

The Linguistic “Fairness” of the Olympic Charter: Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Solutions Adopted in the Official International Document for Global Sport

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- A) conception and design of the study
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ABSTRACT

“The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind (...)” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 10) is an extralinguistic presentation of sport in the Olympic Charter. Ahead of sport rivalry, as well as in social life, all people should be equal: this is the main message of the official, international document for global sport. Pure sport should recognize no differences concerning color of the skin, age, nationality, ethnicity, or gender. The aim of this paper is to show a different perspective: the focus of the paper goes to the language of the Olympic Charter, which should be brought into question. There is a need to investigate the purely linguistic solutions adopted to describe the principles and rules in sport. Additionally, the language, which characterizes participation in the Olympic Games, should be “fair”, meaning free from favoritism and prejudice. People’s dignity must be protected and no offense or discrimination is to be accepted, neither on the extralinguistic nor the linguistic level. Currently, different linguistic issues are being discussed and political correctness policy is being applied. The claims of feminists and purists are being considered. The language of the Olympic Charter seems to be resistant to any kind of criticism, as the document has already been modified a number of times. It is regularly updated. However, the question of whether the Olympic Charter is among the “fairest” documents ever written can only partially be answered. Several linguistic changes will be probably necessary in a very near future.

KEYWORDS

Olympic Charter, linguistic fairness, sociolinguistics, language of sport, equality in sport, discrimination, gender, language nationalism

Introduction

Although certain decisions made by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) can draw wide criticism or attract disapproval of social actors, it is generally known that a competent group of international experts cares a great deal about the present issues and the future of the Olympic Movement and that every single change is being socially consulted.⁶ This certainly happened in wrestling. A recent plan to eliminate

⁶ In his study of the Olympic Charter, Zakus (2005, p. 5) showed that the IOC was one of the first international sports bodies and, as such, was able to influence developments of global sports administration. At the same time, however, he

Ancient Greek wrestling (Pále), one of the most ancient and truly traditional sports, from the Olympic Games (Rotkiewicz, 2011, p. 24) resulted in several petitions urging the IOC to reverse its decision to drop wrestling (<http://www.reuters.com>) and, as a matter of fact, the Board, recognizing its error, reinstated wrestling for the 2020 Summer Games program and to the so-called core (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 81-82). International media followed the entire course of action with interest.

The most important changes germane to the organization and celebration of the Olympic Games are introduced in the Olympic Charter. The document is a basic instrument of a constitutional nature both setting forth and recalling the fundamental principles and essential values of Olympism. The Olympic Charter is an official bedrock document outlining the rules and guidelines for the Olympic Movement and generally for global sport. In addition to laying out the rules and bylaws for the constitutional bodies of the Olympic Movement, it is a codification of the universal fundamental principles of Olympism. It governs the organization, actions, and functioning of the Olympic Movement and establishes the conditions for the celebration of the Olympic Games. The Charter was first published in 1908 under the title of *Annuaire du Comité International Olympique*. Some of the rules contained in this first Charter had, however, been written previously. It is believed that the very first Olympic Charter was handwritten around 1899 by Pierre de Coubertin himself (Müller, 2000, p. 661). Although the title Olympic Charter is generally used in reference to all the editions, it is only since 1978 that it has actually appeared under this very title. Certain early editions have also been divided into several separate parts rather than a single publication. This is why volumes considered as charters are found under differing titles, such as *Règlements et protocole de la célébration des olympiades modernes et des Jeux olympiques quadriennaux/Adresses des membres* in 1921, and *Règles olympiques* in 1946. The Olympic Charter has been modified a number of times since its inception, with important inclusions that have further specified the limits of the IOC's work and its obligations to the Olympic family (Miah & Garcia, 2012, p. 21). Important changes were introduced to the Olympic Charter mainly as a result of discussions during congresses. After the Olympic Congress of Prague (31 May 1925), for instance, the minimum conditions that the Olympic amateur had to meet were written into the Olympic Charter (Müller, 2000, p. 564). Throughout the history of the Olympics, the Olympic Charter has often decided the outcome of Olympic controversies. The document is, therefore, not simply a matter of unenforced policy for the Olympic Games. It has served as guidance for the proceedings of the Games. To name a few examples: the Lagat case in May 2004, the debate in August 2007 on whether athletes should boycott the Beijing Olympics in response to human rights abuses in China, and the case of Saudi Arabia in 2011/2012 accused of contravening the Olympic Charter by systematically preventing women from practicing sports in the country and by not allowing Saudi women athletes to take part in the Olympic Games (<http://www.nytimes.com>).

The Olympic Charter is an international document. It was originally written in French, but translations into national languages followed shortly thereafter. The document has been translated into different languages including English, German, Italian, Spanish, and Polish. It has been agreed that “in the case of divergence between the French and English [or other national language version] texts of the Olympic Charter and any other IOC document, the French text shall prevail unless expressly provided otherwise in writing” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 49). With its 5 chapters and 61 articles, the Olympic Charter outlines several guidelines and rules in detail.

Although the document was produced many years ago, as previously mentioned, it remains in effect. It continues to be regularly updated: the last time was 9 September 2013. Its language, thanks to several innovative linguistic solutions, seems to be politically correct and – at least for now – resistant to any kind of criticism, so that one could even argue that it may even be one of the “fairest” global documents ever

is well aware that a detailed theoretical analysis of changes in Olympic Charter is still required before definitive statements can be made on the degree to which it defined sport and international competition.

written.⁷ However, criticism will probably come in a very near future. Currently, there is a great deal of concern over political correctness and the gender-neutral conception of equality. The world of sport, as a part of social reality and additionally a media-attracting sphere, will not be excluded. The changing social reality may require ulterior changes to the document, as the current, fully satisfactory, as already said, linguistic solutions may not seem sufficient and may not cover all the burning issues. It's also true to say that the endeavor of creating a truly "fair" international document for global sport is aspirational and noble, thus in line with the general idea of Olympics, rather than reality congruent with the world as experienced today. The research in this paper provides such an evaluation.

Theoretical background

On the cover page of the Olympic Charter one can read:

"Olympism is a philosophy of life, which places sport at the service of humankind" (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 10).

Further on it is claimed:

"The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play" (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 10).

The extralinguistic message is, therefore, very clear: no discrimination or oppression for any reason. Sport should make all people equal, and never recognize differences in color of skin, age, nationality, or gender. There is a need, however, to investigate the linguistic solutions adopted to describe the principles and rules in sport, as the language, which characterizes the participation in the Olympic Games, should also be free of prejudice. People's dignity must be protected and no offense or discrimination is to be accepted, neither on an extralinguistic nor a linguistic level. Language reflects society's attitudes and ways of thinking. Language not only expresses ideas and concepts but also actually shapes thought (Moore, 2007, p. 365). People's perceptions are also influenced by the language regularly used in the exercise of power: political power (Spolky, 1998, p. 58). Hence, language, if controlled, can be a political and cultural tool. In other words: language is an important part of the social world, thus understanding the roles that language plays in communicating, manipulating, and controlling – to cite just a few examples – is surely vital to understanding the workings of power and domination (MacKinnon, 1993).

Once we have agreed on the influence of language on our perceptions, we can better understand the general concern over a discriminatory, biased, and unfair linguistic approach to some groups (e.g., women, homosexuals, and/or ethnic groups) and over the lack of equality between majority (dominating) and minority (dominated) groups. This concern has been growing stronger and stronger. It initialized an entire policy and an ongoing, never-ending debate called "political correctness", which aims to end the alienation and exclusion of politically, socially, or economically disadvantaged groups, which mostly include those defined by gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability (Hughes, 2010). Beckwith and Bauman (1993) claim that people can be oppressed in many ways and for many reasons because they are perceived to be different. As soon as groups begin the process of realizing that they are oppressed and why that is so, new words tend to be created to express the concepts that the existing language cannot. Due to the political correctness movement, the discourse is becoming more sensible and several value-free terms have been coined and introduced to the common language and public life. This includes, for example, describing

⁷ "Fair" means in this context totally free from any kind of favoritism, discrimination, or prejudice. Fairness refers to a lack of bias in opinions and judgments. It implies treating all sides, including sportspeople, alike, justly, and equitably. It also implies showing no more favor to one side than another, for example, men and women, Europeans and Africans, etc.

physical disabilities: “visually impaired” in place of “blind” and “hearing impaired” in place of “deaf” (Bleifuss, 2007).

As a movement for social change, feminism seeks to achieve equality between sexes by extending rights for women (Marschall, 1998, p. 228). Feminism has recognized both the importance of pure linguistic form and its potential for changing deeply rooted inequality resulting from patriarchal domination. Language is only a symptom of a more deeply ingrained problem, but – at the same time – it is the first step to encourage wider changes. Beginning in the mid-1960s, several feminists argued that English not only reflected but also in some ways was responsible for the dual and biased attitude towards men and women, resulting in the supremacy of maleness. Just to give an example: feminists objected to the fact that all adult males were referred to as “Mr.”, whereas adult females were called “Mrs.” or “Miss”, according to whether they were married or not. How can such a distinction be explained in terms of human equality? Feminists call for changes that are needed for the sake of feminist goals – to bring an end to certain key ways that women are either treated in a different manner or disadvantaged. Linguistically, there are several features that continue to reinforce the secondary status of women in society (Spolsky, 1998, p. 38). Feminists’ main concerns are false gender-neutrality, the invisibility of women, and maleness as norm. Considered a working solution for the aforementioned infringements, gender-neutral language is a style of writing that adheres to certain rules that were first proposed by feminist language reformers at universities in the 1970’s, and which have been accepted as normative in many schools since about 1980. The rules prohibit various common usages deemed to be sexist: for example, the use of the word “man” and the generic use of masculine pronouns in referring to persons of unspecified gender. A number of new words were also recommended, as for example “chairperson,” “spokesperson,” “police officer,” “firefighter,” etc., as substitutes for the “sexist” words in common use: “chairman,” “spokesman,” “policeman,” and “fireman.” The same reform produced the gender-neutral “sportsperson” to replace sportsman or sportswoman. What about “sportsmanship”? Should it also be changed? Indeed, at least in some cases, the attempts to avoid sexist and gendered language may generate rather ill-formed solutions. Nevertheless, feminists hope that by means of such endeavors at universities, the language of society might gradually be reformed, and that by means of such reforms in language, the awareness of people would be rendered more favorable to feminist ideas. Any language that unnecessarily serves to draw attention to the gender and not the function of the person is sexist. By specifically mentioning gender, one is implying that a female participant is the exception (Cameron, 2005; Sahoo, 2010). There is still some disagreement as how to refer to this new style of writing. Its advocates have called it by various names and descriptions: inclusive language, gender-inclusive language, gender generic language, non-sexist language, and gender accurate language. Feminists’ concerns, however, go far beyond mere theoretical debates on the relationship of language and gender and classificatory problems. Feminists have argued that terms like “he” and “man” contribute to making women “invisible” – that is, to obscuring women’s importance, and distracting attention from their existence. Fighting the exclusion of women is an important feminist project in many areas, and language that makes one less likely to think of women clearly contributes to this invisibility. Languages may simply lack words for things that matter to women. This sort of gap is another way that a language can be seen as encoding a male worldview (Sahoo, 2010). Speaking of views and social roles attributed to the people, gender issues can also be included to the matters under consideration.⁸

In the field of feminist linguistic analysis, different texts have already been reviewed. Interestingly enough, many scientific contributions have appeared that deal with the use of gender-neutral language in the

⁸ As gender issues have become more mainstreamed in scientific research and media reports, confusion associated with the terms sex, gender, and sexual orientation has decreased. In sociology, these terms are fairly standardized to refer to different content areas. Sex, an ascribed status, refers to the biological characteristics distinguishing male and female by emphasizes male and female differences in chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, reproductive systems and other physiological components. Gender, an achieved status, refers to those social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to males and females through particular social contexts. Sexual orientation is the way people experience sexual pleasure. Sex makes us male or female; gender makes us masculine or feminine. Sex orientation makes us heterosexual or homosexual (Lindsey, 2010, p. 11).

Bible. The results are unambiguous: Biblical text is by no means gender-neutral. From the beginning to the very end it presents a thoroughly androcentric, patriarchal, and even misogynist perspective. It generally focuses on men, leaving women in the background. Women are basically absent in the document: they are addressed only indirectly and they are referred to in the third person, while men are addressed directly in the second person. Due to extremely male-oriented language a female reader must read much of the Bible as if she was a man (Marlowe, 2001, 2005).

The theoretical background wouldn't be complete without mentioning another important social actor in the battle for a "better" language: purists. Language purism, also referred to as language protectionism and in some contexts appropriately called language nationalism, is a kind of conservatism which involves reviving native vocabulary that is no longer widely used, removing from the language lexical elements which appear to be of foreign origin (loans), and coining new words based on native, indigenous roots instead of adopting foreign-derived ones. In other terms:

"purism is the opening of the native sources and closure of the non native sources for the enrichment of the language" (Annamalai, 1979, p. 3).

Yet languages are open systems that constantly evolve. Interactions between languages result in the exchange of words. Nevertheless, the hegemonic position of English and its impact on other languages in modern times is truly unprecedented. In fact, it is difficult to carry on a conversation today in any national language (except maybe for French) without employing some English terms. Since linguistic purism interacts with a large number of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors, an in-depth analysis in this field is also required.

To sum up: currently, different linguistic issues are being discussed and a policy of political correctness is being applied. The claims of feminists and purists are being taken into consideration. The terminology must be positive and not perpetuate negative human values. Words degrading people must be avoided (Moore, 2007, p. 375). The language of sport should also be free from prejudice, especially in an era in which it has great impact and power, as broadcasting of sports events is highly diffuse. It looks like a difficult task, as several authors point out: modern sport has been created around the assumptions, values and ideologies of males and maleness (Dunning, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Kidd, 1987; Maguire, 1986; Messner & Sabo, 1990) and the once-established codes of masculinity and gender order continue to be taken for granted.

Method

Content analysis is a methodology in the social sciences for studying the content of the communication, both oral and written messages. Earl Babbie defines it as:

"the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings and laws" (Babbie, 2013, p. 331).

Other documents can be added: newspapers, magazines, letters, speeches, online posts, blogs, decrees, and charters such as the Olympic Charter. By means of content analysis, different specific characteristics of all types of messages can be identified and investigated. Reinharz (1992, pp. 146-147) pointed out, for example, that feminist social and cultural researchers decided to use for their analysis the data collected from books for children, manuals, tales, commercial slogans. They pointed out several unacceptable, discriminatory, and biased depictions of femaleness and maleness.

The corpus chosen for the analysis was the text of the Olympic Charter, basically the English version. It wouldn't be enough, though, to restrict the analysis to the most recent version of the Olympic Charter (9 September 2013). Important information about the trajectory of changes through time is to be found in previous versions (<http://www.olympic.org>).

Towards the sex-blind and gender-neutral conception of equality

Nowadays, it is taken for granted that both women and men are welcome to participate in the Olympic Games as well as other sport tournaments. Looking at the pages of history, it must be admitted that this was not always the case. Coubertin's reservations regarding the participation of woman in the Olympic Games is clear in many places in his writings. It reveals Coubertin's traditional approach based on his noble education, referring as he did primarily to the model of antiquity and the Middle Ages. In spite of his socially avant-garde, liberal and pioneering thoughts, particularly in the 1920s, he did not change his attitude any more. His only concern was the appearance of women at competitions in the Olympic stadium, not their activities in physical education (Müller, 2000, p. 711).

How are women referred to in the modern Olympic Charter? Should a female reader also read the text of the Olympic Charter as if she was a man, as in case of the Bible? The question of the sexism of the text has been resolved very easily. The solution wouldn't be approved by some strict dogmatic feminists struggling against an uneven treatment of both sexes, of course, but the idea that was introduced many years ago seems to be reasonable. The pertinent line in the Olympic Charter reads:

"In the Olympic Charter, the masculine gender used in relation to any physical person (for example, names such as president, vice-president, chairman, member, leader, official, chef de mission, participant, competitor, athlete, judge, referee, member of a jury, attaché, candidate or personnel, or pronouns such as he, they or them) shall, unless there is a specific provision to the contrary, be understood as including the feminine gender" (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 8).

This innovation first appeared in 1991; since then, it incessantly accompanies all successive editions. Moreover, the same information is included in every language version. It must be highlighted, however, that one aspect of English, which is certainly easier than in some other languages, is actually the gender. For instance, in French, Italian and Spanish, for no apparent reason, nouns can be masculine or feminine. In other languages, like German and Polish, there are even three options: masculine, feminine, and neuter. It means that the speaker/learner needs to choose the right article, pronoun, and adjective ending according to the noun to which they refer. In English the only problem, however frequently discussed, is the issue of a correct pronoun: "he," "she," or "it," which are gendered, and "them" as a common plural pronoun. Strictly linked to the aforementioned problem is the fact that in English some nouns may only have a single form and if no pronoun is referring to the substantive, the speaker/reader is not even able to decide whether the male or female agent is intended. Other languages offer gendered nouns for both sexes. Table 1, which shows two chosen sentences from the different language versions of Olympic Charter (2011, p. 76), presents the problem.

Table 1. The masculine and feminine linguistic equivalents. The comparative analysis of the national language editions of the Olympic Charter (English, French, German, Italian, Polish)

Language	Sentence in masculine form in the Olympic Charter	Feminine equivalent
English	Any competitor in the Olympic Games must be of the country of the NOC that is entering such competitor. A competitor who is a national of two or more countries at the same time may represent either one of them, as <u>he</u> may elect.	he – she
French	<u>Tout concurrent</u> aux Jeux Olympiques doit être <u>ressortissant</u> du pays du CNO qui l'inscrit. <u>Un concurrent</u> qui est simultanément <u>ressortissant</u> de deux ou plusieurs pays peut représenter l'un d'entre eux, à son choix.	tout – toute concurrent – concurrente ressortissant – ressortissante
German	<u>Jeder Wettkämpfer</u> bei Olympischen Spielen muss <u>Staatsangehöriger</u> des Landes des NOK sein, das <u>ihn</u>	jeder – jede

	meldet. <u>Ein Wettkämpfer, der</u> gleichzeitig <u>Staatsangehöriger</u> zweier oder mehrerer Länder ist, kann nach <u>seiner</u> Wahl für eines von diesen starten.	Wettkämpfer – die Wettkämpferin Staatsangehöriger – Staatsangehörige ihn – sie ein – eine der – die seiner – ihrer
Italian	Ogni concorrente ai Giochi Olimpici dovrà avere la nazionalità del Paese del C.N.O. che <u>lo</u> iscrive. <u>Un</u> concorrente che abbia contemporaneamente la nazionalità di due o più Paesi potrà rappresentarne uno, a sua scelta.	lo – la un – una
Polish	<u>Każdy zawodnik</u> na Igrzyskach Olimpijskich musi być <u>obywatelem</u> kraju Narodowego Komitetu Olimpijskiego, który zgłasza <u>go</u> jako <u>zawodnika</u> . <u>Zawodnik, który</u> posiada obywatelstwo dwóch lub więcej krajów w tym samym czasie może reprezentować jeden z nich, który może wybrać.	każdy – każda zawodnik – zawodniczka obywatelem – obywatelką go – ją który – która

That is to say, that while in English the form of the noun is generally (apart from some cases, in which it differs, as chairman, spokesman, fireman, however absent in the very text of Olympic Charter) identical and does not draw attention to the gender, in other languages the forms are traditionally different. Whilst in English the text of the Olympic Charter refers generally (except for one pronoun “he”) – from a linguistic perspective – to both men and women, the female readers in other languages read a text addressed instead to men – according to the linguistic forms – and need to think about the comforting comment at the beginning of the text, reassured that:

“the masculine gender used in relation to any physical person (...) shall (...) be understood as including the feminine gender”(Olympic Charter 2011, p.8).

The question is, How long will this solution avoid criticism in the ongoing debate about gender-neutral, non-sexist language?

Another aspect connected with potential discrimination is the sexual orientation of the sportspeople. In the context of the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi in 2014, several politicians and sport officials commented on the gay issue and openly criticized the hostility emanating from Russian society towards homosexual minorities as well as the disapproved of the discriminating legislature supposedly aimed at protecting children from harmful influences of homosexuality. The contentious bill gave rise to calls from some activists to boycott the February 2014 Olympic Games as contrary, even incompatible, to the Olympic Spirit. However, it is difficult to find a pertinent line regarding the protection of the free preference of sexual orientation in the very text of the Olympic Charter. There is the statement “without discrimination of any kind” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 10), which undoubtedly includes the cases of intolerance towards gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals, but nothing is expressed explicitly. In fact, after the Russian president signed into law in June 2012 a bill forbidding the promotion of homosexuality to minors, the possible reactions of the IOC were restricted. The Board only asked for governmental assurances that the law would not affect people attending or taking part in the Games and stated that the law did not violate the Olympic Charter (www.fox59.com, www.economist.com).

Geopolitical and Olympic geography of the world

The Olympic Movement claims to be apolitical and – where politics is inevitable – politically correct:

“Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 11).

Admittedly, the IOC is known for intervening in a matter in 1964 (banning South Africa from the Olympic Games) and in 1972 (expelling Rhodesia just before the opening ceremony) (Humphreys, 2008, p. 213). In this section it will be asked whether the declarative statement explicitly contained in the fundamental principles of Olympism is also implicitly coherent with the language solutions chosen in the text.

The language should reflect reality. The Olympic flag includes five interlaced rings, which represent the union of five continents and the meeting of athletes from throughout the world at the Olympic Games. A truly inquiring sociolinguist would ask: Why five continents? If “it covers the five continents” (Olympic Charter, 2011, pp. 9-10), does it mean that participant from the two remaining continents are not welcome? Moreover, which continents have been left out? To set the record straight: Coubertin presented the design of the interlocking rings to the IOC in 1914 without any particular explanation and the official IOC interpretation of the rings states that they represent the five continents that participate in the Games. This is not to say that each ring is associated with a specific continent, although some make such a claim (Miah & Garcia, 2012, p. 12). The colors listed in the pertinent fragment of the Olympic Charter (“Olympic symbol consists of five interlocking rings which, from left to right are blue, yellow, black, green and red,” Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 20) do not make the inaccuracy easier to handle. If the blue color stands for Europe and the black for Africa, we still have to manage the issue of sociolinguistic and intercultural meaning attributed to the different colors. However, there is an extralinguistic problem, namely the marginalization of some continents, connected and resulting from this distorted vision of the world. If we look back at the history of Olympics we will not find any African host of the event. The hegemonic role of Europe, followed by North America and Asia, cannot be questioned. Although there is indeed a certain penchant for diversification and proneness not to entrust the very same candidate or even the countries from the same continent with the hosting of the Olympic Games within one generation, some continents seem to be effectively eliminated from the rivalry. The problem is also fueled by the lack of strict procedures and criteria characterizing the dynamics of the actual evaluation and decision-making. The fragment regarding the recruiting process and appraisal (Olympic Charter, 2011, pp. 66-68), beginning with the description of the application and ending with arrangements concerning the final assignment, followed by the execution of host city contract, is rather general and describes the routine requirements and liabilities.

Another line in the Olympic Charter settles the conditions for the sportspeople to participate, remembering that:

“the Olympic Games are competitions between athletes in individual or team events and not between countries (...) any competitor in the Olympic Games must be a national of the country of the NIC which is entering such competitor” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 76).

In this context it is important to remember that in order to avoid cultural and political animosities, the IOC decided to change the geopolitical map of the world several times for the sake of the harmonious sport competition. Among nations recognized by the IOC is East Timor with its independent Olympic athletes flag, which also symbolically announces its emergence to the world. Hence, the IOC approved a very liberal definition of “country”:

“In the Olympic Charter, the expression ‘country’ means an independent State recognized by the international community” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 62).

For the time being, this linguistic solution is fully satisfactory, but terms such as “country” and similar notions will cause more complications. Giulianotti points out that “nation” is an increasingly problematic concept:

“The idea of a modern, homogeneous nation is outmoded by polyethnicity and multiculturalism” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 178).

It is interesting that the previous line “The Games will be held in various world capitals” (Müller, 2000, p. 661) was rewritten and now it recalls “the host city” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 65) instead of “world capitals.” The language exactly reflects the reality, as not only do capital cities host the world’s famous sport festival. The term “host city” is neutral and wider. The undoubted privilege of hosting the Olympic Games can therefore be attributed to both large and populated cities with urban character and a small village or second-rate location. Moreover, there is a determined procedure to be followed during the election of the host city, so that every candidate city for the organization of the Olympic Games has equal chances. Last but not least, the decision to elect the host city instead of host country has another undertone in line with the apolitical character of the Olympic Movement. Bearing in mind the enormous financial expenses connected with the organization of one of the biggest sport festivals in the world, this proposition has a rather symbolic dimension (Jankowski, 2011, p. 288).

Handicap and healthiness: psychophysical profile of a competitor

In the past there were restrictions regarding the socioprofessional profile of the participant. In order to participate, the athlete had to be an amateur, that is, individuals who did not make any financial gain from their athletic successes (Müller, 2000, p. 661). However, according to some scientists willing to tackle the sports delusion, “amateurism in sport has always been a deceit” (Humphreys, 2008, p. 68). Anyways, as known nowadays, this recommendation is no longer in force, although we do find in the modern version a sentence with a suggestive undertone:

“The entry or participation of a competitor in the Olympic Games shall not be conditional on any financial consideration” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 75).

While in the Olympic Charter there is enough space dedicated to information regarding the administrative and organizational aspects of participation in the Olympic Games, and even technical arrangements such as clothing, shoes and headgear, there is currently not much about the competitors themselves and their psychophysical profiles. The only thing we know is that there are no age limits, any pharmacological aids and drugs remain strictly forbidden, the anti-doping code (previously, until 14 July 2001, called the medical code) is mandatory to the whole Olympic Movement (Olympic Charter, 2001, p.77), and the competitors must be “adequately prepared for high level international competition” (Olympic Charter, 2011, p. 78). The attention garnered by the question of the psychophysical condition of the competitor is truly unprecedented. Until now, in the history of the Olympic Games, there were just a few cases that could attract attention to this matter. Yet considering the constant progression in medical and technological remedies to the handicap on one hand and physical “abnormalities” (e.g., three-legged Francesco Lentini) on the other hand, it is very probable that in the very near future the issue will be a greater concern. The question is: Should there be a line concerning the natural able-bodiedness of the competitor? Edwards discussed the predicament of Oscar Pistorius, Paralympic gold medalist who wished to participate in the Olympics in Beijing in 2008. Regarding the qualifying time for his chosen event (400 m), it looked clear that Pistorius satisfied the criteria for eligibility for inclusion in the Olympic Games. He surely satisfied the criteria for the Paralympics: he had a demonstrable impairment, which generates an activity limitation. Should he have been allowed to enter the “normal” Olympic Games? A first argument against allowing him to compete was the following: disabled people have their own games, the Paralympics. Since he is disabled, he was plainly entitled to compete in the Paralympics, but it did not follow from that that he

should have been considered eligible to compete in the Olympics. Yet at the same time, to deny Pistorius was to violate principles of fair opportunity (Edwards, 2009, p. 28-29). Anyway, Paralympians have competed in the Olympic Games on numerous occasions. In fact, although for obvious reasons Olympic athletes are not allowed to compete at the Paralympic Games, there is nothing to stop athletes with disabilities from competing in the Olympic Games, providing they can make the qualifying threshold (Miah & Garcia, 2012, p. 23). The only pertinent argument to reject them is that they have an unfair advantage due to mechanical reasons. The blades gave Pistorius an unfair advantage over other athletes with natural legs, two-legged athletes (Edwards, 2009, p. 29). However, until that time, there was no explicit record for this issue in the Olympic Charter in force. It was, of course, problematic how to construct the eligibility rule in this field and how to measure and determinate the relevant boundaries. Facing the increasing pace of medicine development, e.g., replacement and transplant surgery, genetic and hormonal manipulation, artificial prosthesis, which could appropriately be referred to as “technological doping,” the problem may arise, if adequate standards and norms are not set. A new rigid definition of ability and disability is needed.

Language Purism

Although the today’s linguistic infringements are commonly associated with the English language deemed to be a dangerous invader and destroyer of the purity and authenticity of other languages, the findings in this section seldom actually refer to English. Undoubtedly, English is nowadays the biggest exporter of the terms that penetrate other languages and threaten their purity. English, indeed, is accused of “contaminating” other languages. The most popular Anglicisms, definable as linguistic borrowing and loanwords from English, which are considered to spread in the sport world and are also – mainly untranslatable – are: “doping” (“antidoping”), “fair play,” “fairness,” and “foul.” The reader of most language versions of the Olympic Charter, maybe except for the extremely conservative French translation, will find, for lack of a better alternative, these terms with standard national linguistic adaptations (e.g., Polish declination, German capitalization, etc.).

Nevertheless, in the context of the Olympic Charter, the linguistic power relations must be redefined. Latin, Greek and French, or better, Old French, have always played an important role in sports language (e.g., athlete, marathon, triathlon, discipline and gymnastics, <http://www.etymonline.com>) and in the Olympic movement (even “Olympiad” itself). Obviously several lexical elements can escape the attention of the purist as long as they do not seem of foreign origin and do not infringe on pure language authenticity. The typical example can be the notion of “sport” itself. Etymologically, this term comes originally from Old French desport/deport, meaning “activity that offers amusement or relaxation, entertainment, fun” (<http://www.etymonline.com>).

The presence of Latin, considering the legacy of antiquity, is unavoidable in the Olympic Charter. The Olympic motto is in Latin: “Citius – Altius – Fortius.” It refers to the tradition and is customarily not translated into the national languages. Yet many famous Latin sayings, e.g., “Mens sana in corpora sano,” do have national – more or less faithful – equivalents, e.g., German “Gesunde Seele in gesundem Körper”, English “A sound mind in a sound body” (Rotkiewicz, 2011, p. 76).

Discussion and conclusions

As of 2014, 118 years have passed since the beginning of the modern Olympic Games. In spite of various crises and periods of instability, the Games are now stronger than ever. Several challenging situations have had to be dealt with. Several corrections have already been introduced to the text of the Olympic Charter. The international document for global sport is regularly updated in order to mitigate potential social conflicts. This was certainly the objective of the IOC while introducing in 1991 an innovation aiming at sex egalitarianism and gender-neutrality, putting an end to the “invisibility” of women. There is a constant and vivid concern about the political correctness of the language. All efforts are put into protecting people’s dignity. It is true to say that the “fairness” of the language of the Olympic Charter

remains on a declarative level. However, if we want to change the social reality, the first step is to change the way in which we talk about it. Language is a main source of information about the world. Hence, it is a positive sign that the declarations exist, for it allows for the hope that changes in public life will follow. For the time being, the situation still requires significant improvements. Media and public discourse in sport still portray levels of intolerance towards ethnically marginalized communities (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 77). The same intolerant, biased social and linguistic misbehaviors continue to concern other non-dominant groups.

The question of whether or not the Olympic Charter is one of the “fairest” documents ever written can only partially be answered. In spite of several successful achievements and continuous involvement dedicated to the linguistic and extralinguistic issues, the IOC is likely to be constrained to face new problems in the near future. This will be followed, if fairly taken care of, by other several linguistic changes. But this social actor, who in the course of time has grown from an amateur-based gentlemen's club to a multi-national, non-governmental, professionally run sport organization (Zakus & Skinner, 2008, p. 421), has – as it seems – enough experience, strength, and goodwill to persevere in the endeavor.

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