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## A synta-onomastic analysis of Yorùbá nicknames of selected English Premier League football clubs

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**Abstract:** The main thrust of this research is to analyse the use of nicknames as an instrument of banter among fans of the English Premier League and sportscasters in Yorubaland. The aim of this research is to examine if the use of these names is parasitic or symbiotic to the Yoruba language and culture. Data for this research work were gathered from both primary and secondary sources, which include interviews and recordings of football fans' conversations in selected viewing centres in Ibadan, Ilorin, and Maleté towns, as well as gathering data from media sources, which include BBC Yoruba and Splash 105.5 FM Ibadan through their Meta accounts. The theory adopted for this research is the socio-onomastic theory, which sees a name as a social construct. From this research, it was discovered that syntactically, Yoruba nicknames of English Premier League clubs can be classified into nominal class and sentence class. Socio-onomastically, it was discovered that Yoruba nicknames of English Premier League clubs can be classified into Colour and symbol, Yoruba folklore, Clubs' current form, Club history and Place and personal names. It was also discovered that Yoruba socio-cultural beliefs, which include belief in destiny and predestination, the concept of "Ori" 'head' in Yoruba cosmology, as well as other cultural practices such as the system of government, religion, etc., are embedded in Yoruba nicknames for English Premier League Clubs. In conclusion, Yoruba nicknames perform a symbiotic role between football and the Yoruba language and culture.

**Keywords:** Football, Nickname, Onomastic, Socio-cultural belief, Syntax

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### 1. Introduction

Name is one of the oldest sources through which the history, knowledge, ideology, philosophies, thoughts, and beliefs of a particular race or tribe can be known or traced. Names in African society, nicknames inclusive, are carriers of history, culture, belief, philosophy, ideology, and many more. The name serves as a bank through which valuable assets are stored and preserved for posterity. Nickname is one of the five types of personal names in Yoruba, the other four being "orúkò abíṣọ" 'christened names', "orúkò àmútòrunwá" 'heavenly name', "orúkò oríki" 'panegyric name' and "orúkò àbíkú" 'reincarnated child name'. Akintola and Ayantayo (2012: 66) explain that a "nickname is a name added or given to or substituted for the proper name of an individual that is familiar or a place or thing". Nicknames in the Yoruba language are used to praise, eulogize, satirize, and abuse indirectly, as well as to project the physical features and characters of individuals. It was observed that while research abounds on all these name types, little scholarly attention has been paid to the study of nicknames across cultures and tribes, Yoruba language. Leslie and Skipper (1990: 275) give credence to this assertion on the dearth of research on nicknames when they opine that "compared to

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other studies of names, the systematic study of nicknames has attracted little attention. Regardless of academic discipline, only a small amount of empirical research exists". The aim of this research is to examine the concept of language contact, globalization as well as integrated acculturation through the domestication and indigenization process, which results in the nicknaming of English Premier League Football Clubs in the Yoruba language. Majoro-Majesty (2011) in Osisanwo and Alugbin (2024: 415) gives credence to the global outlook of football. He explains that:

Football or soccer, as it is commonly known in some parts of the world, is a global phenomenon that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries. The beautiful game has a unique ability to unite people from diverse backgrounds, creating a shared experience that goes beyond the pitch.

Through this work, Yoruba nickname data of four English Premier League clubs, which are Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester United and Manchester City football clubs, will be examined and analyzed within the scope of synta-onomastic which is an eclectic approach that combine a syntactic as well as an onomastic approach to the study of nicknames used by rival fans and sportscasters for selected English Premier League Clubs. This researcher observed that while there have been efforts by Adetunji (2010) to examine and analyse nicknames of English Premier League football players from a Nigerian perspective, little or no work, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, has been carried out on the nicknames of English Premier League football clubs, most especially in the Yoruba language. This is the research gap the researcher aims to fill with this work.

Sports communication is the study of communication that focuses on sports, about sports, and on participants of sports, which include players, coaches, fans, etc. Aful and Opoku-Addo (2021: 1) bemoan the lack of research attention given to sports communication in comparison to others, such as media and politics. They opine that "Sports communication continues to be a very important branch of communication, although it has not elicited as much interest as media and politics". While research works abound on different aspects of football, most especially among African and Nigerian scholars, especially on nicknames, little or no research work, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, has been carried out on the relationship between club nicknames and banter in football fans' communication.

Ajayi et al. (2023) explain the dearth of research on verbal foul and banter language among football fans in Nigeria. They assert that "the discourse of football fandom has been under-explored in Nigerian scholarship, especially from a linguistic point of view". The aim of this research is to contribute to and fill this gap using Yoruba language-derived English Premier League football clubs' nicknames as source of data. The focus of this research is on football club-derived Yoruba nicknames. This is borne out of the desire to fill an existing gap in this study. Leslie and Skipper (1990: 275) were the first to call for the investigation of nicknames when they opine that "compared to other studies of names, the systematic study of nicknames has attracted little attention. Regardless of academic discipline, only a small amount of empirical research exists". Harder (2008: 1) in Odukpo-Okafor and Ezeifeke (2023: 7) explain the sources and efficacy of nicknames. He explains that:

Nickname could originate from the recognition of a person's physical characteristics or verbal relationship or from an association of ideas. Nickname tends to carry louder voice that conventional names even beyond their socio-cultural settings.

Luqman et al. (2024) also define nicknames as "a byproduct of culture and are specific to the environment in which they are used and given". Mambwe and Da Costa (2015: 54) explain the importance of nicknames in the study of sports communication when they opine that:

Nicknaming as a practice is part and parcel of sports and that such a practice is as old as sports" justify the claim that nicknames of athletes or sports teams are immanent to language for specific purpose.

Ajayi et al. (2023) also in their work explained the sources of verbal fouls and banter among Nigeria EPL fans. Through their work, they explain that banter is derived among Nigeria EPL fans through the following sources: personalization of club name and activities, name calling and distortion of the club logo, jocular mockery, and logo distortion. They explain that:

Findings revealed that fandom language among Nigerian fans of EPL clubs is replete with significantly peculiar linguistic expressions that tend towards banter and banter throwing. Specifically, it was revealed that pragma-linguistic practices such as personalization, of club activities and affairs, name calling and distortion of rival clubs name, direct and indirect jocular mockery and distortion of club's logo for amusement.

This researcher observed that while Ajayi et al. (2023) work is Niger-centric with data from verbal and non-verbal sources, the focus of this research is solely on Yoruba nicknames as a source of banter among EPL rival fans. Osisanwo and Alugbin (2024) also carried out a metaphorical cum semiotic analysis on BBC Yoruba English Premier League result memes. Though the focus of their work is on metaphorical analysis of English Premier League news headlines on BBC Yoruba. They explain the use of the name and naming strategy in creating names for events, players, coaches, and levels of performance. They assert that:

There are created names for events, players, coaches, and levels of performances, which all creatively depict the acceptance or rejection of what is being described. Four clubs were popularly identified with names. Arsenal as Oriògbadé (the crown does not fit the head); Chelsea as Ànàkáyé (beaten throughout the world); Manchester United as Ànṣààní Àdúgbò (existing for neighbourhood or community benefits); and Manchester City as Èkùn (Tiger).

This researcher observed that Osisanwo and Alugbin (2024) highlight the role of the naming strategy in the acceptance and rejection of what is being described. The focus of this research is to carry out a synta-onomastic analysis of Yoruba language derived nicknames for English Premier League clubs. One of the research objectives is to examine the sources of these nicknames as well as analyse how Yoruba socio-cultural beliefs and practices are infused into football communication through the derivation of Yoruba nicknames for social engagements the promotion of a foreign sport, which is football.

## 1. Literature review

### 1.1. Socio-Onomastic Theory

Name plays a pivotal role in business branding and rebranding. The study of name in any form is referred to as onomastics while the study of language about society is known as sociolinguistics. Socio-onomastic, which is the theoretical framework adopted for this work, is a bi-discipline approach to the study of names through the lens of sociolinguistic variables. Leslie and Skipper (1990) in Olimat et al. (2022: 11) explain that “name are not just arbitrary symbols, they signify status, achievement, privilege and meaningful social organization. They may communicate ethnicity, social status, social prestige all understood within social contexts”. What this means is that name is a product of the society. Redmonds (2007) also defines names as “special words that we use to identify a person, an animal, a place, or a thing, and they all have meaning”. In many cases, that meaning will lie concealed in the name’s history, but in others, it will still be transparent”. The term “Onomastics comes from the Greek word ‘onoma’ and it means name. Onomastics thus is the study of proper names. Odikpo-Okafor and Ezeifeke (2023: 6) explain that “Onomastics is derived from the Greek word ‘Onoma’ and which means names. It is therefore the study of proper names”. This means that Onomastics basically has to do with the study of names (proper), place names, names referring to languages, as well as names that refer to nationalities/ethnic groups.

Ainiala (2016:116) defines socio-onomastic as a “study of people’s beliefs and perceptions regarding name and name use”. Berglund (2017) also asserts that socio-onomastic has been developed as a systemic perspective on the dynamic analysis of names and naming, whereas Onomastics traditionally has largely focused on the etymology and typology of names. It can be deduced from the above that socio-onomastic is an interdisciplinary field of study that combines sociology, linguistics and anthropology to explore the social, cultural and situational aspects of names.

Overall, socio-onomastic captures the breadth and depth of the sociological study of proper names, which offers valuable insights into the complex social and cultural dynamics surrounding names and their derivation. Socio-Onomastics is a fascinating field of study that examines the social and cultural aspects of names. It explores how names are used, perceived, and valued in different social contexts, cultures, and languages. Olimat et al. (2022: 11) corroborates this claim when they explain that “socio-onomastic is a linguistic branch linking language with the notions of culture and society where names usually reflect linguistic structures and socio-cultural meanings”.

There are some key aspects explored in the field of socio-onomastic. These key aspects provide valuable insights into the complex social and cultural dynamics surrounding names, thereby revealing the intricate or complex relationship between language, culture and society. This researcher observed, as will be presented in our data, that all these sociolinguistics and socio-cultural principles play a vital role in the derivation of Yoruba nicknames for the selected English Premier League football clubs.

Some of the notable research works on football in the Yoruba language include Adetunji (2010), who explored Nigerianised nicknames of English Premier League players. Through his work, he explains that sources of English Premier League players include action, physical appearance, age, role and age and ability. He gave the following examples to buttress his claim:

**Table 1:**

SN	PLAYER NAME	NICKNAME	SOURCE/ORIGIN
i	Rio Ferdinand	Fagbó/Amugbó ‘hemp smoker’	Physical Appearance
ii	Didier Drogba	Adérògbà ‘crown forms a fence’	Phonological Approximation
iii	Cesc Fabregas	Olóri-òdó	Leader of youths
iv	Peter Crouch	Omóga	Physical Appearance
v	Petr Cech	Omo iyá àjé ‘child of the witch’	Performance
vi	Theo Walcott	Fine boy	Physical Appearance

Adetunji (2010)

## 2. Research methodology

This work adopts a qualitative research method that involves an auto-telic case studies approach. Data for this research were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source involve individual and focus group interview of football fans in selected viewing centers in Maleté and Ilorin, two Yoruba speaking towns in Kwara states and Ibadan in Oyo states. Secondary data sources include the meta account (formerly Facebook) of BBC Yoruba news and the recording of the Yoruba sports program “Já wọn sí i” that is ‘inform them’ on Splash 105.5 FM Ibadan virtually through their Meta page between the period of November 2023 and December 2024 of the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 English Premier League football seasons. Twenty nicknames data from four English premier league clubs which are Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City and Manchester United were selected for analysis through a purposive sampling method. This is because of the re-occurrence of these clubs in our gathered data and also because previous research has shown that these four clubs have the largest followership concerning fans and views in Nigeria.

## 3. Findings and discussions

In this section, the effort will be made by the researchers to examine and analyse Yoruba language-derived nicknames of selected English Premier League clubs, which include Chelsea football club of London, Arsenal football club of London, Manchester United football club of Manchester, and Manchester City football club of Manchester. Twenty Yoruba nicknames of these clubs, as well as the sources and origin of their derivation, were examined and analysed below:

Table 2

SN	FOOTBALL CLUB	NICKNAME	Source/Origin
i.	Arsenal FC	Oníḃon-òjé ‘one who possess a fake gun’	Adapted from Official Nickname
ii	Arsenal FC	Erinmilókun FC ‘Hippopotamus FC’	Yoruba Folklore
iii	Arsenal FC	Erinlákátábú FC ‘Elephant FC’	Yoruba Folklore
iv.	Arsenal FC	Ọba lóla FC ‘Crown prince FC’	History and Form
v.	Arsenal FC	Orí ò gbadé FC ‘The head does dot suit the crown FC’	History and Form
vi.	Chelsea FC	Àwọn ọmọ iyá aláró ‘The children of the woman that sells dye.’	Colour
vii.	Chelsea FC	Èdà ò láròpin FC ‘Human’s life is not predictable FC’	Form
viii.	Chelsea FC	Igi ọpe FC ‘Palm tree FC’	Name (Cole Palmer)
ix.	Chelsea FC	Àwọn ọmọ Boehly ‘Boehly’ children’	Name (Owner)
x.	Chelsea FC	Ànàkáyé FC ‘ the one who is beaten all over the world’	Form
xi	Chelsea FC	Oniyèyè ti ilú London ‘The mediocre team of London’	Place Name (Team Base)
xii	Chelsea	Aniyikáyé FC ‘the one who is honoured and respect all over the world FC’	Form
xiii	Manchester United	Àwọn ará Old Garage ‘The people from old garage’	Place Name (Team Base)
xiv	Manchester United	Èṣù Pupa ‘Red Devil’	Name (Official Nickname)
xv	Manchester United	Àwọn èyàn Glazer ‘Glazer’s people’	Name (Owner)
xvi	Manchester United	Omívalé FC ‘Flood FC’	Natural Disaster
xvii	Manchester United	Àwọn ológo ànà FC ‘Past glory FC’	History
xviii	Manchester United	Ànfàani Àdúgbò ‘Public use’	Form
xix	Manchester City	Ó yí bírìbírì FC ‘It turn from grace to grass FC’	Form
xx	Manchester City	Èkùn ọkọ òkè ‘The team that is as strong as elephant’	Form

### 3.1. Syntactic Analysis of Derived Football EPL Club Nicknames

This researcher observed that derived Yoruba nicknames of the selected English Premier Football clubs earlier mentioned can be classified syntactically into two syntactic groups. These are the noun phrase class and the sentence class:

#### 3.1.1. Noun Class Derived Yoruba Nicknames for EPL Clubs

The noun phrase classes of English Premier League clubs nicknames can be further divided into mono noun class and complex noun class groups. i.e. the mono-noun class groups are examples of nicknames that have a single noun without any complement. Examples of such nicknames are:

- i. Erinmilókun FC ‘Hippopotamus FC’
- ii. Erinlákátábú FC ‘Elephant FC’

b. Complex noun groups, on the other hand, are Yoruba football club nicknames that are derived from combining two or more nouns together, where one noun serves as the head and others as a complement. This noun class can be further classified into Oní derived and non-oní derived complex noun class. Examples of such nicknames are:

- i. Oníḃon-òjé ‘the owner of the fake gun’
- ii. Àwọn ọmọ iyá aláró ‘the children of the dye woman’

iii. Àwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ Boehly	‘Boehly’s children’
iv. Àwọ̀n ará Old Garage	‘Old Garage People’
v. Èṣù Pupa	‘Red Devil’
vi. Àwọ̀n èyà̀n Glazer	‘Glazer’s people’
vii. Àwọ̀n ológo àná FC	‘yesteryears glory FC’
viii. Ànfààní Àdúgbò	‘Pubic use FC’
ix. Èkùn ọ̀kọ̀ ọ̀kè	‘The team that is as strong as elephant’
x. Igi ọ̀pẹ̀	‘Cole Palmer FC’

### 3.1.2. Sentence Class Derived Yoruba EPL Clubs Nicknames

These are Yoruba nicknames for EPL clubs that are derived from complete grammatical sentences. This researcher discovered that sentence-derived Yoruba English Premier League club nicknames can be classified into two which are non-derive or declarative sentence and derived or negative sentence.

#### a. Declarative Sentence Derived Yoruba EPL Clubs Nicknames

A declarative sentence is a sentence at the basic level where any syntactic transformation has not occurred. They are sentences at the basic structure level under Chomsky’s Principles and Parameters theory. Examples of such nicknames are:

i. Ọba ní ọ̀la king in tomorrow the would be king	Ọba lọ̀la FC
ii. À nà ká ayé pron. beat every world ‘the one who is beaten everywhere’	Ànàkáyé FC
iii. Oní yẹ̀yẹ̀ ti ilú London owner embarrass prep city London ‘The mediocre team of London’	Oníyẹ̀yẹ̀ ti ilú London
iv. Ó yí bíríbírí pron. turn over It turn from grace to grass	Ó yí bíríbírí FC
v. A ní iyì ká ayé pron. own honour over world ‘the one who is honoured and respect all over the world’	Aníyíkáyé FC
vi. Omi ya ilé water turn house ‘flood’	Omiyalé FC

#### b. Negative Sentence Derived Yoruba EPL Clubs Nicknames

Negation is a universal phenomenon, which occurs in all languages of the world but differ in the way they are attested. Adenuga (2017, p132) explains that “negation is one of the most important element in human mind which makes it an unavoidable part of natural language, the tools of human thoughts”. Abimbola (2024, p.176) explains that “hierarchically, negation scopes over the focused constituent as shown in various data presented in the work so far. Hence it is a strong head” In a nutshell, we can define negation as the denial of a part or the whole sentence through the use of negation marker. In Yoruba language the negation marker morphemes are **àì** and **kí** which are used to negate verb and noun respectively. The negation markers for sentence i.e. sentential negation in the language are **kò**, **kó**, **kií**, **má** and **tì** respectively. This researcher observed that only the sentential negative marker “kò” ‘not’ and its alternant ‘ò” is attested in the derivation of these nicknames. Examples of negative sentence derived EPL club nicknames:

i. Orí ò gba adé head Neg. collect crown ‘the head does not suit the crown’	‘Orí ò gbadé FC’
ii. Èdá ò ní à rò pin creation Neg. pron. think end ‘human’s life is not predictable’	‘Èdá ò láròpin FC’

It was discovered by this researcher that the most pronounced and prominent syntactic derivation through which Yoruba nicknames for English Premier League clubs are derived is through nominal combinations which is known as compounding in morphology

### **3.2. Socio-Onomastic Classification of Yoruba EPL Club Nicknames**

Relying on sociolinguistics principles, this researcher observed that English Premier League football clubs nicknames are derived from different sources which include irony, descriptive, figures of speech, current form of the football clubs, names which can be classified into place and personal names, Colour and Symbol, Flora and Fauna and many more.

#### **a. Colour and Symbol Derived Nicknames**

Colour and symbol derived Yoruba English Premier League club nicknames are nicknames derived through the official colour, logo and symbols of these clubs. Examples of such nicknames are:

i. Oníḅon-òjé ‘one who possesses a fake gun’. “Òjé” in the Yoruba language is synonymous and can mean “lead” or a dubious or fake act”. In this context, these researchers observed that it is used as a nickname to banter Arsenal football club whose official logo features a cannon and whose nickname is the “Gunners” which means ‘owner of weapons’. They are nicknamed “Oníḅon-òjé” that is ‘one who possess a fake gun’ which is extracted from their official logo and nickname to banter and run verbal foul against them majorly by rival fans and sportscasters because they have been unable to use their acclaimed weapon to hunt for the glory that is being English Premier League champions for the past twenty-two English Premier League seasons.

ii. Àwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ iyá aláró ‘the children of the woman that sells dye.

As practiced globally, some clubs and national teams usually derive their nicknames from the colour of the club football jersey, flags and other unifying symbols. An example of a colour-derived nickname for football clubs is “the blues”, which is the official nickname of Chelsea football club. This researcher observed that Yoruba sportscasters and rival fans usually use colours related to opposing fans football clubs to make verbal fouls and banter against them. An example of such football club nicknames in the Yoruba language is “Àwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ iyá aláró” ‘the children of the woman that sells dye.

This nickname is derived from the official nickname of Chelsea football club which is ‘the blues’ as well as the colour of the home jersey which is blue colour. The nickname is derived from the colour of their jersey and logo which is blue in colour. This nickname was adopted ironically to banter Chelsea fans, most especially when their team lose a match. The “aró” ‘dye’ in the Yoruba nickname “Àwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ iyá aláró” that is ‘the children of the woman that sells dye’ represents blue; this is because “aró” a locally made dye by the Yoruba is blue in colour. The source of the banter from the Yoruba perspective is the rival fans seeing the dye business as not a lucrative one that one should be proud of. While this is not entirely through as the business of tie and dye is one of the age-long traditional profession of the Yoruba people most especially women from Osogbo where the dye is mainly made and Abeokuta where the business of tie and dye is well pronounced. This shows that there is a level of gender disparity embedded in Yoruba EPL club nicknames banter as female based profession such as tie and dye are seen as not lucrative and is used as subject of mockery and bant in a male dominated sports.

iii. Èṣù Pupa ‘red devil’

This is a direct translation of the official nickname of Manchester United football club which is “red devil”. Dopamu (2000, p. 5) explains the concept of Èṣù in Christian, Islam and Yoruba traditional beliefs. He opines that:

The Devil or Satan in the Bible, Iblis or Shaitan in the Quran is similar to Èṣù in many respects. Satan is evil; the Devil is evil; Èṣù derives sadistic pleasure in wickedness and according to Idowu, is the doyen of Yoruba Religion, the Yoruba put almost every evil tendency and practice in man down to his agency.

“Èṣù” a Yoruba deity can be loosely translated as devil in Yorùbá, the red colour is translated as “pupa” in the Yoruba language. In Yoruba society “Èṣù” is a dreaded deity which is usually appease with sacrifice and atonement. This is why the Yoruba people usually say “èṣù má ṣemí ọ̀mọ̀ ẹ̀lòmíràn ni kí o ṣe” that is ‘the devil should not hurt me but other people’. The red colour that is “pupa” attached to the nickname depicts danger in Yoruba belief, this is why red cloth are tied to economic trees and fruits to ward off and warn people against stealing. This shows that rather than being a likeable nickname, this nickname is used by rival fans to show that Manchester United is an evil club.

#### **b. Yoruba Folklore Derived Yoruba EPL Clubs Nicknames**

Folklore is a branch of literature which has been universally acclaimed to interpret the way of life of a particular tribe or race. Yusuf (2015: 99) explained that “Yoruba folktales are primarily entertaining but covertly and systematically address important and salient social, psychological, political, economic and environmental studies”. This researcher observed that Yoruba folklore plays a vital role in the derivation of Yoruba nicknames for English Premier League clubs. As it has been observed by previous scholars African people see animals as an integral part of their society. This is evident in the presence of animals in different aspects of their literature and culture, most especially their oral

literature, which includes their songs, proverbs, similes, metaphors, idioms, panegyrics, folktales (where there is a close relationship between humans and animals), and so on. Feng et al (2020) in Olimat et al. (2023: 15) explain that “football teams have a special preference for animals, commonly recognized for strength”. Olimat et al. (2023) explain further that:

The majority of African national teams have nicknames related to an animal reference alone or a combination of references associated with animals. These nicknames seem to be inspired by the associations with and significance of the animals to African culture and tradition.

Evidence of this can be gleaned from animal-related Yoruba nicknames given to Arsenal football club by rival fans to banter them. The nicknames are:

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| i. Erinmilókun FC   | ‘Hippopotamus FC’ |
| ii. Erinlákátábú FC | ‘Elephant FC’     |

Adisa (2023: 132) explained the Yoruba view of the elephant as “a prized asset that is often seen as a sign of royalty, and wealth in Yoruba culture”. Some of the Yoruba saying that shows the elephant as a prized asset include “koríko tí erin bá tè kò tún gbé rí mọ́” that is ‘whichever grass that the elephant stomp will never grow again’ and “Ìtākùn tó ní kéré n mọ́wodò; toun terin náá jọ n lẹ́” that is ‘the tree root that want to disturb the movement of the elephant will go with it’. It was discovered that rather than used to eulogize and appreciate, the elephant were used ironically in these elephant related Yoruba folktale-derived Arsenal football club nickname to mock and ridicule the football club fans. This researcher asserts that these two names for example. “Erinmilókun” ‘hippopotamus’ and “Erinlákátábú” ‘elephant’ were sourced from a Yoruba folklore story where an elephant that does not have a rightful claim to the throne but out of his greediness to occupy the throne was tricked by the tortoise for it to be used for sacrifice. The chorus song of the folktale goes thus:

Rival football fans belief that just as the greedy elephant was unable to be crowned king, Arsenal football club will also not become the champion of the English Premier League. The Yoruba folksong goes thus:

A ó mérin jọba	‘we will make the elephant the king’
Èwẹ̀kú ẹwẹ̀	Èwẹ̀kú ẹwẹ̀
Erin kárelé o wá jọba	‘elephant come home and be made king’
Èwẹ̀kú ẹwẹ̀	Èwẹ̀kú ẹwẹ̀

These animal-related nicknames sourced from Yoruba folklore shows that Yoruba football fans and sportscasters make use of the native knowledge embedded in Yoruba oral literature such as folktales and folksongs as instruments of banter in the derivation of Yoruba nicknames for English Premier League football clubs

### **c. Current Form Derived Yoruba EPL Clubs Nicknames**

This researcher observed that the current form of English Premier League football clubs play a pivotal role in the derivation of nicknames for these English Premier League clubs in Yoruba language. For example, it was observed that while Chelsea football club was given nicknames such as “Èdà ò láròpin FC”, ‘human’s life is not predictable’ and “Ànàkáyé FC” ‘the one who is beaten everywhere’ in the 2023/2024 English Premier League football seasons because of their poor form, their nickname was changed to “Aniyikáyé FC” ‘the one who is honoured and respect all over the world’ in the just concluded 2024/2025 English Premier League season after turning their form around with strings of good performance and winnings which culminated in them winning the UEFA Conference League as well as the maiden edition of the new format FIFA World Club Cup where they were crowned the world champion. Also, Manchester City football club that was known as “Èkùn ọkọ ọkè FC” loosely translated as ‘the mighty tiger’ because of their scintillating form which made them become the English Premier League champion for the fourth time in a row in the 2023/2024 English Premier League football season nickname was changed to “Oyíbiríbirí” that is ‘it has turn sour’ by rival fans and sportscasters when their form dovetail in the just concluded 2024/2025 English Premier League football season where they ended up trophyless and third on English Premier League log table.

This researcher observed that “ó yí bírírí” ‘it has turn sour’, as used in this context, depicts a situation of moving from grace to grass. Evidence of this can be gleaned from the downturn in the form of Manchester City, a team that won four consecutive English Premier League titles by losing just three football matches in the 2023/2024 English Premier League season finishing the season trophyless by losing to Crystal Palace in the final of the FA Cup at Wembley having lost seven matches and drew five in the just concluded 2024/2025 English Premier League season. Akinola (2014) buttressed this observation when he explained that name changes with times and circumstances among the Yoruba people. He opines that “Yoruba has names for every situation. Sometimes, a new name is created to take care of the new situation”.

### **d. Historical Derived EPL Clubs Nicknames**

These are categories of nicknames of English Premier League football clubs in the Yoruba language that can be traced to past events, performances, successes and difficulties. Examples of such nicknames include:

i. *Ọba lola FC* ‘the would-be king’

These researchers observed that rival fans and sports media practitioners equate Arsenal football club's lack of success in winning the highly coveted English Premier League title since their invincible triumph in the 2002/2003 English Premier League football season with destiny. This is because the team has earned second position four times during this period that is, 2000/2005, 2015/2016, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 football seasons. This nickname is used by rival football fans to banter fans of Arsenal football club that no matter how close Arsenal football club is to being crowned English Premier League champion, the club will always falter and capitulate at the final stage.

ii. *Orí ò gbadé FC* ‘the head does not suit the crown FC’

This is another nickname that is used to banter Arsenal football club fans for their inability to win the highly coveted English Premier League trophy for the past twenty-two years as well as the UEFA Champions League since inception. Their inability to win is linked to their destiny, which is “*orí*” ‘head’, and the English Premier League trophy and the UEFA Champions League trophy is metaphorically likened to the royal crown in Yoruba culture. “*Orí*” ‘head’ at the surface is the physical upper part of the body, which comprises of other body parts; such as ear, nose, mouth, hair, teeth, tongue, etc. Culturally, “*Orí*” ‘head’ among the Yoruba people is destiny that is the inner being in Yorùbá cosmology. It is synonymous with “*àyànmó*” ‘destiny’. The Yorùbá people believe that one cannot change his or her destiny. Hence, destiny is fixed and cannot be changed or altered, just as the physical head cannot be changed or replaced.

“*Orí*” ‘head’ in Yorùbá refers to one’s spiritual intuition and destiny. It is the reflective spark of human consciousness ingrained into the human essence, and therefore is often referred to as “*Òrìṣà*”. It is believed, among the Yorùbá, that one can appease his or her destiny by paying homage and offering sacrifice to the inner head. This is why the Yorùbá people usually say “*orí là bá ọ́ ká f’Òrìṣà s̄lẹ̀; nìgbà tórí n̄ gbeni kí l’Òrìṣà n̄ wò?*” that is ‘one should rather pay homage and offer sacrifice to his head instead of paying homage to other deities, when the inner head is aiding one, what is the deity doing?’. Another proverb that buttress this claim is “*Sarí má saàguṅ, ògùn ní gbeni lójó kan ipónjù; orí ni gbeni lójó gbogbo.*” That is, worship your head and not spiritual charms, the charm can only save one once, but one’s creator and destiny is one’s protector every day. The relationship between an individual head as the gatekeeper to one’s success is best captured in Yoruba *Ìyèrè-Ifá* “Oracle song” which says:

<i>Orí tí yóó dádé owó</i>	‘the head that will be crowned king’
<i>Inú agogo idẹ ní tí í wá</i>	‘will come from the brass gong’
<i>Orùn tí yóó lẹ̀jìgbà ilẹ̀kẹ̀</i>	‘the neck that will adorn coral beads’
<i>Inú agogo idẹ ní tí í wá</i>	‘will come from the brass gong’
<i>Bèbè idí tí yóó lo mósà ijì aṣọ ọ́ba tí í tanná yanran</i>	‘the waist that will adorn shining royal silk cloth’
<i>Inú agogo idẹ ní tí í wá</i>	‘will come from the brass gong’

This shows that the Yoruba traditional belief that being king is a divine call was footballised and exported to mock Arsenal football club fans that their inability to win the coveted English Premier League and UEFA Champions League trophies for over twenty years is divinely orchestrated by their head so they should accept their fate. Ademuleya (2007, p. 216) gives credence to this assertion when he explains the spiritual concept of *Orí* as the guardian of man’s destiny on earth. He asserts that:

*Orí*, in Yoruba belief, is the man’s personality soul, his guardian angel and his personal deity, which is elevated to the level of divinity and thus worshipped by a man for things to be well with him. For a man’s designated role in life- his destiny to be well fulfilled, it becomes necessary for him to be on good terms with his *orí*.

What this researcher discovered is that in the process of banter and use of verbal foul to abuse and mock rival football fans, Yoruba's spiritual and cosmological beliefs are ingrained in the nickname given to Arsenal football club. Adeyefa (2022: 53) gives credence to this assertion when he submits that “most African names have sociocultural identities, which convey thoughts, traditions, fortunes, conditions and other features”. Evidence of Yoruba cosmological and spiritual belief being infused in football fans’ banter can be gleaned from rival fans telling Arsenal fans in public viewing centers to go and cleanse their head that is “*ẹ̀ jẹ̀ lọ wẹ̀rì yín*” (a Yoruba spiritual practice of offering propitiation to one spiritual head for the person to succeed in life) as a form of being in good terms with their head for their team to win the highly coveted English Premier League and UEFA Champions League titles which has eluded them for twenty-two years. Osisanwo and Alugin (2024) give credence to the promotion of the Yoruba language, cultural beliefs and values through sports communication. They opine that:

In football commentary, Yoruba language and culture intersect in fascinating ways, creating a unique market of meaning that reflects and reinforces cultural identity, community and values.

iii. Omíyalé FC ‘Flood football club’s nickname is given to Manchester United football club by rival fans and sports communicators to tease and banter Manchester United football fans for the dilapidated state of their home ground that is “Old Trafford” which usually leaks anytime it rains. “Omíyalé” ‘flood’, which is a natural disaster that comes with the destruction of lives and properties, is used in place of roof leaking to heighten the level of decadence in the physical infrastructure of one of the richest football clubs in Europe which is Manchester United.

iv. Àwọn ológo ànà FC ‘the glorious and successful of yesteryears’

This nickname depicts the successes Manchester United football club had in the pre-Ferguson and Ferguson era which makes them the most successful club in England with three UEFA Champions League, twenty league titles, thirteen FA cups, six league cups and twenty-one FA community shields and their negative change in fortune in the post-Ferguson era where Manchester United have not been able to win the English Premier League for the past twelve seasons or the UEFA Champions league since 2008 that is seventeen years. It was observed that this name can be classified as a name that performs a historical function; this is because the name is a reminder of what this club used to be in relation to what they are now. Akinola (2014) gives credence to the assertion that some names perform historical functions. He explains that “some names are given to serve as a reminder that something good, bad or memorable took place sometimes in the past”.

#### **e. Place and Personal Name Derived EPL Clubs Nicknames**

Names play an integral role in the history and culture of the Yoruba people, and this was exhibited in the nicknames of some EPL clubs in the Yoruba language.

#### **i. Place Name Derived EPL Clubs Nicknames**

This researcher observed that Manchester United football club was nicknamed “Àwọn ará Old Garage”, which is ‘the people of old garage’ which is the name of a place in Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo state, Nigeria about their bad form in their home ground “Old Trafford”. In addition to this, London which is the place where the home ground of Chelsea football club home ground “Stamford Bridge” is, is used to mock the club for their lack of form which resulted in a series of home losses in the 2023/2024 English Premier League season by nicknaming them “Oníyèyè ti ilú London” that is ‘the clown club from London’. Baker (2021) explains the importance of home ground when he asserts that “the conception of home in sports creates an emotional attachment that transcends physical location”.

#### **ii. Personal Names Derived Yoruba EPL Club Nicknames**

Personal name is a mode of identity for an individual that differentiates him or her from other members of society. Crystal (2001) in Ogunwale (2016: 23) explains the personal name as “a word or a phrase that identifies a specific person or a place. A proper name (therefore) connotes a reference to an individual, not to a member of a class”. It was observed by these researchers that the personal names of owners of selected English Premier League football clubs was used as a source of deriving their Yoruba nicknames. Examples of such nicknames are “Àwọn ọmọ Boehly” that is ‘Boehly’s Boys’ which can be traced to Todd Boehly, who is one of the owners of Chelsea football club with 38.5 stake in the club. This researcher observed that the “ọmọ” ‘child’ attached to this nickname shows the infusion of Yoruba socio-cultural belief that, it is not only the biological parent of a child that can lay claim to a child, elders and leaders in the society as well as bosses in place of work are seen as a non-biological parent. While biological child are referred to as “ọmọ àfarabí”, ‘a child born with physical body’ non-biological child or children are referred to as “ọmọ àfẹnubí” ‘a child born with mouth’

Another example of a personal name derived Yoruba English Premier League club nickname is one of the nicknames given to Manchester United football club, which is “Àwọn èyàn Glazer” ‘Glazer’s people’. This nickname is derived from the name of the Glazer family, who holds a seventy-five per cent stake at Manchester United football club. Another personal sourced nickname to banter Chelsea fan is “Igi ọpẹ FC” ‘palm tree football club’ which depicts Chelsea football club as a one man club because of their over-reliance on Cole Palmer who scored twenty-two goals and provided eleven assists in the 2023/2024 English Premier League season, fifteen goals and eight assists in the 2024/2025 English Premier League season and three goals and two assists in the just concluded 2025 FIFA Club World Cup.

### **4. Contribution of the study**

Through this work, this researcher discovered that while single nouns, combined nouns, declarative sentences and negative sentences are used in the derivation of Yoruba nicknames for English Premier League clubs, the most prominent morpho-syntactic construction used in their derivation is nominal combination i.e. compounding. It was also discovered that negative sentences are the principal construction used in bantering Yoruba Arsenal football club fans for the almost success of Arsenal football club as English Premier League champions in three quick successes, that is 2022/2023, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, where they ended up as runners-up. The sentential negative construction kò/ò which is used to negate a declarative sentence, was used. Examples of such negative sentence-derived nicknames include “orí ò gbádé” ‘the head does not suit the crown’

It was also discovered that Yoruba belief in predestination, “ipín” serves as an instrument in the derivation of some of the nicknames. An example of this includes “ori ò gbadé” ‘the head does not suit the crown’. Also, Yoruba belief was explored in the direct adoption of the official nickname of the Manchester United football club that is “Red Devil” with insertion of Yoruba belief of Èṣù as a deity that is difficult to associate with.

In addition, it was discovered that Yoruba nicknames for these four English Premier League football clubs can be classified into three classes which are permanent, semi-permanent and temporary nicknames. Examples of permanent nicknames are those that can be linked to these clubs colour, symbols and official nicknames which include Yoruba nicknames such as “èṣù-pupa” ‘red devil’ for Manchester United, “Onibon-òjé” ‘owner of lead-made gun’ for Arsenal football club and “omọ iyá alaró” ‘the children of the tie and dye woman’ for Chelsea football club.

The semi-permanent nicknames are those that can be linked to the owners and chief executive officers of the football clubs. The temporary or non-permanent nicknames are names given to the football clubs based on their current form. For example while Chelsea football club was known as “Ànàkáyé” ‘the one who is beaten everywhere’ in the 2023/2024 English Premier League because of their run of bad form, they are now referred to as “Aníyikáyé” ‘the one who is honoured and respect all over the world’ in the concluded 2024/2024 English Premier League season. Also while Manchester City football club was known as “Èkún” ‘tiger’ a nickname that depicts bravery and strength because of their amazing form that culminate in them winning the 2023/2024 English Premier League, they are now referred to as “Oyíbiríbirí” which means it has turn from excellent to worse because of their run of bad games in the concluded 2024/2025 English Premier League season.

Michalidis et al. (2014: 1) give credence to this assertion when they explain the non-static nature of football. They assert that “football culture has never been a static affair. Modes of support and the structural and informal organization thereof have constantly been subject to changes in accordance with other socio-historical influences”. Further-more, other natural disaster derived nickname such as “Omíyalé” ‘flood’ was explored to taunt the decaying infrastructure in “Old Trafford” the home ground of Manchester United whose roof is leaking which one Sky sports correspondent refer to as “Old Trafford water fall”.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, these researchers discovered that Yoruba socio-cultural beliefs and practices, such as royalty and the monarchy system of government, religion, belief in destiny and predestination, as well as the use of Yoruba verbal arts such as folklore, proverbs, and simile, are some of the sources through which Yoruba nicknames are derived for English Premier League football clubs. It was also discovered that Yoruba thought, beliefs, and ideologies can be examined through these nicknames. In addition, it was discovered that the relationship between the English Premier League football clubs and the Yoruba nickname is symbiotic. This is because the use of Yoruba nicknames helps promote and popularize the English Premier League among the Yoruba people, who include both literate and non-literate speakers. The English Premier League, on the other hand, provides a global platform for the Yoruba language, culture, belief, literature, and many more. to be showcased to the whole world.

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