

# Time expressions in English and Norwegian football match reports

Minutes of action! A contrastive analysis of time expressions in English and Norwegian football match reports

Signe Oksefjell Ebeling

University of Oslo

## Abstract

This contrastive study examines the use of two time expressions – *on # minutes* and *etter # minutes* ‘after # minutes’ – in football match reports with the aim of shedding light on their conditions of use in English and Norwegian. The cross-linguistic findings suggest that the patterns are typically used to report on the achievements of players. With regard to syntax, the English pattern is clearly preferred in final position, while the Norwegian pattern is found in either initial or final position, with a slight preference for initial position. A more inconclusive difference can be noted regarding the patterns’ distribution across the 90 minutes; the English pattern is more evenly distributed across the two halves than the Norwegian one.

Keywords: contrastive analysis, English/Norwegian, football match reports, time expressions

## 1. Introduction

Previous corpus-based contrastive research involving English and Norwegian has largely focused on the language of fiction, often on the basis of the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus.<sup>1</sup> Less has been done on other text types, although several studies have emerged in recent years, such as Fløttum et al. (2006) on research articles in English, French and Norwegian, Hasselgård (2014), which includes English-Norwegian comparable newspaper data, and Rørvik & Monsen (2018) with comparable data from English and Norwegian research articles in the field of didactics. To further contribute to broadening the contrastive perspective with other text types, this paper investigates contrastive data from The English-Norwegian Match Report Corpus (ENMaRC). The ENMaRC is a comparable corpus consisting of written football match reports from two seasons in the English Premier League and the Norwegian *Eliteserie* (see further Section 3.1).

Previous contrastive studies of English and Norwegian fiction texts have shown that time adverbials are frequent in both languages (Hasselgård 2014; Ebeling & Ebeling 2017). It has also been shown that time expressions abound in other text types, notably (oral) sports commentaries (Hasselgård 2010) and football match reports (Ebeling 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the ENPC bibliography [https://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/tjenester/kunnskap/sprak/omc/enpc\\_espc\\_publications\\_2014.pdf](https://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/tjenester/kunnskap/sprak/omc/enpc_espc_publications_2014.pdf)

Drawing on findings from the abovementioned studies, and in the context of the theme of this volume – time in languages –, this study examines a set of time expressions used in online football match reports in a contrastive perspective with the aim of shedding light on their conditions of use in English vs. Norwegian. The starting point of the investigation is the most frequently occurring lexical words referring to time in a comparable corpus of English and Norwegian match reports, namely *minutes* and *minutter* ‘minutes’. By pinpointing the lexicogrammatical and phraseological characteristics of these items, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how time expressions are used to frame events in football match reports. Moreover, a detailed investigation of these patterns may also contribute to more comprehensive cross-linguistic knowledge of the use of time expressions in English and Norwegian in general.

Although initial observations of *minutes* and *minutter* in the material drawn from the ENMaRC show substantial overlap between the two languages in terms of phraseological patterning, there are also some differences worth noting. English has more different recurrent patterns with *minutes* (see Section 4), i.e. there is less variation in the Norwegian data and some patterns are unique to English. To narrow the scope, the current study focuses on the predominant pattern in each language (see Sections 4.1 and 4.2), i.e. the English sequence *on #*

*minutes* (1), and the Norwegian sequence *etter # minutter* ‘after # minutes’ (2).

(1) ... Alexis smashed home a crucial third goal *on 83 minutes*.

(AFC)<sup>2</sup>

(2) *Etter 86 minutter* fikk vi likevel en god sjanse ... (AaFK)

‘After 86 minutes got we even so a good chance’

Further observations of a subset of the data suggest that there may be interesting cross-linguistic differences in the use of the expressions and way in which events at a specific moment in time are reported, leading to the following research questions:

- a. what is the preferred placement of the time expression in the clause;
- b. which participant is most prominently taking part in the action when the time expression is used, and to what extent does the action refer to the most important part of the game, namely goal scoring;
- c. when, during the 90 minutes of a game, is the time expression typically used?

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<sup>2</sup> The identifiers in brackets after each example refer to the football clubs, e.g. AFC = Arsenal Football Club. For a full overview of all club abbreviations, see the Appendix.

With regard to question (a), previous contrastive research suggests that there may be a general difference in the placement of adjunct adverbials (including time adjuncts) between English and Norwegian (e.g. Hasselgård 2004; 2014). Norwegian has been found to more easily accept such adverbials in initial position than English, although final position seems to be preferred in both languages (Hasselgård 2014). However, a more nuanced and complex picture seems to emerge as more registers are investigated and a finer grained semantic analysis of individual adverbials are taken into consideration (see e.g. Hasselgård this volume). It will thus be interesting to see to what extent the more general trend applies to the text type studied here. Also in connection with research question (a), which is lexico-grammatical in nature, a subsidiary question of tense use will be considered, as this may have an impact on how the action is viewed.

The other questions – (b) and (c) – are narrower in scope than (a) in being less general and more specifically tied to the match report text type. To my knowledge, no previous study has addressed these two issues in a contrastive perspective.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 outlines some relevant previous contrastive research, while Section 3 is devoted to a description of the material and method used. Section 4 starts out with an overview of the patterns with *minutes/minutter* identified in the corpus,

before focusing on the most frequent ‘minute’ pattern in each language, addressing the research questions in turn. Section 4.4 includes a discussion of the main cross-linguistic findings regarding the two patterns, and finally, some concluding remarks are offered in Section 5.

## 2. Previous research

The language of sports in general, and of football in particular, has received some attention in (corpus) linguistic research, notably in the edited volumes by Lavic et al. (2008) and Callies & Levin (2019). The current paper is largely inspired by the results from two studies from these volumes: Levin (2008) and Ebeling (2019).

Drawing on material from newspapers, Levin finds that the language of English football match reports to a large extent consists of recurrent sequences of words with conventionalized functions to describe events. A telling example, illustrating this pervasive use of pre-constructed phrases in newspaper match reports, is given in Levin’s example from the British National Corpus (3), which “consists entirely of holistically stored, slightly variable items (TEAM NAME, *take the lead*, *in the nth minute* and *against the run of play*)” (Levin 2008: 151).

(3) Villa took the lead in the 15<sup>th</sup> minute against the run of play.

(BNC)

Most relevant in the current context is what Levin refers to as the ‘phraseology of football time’. Indeed, newspaper match reports seem to have developed their own register-specific phraseology to specify time. Moreover, Levin notes that “[f]ootball time is often specified in minutes” (2008: 150), and in his data the sequence *in the nth minute* is among the most common ones used to express time. Expressions with the plural *minutes* also abound, notably *the dying minutes*, *the opening minutes*, and *minutes from time*.

Ebeling (2019) is a contrastive study using material from a smaller version of the English-Norwegian Match Report Corpus than the one used in the present study. In the 2019 study, several corpus linguistic methods were explored to investigate some characteristics of the language of football match reports in English and Norwegian. Different types of frequency lists were extracted and scrutinised, pointing to some salient features emerging from word lists, n-gram lists and keyword lists in this highly specialised comparable corpus.

The n-gram lists, consisting of 3-4-grams, showed a high frequency, and great overlap, of time expressions in English and Norwegian, including *(in) the nth minute* / *i det (x) minutt*, *the first half* / *i første omgang* ‘in first half’. While both the English and Norwegian

match reporters are keen to report on when the action takes place (and the Norwegian ones more so than the English), the English reporters are also concerned with where on the pitch it happens, e.g. the 3-grams *the edge of*, as shown in example (4).

(4) Okazaki went for goal from *the edge of* the penalty area ... (MFC)

These observations are more or less in line with findings from previous contrastive studies of English and Norwegian fiction texts. For example, both Ebeling et al. (2013) and Hasselgård (2017) note that temporal expressions are more frequently used in Norwegian fiction than in English fiction, while Ebeling & Ebeling (2017) found that spatial expressions seem to be more frequently used in English fiction when compared to Norwegian fiction. The fact that these two text types (fiction and match reports) seem to behave similarly in their use of temporal and spatial expressions may point to some underlying systemic or cultural differences between English and Norwegian.

With regard to the first research question, it should be noted that Hasselgård (2004), drawing on English and Norwegian fiction data, found that Norwegian uses adjuncts, including time adjuncts, in initial position more often than English does, although the preferred position in both languages seems to be final position. In fact, adjuncts in initial position are regarded as marked themes in English (cf. Hasselgård 2014,



with reference to Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). She further observes that there are register differences in the use of adjuncts in English (cf. Hasselgård 2010). Thus, we may expect to find the Norwegian minute expression more often in initial position than the English one, although the text type may play a role in this respect.

Finally, both Levin (2008) and Ebeling (2019) note that frequently occurring sequences typically refer to goals (not) scored. This is commonly done by sequences including *net/nettet* ‘the net’ and *goal/mål*. A case in point is Levin’s example of *hit the ball in the net* = goal and *have the ball in the net* = disallowed goal. While these phraseologies may not seem to be directly relevant to the present study focusing on *minutes* and *minutter*, there is reason to believe that a time reference is often included in connection with the event of (not) scoring a goal, as shown in example (5).

- (5) ... and when he did *have the ball in the back of the net* three *minutes* after the restart, the flag was up for offside. (MU)

### 3. Material and method

#### 3.1 The corpus

The English-Norwegian Match Report Corpus (ENMaRC) is a comparable corpus of football match reports published online by the football clubs themselves. The ENMaRC contains reports from two seasons in the English Premier League (2016-17 and 2017-18) and the Norwegian *Eliteserie* (2017 and 2018).<sup>3</sup> The reason for compiling such a corpus in the first place was two-fold: a personal interest in (the language of) football and the fact that the language of football, and indeed sports in general, has been shown to be a fascinating text type from a linguistic point of view, e.g. in terms of idiomaticity, phraseology, metaphor and lexico-grammar (see e.g. the edited volumes by Lavric et al. 2008 and Callies & Levin 2019 and papers by Berg & Ohlander, e.g. 2012; 2016). To add a contrastive dimension on top of this seemed like a good avenue for further broadening our knowledge of cross-linguistic/cross-register differences and similarities between languages.

The Premier League (PL) sub-corpus contains match reports from 23 different teams, while the *Eliteserie* (ES) sub-corpus contains reports from 18 teams.<sup>4</sup> Some teams are represented with reports from both seasons, others from only one as they were either relegated from, or promoted to, the PL/ES in the 2017-18 / 2018 season. Each season,

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<sup>3</sup> The football season in England runs from August until May (hence 2016-17 and 2017-18), while the Norwegian season runs from March until November (hence 2017 and 2018).

<sup>4</sup> The sub-corpora contain 23 and 18 files, respectively, each holding all the match reports for one club.

there are 20 teams in the PL and 16 in the ES; thus, the maximum number of reports per team per season in the PL is 38 and in the ES 30. Moreover, some of the teams did not publish reports after every match, while others only published in one of the seasons covered. The difference in number of teams, as well as a notable difference in how long the reports are, has resulted in two sub-corpora of quite different sizes: the PL corpus contains roughly 990,000 words and the ES corpus contains less than a third of that, with roughly 315,000 words. For an overview of the clubs and corpus texts, see Tables A and B in the Appendix. A more detailed description of the compilation process of the ENMaRC can be found in Ebeling (2019).

### 3.2 *The method*

Being a contrastive study drawing on comparable data, the current investigation applies the following criteria of comparability to ensure a relatively sound *tertium comparationis*, i.e. “background of sameness against which [cross-linguistic] differences are to be measured” (Ringbom 1994: 738).

- text type = match reports;
- date of publication = from the same years/seasons;
- topic = football at the highest competitive level in two countries;

- situational context = written by in-house journalists primarily for fans of the respective clubs;
- object of study = most frequently occurring temporal sequences containing the cognates *minutes*/*minutter*.

Against this background of sameness, it is likely that the cross-linguistic observations will be comparable and valid.

In a bottom-up approach, AntConc (Anthony 2019) was used to extract wordlists from the English and Norwegian sub-corpora of the ENMaRC. The lists drew my attention to the plural cognate nouns *minutes* and *minutter*, which are ranked 18 in both the English and the Norwegian data, with 5,553 and 2,385 occurrences, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, *minutes* is in fact the highest ranked lexical word in the English match reports, while *minutter* is only preceded by *ballen* ‘the ball’ at rank 14 in the Norwegian ones. Thus, two seemingly identical time-referring nouns were found to be extremely frequent in the material and therefore thought to reflect the importance of situating the action on the pitch in time.<sup>6</sup> In other words, they are arguably the single-

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<sup>5</sup> The datasets have a mean of 5.8 vs. 7.1 per 1,000 s-units, respectively. The difference is not statistically significant (t-test:  $p < 0.1$ ; Wilcoxon:  $p < 0.1$ ; tests performed in R; R version 3.6.2).

<sup>6</sup> For comparison, *minutes* is found at rank 546 in the BNC (using the search engine Phrases in English, <http://phrasesinenglish.org/>), with 17,598 occurrences. The normalized frequency in the BNC overall is 20 per 100,000 words, whereas the English match reports reach a staggering 560 per 100,000 words. The text type in the BNC that has the highest attested number of *minutes* is Newspaper with 36 occurrences per 100,000 words.

most important time-framing device in these football match reports, and as such interesting to investigate further.

#### **4. Overview and analysis of ‘minute’ patterns**

It was noted above that *minutes* and *minutter* are among the most frequent words in the English and Norwegian football match reports. One explanation for this lies in the very nature of the game of football which is confined to two halves of 45 minutes each; however, there may also be a linguistic explanation for their frequent use. Sinclair (1999) and Sinclair et al. (1970/2004) argue that frequent words are frequent because they occur in frequent phrases, or “frequent phrasal constructions which express conventional pragmatic functions in text” (Stubbs 2007: Section 5; see also Summers 1996: 263). Indeed, Levin (2008) finds that the language of English football match reports to a large extent consists of recurrent sequences of words with conventionalized functions to describe events. Thus, potentially recurrent word-combinations that form more or less fixed phrases with *minutes* and *minutter* may be a contributing factor to their frequent use.

After scrutinising the use of *minutes* and *minutter* in context, using different display techniques in AntConc,<sup>7</sup> I found that Sinclair's hypothesis seems to hold. In the English match reports, more than 4,500 of the 5,553 occurrences of *minutes* occur in so-called "frequent phrases", or patterns, defined here as recurring 3-4-word sequences of which *minutes/minutter* is part. The most salient sequences with *minutes*, listed according to frequency, include:

- *on # minutes* (> 1,100 occ.)
- *with (just) # minutes V* (> 600 occ.)
- *(just) (\*/#) minutes later* (> 600 occ.)
- *after (\*) # minutes* (> 300 occ.)
- *# minutes before* (NP) (> 250 occ.)
- *# minutes after* (NP) (> 250 occ.)
- *# minutes into* NP (> 150 occ.)
- *# minutes from time* (> 150 occ.)
- *with (just) # minutes on the clock* (> 100 occ.)

As noted in the Introduction, the single-most frequent combination with *minutes* in the data is *on # minutes* with 1,114 occurrences, while the sequences *with (just) # minutes V* and *(just) (#/\*) minutes later* occur

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<sup>7</sup> Concordance lines sorting on -3L - +3R and Clusters/N-grams with *minutes/minutter* as the left-most/right-most word.

more than 600 times each in slightly different variants; in Erman & Warren's (2000: 40) terms they are "extendible" in that they allow optional elements. The most frequent English pattern is only extendible insofar as the # represents different numbers. Examples (6) and (7) show two typical variants of the former pattern and (8) and (9) two variants of the latter.

- (6) Puel made his second change *with 16 minutes remaining*, ... (SFC)
- (7) ... had the ball in the net *with just three minutes played* ... (MFC)
- (8) *Five minutes later*, City doubled their advantage. (SFC)
- (9) Palace needed a quick response, and thankfully they got it *just a couple of minutes later* ... (CPFC)

Similarly, Norwegian *minutter* is found in recurrent patterns in more than 1,900 out of the 2,385 occurrences. The most frequent ones include:

- *etter* (\*) # *minutter* 'after (\*) # minutes' (> 850 occ.)
- # *minutter senere* '# minutes later' (> 350 occ.)
- # *minutter før* NP '# minutes before NP' (> 250 occ.)
- # *minutter etter* NP '# minutes after NP' (> 100 occ.)
- # *minutter ut i* NP '# minutes into (lit.: out in) NP' (> 100 occ.)

*Etter* (\*) # *minutter* is by far the most frequent recurrent sequence in the Norwegian data; although it is extendible, it most often occurs with no intervening item between the preposition *etter* ‘after’ and # *minutter*, as in example (10). However, some extensions can be noted, with adverbs such as *bare* and *kun* ‘only/just’, as in (11).

(10) *Etter 50 minutter* må Kalludra byttes ut på grunn av en skade.

(KFK)

‘After 50 minutes Kalludra has to be replaced because of an injury’

(11) ... og SF var i ledelsen *etter kun tre minutter*. (SF)

‘... and SF were in the lead after just three minutes’

It is worth noting that, although both Levin (2008) and Ebeling (2019) comment on the frequent use of MINUTE/MINUTT, neither comment on the plural forms of the lemmas in the most frequently attested patterns in the current material. This may have to do with the methods used for extracting and identifying patterns or, in the case of Levin, the material investigated – in his case newspapers.

There are some notable differences between the phraseological patterning in the English and Norwegian match reports. First, the lists above are only intended to give a snapshot of the patterns, with a cut-off



point of roughly 100 occurrences, and are therefore not exhaustive. The general tendency, taking all identified patterns into account, is for English *minutes* to enter into more different patterns than Norwegian *minutter*; between 15 and 20 for *minutes* and between 7 and 9 for *minutter*, depending on the exact cut-off point for something to count as a pattern.<sup>8</sup> This discrepancy in the number of patterns suggests that there is less variation in the potential for patterning with *minutter* compared to *minutes*. While this could possibly be attributed to the higher overall frequency of *minutes*, I would argue that, with the number of occurrences attested for *minutter*, most possible patterns would have revealed themselves in the amount of data at hand.

Second, comparing the lists of the most frequent patterns, we can note that all the Norwegian ones have formally similar and intuitively semantically equivalent or corresponding patterns in English, e.g. *etter # minutter*  $\approx$  *after # minutes*; *# minutter senere*  $\approx$  *# minutes later*. Further, two of the nine most frequent patterns with *minutes* seem to be unique to English: *on # minutes* and *# minutes from time*, whereas *with (just) # minutes V* and *with (just) # minutes on the clock* have similar realizations in Norwegian that do not reach the threshold of 100 occurrences: *med # minutter igjen V* ‘with # minutes left V’ and *med # minutter igjen på klokka* ‘with # minutes left on the clock’. It is hard to

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<sup>8</sup> An exact cut-off point has not been set for the purpose of this study, but to qualify as a pattern the 3-4-grams have to recur in identical form and be used by several clubs.

determine why two of the English patterns do not have direct counterparts in Norwegian, and we can only conclude that they are lexicalized in English and not in Norwegian in this corpus. Thus it has to do with idiomaticity and preferred ways of saying things.

However, as noted, both languages have a clearly preferred ‘minute’ pattern – *on # minutes* and *etter (\*) # minutter*, accounting for 20% and 36% of all occurrences of *minutes* and *minutter*, respectively. These patterns will be the focus of the contrastive case study described below in order to establish to what extent they are employed similarly or differently when referring to the action on the pitch.

#### *4.1 The preferred patterns in English and Norwegian: Position in clause and tense*

This section gives a more detailed account of the *on # minutes* and *etter # minutter* patterns, focusing on the first of the three points of potential cross-linguistic interest mentioned in the Introduction, namely (a) placement of the pattern in the clause and the tense it combines with.

First, the number of occurrences of the two patterns in initial, medial and final position was registered. Initial is defined as before the subject, medial as between the subject and main verb, and final as

following the main verb and other obligatory syntactic elements.<sup>9</sup>

Examples (12)-(17) illustrate the three positions of *on # minutes* and *etter # minutter* in the material.

- (12) *On 75 minutes* Bolasie combined with Lukaku before shooting over ... (AFCB)
- (13) ... a neat Hughes pass *on 14 minutes* found Richarlison near the left edge of ... (TH)
- (14) ... Bournemouth went close to doubling their lead *on 24 minutes*. (HC)
- (15) *Etter 24 minutter* var det tid for Samuel igjen. (VFK)  
'After 24 minutes it was time for Samuel again'
- (16) ... da Sandefjord *etter 56 minutter* for første gang i kampen gikk opp i ledelsen. (STB)  
'... when Sandefjord after 56 minutes for the first time in the match took the lead'
- (17) Brann får en stor sjanse *etter 17 minutter*, ... (TIL)  
'Brann gets a big chance after 17 minutes'

As shown in Figure 1, the tendency for the English *on # minutes* pattern is quite clear: final position is by far the preferred position. It is similar,

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<sup>9</sup> See Hasselgård, section 4.1 this volume, for a detailed description of the three positions in the two languages.

in this respect, to the ‘on weekday’ adverbial in newspapers, analysed by Hasselgård (this volume: see her Figure 5).

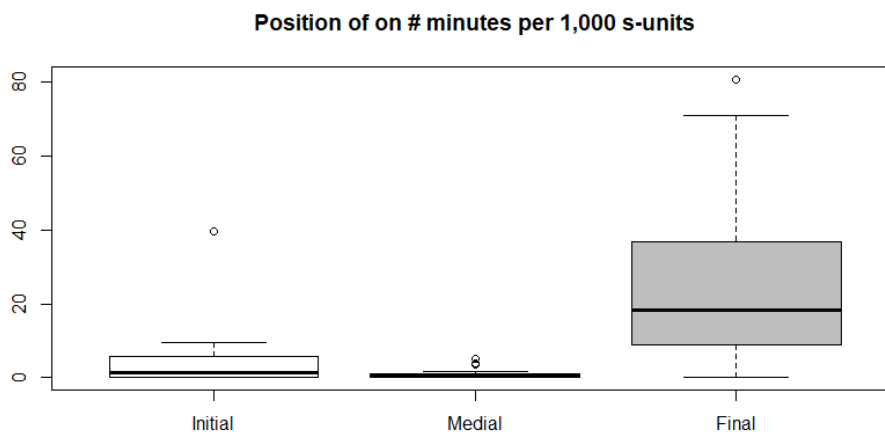


Figure 1. Position in clause of *on # minutes* per 1,000 s-units.

While the distribution of instances for final position ranges from 0-80 per 1,000 s-units (orthographic sentence) across the 23 PL files, with a median of almost 20, the median for initial is just above 1, and medial position is really marginal, with a median of 0.6.

The picture for the Norwegian *etter # minutter* pattern is quite different, as shown in Figure 2.

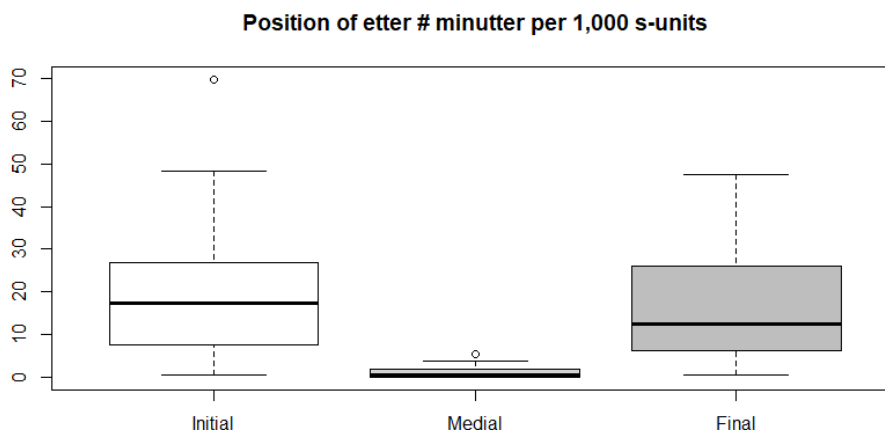


Figure 2. Distribution of *etter # minutter* according to position in the clause

In terms of position in the clause, *etter # minutter* seems to go as easily in initial as in end position. The plot in Figure 2 only suggests a slightly higher median for initial position per 1,000 s-units (17.4 for initial and 12.5 for final), and the difference is not statistically significant between initial and final (Wilcoxon:  $p = 0.35$ ;  $r = 0.2$ ).<sup>10</sup>

Although the match reports are written immediately after the games are finished, it is relevant, and potentially interesting, from a cross-linguistic point of view to compare the use of tense with the most frequent ‘minute’ patterns.<sup>11</sup> Will the past time setting of the reports automatically trigger the past tense or do the journalists resort to the

<sup>10</sup> As there are only 18 data points in the material, these measures should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Mats Johansson for suggesting this.

historic present to report on past events? The historic present is conventionally used “to make the narrative appear more vivid by assimilating it to the here-and-now of the speech act” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 130). With this in mind, the tense was also recorded as part of the lexico-grammatical description of the two main ‘minute’ patterns, as this may further shed light on the patterns’ conditions of use.

It can be noted that the past tense is overwhelmingly used in *on # minutes* contexts, as in examples (12)-(14). In fact, only one instance of the present tense was found in sentences containing the pattern, which incidentally is found in a list of key points in one of the match reports (18).

(18) - Sturridge opens scoring *on 35 minutes* from magnificent Coutinho pass. (LFC)

The remaining 1,113 sentences with *on # minutes* contain a simple past tense form in the main clause (19) or, in the surrounding sentences, in the case of modal verb phrases, (20).

(19) This, however, was always going to be Pablo Zabaleta’s night, with the Argentine cult hero coming on to a standing ovation *on 62 minutes* ... (MC)

(20) ... a fierce strike punched wide by Lukasz Fabianski, and then forced the keeper to stretch and gather a dangerous low centre at the second attempt. The Pole **could** do nothing about our opener *on 18 minutes*, however. His defence failed to fully clear a testing Branislav Ivanovic cross, ... (CFC)

Tense choice with *etter # minutter* is slightly different; although the past tense is clearly favoured (with 666 occurrences), as in examples (15)-(17), the present tense also features (195 occurrences), as shown in example (21).<sup>12</sup>

(21) *Etter 75 minutter kommer* også den etterlengte [sic] scoringen.

(OBK)

After 75 minutes comes also the long-awaited goal

However, it is important to note that as many as 77 of the 195 instances of the present tense are found in the reports from one club, namely Kristiansund (KBK). Nevertheless, the present tense has been used by 11 out of the 18 clubs, suggesting that it is not a feature that is exclusive to one individual team or journalist.

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<sup>12</sup> The remaining 14 sentences that contain *etter # minutter* do not contain a verb (e.g. *Kjempemulighet etter 32 minutter*. (STB) 'Great chance after 32 minutes!'); the surrounding sentences contain a verb in the present tense in two cases and the past tense in 12 cases.

4.2 *The preferred patterns in English and Norwegian: Participants*

When it comes to research question (b), on the use of the *on # minutes* and *etter # minutter* patterns and the kinds of participants that are most prominent in the action reported, these are typically (part of) the subject and include Player, Event, Home team, Away team and Other.

Examples of each category is given in (22)-(31):

Participants:

- Player
  - (22) Sterling was again unlucky *on 55 minutes* ... (EFC)
  - (23) *Etter 36 minutter* var Erik Brenden nær ved å sette inn utlikningen. (LSK)  
  
'After 36 minutes Erik Brenden was close to score the equalizer'
- Event (typically an inanimate entity in contexts with no clear/explicit animate (human) participant involved)
  - (24) The winner arrived *on 88 minutes* in fortunate fashion ... (EFC) (*winner* = 'match-winning goal')
  - (25) Forsøket i tverrliggeren *etter 25 minutter* var den største. (OBK)



‘The attempt in the crossbar after 25 minutes was the biggest’

- Home team (team writing the report)
  - (26) The Foxes were in front *on six minutes* ... (LC)
  - (27) Men *etter 20 minutter* tok LSK likevel ledelsen. (LSK)  
‘But after 20 minutes LSK took the lead even so’
- Away team (the opposition of the team writing the report)
  - (28) Everton were level *on 77 minutes* ... (AFCB)
  - (29) Aalesund var farlig frempå *etter 38 minutter* ... (VIF)  
‘Aalesund were dangerously advancing after 38 minutes’
- Other (spectators, manager, referee)
  - (30) They were out of their seats *on 75 minutes* ... (WFC)
  - (31) *Etter tolv minutter* trodde de fremmøtte at hjemmelaget hadde tatt ledelsen. (S08)  
‘After twelve minutes those present thought that the home team had taken the lead’

From Figures 3 and 4 below it becomes quite clear that the players are in focus and referred to when something happens *on* or *etter* ‘after’ a given minute of the game in both English and Norwegian.

Events, home team and away team are given more or less equal attention in the match reports, while other participants are only occasionally referred to.

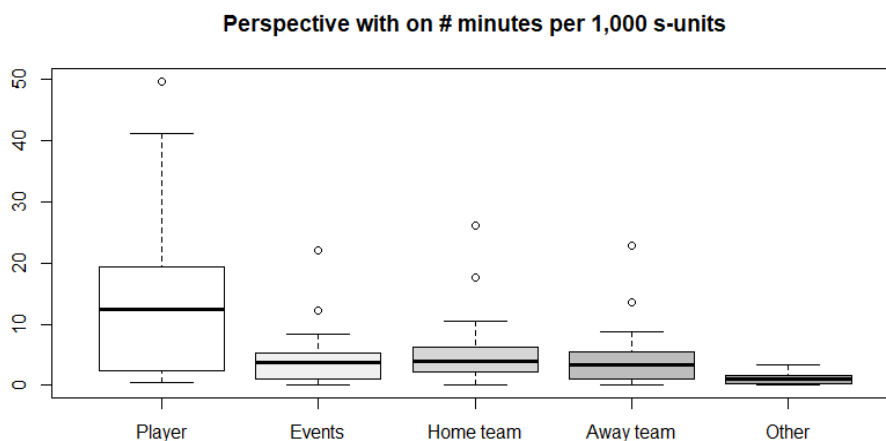


Figure 3. Participant involved in contexts with *on # minutes* per 1,000 s-units

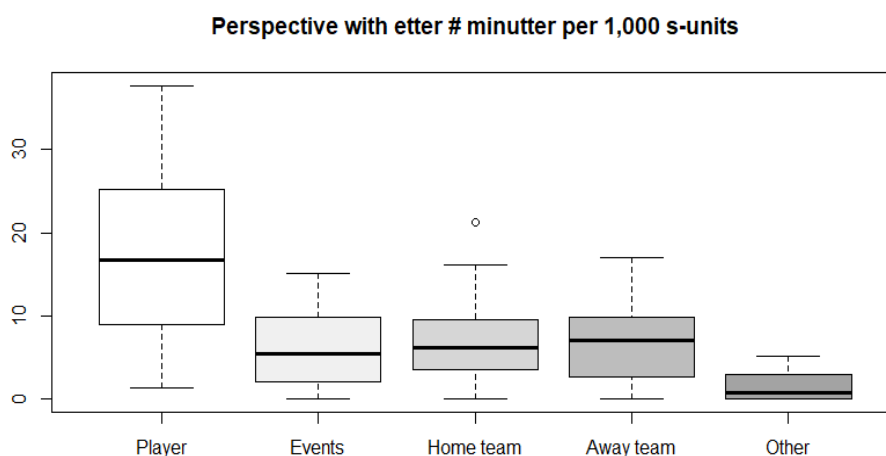


Figure 4. Participants with *etter # minutter* per 1,000 s-units

4.3 *The preferred patterns in English and Norwegian: When are the expressions used?*

Since the minute is clearly of the essence in football, it is relevant to produce a minute-by-minute timeline for the patterns to establish if there are specific minutes that are more prominent than others, i.e.

which of the 90 minutes is most often referred to in the match reports.

Thus, with reference to research question (c) above, when, during the 90 minutes of a game, is the pattern used? Figure 5 outlines the trend for the *on # minutes* pattern.

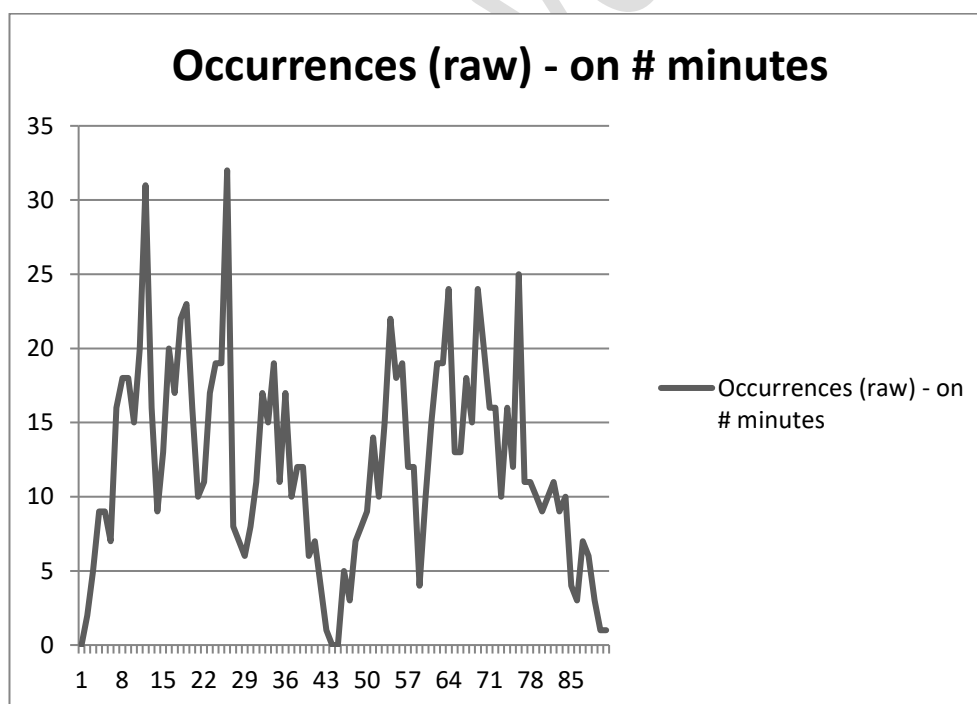


Figure 5. Occurrences of *on # minutes* distributed across 90+ minutes

*On # minutes* seems to be used to report equally frequently on the action in the two halves, peaking at certain intervals: around the 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> minute in the first half and the 55<sup>th</sup>, 65<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup> and 77<sup>th</sup> minute in the second half. It is also worth noting that the pattern is not used beyond the 90-minute mark.

When it comes to the Norwegian pattern, Figure 6 shows that the use of *etter # minutter* peaks in the beginning of the games, as well as after around 20 minutes. It does not feature as prominently in the second half, but has a slight peak around the 65<sup>th</sup> minute, and, although not frequently used beyond 90 minutes, there are a handful of examples where this is the case, e.g. *etter 92 minutter*.

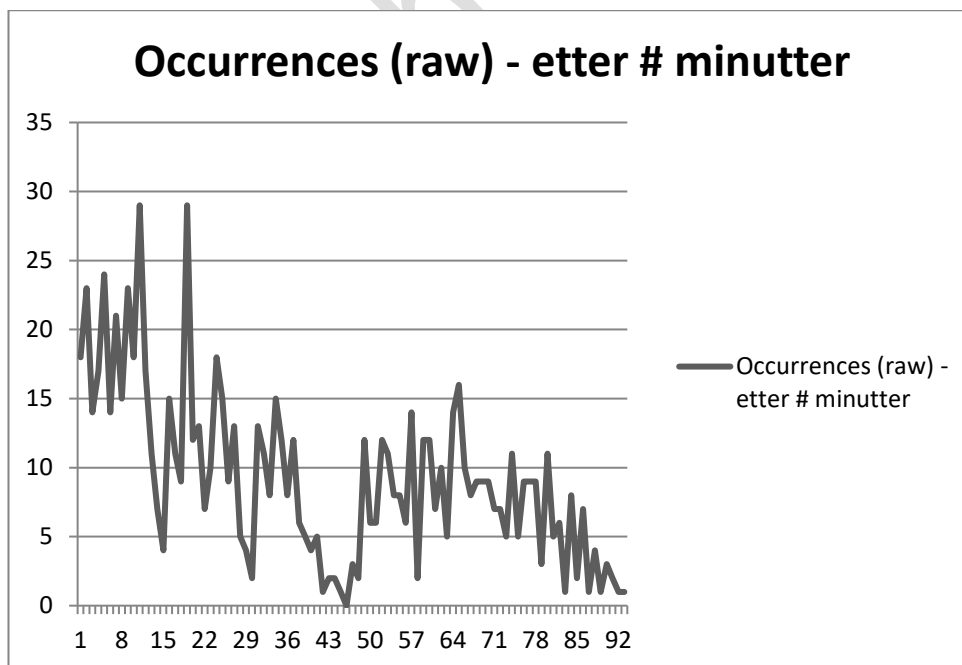


Figure 6. Occurrences of *etter # minutter* distributed across 90+ minutes

As a natural extension of the use of these expressions during a game, it is of interest to explore the extent to which the *on # minutes* and *etter # minutter* patterns are used in connection with the most important thing in football, namely to score goals (see the brief discussion on this towards the end of Section 2). In the Premier League material, *on # minutes* is indeed used in connection with scoring goals, as in example (32), but more often it is used in contexts referring to other events (665 vs. 449 occurrences, i.e. 60% of the cases), as in examples (33) and (34).

(32) Everton added a third *on 79 minutes...* (MC)

(33) We almost added a third *on 68 minutes...* (TH)

(34) Lys Mousset was introduced from the bench *on 58 minutes...*  
(AFCB)

In other words, the action taking place on a specific minute most often refers to some other aspect that is considered important to report on, e.g. missed opportunity (33), substitution (34), etc. Admittedly, example (33) is concerned with the goal-scoring part of the game, but as a goal was not actually scored, examples like this were considered as part of the “goal-not-scored” category.

In the *Eliteserie* material, *etter # minutter* is also used to report both on goals scored and other events taking place on the pitch, as in

examples (35) and (36), respectively. However, there is a clear tendency to use the pattern to refer to events that do not involve a goal. In fact, this is the case in 72% of the occurrences (633 vs. 242).

(35) Stølås' scoring *etter 55 minutter* ble matchavgjørende ... (VIF)

Stølås' goal after 55 minutes was match decisive ...

(36) En hands i feltet førte til straffespark *etter 32 minutter* ... (RBK)

A handball in the area led to a penalty after 32 minutes ...

#### *4.4 Discussion of the preferred patterns in a contrastive perspective*

The most commonly used 'minute' pattern in Norwegian is proportionally more frequent than the most common pattern in English, with 38 vs. 30 occurrences per 1,000 s-units, respectively. This is in line with previous cross-linguistic findings that report on the use of time adverbials in English vs. Norwegian (Ebeling et al. 2013; Hasselgård 2017; see also Hasselgård, this volume, section 5.1).<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the two patterns clearly represent the preferred phraseology of football (minute) time in their respective languages, and are as such comparable.

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<sup>13</sup> However, according to a Wilcoxon rank sum test, the difference is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.1$ ).

It is also interesting to note that the most frequent patterns in the two languages differ in one important aspect, namely the prepositions: *on* vs. *etter* ‘after’. The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s entry for *on* includes the definition “[o]f time, or action implying time [...] [i]ndicating the day or part of the day when an event takes place; = [...] on the instant”. In other words the English pattern is arguably more focused on a point in time than the most frequent Norwegian pattern, where *etter* suggests that the focus is more generally to report on a past event, i.e. something that follows a completed event in the past (cf. *etter* 1.1.4, *Det Norske Akademis Ordbok*). However, in the current context, *on* seems to be close in meaning to *etter*, but further study is needed to establish this with more certainty.

In the Introduction, three potential cross-linguistic points of difference between the two languages were put forward on the basis of preliminary observations of the data, forming the basis for the research questions. Drawing on the full data set it has become clear that the main contrastive difference in the use of the two patterns applies to the first point, namely position in the clause. While the English pattern is overwhelmingly preferred in final position, the Norwegian pattern is more evenly distributed between initial and final, being marginally preferred in initial position. The difference in use of initial position of the English and Norwegian expressions is visualised in Figure 7.

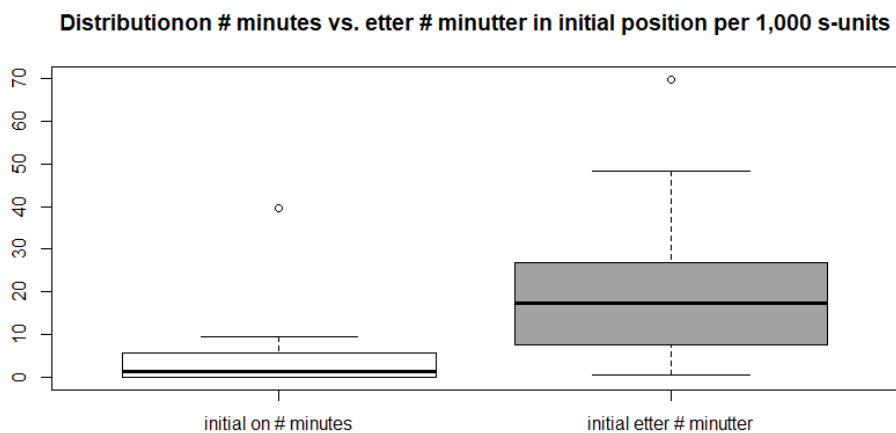


Figure 7. Distribution of initial *on # minutes* vs. initial *etter # minutter* per 1,000 s-units

There is no marked difference in use of final position, as shown in Figure 8.

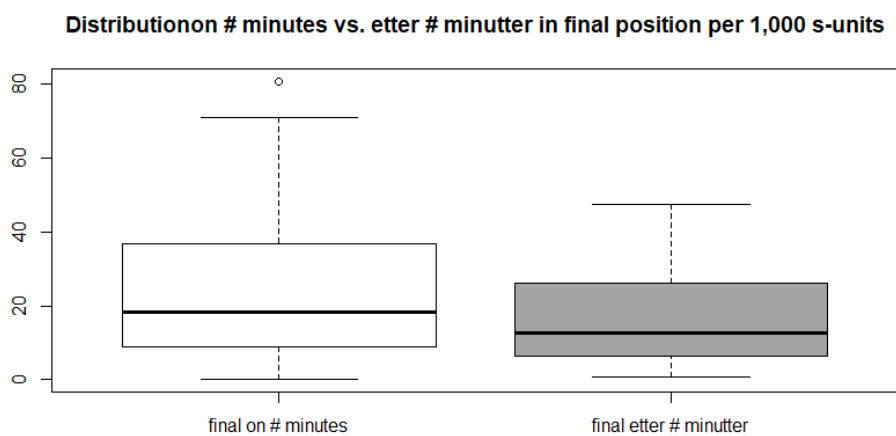


Figure 8. Distribution of final *on # minutes* vs. final *etter # minutter* per 1,000 s-units



The finding regarding the preferred positions of these time expressions in a highly specialised text type reflects results from previous contrastive studies of English and Norwegian, where it has been noted that adjuncts occur more naturally in initial position in Norwegian than in English (e.g. Hasselgård 2014). A possible reason for this could be the tendency in Norwegian to use initial adjuncts for discourse-linking purposes (ibid.: 74). However, the fact that the *etter # minutter* pattern occurs slightly more often in initial position than in final position in the Norwegian match reports suggests that this text type deviates from the norm, at least in Norwegian. Thus, while the current study contributes further evidence to there being a difference between the two languages when it comes to (time) adverbial placement, this difference is even more pronounced in the match reports for these two ‘minute’ patterns, and as such this text type is even more prone to using such patterns as a linking (and structuring) device in Norwegian.

Some minor differences were noted with regard to tense use with the patterns; English exclusively uses the past tense with *on # minutes*, whereas there was some more variation in Norwegian, where both the past and present were represented with *etter # minutter*. As (live) sports commentaries are often set in the present tense, one might have expected that the match reports in the ENMaRC, being written immediately after, or even during, the games, would resort to the

immediacy of the historic present. While this does not seem to be the case in the English match reports, could it be that this text type is considered to be more involved (/oral) in nature in Norwegian, and as a result the historic present is more frequently used to report on past events?

Contrary to expectations based on a smaller data set, there were no marked differences in participant prominence in sentences in which the two 'minute' patterns occur. The journalists most often report on what the players do in both languages. Other perspectives, such as events, home and away team were less, but similarly used in the two languages.

Regarding the question of which minutes the patterns typically refer to, some differences between *on # minutes* and *etter # minutter* were noted. The English pattern is more evenly distributed across the 90 minutes of a game than the Norwegian pattern. There is no reason to believe that events worth reporting on are more evenly distributed in the PL compared to the ES. At this stage we can only speculate whether there may be a functional difference between the two patterns or whether Norwegian makes use of other time expressions in the second half. To determine this with any certainty lies outside the scope of the current investigation.

Finally, both 'minute' patterns are more often used in connection with events that do not involve goals being scored, and more so with the

Norwegian pattern (72% of the cases) than the English one (60%). The difference between the Norwegian and English pattern could be related to the fact that the Norwegian one is potentially more general than the English one, in the sense that the latter may be considered more dramatic as it (grammatically) refers to a point in time rather than a finished past event, which is the case for *etter # minutter*. It could also be the case that the English pattern is more specialized in the sense that it is more tied to a text type reporting on football or, more broadly, sports in general. An investigation of this claim has to await further study, though.

Following the above analysis and discussion, the typical use of the English *on # minutes* pattern can be summarized in the following way:

- Final position
- Past tense
- Player in focus
- Relatively even distribution across the 90 minutes, with noticeable peaks in each half
- Goal not scored

And similarly for the Norwegian *etter # minutter* pattern:

- Initial or final position
- Past (and present) tense

- Player in focus
- More frequently used, and with more peaks, in the first half
- Goal not scored

To illustrate these cross-linguistic tendencies, a typical example with *on* # *minutes* is given in (37) (**player participant**, *past tense*, *no goal*, ***final position*** and ***second half***) and with *etter* # *minutter* in (38) (**player participant**, *past tense*, *no goal*, ***initial position*** and ***first half***).

(37) **Jesus** *blazed wide* when clean through ***on 64 minutes***, ... (TH)

(38) *Etter 12 minutter fikk **Lehne Olsen** en mulighet etter et godt innlegg fra venstre kant, men headingen gikk over mål.*

‘After 12 minutes got Lehne Olsen a chance after a good cross from the left winger but the header went over goal’

## 5. Concluding remarks

Drawing on material from a comparable corpus of online football match reports, this contrastive study started out by identifying the most frequent time-referring items in the English and Norwegian reports. The word forms *minutes* and *minutter* were selected for further scrutiny, and

it was suggested that they feature so prominently in match reports because they are often used as part of frequent recurring phrases.

Thus, the current study lends support to Levin's (2008: 150) observation with regard to the phraseology of football time; it is often specified in minutes. This phenomenon does not only apply to English, but seems to be valid for other languages as well, as attested by the frequent use of both English *minutes* and Norwegian *minutter* as part of recurring phrases in football match reports.

The conditions of use of the two most frequent 'minute' patterns in the two languages – *on # minutes* and *etter # minutter* – were found to be very similar. Both were typically found to be used in contexts where the event was seen from a player perspective and did not involve a goal scored. The main difference was found to be syntactic in nature, with the English pattern typically occurring in final position and the Norwegian pattern being divided between initial and final position with a slight preference for initial. This finding is not in full accordance with previous cross-linguistic studies of adverbial placement in English and Norwegian, but strengthens the view that there is a contrastive difference between the two languages in this regard, possibly due to text type and the actual time expressions under investigation. It would be interesting, in a future study, to check to what extent there is a correlation between type of participant and placement of the time expressions in the clause.

The study also uncovered some differences regarding tense use with the ‘minute’ patterns. Although the past tense is the favoured choice in both languages, the Norwegian pattern more readily seems to combine with the historic present, which arguably reports events more vividly (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 130).

A more inconclusive difference was noted when it came to the patterns’ distribution across the 90 minutes, where the English pattern was found to be more evenly distributed across the two halves than the Norwegian one. A more in-depth study is needed to find out whether the distribution reflects other (functional) differences between the two patterns.

Another avenue for further study would be to take a closer look at the English pattern that is formally congruent to the Norwegian *etter # minutter*, namely *after # minutes*. As the contrastive focus in this study was on the most frequent ‘minute’ patterns in the two languages, such a comparison had to be left out. However, we can already conclude that the two intuitively similar patterns differ with regard to how often they are used, which is an interesting starting point for a future contrastive study of the two.

Beyond the concrete contrastive findings regarding the use of ‘minute’ patterns in English and Norwegian, this study has demonstrated the potential of a carefully constructed comparable corpus for use in contrastive analysis between languages. Investigating a

hitherto underexplored text type in an English-Norwegian context, the study has contributed further insights into previously held cross-linguistic views at a more general linguistic level.

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**Appendix**

Table A Overview of Premiership teams, URLs and s-units in the individual corpus files (setting: hide tags only)

Corpus id. / Club abbr. <sup>14</sup>	Team	URL	# of reports	# of s-units (AntConc counts)	# of tokens (AntConc counts)	# of types (AntConc counts)
AFC	Arsenal	<a href="http://www.arsenal.com/">http://www.arsenal.com/</a>	76	2,465	49,594	4,117
AFCB	Bournemouth	<a href="http://www.afcb.co.uk/">http://www.afcb.co.uk/</a>	76	2,015	51,700	3,782
BHA	Brighton & Hove Albion	<a href="https://www.brightonandhovealbion.com/">https://www.brightonandhovealbion.com/</a>	38	817	24,067	2,312
BFC	Burnley	<a href="http://www.burnleyfootballclub.com/">http://www.burnleyfootballclub.com/</a>	76	1,911	60,884	4,336
CFC	Chelsea	<a href="https://www.chelseafc.com/">https://www.chelseafc.com/</a>	64	2,433	61,506	4,268
CPFC	Crystal Palace	<a href="http://www.cpfc.co.uk/">http://www.cpfc.co.uk/</a>	74	1,184	49,880	3,841
EFC	Everton	<a href="http://www.evertonfc.com/">http://www.evertonfc.com/</a>	76	2,623	70,641	5,364
HT	Huddersfield Town	<a href="https://www.htafc.com/">https://www.htafc.com/</a>	38	1,441	45,388	4,121
HC	Hull City	<a href="http://www.hullcitytigers.com/">http://www.hullcitytigers.com/</a>	37	923	24,470	2,132
LC	Leicester City	<a href="http://www.lcfc.com/">http://www.lcfc.com/</a>	37	920	23,412	2,480
LFC	Liverpool	<a href="http://www.liverpoolfc.com/">http://www.liverpoolfc.com/</a>	62	1,763	41,089	3,446

<sup>14</sup> FC in the abbreviations stands for “Football Club”, while AFC stands for “Association Football Club”, with the exception of Arsenal Football Club (AFC).

## Time expressions in English and Norwegian football match reports

MC	Manchester City	<a href="http://www.mancity.com/">http://www.mancity.com/</a>	76	2,204	52,690	4,251
MU	Manchester United	<a href="http://www.manutd.com/">http://www.manutd.com/</a>	76	1,772	51,000	4,204
MFC	Middlesbrough	<a href="http://www.mfc.co.uk/">http://www.mfc.co.uk/</a>	38	1,018	25,161	2,747
NU	Newcastle United	<a href="https://www.nufc.co.uk/">https://www.nufc.co.uk/</a>	38	813	20,265	2,409
SFC	Southampton	<a href="https://southamptonfc.com/">https://southamptonfc.com/</a>	75	1,847	51,658	3,987
SC	Stoke City	<a href="http://www.stokecityfc.com/">http://www.stokecityfc.com/</a>	73	1,164	40,102	3,713
SAFC	Sunderland	<a href="https://www.safc.com/">https://www.safc.com/</a>	38	909	27,144	3,133
SCAFC	Swansea City	<a href="http://www.swansea-city.net/">http://www.swansea-city.net/</a>	76	1,853	41,754	3,283
TH	Tottenham Hotspur	<a href="http://www.tottenhamhotspur.com/">http://www.tottenhamhotspur.com/</a>	75	2,647	61,895	3,698
WFC	Watford	<a href="https://www.watfordfc.com/">https://www.watfordfc.com/</a>	74	2,338	54,508	4,463
WBA	West Bromwich Albion	<a href="http://www.wba.co.uk/">http://www.wba.co.uk/</a>	74	968	25,917	2,510
WHU	West Ham United	<a href="http://www.whufc.com/">http://www.whufc.com/</a>	70	1,360	36,743	3,202
Total					991,468	

Table B Overview of *Eliteserie* teams, URLs and s-units in the individual corpus files<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> One Norwegian club did not publish any match reports online (FK Haugesund) and is therefore not represented in the ENMaRC.

## Time expressions in English and Norwegian football match reports

Corpus id. / Club abbr. <sup>16</sup>	Team	URL	# of reports	# of s-units (AntConc counts)	# of tokens (AntConc counts)	# of types (AntConc counts)
AaFK	Aalesund	<a href="http://www.aafk.no/">http://www.aafk.no/</a>	30	1,060	16,903	2,563
BG	Bodø-Glimt	<a href="https://www.glimt.no/">https://www.glimt.no/</a>	18	553	6,593	1,281
SKB	Brann	<a href="https://www.brann.no/">https://www.brann.no/</a>	30	989	10,978	1,737
KBK	Kristiansund	<a href="http://www.kristiansundbk.no/">http://www.kristiansundbk.no/</a>	56	1,922	26,421	3,156
LSK	Lillestrøm	<a href="http://www.lsk.no/">http://www.lsk.no/</a>	59	1,836	21,795	2,631
MFK	Molde	<a href="https://www.moldefk.no/">https://www.moldefk.no/</a>	24	519	6,951	1,469
OBK	Odd	<a href="http://www.odd.no/">http://www.odd.no/</a>	58	1,957	23,975	3,721
RF	Ranheim	<a href="http://www.ranheimfotball.no/">http://www.ranheimfotball.no/</a>	30	1,107	14,386	2,008
RBK	Rosenborg	<a href="http://www.rbk.no/">http://www.rbk.no/</a>	58	1,050	16,723	2,138
SaF	Sandefjord	<a href="http://www.sandefjordfotball.no/">http://www.sandefjordfotball.no/</a>	55	1,192	18,081	2,634
S08	Sarpsborg 08	<a href="http://www.sarpsborg08.no/">http://www.sarpsborg08.no/</a>	60	1,918	25,596	3,206
SoF	Sogndal	<a href="http://www.sogndalfotball.no/">http://www.sogndalfotball.no/</a>	29	384	4,900	1,185
STB	Stabæk	<a href="http://www.stabak.no">http://www.stabak.no</a>	54	1,095	15,763	2,652
IKS	Start	<a href="http://www.ikstart.no/">http://www.ikstart.no/</a>	30	1,435	16,273	1,954

<sup>16</sup> FK in the abbreviations stands for *fotballklubb* ‘football club’, BK stands for *ballklubb* ‘ball club’, IF and IL stand for *idrettsforening/idrettslag* ‘sports club’, and F stands for *fotball* ‘football’.

Time expressions in English and Norwegian football match reports

SIF	Strømsgodset	<a href="http://www.godset.no/">http://www.godset.no/</a>	57	1,448	22,940	2,512
TIL	Tromsø	<a href="http://www.til.no/">http://www.til.no/</a>	57	2,016	26,504	2,489
VFK	Viking	<a href="http://www.viking-fk.no/">http://www.viking-fk.no/</a>	30	1,120	17,551	2,464
VIF	Vålerenga	<a href="http://www.vif-fotball.no/">http://www.vif-fotball.no/</a>	57	1,393	22,065	2,898
Total					314,398	

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