The Discourse of Amateur Cricket:  
A Linguistic Examination of Pre-match Team Bulletins

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Abstract

The purpose of this initial article is to establish the salient discourse features of a particular sporting text type: the emailed pre-match bulletins of a local university cricket team. The article therefore seeks, through a detailed and objective examination of an entirely original corpus compiled by the author, to identify the discourse features of the genre and to assess its degree of coherence for a readership distinguished by its cultural and ethnic diversity yet united by a passion for and talent in this particular sport. In so doing, it simultaneously casts light on the game’s historic colonial and post-colonial setting in Hong Kong, the fortunes of the Hong Kong University Cricket Club itself and the inherent richness and charm of cricketing discourse. Through the application of traditional discourse concepts, the formal characteristics of the bulletins are pinpointed. However, whilst the discourse features of the texts appear largely genre-specific, the particular style of writing is self-evidently idiosyncratic. A further article, applying the same discourse framework to the post-match reports of the same team over the same period, will later identify areas of convergence and divergence between the two text types and assess the degree of overall coherence for the intended audience.

Keywords: cricket, discourse analysis, pre-match bulletins, Hong Kong

Introduction

The purposes of this article are to identify the genre-specific discourse features of a particular cricketing text-type, namely the emailed pre-match bulletins of an amateur cricket team. In so doing, the colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong context, the composition and progress of the Hong Kong university team and the nature of “real” (i.e., non-professional) cricket are necessarily illuminated.

The Hong Kong Cricketing Context

The game of cricket, recorded in Hambledon in England in 1756, was first played in Hong Kong in 1851, some nine years after the establishment of a British colony. Even a cursory perusal of recent commemorative publications (Hall, 1999; Lockhart, 2002) reveals the game to have been part and parcel of the colonial enterprise, only a handful of Hong Kong Chinese players having represented the colony before (or indeed after) the transfer of sovereignty in 1997. Cricket was therefore largely a preserve of the establishment being dominated by two major clubs: the historic Hong Kong Cricket Club (HKCC), founded in 1851; and the Kowloon Cricket Club (KCC), founded in 1904. For 124 years HKCC’s original ground occupied a prime location directly adjacent to the former Supreme Court

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building (subsequently Legislative Council Building) and opposite the Old Bank of China in what is now the Central Business District. By 1975, the year of its removal to the more remote Wong Nai Chung Gap, this situation had become politically untenable, the club reportedly being attacked in the late 1960s as “symbolic of racial discrimination” (Hall, 1999, p. 110). Indeed, it became accepted by government that the HKCC was “hardly … a symbol that the majority of [the] community would choose to have as its City Square” (ibid., p. 110). Indicatively, even in the late eighties, only a tiny number of local élite Chinese schools, such as the Diocesan Boys School, displayed interest in the sport while in the nineties a “Chinese” team called Dragons participated briefly in the Sunday League. However, the overwhelming majority of the Hong Kong citizenry remained entirely without access to, unaware of or impervious to its supposed attractions, a situation markedly different from that on the subcontinent where cricket had long since become the unofficial national sport. Only the impending resumption of sovereignty by the PRC in 1997, with the concomitant loss of army and certain urban services grounds, appears—belatedly—to have alerted the Hong Kong Cricket Association (HKCA) to a need to “distribute” the game more widely by engaging local Chinese people, who form more than 95% of the population. Indeed, through playground leagues in schools, some limited progress has consequently been made, with three male and eight female players of Chinese ethnicity featuring in the 2010 Asian Games squads in Guangzhou.

The major shift in the post-colonial era has, however, not been the rise of a cadre of “Chinese” players but the emergence and rise to prominence of the Pakistan Association (PA), which entered local cricket in 1991, and the Little Sai Wan (LSW) club, established in 1964, each of which now have, of right, a seat on the HKCA Executive alongside the former HKCC and KCC powerhouses. Indeed, their mostly Pakistani or Indian players provided the great majority of the squad who gained promotion to the International Cricket Council World Cricket League Division 2 at a tournament held in Hong Kong in January 2011. This dramatic shift in the balance of playing power is also reflected in the composition of several Saturday and Sunday league teams, the former St George’s team—originally with strong British army associations—having, for example, transmuted into LSW St George’s. The prestigious HKCC, which fields 3 Saturday and 2 Sunday teams in the local leagues, still however retains much of its historical mystique, its lavish premises at Wong Nai Chung Gap featuring world class, state-of-the-art, three-lane, indoor net (practice) facilities with Hawk Eye lap-top-accessible technology and first-class professional coaches together with other extensive leisure and dining facilities catering exclusively to those able to afford the initial membership fee and the on-going monthly subscriptions. A Perpetuity Corporate Nominee Membership costing HK$688,000, for example, permits a company in perpetuity to nominate one member of its staff to use the facilities of the Club at any one time.

The Hong Kong University Cricket Club (HKUCC) and the Saturday League

The HKUCC encompasses the present diversity of Hong Kong cricket within its League eleven. Indeed, in one season, players hailed from the UK, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Australia providing a rich blend of ethnicities, religious (and non-religious) philosophies and cricketing cultures deemed highly appropriate in a University setting. The captain (and author of this article) has strong
University links, the team also including one full HKU professor, several post-graduates and a teacher. Others with long-standing HKU associations are prominent in business and commerce within their respective expatriate, Pakistani or Indian communities while several somewhat younger Pakistani players simply enjoy a special rapport with the club and its captain. Prayers by some Muslim team members before a match or during an interval are a regular, unremarked and unremarkable part of the afternoon proceedings. Some degree of sensitivity is consequently required when addressing an audience with such divergent ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

The HKUCC team plays in the HKCA Saturday League, where the cricket season normally extends from September to April or May. At the time in question, however, a shortage of grounds restricted the 19 teams to a preliminary round of 10 fixtures followed by an Australian-style Final Knockout phase involving only the top eight finishers. In the case of this particular team, games at its small but attractive Sandy Bay (SB) home ground start at 1.15 p.m. and rarer away ones at 1.00 p.m. with a maximum of 35 six ball overs\(^1\) per side, a 15 minute interval between innings and a water break after each team has bowled 17 or 18 of their allotted 35 six-ball overs. The matches conclude at 5.55 or earlier. All games are played on artificial wickets, not grass, and bowlers are now restricted to a maximum of only eight (formerly ten) overs in order to ensure greater player involvement. The team scoring the greater number of runs wins.

**Method**

This article applies a discourse perspective to the emailed pre-match bulletins sent by the captain of an amateur cricket team, HKUCC, to team players, office bearers and friends of the club. They cover a period of three seasons (2007–10), during which team finished second (losing the Grand Final), first (winning the Grand Final) and equal third (losing a semi-final) in the league and was undefeated in all friendly games. For the HKUCC team the period in question was therefore one of almost unprecedented success: It had not won a championship since 1933. The bulletins, written mid-week between matches, were subsequently collected to form a data file containing some 13.9K words. Like other, larger, computer-based corpora it forms a representative and “principled collection of texts available for qualitative and quantitative analysis” (O’Keefe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007, p. 1), the objective data largely being derived through the application of WordSmith Tools 5.0. It should be noted that in this article the figures supplied in brackets, for example gully (6), indicate the total number of relevant occurrences of a particular linguistic item in the respective data file.

Discourse analysis itself may be described as a “linguistic or psychological investigation of texts” (Emmott & Pollock, 1997, p. 107), which has, as its subject connected, naturally occurring instances of language in use at a level “above the sentence or above the clause” (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1). Indeed, it recognises the fact that “linguistic patterns exist across stretches of text,” that such “patterns extend beyond … words, clauses and sentences” and that the focus must therefore be on complete texts in their “social and cultural contexts” (McCarthy & Carter, 1994, p. 1). Discourse is consequently regarded as “a type of social practice” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 28), “a means of talking and writing about and acting upon worlds, a means
which both constructs and is constructed by a set of social practices within these worlds” (Candlin, 1997, p. viii).

The pre-match bulletins are therefore to be examined from a discourse perspective adopting a traditional approach that accounts for both coherence, a macro feature, and cohesion, a micro one. These two concepts represent distinct but intertwining entities (Sanders & Pander Maat, 2006), the one not necessarily entailing the other (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The first, coherence, concerns global unity, the wholeness of the texts and the factors which may render them “meaningful and unified” (Cook, 1989, p. 4) and thus permit them, either separately or in combination (as here), to “hang together” and “make sense” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 26). Coherence is not perhaps an inherent property of a spoken or written text but rather a mental entity which is present when the listener or reader “is able to form roughly the same text representation as the text originator” (Gernsbacher & Givon, 1995, p. vii). To get “the big picture” (Riggenbach, 1999, p. 3), it is therefore necessary to “look beyond the formal rules operating within and across sentences, and consider the people who use the language and the world in which it happens” (Cook, 1989, p. 13). In the case of both the bulletins and the later match reports such telling observations resonate strongly, since these messages are generated for a small band of cricketing enthusiasts who rely not merely on the language used but more importantly on common understanding of the real world competitive context, the game itself and its somewhat arcane terminology.

Results

**Coherence: Genre, Context, Audience and Top Level Structure**

The genre of the series of pre-match texts has already been specified: They are regular pre-match bulletins which are largely factual rather than imaginative or expressive in nature. Taken in sequence they tell the story of the club’s progress through each of the three seasons and consequently contain an inherent narrative element (almost a trilogy) where the characters (the players), setting (the grounds), events (the matches), problems and solutions (setbacks and successes) are presented, with some kind of resolution or climax (perhaps a Final) and possibly a coda or future lesson to be learnt.

Further aspects of genre are also evident in the scripts since there is: procedural writing offering the team instructions on “how to” defeat opponents—*We need to build the innings solidly with the top order trying to bat right through but, if not, providing the later batsmen with a good platform. We need to bowl tight no matter what the conditions;* expository writing arguing the case for particular vigilance with certain opponents—*SubCont’ are no mean opponents and we will need to be up for it to be successful;* and explanatory/expository writing providing reasons and justifications for any proposed game plan—*The Semis this weekend and we’ll need yet another 100% team effort. This is a big game that can make or break our season. We need to value every run made, every dot ball bowled, every catch taken. If we bowl first we need to be accurate and restrict the runs, If we bat first we need a solid start from which to build a good total. Clearly the context is the world of cricket in Hong Kong, a microscopic orb in the cricketing firmament. The email recipients furnish the small-circle target audience since they (and they alone) are the
intended readers.

The top-level structure, which may be conceived either as a “coat hanger on which to hang ideas” (Emmitt & Pollock, 1991, p. 112) or as a “tree trunk” that supports branches, twigs and leaves (Bartlett, Barton & Turner, 1988, p. 148), concerns the psycholinguistic pre-organisation of the texts in the mind of the writer. The ideas presented may be formulated in a manner that contains elements of: comparison—Our opponents this week are leaner and meaner; cause and effect—We are now getting towards the business end of the season and I am therefore calling for maximum effort from all players; problems and solutions—With Bruce and Martin out of HK we might even be considered the underdogs .... We will be hoping that our star players are in peak form and that everyone else will be totally committed—ready to step up to the plate [a baseball idiom] and contribute; and lists and descriptions—the list of those selected for the next game, sometimes with a so-called 12th man (14) or reserve who is “on call” (9) or “on standby” (5). The roles of captain, vice-captain and wicket-keeper are almost always specified or described through the abbreviations C, VC and Wkt next to the relevant name.

**Coherence: Organisational Structure**

The organisational structure reflects the breadth of content coverage, as may be determined from the following table.

**Table 1**

*The organisational structure of the pre-match bulletins*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Items/Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email headings</td>
<td>To, cc and subject line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative matters, including:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punctuality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postponements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friendly games/social events</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review Statement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus statement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selection issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team list</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further encouragement and goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insertion of League table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reference to League statistics / player performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Formulaic call to arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salutation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The initial section of the bulletins reflects the hotmail format and appears relatively stable or fixed (Crystal, 2006). Recipient names (squad members) and e-addresses are inserted in the ‘To’ line while officials and loyal supporters (some overseas) may appear in the ‘cc’ box. The ‘bcc’ function is (wisely) never used. The subject line is very largely constant: It specifies the date of the next match, the venue, opponents and start time—HKU v Nomads at SB on 17/10. Start 1.15. The body of the email message appears to have a number of identifiable components, apart from the greeting—usually Dear All (42) but occasionally Gentlemen (3)—and the salutation—normally just the captain’s given name but, on rare occasions, the more mystic Yours in cricket (2). A formulaic call to arms, such as Come on, HKU (7) or Let’s go, HKU (1) may precede the salutation.

The body of the text itself may first address necessary (if tedious) administrative matters. Frequently such niceties involve polite reminders, sometimes entreaties, for players to arrive at the ground in good time, often featuring the word Please and sometimes citing good reason: the match would be forfeited without eight team players present at the start of play; or the December evenings might become too dark for later play. Indeed, Please occurs 103 times and is a key word in the texts. Registration is also a big issue at the start of each season since players must pay a HK$420 subscription to the Hong Kong Cricket Association (HKCA) before appearing in their third game. This is frequently a source of unease for the captain since he must conduct careful individual checks in order to avoid a points penalty for fielding an unregistered player. Availability and non-availability for future games may also be addressed as well as arrangements for postponed weather-affected games (if any). At the start of the season or when there are gaps in the fixture list, the provision of warm-up matches, alternative friendly games or social get-together events such as BBQs may be broached. Such incidental but important matters are more likely to be attended to by the readers if placed before matters of greater import to the audience.

Once such administrative aspects have been disposed of, attention may be devoted to matters of crux, the information often being structured according to a fairly standard (perhaps expected and anticipated) sequence that might almost represent a schema. The bulletins proper frequently start with a review statement (we have made a good start to the season … / … with one more match in the first phase our position remains healthy). A rare supplement to this habitual diet of introductory declarative statements is provided by a lone rhetorical question followed by a complex conditional sentence concerning a lost game: The next match is important. How will we react to defeat? If we bounce back with a top performance, the game against GRs will have served a useful purpose. Naturally enough, the aim following defeats is always to get back into our stride, to rally well and restore our winning ways or (as here) simply to bounce back! There may also be a focus statement—We must again aim high and play our best whilst—at the same time—playing the game in a true spirit of sportsmanship as befits a university team … // … We need this week to concentrate very hard and build on our good start. Comment may then be made on the prospective opposition and their perceived strengths and/or weaknesses. Unpredictable opponents might be described as sometimes inspirational, stronger ones as tough, competitive, formidable, strong or difficult. Warnings about complacency are sometimes issued where opponents appear weaker or are resurgent, for example: … let’s not underestimate them. Not
too much attention is devoted to opponents.

In some bulletins, the prime purpose of which is to convey information, the captain may also comment on the difficulties of selection which he undertakes with little consultation. The tone here is likely to be apologetic and he may appeal for patience, understanding and continuing support, perhaps classifying the task as always or extremely difficult and getting harder and harder. Omitted players are very frequently labeled unlucky and, in contrast to the many we-statements in these texts, there may be a direct personal expression of regret, for example: *I very much regret the disappointment caused to anyone not in the team.* Such remarks might be regarded as an attempt at either empathy or appeasement, an effort to retain the allegiance of the affected players. The willingness of players to make themselves available might also be praised, as in the first 2007–8 season where a squad of 15 committed individuals played (8 in all games) rather than the rather disparate 31 of the previous year, this being a tremendous boost that led to a far greater consistency of performance. On one occasion when the captain was injured there was also a reminder to accept the authority of the Vice Captain totally, citing a former England captain’s adage that *there can only be one captain on the field.*

The administrative and review/focus section of the bulletin always precedes the list of selected team players who are to appear on the following Saturday. This, for the readers, is the essential element and comment has already been made on its conventions. The vertical single column format provides visual contrast with the surrounding left to right text and highlights its importance for the individuals concerned.

The concluding section of the bulletin, which features constantly in all reports, may address once again matters raised earlier, attempting to re-focus or re-emphasise priorities and set targets, such as challenging for honours, that is to say a trophy. Indeed, the need to truly enjoy our cricket, do well and try hard for a good League position may be linked to comments on the good team spirit. The real goal may even be explicitly stated: *Let’s try to be the first ever HKU team to win the [Saturday] League!* Such positive exhortations implicitly indicate the need to eschew internal dissent and division, criticisms or arguments on the field, a particularly vital aspect given the very mixed composition of the team, unusual in Hong Kong, where ethnic groups often tend to coalesce into largely separate and distinct teams. At strategic moments a downloaded current league table may also be inserted to make evident the team’s position and/or progress and to re-emphasise the need for continued or even greater efforts. Towards the end of a season, the captain may also reward outstanding players by drawing attention to the overall League statistics: *Tahir is the leading wicket taker. Hussain is the leading run scorer. Hussain leads the outfield catching.* Somewhat unusually perhaps, no reply to these emails is expected by the sender, although supportive comments reinforcing or amplifying the captain’s points are always welcome.

**Coherence: Motivational and Reflective Functions**

All the aspects enumerated above—genre, context, top-level structure, organisational structure and even the structuring of information—contribute to the potential achievement of coherence, especially in regard to the target cricket-savvy
discourse community. This is further underpinned by the functions or purposes served by the texts. Functions, of course, are harder to define and much fuzzier than language structures, such as tenses, so alternative interpretations remain entirely possible. The following non-exhaustive and overlapping list provides a flavour: to review, focus, exhort, implore, urge, encourage, persuade, advise, suggest, praise, demand, order, instruct, inform, and so on. The more imperative functions are very frequently realised through must constructions (50), 45 of these relating to playing matters and 5 to registration. Those that generally exhort the team to greater efforts generally contain the verb need (65) followed 11 times by a noun and 54 times by to plus a second verb. In these particular instances I-statements are rare (3) and concern only administrative matters whereas, on 16 occasions, the subject of the verb is furnished by the players themselves in their various guises, for instance as old hands, star players or regulars. We-statements (46), however, predominate, the writer utilising every opportunity to identify with the team and strengthen in-group solidarity. Indeed, we-statements in the texts overall total 250, all with the same underlying purpose as does the use of the pronoun our (118) which refers mainly to the HKU team and its players but may also include and recognise regular spectators, as with: I would also like to send a special message to our loyal supporters who have provided such encouragement in recent weeks. Please be assured your presence is much valued. Such is the content of the bulletins that the must / need to / let's sequences might almost be described as a trinity: We must be focused, concentrated and utterly determined; We need to concentrate, work hard and be positive; Let’s be that focused again this week. Or: If we want to be champions we must play like champions! Indeed, we need to play like Champions if we want to post a good points total for the season! Let’s make history!

The wordscape (Higgins & Higgins, 2003) below displaying concordances of 'need' illustrates not only the We/I relationship but, just as importantly, highlights the wide variety of following expressions used to convey encouragement and exhortations:

**Wordscape: need ....**

[The team logo, created in 2009 before the Grand Final, provides the watermark. The shield features crossed cricket bats and a ball and bears the improvised Latin legend: *In ludo sapientia.*]
coming game v CCC let's not underestimate them. We need to establish a routine of playing to our best & MUST be registered for third game. 12th Matt West and build us as good sportsmen. More importantly still we need to play in a positive friendly spirit, supporting heavily in both matches and bowling well. We need to keep this going especially as tougher oppositions come along. We need to establish the habit of winning. Players a d team and a chance of challenging for honours. We need to support each other at all times - even (o eam will be picked a bit later this week because I need to know who is available. IF YOU ARE NOT AVA 11 me by phone or email by Monday at 17.00. I also need to check very carefully who has registered a for third game. 12th Matt 22/10/2007 v Saracens We need this week to concentrate very hard and build us as good sportsmen. More importantly still we need to play in a positive friendly spirit, supporting Cup-like phase to seize the trophy. Senior players need to stand up and be counted and the middle or low. They will to do some 'giant-killing'! We will need to play well. League Team Martin Khalid Bruck lice are certainly formidable opponents so we will need to be at our best to win. Let's keep the mot let's focus our minds on the task in hand. We also need to start thinking seriously about our fieldi fall into the "young" category. These "youngsters" need to raise their fielding output even further we match was on Dec 9th. This is a fresh start. We need to win the next three to take the title! Ple good of the side. The team is playing well and we need to lift ourselves again. Generally the idea ke yourself available for every possible match! We need a core of regulars for stability. Please not p function as a squad where each member is more supportive of each other than ever before. We need to be positive and be lucky too / get the ru we have had our bit of looking around and we do more supportive of each other than ever before. We need to be positive and be lucky too / get the ru and being totally on track throughout the game. We need to concentrate, work hard and be positive. W ed only one chance to get the league this year, we need to therefore to catch this year's level of support evened throughout the entire campaign. Star players need to be on song, old hands need to raise their magian. Star players need to be on song, old hands need to raise their game and everyone needs to pl E Phil Dear All, The Semis this weekend and we'll need yet another 100% team effort. This is a big s is indicative not of the end of the season, but of the start of the new campaign. Star players need to be extended consistently throughout the campaign. Although less frequent, I-statements (117) serve far more disparate purposes. They often concern mundane administrative matters but may include musings of a...
more reflective personal nature on team performances: I greatly enjoyed our last outing against Millennium for various reasons. It was such a beautiful day and I enjoyed watching our endeavours in the field where the collective will to win was very evident. Players were very focused and the team moved well. I certainly hope we will display similar zeal and concentration this week. There are also expressions of personal gratitude to the players, for instance: First I would like to thank all the players who have come into the team over the last weeks and helped us to post creditable performances against top opposition. Such sentiments may sometimes be all-encompassing: Throughout my tenure as skipper of HKU, I feel you have offered me almost total backing and support and played with dedication, determination and a strong desire to win. There are also (vain) expressions of concern for Muslim team members who insist on playing all afternoon during Ramadhan without eating or even drinking, a time when the semi-tropical climate generates temperatures of 33 degrees with 95% humidity: The skipper will be hoping to continue winning the toss (11 out of 13 last year). This would certainly help us with the games in September when it is extremely hot and humid. I would respectfully ask all team members to drink water during games. I think there is a serious risk to health (dehydration) otherwise given the extreme tropical conditions. On occasion too, there may be explicit acknowledgement of the close ties between captain and players: I know, many players are personally loyal to me and play for me. Bonds such as this, conveyed to the captain by word and deed, are clearly dear to his heart and may explain why it has been difficult for him to retire (his sell-by date having long since expired). He evidently treasures the fact that: Younger/older players, all faiths/non-faiths, and all nationalities/ethnicities [come together] in harmony as one united team.

Given the still extant striped blazer style associations of cricket alluded to at the start of the article, it might perhaps appear tempting to regard the position of the English-born HKU skipper and his relationship to the team as somehow echoing, or even epitomising, that of the now defunct British Empire to its former colonies (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand). Certainly the author appears conscious of and sensitive to the historical context and, whilst perhaps presenting a partial embodiment of traditional “Englishness,” is anxious to avoid any danger of personifying negative aspects of the colonial enterprise. Rather he diligently seeks (either overtly or covertly) to propagate the ideals of equality, harmony and mutual understanding. Any imperial perspective would therefore be a grave misperception, since the key factors in his appointment are his past membership of the Hong Kong University faculty, his life-long association with the world of education, the support of the chairman, his supposed knowledge of the game and above all the votes of the players—not his nationality. The present rich cultural diversity within the team is consequently seen very much as a cause for celebration, the captain’s leadership and motivational style being largely determined by ingrained pedagogical imperatives and by his personal attachment to intercultural ideals of the type articulated by Kale (1991, p. 423), who suggests that the “guiding ethical principle of any universal code of intercultural communication … should be to protect the worth and dignity of the human spirit.” Ethical communicators, Kale proposes, should:

address people of other cultures with the same respect that they would like to receive themselves; seek to describe the world as they perceive it as
accurately as possible; encourage people of other cultures to express themselves in their uniqueness; and strive for identification with people of other cultures. (ibid., pp. 424–425)

In this sense HKUCC represents the very antithesis of colonial subordination models. Whilst the organisational format of the bulletins may therefore be considered genre-specific, the writer lends these texts his particular personal stamp, so rendering them relatively accessible to the intended audience.

**Cohesion: Referencing, Substitution, Ellipsis and Conjunction**

It is now opportune to consider the second concept for the discourse analysis of texts, cohesion. The seminal work here is furnished by Halliday and Hasan (1976), who establish reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion as the substantive constituent elements. According to these authors, “cohesion expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text[5] and another” (ibid., p. 299) and concerns both the grammatical links and the lexical or meaning-related ties among different textual elements. The visual images employed to convey the concept of cohesion therefore usually involve a needle and thread that may sew the text together or, alternatively, an intricate multi-layered electronic circuit board. In both cases, there is the implicit suggestion that a range of cohesive devices, the “building blocks of discourse” (Nunan, 1993, p. 59), may create tightly interlinking internal or inter-textual bonds within or across texts, so rendering them cohesive. Additional stylistic features such as alliteration, parallelism (i.e., syntactic repetition) and verb harmony (i.e., consistency of tense usage) will also be briefly alluded to—as will sentence type.

In the bulletins, referencing directs the reader—in the overwhelming majority of cases—back to preceding items: If Hussain could score 311 not out v Nomads as he did in 2004 winding down from the Sixes where he was Player of the Tournament that would be helpful! Such references are classified as anaphoric. Examples of cataphoric or forward looking reference are not noted but there is exophoric or outward reference, either directing us to items in the immediate environment (the team, the players, the scorer, the spectators) where shared knowledge is assumed, or to outside entities whose source cannot be traced to another word in the texts (the Hong Kong Cricket Association, the Pakistan Association, the [International] Sixes [Tournament]). Given the strong *we/I* orientation of the texts (as discussed), the use of other subject pronouns is somewhat restricted. *You* occurs 53 times, often with regard to availability and other general arrangements *They* (42), often referring to the other team or to HKU players, has a not dissimilar frequency. *He* occurs only 23 times and *she* not at all, suggesting an undervaluing of the scorer (4)! (The name Agnes, however, does occur 8 times). The most common demonstrative pronoun is *this* (109), which sometimes occurs in conjunction with commonly found time words such as *week* (43) or *season* (30) but may also serve to indicate some course of action hotly desired by the skipper. *It* also occurs frequently (103), but many instances involve ‘empty subjects’, as in *It is imperative/crucial/essential/vital/important/that* .... The remaining *it*-references are anaphoric, for example: As always please be positive in supporting your teammates when the game is going well and especially at any moments when it is not. Sometimes the item referred to is simply assumed: If it [i.e., the ball] is there hit it [hard]. If not, knock it into a gap.
As regards substitution, a few instances may be found: *The next match will be a challenging one* ... // ... *This is our best chance. We will probably not get another one for years.* Examples with *so* also occur: *Tanmay or Khalid can both keep and should both be ready to do so as required.* Ellipsis, indicated by the \( \Lambda \) symbol, is, as would be expected, far more common. The sequence \( \Lambda \) *On our toes. \( \Lambda \) Moving quickly. \( \Lambda \) Trying for all catches. \( \Lambda \) Giving it 110%* provides a classic sequence, with the words *We should be* or *We must be* being elided. Conjunction is also present, being additive (*and 379; furthermore 1*), adversative (*or 48; but 43, however 8, although 1*), causal (*if 90; so 22, therefore 17; because 7 so that 5*) or temporal (*after 22; then 14; before 10; while 2; thereafter 1*). Such instances of conjunction would suggest that in addition to simple sentences (one verb, one subject), there is a range of compound sentences with two main clauses joined by the coordinating conjunctions *and* / *but* and the like, plus a not insignificant number of complex sentences with both a main clause and a subordinate or relative clause featuring subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns, for example *if* (90), *who* (24) and *which* (8). The writing is therefore fairly sophisticated.

**Cohesion: Lexis**

Lexical cohesion is perhaps the most interesting and significant aspect to address, Gómez González (2010, p. 600) suggesting that “choices of lexical cohesion are determined by genre, or the pragmatic knowledge shared by the members of a discourse community about a conventionalised class of communicative events with common communicative purposes.” In consequence, lexical cohesion concerns ways in which text continuity may be created for and within a discourse community through the relationships of single lexical items or multi-words to each other, their meaning or communicative potential being co(n)text-specific rather than abstracted from dictionaries. Cohesive devices include repetition, [near] synonymy, antonymy, superordinates and hyponyms plus general nouns, these semantically-related features being complemented by collocations defined by Halliday & Hasan (1976, p. 284) as “the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur.”

**Lexical Cohesion: Repetition**

Repetition is particularly frequent in the pre-match bulletins, given the restricted or specialised topic area and their sequential, sometimes weekly, transmission. This is indicated by a type-token ratio of 14.97, much higher than the 4.27 of the readily available 1961 Brown Corpus. Much of this vocabulary repetition relates to the general sporting word field while some belongs to a more specifically cricketing register. Particularly frequent sporting words are recorded in Table 2.
Table 2

General sporting terms in the bulletins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Consisting of</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>game[62] games[35]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>match[27] matches[16]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>player[5] players[48]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>ground[21] grounds[1]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>select[2] selected[8]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less notable items include items such as bonus (5) points (12), practise/practice as a verb or noun (15), varied forms of the verbs hit (10), lose (9) and beat (7) plus nouns like side/s (11), opponent/s (11), position (9), captain (8), squad (8), ground (6), club (6), umpire (5), rules (5), table (5), toss (5), fixture/s (5), title (4), pitch (4), outfit [i.e., team] (4), pitch (2), trophy (1), victory (3), defeat (1), walkover (1) and knock-out round (1).

This profusion of general sporting items is supplemented by a more limited range of terminology that is clearly cricket-specific in the text of these bulletins:

Table 3

Cricket-specific terminology in the bulletins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Consisting of</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>field[10] fielding[16]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This range of cricketing lexis is supplemented by items such as order (11) meaning the batting order, stand/s (5) indicating batting partnerships during an innings (5), over/s (11), wides (5), no balls (2), spells (1) and dismissal (1) relating to
bowling—together with terms related to wicket-keeping (5) and the word gully (6), a fielding position. Practice facilities, i.e., nets, receive 6 mentions. The scoring system generates several items, notably: century/centuries (4), fifties (2), boundaries (2) such as fours (2) and sixes (3) [not the Hong Kong Sixes (5)], singles (3) and extras (3). There is some reference to statistics through the word averages (4). However, the use of the word rules (5) rather than the correct term laws does not, perhaps, do cricket justice. It is, after all, the only sport to generate an idiom equating its conduct with fairness: It’s not cricket.

Other significant vocabulary fields concern team attitudes, tactics and values, and these, like the exhortative writing discussed in the section on coherence, usually serve to promote team spirit and foster motivation. In Table 4 below, the word choices indicate the importance of team and player attitudes.

Table 4
Desired attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Consisting of</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being positive (20) and encouraging (3) and taking responsibility (3) are clearly important too as are dedication (2) and desire (2), confidence (1), keenness, (1), togetherness (1) and zeal (1). Even the right body language (1) is required. Complacency (4) and/or underestimating (1) the opposition are, by contrast, to be avoided. Values are also conveyed through positive lexical choices which emphasise verbs like support (37) with derivatives such as supporting (4) and supportive (2). The vital thing is clearly to create some genuine (1) team spirit (22) and to be sporting (6) by demonstrating sportsmanship (1) and/or being good sportsmen (1). Indeed, several references are made to the strong sporting traditions of HKUCC (4) as well as to the necessity of being friendly (9), loyal (5) and courteous (1). As already noted, the avoidance of dissent (2) and arguing/arguments (2) is stressed.

As regards tactics, there is the general need to establish (3) and keep (22) going the habit of winning (2) in order to maintain momentum (5) or impetus (1). Bowlers are then instructed to apply pressure (5) through accurate (5) or tight (5) line (5) and length (4) bowling in order to restrict (4) opposing batsmen while top order (5) batsmen are instructed to deliver a strong foundation (3) or solid platform (2) and the middle (1) and lower order (3) to show resolve (1) and stay on the wicket
Senior players particularly are expected to stand up and be counted in the big matches while the entire team are urged to prepare themselves mentally throughout the week, to keep their nerve, have no nerves, be calm and to support each other at all times—even (or especially) when things are not going all our way.

Team and Player Performance: The Use of Adjectives

The positive attributes of team and player performance are conveyed by a wide range of adjectives. The most prominent item is good together with its comparative and superlative forms better and best. Strong, stronger and strongest, and the word positive, are also important but may occasionally refer to the opposition and/or to attitudes, as has been noted. Other adjectives ascribed are captured in Table 5 below, some of the least frequent items carrying the strongest connotations of courage or perfection.

Table 5
Player and team attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>top</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>big</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>important</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>great</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>crucial</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>keen</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>special</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>fantastic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amazing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>huge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>brilliant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>magic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlled</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>creditable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>useful</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>decent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explosive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>valiant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>gritty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>gutsy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on fire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>chanceless</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are sometimes intensified through very, totally, extremely, truly, absolutely, and utterly, again reinforcing team spirit and motivation. By contrast, negative adjectives such as poor and weak do not appear, the captain admitting only to disappointment after the Grand Final defeat.

Collocations, Alliteration, Lexical Relations, Parallelism, and Verb Harmony

The richness of the lexis is illustrated by common collocations such as: utterly determined and absolutely vital and specifically cricketing ones like bat and ball, every dot ball, a truly explosive batsman, and stay on the wicket. Alliteration may also be detected, as with convey confidence or committed and consistent. In any case, the overall impression is that the team played well, at the same time wisely recognising that some luck is always required to stave off the agony of second place. Less shattering defeats than that in the first Grand Final may perhaps be categorised as merely an unfortunate episode. Synonyms, such as captain and skipper, and antonyms, such as win and lose also provide further rich in-text links as do superordinates and hyponyms, for example the desired mental characteristics of enthusiasm, commitment, concentration, determination, resolve, confidence, keenness, togetherness and zeal. There is also some attempt to generate a sense of rhythm reminiscent of parallelism through the use of two or three consecutive, related lexical items allied to some syntactical repetition: At the same time we look to our loyal team players to enthuse the team with their runs and wickets and [ellipsis] infuse it with the goodwill, loyalty and
commitment expected of all club members which provides the foundation for potential success ... / / ... We need that sort of determination, class and consistency so the papers speak once more of ‘the University run machine.’ This three-part phraseology—clearly intended to stir the emotions—mirrors that employed by politicians. It is a device found also in religious discourse (e.g., prayer) and children’s literature. The simple present, which conveys truths and facts, is clearly the main tense but others such as the will-future (97) also serve to create a sense of verb harmony, the frequency of next (22) in combination with week/s (8), match/es (4), game (3), Saturday (2), phase (1) round (1), season (1) and year (1) and talk of further information later (4) confirming a natural propensity to anticipate forthcoming fixtures.

Idiom and Expression

A feature not perhaps anticipated within the original framework of analysis is the use of idiom, yet it pervades the text. Indeed, the Wordscape concordances provide numerous examples emphasising the need to be on song, on the front foot, on top form [i.e., play positively and well], to lift ourselves and be up for it [i.e., raise motivational levels], to gird up and/or stand up and be counted [i.e., prepare for a tough game and deliver a good performance], to bowl tight and press hard [i.e., to bowl accurately and put pressure on the opposition] and to put in good foundations [i.e., make a good start] when batting. Military-style parlance, however, appears limited in comparison to much sports writing. The term attack occurs eight times, usually in expressions such as the opening bowling attack or attacking play. However, only once is the HKU team called directly into offensive action, the need being to take the fight to them and create early doubt in their minds. In the only other such instance the challenge seems to stem from the opposition: We need to be 100% on our game from the very first ball and not be fazed by any in-your-face aggression or early assault from the opposition. Indeed, the threat may occasionally be home-grown since togetherness and the absence of internal squabbles and fights (1) is emphasised. Sporting injuries (5) are mentioned but words such as wounded, battle and defend are absent. Rather romantic do or die (2) efforts are mentioned plus the chance to be [sporting] heroes (2) through various valiant (1) or heroic (1) deeds. There is even talk of the Sunday Social team skipper Mick regaling the players with tales of derring-do elsewhere.

Key Words

The bulletins appear to reach and be read by their intended audience, although one or two fringe players do not hold email accounts, leaving the captain’s ruminations entirely unremarked. Reliance in such cases is perhaps placed on what has been jokingly referred to as “invigorating Churchillian style” pre-match or half-time on-the-field team talks, where the various utterances or locutionary acts might be examined for their literal meaning, their illocutionary force, i.e., intention, and their perlocutionary effects, i.e., what they caused the players to do (Paltridge, 2000): *The opposition is scoring quickly. I might have to rotate the bowling (fact/warning/current bowlers galvanised into life). The writing is, however, intensely personal in nature with 15 of the first 30 key words being player names, their position in the frequency list perhaps reflecting something of their value to the team (Zar and Khan occur as equal separate entries but represent one player). Email
subject line terms also appear, namely HKU and V (= versus) together with the
greeting word Dear and the abbreviation Wkt from the annotated list of selected
players. The key items team (1st), we (7th), our (26th) and please (2nd) stress the
importance of the team, the author’s identification with it and his respect for its
members. Other words in descending order are players (16th), game (19th), bowling
(21st), win (23rd) and play (29th), these highlighting aspects of the game and the
desire for victory.

Idiosyncracies

The style appears rather formal, some might say pedestrian. There are no
nicknames, no mention of (perhaps unaffordable) “fines” for mistakes on the field,
off Australian expressions like “you ripper” and certainly no allusions to alcohol or
drinking which for many team members would be “haraam” [forbidden]. There are
no internet abbreviations of the TTYL variety (Crystal, 2004). The players may
occasionally be addressed as guys (9) and the “Westerners” referred to as gweilos
(2), a very common Cantonese slang term for foreigners with a history of racially
deprecatory use but nowadays simply a word used to refer to Caucasians, often—as
here—by themselves. However, words such as stalwarts (1) and fellow players (1)
are more in keeping with the overall register of the texts. Indeed the perhaps
unexpectedly high register and the sober, rather single-minded, insistent tone of the
texts probably reflect both the nature of the team, who take their cricket seri-
ously, and the somewhat academic bent of its captain. Indeed, non-standard grammar is
rare. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it is the sole example of note, although vernacular
expressions, colloquialisms and idioms with their cultural allusions and hidden
emotional connotations suffuse the texts. Occasional attempts at levity also occur.
There is a humorous (but still respectful) self-composed ditty about an opposing
team Lamma and its players, entitled Hammer Lamma (to the tune of California
Girls), that might, in terms of genre, be labelled imaginative or expressive. This
contains the short informal response token yeah nine times, and the “hammering”
received in the song permits the team name Lamma to feature as the 13th key word.
Given the number of more senior players in the team and impending fixtures on
much larger away grounds, the skipper also on one occasion urged his youngsters
(i.e., any player under the age of 40) to take up the slack, citing the need to assist
the “aged and infirm” (Glenwright) ... and the "middle management cohort" of
Sabine, Abernethy, Hafeez and Runcieman (elsewhere referred to as Golden Oldies).

Conclusions

New Insights

The article presents new and innovative perspectives on the discourse of
amateur cricket. It reveals the care and concern of the captain for his players, his
adherence to the principles of equality and harmony, and consequently his desire to
tailor his writing to the sensitivities of an audience distinguished by its widely
varying cultural, ethnic and sporting traditions in order to instill a spirit of unity,
goodwill and sportsmanship worthy of the University name. The overwhelmingly
positive, respectful and empathetic orientation of texts reflects the pedagogical
persona of the writer and serves to strengthen team motivation and performance in
evidently successful ways, the University having successfully transmuted from a
The discourse of amateur cricket

racially largely homogeneous pre-1997 team to one that reflects, more thoroughly than most, the cosmopolitan nature of post-colonial cricket in Hong Kong. It also offers a permanent record of the good fortunes of the HKUCC team in these particular years while simultaneously revealing the richness of general sporting and cricket-specific language. Indeed, the latter will assume yet more striking dimensions in the match report analysis that is to follow.

Degree of Coherence and Intelligibility for the Audience

There is also one key discourse question yet to be answered: How far and for whom the respective scripts could be considered coherent and cohesive? Clearly the texts are imbued with expressions and idioms that would be unintelligible to those beyond the ambit of cricket—but these are not the audience. Certainly the native speakers of English in the team should have encountered few, if any, difficulties in processing the texts. In regard to the non-native speakers, a more differentiated individualised picture emerges. Some, occupying high-level positions in the world of commerce or business, might encounter little difficulty in untangling the delicate weft and weave of language, although cultural allusions and/or emotional connotations might occasionally go unremarked. The majority of non-native speakers might, however, experience greater difficulties with such intricacies, although it must be remembered that they usually employ English, not Cantonese, as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in the conduct of their everyday Hong Kong affairs. Given their passion for and knowledge of cricket, their interest in the team success and the part they play in it, they are probably able to reconstruct all core aspects of the message. Indeed, both non-native and native readers would be assisted in their processing of the bulletins by intertextuality, i.e., through their familiarity with the mantra of cricket encountered in similar texts at other clubs and in other settings, the format and content of the messages being not untypical of the genre. The texts then, while perhaps less comprehensible to outsiders, would appear largely coherent and cohesive for the intended target audience, particularly the native speakers but also—to a greater or lesser extent—to the non-native speakers. Even the occasional idiosyncrasies might perhaps be appreciated.

Notes

2. Subcont was one of the Saturday league opponents in the 2008–9 season (see Appendix).
3. Winning the toss would enable the University team to field in the later, somewhat cooler part of the day.
4. This is the only triple century in the history of Hong Kong cricket.
5. The HKU skipper received the HKCA Saturday Captain of the Year Award in the seasons 2007–8 and 2008–9.
References


**Appendix**  
**League opponents in 2008–9**

*Independent Teams*: Craigengower CC, Centaurs, Kai Tak, Lamma CC, Laguna Gully, LSW Warriors, LSW St Georges, Pakistan Club (PA), Police, Mainlanders, Millennium, SCC (SubCont).

*Kowloon Cricket Club Teams*: Crusaders, Saracens, Tartars.

*Hong Kong Cricket Club Teams*: Gap Ramblers (GRs), Nomads, Witherers.