Framing of news sports articles in online Dutch and Spanish newspapers

Bachelor´s thesis resit

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Abstract

This research studies the textual and contextual differences in framing between Spain and the Netherlands in sports news articles. The core of the study is a textual analysis in which ten Dutch articles from NOS and ten Spanish articles from El País have been coded. The textual analysis was focusing on three main news elements, namely *actors, actions,* and *circumstances*. Each of these main news elements was in turn analyzed on three different aspects: *occurrence, valence,* and *prominence.* The textual analysis was followed by a contextual analysis in which the results were tried to be linked to the cultural differences in dimensions of Spain and the Netherlands. Several results were found from both the textual and the contextual analysis. A key finding was that, despite that Spain is a collectivistic culture, the main focus of Spanish journalists was to write about individuals with respect to the actors. A second main finding may appear to relate to the cultural dimension of high- and low-context culture. The data analysis shows that Dutch journalists tend to use more direct language, whereas Spanish journalists use more metaphors and adjectives to describe the actors, actions, and circumstances. This seems to align with the Dutch low-context culture in which directness and efficiency is central.

Introduction

A tennis match is in fact the same for all spectators. Three sets, and one player wins. Yet, journalists tell and report different stories about this same match. Oftentimes it is striking that the country from which the journalists come plays an influential role in the way they report about a sports event. A striking example is from the famous last match of Serena Williams. Serena played at the US Open against Tomljanovic and lost in three sets. The Dutch papers emphasized in their news articles the result of the match: "Serena Williams lost". They found it pitiful that Serena lost her last match. In contrast, Spanish journalists had a very different angle: "Serena Williams is a winner"; The Spanish newspapers emphasized the successful long career of Serena Williams which made her a winner. Only as a sideline in their articles it is mentioned the result of this last match. It may be that mass media from different countries focuses on completely different aspects of the same sports event. A better understanding on how sport events are framed in different cultures will help to better value how mass media reports on actual sports events. Despite the motivation of journalists to be perfectly objective, their cultural background might affect the way in which they report. This is important to understand as it puts into perspective the cultural attachment of mass media. The strong link between frames and culture is beneficial in making communication effective.

This is through the mechanism of cultural resonance; meaning that the receiver of a message can more easily process it if it is communicated through a known cultural frame (Gamson, 1995). The receiver of the message recognizes its own habits, values, and own culture, causing a comfortable feeling.

In this study, sports news articles from two different cultures will be compared in order to bring out the dependance of reporting to culture. In the comparison made, my analysis will bring out the linguistic differences and I will try to relate these differences to specific cultural dimensions. By making the possible relation between linguistic and cultural differences, I will be able to conclude whether indeed culture plays a role in the reporting of sports events. In order to study this, two research questions will be answered. One research question will be studied on the basis of a textual analysis and the other research question will be studied on the basis of a contextual analysis.

Representation of social events in mass media

Mass media can be defined as the ways of communication that reach a large number of people through different channels, as television, radio, books, films, music, or the internet. Online and printed newspapers are part of mass media. In mass media the consumer is typically passive compared to, for instance, the social media where the consumer is active (Oralkan, 2019).

Mass media is omnipresent in our daily lives nowadays. In a waiting room, in the train, on the streets, everywhere people are on their phones, laptop, but we also are confronted with mass media by seeing billboards on the streets, watching the journal on television, or reading the newspapers. Mass media has become more and more dominant in society over the years. Mass media reaches a large number of people; as such, it has a potential power in influencing the society (Viswanath et al., 2007). People nowadays rely on mass media to access information about local, national, and international events. Journalists communicate by putting emphasis, consciously or unconsciously, on certain aspects of events and present it to the audience. In other words, media channels construct a certain reality. How a journalist communicates the message, influences how the audience views events; and forms a reference point for people in interpreting reality (Carter, 2013).

Representation of sports events in news items

Sports journalism is regarded as one of the most enduring forms of journalism and culture nowadays as it has adapted itself well to technological developments as the digitalization of journalism. Sports articles are relevant to study, because they have always

been one of the most popular articles within a newspaper. Moreover, history shows that sports articles adapt easily to changes. For instance, with the digitalization in journalism, where the journalistic processes were enabled by leveraging digital technologies, sports articles were one of the first genres that adapted successfully to these changes (Wiske and Horky, 2021; Ramon and Tulloch, 2019). Considering the easy and fast adaption of sports articles to changes, it makes studying sports articles relevant, because this genre is not some sort of hype but an enduring form of journalism.

Sports is a special genre within journalism. On one hand, it is seen as a form of 'soft'-journalism (Boyle, 2017) in the sense that it misses the seriousness and credibility as in 'hard'-journalism. In other words, it focuses on entertaining aspects of social life rather than the more serious ones such as politics and crime. Sports journalism is seen as an uncriticized booster of sport and the sports culture. It is known as a genre that is relatively superficial and only seldomly is more inquisitive. On the other hand, sports journalism is commercially one of the most important categories in journalism in the sense that it attracts people to buy the newspapers (Boyle, 2017).

Given its importance, the body of research on content analysis in sports journalism is large. For example, Schmidt (2017) conducted a content analysis and a survey to study the involvement of women and the coverage of women's sport in American, British, and Australian sports newspapers. The survey consisted of 309 journalists that were being interviewed with twenty-five questions. The content analysis studied 3.382 articles from the sports sections of fifteen newspapers from Australia, United Kingdom, and United States. The articles were coded on multiple factors. For instance, the sex of the author, number of sources that were quoted, type of the article, topic, length, and geographic focus. Moreover, the articles were coded for themes as, whether the article framed women or men in a sexualized manner, in the context of an assault, a fight, scandal, or in a domestic role as wife or husband. The results of the content analysis show that there is no equal deviation between the coverage of men and women in sports media. Male journalists are less likely to report supportive for women within sports journalism. Thus, Schmidt concludes in general that the background of journalists makes a significant difference in the way that they report on sport events.

Framing in media

The intertwinement between communication and reality is called 'framing'. This intertwinement has been studied by Ericson (1998) who concluded that "communication does not stand apart from reality. There is not, first, reality and then, second, communication.

Communication participates in the formulization and change of reality". Although it is difficult to give one definition for framing, framing is widely known as making a certain aspect of a perceived reality more salient in a communication text. Framing has always been considered an important aspect of communication. Nowadays, it is even the most used theory in the field of communication research (Bateson, 1972). Framing is an essential characteristic of news media which helps people shape a certain understanding of the narrated events.

Framing has four functions: defining the issue, assigning responsibility, passing a moral judgement, and reaching viable solutions (Entman, 1993). Framing shapes the way issues and events are reported on and, therefore, can possibly influence the perception of the audience. The importance of framing was pointed out by Chuan et al. (2019) in a study on how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being framed. Analyzing a sample of American newspapers over the period 2009 to 2018 on the basis of a content analysis, the researchers identified the topics and frames that were dominant in the articles. The key topics were categorized in groups with the names, Technology Development and Application, Business and Economy, Politics and Policy, Ethics, Threat, Science Fiction, Entertainment, and Education. Each article was coded on the dominant topic. The results of the study showed that the risks of AI were discussed less than the benefits, so journalists focused more on the positive aspects than on the negative. Moreover, it was found that Business and Economy and Technology Development were the primary topics in the news items. The main conclusion was that these frames might influence the public's perception and opinion on AI and the scientific advances.

Journalistic discourse: News text in cultural context

The selection of a frame is most of the times not something that a journalist does consciously, but mostly it occurs unconsciously (Van Gorp, 2006). Frames do not belong to individual journalists, but they are part of a macrostructure that is part of a culture. Every culture has its own types of frames on which journalists can rely to frame the reality. Culture is seen as the basis to understand the world (Hall, 1977). If the importance of culture would be denied, miscommunication could occur easily, and miscommunication can cause serious problems.

To understand cultures, one has to acknowledge that they are multi-dimensional. A total of six different dimensions were distinguished by Hofstede (1984), when he created a model to understand cultures from a variety of countries. The first dimension is individualism/collectivism. This dimension shows whether the mainstream cultural context focuses on the 'we'- or on the 'I'-form. The second dimension is power distance. This has to

do with the distribution of power, the perception of inequality and power from the followers. The third dimension is 'uncertainty avoidance'. This dimension studies the way a culture treats the fact that the future is always insecure, also called the tolerance of the society for ambiguity. The next dimension, masculinity/femininity, studies the motivation of the people in the culture. A masculine culture is driven by the motivation that they always need to succeed and be the best. It is very much about competition. Whereas a feminine culture gives more priority to relations and the quality of live. The fifth dimension that Hofstede explains is 'long/short term orientation'. This dimension explains the difference in cultures between the relation they have with the past and the way that they think about the future. The last dimension in the index is about 'indulgence/restraint'. This has to do with the level of freedom that the culture gives to fulfill human desires. Hall (1977) added another dimension to the six from Hofstede. He introduced the cultural dimension of high-/low-context cultures. A low-context culture is very dependent on the direct verbal communication whereas a high-context culture relies on implicit communication and needs a lot of contexts, and it retrieves a lot of information from nonverbal communication.

Literature review

Various scholars have researched the link between culture and framing in different countries, different news articles and cultural dimensions. I will highlight three studies conducted by Xiang Zhou (2008), Van Gorp (2006), and Rafiee et al. (2021). The three studies have in common that all three are cross-cultural comparative analyses on framing in journalism. The studies deviate in the research methodology applied, in the source of data and in the countries studied. Yet, conclusion of all three is mainly shared. All three conclude that there is some kind of difference in framing between different cultures.

Xiang Zhou (2008) focused in his study on the cultural dimension of the low-/high-context cultural differences as pointed out by Hall. He conducted a cross-cultural comparative analysis on framing of news coverage of the internet in China, Singapore, the USA and the UK. For each country two newspapers were selected. The unit of analysis, news articles, were selected by random sampling. Xiang Zhou designed a codebook based on three primary research interests. The first interest is about whether the issue related to the internet in China was discussed. The second interest is about the framing of the issue, which could be framed in a political perspective, presented tolerance, or political view that was not favorable for the Chinese government. The third interest, questions whether a certain type of frame was presented and whether that frame was associated with the primary subject. Two bilingual

coders coded all the articles. Statistics were used to analyze the data. The results show that there are differences in the use of news frames between China, Singapore, the USA, and the UK. The news frames varied between the human-interest frame, conflict frame, responsibility, morality, and economic consequences frame. In the USA and UK, the issue of internet control, censorship and regulation was often reported as the primary subject of the article. However, in Hong Kong and Singapore, the issues e-commerce and internet business were emphasized stronger. This might be a result of the cultural differences between the countries. Xiang Zhou explains that this, for instance, might be in relation with the low-/high-context cultural differences.

In line, Van Gorp (2005) aims to understand whether framing really forms part of the culture and that the elaboration on framing studies will lead to the very heart of the mass communication theory. In this pursuit, he analyzes the issue of asylum and illegal immigration in relation to the victim-frame and intruder-frame. He analyzed eight newspapers to cover the diversity in the Belgian media landscape. His hypothesis was that framing was different between the Flemish and the French newspapers. The news articles were assembled on asylum-seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants. The selected articles were coded by twelve different coders. A coding scheme with indicators was set up and the coders had to indicate whether the articles contain these indicators or not. Some extra questions were included to make a distinction between whether the analyzed statement was quoted from an interview or whether the journalist formulated it himself. To define the frames, a homogeneity analysis with the algorithm of the HOMALS program was run. Therefore, the data could be interpreted and analyzed. The study finds that one out of five news articles in the sample of Belgian newspapers, referred purely to the message that asylum-seekers are innocent victims. On the other hand, one out of four news articles referred to the message that asylum-seekers are portrayed as intruders. Overall, van Gorp concludes that the victim-frame is the dominant frame in the Belgian newspapers although in the Dutch speaking newspapers this was less dominant compared to the French newspapers. Van Gorp assumes that the right-wing populist Flemish party has an influence on this. In the campaigns of this party, immigration and asylum play a crucial role. Van Gorp concludes that the media plays an important role in creating public support for the asylum policy.

Rafiee et al. (2021) studied how news about similar issues, namely crime incidents, are presented in Dutch and Iranian newspapers. They conducted a linguistic framing approach to analyze Dutch and Iranian crime-news texts. Three aspects of framing were defined to analyze the differences in the conception of crime events in news articles across socio-cultural

contexts. The three aspects are occurrences, marked description and prominence. These three aspects were analyzed on three levels to cover the main news elements: actors, actions, and circumstances. The results show differences between Dutch and Iranian texts on how crimes were reported, specifically with respect to victims and officials. Moreover, the results showed that the Dutch texts are more framed with the emphasis on the location, whereas the Iranian newspapers focus more on the manner of actions and the cause and reason behind the actions. The identified differences in framing might be explained by the different socio-cultural contexts of the journalists. For instance, Iran is a culture with a high-power distance, hierarchy is very important in the culture, whereas the Netherlands have a more low-power distance culture. This difference could be an explanation of why the Iranian newspapers focus more on officials in their articles than the Dutch newspapers.

Present study

The present study applies a linguistic framing approach to analyze Dutch and Spanish sports-news texts, as also used in the above referenced study from Rafiee et al. (2021). A comparative analysis will help with the journalistic understanding and interpretation and to link it to the cultural context (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012). For the study, a sample of twenty sports articles will be analyzed. The choice to study sports articles was made given the large societal value of sports journalism (Boyle, 2017).

It is scientific relevant to do this study because different studies already studied the role of culture in framing in journalism (Rafiee et al., 2021; Van Gorp, 2005). However, this has not been studied yet for sports news articles. Sports articles have been studied a lot on their different structure and language use and these studies show that this genre differs significantly from other genres (Oates & Pauly, 2007). However, the relation between culture and sports articles has not been studied yet. This is remarkable, as sports and culture are connected strongly to each other (Rowe, 2015).

The choice was made to make a cross country comparison between Dutch and Spanish newspapers in this study. The choice was made on the one hand because both countries are similar in level of economic development and having a strong and long-standing sports culture. For example, both countries have a long tradition at the World Cup Football, and at the Olympic Games. The population of both countries are strongly emotionally attached to their sports and their national athletes. On the other hand, the choice for both countries was made because both countries are culturally different. Hofstede (1984) showed with his research that Spain and the Netherlands differ significantly on multiple cultural dimensions.

For instance, Spain has a more feminine culture whereas the Netherlands clearly have a masculine culture. The feminine Spanish culture is less performance-oriented, more based on harmony and the quality of life, compared to the masculine Dutch culture. Moreover, Spain is known as a low-context culture, as in contrast the Netherlands is known as a high-context culture. Such implies that in the high-context Dutch-culture people are more direct and straightforward in their communications, compared to the Spanish low-context culture. These cultural differences make it relevant to study the differences between Dutch online newspapers and Spanish online newspapers.

Hence, four key choices shape the research at hand: (i) the choice to research the link between framing and culture, (ii) the choice to use a linguistic framing approach, (iii) the choice to apply a cross-cultural comparative analysis between the Netherlands and Spain, and (iv) the choice to take as a sample the online sports news articles of leading news papers. Supported by these four key choices, the following two research questions will be studied during this research:

Research question 1. How are sports events framed in online newspapers El País from Spain and NOS from the Netherlands?

Research question 2. How can possible differences between the online newspapers El País and NOS relate to the differences in the cultural contexts of Spain and the Netherlands?

Method

Corpus

A corpus of twenty sports news articles from a Dutch and a Spanish newspaper were used for this study. Ten Dutch news articles and ten Spanish news articles were analyzed. The online newspapers that have been used for this study are NOS and El País. NOS is a Dutch news website, and El País is a Spanish news website. Both newspapers belong to the top three best news providers in their country. NOS and El País are both national newspapers and both have online news articles. Moreover, they both exist already for a long time: El País was found in 1976 (El País, 2021) and NOS in 1969 (NOS, 2021). Regarding political orientation, NOS and El País are similar in that they are both center-left publications. The online newspapers were used because most people nowadays read the news online, so it is more relevant and there is more availability of data for online newspapers.

The time frame for the data is from 04/02/2022 until 30/09/2022. The starting date is 04/02/2022 because the Olympic Winter games started that day, so a lot of diverse sports news items were published during the weeks after this date. The end date is 30/09/2022, because this offered a time frame that is long enough to collect variated and sufficient articles. Because, after the Olympic Winter games most professional sporters had a break, so there were not too many sports events. To make sure that not only sports articles about the Olympic games were analyzed, the end date was chosen to be 30/09/2022. By choosing this as an end date, one month of regular sport competition took place, so also daily and weekly sport reporting were considered in the study.

A systemic sampling has been drawn. The data was collected online via the website www.nos.nl and www.elpaís.es. These are the original websites from the newspapers. The 'archive' function on both websites was used to find all the data. For NOS, the archive is free accessible and for El País an account has been created to access this function. The criteria for the selection of the articles are based on the study of Lee and Yang (1996). First, the articles need to be published under the heading 'sports' on the website. Second, a local journalist from the country of the newspaper needs to have written the article. Only Dutch and Spanish cultures will be compared and there will be no side effects from possible other cultures that might be involved. Furthermore, the articles have to cover sports events that were published both in the Dutch and the Spanish newspapers. Additionally, these sports events should not have taken place in either the Netherlands or in Spain and they should not report about a Spanish or Dutch national team. Selecting articles that are 'neutral' to both countries eliminates the chance of comparing emotionally biased articles. Journalists are less objective when writing about their own national teams and other side effects delude a thorough analysis. Therefore, as corpus the study has selected exclusively articles that are of sport events in which neither of both countries are actively involved. The sports articles are first-hand news reports. Headlines were excluded from this research, because they are structured differently (Ungerer, 2000), so they are not comparable with the sentences within the article and this model of analysis does not cover this different structure. The articles were selected in pairs. A pair contained one Spanish article from El País and one Dutch article from NOS. The articles in the pair were published on the same date and report about the same sports event. As a basis to select the corpus, the introduction to each article was read, in order to see whether it complies to the set criteria.

Model of analysis

This study follows a discourse analysis approach, which means that the study will be conducted in two different phases. The first phase includes textual analysis, and the second phase the contextual analysis. Below, the model of analysis of the two different phases is explained.

Phase 1. Textual analysis

The model of analysis developed by Rafiee, Spooren and Sanders (2021) was used to scrutinize the way sports events are linguistically framed in the Dutch and Spanish online newspapers. Accordingly, twenty news articles were divided into clauses. Each clause took a different row in a separate cell in the Excel document from the research. A clause was defined as "a minimal grammatical segment with a tensed verb" (Rafiee, et al., 2021, p. 7). Following Rafiee et al., (2021), three categories were used to analyze the clauses. Each category has been studied on the main news elements of the clauses which are the *actions*, *actors,* and *circumstances*.

The *actors* are defined as the people that participate in the news articles. In a sports article this can be an individual, a team, the public, or other. The subgroup 'public' is about the audience as an actor, but also about organizations who are the actor, for instance 'the UEFA'. The group 'other' contains the actors that are no human participants, because only human actors were analyzed.

The *action* describes what happened. This is categorized in performance, personal, strategy and other. 'Performance' is for instance about winning, scoring a goal or losing. Within this group a distinction has been made between positive (p) and negative (n) actions, because this shows where the journalists put the emphasis on. For instance, the journalist can report a match between France and Austria as 'France won the match', but also as 'Austria lost the match'. To mark these differences, the subgroup 'positive' and 'negative' was added to the category 'performance'. The category 'personal' is for instance about an athlete who suffers from an injury. 'Strategy' contains for instance a coach who decided to let an athlete play.

The last element, *circumstances*, is about when, where, and how the action took place. This can be divided into the subcategories: location, cause/reason, manner and other. The category 'location' also contains the words that give a description of time.

Hence, these three elements define the content of a news article and are the subject of study. In the study at hand, I apply a linguistic framing analysis to understand each of these three main news elements of *actors*, *actions,* and *circumstances*. In this order, I used three categories for each of these three news elements, e.g., *occurrence, valence,* and *prominence*.

The first category is called *occurrence*. This is about what the journalist chose to say and what he chose not to say. This category analyzes the means of selection. In other words, it divides the three groups into the subcategories that were mentioned above.

The second category is defined as *valence*.[1] This category studied the clauses on lexical level. It analyzes whether, for instance, the actors are called by their names or whether metaphors or adjectives are used to name them. Something is coded as a valence when more than the factual name of the actor, action, or circumstance is mentioned, for instance with the use of an adjective. For example, 'World champion France'. The journalist could have said 'France' but choose to put emphasis on the strength of France by naming them as 'World champion France'. Something is also coded as a valence when a metaphor is being used to describe the action or actor. For instance, 'the king of the match', the journalist could have called the athlete by its name but chose to call him with a metaphor. This shows some extra positivity or negativity about the actor. Therefore, within the category 'valence' subcategories were created; 'positive', when the description emphasizes the positive characteristics, 'negative', when the negative characteristics are being emphasized, 'neutral', when a metaphor or adjective is used but it does not make the actor, action or circumstance more negative or positive, and 'no', when no metaphor or adjective is used to describe the actor, action or circumstance.

The third category is named *prominence*. This category deals with the structure of the sentence. It shows whether the action, actor or circumstance is described in the main clause or in a subordinate clause. The structure of the sentence can put the emphasize on the goal of the action or on the quality of the action.

The first section in the appendix shows the questions and criteria that were asked to code each and every clause. By coding all the clauses of the articles via this code book the differences will become clear and to these differences the cultural dimensions can be linked.

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[1] This category of 'valence' is in the place of the category 'marked description' that was used in the model of analysis from Rafiee et al. (2021). For this study it is more relevant to study whether the main elements are positive, negative, or neutral, rather than to study whether the clause contains a marked lexical term.

Statistics

A Chi-square test was run to compare the Dutch and Spanish sports articles on the three frameworks occurrence, valence, and prominence of the three categories, actions, circumstances, and actors. If the Chi-square tests show a significant difference, the standard residuals were analyzed to study which frame causes the most differences between the two countries. When the frequencies are very low a Fisher's exact test had to be run instead of a Chi-square test (Rafiee et al., 2021)

Phase 2. Contextual analysis

To study the potential link between the cultural differences between Spain and the Netherlands and the differences between the online Dutch and Spanish newspapers, a contextual analysis was conducted. The researcher interpreted the texts based on literature research to acquaint herself with the cultural dimensions of both countries. The categories were applied based on the researcher's informal understanding and interpretation of the meaning and significance of the texts (Rafiee et al., 2021). The characteristics of these cultural differences were linked to the textual differences in the online newspapers. For instance, the category *occurrence* might say something about the cultural dimension 'high/low-context culture': If the journalist chooses to only state the facts or if the journalist decides to share a lot of background information, it might be in relation with the cultural dimension of a high or low-context culture. Or another example is that the category 'valence' might suggest a difference between the cultural dimension 'collectivism/individualism'.

Reliability

To secure the reliability of the research reference is made to the study of Rafiee, et al. (2021). The research was conducted by a native Dutch speaker with a near native Spanish knowledge. The reliability has been assured by two other coders who were trained for the coding. One coder, a native speaker of Dutch, coded two Dutch articles and the other coder, a native speaker of Spanish, coded two Spanish articles to make sure that the coding was done correctly. Moreover, Cohen's kappa was computed to check the reliability statistically. All variables with a value less than .60 were eliminated from the data (Krippendorff, 1982).

Results

The results-section elaborates on the implementation of the earlier presented model of analysis. The analysis of the data is aimed at answering the first research question about the textual analysis of the sports news articles. The section is composed of three combining parts followed by an overall summary highlighting the main results. The first main part is about the main news element of *actors*, the second about the element of *actions,* and the third part is about *circumstances.* In each part, first the table is presented which is the heart of the analysis. In these tables the frequencies and the standardized residuals are presented, followed in each part by a textual explanation on the main findings. Hence, the results of the coding of the Dutch and Spanish sports news articles and the statistical analysis can be found in this section.

Actors

Table 1. Framing of actors in Dutch and Spanish sports news articles (Dutch: N = 215, Spanish: N = 349).

	Dutch						Spanish					
	Individual		Team		Public		Individual		Team		Public	
	N	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*
Occurrence	144	-2,26	39	-1,96	32	1,79	242	1,20	66	1,13	41	-1,62
Valence	28	-1,29	8	-1,17	8	1,86	52	1,22	15	1,13	8	-1,66
Prominence	122	-1,56	34	1,55	30	1,64	181	1,48	39	-1,47	33	-1,55

Common for the journalists of both countries is that both refer the most to *individual* athletes; followed by the *teams* and mentioned least by both the Dutch and the Spanish journalist is the *public* as actor. A significant difference was found in the analysis of the table 1 for the occurrence of the type of actors ($X^2(2) = 317,93$, $p < 0.01$) between the Dutch and Spanish clauses. In other words, the Dutch journalists reported relatively less about *individual* (SR = -2,26) and *team* (SR= -1,96) and more about *public* (SR = 1,79) than the Spanish journalists.

For the next category relevant to the actors, the category *valence* and *prominence,* no significant differences were found. This means that regarding actors, Dutch and Spanish journalist do not differ significantly in describing the actors by adding a valence to it; and in giving prominence to the actor. It is noted though, that the journalists from both countries focus on the actors, as they are most of the times prominent in the sentences.

In sum, the analysis of the actors delivers two insights: (i) the *public* is significantly more discussed by the Dutch journalists, whereas the Spanish journalists report more about *individual* and *team*. And (ii) the journalists of both countries tend to focus on the actors when reporting about sports events.

Actions

Table 2. Framing of actions in Dutch and Spanish sports news articles (Dutch: N = 222, Spanish: N = 327).

	Dutch						Spanish					
	Performance		Personal		Strategy		Performance		Personal		Strategy	
	N	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*
Occurrence	87	-1,21	97	1,72	38	-1,74	133	1,17	126	-1,59	68	1,61
Valence	32	0,77	29	-0,31	8	-0,72	79	-0,44	93	0,18	33	0,42
Prominence	66	-1,02	88	1,82	28	-2,22	90	1,02	102	-1,71	55	2,04

In table 2 the results of the analysis of the main news element *actions* are shown. With respect to *occurrence*, a significant difference between Spanish and Dutch newspapers was found for the type of actions that the journalists addressed ($X^2(9) = 496,18$, $p < 0.01$). Dutch newspapers tend to write the most about *personal* actions (SR= 1,72), whereas the Spanish newspapers tend to write the most about *performance* (SR=1,17). In both countries the least reported action was *strategy* (although the standardized residuals failed to reach significance for these separate categories).

Regarding *valence*, no significant differences have been found, so the Dutch and journalists do no differ in the way they the valence of the actions.

When analyzing the last category related to actions, the category *prominence,* there is a significant difference between journalists from Spain and the Netherlands in emphasizing actions. In the sports news articles from both countries, the focus was most of the times on the action. There was a significant difference between the focus on strategic actions for Spain and the Netherlands. Spanish journalists used to focus more on actions regarding strategy (SR= 2,04) than Dutch journalists (SR= -2,22). On the other hand, Spanish journalists focused less on actions that had to do with personal issues (SR= -1,71) than the Dutch journalists (S.R.: 1,82).

In sum, framing analysis of actions showed as key finding that Dutch newspapers tend to write more about personal actions than Spanish journalists, whereas Spanish journalists

tend to write more about actions regarding performance than Dutch journalists. Additionally, both countries focus on the actions in their writing style. However, this does differ per category; Spanish newspapers focus more on actions that have to do with the strategy, whereas Dutch newspapers put more emphasis on personal actions than Spanish newspapers.

Circumstances

Table 3. Framing of circumstances in Dutch and Spanish sports news articles (Dutch: N = 152, Spanish: N = 349).

	Dutch						Spanish					
	Location		Manner		Cause/reason		Location		Manner		Cause/reason	
	N	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*	*N*	*SR*
Occurrence	114	3,23	17	-3,95	21	-1,83	191	-2,47	96	2,95	62	1,55
Valence	17	2,76	7	-2,24	3	-1,80	37	-1,90	47	1,63	20	1,41
Prominence	98	2,11	16	-2,38	17	-1,85	112	-1,94	38	2,16	33	1,72

The analysis of the last main news element *circumstances* shows (table 3) that in general Spanish news articles contain relatively more circumstances than Dutch news articles. Moreover, there is a significant relation between country and type of framed circumstantial element ($X^2(9) = 280,74$, *p* < 0.01). In both countries *location* is the most occurring circumstance. However, reference to the location occurs more often in Dutch newspapers (SR= 3,23) than in Spanish newspapers (SR= -2,47). Besides, in Spanish sports articles *manner* is the second most used circumstances (SR= 2,95). Whereas, in Dutch sports articles *cause/reason* is the second most occurring circumstance.

In addition, regarding *valence*, there was a significant relation between country and valence as well ($X^2(9) = 243,72$, *p* < 0.01). For the Spanish circumstances, categorized as *location*, the journalists put less often a value to the location (SR= -1,90) than the Dutch journalists (SR= 2,76). However, the other two categories, *manner* and *cause/reason*, were reported more with an added value by the Spanish journalists (SR= 1,63; SR= 1,41) than the Dutch journalists (SR= -2,24; SR= -1,80). So, overall, the Spanish journalists put more value to the circumstances than their Dutch colleagues.

Lastly, the *prominence* of the circumstance resulted in the finding that for the Dutch articles the emphasis was more on the location (SR= 2,11) than for the Spanish articles (SR= -1,94), whereas for the other two categories the Spanish had more focus on the circumstances *manner* (SR= 2,16) and *cause/reason* (SR= 1,72) than the Dutch (SR= -2,38) (SR= -1,85).

In sum, with respect to circumstances, Spanish articles refer to circumstances more often than Dutch sports articles. Moreover, Spanish journalists report significantly more about the *manner* than the Dutch journalist*,* whereas the Dutch journalists focus more on the *cause/reason* than their Spanish colleagues. Lastly, the Spanish news articles put more emphasis on the circumstances than the Dutch journalists for the circumstances that report something about the *manner* and *cause/reason*.

In general, the study shows significant differences between Dutch and Spanish journalists in three news elements: *actors, actions,* and *circumstances*. In presenting the *actors*, Dutch journalists reported more about the public than Spanish journalists, whereas Spanish journalists reported more about the team and individuals. In referring to *actions*, Spanish newspapers reported most about actions that described a performance, whereas the Dutch newspapers reported most about actions that described something personal. In the third and last main news element studied (*circumstances*) the Spanish newspapers reported more about the manner, while the Dutch newspapers reported more about the cause/reason.

For *valence* the differences were not significant for the actors and actions. However, regarding circumstances it was found that generally Spanish journalists add more value to the *manner* and *cause/*reason of the circumstances. For *prominence,* generally, all three categories were prominent in both countries.

Conclusion and discussion

This final section of the thesis presents the conclusion and discussion related to the research questions posed. The section is organized in the following manner. First, I recall the aim of the study and the position of the study in the existing literature, followed by the research questions to be answered. Next, the main differences and similarities are highlighted between the Dutch and the Spanish sport news articles. I try to relate these main findings to the cultural differences between the two countries. Apart from the main findings, I will also present marginal findings that the study generates with respect to differences and similarities between the sports news articles of the two countries. After these elaborations about the differences and similarities, I will complete this final section with the limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies.

In this thesis, I studied to what extent Dutch and Spanish online newspapers differ in the way that they report about sports events. Moreover, I tried to explain whether and how

these differences can be linked to the cultural differences between Spain and the Netherlands.

The study at hand is contributing to the existing body of literature in understanding the role of culture in journalism. As Rafiee et al. (2021) studied the role of culture in framing in journalism regarding crime events; the study at hand is deviating in topic giving it an added scientific relevance. My topic of study is sports articles, of which no in-depth analysis has been made so-far in their relation to the culture of a country. It is noted though, that sports articles have been studied a lot on their different structure and language use (Oates & Pauly, 2007), but the relation with culture is still missing. This is remarkable, as sports and culture are connected strongly to each other (Rowe, 2015). The study was done through an attempt for finding answers to the two research questions: *How are sports events framed in online newspapers El País and NOS? How can the differences between the online newspapers El País and NOS relate to the differences in the cultural contexts?*

To seek an answer to these two research questions, I conducted a textual analysis followed by a contextual analysis. Result of the textual analysis was that I found three main similarities between Dutch and Spanish sports news articles. The journalists from both countries write, when they report about *actors*, most about individuals, instead of the team or the public. Hence, even in articles that are about a match, or a team performance, most attention is given by the journalists to the individual athletes. Next, in both countries the news element is prominent in the clause, when they report about *actions* and *actors.* Meaning that the journalists from both countries use an active writing style, focusing on the actions and the actors. The third main similarity found is that in both countries, location is the most occurring circumstance. So, the journalists from both countries both have a tendency to write about the location or the time when they give context to the sports events.

Three main differences are found from the textual analysis. The first one is that circumstances were mostly emphasized in Spanish newspapers, while in the Netherlands there was less focus on the circumstances. This implies that Dutch journalists put less focus on the context of the sports event compared to Spanish journalists. The second main difference is that Dutch and Spanish online newspapers differentiate in the way they report the valence of the circumstances. The results show that Dutch newspapers use less biased descriptions to describe the circumstances than Spanish newspapers. In other words, Dutch journalists report about sports events in more concrete language than Spanish journalists. The third main difference is that the Dutch journalists write most about personal actions, while the Spanish write most about actions that relate to a performance.

To answer the second research question that connects the textual analysis to the cultural context, we may possibly link the main findings in similarities and differences to the different cultural dimension of Spain and the Netherlands by conducting a contextual analysis. An interesting conclusion can be made with respect to the cultural dimension of individuals versus collectivism. Spain is in comparison to other countries categorized as a collectivistic culture, which means that they focus on groups instead of individuals. Their focus is more on the 'we' instead of 'I'. This culture puts more emphasis on relationships than the individualistic culture. In contrast, the Netherlands is categorized as an individualistic culture, so people live more for themselves and care less about groups and other people. In this culture people are expected to only take care of themselves. The focus is more on the 'I' instead of the 'we'. Hence, one would expect that Spanish newspapers focus more on the teams within sports events, while Dutch newspapers would focus more on the individual athletes and the individual players within the team. Yet, the data shows no significant difference between Dutch and Spanish journalists in this respect. Both focus the most on individual actors. This is in contrast with the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1984). Hence, it might possibly be that the collectivistic culture has a limited influence on Spanish journalists in this respect.

Another link that could be made from the main findings is that Spain is seen as a high-context culture, so they depend a lot on the context of the message. They use the context to interpret the message. Another characteristic of a high-context culture is that the communication is nuanced and more difficult to enter, because the people in this culture mostly use implicit information. Whereas the Netherlands is seen as a low-context culture. In other words, Dutch people tend to communicate as directly and clearly as possible. In this culture, all of the necessary information is integrated in the exchange, which makes it easier to enter. These characteristics are in line with several findings from the study. The data analysis shows that in comparison to Spanish journalists, the Dutch tend to use less added valence. Their language use is more direct without too much context of for instance valence of the circumstances. Moreover, Dutch use less additional descriptions, such as location and time, in their reporting about sports events, which also suggests more direct and 'easy' language. Both may possibly indicate that Dutch journalists are more direct in their writings about sports events compered to the Spanish, which is aligned to the cultural disposition.

The third possible link is related to the masculine/feminine cultural dimension. Spain is known as a feminine culture attaching large value to quality of life and harmony. This culture stands for cooperation, caring and modesty; while the Netherlands are a masculine culture attaching values to status, competitiveness, and success. The masculine culture has

more preference for achievement, assertiveness, and heroism. One could expect that Dutch journalists would write most about performance, and the Spanish about the actions regarding personal issues. Yet, this was not found. The findings show the opposite. Spanish journalists write mostly about the performance, while the Dutch write most about personal actions. Again, such would indicate that the cultural masculine/feminine background of the journalists may have few effects in the writing.

With this study two additional marginal findings were found. When analyzing the texts, it was remarkable that the Spanish newspapers use a lot more literal citations, whereas the Dutch newspapers tend to rewrite a quote of an actor in their own words. Moreover, the Spanish articles were longer than the Dutch articles. The first impression is not that the Spanish newspapers use a lot more background information, so it can be interesting for future research to study the cause of this difference in length between the two countries.

Several limitations restrict the study in answering the research questions. A key limitation was that this study only studied the texts at clause level. However, an in-depth study of the article as a whole might give a different impression, and subsequently might give different results. For further research, it can therefore be interesting to do a framing analysis in which the articles are studied as a whole instead as a composition of individual sentences. A second limitation is that only one reputable newspaper in each country was selected in the corpus. Broadening this selection with more and alternative newspapers will enrich the data set and enrich the conclusion. Lastly, a limitation is that the study focusses only on the verbal text in the newspapers, so for future research it might be interesting to study images as well Because people pay a lot of attention to images, and they also make a remarkable part of news articles. It was remarkable that multiple times exactly the same images were used in the Dutch and Spanish articles. This might be worth to study.

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Appendix

Codebook

Actors

  The actor was defined as the person or object that carries out the action. This is always a noun. The question that was asked to find the actor in the sentence was 'Which participant is mentioned in the clause?'. For instance, 'Mbappe won the match', in this sentence 'Mbappe' would be the actor of the sentence. In Dutch there should always be an explicit actor in the sentence. However, in Spanish the actor does not need to be stated explicitly, it can be combined with the verb. In other words, 'yo vivo' means 'I live'. Nonetheless, 'vivo' also means 'I live', literally it would be translated as 'live', but in Spanish it is not necessary to state the personal pronoun. Therefore, in the comment section was stated whether the actor was mentioned explicitly or if it had to be extracted from the verb.

  Each actor is categorized within the category 'occurrence' as individual, team, public, or other. An actor is categorized as individual when the actor is one person, a single human. This can be for instance an athlete coach, or referee. An actor is divided to 'team' when it is a group of athletes. Two or more humans who sport together as a team. These are often called by the name of their country, but the sports team of the country is meant. For instance, 'France scored a goal', but also 'Real Madrid won the match'. The actor is categorized as 'public' when the actor is the audience that watches the sports event or is present at the sports event. Or if the actor is a sports organization. For instance, 'The British audience made a lot of noise' or 'The UEFA decided to stop it'. An actor is divided to 'other' when the actor is no human participant or if there is no concrete actor.

  To analyze 'valence' for the news element 'actors' the question was asked 'Is an adjective or metaphor used to refer to the actor?'. Within valence four subcategories were made 'positive', 'negative', 'neutral', 'no'. An actor was coded as positive when an adjective or metaphor describes the actor and puts the emphasis on the positive characteristics of the actor. For instance, 'the strong football player left the match' or 'the king of the match proved himself'. An actor was coded as negative when the adjective or metaphor puts the emphasis on the negative characteristics of the actor. For instance, 'the drama queen fell down' or 'the arrogant team won the match'. An actor was divided to the subcategory 'neutral' when an adjective or metaphor was being used to describe the actor, but it does not clearly make the actor more positive or negative. For instance 'the polish tennisplayer' or 'the 25-year old footballer'. The actor was coded as 'no' when no adjective or metaphor was used to refer to

the actor. For instance, 'Arjen Robben scored a goal'.

The last category 'prominence' was divided into 'yes' or 'no' and was analyzed using the question 'Is the actor the grammatical subject of the clause?'. An actor was coded as 'yes' when the actor was the grammatical subject of the main clause. It was divided to 'no' when the actor was not the grammatical subject of the clause.

Actions

The action was defined as the main activity that happened the clause. This always contained a verb. Additionally, a noun or adverb could belong to the verb, but at least one verb should be part of the action. When more verbs are part of the clause, it should be decided which verb describes the main action.

The question that was used to analyze the category 'occurrence' for actions was 'What action is being described in the clause?'. Within 'occurrence' four subcategories were made. The first subcategory is called 'performance'. It is coded as performance when the action has to do with an achievement. For instance, scoring, winning, losing. Within performance, there is a subcategory 'positive (p)' or 'negative (n)'. A positive performance is for instance scoring and winning. These are actions that are considered by society as good. While a negative performance would be for instance, losing or missing a goal. The second subcategory within occurrence is called 'personal'. An action is personal when it describes something personal about the actor. For instance, 'the athlete suffers from an injury' or 'she likes cake'. The third subcategory is 'strategy'. An action belongs to 'strategy' when it describes a decision or when it explains a strategy for a match. For instance, 'the coach decides to let Ronaldo play' or 'the IOC breaks its own policy by making this decision'. The last subcategory is 'other'. When the can action can not be categorized to one of the above categories, it will be categorized under the category 'other'. For instance, 'it is snowing outside'.

The second category 'valence', was analyzed for actions by using the question 'Is an adjective or metaphor used to describe the action?' and additional 'Does this make the action look more positive or negative?'. The action is considered as 'positive' when the adjective or metaphor that describes the main action puts the emphasis on the positive characteristics of the action. The use of these makes the action look stronger. For instance, 'he crowned himself to champion' or 'the points were more than welcome'. Important for this is, that the action can have a negative meaning, but the valence can still be positive or the other way around. For instance, 'Jabeur barely won the service'. The action was considered negative when the adjective or metaphor puts the emphasis on the negative characteristics of the action. For

instance, 'they were left without a hope' or 'The team played horribly bad'. The action was code as neutral when an adjective or metaphor is being used to describe the action, but it does not clearly make the action more positive or negative. For instance, 'they were playing for ages'. It is divided to 'no' when no adjective or metaphor is being used to refer to the action.

To analyze the last category, prominence, the question was asked 'Does the action appear in the main clause?'. If the answer was yes to this question, the action was coded as the category 'yes' and otherwise as the category 'no'.

Circumstances

The main element circumstances contain the circumstances under which the action took place. One clause can contain more than one circumstance. For instance, the manner of the action and the time of the action. If more than one circumstance is in the clause. The clause is analyzed as many times as there are circumstances in the clause. In other words, if there are two circumstances in the clause. The clause is copied once in a new row in Excel, so that it is in the document twice and that each circumstance has its own row.

The circumstances are divided in 'occurrence' in location, manner, cause/reason and other. The question used for this is 'Is the location, time, cause, reason, or manner of the actions mentioned in the clause?'. A circumstance belongs to location when the circumstance describes a location or time. It belongs to manner when it describes a manner, to cause/reason when it describes a cause of reason of the action. It is coded as 'other' when it can not be categorized as location, time, manner, cause, or reason.

The second category 'valence' is analyzed with the question 'Does the way the circumstances are being described imply a biased way of reporting or imply a partial view about the actor or action?'. If the adjective or metaphor puts the emphasis on the positive characteristics of the circumstance, it belongs to 'positive'. For instance, 'during the best time of his life'. It is negative when it puts the emphasis on the negative characteristics of the circumstance. For instance, 'in the bleak stadium' or 'due to horrible weather'. It was coded as neutral when the adjective or metaphor does not clearly make the circumstance more positive or negative. For instance, 'in the Dutch arena' or 'time ran out'. If no adjective or metaphor is being used to refer to the circumstance, if it is only factually described, it was coded as 'no'.

'Is the main focus of the clause on the circumstances?' is the question that was used to analyze the prominence of the circumstance. This could be coded as 'yes' or 'no'.

Additionally, to these three main categories, a column was added at the end of each table with the heading 'comments', to write down any remarkable findings that could not be categorized in one of the groups.

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Sign this *Statement of own work* form and add it as the last appendix in the final version of the Bachelor's thesis that is submitted as to the first supervisor.

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