

## Semantic and Functional Features of English Football Lexical Units

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### Annotation

This article focuses on a comprehensive analysis of the semantic and functional features of football-related lexical units in the English language. It provides an examination of football terminology through the lens of linguistic theories such as semantic field theory, prototype theory, and communicative-functional approach. The terms are categorized based on their semantic, morphological, and contextual properties, with real-life examples analyzed for each type. Findings suggest that football terminology is a significant area of study in both linguistics and translation studies.

**Keywords:** football terminology, semantic field, functional analysis, linguistic theory, prototype model.

### Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqola ingliz tilidagi futbol leksik birliklarining semantik va funksional xususiyatlarini chuqur o'rganishga qaratilgan. Unda futbol terminlarining semantik maydon, prototipik nazariya, kommunikativ-funksional yondashuv kabi lingvistik nazariyalar asosida tahlili beriladi. Terminlar ma'noviy, morfologik va kontekstual jihatlari bo'yicha guruhlarga ajratilib, har bir turga oid real misollar tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, futbol terminologiyasi tilshunoslik va tarjimashunoslikda muhim mavzulardan biri hisoblanadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** futbol terminologiyasi, semantik maydon, funksional tahlil, lingvistik nazariya, prototipik model.

### Аннотация

Данная статья посвящена всестороннему анализу семантических и функциональных особенностей лексических единиц, связанных с футболом, в английском языке. В ней рассматривается футбольная терминология с точки зрения таких лингвистических теорий, как теория семантического поля, прототипная теория и коммуникативно-функциональный подход. Термины классифицируются по их семантическим, морфологическим и контекстуальным характеристикам, при этом для каждого типа анализируются реальные примеры. Результаты исследования показывают, что футбольная терминология

представляет собой важную область изучения как в лингвистике, так и в переводоведении.

**Ключевые слова:** футбольная терминология, семантическое поле, функциональный анализ, лингвистическая теория, прототипная модель.

**Introduction.** Football is one of the most popular sports worldwide, and English football terminology is widely used in global communication. These lexical units are actively employed in media, sports commentary, social media, and language teaching. English football terms stand out due to their complex semantic layers, contextual usage, and cultural associations. Therefore, their study holds importance within the frameworks of semantic linguistics, functional linguistics, and translation theory.

The main objective of this article is to identify the semantic and functional characteristics of football-related lexical units in English, categorize them into groups, and analyze them using real textual examples.

**Methodology.** The following methods were employed in the study:

- *Semantic Field Theory* [1;42]: If terms belong to the same thematic area, they are semantically interconnected;
- *Prototype Model*[2;27]: Terms are distinguished as core (central) or peripheral members of a category;
- *Componential Analysis*: Terms were analyzed by identifying their individual meaning components;
- *Functional-Pragmatic Analysis*: Examined how terms function within specific contexts.

Sources of material included BBC Sport, Sky Sports, The Guardian Football, specialized football blogs, YouTube football commentaries, football-related dictionaries, and academic articles.

Terms were grouped based on the following criteria:

- *Type of meaning formation* (literal, figurative, metaphorical);
- *Context of use* (formal, informal, journalistic);
- *Structure and form* (single-word, compound, abbreviations).

**Results.** The vocabulary of football in English can be organized into semantic fields, or groups of words that share related meanings within the same domain. This categorization helps learners and researchers understand how football terminology functions as an interconnected system, rather than a set of isolated terms. Below are some major semantic groups identified within football vocabulary:

#### **a) Player-Related Terms**

These lexical items describe the roles and positions of individuals on the field during a match. They are essential for identifying tactical arrangements and understanding gameplay strategies. Examples:

*Goalkeeper* – the player who defends the goal and can use their hands within the penalty area;

*Defender* – a player whose main role is to prevent the opposing team from scoring;

*Striker* – a forward player, typically responsible for scoring goals;

*Winger* – a player who operates mainly near the sidelines and delivers crosses or makes runs into the box;

These terms are vital in both formal analysis and casual fan discussions.

#### ***b) Movement and Technique Terms***

This group includes action verbs that describe the technical and physical activities performed by players during the game. They are dynamic in nature and often used in play-by-play commentary or coaching instructions. Such terms help to narrate the flow and structure of the game. Examples:

*Dribble* – to move the ball forward by repeatedly kicking it lightly;

*Tackle* – to try to take the ball from an opponent;

*Pass* – to send the ball to a teammate;

*Shoot* – to strike the ball in an attempt to score;

*Cross* – to deliver the ball from the side of the field into the opponent's penalty area.

#### ***c) Result-Oriented Terms***

These terms refer to the outcomes, scores, or status of a football match. They are commonly used in sports reporting, live commentaries, and post-match discussions and reflect the result-based focus of football discourse. Examples:

*Goal* – a successful attempt to send the ball into the net;

*Score* – the act of achieving a goal;

*Win* – to be the team with the higher score at the end of the match;

*Draw* – a tied result, where both teams have equal scores;

*Equalizer* – a goal that brings the score to a tie.

#### ***d) Rules and Refereeing Terms***

This category contains words related to the regulatory framework of football, including rules, penalties, and refereeing technologies. Understanding these terms is essential for interpreting decisions made during matches. Examples:

*Offside* – a rule violation where a player is positioned improperly at the moment the ball is played;

*Foul* – an illegal action that breaks the rules of the game;

*Penalty* – a direct shot awarded after a foul inside the penalty area;

*Yellow card* – a caution given to a player by the referee;

*Red card* – a signal that a player must leave the game due to a serious offense;

*VAR (Video Assistant Referee)* – a technology used to assist referees in reviewing decisions;

These terms are central to discussions about fair play, discipline, and technological influence in modern football.

According to the prototype theory [2;63], within any conceptual category, certain members are perceived as more central or typical than others. These are known as prototype terms, while less typical, more context-specific terms are considered peripheral. For instance, in football terminology: “*Goal*” serves as a prototype term because it represents the core concept of the game - the main aim of scoring. It is widely recognized and universally applicable across all levels of the sport. In contrast, terms like “*brace*” (which refers to a player scoring two goals in a match) and “*hat-trick*” (referring to three goals scored by one player in a single match) are peripheral. They still belong to the semantic field of scoring, but they are less general and used in more specific contexts. This distinction highlights how football vocabulary can be structured around central and marginal concepts, helping linguists understand how terminology is organized cognitively and functionally.

Moreover, many football terms are used metaphorically in general English:

- a) red card – a warning or reprimand (He got a red card from the boss for being late.)
- b) kick off – to begin something (Let’s kick off the meeting with an introduction.)

These usages support the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson [3;74].

In football discourse, especially within formal communication and media reporting, abbreviations are frequently used for efficiency and clarity. These shortened forms of longer terms are especially common in written formats like match statistics, headlines, live commentary feeds, and tactical analysis. Some widely recognized examples include:

*VAR* – Video Assistant Referee: A technological system used to assist referees in decision-making.

*GK* – Goalkeeper: The player who guards the goal and is the only one allowed to use their hands within the penalty area.

*PK* – Penalty Kick: A direct shot at goal awarded for a foul within the penalty box.

These abbreviations function as lexical shortcuts and are part of the structural characteristics of football language. They not only save space in texts especially in tables and scoreboards but also enhance quick understanding, particularly for audiences already familiar with the sport. Their frequent use reflects the influence of media language, where brevity is valued, and also aligns with trends in sports journalism, which often relies on compact, visually digestible content.

**Discussion.** The lexical units used in English football terminology form a multilayered semantic system. These terms are not just isolated words; they function as essential linguistic tools for describing, analyzing, and interpreting every stage of a football match — from tactics and rules to results and player performance. In examining these units, several key aspects emerge:

### ***1. Linguistic Consistency and Terminological Precision***

In football-related discourse, maintaining clear and consistent terminology is vital. Inaccurate or vague use of terms can lead to misunderstanding, especially in media reports or international commentary. Standardized usage ensures better communication among professionals, fans, and translators.

### ***2. Cultural Component***

Some football terms carry culture-specific meanings that may differ across countries. For instance, the term “*derby*” typically refers to a match between local rival teams in the UK, such as Manchester United vs. Manchester City. However, this same term may not carry the same emotional or historical weight in other cultures unless explained.

### ***3. Pragmatic Approach - Importance of Context***

The meaning of a football term is often shaped by the context in which it appears. The same word might have different nuances depending on whether it's used in a news article, a coach's tactical explanation, or a casual fan's social media post.

Let's look study examples in real-world usage in context.

*“The striker scored a brace in the second half.”*

– In this sentence, the term brace refers to a player scoring two goals in one match. While brace is not typically listed in general English dictionaries with this specific sports-related meaning, it is widely understood in football commentary and writing. This highlights how specialized contexts can give words new or extended meanings.

*“The player was caught offside by the assistant referee.”*

– Offside is a complex and technical term in football rules. It means a player was in an illegal position when the ball was passed to them, gaining an unfair advantage. While the Uzbek translation “o'yindan tashqari holat” is commonly used, the term still requires contextual explanation, especially for learners or audiences unfamiliar with football rules.

**Conclusion.** The findings of this study demonstrate that English football terminology is more than just a collection of sports-related words. It represents a rich, layered, and dynamic system of lexical items that plays a crucial role in the discourse of sport and beyond.

***1. A Semantically Rich and Complex Lexicon*** - Football vocabulary in English comprises terms with multiple layers of meaning, often shaped by rules, player actions,

outcomes, and cultural factors. This complexity reflects the evolving nature of both the sport and its language.

**2. Greater Clarity Through Linguistic Theories** - By applying linguistic frameworks—such as semantic field theory and prototype theory—these terms become easier to interpret and organize. Theories help to categorize, explain, and distinguish core vs. peripheral terms, literal vs. metaphorical meanings, and more.

**3. Enhanced Understanding Through Functional Analysis** - A functional approach, which looks at how terms operate in context, reveals their communicative purposes—such as explaining gameplay, enforcing rules, or expressing emotional reactions in commentary. It highlights the real-world role these terms play.

**4. Importance of Cultural Equivalence in Translation** - When translating football terms into other languages, it's not enough to simply find a linguistic equivalent. One must also consider the cultural context and meaning, especially with terms like derby, brace, or offside, which may not carry the same connotation in all cultures.

By and large, studying English football terminology provides valuable insights not only for language learners and translators, but also for researchers interested in sports linguistics, intercultural communication, and domain-specific vocabulary development. It bridges the gap between language, culture, and a globally shared passion - football.

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