



The Sociolinguistics of Sporting Nicknames: A Cross-Cultural Study of International Cricketers

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ABSTRACT

Nicknames function as a significant linguistic resource that encapsulates cultural values, social identities, and interpersonal dynamics. Within the realm of international cricket, these monikers extend beyond mere terms of endearment or informal labels to operate as sociolinguistic markers that reveal insights into players' personalities, performances, national identities, and media representations. This study explored the sociolinguistic dimensions of sporting nicknames among international cricketers, both active and retired, from diverse cricketing nations. Guided by Social Identity Theory and adopting a descriptive qualitative design, data comprising 30 players' nicknames were purposively gathered through documentary and media analysis, including sports journalism, player interviews, biographies, social media (Twitter and Instagram), fan forums, and cricket databases such as ESPNcricinfo. The data were analysed thematically. The findings indicate that cricket nicknames serve as multifaceted identity markers such as geographical, physical, performance-based, interpersonal, and fan-generated, shaping both personal and collective identities, fostering social cohesion, and embedding athletes within wider cultural and symbolic contexts. The study contributes to sports linguistics by highlighting the intricate interplay between language, identity construction, and the global culture of cricket.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Sports, Nicknames, Cricketers, Social Identity Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Language functions as a fundamental social instrument through which individuals communicate, construct identities, articulate relationships, and mediate their lived experiences.¹ It significantly influences how people understand themselves and others, navigate complex social hierarchies, and negotiate meaning across varying cultural and interpersonal contexts. Within the field of sociolinguistics, language is not merely a neutral conduit for conveying information, but a dynamic, contextually situated system that both reflects and reproduces existing social structures, cultural norms, ideologies, and

¹ Mustafa Altun, "The Power of Language: Exploring Its Significance in Shaping Perceptions, Beliefs, and Relationships," *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies* 10, no. 3 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v10i3p362>.

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collective affiliations.² Through language, social categories such as gender, ethnicity, class, and occupation are not only represented but also actively constructed and legitimised.³ Additionally, language serves as a means through which symbolic capital, such as prestige, authority, and social status, is negotiated, reinforced, or contested within diverse communicative encounters.⁴ Among the various linguistic practices examined in sociolinguistics, the phenomenon of nicknaming holds particular significance. Nicknames, often characterised by their informal and creative nature, function as culturally embedded expressions of social identity and group affiliation.⁵ These names are typically assigned from childhood through to adulthood.⁶ They serve a wide range of functions, from expressing affection, humour, and solidarity, to communicating criticism, irony, or social exclusion. In essence, the study of nicknaming within sociolinguistics underscores how seemingly simple linguistic practices encapsulate complex layers of meaning, revealing the intricate interplay between language, culture, identity, and power in everyday social life.

In the domain of sports, particularly in the multicultural context of international cricket, nicknames serve as socio-cultural signifiers that encapsulate not only individual traits and sporting accomplishments but also broader cultural values, national identities, and interpersonal relationships. International cricket's unique characteristics stem from its diverse formats, extended player interactions, slower pace in some formats, and the presence of players from varied backgrounds on extended tours.⁷ Unlike many other sports, cricket has diverse formats such as Test matches, One Day Internationals (ODIs), and Twenty20 (T20), each with its own pace and strategic demands.⁸ Fletcher noted that the longer formats, particularly Test matches, involve intense player interaction and strategic battles over extended periods, often several days.⁹

This contrasts with the faster-paced T20 format, which is designed for quicker entertainment. Furthermore, international cricket tours can last for weeks or even months, leading to prolonged periods of coexistence among players from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.¹⁰ These unique structural features foster strong interpersonal bonds and rich cross-cultural exchanges, providing fertile ground for the development and circulation of nicknames. Such nicknames operate not merely as informal labels but as linguistic tools that reinforce team cohesion, construct public personas, and embed athletes within narratives that resonate across both professional sporting contexts and fan communities.

Despite the widespread use and cultural resonance of nicknames in sports, scholarly inquiry into their sociolinguistic dimensions, particularly in international cricket, remains limited. Previous studies have investigated nicknaming practices in sports such as football, hockey, and baseball.¹¹ These studies have examined contexts including Premier League clubs, South

² Bettoni Jean, "Sociolinguistics: Investigating Language Variation in Society," *Journal of International Social Research* 16, no. 107 (2023): 1–5.

³ Ezekiel Opeyemi Olajimbiti, "Identity Framing as Resilience in Selected Nicknames of Nigerian Street Children," *Languages* 9, no. 8 (August 16, 2024): 277, <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages9080277>.

⁴ Flora Woltran and Susanne Schwab, "Language as a Distinguishing Feature or Common Ground? A Participatory Study on Manifestations of Intergroup Relations in the Lived Experiences of Multilingual Students.," *Linguistics and Education* 85 (February 2025): 101379, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2024.101379>.

⁵ Eyo O. Mensah and Roseline I. Ndimele, "King Shumba, Smiling Devil and Baby Doctor: A Sociolinguistic Study of Lecturers' Nicknames in Two Nigerian Universities," *African Identities* 20, no. 2 (April 3, 2022): 136–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2020.1813544>.

⁶ Muzi Matfunjwa, Respect Mlambo, and Nomsa Skosana, "Nicknames among Swati Clans: A Socio-Cultural Analysis," *Literator* 45, no. 1 (February 29, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v45i1.2020>.

⁷ Barrie Axford and Richard Huggins, "The Telemediatization of Cricket: Commerce, Connectivity and Culture in the Post-Television Age," in *Cricket and Globalization*, ed. C. Rumford and S. Wagg (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), 122–51.

⁸ Carl J. Petersen et al., "Movement Patterns in Cricket Vary by Both Position and Game Format," *Journal of Sports Sciences* 28, no. 1 (January 2010): 45–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410903348665>.

⁹ Dominic Malcolm and Thomas Fletcher, "The International Cricket Council Cricket World Cup: A 'Second Class' Megamediasport Event?," in *Sport, Media and Mega-Events* (Routledge, 2017), 115–29.

¹⁰ Jonathan Ames, "International Cricket Faces Commercial Challenges-David Becker," *In-House Persp.* 4 (2008): 35.

¹¹ Robert Kennedy and Tania Zamuner, "Nicknames And The Lexicon Of Sports," *American Speech* 81, no. 4 (November 1, 2006): 387–422, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2006-026>; M. T. Babane and M. T. Chauke, "An Analysis of Factors Involved in Nicknaming of Some Soccer Players in South Africa," *The Anthropologist* 20, no. 3 (June 17, 2015): 780–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2015.11891785>; Kelvin Mambwe, Dinis Costa, and F Costa, "Nicknaming in Football: A Case of

African soccer players, national teams participating in the FIFA World Cup, and Southern African football teams. Research on hockey and baseball, notably Kennedy and Zamuner's work, provided detailed linguistic and cultural analyses of nicknaming practices, distinguishing between Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames.¹² In contrast, sports such as cricket, especially at the international level, present a highly complex, multilingual, and multicultural environment that remains largely underexplored in sociolinguistic research.¹³ The intricate interplay of diverse national identities, languages, and cultural norms in international cricket suggests that nicknaming practices in this context may follow unique patterns, yet systematic investigations remain scarce. As Lozowski observes, such naming practices constitute more than casual labels; they are embedded in socio-cultural contexts and shaped by power relations, humour, cultural references, and linguistic creativity.¹⁴ However, there is a notable absence of in-depth, cross-cultural analysis of how nicknames are constructed, interpreted, and disseminated within the global cricketing community. This gap underscores the need for a study that extends beyond football, hockey, and baseball to examine how nicknames function as linguistic, social, and cultural markers in globally diverse sporting arenas.

The primary aim of this study was to explore the sociolinguistic dimensions of sporting nicknames among active and retired international cricketers within a cross-cultural context. The study seeks to investigate how nicknames are linguistically formed, culturally interpreted, and socially utilised within the global cricketing community. International cricket comprises both male and female cricketers competing across various formats of the game. However, this study specifically focuses on the nicknaming practices of male cricketers. The specific objectives of the study are: (i) to identify and classify the types of nicknames used among international cricketers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, (ii) to analyse the linguistic features and semantic patterns of these nicknames, and (iii) to explore how nicknames contribute to identity construction, team dynamics, and cultural representation in international cricket. This study is therefore significant not only for advancing academic knowledge in sociolinguistics but also for contributing to our understanding of intercultural communication, identity politics, and linguistic creativity in contemporary global sports.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nicknaming practices in sports offer a valuable lens for examining the intersection of language, culture, and identity. Research in sociolinguistics, onomastics, and cultural linguistics shows that nicknames function not only as linguistic artefacts but also as social markers, reflecting identity, community, and cultural values. Across individual athletes, clubs, and national teams, nicknames reveal the interplay between linguistic creativity and socio-cultural norms. This review incorporates existing studies to highlight how nicknames operate across diverse sporting contexts and scales, from local to global.

Linguistic Structuring of Nicknames

Kennedy and Zamuner's investigation of nicknames in North American hockey and baseball foregrounded the structural dimensions of nickname formation.¹⁵ They distinguished between Homeric nicknames, characterised by their length, semantic richness, and metaphorical quality, exemplified by *The Sultan of Swat* for Babe Ruth and *The Finnish Flash* for Jari Kurri. In contrast, hypocoristic

Selected Nicknames of National Football Teams in Southern Africa," *International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research* 2 (August 1, 2015): 4–2015; Sameer Naser Olimat, Dana Khalid Mahadin, and Kholod Naser Olimat, "A Socio-Onomastic Study of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Football Teams' Nicknames," *Training, Language and Culture* 7, no. 2 (June 26, 2023): 9–20, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2023-7-2-9-20>; Luqman M. Rababah et al., "A Linguistic and Cultural Analysis of British Football Club Nicknames," *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 6, no. 6 (December 14, 2024): 1164–74, <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i6.7495>; N. Bobyryeva, "Nicknames in the Sport Society: Linguocultural Aspects," *Ad Alta-Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 7, no. 2 (2017); Carmen Luján-García and Eugenia Esperanza Núñez Nogueroles, "The Use of Nicknames to Refer to Premier League English Football Teams in Spanish Digital Press," *Lengua y Sociedad* 23, no. 2 (December 30, 2024): 535–55, <https://doi.org/10.15381/lengsoc.v23i2.27867>.

¹² Kennedy and Zamuner, "Nicknames and the Lexicon of Sports."

¹³ Thomas Fletcher, "The Making of English Cricket Cultures: Empire, Globalization and (Post) Colonialism," *Sport in Society* 14, no. 1 (January 2011): 17–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2011.530006>.

¹⁴ MaryAnn Lozowski, "Lingering Legacy: The Impact Fan Reactions Had on Media Framing in the Rossi-Marquez Rivalry," 2025.

¹⁵ Kennedy and Zamuner, "Nicknames and the Lexicon of Sports."

nicknames are marked by the truncation or alteration of names, such as *Big Mac* for Mark McGwire and *A-Rod* for Alex Rodriguez. This functional distinction disrupted popular narratives that modern nicknames lacked creativity, revealing instead that creativity manifested differently across contexts: in narrative embellishment for Homeric forms and in interpersonal address for hypocoristics. This highlights the semiotic versatility of nicknames, illustrating that linguistic creativity in sports is contextually mediated rather than uniformly expressed. It further emphasises how structural features, such as length, phonological form, and morphological processes, interact with social functions, revealing that nicknames operate simultaneously as linguistic artefacts and as instruments of cultural meaning.

Bobyreva similarly examined the structural and semantic features of approximately 600 nicknames in global sports, highlighting their brevity, compositional strategies, and metaphorical underpinnings.¹⁶ While Kennedy and Zamuner identified phonological tendencies in hypocoristic nicknames, Bobyreva pointed to broader strategies, such as compounding (*Super Mario* for Mario Balotelli), abbreviation (*CR* for Cristiano Ronaldo), ethnonyms (*the Flying Dutchman* for Johan Cruyff), culturally marked borrowings (*Il Faraone* for Stephan El Shaarawy), and metaphorical mappings (*Black Mamba* for Kobe Bryant).¹⁷ Both studies thus emphasised systematicity in nickname formation, countering assumptions that nicknames are arbitrary or purely spontaneous. These findings converge on the insight that nickname formation is governed by a balance of linguistic economy and creativity. While truncation and phonological manipulation facilitate ease of use in interpersonal contexts, metaphorical extension and descriptive elaboration serve narrative and symbolic functions. They demonstrate how language users exploit structural resources to generate nicknames that are at once functional, memorable, and socially resonant.

Cultural Symbolism and Identity Construction

Beyond structure, nicknames carry cultural and symbolic significance. Babane and Chauke's study of South African soccer players highlighted how nicknames reflect playing style, social behaviour, and relationships with fans, embedding players within local cultural narratives.¹⁸ For example, Jabu Mahlangu's multiple nicknames, such as *Shuffle the Pack*, *Ngwana wa Tshwenya* and *Lost and Found*, captured both his technical flair and his off-field controversies, showing how nicknames encode admiration and critique simultaneously. Similarly, the nickname *Roadblock* for Johannes Makhathini exemplified how physical presence on the field could be linguistically transformed into a metaphor of strength and immovability. Additionally, the nicknames of Mark Mayambela, such as *Scara*, *Professor*, and *Umsaba ungamazi*, resonated with how naming practices shifted in response to changes in club affiliation and performance, thereby underscoring the fluid and performative nature of identity in the context of sport.

This cultural encoding parallels findings from Olimat, Mahadin, and Olimat, who investigated nicknames of World Cup national teams.¹⁹ They categorised nicknames into themes such as animals, colours, historical figures, and natural elements, each of which is symbolically tied to national values. For instance, Senegal's *Lions of Teranga* fused martial imagery with the cultural ethos of hospitality, while Japan's *Samurai Blue* evoked historical tradition and national pride. Similarly, Iran's *Team Melli* was interpreted as a marker of linguistic authenticity and national cohesion. In both the South African and global contexts, nicknames function as symbolic vessels, articulating values of identity, pride, and morality that transcend the sporting field. These studies reveal a shared phenomenon: nicknames are cultural signifiers that mediate between individual performance and collective identity. Whether capturing a player's personal behaviour or a nation's cultural heritage, nicknames function as narrative shorthand through which communities construct, negotiate, and communicate social meaning.

¹⁶ Bobyreva, "Nicknames in the Sport Society: Lingvocultural Aspects."

¹⁷ Kennedy and Zamuner. "Nicknames and the Lexicon of Sports."; Bobyreva, "Nicknames in the Sport Society: Lingvocultural Aspects." 227-229.

¹⁸ Morris Thembhani Babane and Arnold Mushwana, "An Ethnographic Study of the Functions of Xitsonga Taboos in the 21st Century," *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 31, no. 2 (May 18, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.25159/2663-6697/6504>.

¹⁹ Olimat, Mahadin, and Olimat, "A Socio-Onomastic Study of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Football Teams' Nicknames."

Nicknames and Collective Identity

While individual nicknames highlight personal traits, collective nicknames underscore group solidarity and identity. Bobyreva noted how nicknames such as *Dream Team* or *Les Bleus* evoke national or team unity, while Rababah et al. expanded this focus by systematically examining English football club nicknames.²⁰ Their categorisation into colours, animals, local industries, and regional culture demonstrated how club nicknames encode deep ties to place and history. The team nicknames, such as *The Toffees* (Everton), drew from local confectionery traditions, while *The Saddlers* (Walsall) and *The Hatters* (Luton Town) alluded to historic trades within their respective communities. Such nicknames tie clubs to their socio-economic roots, enabling fans to identify not only with a team but also with a shared cultural heritage. By linking linguistic expression to local heritage, these nicknames foster a shared sense of belonging, enabling supporters to engage not only with a team but also with broader historical and cultural narratives. In this way, collective nicknames perform both symbolic and social work, reinforcing continuity between past and present and mediating the interrelationship between sport, identity, and community.

Olimat et al. similarly linked national team nicknames to collective identities, situating them within historical and cultural narratives.²¹ The symbolic resonance of team nicknames, such as England's *Three Lions*, underscored the entanglement of sport with national mythology and politics. These studies demonstrate that collective nicknames function as semiotic resources through which communities imagine themselves, reaffirming Anderson's notion of nations as "imagined communities."²² Beyond mere labels, nicknames operate as discursive practices that construct belonging, memory, and identity within a globalised sporting context. They provide continuity between past and present, embedding clubs and nations within broader socio-historical trajectories. Moreover, in multicultural and transnational sporting spaces, nicknames act as boundary markers, simultaneously inclusive for insiders who share the cultural knowledge and exclusive for outsiders unfamiliar with the symbolic references. This dual function reinforces their role as powerful instruments of cultural semiotics and collective imagination.

Pragmatic and Discursive Functions

Nicknames also serve important pragmatic functions in communication, extending beyond mere labels to become versatile linguistic resources. Kennedy and Zamuner demonstrated this by showing that hypocoristic nicknames, often diminutive or affectionate forms, facilitated address and reference in informal settings such as sports teams, thereby strengthening interpersonal bonds.²³ Building on this pragmatic orientation, Luján-García and Núñez Nogueroles examined the use of Premier League nicknames within Spanish digital media.²⁴ Their analysis revealed the incorporation of English sobriquets such as *Gunners* (Arsenal), *Citizens* (Manchester City), and *Reds* (Liverpool), which fulfilled multiple communicative roles. Expressively, these nicknames signalled symbolic identity, strengthened group belonging, and fostered camaraderie among fans. Textually, they functioned as cohesive devices by reducing lexical repetition and diversifying stylistic choices in sports journalism. In this way, nicknames not only economise language but also imbue texts with symbolic resonance and cultural hybridity, bridging English football culture with Spanish media discourse. These studies underscore the pragmatic versatility of nicknames across contexts. Whether in informal interaction, literary reporting, or digital journalism, nicknames streamline communication while simultaneously enriching discourse with cultural, symbolic, and stylistic associations. Their adaptability and persistence reflect their embeddedness in the social and cultural fabric of language use, where they operate as markers of identity, tools of economy, and vehicles of symbolic expression.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that sports nicknames transcend their apparent role as informal or decorative labels, functioning instead as dynamic linguistic constructs that encode identity,

²⁰ Bobyreva, "Nicknames in the Sport Society: Lingvocultural Aspects."

²¹ Olimat, Mahadin, and Olimat, "A Socio-Onomastic Study of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Football Teams' Nicknames."

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

²³ Kennedy and Zamuner. "Nicknames and the Lexicon of Sports."

²⁴ Luján-García and Nogueroles. "The use of nicknames to refer to Premier League English Football Teams in Spanish digital press."

convey cultural narratives, and influence public perception. Across diverse sporting contexts, researchers have shown that nickname formation is shaped by a complex interplay of historical references, socio-cultural symbolism, linguistic patterns, and pragmatic functions. However, to the researcher's knowledge, no study has specifically examined the sociolinguistic dimensions of sporting nicknames within the context of international cricket. This study addresses that gap by investigating the sociolinguistic aspects of nicknames attributed to international cricketers, both active and retired, from a range of cricketing nations. It contributes socio-onomastic scholarship by extending its scope to a globally significant yet underexplored sporting domain, offering new insights into how nicknames operate as markers of identity, instruments of camaraderie, and expressions of cultural meaning within the multicultural sphere of international cricket.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed Social Identity Theory (SIT) as its principal theoretical framework to analyse the sociolinguistic aspects of sporting nicknames within the context of international cricket. Developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, SIT posits that individuals derive a significant part of their self-concept and identity from the social groups to which they belong.²⁵ The theory further asserts that individuals strive to achieve a sense of positive distinctiveness for their in-groups, frequently employing language, symbols, and shared cultural practices such as nicknaming to affirm group cohesion and pride.²⁶ In international sport, and particularly in cricket, nicknames function as symbolic linguistic markers that facilitate the negotiation of group membership, reinforce team solidarity, and distinguish in-groups from perceived out-groups. The assignment of nicknames in cricket extends beyond informal labelling; it reflects complex cultural, social, and linguistic meanings. Cricketers are frequently nicknamed based on attributes such as their style of play, physical characteristics, national origin, or public persona as represented in media and fan discourse. These nicknames contribute to the construction and communication of social identities, both within the team and across broader fan communities. Additionally, SIT suggests that the process of categorising individuals into groups naturally leads to in-group favouritism and the differentiation of out-group dynamics, often mirrored in nickname usage that underscores allegiance, rivalry, or distinguishing characteristics.²⁷ Viewed through this theoretical lens, the study investigated how nicknames reinforce a sense of collective identity among players and supporters, foster internal team cohesion, and shape external perceptions. Furthermore, the cross-cultural variation in nickname practices revealed how different cricketing nations use language as a culturally resonant tool in identity construction.²⁸ Therefore, SIT offered a framework for understanding the intersection of language, identity, and culture within the sociolinguistic landscape of international sport.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the sociolinguistic dimensions of sporting nicknames among international cricketers. A descriptive qualitative approach was deemed suitable for uncovering the cultural, social, and linguistic meanings embedded in nickname usage across various cricketing contexts.²⁹ The primary aim was not to quantify data, but to understand the contextual

²⁵ Christopher J McKinley, Dana Masto, and Katie M Warber, "Social Identity Theory as a Framework for Understanding the Effects of Exposure to Positive Media Images of Self and Other on Intergroup Outcomes," *International Journal of Communication*, 2014; Jake Harwood, "Social Identity Theory," in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology* (Wiley, 2020), 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0153>.

²⁶ Saul McLeod, "Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory," *Simply Psychology*. London 694 (2011): 695.

²⁷ Kati Kish Bar-On and Ehud Lamm, "The Interplay of Social Identity and Norm Psychology in the Evolution of Human Groups," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 378, no. 1872 (March 13, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2021.0412>.

²⁸ Wei Zhang, "Study on Cultural Identity and Cross-Cultural Communication in Teaching of International Students in China under the Context of the Belt and Road," in *2019 International Conference on Advanced Education Research and Modern Teaching (AERMT 2019)* (Atlantis Press, 2019), 91–94.

²⁹ Hossein Nassaji, "Qualitative and Descriptive Research: Data Type versus Data Analysis," *Language Teaching Research* 19, no. 2 (March 26, 2015): 129–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815572747>.

and symbolic significance of nicknames as they emerge through discourse and media representation.³⁰ Purposive sampling was employed to select 30 cricketers’ nicknames from nine cricketing nations, providing rich and contextually relevant insights into regional and cultural practices of nickname formation. Data was collected from a range of documentary and media sources, including sports journalism articles, televised and written player interviews, autobiographies and biographies, and official cricket databases such as ESPNcricinfo.

In addition, social media platforms (notably Twitter and Instagram) and fan forums were examined to capture the informal, popular discourse surrounding cricketers’ nicknaming practices. These platforms provided valuable insights into how nicknames are disseminated, interpreted, and sustained by fans and media, thus contributing to the construction of public sporting identities. Thematic analysis was used to guide the data analysis, allowing the identification, categorisation, and interpretation of recurring patterns across the dataset.³¹ Following the framework of Clarke and Braun, the analysis involved familiarisation with the data, initial coding, and the development of thematic categories aligned with the study’s objectives and theoretical underpinnings.³² The themes were interpreted through the lens of SIT, enabling a deeper understanding of how sporting nicknames reinforce notions of group identity, cultural belonging, and in-group versus out-group dynamics. It is also important to note that the researchers’ familiarity with cricket significantly contributed to the effective collection, validation, and interpretation of the data. This expertise supported the exploration of the socio-cultural narratives underlying nickname usage and illustrated how language functions as a tool for articulating collective identity within the global arena of sport.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explores international cricketers’ nicknames, examining their origins, meanings, and social significance, highlighting how they reflect identity, performance, physical traits, cultural heritage, and fan or team relationships.

Geographical or Place-Based Nicknames

International cricketers’ nicknames are derived from a player’s country, hometown, region, city, or cultural-geographical roots emphasising cultural identity and origin. They often celebrate heritage, strengthen national pride, and create a sense of belonging within international cricket communities. Such nicknames also act as markers of geographical identity, linking players to specific landscapes, histories, and traditions.³³ They can reinforce regional stereotypes, highlight local reputations, and serve as symbolic reminders of a player’s roots, thereby shaping how fans and media construct narratives of belonging and representation in global sport as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Cricketers’ Nicknames Rooted in Geographical Origins

Cricketers formal names	Country	Cricketers nicknames
Dale Steyn	South Africa	Phalaborwa express
Shoaib Akhtar	Pakistan	Rawalpindi Express
Kapil Dev	India	Haryana Hurricane
Brian Lara	West Indies	Prince of Port of Spain
Josh Hazlewood	Australia	Bendemeer Bullet
Sanath Jayasuriya	Sri Lanka	Matara Mauler

³⁰ Josephine Oranga and Audrey Matere, “Qualitative Research: Essence, Types and Advantages,” *OALib* 10, no. 12 (2023): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1111001>.

³¹ Moira Maguire and Brid Delahunt, “Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars,” *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education* 9, no. 3 (2017).

³² Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, “Teaching Thematic Analysis: Overcoming Challenges and Developing Strategies for Effective Learning,” *The Psychologist* 26, no. 2 (2013).

³³ Botolv Helleland, “Place Names and Identities,” *Oslo Studies in Language* 4, no. 2 (July 21, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.5617/osla.313>.

Table 1 highlights nicknames such as *Phalaborwa Express*, *Rawalpindi Express*, *Haryana Hurricane*, *Prince of Port of Spain*, and *Bendemeer Bullet*, which are derived from the cricketers' hometowns or geographical origins. These nicknames function as more than mere labels of recognition; they embed the athletes' personal journeys within a collective sense of belonging and pride shared by fans who identify with the same region. For instance, Dale Steyn, South Africa's iconic fast bowler, was dubbed the *Phalaborwa Express* after his birthplace in Phalaborwa, Limpopo province.³⁴ The metaphor likens his blistering pace to a speeding train while also reinforcing his rootedness in his community. Similarly, Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar became universally known as the *Rawalpindi Express*. The nickname captures both his unmatched pace, consistently exceeding 150 km/h, and his connection to Rawalpindi, the third-largest city in Punjab province.³⁵ In both cases, the metaphor of the "express train" demonstrates how pace bowlers are celebrated for speed while their regional identities are simultaneously foregrounded.

Kapil Dev's moniker, the *Haryana Hurricane*, exemplifies another dimension of this trend. The alliteration ties his state of origin, Haryana, to his whirlwind presence on the cricket field. This label positioned him not only as a cricketing force but also as a symbol of collective pride for the people of Haryana in India. Similarly, Brian Lara was hailed as the *Prince of Port of Spain*. Unlike metaphors of force or velocity, this nickname foregrounds nobility and elegance, aligning with Lara's graceful batting style while elevating Port of Spain's status through his sporting royalty. Josh Hazlewood of Australia earned the nickname Bendemeer Bullet, a reference to his hometown in New South Wales. The term "bullet" conveys precision, pace, and lethal accuracy, traits synonymous with Hazlewood's bowling. Similarly, Sri Lanka's Sanath Jayasuriya was famously nicknamed the *Matara Mauler*, a title that captured his aggressive, destructive batting style while simultaneously anchoring his identity to his hometown, Matara, a prominent coastal city in Sri Lanka.

A comparative analysis of these geographically inspired nicknames reveals distinct regional patterns shaped by differing cultural values and sporting traditions. In South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan, such nicknames often merge geographical reference with collective pride, embodying a communal ethos that situates individual sporting success within a broader framework of regional honour and solidarity. In the Caribbean, exemplified by Lara's *Prince of Port of Spain*, nicknaming practices highlight aesthetic refinement and symbolic elevation, resonating with cultural narratives of dignity, artistic expression, and national prestige. Conversely, in Australia and South Africa, nicknames such as *Phalaborwa Express* and *Bendemeer Bullet* accentuate qualities of speed, precision, and resilience, reflecting competitive, performance-oriented sporting cultures that valorise endurance and technical mastery. These contrasts underscore that geographical nicknaming is not merely descriptive but constitutes a culturally embedded practice through which regional sentiment, identity, and social values are linguistically performed and symbolically perpetuated.

From SIT's perspective, such nicknames play a crucial role in shaping both personal and collective identity. SIT posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social groups, including those defined by geography. By linking athletes' achievements to their hometowns, these nicknames elevate regional identities to a global platform. Fans who share these geographical backgrounds experience a sense of in-group pride, perceiving the cricketers' success as a reflection of their own community's value and resilience. In turn, opposing fans may develop a sense of rivalry, further reinforcing the dynamics of in-group versus out-group identification described by SIT. Therefore, geographical nicknames serve dual functions: they immortalise the athlete's sporting prowess while simultaneously transforming hometowns like Phalaborwa, Rawalpindi, Haryana, Port of Spain, Bendemeer, and Matara into global cultural references. They become identity markers that solidify the bond between athlete, place, and community, ensuring that international cricket is not only about individual performance but also about collective representation and pride.

³⁴ Manfred Spocter, "Neglect of Municipal Infrastructure in Phalaborwa," in *Socio-Spatial Small Town Dynamics in South Africa* (Springer Cham Switzerland, 2023), 47–78, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37142-4_3.

³⁵ Ziauddin Safari et al., "Land Use and Environmental Planning in Rawalpindi, Pakistan," *Journal of Mechanical, Civil and Industrial Engineering* 4, no. 2 (April 4, 2023): 01–10, <https://doi.org/10.32996/jmcie.2023.4.2.1>.

Physical Appearance or Style-Based Nicknames

These nicknames stem from players' physical traits, mannerisms, or on-field techniques, making them easily recognisable and memorable. They serve as identity markers that highlight individuality, foster social recognition, and reinforce perceptions of personality or athletic style. Beyond team bonding and fan engagement, such nicknames also shape personal branding, media narratives, and spectator perceptions, influencing how players are celebrated or stereotyped in international cricket (see Table 2).

Table 2: Nicknames Derived from Physical Appearance and Personal Style

Cricketers formal names	Country	Cricketers nicknames
Graeme Smith	South Africa	Biff (Buffalo)
Stuart Broad	England	Malfoy
Sachin Tendulkar	India	Little Master
Virat Kohli	India	Chiku
Paul Adams	South Africa	Gogga (Insect)
Angelo Mathews	Sri Lanka	Kaluwa (black one)

Nicknames often serve as playful yet descriptive labels that capture distinctive aspects of a player's physical appearance, body structure, or demeanour both on and off the field.³⁶ In cricket, these labels extend beyond casual references; they function as cultural markers, shaping how teammates, fans, and the media perceive and engage with players. As illustrated in Table 2, nicknames such as **Biff**, **Malfoy**, **Little Master**, **Chiku**, **Gogga**, and **Kaluwa** reveal how traits like body size, facial resemblance, complexion, and unusual movements become embedded in a cricketer's identity. Graeme Smith, the former South African captain, earned the nickname **Biff** (short for Buffalo), highlighting his stocky build and commanding presence at the crease. The label underscores how physical stature can shape perceptions of strength and dominance in sport. Similarly, England's Stuart Broad was called **Malfoy**, a nod to the *Harry Potter* character Draco Malfoy, due to his fair hair and sharp facial features. This example illustrates how popular culture and physical resemblance intersect, producing humorous associations that resonate with fans and teammates alike.

By contrast, Sachin Tendulkar's nickname, **Little Master**, drew attention to his comparatively short stature but simultaneously conveyed deep respect for his batting genius. The nickname transformed a potential limitation into a celebrated trait, reinforced by his record-breaking career as the highest run scorer and century-maker in Test cricket. In a similar vein, Virat Kohli's nickname **Chiku**, derived from a cartoon character with spiky hair, reflected his youthful appearance and hairstyle in his early career. Both examples show how nicknames rooted in appearance can evolve into affectionate identifiers that symbolise admiration rather than ridicule. Some nicknames, however, highlight unusual bodily quirks. Former South African spinner Paul Adams was called **Gogga** (insect) because of his unorthodox, frog-like bowling action, which became inseparable from his public identity. Likewise, Sri Lankan all-rounder Angelo Mathews was dubbed **Kaluwa** (black one), referencing his darker skin tone. While such a nickname reflects how complexion-based labels are culturally familiar, it also raises critical questions about how race and physical attributes influence the ways athletes are remembered or addressed. These examples demonstrate that physical appearance plays a central role in the construction of identity within cricket. Whether humorous, descriptive, or affectionate, nicknames reflect cultural perceptions of body size, resemblance, skin colour, or distinctive physical traits and often endure in public memory more strongly than players' formal names.

A comparative analysis reveals that appearance-based nicknaming practices in cricket vary across regions, reflecting distinct cultural norms and social values. In South Asia, nicknames such as

³⁶ Annisa A Dianitami, Widyastuti Widyastuti, and Slamet Setiawan, "A Connection between Nickname and Identity: Does It Reflect Intimacy or Shaming?," in *International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities 2022 (IJCAH 2022)* (Atlantis Press, 2023), 2046–56.

Little Master and *Chiku* often integrate physical characteristics with expressions of respect or affection, emphasising admiration for skill, temperament, and personal character rather than superficial traits alone. In the Caribbean and Africa, nicknames like *Biff* or *Gogga* frequently foreground humour, distinctiveness, or exaggeration, reflecting playful, performative, and communal modes of cultural expression. In Western contexts, as exemplified by Stuart Broad’s *Malfoy*, nicknames tend to draw on popular culture and visual resemblance, producing labels that gain resonance through shared media literacy and fan engagement. These regional variations demonstrate that while appearance-based nicknames universally function as markers of identity, the cultural framework in which they emerge shapes whether they convey esteem, amusement, notoriety, or aesthetic appreciation.

Performance or Skill-Orientated Nicknames

These nicknames are derived from a player’s sporting abilities, distinctive techniques, or memorable achievements, emphasising athletic identity and professional excellence. They symbolise performance, resilience, and distinctive styles, reinforcing reputations of dominance and inspiring admiration. By capturing moments of brilliance or consistent mastery, they construct narratives of sporting greatness and link players’ identities to lasting legacies in global cricket, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Performance or Skill-Based Nicknames of Cricketers

Cricketers formal names	Country	Cricketers nicknames
Abraham Benjamin de Villiers	South Africa	Mr. 360
James Anderson	England	King of Swing
Rohit Sharma	India	Hitman
Shane Bond	New Zealand	The Terminator
Rahul Dravid	India	The Wall
Viv Richards	West Indies	Master Blaster

Performance or skill-based nicknames in cricket underscore players’ extraordinary abilities, distinctive playing styles, and on-field achievements that distinguish them from their peers, as shown in Table 3. Unlike appearance or geography-based nicknames, these titles directly highlight a player’s technical mastery, creativity, or destructive power, transforming moments of sporting brilliance into enduring markers of identity. Often coined by fans, commentators, or teammates, such nicknames become symbolic legacies that immortalise a cricketer’s impact on the game. A notable example is South Africa’s Abraham Benjamin de Villiers, who earned the title *Mr. 360*. This nickname captures his ability to play strokes in every direction of the field, showcasing innovative shot-making and adaptability that redefined limited-overs batting. It emphasises not only his technical genius but also his flair for unpredictability and reinvention. Extending this tradition, young South African talent Dewald Brevis has been christened *Baby AB*. The label draws an explicit comparison to de Villiers, recognising Brevis’ similar 360-degree batting style while also stressing his youth and potential. The use of *Baby* suggests continuity, casting Brevis as a successor to de Villiers’ legacy and reinforcing generational identity within South African cricket.

Similarly, England’s James Anderson is widely known as the *King of Swing*. This nickname elevates him to royalty in the art of swing bowling, acknowledging both his technical mastery and his unmatched consistency across formats. In contrast, India’s Rohit Sharma is called the *Hitman*, a reflection of his explosive batting, particularly his ability to dominate limited-overs cricket with effortless six-hitting. New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond was dubbed *The Terminator*, a label evoking aggression, fear, and lethal pace, framing him as a bowler capable of dismantling opposition innings. While *Hitman* and *The Terminator* differ in focus, one on batting firepower, the other on bowling ferocity, they both highlight destructive power as a defining quality. Not all nicknames emphasise aggression; some celebrate resilience and stability. India’s Rahul Dravid earned the enduring title *The Wall*, a metaphor for his unbreakable defence, patience, and reliability under pressure. His nickname immortalises him as a symbol of steadiness, in stark contrast to more flamboyant

contemporaries. The West Indies great Viv Richards, on the other hand, was celebrated as the **Master Blaster**, a title that reflects his unmatched dominance, charisma, and attacking batting style that defined an era of West Indian cricketing pride.

A comparative lens reveals that performance-based nicknames in cricket are deeply shaped by the cultural values and sporting traditions of their respective regions. In South Asia, designations such as Hitman and The Wall encapsulate ideals of endurance, discipline, and technical artistry qualities that resonate with the subcontinent’s moral and aesthetic conception of cricket as a disciplined pursuit of mastery. In the West Indies, nicknames such as Master Blaster embody cultural pride, expressive flair, and the celebratory exuberance that define Caribbean cricketing identity. Conversely, in Western contexts such as England, titles like King of Swing highlight precision, technical expertise, and professionalism, reflecting long-standing traditions of craftsmanship and consistency. These regional variations indicate that performance-oriented nicknaming constitutes a culturally mediated form of linguistic recognition through which diverse cricketing communities articulate and sustain their distinctive philosophies, values, and collective identities.

From the perspective of SIT, these nicknames are not merely descriptors but also markers of group identity and collective pride. SIT suggests that individuals construct part of their self-concept through membership in social groups.³⁷ In this case, performance-based nicknames elevate players as representatives of excellence, innovation, or resilience within national and international cricket. Fans internalise these labels as reflections of their in-group, whether national teams or cricketing cultures, strengthening a shared sense of pride and belonging. For example, **Mr. 360** or **The Wall** becomes more than a personal accolade; they symbolise South African ingenuity or Indian resilience, respectively, reinforcing how supporters view themselves through the achievements of their sporting heroes. Therefore, performance-oriented nicknames immortalise cricketers not just as athletes but as cultural icons. They encode skill into identity, enabling players to transcend statistical records and embody values such as creativity, dominance, perseverance, or flair. These nicknames contribute to the construction of collective memory, ensuring that players are remembered not only for their contributions to the field but also for the symbolic weight of their identities.

Shortened Nickname Forms (Hypocoristics)

Shortened nickname forms, or hypocoristics, are created by modifying personal names with affectionate or informal variations, personalising players’ identities within teams and fan communities.³⁸ In cricket, they foster familiarity, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging, reinforcing team cohesion and social acceptance. These nicknames also enhance fan engagement, allowing supporters to connect with players on a personal level and shaping narratives of loyalty and intimacy, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Shortened nickname forms (hypocoristics) in international cricket

Cricketers formal names	Country	Cricketers nicknames
Muttiah Muralitharan	Sri Lanka	Murali
Mushfiqur Rahim	Bangladesh	Mushi
Suryakumar Yadav	India	SKY
Kagiso Rabada	South Africa	KG
Ben Stokes	England	Stokesy
Jacques Kallis	South Africa	Jakes

In Table 5, shortened name forms, or hypocoristics, are presented as commonly used cricket nicknames that are familiar, endearing, and easily recognisable. Typically created through abbreviations,

³⁷ McLeod, “Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory.”

³⁸ Dianitami, Widyastuti, and Setiawan, “A Connection between Nickname and Identity: Does It Reflect Intimacy or Shaming?”; Thapelo J Otlogetswe and Goabilwe N Ramaeba, “Nickname Creation through Shortening Setswana Personal Names,” *South African Journal of African Languages* 42, no. 2 (May 4, 2022): 200–206, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2022.2094052>.

clipped forms, or playful modifications of full names, they make players’ identities simpler to recall and easier to chant for fans, teammates, and commentators.³⁹ Unlike geography or performance-based nicknames, hypocoristics carry less symbolic weight and instead emphasise familiarity, camaraderie, and intimacy within the cricketing community. Over time, many of these names become so widely accepted that they rival or even eclipse players’ formal names. For example, former Sri Lankan spin legend Muttiah Muralitharan, popularly known as *Murali*. Given the complexity of his long surname, this clipped form and memorable way for both fans and commentators to refer to him. Similarly, Bangladeshi wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim is affectionately called *Mushi*, a diminutive that makes his name sound lighter and more personal, reflecting the closeness and admiration of teammates and supporters. In India, Suryakumar Yadav is widely recognised by the acronym *SKY*, formed from the initials of his full name. Unlike traditional hypocoristics, this nickname also carries symbolic value, as the “sky” metaphor suggests expansiveness and limitless potential, aligning with his aggressive, innovative batting style.

South Africa’s fast bowler Kagiso Rabada is called *KG*, another initial-based hypocoristic that provides brevity and modernity, echoing a sporting culture where initials often serve as sleek, catchy identifiers. England’s Ben Stokes is frequently called *Stokesy*, a typical English diminutive formed by adding the suffix *-y*, which reflects informality and team-based camaraderie. Likewise, South Africa’s Jacques Kallis was popularly known as *Jakes*, a clipped, anglicised form of his first name that conveyed warmth and familiarity while still maintaining respect for one of cricket’s greatest all-rounders. These shortened forms highlight how linguistic creativity simplifies otherwise long or formal names while fostering inclusivity and emotional connection. From Murali to KG, hypocoristics often function as both practical tools of communication and symbolic markers of closeness between players, teammates, and fans. They embody the balance between individuality and community in cricket, where a simple nickname can capture not only a player’s identity but also the social bonds that surround the sport.

Self-Proclaimed or Fan-Created Nicknames

Self-proclaimed or fan-created nicknames in international cricket are labels that emerge outside formal team structures, either chosen by the players themselves or popularised by supporters and commentators. Unlike appearance or performance-based nicknames, these titles often carry an element of showmanship, branding, or cultural imagination, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Self-proclaimed and fan-created nicknames in international cricket

Cricketers formal names	Country	Cricketers nicknames
Chris Gayle	West Indies	Universe Boss
Glenn Maxwell	Australia	The Big Show
Shahid Afridi	Pakistan	Boom Boom
Ravindra Jadeja	India	Rockstar
Kevin Pietersen	England	Maverick
Mahendra Singh Dhoni	India	Thala

Self-proclaimed and fan-created nicknames in international cricket function as significant identity markers that extend beyond the boundaries of sport. Unlike descriptive, appearance-based, or hypocoristic nicknames, these titles are either consciously adopted by players or enthusiastically bestowed upon them by fans, thereby becoming embedded within broader cultural narratives. Such nicknames reflect not only the cricketer’s playing style but also their personality, charisma, and public image. For instance, Chris Gayle’s *Universe Boss* is a self-proclaimed title that encapsulates his dominance in T20 cricket and his flamboyant persona, symbolising a larger-than-life presence that positions him as both an entertainer and a brand. Similarly, Australia’s Glenn Maxwell is widely known

³⁹ Jonnie Robinson, “Stokesy Ct. Foakesy b. Woakesy,” *English Today* 40, no. 4 (December 9, 2024): 248–57, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078424000348>.

as **The Big Show**, a nickname that highlights his explosive batting and flair. While initially criticised as arrogant, the label accurately represents his role as a performer capable of altering the course of a match. This was exemplified in the 2023 Cricket World Cup encounter against Afghanistan in Mumbai, where Maxwell, arriving with Australia in deep trouble at 49 for 4 while chasing 293, produced an extraordinary double century to secure one of the most remarkable victories for Australia in the tournament's history.

Fan-created nicknames often embody strong emotional connections and collective pride. Shahid Afridi's **Boom Boom**, coined by fans in recognition of his aggressive batting, became a rallying cry that encapsulated both his unpredictability and the excitement he generated. Ravindra Jadeja's **Rockstar**, popularised by Shane Warne during the IPL and quickly embraced by supporters, reflects Jadeja's energy, all-around abilities, and charismatic appeal. Kevin Pietersen's **Maverick**, a title he embraced, signifies his unconventional approach, rebellious streak, and individualism, distinguishing him as a player who often defied cricketing norms. Mahendra Singh Dhoni's nickname **Thala** (meaning "leader" in Tamil), though originally coined by fans within the Chennai Super Kings community in the Indian Premier League, has become firmly associated with him, symbolising his composed authority and celebrated leadership reputation even on the international stage.

A cross-regional comparison indicates that nicknaming practices are deeply reflective of the sociocultural values and communicative traditions from which they emerge. In South Asian contexts, nicknames often convey collective emotional attachment and communal admiration, reinforcing shared cultural pride and social cohesion. In the Caribbean, nicknaming practices are typically infused with humour, bravado, and performative self-expression, capturing the region's vibrant oral traditions and celebratory identity. Conversely, in Western contexts such as Australia and England, nicknames tend to foreground traits of individualism, competitiveness, and athletic excellence, mirroring broader cultural ideals of self-reliance and merit-based recognition. These regional distinctions illustrate that nicknaming is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a culturally embedded act of identity performance that reflects and reinforces localised norms of self-presentation, social interaction, and belonging.

Viewed through the lens of SIT, these nicknames exemplify how individuals and groups construct identity through association. Self-proclaimed nicknames enable players to shape their personal brands, while fan-created ones foster emotional attachment, admiration, and collective belonging. For example, Dhoni's **Thala** unites Chennai Super Kings supporters into a shared identity, whereas Afridi's **Boom Boom** symbolises national pride among Pakistan fans. In this way, nicknames function as symbolic identity markers that reinforce group membership, strengthen emotional bonds, and elevate cricketers into cultural icons whose significance extends beyond the playing field.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that nicknames in international cricket function as multifaceted markers of identity, encompassing geographical, physical, performance, interpersonal, and cultural dimensions. Geographical or place-based nicknames connect players to their hometowns, regions, or countries, situating personal achievements within broader cultural and communal contexts. Such nicknames transform athletes into symbols of collective pride, reinforcing regional belonging and fostering in-group identification. Physical appearance or style-based nicknames emphasise distinctive bodily traits, mannerisms, or on-field techniques, serving as social and cultural markers that convey personality, individuality, and athletic style while promoting recognition and engagement among teammates, media, and fans. Performance or skill-oriented nicknames foreground technical mastery, athletic brilliance, and consistent achievement, immortalising moments of excellence and linking players' identities to enduring legacies that inspire admiration across generations. Shortened forms (hypocoristics) and self-proclaimed or fan-created nicknames emphasise familiarity, camaraderie, and personal branding. Hypocoristics foster relational closeness and fan engagement, whereas self-proclaimed or fan-created nicknames extend identity beyond the sporting domain, reflecting charisma, personal style, and collective emotional investment. These nicknames illustrate how linguistic creativity and social dynamics intersect to reinforce a sense of belonging and elevate cricketers into cultural icons.

These cricket nicknames operate as complex identity markers, embedding players within social, cultural, and performance narratives. Across all categories, they mediate between individual achievement and collective recognition, reflecting SIT principles and highlighting the interplay among personal identity, group membership, and global cultural representation. Beyond the cricketing context, these findings contribute to SIT by showing that linguistic practices such as nickname formation function as dynamic mechanisms for negotiating social inclusion, status, and symbolic capital within and between groups. Furthermore, the study advances socio-onomastics by demonstrating that personal naming practices in high-visibility, transnational domains not only reflect existing social hierarchies and cultural values but also actively shape collective identities and global cultural imaginaries. Therefore, this study contributes to sports linguistics and social identity research by systematically categorising and analysing cricketers' nicknames, demonstrating their pivotal role in the construction of identity and the shaping of cultural meaning within international cricket.

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