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Journalistic Sport Language versus Olympic Assumptions: the Current State and Challenges. A Diagnosis Based on an Analysis of Internet Sport Commentaries

Abstract

Literature within Olympism, though vast, offers relatively little detailed discussion regarding the way of presenting sportspeople, rivalry, values and symbols in the contemporary sport press and the impact of the journalistic stylistics on the image of sport. There is, however, a need to investigate the sport media language in this perspective, as it is directly linked to the reception of sport and Olympism in the society. The present paper is an attempt to present a vision of modern competitive sport presented at the press site in the context of the principles of Olympism. It focuses on the stylistics, narration and shape of expression in terms of the linguistic resources. A corpus of 92 articles from the “Sports” section of the online edition of a popular newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* was content were analysed. The findings of the research show that the language of Internet sports commentaries is “poor”, has little values and is not always compatible with the principles and recommendations of the *Olympic Charter*. The concern for the aesthetics and attractiveness of the communication (use of sophisticated terms when describing athletes, colourful and attractive narration of sport competition, use of metaphors and other figures of speech) comes first. The information regarding the up-to-date events and sports results is in the foreground. In order to “rescue” the Olympic vision of sports, a new generation of sports journalists dedicating an equal attention to the beauty of both text and sports is needed. The role of sports universities in this venture is crucial.

Keywords: sports language, Internet sports commentary, Olympism, sports journalist.

Introduction

Sport is a popular worldwide acclaimed social phenomenon and a common topic of conversation in all societies¹. Not surprisingly, therefore, this object of

¹ R. Giulianotti, *Sport. A critical sociology*, Cambridge 2005, p. 210.

mass interest continues to attract the attention of all media, including press, radio, television, the Internet, each of which – respectively – elaborated an own style of communication depending on many factors such as sport discipline, addressee of the utterance, social context, communication channel, etc. Consequently, the language of sports is an extensive and internally diverse variety of language. The multiplicity of dimensions of the analysis and the need to take into account the different sports sociolects have already been pointed out and addressed by many highly qualified experts in the field, such as Dankert², Ożdżyński³, Beard⁴, Lipoński⁵. It is worth highlighting that over time the reality is changing: new disciplines and new media are emerging and being popularised. Let us note that the classification of sport communication situations proposed – years ago – by Ożdżyński did not include the webcast and that an eight-layer-taxonomy of the language of sports created – also in the past – by Tworek did qualify the language of the television coverage and that of the online commentaries, despite the obvious differences, into one and the same category⁶. It is only the ten-stratum-proposal of stratification of the language of football (as a subtype of the language of sport) suggested by Lewandowski that seems to represent an up-to-date situation and the language of online sport commentary is a separated subgroup⁷.

The research on various aspects of the language of sport and on the characteristics of the presentation of sports in the media has been systematically conducted. It is impossible to point all the researchers who contributed to this field of science, but at least some of the interesting research directions can be mentioned. Meurders dealt with the language of cycling in the sports magazines⁸. Rutishauser carried out a diachronic analysis of the language of basketball based on the corpus of a well-known sports magazine *Basketball*⁹. Most attention has

² H. Dankert, *Sportsprache und Kommunikation – Untersuchungen zur Struktur der Fußballsprache und zum Stil der Sportberichterstattung*, Tübingen 1969.

³ J. Ożdżyński, *Polskie współczesne słownictwo sportowe* [*Contemporary Polish Sports Vocabulary*], Wrocław 1970.

⁴ A. Beard, *The Language of Sport*, London – New York 1998.

⁵ W. Lipoński, „Hey, ref! Go, milk the canaries!” *On the distinctiveness of the language of sport*, “Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism. Special Issue: Sports Language and Linguistics” 2009, noXVI (1), pp. 19–36.

⁶ A. Tworek, *Język sportu – próba definicji (analiza języka polskiego i niemieckiego)* [*The language of sport – an attempt of definition (analysis in Polish and German)*], [in:] G. Szpila (ed.), *Język Trzeciego Stulecia. Język a Komunikacja 1* [*The Language of the Third Century. Language and Communication 1*], Kraków 2000, pp. 334–336.

⁷ M. Lewandowski, *The language of soccer – a sociolect or a register*, “Język, Komunikacja, Informacja” [“Language, Communication, Information”] 2008, no 3, pp. 26–30.

⁸ J. Meurders, *Alles Renner. Zum Vokabular des Radsports in der medialen und literarischen Reportsprache*, [in:] H. Ester, G. van Gemert (ed.), *Annäherungen: Studien zur deutschen Literatur und Literaturwissenschaften im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, Amsterdam 1985, pp. 227–246.

⁹ P. Rutishauser, *Sportsprache im Wandel der Zeit – Entwicklungstendenzen am Beispiel der Zeitschrift “Basketball”*, Hamburg 2014.

been paid to the language of football and this subject is still undertaken by many researchers¹⁰. The characteristic terminology used in the sports talk and its specific stylistic features have been widely treated by many researchers, such as, among others, Schneider¹¹, Ożdżyński¹² and Kowalikowa¹³. Fehringer published the outcomes of an analysis of the „own rights” of the language of sport and sports commentary based on an extensive research of the mediated sport¹⁴.

The present article is an attempt at capturing the vision of the modern professional sports emerging in the online press from an unusual perspective, namely, in the context of the principles of Olympism. Sport, with the prospects of the Olympic idea, is to be a means of transmission of values, and not merely a struggle for results, podium and success. With this in mind, we examined the “value” of the material published on the online portal by conducting a sociolinguistic analysis of the Internet sports commentaries. The ideals of the Olympic idea were contrasted with the reality presented in the journalistic media coverage. On this basis, we tried to show how the sport is presented in the web press easily accessible for the broad masses, and decide whether these media fulfill the postulates of the Olympic education and – if not – why. We focused on the stylistics, on the form of narration, on the language means and linguistic measures. In other words, on the basis of arbitrarily selected categories of analysis (expressed in the research questions presented below), we attempted to answer the question whether the concerns of Pierre de Coubertin regarding the involvement of the press in the project of revival of the Olympic Games were legitimate? The

¹⁰ G. Devoto G., *Le lingue speciali: le cronache del calcio*, “Lingua nostra” 1939, No I, pp. 17–21; H. Dankert, *Sportsprache und Kommunikation – Untersuchungen zur Struktur der Fußballsprache und zum Stil der Sportberichterstattung*, Tübingen 1969; A. Jorroch, *Höhen und Tiefen im deutsche Fußball – Sprachliche Mittel der deutschen Presse in der Fußball saison 2010/2011*, “Studia Niemcoznawcze” [“Studien zur Deutschkunde”] 2012, no XLIX, pp. 767–778; M. Lewandowski, *The language of soccer – a sociolect or a register*, “Język, Komunikacja, Informacja” [“Language, Communication, Information”] 2008, no 3; M. Medici, *Delle cronache del calcio*, „Lingua nostra” 1959, no XX, pp. 24–26; G. Nascimbeni, *La lingua del calcio*, [in:] M. Medici, D. Proietti (ed.), *Il linguaggio del giornalismo*, Milano 1992, pp. 107–116; W. Schweickard W., *Die “cronaca calcistica”. Zur Sprache der Fußballberichterstattung in italienischen Sporttageszeitungen*, Tübingen 1987.

¹¹ P. Schneider, *Die Sprache des Sports. Terminologie und Präsentation in den Massenmedien*, Düsseldorf 1974.

¹² J. Ożdżyński, *Polskie współczesne słownictwo sportowe* [Contemporary Polish Sports Vocabulary], Wrocław 1970.

¹³ J. Kowalikowa, *Język w sporcie. Z zagadnień komunikacji i kultury* [The language in sport. The issues of communication and culture], [in:] J. Lipiec (ed.), *Logos i etos polskiego olimpizmu* [The logos and ethos of Polish Olympism], Kraków 1994, pp. 157–163; J. Kowalikowa, *Sport a język* [Sport and language], [in:] Z. Krawczyk (ed.), *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku. Kultura fizyczna. Sport* [Encyclopaedia of Polish culture in XX century. Physical Culture. Sport], Warszawa 1997, pp. 377–383.

¹⁴ T.B. Fehringer, *Die “eigenen Gesetze” der Sportsprache und Sportberichterstattung – eine Medienanalyse am Beispiel Zeitung*, Marburg 2007.

problem of describing the sporting topics and competition in a “poor” way was already well known at the beginning of the twentieth century, and de Coubertin himself worried that the participation of the press in the endeavour may prove to be disastrous for the rebirth of Olympism: in his opinion, “the people of the press” often did not understand the mission designed for the Olympics and focused primarily on what was happening on the pitch¹⁵. Sports journalists focused too much on the external form and the course of the sport event, as if they had a “tunnel vision”. Let us recall in this context that the founder of the modern Olympic movement came even up with the program of the university for sports journalists to render them “spiritual guides” for Olympism (values) and sports (results), in this order and not in the reverse.

Because of the narrow scope of the study, we decided not to place any hypotheses. We formulated, instead, the following research questions:

1. What is the image of an athlete that emerges from the description of the printed media?
2. How the media releases represent the spirit of sports competition?
3. What values and Olympic symbols are included in the press transmission of sports?
4. What contents fill the newspaper articles in the section “sports” beyond the presentation of the sportspeople and their achievements?

The research method used was the content analysis, which is “the study of human recorded messages”¹⁶. It focuses on what content appears in the selected body of texts (corpus). The analysis was qualitative, but in some cases it was necessary to refer to the quantitative aspect. The selection of texts for the analysis is always a difficult choice. The sports press (even limited to the Internet commentaries) is a huge area of communication and we are aware that it is hardly possible to ensure full representativeness. Thus, in this very study we do not assume that we can draw irrefutable conclusions pertinent to the worldwide presentation of the sport in the press. We can merely talk about certain tendencies, observed on the basis of a careful analysis of a certain segment of reality. For this very analysis we selected press articles about the sport (section “Sport”) published in the online edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Wyborcza.pl; <http://www.sport.pl/sportGW/0,0.html>). We analysed all the archived articles with the date of February 2010, i.e. a total of 92 articles related to various sporting events. Most of them regarded the Winter Olympics in Vancouver (45% of articles), while the second topic was football (33% of articles). The subject of the remaining articles was related to other sports, such as basketball, ski jumping (prior to the Olympic Games), handball, boxing, tennis, athletics, and car racing. The

¹⁵ K. Zuchora, *Coubertin a media* [*Coubertin and the Media*], [in:] Z. Dziubiński, M. Lenartowicz (ed.), *Kultura fizyczna a kultura masowa* [*Physical Culture and Mass Culture*], Warszawa 2011, p. 373.

¹⁶ E. Babbie, *The practice of social research*, Belmont 2013, p. 358.

month of February 2010 was chosen deliberately: the Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver were held, as well as other major sporting events, domestic and foreign, in various sports – winter and year-round, including football, ski jumping, tennis, handball and others. In fact, we did not want to limit ourselves only to the reports on the Olympic Games as the Olympic postulates should – at least theoretically – equally refer to the Olympic sport, to the sport in general, and last but not least, to the reality beyond the sporting competition. We decided to include all sports articles from February 2010, regardless of whether they were a report on a sporting event, an interview with the athlete or coach, or an entry on the sporting reality in a broad sense (construction of the stadium, corruption scandal, etc.). In the corpus we sought information on the description of the athletes (their behaviours, their characteristics, their representation through synonymous expressions), on the description of the competition, on the references to the symbols and values of the Olympics and on the content filling the section beyond the scope of the athlete and his sports achievements. In the analysis performed we used the Atlas.ti with the following codes: athlete (with annotations: synonym, description, attributes), competition, Olympic symbols, the reality of non-sport-events (with due annotation, e.g.: weather, doping, corruption, etc.). Because of the narrow scope of the study, this article should be taken as a case study, yet dedicated to a significant research problem. The subject truly matters, because it seems that we can now see the coexistence of two trends, or two ideologies, within sport: the “official” Olympic one (resurrected by de Coubertin, referring to ancient Greek motives, contained in the *Olympic Charter*, promoting the postulates of the Olympic education), and the “commercialized” one, developed by television, newspapers and new media, namely the Internet, which is particularly responsible for a changing image of sports¹⁷. The first one emphasises the value of participation, comprehensive personality development, fair play and competition in the spirit of friendship¹⁸, while the second one reflects the postmodern, capitalist society in the era of consumerism, focuses on a spectacular and attractive nature of sports events, re-establishes the (modern) nationalism through the process of celebrating the victory and labelling the athletes as celebrities and national heroes¹⁹. The Olympic values remain meanwhile in the background.

The noble character of sport, the “official” Olympic ideology, is subject to deliberations of the theorists of physical culture and is well described by the academic scientific community in normative terms. Sport is seen as a vital element

¹⁷ K.M. Lange, *Sport and New Media: A profile of Internet Sport Journalists in Australia*, Victoria University 2012, <http://vuir.vu.edu.au/278/> [accessed: 5.08.2015].

¹⁸ N. Müller, *Pierre de Coubertin: 1863–1937. Olympism: Selected Writings*, Lausanne 2000; A. Miah, B. Garcia, *The Olympics. The basics*, London – New York 2012.

¹⁹ P. Rymarczyk, *Kultura masowa i kultura fizyczna [Mass culture and physical culture]*, [in:] Z. Dziubiński, Z. Krawczyk (ed.), *Socjologia kultury fizycznej [Sociology of physical culture]*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 84–93.

of education: the Olympic values created in antiquity are universal²⁰. Moreover, the Olympic Games, in addition to the dimension of sport competition, also contain a huge load of positive human values: solidarity, friendship, peace and respect. Olympism today can be interpreted in many ways: as the prototype of the ancient custom associated with the sports games, as a system of values constituting an axiological basis, as a doctrine put into practice by national and international sports organisations, as an element of human culture including different sporting activities. Additionally, Olympism is also – in the assumptions – a pedagogical project which uses sport as a tool for implementing the model of harmoniously developed person, the model community of nations based on peace, respect and truth, the pattern of world unity, based on the order of universal values and symbolised by the global stadium²¹. As noted by Zuchora “sport is to support the personal human potential, to extract the value of the subject and specify in sharp dispute with other people inviolable boundaries of mutual respect”²². So sports are not only activities aimed to expand the somatic and physical possibilities of human’s body, but also to contribute to the comprehensive development. All these assumptions are widely referred to in a kind of “sports constitution”, i. e. in the *Olympic Charter*²³. This document constitutes the foundation for a global, not only Olympic, sport²⁴, and has been more than once adequately modified, supplemented and adapted to the changing social reality²⁵.

There is, however, the other face of sport. Interestingly, much less publications are dedicated to the facts actually observable. The condition of the modern Olympic movement, with a special attention to the changes taking place in the post-modern society, was elaborated by Dziubiński. The sociologist highlighted, among others, the problem of money and degradation of man in sport²⁶. Rymarczyk undertook the subject of mass culture as a factor of change in sport. He described, among others, the role of sport in the modern media and the sport celebrities as idols of consumer culture²⁷. Żukowski wrote about the gap be-

²⁰ G. Młodzikowski, *Olimpiady ery nowożytnej* [*The Olympiads of the modern era*], Warszawa 1984.

²¹ J. Lipiec, *Filozofia olimpizmu* [*Philosophy of Olympism*] Warszawa 1999, pp. 66–69.

²² K. Zuchora, *Nauczyciel i wartości z filozofii kultury fizycznej i pedagogiki sportu* [*A teacher and the values of philosophy of physical culture and sport pedagogics*], Warszawa 2009, p. 121.

²³ N. Müller, *Pierre de Coubertin: 1863–1937. Olympism: Selected Writings*, Lausanne 2000; A. Miah, B. Garcia, *The Olympics. The basics*, London – New York 2012.

²⁴ D. Zakus, *The Olympic Charter: A Historical Analysis of a Hegemonic Document for Global Sport*, [in:] D. Adair, B. Coe, N. Guoth (ed.), *Beyond the Torch: Olympics and Australian Culture*, Melbourne 2005, pp. 4–15.

²⁵ R. Frasca, *Introduzione*, [in:] R. Frasca (ed.), *Saggi sulla carta olimpica*, Roma 2009, pp. 5–19.

²⁶ Z. Dziubiński, *Olimpizm a nowoczesność* [*Olympism and modernity*], [in:] Z. Dziubiński, Z. Krawczyk (ed.), *Socjologia kultury fizycznej* [*Sociology of physical culture*], Warszawa 2011, pp. 126–128.

²⁷ P. Rymarczyk, *Kultura masowa i kultura fizyczna* [*Mass culture and physical culture*], [in:] Z. Dziubiński, Z. Krawczyk (ed.), *Socjologia kultury fizycznej* [*Sociology of physical culture*], Warszawa 2011, pp. 88–93.

tween assumptions and reality within consideration of the principle of fair play²⁸. Nowocień conducted an empirical research in schools on the needs for promotion of the Olympic education. The study showed that the Olympic education can be a helpful tool in the education of youth²⁹. The Olympic education is a pedagogical concept which aims at teaching and developing personality of the young with the use of Olympism – as a source of values, and sports – as a means of execution³⁰.

Research Outcomes Overview

If we look at the expressions synonymous with the term “athlete” found in the corpus, we can see that a typical procedure used by journalists when referring to an athlete is a reference to the discipline practised (e. g. volleyball player, cyclist, athlete), to the position or function of a player (e. g. a goalkeeper, right winger, striker), to the membership in a sports club (e. g. nerazzurri, milanese) and to the previously sustained sporting success (e.g. multimedalist, defending champion, Olympic winner). Some of the terms of journalistic jargon are very strongly – positively or negatively – marked, as for instance “Superman”, “heir to the throne”, “beast”, “giant” or “freak of nature”. The journalistic desire to avoid repetition, e. g. name of the athlete, ends sometimes in a faulty procedure of referring to the nationality of the player (in opposition to the Olympic idea). Athletes are also portrayed descriptively. Highlighted are the positive traits of character and the will to fight. The athlete is a hero (“unbeatable”), possesses the socially desirable characteristics (“mandatory”, “diligent”, “hard-working”), is strong mentally and physically. His assets are the discipline and the conscientiousness. This is how he achieves his success. In the case of community of football players we often have to deal with a kind of “commodification”. The players are referred to as an object to trade, are turned into a “commodity”, are made commercial. As a merchandise, they can be sold and bought, they have a certain price in the market (the football club Legia offered almost 1 million euro for a certain footballer, payable in two instalments). Importantly, athletes are portrayed in the online press not only in their primary role (i. e. as sportspeople during the competition), but also through the prism of their behaviour in private

²⁸ R. Żukowski, *Fair play najwyższą wartością olimpizmu. Założenia a rzeczywistość* [Fair play as the highest value of Olympism. Assumptions and reality], [in:] J. Lipiec (ed.), *Logos i etos polskiego olimpizmu* [The logos and ethos of Polish Olympism], Kraków 1994, pp. 265–278.

²⁹ J. Nowocień, *Sport i olimpizm w systemie dydaktyczno-wychowawczym szkoły* [Sport and Olympism in a didactical-educational school system], Warszawa 2001.

³⁰ Idem, *Ramowa oferta programowa – w zakresie edukacji olimpijskiej* [Framework program within the Olympic education], “Wychowanie Fizyczne i Zdrowotne” [“Physical Education and Health Education”] 2010, no 8, p. 4.

life (partying, shopping, dating, eating, drinking, etc.). Unfortunately, in this context, we can observe more references to the dishonourable deeds and incorrect behaviour of athletes (Lambourne showed the middle finger to a trainer, Cole cheated on his wife with five other women, Terry seduced the girlfriend of his colleague from the national team, Rio Ferdinand was driving under the influence, etc.).

Based on the analysed corpus, it can be stated that athletes embody usually beautiful features important for sport: fighting will, strength of spirit, devotion and dedication. The community of football players are presented in the worst lights. They are portrayed, on the one hand, as a valuable “commodity” and, on the other, as “socially maladjusted” individuals or even social deviants with behavioural problems.

Let us now focus on the description of the spirit of sports competition in the online sport commentaries. It is emphasised that every competition is an opportunity for an athlete to test his skills, to confront with his own limitations and pain, to compare with others. If the fight is supposed to be beautiful, the chances must be equal, the competition ought to be heroic, exhausting, fierce, but “clean”. The encounter should be exciting, arouse extreme emotions, provide a thrill and force participants to the maximal sacrifice, but all within the limits of a fair fight. It is also important that the opponent is strong and in a top form, otherwise the victory is not legitimised (or at least not deserved). The journalists are ready to treat severely those sportspeople who won thanks to a propitious situation. Winning counts only if one was better, and not if the opponent simply failed by accident, was suddenly weaker or the desired exterior and interior conditions were not provided. The respect for the rival is an indispensable element of the competition. In this spirit the sports journalists present competing in the vast majority of cases, which is fully in line with the spirit of the Olympic idea. Again, in the case of the football, the rivalry in the pitch is portrayed a little differently. One report on an Italian League match starts with the words that “the match had an incredible dynamics”. Already in the second sentence we can discover that within the first 38 minutes the referee threw two players. Therefore, the incredible dynamics referred to foul play, behaviours contrary to the rules in force in the sport, since only for such transgressions athletes can be removed.

Another problematic phenomenon is the fact that the beauty of sport competition may be overshadowed by breaking the rules of fair play. Pharmacological race, doping, fouls, illegal practices, affair with an unauthorised equipment – these all make for the dark side of the noble fight for victory. The press eagerly cites statements of the athletes taking position in such cases, as if they were looking for scandal.

In the analysed corpus the values, symbols and ceremonies accompanying the Olympic sports events were hardly ever mentioned. The Internet reports are designed primarily to inform about current sporting events. It would be desira-

ble, however, to find in such publications more references also to the idea, which is to be the basis of the sportsmanship. Sadly, the institution of the Olympic vows was briefly mentioned in two articles only.

It is interesting to concentrate on the role of the medal. Surely, an Olympic medal is a reward, but also a carrier of certain values. Olympic gold is considered to be the greatest honour for the hard effort in the long and gruelling training. In non-Olympic competitions athletes are prized with cups and other decorations that also grow to symbols. Unfortunately, nowadays, we can sometimes find behaviours bordering on perversion of the role of the medal. A creeping commercialisation and thinking in terms of money are a real danger to the symbolic value of medal and generally to the Olympic ideal of “participation”, about which some sportspeople seem to forget. Let us cite a following statement by Jurasik after the Polish handball team’s defeat: “For me it’s a failure. We came to Austria for a medal”. In addition, the medals provide a basis for measuring the strength of a country, although the *Olympic Charter* clearly reads about the rivalry between the players and not the states. However, this is frequently ignored and charts with statistical data are shown to the public. The number of medals gained by the national team is an indicator in political terms. This is how the media come up with the absurd wordings such as “an Italian-German war” in occasion of a football match between Bayern and Fiorentina (Champions League) or “a Polish-American confrontation” (the Pedros Cup).

It is sad that the word “Olympiad” is commonly used in an incorrect way. In the analysed corpus the term occurred in a total of 22 times, most of which faultily – as a direct synonym for the Olympic Games, while, as is well known, “Olympiad” means a period of four years in the Greek calendar, including the preparation time and the games themselves. That’s why we can conditionally accept the sentence that a certain sportsman has four Olympiads behind him (four starts and, respectively, four preparation periods).

The articles in the section “Sports” do not only concern the sports results and athlete profiles. Some of them refer to the non-sporting events and extra-sportive reality. The theme of “weather” was often presented at the reports of the Olympic Games in Vancouver and other winter competitions, like world cups on ski slopes or the world championships in racing. In winter sports, weather conditions play a very important role – they can change the fate of a sports competition. The outside temperatures (in case of racing) and the wind (in case of shooting and ski jumping) are of great importance. Some reports are dedicated to the “technical preparation”, including such topics as sportswear (e.g. the controversial suit of Kowalczyk), waxes, service of the sports equipment. A real issue was the use of special ski bindings by a Swiss ski jumper Ammann, which sparked numerous discussions in relation to the idea of fair play.

Sport is still overshadowed by numerous corruption scandals, especially in football. Determining the results, giving away matches, selling goals, inaccurate

kicks – these are all today’s football illnesses. “Dirty business” affects not only athletes, but also coaches.

Another important subject in the articles devoted to sports is the sports infrastructure (toboggan run in Whistler, condition of stadiums in Poland and Portugal). Vast place was also dedicated to the behind the scenes of the fatal accident of Georgian luger.

Discussion and conclusions

In the analysed online sport commentaries athletes are presented in a very different light, through the prism of their achievements, behaviours and physical features. Most often it is highlighted that the players have beautiful character traits essential for sports competition: the will to fight, strength of spirit, devotion and dedication. An interesting and worthy of consideration is the fact that the community of football players is presented in the worst light. They are on the one hand a valuable “commodity”, considered in terms of a particular product to trade in the market (buy, sell, negotiate the price, preserve rights for). As Lenartowicz rightly observes, commodification of the players and the sport is very evident in sports journalism, and the adequate terminology has been created by sports journalists, indeed³¹. On the other hand, the footballers appear as “socially maladjusted” individuals engaging in various scandals and riots. This seems far away from the model of “athlete the Olympian”. It can be assumed that this is because football is currently the most commercialised area of sport and the football community is closer to the full professionalism than any other group of athletes, which is linked to a defective course of socialisation into the role of an athlete. Under normal conditions, this process should include a comprehensive preparation to enter the world of sport, including the internalisation of norms and values, as well as taking into account the economic and social changes involving the career. However, high earnings in football achieved in a short time that allow extremely rapid change in the social status often “spoil” people. It may explain why the description of the competition in football contains many references to foul play. Another aspect can be the sponsors’ pressure on the reporters to seek sensation on the “heroes” of football in order to enable higher interest and readership. It would be a manifestation of the pursuit of shocking news and scandals from the life of the stars of mass culture, and exactly the practice that de Coubertin was concerned about at the beginning of the twentieth century. Shocking content is, unfortunately, a very attractive material for the modern media. And the celebrities from the world of sport arouse par-

³¹ M. Lenartowicz, *Kariera sportowa i jej społeczne uwarunkowania* [*Sport carrier and its social determinants*] [in:] Z. Dziubiński, Z. Krawczyk (ed.), *Socjologia kultury fizycznej* [*Sociology of physical culture*], Warszawa 2011, p. 432.

ticular interest – the world wants to read about them³². It is a pity, however, that the media are less likely to write about the beautiful actions of athletes than about those disgraceful.

Journalists' concern about the beauty of the text, understood in terms of care for the aesthetics and attractiveness, unfortunately, leads in many cases to the distortions in relation to the Olympic idea. An obvious example can be a reference to the nationality when describing the athletes. Of course, multiple repetition of the surname would not sound good, either. Nonetheless, some of the synonymous expressions are acceptable, some are not. There was a scandal in the Polish media recently, when a sports journalist Laskowski commenting on the match Algeria-Germany during the FIFA World Cup in Brazil used the words "sneaky animals of the desert" referring to the representation of Algeria. He initially thought about the nickname of the African team, namely "desert foxes", and created a periphrastic form, which, however, hasn't been interpreted well. Due to the unfortunate formulation the commentator has been accused of racism.

Most likely the same motivation, i.e. the urge not to repeat the term "Olympic Games", leads to the frequent use of the incorrect "Olimpiad". Consequently, based on the diffusion of such a usage, the new meaning of the term has been meanwhile taken into account in the dictionaries of the Polish language (*Wielki słownik języka polskiego*³³ and *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*³⁴). The question is, whether the academic community should also accept this term in a new meaning, contrary to the Greek tradition and the *Olympic Charter*?

It is obvious that journalists must take care of the colourful and attractive narrative of the sport rivalry and have the right to use metaphors and other stylistic figures of speech. A typical feature of the language of sport is the introduction to the description of competition the vocabulary originating from the military. This raises, as rightly observed Kowalikowa, the threat of "re-militarisation of sports", contains an enormous emotionally negative charge and may cause violence and aggression on the side of the audience³⁵. We are exposed to the concept of "killing with words"³⁶.

In the analysed corpus only few references to the symbolism have been found. The sport presented in the media is "poor", "empty" or "naked" and there

³² P. Andrews, *Dziennikarstwo sportowe* [Sports journalism], Kraków 2009, p. 1.

³³ *Wielki słownik języka polskiego Instytutu Języka Polskiego PAN*, [Great Dictionary of Polish Language] <http://www.wsjp.pl> [accessed: 5.08.2015].

³⁴ *Słownik języka polskiego PWN* [Dictionary of Polish Language], <http://www.sjp.pwn.pl> [accessed: 5.08.2015].

³⁵ J. Kowalikowa, *Sport a język* [Sport and language], [in:] Z. Krawczyk (ed.), *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku. Kultura fizyczna. Sport* [Encyclopaedia of Polish culture in XX century. Physical Culture. Sport], Warszawa 1997, p. 381.

³⁶ J. Kowalikowa, *Język w sporcie. Z zagadnień komunikacji i kultury* [The language in sport. The issues of communication and culture], [in:] J. Lipiec (ed.), *Logos i etos polskiego olimpizmu* [The logos and ethos of Polish Olympism], Kraków 1994, p. 163.

are no noble values behind it. The press articles are designed primarily to inform about current sports events: what matters is who first broadcasts the results. A higher number of references to the Olympic idea, the basis of sportsmanship, would be desirable. The institution of vows, an important ritual of accepting the principles of fair play, was mentioned only twice. The role of an Olympic medal, as carrier of values, has been distorted. A sport competition becomes a race for an Olympic gold, and yet not a piece of metal and not a victory – as proclaimed by the Olympic idea – but participation is the goal that should guide the athletes. In addition, medals frequently provide a basis for measuring the strength of the country, although the timeless “sports constitution” clearly reads about the rivalry between athletes in individual and team events and not between countries³⁷. However, this is frequently ignored and the statistics with the numbers or medals won by countries are presented. All this leads to the question: what sport do you want to watch in the future. In other words, let us quote a provocative question asked by Kosiewicz: “should the Olympic Games be only a sporting spectacle”³⁸? The situation has been also accurately diagnosed by Zuchora: “The world accepted the sport as a theatre, not as a school based on the universal principles”³⁹.

To sum up the results of the research we can say that the value of sport, its beauty and ideals are described by academic eminent experts on the subject. But this is not what a great audience is reading. An average viewer, an internet surfer or a newspaper reader often do not know about the existence of the *Olympic Charter* and the values on which should the modern sport be based. However, the society has an easy access to the media – TV, newspapers and the Internet, which monitor and report on all sporting events in the world, but – as shown by the results of a sociolinguistic analysis of online sport commentaries presented in this article – they do so in their own specific way, maximising the attractiveness of the message and with the noble principles in the background.

In the context of the research results we can therefore talk about the need for “healing” the mediated language of sport, by enriching it with the values on which it should be based. The idea is to laboriously introduce the elements of Olympism into the mediated discourse in order to preserve its spiritual dimension. This may be due to a new generation of sports journalists, in whose education an important role could be played by the sports universities (as proposed by de Coubertin), which in addition to the transmission of the journalistic workshop would also inculcate the ideals and values of the Olympic movement, which

³⁷ *Karta Olimpijska [Olympic Charter]*, Lausanne 2013, p. 8.

³⁸ J. Kosiewicz, *Czy Igrzyska Olimpijskie są czymś więcej niż sportem?* [*Are the Olympic Games something more than just sport?*], “Wychowanie Fizyczne i Zdrowotne” [“Physical Education and Health Education”] 2008, no 6, pp. 4–11.

³⁹ K. Zuchora, *Coubertin a media [Coubertin and media]*, [in:] Z. Dziubiński, M. Lenartowicz (ed.), *Kultura fizyczna a kultura masowa [Physical culture and mass culture]*, Warszawa 2011, p. 374.

have been the basis for any sporting competition. An accurate knowledge of the content of the *Olympic Charter* is an absolute must-do and the *condition sine qua non* of a professional approach to the position of a sports journalist. Commentators and reporters of the new generation should attach importance to the beauty of the text and the beauty of sport. They have yet to be “spiritual guides” for Olympism (values) and sport (results), in this very order.

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