with its manifestations in different aspects of the society shapes the kind of language produced in sports (mainly soccer here), especially in media, and how this kind of language forms sport, its related organizations, and the audience perception of sport consequently. Actually, the researchers have attempted to check if this inter-relationship bounces back and re-forms the culture of sports consumption and interpretation and if it shapes the kind of language produced in sports media.

Procedures

The main sources of data collection on the reactions of the coaches and players to failure and failure were the live interviews played on TV after each game, which were replayed in more details on Navad as well as in four sports papers: GOL (goal), KHABAR-e-VARZESHI (sports news), IRAN-e-VARZESHI (Sports in Iran).

The first procedure in the present study was to record and transcribe all the above interviews after each event for later analysis. For each of the selected coaches a number of ten interviews (a total of 50 games) were transcribed and analyzed.

As for the audience, 10 real time observations were done and field notes were taken to record the reactions of the audience to the foul scenes of both their favorite and opponent teams. These observations were then coupled for analysis with Navad interviews with the fans after the events as well as some scenes on their reactions to the judgments of referees both during and after matches.

Finally, the data obtained from the coaches were subject to statistical coding to find the most and the least frequently used expressions stated by them. The data obtained from the audience were also analyzed to find the patterns of behavior among them.

Data analysis and Results

Coaches' data

Transcription and coding of the coaches' interviews with different TV and radio stations provided the researchers with utterances indicating the coaches' reaction strategies to their failure. The following table shows twelve different categories for such strategies and their frequency of use:

Table 1. *Frequency of Use of Coaches' Verbal Reactions to Failure*

	Category	Percentage of use
1	Referees' judgements	% 60
2	Injured players	% 20
3	Team' lack of harmony	% 18
4	Tiredness in the middle of the league	% 15
5	The gap in the league	% 15
6	Absence of professional strikers	% 12
7	Distraction of attention	% 10
8	Blaming the players	% 10
9	Unluckiness	% 8
10	Resisting against interview	% 5
11	Self-blaming	% 3
12	Fair play	% 3

As is seen in the table, the most frequently used pretext referred to the judgments of the game's referee. The coaches basically claimed that the game's referee had not been fair to their team; rather, he had been biased. They frequently pointed out their past experiences with the referee. As an example, one of the coaches claimed that the referee in question had been involved in a violent chase by the fans of his team after a failure two years before, and this was the reason for the referee to get back at them by giving unfair yellow or red cards to the players and not considering one obvious penalty in their favor. Such claims which were then analyzed and ruled out following an expert's technical views in Navad, proved to be just the coach's excuse not to accept his team's weakness as the main reason of the failure. Other expressions to blame the referees for failure were based on claims such as "the referee did not have enough concentration during the game", "the referee was himself a fan of the opponent", or "he was not experienced enough and not qualified for such a game (premier league series)". Such accusations were even made for international referees by questioning their qualifications as if they had wrongly been given an international certificate for judging soccer games.

The second most frequent pretext was 'having injured players, blaming the national team for straining its players or the co-occurrence of Asian Games which made some players to be inevitably absent from their teams for a while'. The third pretext was 'lack of harmony in the team' because, the coaches claimed, the league had just started and the team had to have more time to be organized and harmonized to show their best. The next one which was again related to

the league and its schedule was ‘tiredness in the middle of the league’. Some coaches claimed that their players were very tired because they had had so many games one after another.

The next pretext was ‘the gap in the league’ which was claimed to be due to the co-occurrence of the National Team’s games or the Asian Games at the time and the gap they had imposed in the middle of the league (i.e. the league had to be suspended until the National Team would come back home). This was said to be the reason for ruining the integrity of the team as well as the eagerness and motivation of the players. The next category of excuses was ‘absence of professional strikers’ to finalize the obvious chances of making goals. Actually, some coaches believed that their players made a lot of goal scenes but the final hit to make them a goal was lost because of having unprofessional strikers. Another verbal reaction to failure by the coaches was ‘distraction of attention’ from the issue of having been failed and bringing up unrelated issues to the interviews. An example was the low quality of the rest rooms (i.e. one of the coaches carried with himself the door handle of one of the rest rooms and claimed that with such low quality stadiums expecting a high quality game would not be realistic). The low quality of the fields, and talking about how the audience reacted after the game (i.e. yelling at the players, or rushing into the field) were other distracting issues.

‘Blaming the players’ was the next category. The coaches blamed the players for not having enough concentration, or not being ready either physically or mentally. With such claims, they would attribute everything to luck and proceed to their next pretext, i.e. ‘unluckiness’, complaining that they were not lucky enough that day. Another strategy to react to failure, which was not used so often by the coaches but turned out to be a big issue in the press and TV, was that they refused to attend the interview after the game and ignored the interviewers. Their main justification for this reaction was ‘being angry or not being in a good mood to talk to the press’.

‘Self-blaming’ was the coaches’ another reaction to failure. They would utter such expressions: “Maybe it is me to blame for the failure”, “I guess I could arrange the team better” or “Perhaps, I had to predict the opponent’s tactics better”. Even in these utterances they used markers such as ‘maybe’, ‘perhaps’, and ‘I guess’ which indicated their misleading doubt as to the person to be blamed.

The last reaction of the coaches under study to failure was the notion of ‘fair play’. ‘Fair play’ means that if one of the opponent players gets injured during an attack and his presence is a must for not receiving a goal from the other team, the other team’s player who is about to make a goal, kicks the ball out for the injured player to recover or to be replaced by another player. The opponent then passes the ball to the team who has played fairly and the game continues. In the observations within the first 6 months of the present study, fair play was not found to be used as an excuse to justify failure. But, after one incidence around one and a half month before coming to final phases of the study, in which because of ignoring ‘fair play’ by one of the teams a goal was struck, this new category was added to the categories mentioned in the above table. It was shown to be the last and the least quoted excuse, but because of the controversy it brought up with itself after the incidence it became a big issue and two other teams announced as well that the reason of their failure was ignoring ‘fair play’ by the opponent team. One very interesting instance of this new notion happened when it occurred first to one of the most popular teams. The team’s coach announced that the notion of ‘fair play’ was misunderstood by soccer players in Iran, and that not all injuries, especially faked injuries, deserve fair play. Following this, another coach claimed that it is so embarrassing to make excuses for not following ‘fair play’ and being willing to make a goal at any expense. Two weeks later, the very same incident happened to the latter’s team, and he stated that there was no reason to follow ‘fair play’ since the opponent player had faked to be injured and thus, he assumed their ‘goal’ to be totally fair!

As for the ten coaches' reactions to winning, interesting results were obtained from the analyzed data. The reactions mostly came as God's help as well as vigilance and expertise on the part of the coaches and their players. Even in games with judgment flaws (around 15% of the games), because the flaw had happened in their favor, the coaches of the winning team did not mention anything about the referees or their mistaken judgments. In some cases, they would even praise the referee in spite of his wrong judgment stating that "the referee was so ready and conscious today". Actually, under equal conditions, while winning there was no complaints on the same issue the coaches had complained about while failing. They would thank their players for being smart and professional enough to win despite their tiredness, and even they would express their gratitude to the audience for being so supportive during the whole game. A very salient feature of such expressions of satisfaction was the reality that any limitations, if there were any, equally affected the two teams in every match, and not just the failed one. The coaches, however, complained about the field or the weather, for instance, as if these were preventing factors just for their own teams and not for their opponents. The interesting point was that they tried to bring up such issues to justify their failure, but they would never mention them when they won.

Discussion

The data obtained from real time observations revealed fans' overreactions to almost all pauses imposed by the referees during the game. The fans of team A, for example, yelled in anger each time the referee stopped the game in favor of team B and underestimated the referee's judgment, especially in controversial scenes. They used expressions such as "he doesn't know what he is doing" or "he is of no referee!" or "he is biased, he doesn't want our team to win". They even personalized the issue by saying "he always does this when it comes to our team" or even more shocking, by accusing the referees to say, "the referee has been bribed!" The data obtained from the episodes shown on Navad revealed scenes in which the audience used insulting expressions towards the referees after the games, blaming them for the failure of their favorite team. They even used insulting utterances during the game each time the referee stopped the game for a foul.

The categorization of the reaction utterances of coaches, players, and the audience showed that complaining about the referees' judgments was the most frequent and controversial issue. In almost 60% of the games the issues related to the referee and his judgments were the main cause of complaints for these three groups. The question is: What could be the source of such sensations towards the judgments in soccer games?

As mentioned earlier, Navad was one of the most popular sports talk shows in Iran. The show covered almost all kinds of issues related to soccer games during the week and invited different people involved in soccer, i.e. players, coaches, supervisors and officials of sporting organizations. A very popular episode of the show (as claimed by the host himself) was the part in which the foul scenes of the games were overviewed and an expert (an experienced referee) tried to justify the referees' judgments. This episode implicitly took it for granted that the judgments were to some extent wrong or at least controversial unless the reverse had been proved. The invited guest was then asked to review the scenes and issue his verdict on the accuracy of the judgments. Most often it happened that the host seemed not to be convinced and so he asked the guest to see the scene again. Even then the host indicated, either verbally or by facial expressions, that he was not still one hundred percent satisfied.

Another inseparable episode of the show was allocated to telephone games in which a question was asked and the audience at home was required to send text messages and say which

choices they thought the answer would be and took their chance to win some prizes (e.g. TV sets, money, etc.). The games had all kinds of themes ranging from people's opinions about the qualifications of a player, predicting the future of the National Team, and, of course, the qualifications of a specific coach. The questions were usually designed to have 'yes' 'no' answers, or short sentences such as: I agree, I disagree. These games were actually very popular since they got over one or two million text messages each time. The questions often asked for the audience's opinions on the wrong or right judgments of a referee or even asked if a team had failed due to misjudgments of a referee. The results of the present study showed that in both cases, the answers were all against the referee's qualifications and thus, the main cause for some teams' failure. This can be attributed to the negative publicity of such shows in which almost very indirectly the qualifications of referees are challenged. These shows try to make an image in the public minds of unqualified and not well-trained referees who need to be trained better, and who need to be less biased and up to the date. Actually, when there are no definite reasons for unexplained repeated failures of teams, and when there is no sure way to blame the coaches for irresponsibility (since they are limited in number, new coaches are not very welcomed to the field, and consequently keeping the coaches at hand seems inevitable), the best and most vulnerable party to be blamed is the referees. A member of the head quarters of the Referees Committee stated in a TV interview that the biggest reason of so many controversies on judging issues in Iran is TV itself, and whatever false publicity which is made against the referees and their judgments on TV. He informally and indirectly talked of some TV shows (most likely, he meant Navad) which underestimate all judgments by the referees and try to challenge almost all their decisions.

The researchers' observations in the present study also showed that in some cases the fans of a team demonstrated to express their objection to the show (i.e. Navad) for having been biased against their favorite team or for highlighting controversial issues which damaged their national face. Here, the question arises as to what happens to the consumers of sporting events such as coaches and players as micro-component, fans as meso-component, and related organizations such as the Referees Committee and the Football Federation as macro-component. Such wrong publicity has in fact made the job of a failed coach much easier in justifying all his shortcomings and those of his players to save face among the public and the fans. No matter how serious or crucial the degree of wrong or right judgments, while failing, the coaches mention wrong judgments as the main cause of their failure. To what extent this affects the fans and their interpretation of the sporting event and the underlying elements of that event? The answer is that the fans in almost %80 percent of cases blame referees for their favorite teams' failure and have no trust whatsoever on their judgments during the game. Their view of referees is reflected as 'a bunch of inexperienced, non-qualified elements that change the results of games by their wrong judgments'. They have been even seen to insult the referees during and after the games by using rhythmic logos against them.

As for decision-makers, the way TV and its wrong publicity have an effect on the coaches and the way the coaches change the fans' views due to their trust on their favorite team's coach, have vivid consequences on the related decisions of the sporting organizations on the matters of judgment and selection. One very obvious effect of this false publicity in addition to the fans' pressure on having fair and flawless games, can be seen in making the decision of who should be selected to judge the most popular soccer game of the two most popularly favored teams in Iran: ESTEGHLAL and PERSPOLIS. These two teams together have more than half of the soccer spectators as their fans. They are the oldest and most popular of all teams and have fans from all around the country. Twice a year they play against each other. The fans of the two sides are very

prejudiced on their teams, to the extent that a very small wrong can make fights among them. A very major reason for the audience's violent reactions after certain games between these two teams was the claim that the biased referee had judged in favor of the other team. They even went as far as claiming that the referee had been bribed to judge against their favorite team. After such incidences the solutions came up and it all narrowed down to inviting foreign referees to these games and put an end to all controversies. It is sometimes referred to as an embarrassment for the referees' society as not to be trusted to judge the most important sporting event in their own country while they are frequently invited for judgments to other countries and prestigious events such as the world cups or Asian games. In a very much circular manner these decisions are reflected in the media as why the Federation does not have trust in its referees and brings up controversies as to the issues of judging among the coaches and players on the one hand and the audience on the other.

Concluding remarks

This paper tried to show how media and the language used through media, here sports media, shape the soccer coaches' justifications of their failure in Iran, and how this consequently influences the sports culture in the country for sport consumers such as the fans. The referees were shown to be the main called reason for teams' failure in almost %60 of the cases. This was reflected on TV talk shows in their most favored episodes by the audience who were even asked for their opinions about the referees' qualifications. This can be seen as an imposed ideology on the audience for the existence of a high possibility that there is something wrong with the referees. The media and soccer fans' pressure which is highlighted on TV has influenced sports organizations, such as the Federation, in their macro decisions upon sports; for instance, asking foreign referees to judge important games in the country to lessen expected controversies. The reflection of such decisions bounces back to media again, as the officials in charge are frequently asked in sports talk shows about the main reasons of distrusting native referees. This ill circularity has continued to the extent that today the referees' society is mostly viewed as weak and untrained in the eyes of the public. The findings of this study can contribute to the development of a better and more appropriate environment among the four mentioned groups involved in soccer game in Iran. The findings can also be generalized to soccer game and its related issues in other countries, but in varied degrees of intensity as to their specific culture, ideology and language.

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Appendix: English translation of some natural data

Coaches on newspaper

Sports in Iran-13 Nov 2010

“SHAHIN’s coaches had objections on both penalties in favor of ESTEGHLAL and therefore one of them was discharged by the referee”

“HAMID ESTILEE hit his head for each of the two penalties against his team”

“SHAHIN’s manager KANGANI’s objections were to the extent that no body could control him by the field. They believed that the penalties were not fair and there was another misjudgment in ESTEGHLAL’s favor by the referee”

SHAHIN’s coach: “The misjudgments of the referee distracted our players’ concentration and couldn’t control the ball in the forward”

SHAHIN’s coach: “We could failure ESTEGHLAL but not the referee!”

TV interviews

Dec-2010

Reporter: Mr. Why do you think your team couldn’t show his potential in this game?

Coach: Let me first show you something, you can decide on your own then. (Takes out the handle of one of the rest rooms) continues: Have you seen such a thing?

Reporter: It was alright the last time I saw it!!! (Every one laughs.)

Coach: You're saying I am lying? We can go together and I'll show you! How do you expect us to concentrate or even win in such a low quality field?

(The reporter asks no more questions)

Augu-2011

A player: "The referee was mistaken; watch it again, if I am not right I will quit playing"

Jan-2011

A fan on TV: "We come here to enjoy some good game, and what happened? The referee ruined everything, everything really!"