Theologising the Discourse of Representation through 'Faith' and Religion in Football News

NADHRATUNNAIM ABAS
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics,
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
&
Academy of Language Studies,
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pahang, Malaysia
naimnadhratun@gmail.com

SURINDERPAL KAUR
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics,
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
surinder@um.edu.my

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the use of 'faith' in football through the analysis of the patterns of its co-occurrences in the corpus of football news articles in The Star, a local Malaysian English language newspaper. These articles have been produced by the local news authors who claim to be the faithful of particular football teams. The use of 'faith' has been found to express and call for the allegiance towards the preferred teams which is addressed to the audience in general. In this sense, the overdetermined role of the authors as the news producers and the supporters of certain football teams may contribute to how they are represented in the media. Moreover, 'faith' has often been limited to religion and little is known about its use in sport and representation. Hence the investigation is aimed at making sense of the meanings of 'faith' in the context of football to further unveil its role in the discourse of representation. The results reveal the co-occurrences of 'faith' with the vocabulary of religion simulating interdiscursive relations that strategise on theologising the representation of the news participants in attempts to legitimise the allegiance to particular sides in football naturally. Consequently, using faith of religion to call for faith in football may lead to the glorification and derogation of certain football teams that further influence their representation as 'Us' or 'Them'. As this practice may also be accepted as a common practice indicating sports rivalry, it also makes 'faith' a naturalised code without appearing to be ideological.

Keywords: faith; theologisation; representation; news discourse; interdiscursivity

INTRODUCTION

Expressing 'faith' in particular athletes or teams may be considered as a normal practice in sport, hence, making the use of 'faith' appear to be naturalised in the environment of football news. Nevertheless, as those who call themselves as the faithful of a team happen to be news authors whose audience involves the public, such a practice may influence how the team is represented in the media, either as the favourites or the villains. As mentioned by Campbell (2019), language choice represents social inclusion in Malaysia. Hence, choosing to express faith in a certain team while rejecting their rivals may contribute to the 'Us' versus 'Them' narrative.

According to Fairclough (2001), a practice that seems to be 'universal and commonsensical' is often taken for granted as it has 'become naturalised' and thus, is 'invisible' (pp. 27 & 71). One way in which 'common sense' is realised is in the 'meaning of words' based on its relationship with other words that constructs its meaning within that particular environment (Fairclough, 2001, p. 77). This can be uncovered by analysing 'collocations' or 'patterns of co-occurrence of words in texts' by 'simply looking at which other words most frequently precede and follow any word which is in focus, either

immediately or two, three and so on words away' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 131). These findings can then be validated through their comparison with those in the reference corpora such as the British National Corpus (henceforth, BNC) as performed in Baker's (2013) study of gendered terms.

The relationship between sport and religion has been discussed in the previous studies (Delaney & Madigan, 2015; Coakley, 2007; Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001). A link between 'faith' and sport fandom can be seen in terms of the universality of religion and the allegiance to the preferred team. The faithful of a football team is often said to be akin to the faithful of a religion in which maintenance of allegiance at all times is required. 'Faith' that refers to religion denotes the idea that it is 'a socially shared set of beliefs and rituals' (Coakley, 2007, p. 530) which can make it universal and natural. In addition, it is relative to 'sacred things' which are 'set apart and forbidden' (Durkheim, 1915, p. 48). Besides, 'faith' of religion is also related to the 'supernatural' such as 'gods' in which Hoffman (1992) referred to as the 'entities regarded as unquestionable and unchallengeable' (pp. 6 – 7). Thus, the religious sense of 'faith' can be applied to theologise the discourse of representation to ensure that allegiance to particular sides in football is maintained. Unfortunately, according to Wann, Melnick, Russell and Pease (2001), there has been lack of research to linguistically explain the association between the vocabulary of sport and religion particularly through the use of 'faith'.

News on football in Malaysia has commonly been influenced by the highly publicised coverage of tournaments that often centres on international football, mainly the English Premier League (henceforth, EPL). The focus of the news tends to be shifted to more popular teams with more records of winning particularly the 'Big Four' of the EPL (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United). Consequently, this seems to breed generations of local supporters who are self-proclaimed faithful of these teams while serving as sports news authors who are attached to the local media agency. Hence, as they choose to use 'faith', it does not only express their loyalty towards their team, but it also calls for the maintenance of allegiance regardless of the conditions that the team are in. Regardless, studies on the Malaysian football have commonly concentrated on the team performance (winning or losing) factor (Tan, Abdollahi-Guilani and Rusly, 2017; Nazarudin, Yusof, Wahab, and Razak, 2014; Shamsuddin and Kamaruddin, 2008; Yusof and Yusof, 2008). Studies that link football and representation involve those outside Malaysia. Nordin (2008), for instance, uncovered the differences in the language used during the match between Sweden and Germany while Richard (2008) discovered French media discrimination against Germany through the understatement of their victory and magnification of France's contribution to the country despite their failure, hence, making the former as 'Them' and the latter as 'Us'.

In this regard, the paper intends to investigate the association between 'faith' and religion linguistically in football news in order to firstly, make sense of its meanings that influence its use in football. Therefore, it seeks to question 'How does theologisation of 'faith' take place in football news?'. Secondly, to further demonstrate how the use of 'faith' may influence the representation of the news participants as the preferred or villains, the analysis looks into 'How does theologisation of 'faith' contribute to the representation of football teams?' The investigation is expected to unveil the construction of the meanings of 'faith' that communicate theologisation strategy and identify its role in the representation of football teams as 'Us' or 'Others' in football news.

'FAITH' OF SPORT AND RELIGION AS INTERDISCURSIVE RELATIONS

'Faith' in the sociology of sport fandom adopts religious notion (Delaney & Madigan, 2015; Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001). Coakley (2007) perceived 'faith' as the 'foundation

for all religions and religious beliefs' (p. 530). It is regarded as the 'formally stated beliefs' in which 'millions congregate' to 'houses of worships' which are akin to the stadiums in order to 'bear witness to the manifestation of their faith' (Hoffman, 1992, pp. 6 – 7). Sport fans' commitment to sports acts as a 'symbol' of faith in the sporting figures whom they regard as the 'earthly gods' (Delaney and Madigan, 2015, p. 263) who are also considered as 'sacred' as religion (Prebish, 1993, p. 262). Hoffman (1992) described the nature of the commitment as 'beyond what might be considered ordinary' and of 'radical' one (pp. 1 – 2). It is the intensity of the commitment or 'devotion for sport' that made it 'religious' (Hoffman, 1992, pp. 1 – 2). According to Delaney and Madigan (2015), 'fans are told to have faith in their team, especially in times of turmoil, much in the same manner that religious people are told to have faith in times where they doubt their religion or "God's plan"' (p. 262). As sport is 'uncertain and uncontrollable', the religious sense of 'faith' works to 'conquer fear, weariness, slumps, and negative attitudes' (Hoffman, 1992, p. 168). Thus, this can help the followers (of sport or religion) to cope with bad times (Coakley, 2007, p. 530).

'Faith' as the Latin word has the 'same root' as the 'Greek word, *peitho*' which refers to 'a goddess' as 'a prodigious phenomenon' that can 'persuade others and holds supernatural and almost magical power' (Pernot, 2006, p. 245). In addition, *peitho* also means 'to persuade' and 'to obey' (Burke, 1969, pp. 51 – 52). Kenny (1992) viewed that the religious 'faith' is persuasive as it is referred to as 'a special kind of belief on theological topics' which 'has often been contrasted with reason' (p. 47).

The similarities between 'faith' of religion and sport indicate 'interdiscursive relations' in which Fairclough (2003) referred to as the relations between the texts and other elements such as 'discourses, genres and styles' as well as the 'social elements' (p. 37). Wu (2011) viewed interdiscursivity as 'the mixing of diverse genres, discourses, or styles associated with institutional and social meanings in a single text' (p. 96). Interdiscursivity is marked by 'hybridity' or 'mixing of social practices' such as 'conversationalization' as the 'conversational language' is adopted in 'radio talks' or 'broadcast news' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 35). Through mixtures of discourse conventions, the intentional exploitations of semiotic resources or the internal and external discourse elements act as an appropriation strategy to implicitly convey certain ideas in attempts to influence others. In this respect, Stapleton, Evans and Rhys (2019) perceived that interdiscursivity analysis could help explain the appropriation of religious discourse in the pro-anorexia movement.

CONCEPTUALISING THEOLOGISATION

'Theologisation' is derived from the concept of 'theology' that concerns religion as discussed recently (Alston, 2019; Peters, 2019). Very few have reported on theologisation in other fields. Abraham and Rufaedah (2014), for instance, referred to 'theologisation' as the infusion of religion into the studied field. In their case, it concerned the role of theologised psychology to move away from social conflicts. In relation to sport, Bain-Selbo (2019) discussed the role of religion in ensuring people's well-being and morality. In the present context, the notion of 'theologisation' is formed based on the relationship that 'faith' has with religion.

METHODS

The corpus under investigation contained football news articles published in the sports section of *The Star* namely, *Football Every Day.* The study concentrated on the articles produced by the local authors and excluded those that were reproduced from other news

media like *Reuters* and *The Sun UK*. This was to ensure that the findings were representative of the local voice. Hence, the corpus covered news reports on the local and international football. Additionally, it included reports on the competitions that were on-going for several months such as the Premier League and the Super League and excluded those of one-time events such as the Charity Shield and friendlies. Longer duration of the events was expected to demonstrate richer linguistic resources that could be captured as a result of the long-term display of commitment to the competitors.

The process of data collection, which was based on the articles on the local and international competitions, took 15 months to be completed. The selection of data helped to clean the corpus from irrelevancies, redundancies and repetitions to further concentrate on its consistent patterns. The articles included news on the local football in the general section of *Football Every Day* and those in the *Football War* column that specifically featured four international football clubs, namely Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United. In total, the corpus contained 1,311 texts with 485,862 words.

The corpus analysis involving concordance and collocation was intended to identify the patterns of occurrences and co-occurrences of the nodes ('faith' and its lemmas). The analysis of concordance identifies the occurrences of the word under investigation (node) in a corpus that are listed according to the context of normally five words to its left and right. These occurrences were further studied in terms of their associations with other words that revealed the pattern of their relationships. To refer to these words, the paper opted for a general term which is co-occurrence that refers to instances beyond five collocated words for wider contexts. The co-occurred words were analysed in order to establish the context of their use. Then, the co-occurrences were examined in terms of their semantic prosodies to identify the discourse producer's attitudes. The associations can indicate positive and / or negative value based on the analysis of semantic prosodies or 'attitudes' (Baker, 2006, p. 87; McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 136). They were compared with 1 million word written texts of the reference corpus such as BNC to ensure that the findings were representative of the 'normal' occurrences (Baker, 2006, p. 43). This way, the analysis can provide 'evidences' that can help substantiate the findings and at the same, work as 'checks and balances' for a more reliable interpretation of the data (Mautner, 2008, pp. 44 & 49).

Next, the findings obtained from the corpus analysis were discussed from the perspective of Discourse Analysis (henceforth, DA) to further understand the patterns of the co-occurrences. The combined methods help to complement the findings obtained from each analysis as corpus analysis tends to be 'descriptive' while a critical view of DA may be 'explanatory' (Baker, Gabrielatos, KhosraviNik, Krzyżanowski, McEnery & Wodak, 2008, pp. 279 & 281).

FINDINGS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'THEOLOGISATION' OF 'FAITH' IN FOOTBALL NEWS

The corpus analysis performed on the corpus of football news and the reference corpora, BNC of written texts indicate the co-occurrences of 'faith' with the vocabularies of religion and supernaturalism as discussed in Hoffman(1992), Pernot (2006), Coakley (2007). This pattern of use unveils the attempts to theologise the discourse that are aimed at manufacturing mutual consent to how the actors in football news are represented as 'Us' or 'Others'.

CO-OCCURRENCES OF 'FAITH'

A concordance analysis of 'faith' shows the co-occurrences of 'faith' with the actors in football news who were actively and passively involved with particular teams. Those actively involved were the coach and players while those passively involved were the followers who were also the news producers. Additionally, the analysis reveals that these actors, in relation to 'faith', assumed the role of the agent(s) and (or) beneficiaries. This pattern of use indicates that 'faith' was meant for specific actors and context (see Table 1). For example, in the articles involving the local football teams such as Terengganu and Sime Darby, the coach or players acted as the agents while those in the international football teams such as Chelsea and Liverpool, the followers became the agents while the teams were identified as the beneficiaries in relation to 'faith'.

TABLE 1. 'Faith' in football news

No.	Example	Team
(1)	Mohd Ashaari Shamsuddin and Abdul Manaf Mamat are nursing injuries but Mat Zan continues to have **faith** in his men Source: Terengganu put faith in strikers for return leg, (2012, April 27). *Football Every Day.*	Terengganu
(2)	The Turtles are expected to put their **faith** in supersub Ahmad Nordin Alias Source: Farik Zolkepli, (October 13, 2011) Turtles' super sub Ahmad Nordin to stand in for Ismail. *Football Every Day.*	Terengganu
(3)	Suspended Sime Darby FC's Patrick Ronaldinho Wleh has **faith** in his team-mates Source: Samuel, E., (2012, April 29). Sime Darby FC striker believes team-mates can tame Terengganu, *Football Every Day.*	Sime Darby
(4)	Despite his dismay at the Blues' current form, Kng Zheng Guan still has **faith**. Source: Guan, K. Z., (2012, February 25). Enough of the Blues, guys*, Football War.*	Chelsea
(5)	We have **faith** in Suarez and the team to deliver! Source: Tengku Zafrul Aziz, (2011, September 10). *Football War.*	Liverpool

THE CO-OCCURRENCES OF 'FAITH' AND RELIGION

A further analysis of the co-occurrences of 'faith' indicates its associations with the vocabulary of religion as listed in Wann, Melnick, Russell and Pease (2001) such as 'devotion', 'ritual', 'dedication', 'sacrifice', 'commitment', 'spirit', 'prayer', 'suffering', 'festival', and 'celebration' (p. 198) (see Table 2). This pattern of use indicates the similarities between the behaviours of the followers of religion and those of sport that are 'radical' in nature (Hoffman, 1992, pp. 1 – 2). In this sense, they appear as an 'analogy' that compares 'faith' in religion to 'faith' in sport (Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001, p. 198). In religion, these words are meant for 'god' while in sport, they are displayed towards the athletes or teams who are regarded as the 'earthly gods' (Delaney & Madigan, 2015, p. 263). Similarly, in the present context, these behaviours are associated with particular football teams or the actors associated with the teams like the player, coach (local football) or manager (international football) and followers. For instance, the words 'devotion', 'dedication', and 'commitment' which are, in the context of religion, used to denote obedience to 'god' and religious beliefs, in examples (6) ('Liverpool fan') and (7) ('new signings' of Kelantan), they are used to express adherence to particular teams in the same manner as practiced in religion.

TABLE 2. Vocabulary of religion in football news

Word	No	Example	Team(s)
Devotion (devout)	(6)	I am a staunch and **devout** Liverpool fan myself – have been since 1972 and always will be. That's why I am Red2TheCore. Source: Manogaran, R. (2012, March 3). Red pride rising, *Football War*.	Liverpool
Dedication & Commitment	(7)	"…Though a little short in experience compared to the three who have left to join Kelantan, the new signings have shown their **commitment** and **dedication**…" said Yunus. Source: Oh, R. (2012, January 6). Yunus says Petric's 'football language' good enough for T-Team. *Football Every Day*.	T-Team, Kelantan
Prayer	(8)	"Too bad, I will be out on suspension … but I will uphold my team in **prayer**" - Patrick Ronaldinho. Source: Samuel, E. (2012, April 29). Sime Darby FC striker believes team-mates can tame Terengganu. *Football Every Day*.	Sime Darby
Ritual	(9)	Roberto Di Matteo, too, had his fortunes forged by the departure of another manager – Andre Villas-Boas was booted out in an honoured sacrificial **ritual** at Stamford Bridge. Source: Kumar, N. (2012, April 13). Capital fault lines. *Football War*.	Chelsea
Sacrifice	(10)	"While it may appear to be a submission to MU, I see it more as our ability to make **sacrifices** to preserve the sanctity of the institution and to emerge as a bigger club than our rivals. The trophies and wins are not all that is of value in this game" - Lim Chee. Source: Monagaran, R. (2012, February 15). Sticking the boot in. *Football War*.	Liverpool, Manchester United
Suffering	(11)	"Some of the young players are **suffering** from jitters even after I told them to play their own brand of football" – Yunus Alif. Source: Yunus wants to end three-match winless run by beating Felda. (2012, June 30). *Football Every Day*.	T-Team
Spirit	(12)	Finally for today, a word for the Arsenal fans who went to Old Trafford yesterday, sang their hearts out and showed the real **spirit** of this football club. You, at least, did us proud. Hats off. Source: Man Utd 8-2 Arsenal: Shambles. (2011, August 29). *Football War*.	Arsenal, Manchester United
Festival (festive)	(13)	Arsenal travelling to the Eastlands to take on a rampant City side is not exactly the preferred way to start this **festive** series of matches. Source: Anand, K. (2011, December 17). Facing the not-so-Invincibles. *Football War*.	Arsenal, Manchester City
Celebration	(14)	Never short of optimism and chewing gum, Sir Alex Ferguson has already said that United fans may have "the biggest **celebration** of their lives" come this weekend. Source: Asriff Yusoff. (2012, May 13). Forza Man City. *Football War*.	Manchester United

In addition, the idea of 'routines' in religion such as 'prayer' and 'ritual' to appeal for one's well-being is used in football as sport is 'uncertain and uncontrollable' (Hoffman, 1992, p. 168). In example (8), the 'prayer' was invoked for the well-being of Sime Darby FC. Next, the sacking of 'Andre-Villas Boas' was considered as a 'ritual' as it was a common practice for the Chelsea owner to discontinue the service of the team's manager whenever he underperformed.

As the religious followers are described as willing to 'sacrifice' and 'suffer' for the sake of their religious beliefs, the followers of football teams are also expected to do the same

(Hoffman, 1992). In example (10), 'Lim Chee' as a Liverpool supporter would rather 'sacrifice' Suarez (a Liverpool star player) for the sake of the team. In the case of the players of T-Team in example (11), their 'suffering' serves as an excuse for their underperformance.

The uncertainties in sport (Hoffman, 1992) can be used to justify the support for the teams in their good and bad times. Additionally, they may also promote acceptance of the teams' misfortunes. In example (12), the Arsenal followers were praised for maintaining their support of the team despite their defeat as religious followers would behave when disasters struck. In this sense, the 'real spirit' celebrates loyalty rather than emphasizing on the match outcome.

To reward its followers, happy occasions in religion can be regarded as 'festival' and 'celebration'. In football, these words are used to refer to the events that excite the teams and their supporters. In example (13), a series of football matches which was described as 'festive' was considered as joyful moments for football fans. Additionally, the predicted victory of Manchester United in example (14) was regarded as a 'celebration' for their supporters.

CO-OCCURRENCES OF 'FAITH' AND SUPERNATURALISM

The corpus analysis also reveals that 'faith' has co-occurred with the words that indicate supernatural influence such as 'luck' (including 'lucky' and 'unlucky'), 'miracle', 'fairytale', 'magic', 'Midas', 'Santa', 'curse' and 'karma' (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. Vocabulary of supernaturalism in football news

Word	No.	Example	Prosody	Team(s)
Luck	(15)	**Luck** is just part of the ball game Source: Yee, I. (2012, March 31). Luck is just part of the ball game. *Football War.*	Neutral	
	(16)	They were **riding on their luck** at the beginning of the season and their true colours will start to show against the big teams. Source: Gnanalingam, R. (2011, November 26). *Football War.*	Positive	Newcastle United
	(17)	City too have had their **slice of luck** this season against Tottenham, when the ref failed to send Mario Balotelli off for a clear stamp on Scott Parker, and the player then went on to win a penalty and score it himself. Source: Yee, I. (2012, March 31). Luck is just part of the ball game. *Football War.*	Positive	Manchester City
	(18)	Now, Kelantan skipper Mohd Badri Mohd Radzi is hoping that some of Hairuddin's **luck** will **rub off** on his team when the two sides face off in the Malaysia Cup final at the Shah Alam Stadium tonight. Source: Lady Luck has always smiled on Omar but Badri hopes luck will be on his side this time. (2012, October 20). *Football Every Day.*	Positive	Kelantan, Armed Forces
	(19)	But in this Blues team I have faith and full confidence that **Lady Luck** is finally shinning on us and we will survive the Barca onslaught. Source: Guan, K. Z. (2012, April 21). After beating the best, who are the Gunners. *Football War.*	Positive	Chelsea, Barcelona
	(20)	For once, Roberto Mancini has a right to complain – having to play two matches just 48 hours apart is absolutely ridiculous. But then again, they deserve some **bad luck**, don't they? Source: Yee, I. (2011, December 31). Fortune finally favours the Devils. *Football War.*	Negative	Manchester City, Liverpool
	(21)	It was a bunch of second-string and youth team players desperately thrown together by Arsene Wenger after a fortnight of horribly **rotten luck** with transfers, injuries and suspensions.	Negative	Arsenal

Word	No.	Example	Prosody	Team(s)
		Source: Yee, I., (2011, September 10). These Devils still not the finished product. *Football War.*		
	(22)	Sheikh Ahmad Tajuddin Sheikh Ahmad Yusof, the Turtles' assistant team manager, said they are **down on their luck** with more casualties on their hands. Source: Demoralised Turtles may even lose Doe, (2012, May 3). *Football Every Day.*	Negative	Terengganu
	(23)	It was a bitter pill to swallow for Armed Forces skipper Hairuddin Omar when his **luck** in the Malaysia Cup **ran out** at the Shah Alam Stadium on Saturday. Source: Heartache for Hai-O as his Cup luck runs out, (2012, October 22). *Football Every Day.*	Negative	Armed Forces
Lucky	(24)	…United are somehow **luckier** than other teams, that referees favour them. Source: Yee, I. (2012, March 31). Luck is just part of the ball game. *Football War.*	Positive	Manchester United
	(25)	Football nomad Hairuddin Omar is dubbed the man with the **lucky charm** – having won the Malaysia Cup three times since 2009. Source: Samuel, E., (2012, October 4). Soldiers have a lucky charm in four-time Malaysia Cup winner Hairuddin Omar. *Football Every Day.*	Positive	Armed Forces
Unlucky	(26)	Our team were unlucky last week but my faith in Liverpool will never die. Source: Tengku Zafrul Aziz. (2011, September 17). *Football War.*	Negative	Liverpool
Miracle	(27)	Die-hard Gooner Hariati believes in **miracles**. Source: Hariati Azizan. (2012, February 25). Just the Spur the Gunners need, *Football War.*	Positive	Arsenal
Fairytale	(28)	In the 65th minute, Kelantan captain Badhri Radzi slotted in a historic goal that would earn Kelantan its first major trophy ever, the most valuable of the lot, the Malaysia Cup. A **fairytale** end to a seemingly never-ending wait. Source: Asrif Yusoff. (October 25, 2012). A journey through Kelantan's dramatic rise in Malaysian football. *Football Every Day.*	Positive	Kelantan
Magic	(29)	Sathianathan has weaved his **magic** again after having led Kelantan to their first major silverware when they won the Malaysia Cup in 2010. Source: Soldiers out to shoot down big boys. (2012, July 8). *Football Every Day.*	Positive	Kelantan
Midas	(30)	Rookie coach P. Maniam seems to have the **Midas** touch. Source: Underdogs tag good for the Red Giants, says Maniam. (2011, October 12). *Football Every Day.*	Positive	Selangor
Santa	(31)	WHAT a Merry Christmas it was for Manchester United fans the world over – all our main title rivals (and Liverpool) dropped points, and Jonny Evans won't be playing for two weeks. I'm starting to believe in **Santa** all over again. Source: Yee, I. (2011, December 31). Fortune finally favours the Devils. *Football War.*	Positive	Manchester United
Curse	(32)	Cue **curse** of the Black Cats. All City could do was draw 3-3 and, having played a game more, find themselves two points behind United (and it could very well be five by the time you read this as United took on Blackburn earlier this morning). Source: Manogaran, R. (2012, April 3). City's title hopes practically blown away by Black Cats. *Football War.*	Negative	Sunderland, Manchester City, Manchester United
Karma	(33)	Kng Zheng Guan believes the 1-0 win was **karma** on Barcelona's part for all their cheating, diving and playacting over the past years. Source: Guan, K. Z. (2012, April 21). After beating the best, who are the Gunners. *Football War.*	Negative	Chelsea Barcelona

The use of the vocabulary of supernaturalism communicates their influence on the fate of the football teams. These supernatural entities might not necessarily be limited to the religious god but might also include those of the superstitious beliefs and unknown forces of nature. Consequently, their co-occurrences seem to demonstrate neutral, positive and negative attitudes based on the analysis of their associations or prosodies.

The associations with 'luck', and its lemmas, 'lucky' and 'unlucky', for instance, indicate all the three different attitudes. 'Luck' that co-occurs with 'ball game' indicates a neutral attitude as its association with football is considered as a natural phenomenon despite being a significant force in influencing future events. 'Riding on their luck' indicates positive prosody as it describes Newcastle United as the privileged sides to have been blessed with positive outcomes. Although these positive outcomes are implied as a temporary phenomenon, the use of 'luck' portrays Newcastle United positively as a better team than their opponents except the 'big teams'. Similarly, the 'slice of luck' in example (17) became the cause for the positive outcome for Manchester City that made them the privileged sides. Like Newcastle United, Manchester City were blessed with 'luck' as they managed to escape from the committed foul and turned it into a score from a penalty kick that allowed them to overcome their opponents. Other examples include 'luck will rub off' and 'Lady Luck' that could bring victory to the teams. A Kelantan player wished that the Armed Forces player's luck would be infectious to his team so that they could overcome their opponents. Next, 'Lady Luck' was believed to have the power to grant an advantage or a victory to Chelsea against their tough opponents, Barcelona.

Besides, some instances involving 'luck' also indicate negative prosody. 'Bad luck' in example (20) describes Manchester City as the disadvantaged sides due to the tight match schedule that could cause the players to be physically exhausted. Similarly, 'rotten luck' can be seen as the source of Arsenal's (as represented by their manager, 'Arsene Wenger') strings of misfortunes that affected their players in terms of transfer deals, injuries and suspensions which could weaken the squad. The lack of 'luck' for Terengganu as they were 'down on their luck' and the Armed Forces as their 'luck ran out' seemed to cause their misfortunes that were intensely compared to as 'casualties' and 'a bitter pill to swallow'.

Being 'lucky' depicts Manchester United as the referees' favourites which further made them the privileged sides against their opponents. The co-occurrences of 'lucky' and 'charm' associate the player and his teams ('Hairuddin Omar') with consecutive victories in the 'Malaysia Cup'. However, being 'unlucky' causes 'Liverpool', the team that the author supported, to suffer from mishaps. In this example, the use of 'faith' emphasizes the author's belief in the association between 'unlucky' and unhappy endings.

Other words like 'miracle', 'fairytale', 'magic', 'Midas' and 'Santa' indicate positive prosody as they correlate with the teams' happy endings. In example (27), the word 'miracle' which co-occur with 'believes' associates the belief in the better future for Arsenal ('Gooner') with divine intervention. Similarly, the word 'fairytale' incorporates the supernatural element in the description of a victory as an unbelievable experience particularly for Kelantan and their followers. According to Zipes (2011), a fairy is considered as a 'supernatural creature' (p. 239). As depicted by the French women writers, the fairies are characterised as 'witchlike and had supernatural powers that they used to test or contest ordinary mortals' (Zipes, 2011, p. 225). Other victories associate the coaches with magical powers. Kelantan's victory in example (29) was due to (Sathianathan's) 'magic' while Selangor's victory in example (30) resulted from P. Maniam's ability that was compared to the 'Midas' touch' which refers to the 'legendary king of Phrygia' who can convert everything that is touched into gold ('Midas', n. d. para 1).

Besides, the advantages gained by Manchester United as their rivals 'dropped points' and their underperformed player ('Jonny Evans') rested due to an injury are associated with

'Santa' in example (p. 31). 'Santa Claus' is known as an 'imaginary' creature that has the power to fulfil wishes (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2015, p. 1329). These advantages represent the wishes that came true for the 'Manchester United fans' as they would provide more opportunities for the team to perform better in the competition.

The last two words, 'curse' and 'karma', indicate negative prosody as they are associated with the teams' misfortunes. In the context of example (p. 32), the no win result for Manchester City is compared to a 'curse' that is associated with the 'Black Cats' which also refers to Sunderland, the opponents of Manchester City. It is believed that meeting a black cat can result in bad luck. The double meanings in 'black cats' that refer to literally, the animal and metaphorically, the team (Sunderland) showed the influence of paronomasia in animating the influence of the curse. In this case, the curse resulted in 'Manchester City's' inability to defeat Sunderland ('Black Cats') which were, ironically, the season's bottom of the league team. Moreover, with the game ended in a draw, the curse on Manchester City caused them to fall behind their closest rivals, Manchester United, due to the team's lack of points. Similarly, the word 'karma' is associated with Barcelona's defeat to Chelsea. The use of 'karma' implies the power of an unknown force in ensuring that one's fate is the result of his or her previous actions. Based on the example (p. 33), the author was a Chelsea follower and Barcelona were his team's tough opponents. Hence, 'karma' is used to justify Barcelona's defeat due to their perceived misbehaviours on the field ('cheating', 'diving' and 'playacting') which also made them the villains who were unworthy of a victory. In addition, it is used to rationalise Chelsea's victory as the team are depicted as a better team than their opponents.

CO-OCCURRENCES OF 'FAITH' IN THE BNC

The corpus analysis of the written texts of BNC to observe the 'normal' use of 'faith' shows its occurrences in the context of religion. The concordance lines reveals a pattern of its use in prayers or religious writings concerning Christianity and its followers (see Table 4).

TABLE 4. 'Faith' in the BNC

No.	BNC
(34)	I had failed a test of **faith**. **Faith** was a gift of God, yet a gift you must have to live.
(35)	Let us pray for the church and for the world and let us thank God for His goodness Almighty God, our heavenly father, you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in **faith**.
(36)	…take care of us Your people who embrace the cross of Your son and desire to move forward in **faith** in the power of Your Spirit and to the glory of Your name Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.
(37)	We pray to you for the stalwart **faith**, which gives to us, while we live in Your created world
(38)	We pray that each member of the church in our land may know the love of God the Father, the strength of God the Holy Spirit and the friendship of God the Son, and be willing to share their **faith** with those who are not yet followers of our Saviour.
(39)	...you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in **faith**.
(40)	Take our lips and speak through them, take our lives and purify them, so that we too may be **faithful** witnesses to the truth which has set us free.
(41)	We pray that you will strengthen your church in this parish and throughout the world to be more **faithful** in its witness.

The analysis of collocation, which examines five words to the left and right of 'faith', identifies 'God', a concept that is explored in religion (Durkheim, 1915; Weber, 1993; Swanson, 2001), as the most likely collocate (see Figure 1).

ALL POTENTIAL COLLOCS (n=1) for faith (assoc=) (freq>4, content only, within 5 words either side):

God=4

KEYWORD=FAITH; NUMBER=32; LANGUAGE=English; SEARCHTYPE= equals; SORT=keyword; CORPUS=BNC_Written.txt; ASSOCIATE=/SIDE= either ; GAPPED=no_gaps; LINEWIDTH=120 chars;CPU SECS=0.844   [Top]

FIGURE 1. 'God' as the collocate of 'faith' in the BNC

RECONTEXTUALISED 'FAITH' OF RELIGION IN SPORT INDICATING THEOLOGISATION

The incorporation of the religious 'faith' in sport witnesses the adaptation of its meanings in the different contexts. While 'faith' in sport is addressed to football players and teams and used in football news, the BNC shows that it is directed to 'God' with references to 'Christianity' in religious writings involving prayers and sermons. The employment of the interdiscursively linked vocabulary across the different discourse types witnesses the appropriation of the semantic properties of 'faith' that further contribute to its recontextualisation of meanings in religion and sport. In this case, the notion of 'faith' in God is applied to 'faith' in football teams and players. Consequently, the recontextualised 'faith' tends to highlight the influence of the supernatural beings (religious god, unknown forces et cetera) on the players' and football teams' gains and losses. Cox, Navarro-Rivera and Jones (2014) reported that half of the American sports fans believe in the role of supernatural beings in sports by praying to God, believing in the curse that befell their team and God's power in deciding the fate of their team. Izutsu (2012) discussed the magical function of words in animating the supernatural power through 'spells and incantations, blessings and curses, oaths, prayers, etc.' which he called 'verbal magic' (p. 72). The uncertainties of what the future may hold rationalises the associations with favourable and unfavourable situations by encouraging readers to maintain adherence to their team like a 'faithful' follower who would remain adherent to his religion regardless of the blessings and disasters that take place in everyday life. According to Hoffman (1992), 'if sport is to be regarded as a religion, attacks upon its practices must be regarded as attacks upon faith' (p. 59). This not only makes sport as sacred as religion, but it also maintains the followers' obedience and loyalty to the beneficiaries of 'faith'.

DISCUSSION: THEOLOGISATION AND THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF 'US' AND 'OTHERS'

The foregrounded influence of supernatural beings on the team's fate through theologisation strategy works to maintain loyalty and acceptance of the favoured team's fortunes and mishaps by promoting religious way of behaving in sport. Moreover, it also serves to rationalise the team's gains and losses as 'destined' to happen to further legitimise their advantaged or disadvantaged positions. This also means that it enables the shifting of the blame due to the team's mishaps such as defeats, injuries and underperformances which can serve as an excuse for their undesirable circumstances. In addition, it also provides the justification to their position by evaluating the circumstances that favour or disfavour them as deserving or simply 'meant-to-be'. The circumstances that favour the team produce desirable outcomes and thus, placing them in the advantaged position. In contrast, the circumstances that disfavour the team result in undesirable outcomes and consequently, causing them to be

in the disadvantaged position (see Figure 2). This creates social divisions in football teams in which Delaney and Madigan (2009) believed that due to the competitive nature, sports teams, in general, identify other competitors as rivals. Wann, Melnick, Russell and Pease (2001) also mentioned that sport fans have the tendency to label the teams as the preferred 'heroes' and despised 'villains' (pp. 70 & 86).

In the present context, the theologisation strategy naturally divides the teams into the deserving privileged and the undeserving disadvantaged as 'Us' as well as the undeserving privileged and the deserving disadvantaged as 'Others'. The deserving privileged are the teams that are viewed as worthy of the favourable circumstances while the undeserving disadvantaged are the teams that are considered as unworthy of the undesirable circumstances. Both groups are categorised as 'Us' as they are depicted in a favourable manner. In contrast, the undeserving privileged are the teams that are viewed as unworthy of the advantages awarded to them while the deserving disadvantaged are those that are accepted as worthy of the undesirable circumstances. They represent the villainous 'Others' as they were rivals to the preferred teams.

Attributing future events to the supernatural influence enables the deserving privileged and undeserving disadvantaged to maintain their superiority over the 'Others' regardless of the situation that they are in. The deserving privileged such as Chelsea, Manchester United and Kelantan were awarded with the advantages as the supernatural powers sided with them. In example (19), 'Lady Luck' was implied as favouring Chelsea. Manchester United became privileged in example (24) as they were bestowed with 'luck' by escaping punishments or gaining more free kicks which enabled them to overcome their rivals more easily. Again, in example (31), due to Santa's influence, Manchester United were presented with the opportunities that enabled them to lead the table as their rivals' were unable to score better points and their underperformed player were rested from the game. Similarly, Kelantan's victory was even regarded as a fairy tale. These examples work to justify that the advantages earned were the result of the supernatural influence. In this sense, the justification serves to rationalise and further legitimise the teams' position as the privileged sides. Additionally, the association with the supernatural beings releases the news producer from being perceived as favouring particular teams. For the undeserving disadvantaged such as Arsenal, Terengganu and the Armed Forces, as their mishaps were attributed to the supernatural influence, it allows these teams to be excused from their disadvantaged position and further releases them from being blamed. This enables the blame to be redirected to the supernatural beings rather than the player or the team and hence, it also allows them to escape derogation. For instance, the defeats involving these teams in examples (21), (22), (23) and (26) were caused by the teams' perceived disassociation with 'luck'.

The lack of the supernatural influence on their side causes the deserving disadvantaged such as Manchester City and Barcelona to suffer from misfortunes. In example (20), Manchester City were portrayed as worthy of the hectic match schedule as they were the author's favourites' (Manchester United) closest rivals. Therefore, the advantage on Manchester City's side was necessary for Manchester United to secure a better position in the competition. Similarly, in examples (19) and (33), Barcelona were depicted as worthy of losing to the author's team (Chelsea), not only because they did not have 'Lady Luck' on their sides, but also because of their wrongdoings on the pitch which made them the villains. In the case of the undeserving privileged such as Newcastle United, their success was perceived as a temporary deal as it resulted from the supernatural influence and not because of their true ability.

CONCLUSION: THEOLOGISATION AND THE NATURALISATION OF THE REPRESENTATION

Theologisation strategy reveals the foregrounding of religion and the supernatural in the recontextualised 'faith' in football. The universality of religion as 'a socially shared set of beliefs' (Coakley, 2007, p. 530) and its sanctity (Durkheim, 1915) can naturalise the endorsement of the ideas associated with it. This includes the supernatural influence on the future events that can lead to desirable and undesirable situations. For religious followers, beliefs in the supernatural influence can be accepted as natural and commonsensical. As Fairclough (2001) mentioned, naturalisation is the 'royal road to common sense' as it is embedded in the 'taken-for-granted background knowledge' (p. 76). Theologisation of 'faith' represents a social practice that is naturalised as it promotes the acceptance of the desirable and undesirable situations that, as religious followers believe, are destined to happen. Additionally, it also shows how a word that may seem to be neutral in its meaning like 'faith' can serve as a naturalised code without being ideological.

Thus, by adopting the vocabulary of religion in football, news authors who have the authority in officially disseminating information to the audience while assuming the role of the faithful of their team seem to allow them to be legitimately partisans without appearing to be so. In this sense, these overdetermined identities not only enable them to express their allegiance, but they also help to naturally promote their team in their call for faith. Besides, it also works to rationalise and justify the teams' privileged or disadvantaged position as predetermined by the supernatural intervention as in the case of Manchester United against their rivals, Manchester City. The beliefs in the supernatural have been discussed pertaining to intergroup relations (Kurzban & Christner, 2011), ingroup loyalty (Graham & Haidt, 2010) and social compliance (Bourrat, Atkinson & Dunbar, 2011).

REFERENCES

Abraham, J. & Rufaedah, A. (2014). "Theologization" of psychology and "psychologization" of religion: How do psychology and religion supposedly contribute to prevent and overcome social conflicts?. *Procedia environmental sciences*, 20, 516-525.

Alston, W. P. (2019). *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology*. Cornell University Press.

Bain-Selbo, E. (2019). Sport and social change: The prophetic dimension. In T. Shoemaker (Ed.), *The Prophetic Dimension of Sport*. (pp. 7-14). Springer.

Baker, P. (2006). *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., KhosraviNik, M., Krzyżanowski, M., McEnery, T. & Wodak, R. (2008). A useful methodological synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK Press. *Discourse and Society*. *19*(3), 273 – 306. DOI: 10.1177/0957926508088962

Baker, P. (2013). Will Ms ever be as frequent as Mr? A corpus-based comparison of gendered terms across four diachronic corpora of British English. *Gender and Language*, *1*(1), 126 – 149.

Bourrat, P., Atkinson, Q. D. & Dunbar, R. I. (2011). *Supernatural Punishment and Individual Social Compliance Across Cultures*. Retrieved April 20, 2018 from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2153599X.2011.598325?src=recsys

Burke, K. (1969). *A Rhetoric of Motives*. *111*. California: University of California Press.

Campbell, J. (2018). English language and an inclusive Malaysia. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, *24*(3), 206 – 219.

Coakley, J. (2007). *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*. (9th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Cox, D., Navarro-Rivera, J. & Jones, R. P. (2014). *Half of American Fans See Supernatural Forces at Play in Sports*. Retrieved April 20, 2018 from https://www.prri.org/research/jan-2014-sports-poll/

Delaney, T. & Madigan, T. (2015). *The Sociology of Sports: An Introduction*. North Carolina: McFarland.

Delaney, T. & Madigan, T. (2009). *Sports: Why People Love Them!*. Maryland: University Press of America.

Durkheim, E. (1915). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power*. (2nd ed.). England: Pearson Education Limited.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Graham, J., & Haidt, J. (2010). Beyond beliefs: Religions bind individuals into moral communities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. Retrieved April 20, 2018 from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1088868309353415

Hoffman, S.J. (Ed.). (1992). *Sport and Religion*. Illinois: Human Kinetics Books.

Izutsu, T. (2012). *Language and Magic: Studies in the Magical Function of Speech*. Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press.

Kenny, A. (1992). *What is Faith? Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kurzban, R. & Christner, J. (2011). *Are Supernatural Beliefs Commitment Devices for Intergroup Conflict?*. Retrieved April 20, 2018 from http://www.sydneysymposium.unsw.edu.au/2010/chapters/KurzbanSSSP2010.pdf

Mautner, G. (2008). Analyzing newspapers, magazines and other print media. In R. Wodak & M. Krzyżanowski, (Eds.) *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the social science*. NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

McEnery, T. & Hardie, A. (2012). *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Midas (n. d). Retrieved April 7, 2017 from http://www.mythweb.com/today/today04.html

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary: *International Student's Edition*. (2015). (9th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nazarudin, M. N., Yusof, B., Wahab, S. A. & Razak, M. R. A. (2014). Malaysian ethnic groups and the culture of football fans attendance during EPL clubs friendly matches in Malaysia. *Jurnal Pemikir Pendidikan*, *5*.

Nordin, H. (2008). The use of conceptual metaphors by Swedish and German football commentators – A comparison. In E. Lavric, G. Pisek, A. Skinner & W. Stadler (Eds.), *The Linguistics of Football*. (pp. 113-120). Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen.

Pernot, L. (2006). The rhetoric of religion. *Rhetorica*, *XXIV(3)*, 235–254. Retrieved from www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm

Peters, T. (2019). *Science and Theology: The New Consonance*. Routledge.

Prebish, C. S. (1993). *Religion and Sport: the Meeting of Sacred and Profane*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Richard, A. (2008). Televised football commentaries: Descriptions, narrations and representations of a non-victory. In E. Lavric, G. Pisek, A. Skinner & W. Stadler (Eds.), *The Linguistics of Football*. (pp. 193-202). Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen.

Shamsuddin, K. & Kamaruddin, F. (2008) "Canaries versus Roaring Lions": Language and football in Malaysian newspaper reporting. In E. Lavric, G. Pisek, A. Skinner & W. Stadler (Eds.), *The Linguistics of Football*. (pp. 171-178). Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen.

Stapleton, K., Evans, S. L. & Rhys, C. S. (2019). Ana as God: Religion, interdiscursivity and identity on pro-ana websites. *Discourse & Communication*, *13*(3), 320-341.

Swanson, G. (2001). The birth of Gods. In M. Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion*. (2nd ed.). NY: Routledge.

Tan, K. H., Abdollahi-Guilani, M. & Rusly, F. N. A. (2017). Negativity as criteria for newsworthiness in Malaysian newspaper sports corpus. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, *33*(2).

Wann, D. L., Melnick, M. J., Russell, G. W. & Pease, D. G. (2001). *Sport Fans: the Psychology and Social Impact of Spectators*. NY: Routledge.

Weber, M. (1993). *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Wu, J. (2011). Understanding interdiscursivity: A Pragmatic model. *Journal of Cambridge Studies, 6*(2-3), 95-115. Retrieved from www.journal.acs-cam.org.uk/data/archive/2011/201123-article8.pdf

Yusof, A., See, L. H. & Yusof, A. (2008). Spectator perceptions of physical facility and team quality: A study of a Malaysian super league soccer match. *Research Journal of International Studies*, *8*(2), 132-140.

Zipes, J. (2011). The meaning of fairy tale within the evolution of culture. *Marvels & Tales*, *25*(2), 221-243. Retrieved April 7, 2017 from http://muse.http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mat/summary/v025/25.2.zipes.html