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On the variation of fragmental constructions in British English and American English post-match interviews

Abstract: This article takes a cognitive, interactional perspective on pluricentricity and examines the use of fragmental constructions in a mid-sized dataset, drawing on recordings of British English and American English post-match interviews (PMIs), i.e. media interviews conducted with football players after matches in the British and North American top leagues. It examines what types of fragmental constructions are deployed in the PMIs and whether the use and distribution of such constructions vary between the British and American "communities of practice" (Lave/Wenger 1991). The study finds that the quantity and quality of fragments largely differ, with the British English data showing a higher relative frequency of fragmental constructions, more grammatical variation, and a use of fragmental constructions which do not necessarily draw on latent grammatical structures from the prior speech for meaning-making. It has been suggested by Biber et al. (1999) that clausal elliptical structures are generally less typical of American English. The present genre-specific analysis suggests an interdependence between fragmental constructions and their routinisation and frozenness, interactional constraints, as well as deviant sports and media cultures shared by these communities of practice, which can be treated as a form of "enregisterment" (Agha 2007).

Keywords: American English, British English, fragmental constructions, post-match football interviews, online syntax, enregisterment, communities of practice

1 Introduction[1]

English has been described as a pluricentric language, with British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) representing the two largest national standard varieties

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world-wide (e.g. Algeo 2006: 1; Leitner 1992).[2] Generally, it is widely agreed that BrE and AE phonologies and lexicons show great variation but that these two varieties only show small morphosyntactic differences (Crystal 2003). However, corpus linguistic studies have challenged such a view that "accent divides, and syntax unites" (Mair 2007: 97; the contributions to Rohdenburg/Schlüter 2009a), proposing that the morphosyntactic divergence might not only be greater than assumed but also context-specific: Mair (2007) finds larger differences between spoken than written language use, arguing that the former is more contextualised than the latter. Despite this greater potential for variation, contrasts between spoken BrE and AmE in a social situated context are, nevertheless, little researched (Rohdenburg/Schlüter 2009b: 3).

Notable exceptions include Couper-Kuhlen (2020) who examines the practices of recipients' repetition of prior speakers' talk in a medium-sized collection taken from British and Northern American (i.e. US American and Canadian) everyday conversation. Her contribution offers a detailed comparative study of the patterned prosodic forms and functions of what are called other-repetitions across a common sequential context. The study does not seek to discuss the findings against the backdrop of a wider variational and/or socio-cultural context. Bergen et al. (2017) compare patients' treatment resistance in US American and British doctor-patient interaction. Drawing on a large set of recordings, their study accounts for the qualitative and quantitative results, which reveal different practices, with diverse normative orientations of the participants in the two national healthcare settings.

This article compares the variation of what will be called fragmental (elliptical) constructions in BrE and AmE post-match football interviews (PMIs). Excerpt 1, taken from the BrE sample (English Premier League [EPL]), exemplifies the forms of fragments in the opening sequence between the interviewer (IR) and the player (PL 1). Arsenal has just won 5-1, and PL 1 (Aaron Ramsey) has scored a hat trick, i.e. three goals in one single match. The interview is conducted with his teammates PL2 (Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang) and PL3 (Henrikh Mkhitaryan) present (see Appendix for transcription conventions).

(1) EPL PMI 03 February 2018 (PL1: Aaron Ramsey; Arsenal vs. Everton 5-1)

```
1    IR:     i gotta crowd a happy crOwd (here) AAron, (-)
2        -> ((smack)) <<l>great [evening  ]'s WORK,>
3    PL2:                       [((SNIFF))]
```

2 I adopt the following definition of pluricentric languages for this study: "[a] pluricentric language is typically defined as one which has more than one normatively installed national standard variety" (Auer 2014: 17).

```
4    IR:  -> COMprehensive win,
5         -> HAT trick-
6         -> MATCH [ball-    ] (-)
7    PL3:       [((SNIFF))]
8    IR:  -> <<l,p>couldn't got> <<:-)>couldn't have got
              very much BETter=<<pp>could it;>
9    PL1:     (-) no:_obviously i'm deLIGHted;
10            uh: it's my first hattrick so it'll be one
              of(them) (.) moments to_uh: reMEMber (.) but-
11            °h you KNOW;
12        -> full credit to the TEAM;
13            who played some really (.) good attacking
              football in the first HALF,=
14            =and we
15            °h the gAme was won in the first HALF really-=
16            =so we gotta h˚ KEEP that focus-
17        -> KEEP that quality; h˚
18            uhm: throughout the rest of the SEAson then;
```

The interviewer uses four nominal fragments in his question turn to summarise and assess the player's performance (*great evening's WORK, COMprehensive win, HAT trick-MATCH ball-*, lines 2, 4–6). Next he deploys a clause with a nonexpressed subject, i.e. a finite verbal fragment, to solicit a response by Player 1 (*couldn't have got very much BETter could it;*, line 8). In his answer turn, the player produces a nominal fragment in order to pay credit to his team mates (*full credit to the TEAM;*, line 12) which is extended by a postmodifying relative clause in the subsequent line. The upshot of his talk is projected in a so-prefaced construction (line 16; Raymond 2004, Reber 2012), which is expanded in terms of a nonfinite verbal fragment (*KEEP that quality;*, line 17).[3]

Auer (2000, 2005, 2015) has developed a theoretical explanation of how the minds of speaker and recipient are synchronised when producing and processing talk in interaction in real time. It is assumed that the shared understanding of syntactic structures in time allows recipients to anticipate subsequent units ("projection") as well as relate current structures to units in prior talk (a process called "latency", Auer 2015). I show that the BrE and AmE data vary in terms of such fragments which are incremental on the prior talk and others which cannot be readily analysed as products of structural latency.

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3 Instances where the speech is cut off, and the clausal structure is not complete as well as the intonation phrase abandoned, were not considered in the analysis (e.g. *and we*, line 14).

I suggest that the specific formats and usage of the fragmental constructions are generic, i.e. they are normative within the particularised BrE and AmE conventions of a media genre, i.e. post-match football interviews (cf. also Hauser/Luginbühl 2012). In this vein, I aim to take a pluricentric perspective which describes the structural linguistic variation between the two genres as performed by the members of two "communities of practice" (Lave/Wenger 1991) as well as attempts to provide a tentative explanation for such variation.

My analysis addresses two questions: 1) What types of fragmental constructions are deployed in the PMIs? 2) Do their use and distribution vary between the British and American samples? The article is organised as follows: I provide a brief literature review on post-match interviews and fragmental constructions in English (sections 2 and 3). I describe the data and methodology deployed (section 4) and present my results (section 5). The study closes with a summary and conclusions (section 6).

2 Post-match interviews

Previous research on post-match interviews has focused on media sports interviews concerning televised and supported sports games, including New Zealand rugby (File 2012, 2013, 2015), English football in the Premier League (Rhys 2016), and German Bundesliga football (Wilton 2016, 2019).

As to their functions, File (2012) describes PMIs as interviews which are "ritually carried out after sports matches to garner the opinions and experiences of those who have played in the match for the benefit of a television audience [i.e. the fans, E.R.]" (File 2012: 446). This view is corroborated by Rhys (2016), who finds that assessments constitute the primary business of PMIs (cf. also Wilton 2016). In contrast to political news interviews (Clayman/Heritage 2002; Reber 2012, 2020), PMIs are marked by a conciliatory rather than adversarial style (File 2012).

Related to their evaluative function of the events and the players' performance on the pitch, the participants in the PMIs in my data often deploy what Pomerantz (1986) has called "extreme case formulations" (ECF), i.e. constructions with lexical markers such as *everybody*, *forever*, *no time*, which present the extreme case of a scenario or state of affairs. Crucially, such ECFs represent "[o]ne practice used in legitimizing claims" across mundane and institutional settings (Pomerantz 1986: 219). More recently, it has been shown that ECFs tend to be formatted in terms of "numerical values" which index a breach of norm in terms of, for instance, duration, age, weight or size (Wilkinson/Kitzinger 2006: 157). By using ECFs, "social participants have methods of making something available as an assessable object (here a source of awed amazement) without being seen overtly to produce it as such" (Wilkinson/Kitzinger 2006: 173), e.g. when referring to the weight of a newborn baby.

3 Fragmental constructions in English

Fragmental constructions in English are well-researched from various perspectives. In principle, they serve as a practice for condensation across discourse types (Biber et al. 1999: 155) where speakers communicate under time pressure (cf. Biber/Conrad 2009: 194 on e-forum postings). In terms of the formats found in conversation, Biber et al. (1999) distinguish between what they call "syntactic non-clausal units" (*poor kids*; *good for you*; Biber et al. 1999: 1099–1104), and "ellipsis in clausal units" (*Dunno*; *Know what I mean?*; Biber et al. 1999: 1104–1108). They note that the former are marked by "a dependence of the message on context" (Biber et al. 1999: 1099) and that the latter are more frequent in BrE than in AmE conversation, which seems to contradict the general stereotype of American speakers being "more laid-back than BrE speakers" (Biber et al. 1999: 1108; cf. also Schröter 2019 on the differences between BrE and Asian English varieties). Notably, such fragments are often produced in clusters of various formats. Günthner (2005, 2006, 2011) on German interaction observes that such clusters, which she calls "dense constructions", are associated with a dynamic, dramatic, emphatic, and affect-laden speech style.

With respect to ellipsis in clausal units, null-subject expressions in conversation are a well-studied phenomenon in English. Travis/Lindstrom (2016), who examine the use of pronominal and unexpressed third person singular subjects, suggest that null-subject expressions show variation across registers: monologic narratives contain over five times more unexpressed subject constructions (22 %) than interactional conversation (5 %). Oh (2005, 2006) reports that subjectless verbal formats are deployed for specific actions and practices in American mundane conversation (cf. also Wide's 2014 similar findings for Swedish). Wagner (2016) provides evidence that null-subject expressions are produced in patterned formats, which warrants a perspective on such expressions as constructions (Torres Cacoullos/Travis 2014). Perek/Goldberg (2015) show how the rhetorical question *Got milk?* known from an AmE dairy commercial, has come to be used more generally as a Got X? construction, including formats such as *Got Jesus?* but not, e.g. *Got depression?* (Perek/Goldberg 2015: 124). Based on the observation that the X-slot of the construction is filled by candidates of "what the speaker construes to be a good life" (Perek/Goldberg 2015: 124), they discuss the wider implications of this finding for the acquisition of constructions. They conclude that children may to some extend determine the functions of such constructions and use these relevant functions for generalisation (cf. also Tomasello 2007).

4 Data and methodology

The datasets used for this study draw on video clips of the opening question-answer sequence of 50 post-match interviews with AmE and BrE football players of the

winning team which were created after matches between 2011–2018 and retrieved from YouTube. The collection culled from these opening sequences comprises 120 instances of fragmental constructions. All examples were transcribed in GAT 2 (Couper-Kuhlen/ Barth-Weingarten 2011).

The data were compiled such as to make the two subsets as comparable as possible. However, "the ideal of complete comparability" (Leech et al. 2009: 28) can never be reached since deviations in the size and make-up between corresponding subcorpora are hard to avoid. This means that:

– the subsets were well-balanced in terms of size (25 BrE PMIs, 25 AmE PMIs)
– only PMIs conducted after matches in the top leagues, i.e. the English Premier League in the BrE sample, and the Major League Soccer (MLS) or North American Soccer League (NASL) in the AmE dataset were included
– only sequences between native speakers, i.e. BrE interviewers and players in the EPL dataset and AmE interviewers and players in the MLS / NASL sample were analysed
– the analysis focuses on the first question-answer sequence in each interview to keep the sequential setting comparable.

While the two subsets show great analogies, there are also considerable differences between these socio-cultural, physical and temporal settings. In terms of the differences between the two datasets, football has more socio-cultural significance in the UK in that it represents the most popular sport. By contrast, the most popular sport in the US is American football. In a reflection of the status of EPL football matches as high-profile commercialised media events, the recordings of the PMIs in the English Premier League show players in the mixed zone with the logos of the sponsoring brands on the backdrop, right after the match. By contrast, the recordings of PMIs in the MLS/NASL are sometimes done with more temporal distance, e.g. with the players having had time to have a shower and get changed, and do not show such commercial backdrops.

My methodology takes an interactional linguistic approach in order to describe the linguistic resources as they are deployed by participants to serve interactional and social functions in different cultural contexts (cf. Couper-Kuhlen/Selting 1996, 2001, 2018). In addition to a meticulous qualitative interactional analysis, I argue that such a variational perspective also requires the calculation of frequencies across the two datasets. To this end, this study draws on the work by Clayman et al. (2006, 2007) which shows that relative frequency per turn constitutes a methodological tool to depict processes on a more global discourse level, i.e. what participants treat as appropriate linguistic structures for action formation in social interaction. Drawing on their methodology, I calculated the relative frequencies of fragmental structures per turn type (questions, answers) and participant role (interviewers, players) by dividing the absolute number of fragmental structures by the absolute number of interviewers' questions (25) and players' answers (25) examined in each dataset. Such an approach

also follows the participant's perspective taken in the study. More generally, a participant's perspective means that analytic categories are derived inductively from the data, as made relevant by the speakers who use them (Sacks/Schegloff/Jefferson 1974). This corresponds to a speaker-centred, usage-based perspective, which argues for "the importance of looking at the recurrent patterns in everyday interactions in order to know what constructions speakers are using and storing" (Thompson/Hopper 2001).

Finally, treating the participants engaging in the interviews as members of two communities of practice who each share a set of linguistic practices as "a way of doing things, as grounded in and shared by a community" (Eckert/Wenger 2005: 583) allows us to accommodate the observation that the speakers represented in the sample potentially come from diverse dialectal backgrounds subsumed under the construct of BrE and AmE in this study.

5 Results

The data revealed the following fragmental constructions in terms of their grammatical properties: verbal fragments (e.g. *'h managed to get a two nil win*), phrasal fragments (e.g. *THIRteen titles for sir Alex*;), and borderline cases in which a chunk contains e.g. a noun phrase which is qualified by adverbials but includes no verb (*more importantly maybe a SHOUT out;*). The focus of my analysis is on verbal and phrasal fragments.

Table 1 shows the number of occurrences of fragmental constructions per turn according to speaker role (interviewer/player) and turn type (question/answer). It demonstrates that, on average, the BrE participants used at least one fragmental structure per question and answer turns (1.56 and 1.88 respectively). By contrast, the average turns in the AmE interviews contained less than one fragmental structure per question and answer turns (0.56 and 0.80). This demonstrates that fragmental constructions constitute a more typical feature of BrE PMIs than AmE PMIs. In the BrE data, phrasal fragments dominate in both turn types. The AmE sample shows a tendency towards phrasal fragments in the question turns and verbal fragments in the answer turns.

Table 1: The relative variational distribution of fragments (n = 120) across speaker roles/turn types

Speaker role/turn type	Verbal fragments	Phrasal fragments	Borderline cases	Total
BrE interviewers/question turns (n= 25)	0.12 (3)	1.24 (31)	0.20 (5)	1.56 (39)
AmE interviewers/question turns (n= 25)	0.40 (1)	0.44 (11)	0.80 (2)	0.56 (14)
BrE players/answer turns (n= 25)	0.48 (12)	1.04 (26)	0.36 (9)	1.88 (47)
AmE players/answer turns (n= 25)	0.56 (14)	0.12 (3)	0.12 (3)	0.80 (20)

5.1 Verbal fragments

Both datasets show a total of 15 verbal fragments each (Table 2).

Table 2: The relative variational distribution of finite and nonfinite fragments (n = 30) across speaker roles/turn types

Speaker role/turn type	Finite	Nonfinite	Total
BrE Interviewers/question turns (n= 25)	0.08 (2)	0.04 (1)	0.12 (3)
AmE Interviewers/question turns (n= 25)	0.04 (1)	0.00 (0)	0.04 (1)
BrE players/answer turns (n= 25)	0.40 (10)	0.08 (2)	0.48 (12)
AmE players/answer turns (n= 25)	0.48 (12)	0.08 (2)	0.56 (14)

In both datasets, the verbal fragments tend to be used by the players in their answer turns, and the finite fragments tend to dominate compared to nonfinite fragments. Topic drop has been associated with narrative structures in the previous literature (see the discussion in Günthner 2005). I examine the formal variants of verbal fragments and the interactional context in which they occur in more detail in what follows.

5.1.1 Nonfinite verbal fragments

Due to the low frequency of nonfinite fragments, it is not possible to make any generalised assumptions about their systematics across the two datasets. With respect to their form, the sample comprises infinitives and ing-forms.

Excerpt 2, which shows some of the interaction of Excerpt 1 from the BrE sample, illustrates an infinitival fragment (line 3), taken from an answer turn.

(2) EPL PMI 03 February 2018 (PL1: Aaron Ramsey; Arsenal vs. Everton 5-1)

```
1    PL:    the gAme was won in the first HALF really-=
2        -> =so we gotta h° KEEP that focus-
3        -> KEEP that quality; h°
4           uhm: throughout the rest of the SEAson then.
```

In line 2, the player produces the declarative sentence *so we gotta h° KEEP that focus-* before he continues with the nonfinite fragment *KEEP that quality;* (line 3). It consists of an infinitive and object with the primary accent on the verb. The fragment thus mirrors the structure following the subject and auxiliary verb in line 2 in syntactic and prosodic ways, and can be interpreted as a second list item (cf. Selting 2007: 523 on

prosody as a constitutive feature of lists; Couper-Kuhlen 1986; Jefferson 1990; Reber in press). The fragment draws on the declarative structure in that the subject referent (and potentially the modal auxiliary) can be inferred. This creates a dense style and coherence on the turn-constructional level.

Excerpt 3 illustrates a similar structure, this time including a fragmental ing-form (line 1) deployed in the answer turn by an AmE player.

(3) MLS PMI 05 August 2017 (PL: Will Bruin; Seattle Sounders vs. Minnesota United FC 4-0)

```
1    PL: -> we know (.) when we're clicking going FORward-
2            we're (-) finishing our CHANces,
```

The player first uses a declarative structure with the verb in the present progressive (*we're clicking*) and next produces a verbal fragment (*going FORward*, line 1). As in Excerpt 2, the fragmental structure draws on the prior clausal structure, contributing to a dense narrative summary of the previous events on the pitch. In section 5.3.2 it will be demonstrated that in contrast to the AmE examples this is not necessarily always the case in the BrE data.

5.1.2 Finite verbal fragments

As shown in Table 2, fragmental constructions with finite verb forms are characteristic of answer turns in both datasets. Here the nonexpressed subject which can be inferred from the context is first person singular/plural or third person singular/plural. In question turns, where such verbal finite constructions are much fewer, the inferred nonexpressed subjects are in second or third person singular.

In both samples, structures with non-expressed subjects are generally characterised by what Torres Cacoullos/Travis (2014) have called "subject continuity", i.e. the inferred subject is the same as in the previous clause, and here specifically by "co-reference", i.e. without intervening clauses. Excerpt 4, taken from an AmE answer turn, shows such a co-referential subject continuity in a coordinated list-like structure (lines 1–4).

(4) MLS PMI 19 August 2018 (PL: Harry Shipp; Seattle Sounders FC vs. LA Galaxy 5-0)

```
1    PL: -> ˚hh <<all> you know we CAME out->
2        -> <<all> started the game WELL->
3        -> <<all> got the early> GOAL-
4        -> and the:n <<all>you know started the SECond half
            well->
```

Following the discourse marker *you know*, the player produces a clause *we CAME out* (line 1) which consists of a subject in first person plural and a verb. He continues with three subjectless clauses in which the first person plural subjects remain unexpressed (lines 2–4). The last clause is coordinated with the prior ones through the coordinator *and*. All four lines are produced with the same level final pitch movement which makes them recognisable as a list.

Excerpt 5, which shows a BrE question turn in full, exemplifies a co-referential subject continuity in an uncoordinated structure. In addition, it shows an unexpressed second person subject as is typical for question turns.

(5) EPL PMI 03 March 2018 (PL: Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain; Liverpool vs. Newcastle United 2-0)

```
1    IR: -> you DID it;
2        -> SET up that first gOal-
3           VERy important.
```

The interviewer begins his question turn with a clause which has a subject-verb-object structure (*you DID it,* line 1). In the subsequent, uncoordinated clause the subject remains unexpressed, but it can be inferred that it shares its referent with the subject in the prior clause (*SET up that first gOal,* line 2).

My analysis so far has demonstrated that BrE and AmE speakers tend to use subjectless constructions in similar ways. However, what constitutes a noticeable difference between the two datasets is that the Premier League data contain examples of discontinuity in reference which is not observable in the MLS/NASL sample. Excerpt 6 illustrates such a case.

(6) EPL PMI 21 March 2015 (Player: Harry Kane; Tottenham Hotspur vs. Leicester City 4-3)

```
1    IR:    harry fanTAStic wIn,
2           was it TOUGHer than you expected,
3           (-)
4    PL:    huh: YEAH:; h˚
5           uh: we went two nil UP, (-)
6           uh: (--) then we had a few chAnces to get the
               th:ird and the fourth and we DIDn't=and-
7        -> ˚h uh: credit to LEICESter;=
8        -> =<<all>they they> stuck IN there_and-
9        -> ˚h uh: yeah made it TOUGH for us;
10       -> uh: but Obviously WON it,
11          ˚h (xxx about) the two TWO-
```

```
12          ˚h <<all>great CHAracter from the lads->=
13          =<all>(xxx) going to get the THIRD and the
            fourth=and->
14          ˚h uh: h˚ yeah=we're² we're really HAPpy.
```

The player praises the opposing team in a formulaic phrasal fragment (*credit to LEICES-ter*, line 7) and makes nominal reference to them. In the subsequent account, he first constructs overt anaphoric pronominal reference to the opposing team *(=<<all>they they> stuck IN there_and*, line 8), before producing a zero anaphoric verbal construction where the subject is unexpressed (˚*h uh: yeah made it TOUGH for us*, line 9). From the meaning of the subjectless clause, it can be inferred that here the unexpressed subject is co-referential and continued. There follows an intonation phrase with another unexpressed subject (*uh: but Obviously WON it*, line 10). This time, the coordinator *but* marks a contrast to what was said before. In the previous sequential context of this multi-unit TCU (turn construction unit) it was stated that the speaker belongs to the winning team (*harry fanTAStic wIn*, line 1). Due to this contextual knowledge, the unexpressed subject of *WON* can be interpreted as "we", which makes reference to the speaker and his team.

Excerpt 7 represents the case where the finite subjectless construction (line 8) is not preceded by a syntactic structure which includes a subject. This is followed by another fragment (line 9) where the inferred subject (and verb) remains unclear. Lines 1–2 are spoken in a voice-over by the interviewer while he and the player Steven Gerrard are being shown a video of an emotional Gerrard interacting earlier with the football fans in the stadium.

(7) EPL PMI Win 13 April 2014 (PL: Steven Gerrard; Liverpool vs. Manchester City 3-2)

```
1     IR:    STEven-
2            you saw the TEARS and the emotion there at the
             End- (.)
3            TELL us about it,
4            (-)
5     PL:    h˚ eMOtional, ˚h
6            ˚hhh eMOtional-
7            h˚ bu' h˚
8      ->    need to keep CALM- h˚
9      ->    ˚hh still fOur big gAmes to COME bu'- hh˚
10           ˚hh that meant so MUCH,
11           specially WHEN- h˚
12           <<all>you know (****) of the game an',>
13           ˚hh you feel the WORST at that pOint bu'; h˚
14           ˚hhh i think we've shOwed today <<all>that we're
             gonna go to the WIRE;>=
```

```
15          =<<all>we're wanna go all the WAY;> h°
16          you know NOthing's won yet bu'-
17          that was uh' h°
18          °hh probably the biggest GAME that we've made so
            fAr;
```

After addressing the player by his first name (line 1), the interviewer makes reference to Steven Gerrard's *TEARS and the emotion* as seen in the video footage (line 2) and asks him to tell the audience about it. This pre-empts interactional space for an experiential account on the part of the player. In response, Gerrard first produces two phrasal constructions (*eMOtional, eMOtional-*, lines 5–6) in which he simply confirms his emotional displays in the video. He continues his talk with a contrastive marker *bu'* (line 7) which is followed by a subjectless construction (*need to keep CALM-*, line 8). Based on the interactional knowledge that the player has been asked to talk about his experience of what happened earlier on the football pitch, the recipient audience can infer that the fragmental assessments in lines 5, 6 and 8 are to be attributed to the player and the referent of the inferred subject in line 8 is him. Next he uses another fragment (*still fOur big gAmes to COME bu'-*, line 9) which represents a borderline case because it contains the adverbial *still*. Here the inferred subject is arguably an existential one. Such practices are highly indexical in that the meaning is constructed in very dense and context-bound ways.

5.2 Phrasal fragments

Phrasal fragments come in five different types in the data: noun phrases (NPs; e.g. *first HALF*), adjective phrases (AdjPs; e.g. *so happy for the' °h for for the TEAM_an'*), adverb phrases (AdvPs; e.g. *yeah;=DEFinitely;*), prepositional phrases (PPs; *without rePLY:*), and other phrase-like formats which contain numerals (e.g. *SIX on the bOunce;*). Here, the BrE and the AmE samples differ in terms of not only their quantitative but also their qualitative distribution of phrasal fragments. Table 3 shows the relative variational distribution of phrasal constructions across speaker roles and turn types.

On average, almost all BrE question turns contain fragmental NPs (0.96), compared to roughly half of the AmE ones (0.44). BrE players use fragmental NPs in slightly more than half of the answer turns (0.60). This contrasts with their AmE counterparts who rarely used such fragments in their answer turns (0.12). Moreover, the BrE sample shows more variation with respect to the types of phrasal fragments used across turn types. Note that AmE interviewers and players only deploy NPs for phrasal fragments as a resource for turn construction. By contrast, BrE interviewers produce AdjPs, PPs and others, and BrE players use AdjPs as well as AdvPs in syntactically fragmental formats. Finally, recall that these are relative frequencies. This means that – as already

Table 3: The relative variational distribution of phrasal fragments (n = 71) across speaker roles/turn types

Speaker role/turn type	NPs	AdjPs	AdvPs	PPs	Other	Total
BrE interviewers/ question turns (n= 25)	0.96 (24)	0.12 (3)	0.00 (0)	0.04 (1)	0.12 (3)	1.24 (31)
AmE interviewers/ question turns (n= 25)	0.44 (11)	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	0.44 (11)
BrE players/ answer turns (n= 25)	0.60 (15)	0.28 (7)	0.16 (4)	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	1.04 (26)
AmE players/ answer turns (n= 25)	0.12 (3)	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	0.12 (3)

suggested in section 5.1 – fragmental constructions tend to be used in clusters. As a case in point, the three phrasal fragments attested for AmE answer turns were produced in one and the same turn.

Due to their high average frequency in the AmE and BrE PMIs, the following analysis focuses on NPs. To compile my collection, I only considered NPs with common nouns as their head (e.g. *goal*) but not names (e.g. *matt*, *WILL*;). I discarded the latter in my analysis of NPs since, grammatically, names behave in very different ways from common nouns (Quirk et al. 1985: 246, 291–292) and are characteristically deployed as personal addresses in the data. The collection of nominal fragments is characterised by specific morphosyntactic and pragmatic features.

A striking feature of the nominal fragments is what has been described as a zero-marking or "ellipsis of the article" (Quirk et al. 1985: 899) in countable nouns. Zero articles have been analysed not only as a feature of nonstandard varieties (e.g. Rupp/Tagliamonte 2019). Consider Excerpt 8, which illustrates two zero-article constructions (lines 2 and 4).

(8) NASL PMI 15 November 2015 (PL: Carlos Mendes; New York Cosmos vs. Ottawa Fury FC 3-2)

```
1     IR:    <<all>CARlos>;=
2        -> =great GAME; h
3           you're the CAPtain of the team (with what looks)
            like; (.)
4        -> great FINish-
5           HOW do you feel;
```

The noun phrases *great GAME;* (line 2) and *great FINish-* (line 4) each have countable nouns as their head and no article. As Günthner (2005: 21) points out, such arti-

cle-dropping means that the chunk begins with a "semantically meaningful element" which contributes to a performative condensation. This contrasts with the use of *the CAPtain of the team* (line 3) where the article is produced.

Excerpt 9 exemplifies a coordinated zero-article nominal construction in line 2.

(9) MLS PMI 19 August 2018 (PL: Harry Shipp; Seattle Sounders FC vs. LA Galaxy 5-0)

```
1    IR:    HARry;=
2        -> =GOAL and assist;
3           ˚h toDAY- (.)
4           more importantly maybe a SHOUT out;
5           TALK about today's performance;
6    PL:    ((takes turn))
```

Following the personal address of the player (*HARry*, line 1), the interviewer produces two coordinated countable nouns in singular number without articles (*GOAL and assist*, line 2).

In terms of their semantic meaning, the nominal heads are constrained by the topic and communicative functions of post-match victory interviews in generally having positive connotations. The four most frequent types of nouns account for more than half of the tokens in the two datasets: *goal(s)* (10), *congratulations* (9), *win* (7), and *credit(s)* (4). These nominal fragments are characterised by specific discourse-pragmatic features. The fragmental constructions *(many) congratulations* and *credit(s)* are deployed for routinised, formulaic action formation. Excerpt 10 exemplifies the use of *congratuLAtions* (line 1).

(10) EPL PMI 11 January 2014 (PL: Mark Noble; Cardiff City vs. West Ham United 0-2)

```
1    IR: -> congratuLAtions,
2           (-)
3           what a MASsive win for yOu,
4           how big is it for YOU <<all>as well your
            manager>;
5           (-)
6    PL:    ((takes turn))
```

It is typical for the formula *(many) congratulations* to be produced early in the question turn, sometimes in combination with a first-name address of the player (*con↑gratuLAtions ryan-*). By contrast, *credit(s)* is deployed by players in the answer turn as a formulaic enactment of praise commonly addressed at the opponent (*credit to LEICESter;*). In only one case does the player praise his own team (*full credit to the TEAM;*).

The zero-marked fragments *goal(s)* and *win* show different uses across question and answer turns. Interviewers often use *win* and *goal(s)* as part of fragmental extreme case formulations (*four nil WIN,*; *your first goal for the Albion,*). *Win* can also be used for positive (*fanTAStic wIn,*) or high-grade assessments (*COMprehensive win,*) by the interviewer. Such fragments serve to appreciate the achievement of the player and his team as well as to attract the interest of the audience. By contrast, the players' answer turns do not show any use of *win*. The fragmental uses of *goal(s)* include positive evaluative premodifiers (*some good GOALS,*) and quantifiers (*a lot of GOALS-*).

5.3 Fragmental clusters

This section is concerned with the variation in the use of fragmental clusters consisting of verbal and phrasal fragments (as well as borderline cases) in the opening sequence of the PMIs. It also discusses some of the turn-constructional and interactional implications of such clusters. Due to the lower relative frequency of phrasal fragments in the AmE sample, fragmental clusters are less common in the AmE question and answer turns.

5.3.1 Fragmental style in the question turns

I begin with the analysis of the question turns. As shown in sections 5.1 and 5.2, the BrE question turns tend to be characterised by nominal fragments, while these are fewer in the AmE sample. Moreover, the qualitative analysis reveals no AmE question turn exclusively constructed in terms of fragments. Excerpt 11 exemplifies this.

(11) PMI 12 June 2015 (PL: Aaron Kovar; Seattle Sounders vs. LA Galaxy 1-0)

```
1     IR: -> only gOa:l and a one-nil WIN,
2            <<all>what are your thoughts on the PLAY,>
3            <<all>and how the team PLAYED today;>
4     PL:    (-) yeah i mean i thought we fought really HARD;
              ((sighs))
              ((turn continues))
```

The interviewer begins with a coordinated nominal fragment, in which he produces two ECFs which summarise the performance of the player in the match and the result (*only gOa:l and a one-nil WIN*, line 1). It serves as the "headline" of the interview (Clayman/Heritage 2002), i.e. the thematic summary of the PMI. Next he completes the question turn with a compound wh-interrogative (lines 2–3).

Compare this with the BrE question turn illustrated by Excerpt 12, which consists of multiple fragments: lines 1–2 contain two nominal fragments, and line 3 shows a fragment with clausal and nominal features.

(12)   EPL PMI 06 November 2016 (PL: Matty Phillips; West Bromwich Albion vs. Leicester City 2-1)

```
1    IR: -> <<all>matt congratuLAtions;>=
2        -> =<<all>your first goal for the ALbion,>=
3        -> =and then a REALly (.) important one as wEll;
4    PL:    yeah=DEFinitely; ((turn continues))
```

The interviewer addresses the player with his first name and congratulates him with a routine (*matt congratuLAtions;*, line 1). In what serves as the headline of the interview, he constructs the player's performance as newsworthy, using an ECF *(your first goal for the ALbion,* line 2) and a positive assessment (*and then a REALly (.) important one as wEll;*, line 3). It does not contain an interrogative or imperative structure which occasions the players response. The interviewer's turn is taken up by the player without delay. He first confirms the interviewer's assessment (*yeah=DEFinitely;*, line 4) followed by talk in which he assesses his manager, his own and his team's performance (not shown here).

Excerpts 11 and 12 illustrate that in general nominal fragments can be used for ECFs and assessments in the headline in the opening turns. However, the BrE excerpt shows a fragmented style which frames the question turn in a way which is very dense in terms of its informative value, and produced under high time pressure. Such a style indexes that the speakers assume high normative knowledge of the communicative constraints and goals of PMIs on the part of their interlocutors and the audience.

5.3.2 Fragmental style in the answer turns

Players use a clustered fragmental style in their answer turns in what I call experiential accounts, i.e. narratives in which the players provide a personal account of what happened during the match. Such a clustered fragmental style represents a particularly powerful resource for narratives which summarise the main events of the match. While this practice can be generally observed in both datasets, it tends to be less common in the AmE sample because of the low relative frequency of nominal fragments in the AmE players' answer turns.

Excerpt 13 illustrates such a rare example from the AmE dataset. The fragmental cluster is in lines 13–14 and 16–19.

(13) MLS PMI 05 May 2012 (PL: Brian Meredith; Seattle Sounders vs. Philadelphia 1-0)

```
1      IR:    SAUNders get a one nil victory over philadElphia
              here today-=
2             =now ↑HERE'S a guy brian meredith who had a HALF
              a clean sheet the other night;
3             (--) now it's a FULL clean sheet-=
4             =now uh: (-)
5             and i know there wasn't (-) treMENdous pressure
              but you dId,
6             (-) whatever you needed to do you DID.
7             (--)
8      PL:    yEah i MEAN; (.)
9             <<all>it was i think it was> a good game to come
              into toDAY-=
10            =i had my first START;
11            it WASn't- (--)
12            much PRESsure;
13     ->     not Many; (-)
14     ->     you know;=difficult shOts or tosses to DEAL
              with,
15            i had to come OUT an?; (-)
16     ->     a couple of CROSses;
17     ->     collect a few BALLS;
18     ->     other than THAT-
19     ->     (--) a relatively easy DAY.
```

In what represents the headline of the interview, the interviewer first announces the result of the match (*SAUNders get a one nil victory over philadElphia here today-*, line 1) before he introduces the player to be interviewed by providing his name and acknowledging his recent performance (*now ↑HERE'S a guy brian meredith who had a HALF a clean sheet the other night; (--) now it's a FULL clean sheet-*, lines 2–3). Note that the AmE interviewer uses the British expression *clean sheet* to refer to "a game in which the opposing team is prevented from scoring".[4] The interviewer next assesses the player's performance providing his own epistemic take on the match in a concessive move (*and i know there wasn't (-) treMENdous pressure but you dId, (-) whatever you needed to do you DID.*, lines 5–6). After a medium pause (line 7), the player responds with a minimal response token and discourse marker (*yEah i MEAN;*, line 8) which display an acknowledgement of the prior talk and project a

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[4] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clean%20sheet; last access on 11 June 2021.

"change in perspective" (Imo 2005: 24). Following a micro pause, he first assesses the game in positive terms before confirming the interviewer's assessment that there was not much pressure (*<<all>it was i think it was> a good game to come into toDAY- [...] it WASn't- (--) much PRESsure;*, lines 9–12). Next the player accounts for the latter, deploying multiple fragmental structures. He begins with an evaluative nominal fragment in which the discourse marker *you know* is inserted and which is done in two intonation phrases (*not Many; (-) you know;=difficult shOts or tosses to DEAL with,* lines 13–14). He next produces a mini narrative which consists of a declarative clause (*i had to come OUT an?;*, line 15) and a nominal and a verbal fragment in the subsequent talk (*a couple of CROSses; collect a few BALLS;,* lines 16–17). The verbal fragment in line 17 is not easily interpreted in terms of the prior syntactic structure through latency. The local coherence of this fragment is achieved through a prosodic contour which parallels that of line 16, our situated knowledge of the activity under way, and the player's experiential telling of his team's win on this day, all of which helps us interpret the nonexpressed subject. The short intonation phrases and fragmental clusters construct this report of the main events and actions in a condensed and dynamic fashion. The player continues with two more fragments to finish his turn with a summarising assessment (*other than THAT- (--) a relatively easy DAY.*, lines 18–19).

Excerpt 14 exemplifies a similar organisation in the BrE data.

(14) EPL PMI 07 February 2015 (PL: Harry Kane; Tottenham Hotspur vs. Arsenal 2-1)

```
1    IR:    what i WONder,
2           if you're wAtching from the stands or the
            terraces HERE,
3           (-)
4           at nOrth london DERby thinking-
5           <<l>One day i might play and i alone SCO[RE;>]
6    PL:                                            [°h]hh
            YEAH,
7           uh:: obviously inCREDible;
8           my fIrst london DERby-
9    ->     °hh uh: watching so many as a KID_an'-
10          ((laughs softly)) uh just MAGical-
11          uh:: °h (it's) a feeling that i can't really
            desCRIBE_an'-
12          just one i want for GOOD_an'-
13          so happy for the' °h for for the TEAM_an',
14          an' the club itSELF-
15          it's just a yeah: a special DAY.
```

In his question turn, the interviewer asks the player if he used to think that he might play and score at the North London Derby[5] when he was younger. The player confirms this with the response token *YEAH,* (line 6) before he produces an assessment and an ECF in the form of two phrasal fragments (*uh:: obviously incredible; my fIrst london DERby-,* lines 7–8). He next uses a verbal fragment *°hh uh: watching so many as a KID_an'* (line 9), which is again followed by a phrasal fragment (*uh just MAGical-,* line 10). Noticeably, the verbal fragment – just as the phrasal fragments – does not grammatically draw on a full, finite syntactic structure in the immediate linguistic context. It becomes semantically meaningful due to context-specific factors. In that the speaker picks up on the interviewer's wording in line 2, which makes pronominal reference to the player, it can be inferred that the player is speaking about himself. In addition, s*o many* refers back to *london DERby* (line 8). But the fragment also carries affect-laden meaning, which could be described as awe, sheer happiness, and bliss. This is achieved through the fragmental form of the verbal construction and by it being produced in a series of fragments which express the extreme case *(obviously inCREDible, fIrst)* and highly positive evaluations (*just MAGical*).

While clustered fragments can be found in both datasets, they do not represent a common practice in the AmE sample but are limited to a few answer turns. In the BrE answer turns, these are not only produced more frequently but more often in highly contextualised ways. Such fragments do not become meaningful through latency but through the recipient's local knowledge of the prior talk as well as a general understanding of the genre-specific norms and tasks oriented to by the speakers.

6 Summary and conclusions

The analysis of fragments in British English and American English post-match interviews has yielded interesting results with respect to frequencies, constructions, and interaction.

Frequencies. The findings point to both a qualitative and quantitative variation between the AmE and the BrE use of fragments in the opening sequences of PMIs. Although the data showed a well-balanced average distribution of verbal fragments in the two datasets, phrasal fragments appear to be more common and variable in form in the BrE dataset. The study demonstrated a distribution of fragments related to the interactional tasks performed. Verbal fragments were most frequently used in the answer turns of both datasets, which seems to be linked to the routinised practices deployed in the telling of experiential accounts. Fragmental clusters which consist of verbal and phrasal fragments were shown to be far less common in the AmE sample

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5 The North London Derby refers to the local football rivalry between Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal, which are both based in North London.

due to the lower relative frequency of phrasal fragments in the AmE data. In sum, these results indicate a much more fragmented style in the BrE PMIs in terms of both the qualitative and quantitative distribution. More research is needed if the contextual observations for PMIs made on the basis of a mid-sized sample stand for a more general phenomenon which distinguishes AmE and BrE usage across genres.

Constructions and interaction. The study provided evidence for the interdependence between the formats and the routinisation and frozenness of constructions, interactional constraints, as well as different sports and media cultures. Bergen et al. (2017) have pointed out that the variation in conduct between the BrE and AmE participants in doctor-patient interaction reflects orientations towards different cultural norms in the two national contexts. Similarly, I argue that the higher information density, and more dramatic style displayed in the constructions used in the BrE opening sequences may be explained by the more immediate timing of such interviews after the match, and the greater commercial and time pressures under which the BrE PMIs are conducted. In addition, it can be assumed that the BrE PMIs tend to be broadcast live due to the socio-cultural and commercial significance of football in the UK, whereas the AmE PMIs are recorded for webcasts and later use. In the BrE data, the verbal fragments do not necessarily draw on latent structures explicitly established in the prior speech. This suggests that the BrE speech tends to be more indexical. Here the recipients' tacit normative understanding of the participants' roles, of the genre and of the prior local talk is assumed and required for meaning-making. Generally, these differences can be interpreted as a participant's orientation towards a rhetoric of drama in the BrE opening sequences and towards a "rhetoric of factual description" (Edwards 2000) in the AmE data.

In terms of register, the use of fragments observable across the two datasets can be treated as "linguistic enregisterment".[6] This register of forms shows "frozenness" to various degrees and on different levels. For instance, *congratulations* and *credit to X* were identified as (semi-) frozen structures functional of idiomatic action formats for congratulating on and appreciating a team's performance. This suggests that genre-specific lexicogrammatical choices and action formats constitutive of the genre are closely intertwined and are indicative of a high routinisation. Further, the AmE speaker's use of BrE football terminology (e.g. *clean sheet*) shows the borrowing of terms and expressions in a specialised contact situation where BrE culture dominates AmE culture.

The study has explored the use of fragmental constructions in a media genre between two English varieties in which soccer has different sociocultural relevance. In the analysis, this was taken as a given (following, e.g. Bergen et al. 2017; Nilsson/ Norrby 2016) but the question remains whether there is a point where the settings

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6 Agha (2007: 190) defines linguistic enregisterment as "processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms".

may be too diverse to allow comparative study. So to put our finger on what might be subtle differences and to provide evidence for these, future variational generic analysis requires bigger datasets, and more qualitative and quantitative analysis.

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8 Appendix

GAT 2 transcription conventions (adapted from Couper-Kuhlen/ Barth-Weingarten 2011)

[ ]	overlap and simultaneous talk
=	fast, immediate continuation with a new turn or segment (latching)
(.)	micro pause, estimated, up to 0.2 sec. duration approx.
(-)	short estimated pause of approx. 0.2–0.5 sec. duration
(--)	intermediary estimated pause of approx. 0.5–0.8 sec. duration
(---)	longer estimated pause of approx. 0.8–1.0 sec. duration
(0.5)/(2.0)	measured pause of approx. 0.5 / 2.0 sec. duration (to tenth of a second)
and_uh	cliticisations within units
uh, uhm, etc.	hesitation markers, so-called "filled pauses"
:, ::, :::	lengthening, depending on duration
?	cut-off by glottal closure
?	rising to high
,	rising to mid
–	level
;	falling to mid
.	falling to low
(may i)	assumed wording
SYLlable	focus accent
sYllable	secondary accent
!SYL!lable	extra strong accent
↑	smaller pitch upstep
↑↑	larger pitch upstep
<<l> >	lower pitch register

<<h> >	higher pitch register
<<f> >	forte, loud
<<ff> >	fortissimo, very loud
<<p> >	piano, soft
<<pp> >	pianissimo, very soft
<<all> >	allegro, fast
<<len> >	lento, slow
<<cresc> >	crescendo, increasingly louder
<<dim> >	diminuendo, increasingly softer
<<acc> >	accelerando, increasingly faster
<<rall> >	rallentando, increasingly slower
((coughs))	non-verbal vocal actions and events
<<coughing> >	... with indication of scope
((laughs))	description of laughter
<<:-)> so>	smile voice
°h/ °hh //	in- / outbreaths of approx. 0.2–0.5 sec. duration
h° hh°	in- / outbreaths of approx. 0.5–0.8 sec. duration
°hhh / hhh°	in- / outbreaths of approx. 0.8–1.0 sec. duration
((...))	omission in transcript
->	refers to a line of transcript relevant in the argument