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**“YOU COULD LEAVE THE BACON AND EGGS  
FOR JUST A COUPLE OF HOURS”  
– REFERENCES TO FOOD IN BRITISH FOOTBALL COMMENTARY**

This paper describes contexts and functions of references to food in British football commentary. It considers both the media text proper, i.e. the football commentary, as well as the reactions of the football fans at home.

When the commentators refer to meals or other items of the semantic field ‘food,’ it is invariably the food of the television viewers at home. These references are markers of colour commentary and are used to pass the time during uninteresting parts of the game.

The contexts in which these references occur fulfil a variety of functions. To give two examples: they help bridge the co-presence gap between the viewers and the game on television in this mediated discourse situation. One instance demonstrates how this may result in the media reinforcing hegemony by excluding some of the fans at home. Secondly, the references highlight the uniqueness of the football World Cup by contrasting it with the fans’ mundane activities.

Besides some quiet back-channelling, which is typical for the TV viewers’ verbal behaviour regarding the media text, there are no reactions at home. ‘Food’ in colour commentary goes unnoticed, a topic fundamental to human kind and presumably, for this very reason, invisible and unmarked in talk.

## **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Food and culture being a long-standing topic in anthropology (cf. Counihan et al. 1997 for a list of references), several recent publications as well as the foundation of a new journal (*Gastronomica*, see Goldstein 2001) evince that there is a rising interest in this area from other fields such as sociology, literary or gender studies (Beardsworth et al. 1997, Griffiths et al. 1998, Inness 2001). In linguistics, this is mirrored by the Verbal-Workshop ‘Food and language’ at the Austrian Linguistics Conference in 2006.

This paper endeavours to further ‘gastrolinguistics’ (Lakoff 2006: 144) by scrutinizing references to food in football commentary. It seeks to describe these references in their context taking both the specific setting of the talk and wider societal circumstances into account. Furthermore, it examines both the production side (the media text itself, i.e. the football commentary) and the users’ side, hence, the talk of the viewers at home, with the help of findings, concepts, and methodologies from linguistic media studies (Ferguson 1982, Hansen 1999, Scollon 1998, Bowder 2003, Hutchby 2006) and interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman 1981, De Fina et al. 2006).

I will first present the data on which the analysis is based. I will continue by studying a piece of conversation between football fans at home. A short description of football commentary introduces the main part of the paper, namely the contexts and functions of references to food in football commentary. Hence, the body of the paper consists of a description of these references in the specific setting of mediated discourse. Coming full circle, the last section revisits the viewers at home.

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## 2. The data

The study is based on data from the ATTAC-corpus (Analysing The Television Audience's Conversations), which consists of recordings of non-immigrant English football fans watching the World Cup 2002 Japan/Korea on television. Their conversations (and in part the talk and events on television) were transcribed to allow for a close reading. For the transcription conventions, see the appendix. All in all, the corpus consists of 14 different half-times, BBC and ITV broadcasts, and five different groups of friends or families. The participants are aged between 18 months and over 70 years.

The corpus was compiled with a view to studying the hinge between mass media and everyday conversation (Gerhardt 2006, Gerhardt to appear; for German see Holly et al. 2001, Hepp 1998, Klemm 2000). Hence, research questions include: What are the (para/extra)-verbal practices of television viewers? How does the audience appropriate the primary media text, i.e. in this case the football commentary, with the help of talk? Thus, the study mainly concentrates on the spectators' talk and not on the primary media. However, for this paper, the focus is shifted to the commentary on television. The paper will demonstrate how the discourse on television represents the other side of the coin within this issue: on the one hand, the audience relates to the television text e.g. by talking to the television (Baldauf 2001, Gerhardt 2006, Gerhardt to appear). On the other hand, the television text, i.e. the commentators, aligns with the audience at home as we will see in this paper.

## 3. References to food by the viewers at home

In the following, an example from the corpus will illustrate how the conversationalists at home refer to food in their talk. It will lead us to some issues that also touch the references to food in the football commentary on TV.

- 1) AE2C "wanna sit down"
- |   |       |   |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | Com   | but it was Ashley Cole covered.=                  |
| 2 | Henry | =wanna sit down? {to Wilma}                       |
| 3 |       | [maybe] have lunch afterwards?=<br>4 Com [Aimar,] |
| 5 |       | =Ortega,=<br>6 Wilma =yeah yeah.                  |
| 7 |       | (5.0)   |

The participants who watch Argentina-England are Henry and Darrell, two former referees, who at this point have been joined by Wilma, Henry's wife. All three are over seventy years old. Because of the pairing, this match is one of the more important games of the World Cup, a group stage game, which England won 0:1.

At the end of the commentary (line 1), Henry latches onto the commentator's turn, i.e. he starts his utterance precisely when the commentator finishes. Henry invites his wife to join them for the rest of the game *wanna sit down?* (line 2). Line 3 represents the first reference to food *maybe have lunch afterwards?* There is an overlap (marked by the square brackets [ ]) between line 4 *Aimar* and *maybe*, i.e. both words are uttered simultaneously. The end of Henry's turn latches onto the commentator's *Ortega*, (line 5). Finally, Wilma latches her

answer onto the commentator's again. The example illustrates the complexity of the speech situation: not only do the participants have to take their co-viewers into account; at times the TV is also treated just like another participant. The conversationalists grant turn-rights to the television, i.e. they try to weave their contributions into the on-going commentary with as little disruption as possible. Other examples feature joint adjacency-pairs as for example when the viewers answer questions asked by the commentators on television (Gerhardt 2006).

The utterance *maybe have lunch afterwards?* (line 3) refers to the food of the viewers at home. This is not only the case in this example of talk of the viewers, but also in the football commentary on TV (cf. section 5). The viewers here are discussing practical matters. The couple is simply planning their day talking about mundane household matters. Thus food is not used symbolically here.

Nevertheless, this exchange foreshadows one of the reasons why there are so many references to food within the television commentary, namely the time difference between East-Asia, where the World Cup took place, and England, where the participants are watching. As the World Cup is aired live, the games can only be seen at odd hours. For example this game started on a Friday at 12:30 p.m. At this point in the transcript, a few minutes into the second half, it is about 1:45 p.m. Lunchtime in Britain seems to be around 1 o'clock (e.g. Lunchtime news are broadcast at 1:00 p.m.) Hence, football here stops people from following their usual routines such as having lunch. It forces them to choose between two options: either postpone their eating time or have their meal while watching TV. This second alternative may be chosen without thinking by some, whereas for others having lunch in front of the TV may entail cultural implications which rule out this option. Interestingly, most of the participants in the ATTAC-corpus are indeed eating while watching (cf. section 7).

#### 4. Football commentary

“Football commentary”, “sports announcer talk” (SAT) or “sportscasting”, the language on television, has been described as follows by Ferguson (1982): on the one hand, we find play-by-play announcing (PP) by a journalist. He (rarely she) describes the ongoing action on the football field, and will be referred to as the commentator in the paper. The commentator has the floor during PP. Overall, he contributes most to SAT. (Bowcher 2003) The other person dialogically involved in SAT is the pundit (color-commentator in American English, summariser, or co-commentator). He (again, rarely she) is often a former football player. In the ATTAC-corpus, both groups consist of men only. When the two men share the floor in conversational style giving background information and interpreting the match, the stretches of SAT will be referred to as colour commentary (CC). It is up to the commentator to negotiate with the pundit when PP restarts by reclaiming the floor. (Hansen 1999)

“Sportscasting is the oral reporting of an ongoing activity, combined with provision of background information and interpretation.” (Ferguson 1982: 155) Hence, in contrast to narrative (Labov et al. 1967), it is not a rendering of complete activities, but it happens ‘live’ at the same time as the activity. It is originally an oral form, although there are now also ‘live tickers’ on the internet or on teletext, which are written summaries of live commentary (cf. the BBC clockwatch). “Sportscasting is a monolog or dialog-on-stage directed at an unknown, unseen, heterogeneous mass audience who voluntarily choose to listen<sup>2</sup>, [...] and provide no

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<sup>2</sup> I excluded “do not see the activity being reported,” as Ferguson was referring to radio SAT. The television viewers, obviously, do see the activity being reported. Structurally, i.e. in the differentiation between play-by-play announcing and colour-commentary, there does not seem to be a difference between radio commentary and television commentary. This might be due to purely historical reasons as many journalists

feedback to the speaker.” (Ferguson 1982: 156) “Monolog” refers to PP and “dialog” to CC. Furthermore, what Ferguson refers to as an “unknown and unseen, heterogeneous mass audience” represents the core of the ATTAC-corpus (cf. section 3). Hence, besides the analysis of references to food in SAT, which is the main aim of this paper, the reactions of the audience, which in this case is both seen and heard (by the analyst), can also be taken into account. Finally, “the level of arousal or excitement varies significantly [...] and [...] is determined by quite specific bodies of knowledge and values assumed to be shared by speaker and addressees.” (Ferguson 1982: 172) Hence, in order to be doing SAT, those on television have to interpret the match in terms of an established set of values about e.g. what constitutes good playing etc. Most importantly, these norms or conventionalised practices have to be shared by the journalists and their audience. If this was not the case, either communication would break down or the fans would protest against the SAT they are witnessing. Coming back to the references to food in SAT, the ATTAC-corpus indicates whether the fans at home accept them as regular features of SAT. In other words, the conversations of the viewers at home allow cross-checking whether referring to food in SAT lies within the general boundaries of SAT.

## 5. References to food as colour commentary

In the following, I will present an example of a reference to food in SAT. A close analysis will illustrate its working within football commentary. The abstract is taken from the same game as earlier, only Wilma has not arrived yet. It is 11 minutes into the game.

- 2) AEIC “*the first course of that lunch*”
- |    |         |   |
|----|---------|---|
| 1  | Com     | <i>that's-</i>  |
| 2  |         | <i>how I see the main problem,=</i>                         |
| 3  |         | <i>=that's Beckham,</i>                                     |
| 4  |         | <i>(0.6)</i>  |
| 5  |         | <i>Placente,</i>  |
| 6  |         | <i>(5.5)</i>  |
| 7  |         | <i>I'm sure you've-</i>                                     |
| 8  |         | <i>delayed the first course of that lunch back at home,</i> |
| 9  |         | <i>or maybe you've already had it.= {acc}</i>               |
| 10 | Darrell | <i>=mmh {quietly}</i>                                       |
| 11 |         | <i>(0.5) (0.7<sup>iv</sup>)</i>                             |
| 12 | Com     | <i>here's Scholes,</i>                                      |
| 13 |         | <i>(0.8)</i>  |
| 14 |         | <i>to Butt,</i>   |
| 15 |         | <i>(4.9)</i>  |

In lines 1-2, the commentator ends a discussion about the ticketing, which was triggered by the commentator’s reference to the many empty seats in the stadium. In lines 3 and 5, the commentator announces the names of the players who are in possession of the ball at that moment. Lines 7 to 9 represent the reference to food. In line 10, Darrell, one of the viewers,

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changed from reporting on radio to reporting for television at the advent of television. Another reason may lie in the natural rhythm of football matches (cf. section 5).

backchannels. After a short pause (0.7 seconds on television and 0.5 seconds at home), in line 12, the commentator resumes announcing the players' names.

To further the discussion, a closer look at the actions which happen simultaneously on the pitch, hence the context of this reference to food (lines 5 to 9) will be given. This will shed some light on the interplay between PP and CC, and the role of this reference. The underlined and bold parts of the transcript in the left column indicate the exact moment at which the action described on the right takes place.

5	Placente,	ball reaches Placente near Argentine goal
6	(5.5)	Placente passes backwards to another Argentine player
7	<u>I'm</u> sure you've-	0.6 sec. earlier: second Argentine passes sideways to a third
8	delayed ... at <u>home</u> ,	long shot towards English goal by this third Argentine player
9	or ... had <u>it</u> .= {acc}	0.3 sec. later: ball touches ground near centre circle

In line 5, the commentator announces the player with the ball pronouncing the name Placente [pləsæntɪ]. On the high front vowel, exactly at the end of the turn, Placente gets the ball near the Argentine goal. The result of this move is an Argentine with the ball in front of his own goal. This scene is not very exciting due to the rules and logic of football.<sup>3</sup> As Placente passes the ball to another Argentine player, the commentator remains quiet (line 6). This Argentine then passes the ball to a third player, this time sideways before their own goal (line 7). Still, no English player is in sight. 0.6 seconds after this shot, the reference to food starts: *I'm sure you've delayed the first course of that lunch back at home*. Hence, after a pass backwards and then one sideways, the commentator chooses to talk about non-game related matters. The game simply does not merit following play-by-play. So with hindsight, one can state that line 5 represents the end of PP. To continue with the game, when the commentator pronounces the word *home* (line 8), the Argentine player decides for a long shot towards the English goal. While the commentator finishes *or maybe you've already had it*. (line 9), he accelerates so that his sentence ends before the ball touches ground in midfield (0.3 seconds earlier). This allows the sportscaster to be ready for PP, once the game picks up again.

The following table sums up the alternating between play-by-play announcing and the colour-commentary of the passage studied:

CC	1	Com	that's-
	2		how I see the main problem.=
PP	3		=that's Beckham,
	4		(0.6)
	5		Placente,
	6		(5.5)
CC	7		I'm sure you've-
	8		delayed the first course of that lunch back at home,
	9		or maybe you've already had it.= {acc}
	10	Darrell	=mmh [quietly]
	11		(0.5) (0.7tv)
PP	12	Com	here's Scholes,
	13		(0.8)
	14		to Butt,
	15		(4.9)

<sup>3</sup> I assume that most readers will know the basics of football (and, for that matter, many other team sports with a ball.) For the unfortunate few, suffice it to say that the aim of football is to get the ball into the other team's goal. For this reason, kicking the ball about in front of one's own goal is not a decisive moment in a match.

As a conclusion, the data suggest that references to food are used to pass the time during uninteresting parts of the game, which do not merit close play-by-play announcing. They are used to avoid prolonged silence. See how after 5.5 seconds the commentator starts talking about food (line 7). For the same reason, they are markers of CC. Since food is not part of the game, it cannot represent PP. Following on from this, these references and colour commentary in general can be seen in the light of the “impulse constantly to shift the viewer’s perspective [...] in order to prevent their attention from wandering and their hand from straying to the remote control button.” (Rowe 1999: 157 on the fast style in sports presentation on TV) Here, a verbal pause of 5.5 seconds seems to be the limit that this commentator expects the audience to endure before a new perspective is opened for the viewers with the help of this reference to food and CC.

However, the corpus also evidences that there are many possible subjects in colour commentary as, e.g., in this stretch of SAT (lines 1 and 2, and prior to that) the ticketing regulations of the tournament. Hence, the question why the commentator decides to choose food as a subject in CC remains.

## 6. Functions and contexts of references to food

In the following, I will discuss one reference in detail giving other examples in support only. Example 3 comes after the Brazilian national anthem has been played and before the kick-off. Hence, structurally, it functions in the same way as a prologue in a classical play introducing the drama. Often, the references to food occur at the beginning or at the end of half-times, though food is also mentioned in the middle of games as we saw in the earlier example. The commentator here sets off with a stately voice, which underlines the importance of the situation. Together with the parallelisms and repetitions, this piece has quite a poetic touch to it. Unfortunately, the oratory style is hard to render in transcription. At this point in the transcript, it is approximately 7:30 a.m. on a Friday morning in England. Generally people do not watch football at this time of day. Either they have breakfast or they are on their way to their various occupations. They could also still be asleep (cf. line 12), but this would exclude them from the list of potential onlookers. Hence, one reason why food is often mentioned might be grounded in the time difference (cf. also section 3) as one can see in the following:

- 3) *EB1 “you could leave the bacon and eggs“*
- |    |            |  |
|----|------------|--|
| 1  | <i>Com</i> | <i>England COULD reach the World Cup semi-finale for the third time,</i> |
| 2  |            | <i>they COULD breat Brazil-</i>  |
| 3  |            | <i>for the first time in the World Cup,</i>                              |
| 4  |            | <i>(1.2)</i>   |
| 5  |            | <i>you COULD leave the bacon and eggs,=</i>                              |
| 6  |            | <i>=for just a couple of hours,</i>                                      |
| 7  |            | <i>because this is just about as big as it gets.</i>                     |
| 8  |            | <i>(0.7)</i>   |
| 9  |            | <i>and if you are at home,=</i>  |
| 10 |            | <i>=in a school,</i>   |
| 11 |            | <i>in a pub at work,</i>   |
| 12 |            | <i>or even watching in bed,</i>  |
| 13 |            | <i>{laughs}</i>  |
| 14 |            | <i>enjoy it,</i>   |

15                    *{chuckles}*  
 16                    *it hasn't happened for THIRty-two years,*  
 17                    *and it might not happen again,*  
 18                    *for a very long time.*

In stating that *you could leave the bacon and eggs for just a couple of hours*, (lines 5 and 6), the commentator moves away from his spatio-temporal position in East-Asia (ego-hic-nunc) to the viewer's Greenwich Mean Time in England. He does so with the help of the deictic personal pronoun *you* which points away from the speaker's origo to reference the addressee of the football commentary, namely the viewers. Temporarily, he draws on the common knowledge that at this time of day, in England, *bacon and eggs* could be an option. Hence, he foregrounds the viewer's situation in the commentary and *bacon and eggs* are used as an anchor in the time-frame of the viewers indicating 'breakfast time.'

Generally, it is the viewer's food that is being referred to by the commentators. Also, the viewers are often personally addressed in these instances.

4)            EAI "*it'll be a long lunch time for you at home.*"  
 1            Com    *well there's a lot of football to be played here,*  
 2                    *(0.8)*  
 3                    *it'll be a long lunch time for you at home.*  
 4                    *(2.5)*  
 5                    *hopefully.*

5)            EB2 "*and don't start eating the main course yet.*"  
 1            Com    *and don't start eating the main course yet,*  
 2                    *because there's a lot of conversation to come,*  
 3                    *from Gary Lineker and company.*

6)            EB2 "*I hope they've given you some orange juice.*"  
 1            Com    *well,*  
 2                    *if you've been watching at school,*  
 3                    *I hope they've given you some orange juice.*

As there is not enough space for a detailed analysis of all the examples, suffice it to say that here, too, the 'distributed recipients' i.e. those "separated from the broadcaster by space and time" (Hutchby 2006: 171) are directly addressed in the form of a second person pronoun (*you* in example 4 and 6) or an imperative verb form (*don't start* in example 5). These linguistic means allow the speaker to signal his shifting alignment to the hearers. The change in 'footing' (Goffman 1981) turns the viewers at home into primary members of the participation framework: the addressee. This helps to bridge the co-presence gap between presenter and audience in this mediated discourse. (O'Keeffe 2006)

Returning to the finding that it is only the viewer's food that is being referred to, it is interesting to note that this gap between the viewers and the event could also be bridged from the opposite direction. Thus, instead of the commentators verbally moving into the living rooms of their viewers, they could also establish common ground by inviting the viewers to join them mentally in Asia. Hence, one could imagine the commentators gushing over Asian cuisine or relating anecdotes about their daily food-intake. However, this does not happen in

the ATTAC-corpus. Although the World Cup is seen as a promotional platform by the hosting nation(s), the event is mainly portrayed stripped from its cultural surroundings in SAT. If cultural differences are mentioned, they pertain to the World Cup or football in general. Examples include crowd behaviour during the games, stories surrounding the construction of the venues etc. Hence, apart from those football related localisations, the World Cup in sportscasting is presented detached from the host countries as a world-wide event. Clearly there are other genres in the broadcast of the World Cup which allow for or even consist of reference to local customs (such as features transmitted during the build-up to the tournament or specific games).

Continuing with example 3, on the one hand, *bacon and eggs* evoke breakfast in general, which they stand for here as pars-pro-toto and prototypical members, especially in this collocation. On the other hand, they also mean typical English food. “‘Minor identities’ like culinary preferences [...] contribute significantly to our sense of ourselves: who we are, how competent we are, who our friends are or should be, whom we admire or disdain.” (Lakoff 2006: 165) So the commentator takes into account the culture of those watching by mentioning a stock item of the Englishness domain. He evokes one of the stereotypes of ‘being English’ or in more general terms, the English identity of the viewers in the discourse:

[D]iscourse identities [...] link the micro and the macro level thanks to the shared nature of ideologies, cultural models, Discourses and social representations that assign roles, typical behavioural patterns, even physical or mental characteristics to social agents and that presuppose scenarios in which stereotypical social relationships are represented. (de Fina et al. 2006: 15)

The commentator in mentioning these two items indexes a typical behavioural pattern, namely having bacon and eggs for breakfast. Hence he references a scenario of the English doing English things. It remains to be questioned how many of ‘the English,’ most notably, the female viewers, actually do have bacon and eggs for breakfast in these days of dieting and health zeal. Be that as it may, since the World Cup is a competition of nations, the evocation of national identities is ever present, even in these references to food. Recalling that England is not peopled by white Anglo-Saxons only, this reference to the Englishness of the viewers at the same time reinforces hegemony. The pronoun *you* addresses those viewers only for whom, at least potentially, *bacon and eggs* are part of their diet. It excludes viewers who would never consider eating bacon and who would still claim being part of the English nation and supporters of the English team. Furthermore, “local (‘discourse’ and ‘situated’) identities crucially contribute to the emergence of more global, transportable identities.” (de Fina et al. 2006: 14) Hence, by mentioning *bacon and eggs* as the food of choice for the viewers, i.e. by discursively drawing them as pork-eaters, the global, transportable identity of the English as being white, Anglo-Saxon and potentially male is confirmed and reconstructed. Thus SAT here reinforces hegemony and this happens apparently without any ill meaning or overt racism. The banality of food, its inconspicuousness, leads to this presupposition, which the commentators would probably deny if questioned. In other words, if one would ask them whether their audience consisted of viewers with traditional English dietary habits only, they would in all likelihood negate this. However, the unobtrusiveness of food makes them oblivious to this presupposition. Example 6 *I hope they’ve given you some orange juice* carries similar behavioural stereotypes, albeit not with the same effect of precluding a whole religious or cultural group.

Finally, one last function which the commentators achieve with the help of references to food is to contrast the singular and the mundane. On the one hand, they present a quarter final of the **World** Cup with England playing against a major football nation at the knock out stage of the tournament; “history is being made.” (Rowe 1999: 140). On the other hand, they

refer to the daily routines of their viewers. In example 3, this effect is first achieved in lines 5-7 *you could leave the bacon and eggs, for just a couple of hours, because this is just about as big as it gets*. Thus, on the one hand, the viewer is pictured as (not) following a daily routine (having breakfast), and, on the other hand, the match is portrayed as a chance-of-a-lifetime. The hedging *just about* (line 7) seems to heighten the credibility of the commentator's claim. Also, the parallel use of the modal *could* in lines 1, 2, and 5 *England could..., they could...,* and, finally, *you could* solidifies this contrast. This opposition is maintained in the following lines (9-19). On the one hand, the viewers are portrayed in different everyday places *and if you are at home, in a school, in a pub at work, or even watching in bed* (lines 9-12). The parallelism of the prepositional phrases underlines the ordinariness of the viewers. Furthermore, it aims to encompass them all: potentially, every single viewer seems to be covered. By contrast, the pairing (Argentina versus England) *hasn't happened for THIRTY-two years, and it might not happen again, for a very long time*. Hence, the singularity of the event is again emphasised. The reference to food is used as one item in this array of linguistic means which enhances the opposition between the extraordinary spectacle football World Cup and the daily doings of the fans.

In the following example, which acts as a bracket around Beckham's goal against Argentina, similar functions can be retraced:

- 7) *EAI "hold the cups and the glasses back home."*
- |   |            |   |
|---|------------|---|
| 1 | <i>Com</i> | <i>David Beckham.</i>                           |
| 2 |            | <i>with the penalty for England.</i>            |
| 3 |            | <i>(1.4)</i>                                    |
| 4 |            | <i>hold the cups and the glasses back home,</i> |
| 5 |            | <i>(6.3)</i>                                    |
| 6 |            | <i>you can SMASH them now,</i>                  |
| 7 |            | <i>Beckham has scored for England.</i>          |

Again, the life-world of the viewers at home and the game are connected with the help of these references. In this case, it is not food itself that is being referred to, but containers which are typically used for holding beverages (line 4). Not only is this connection established verbally, but, albeit presumably in a non-serious manner, the spectators are also prompted to react physically. Hence, the place of the audience in the participation framework is expanded. They now participate verbally and physically: the addressees become co-agents by smashing their glasses in response to an act on the field.

Furthermore, by referring to those food-containers while Beckham, the star of the English team, prepares for the penalty, the commentator increases the tension which is already high (as a penalty shot may always represent the decisive moment in a match). The contextual meaning and communicative intent of the utterance *hold the cup and the glasses at home* is only resolved in line 6: *you can SMASH them now*. Even though the verb *hold* is used in its literal sense here, its figurative use as in *hold your breath* or *hold on* on the telephone resonates in this setting where everybody is indeed holding their breath or holding on.

Although smashing glasses does not represent prototypical English behaviour, we can again trace how the commentator moves into the time and place of his spectators: it is by adding cups to the proverbial smashing of glass(es) that the portrait of a typical English breakfast with tea and orange juice is drawn again. So once more, this reference to English dietary customs closes the co-presence gap between the football commentary and the audience at home.

## 7. Revisiting the viewers

This final example represents the only verbal response by the spectators to the commentator's references to food in my corpus. It is Wilma here who protests that one could also eat lunch while watching the game, although the couple itself decided to postpone their lunch (see example 1). This piece of SAT is taken from the end of the match where the commentator brings closure to the game in a kind of epilogue.

- 8) EA2C "can't eat lunch and watch?."
- 1 Com all the England supporters back at home,  
2 (1.2)  
3 well they will be enjoying their lunch now,=  
4 if it stays like this,=  
5 =won't they.=  
6 =and maybe,  
7 (0.4)  
8 who knows,  
9 (some?) might be going back to work,=  
10 = I guess.  
11 (0.7)  
12 Wilma can't eat [lunch and watch?]  
13 Com [(although?)] surely,  
14 they give you the afternoon off.

Wilma, in line 12, seems defensive about a presupposition she perceived in the commentary: e.g. line 3: *they will be enjoying their lunch now* presupposes that the viewers have at that time not had their lunch yet. This could signify that the commentator has transgressed a boundary either by linguistically moving too far into the life-world of his viewers, i.e. by imposing. Or else her protest could also be based on his wrong prediction concerning their behaviour. Recall that most viewers in the ATTAC-corpus do actually eat and drink while watching the games. Hence, Wilma's assessment of the situation, namely that the commentator is falsely presupposing a postponement of lunch, is correct. The fact that 'having TV-dinners' carries cultural implications in Western societies may be the basis of her rebuttal. Her remark could then be paraphrased as *it is not prohibited to have lunch while watching television, is it?* Be that as it may, the decisive feature of her remark for this discussion is that she does not question the choice of food as a topic in football commentary as such. Also, her remark is not oriented to by the other viewers, her husband and his friend. For this reason, the extract cannot be taken as evidence of a general refusal of food as a topic in CC.

Furthermore, as a rule, there are no reactions by the spectators at home. Only minimal backchannelling can be found (cf. ex. 2, l. 10). Hence, food as a topic in CC is generally accepted by the viewers and not oriented to in their talk. The backchannelling indicates that the football fans do feel part of the participation framework and feel invited in by the commentators (Gerhardt 2006). Hence, the attention signals may count as evidence of the felicity of the commentators' endeavours.

## 8. Conclusion

The food referred to in the data is invariably the food of the viewers at home. Structurally, these references function as markers of colour commentary. Hence, they help avoid prolonged silences and allow the commentators to pass the time during uninteresting moments of a football match. Just like the football fans talking to the television, the references to food bridge the gap between the distributed recipients and the speakers on TV. They mark the viewers as participants in this mediated discourse. Food is used like an anchor in the daily time frames of the viewers to signify different meal times. It links East-Asia and England, and allows the commentators to move verbally into the realms of the viewers. Furthermore, a 'minor identity' based on food preferences and, simultaneously, Englishness is evoked. Finally, these references underscore the contrast between the singular football World Cup and the mundane routines of the fans.

Reflecting the viewers' reactions to these references, it becomes apparent that food as a choice of topic in colour commentary goes more or less unnoticed. Besides some quiet back-channelling, which is typical for the audience's verbal behaviour regarding the media text, generally, there are no reactions by the viewers. Food, a topic fundamental to human kind, appears invisible and unmarked in talk, even in contexts where, at first sight, it may strike as far-fetched or out-of-place.

"Food marks social differences, boundaries, bonds, and contradictions." (Counihan et al. 1997: 1) By concentrating on the implications of the use of *bacon and eggs* in one of the examples, I hope to have demonstrated how media reinforces hegemony in society. Because of the ordinariness and inconspicuousness of food, it seems an interesting source for the analysis of tacit agreements on societal make-up and ideologies.

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### **Transcription conventions**

she’s out.	falling tone in the preceding element; suggesting finality
oh yeah?	rising tone in the preceding element; cf. yes-no question intonation
so,	level, continuing intonation; suggesting non-finality
bu- but	cutoff or truncated intonation unit
(2.0)	timed pauses in seconds
and=	latching
=then	
{laughs}	para- and non-verbal behaviour and contextual information
{acc}	becoming faster
CC	colour commentary
PP	play-by-play announcing
<b><u>home</u></b>	adjacent: description of simultaneous action

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