

Onomatopoeia in Hajime Isayama's *Attack on Titan* Manga

Onomatopoeia Dalam Serangan Hajime Iayama Terhadap Manga Titan

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the different types of onomatopoeia in Hajime Isayama's Attack on Titan Volume 1 manga. Attack on Titan is the English title of the Japanese manga series Shingeki no Kyojin, written by Hajime Isayama. The researchers selected Attack on Titan Volume 1 manga as the object of study because the plot at the story's beginning uses various onomatopoeic words to enhance the action scenes and intensity of the battles. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the types of onomatopoeia using the theory stated by Bredin (1996). The data was collected by reading all the chapters in Attack on Titan volume 1 manga, taking notes of the onomatopoeias found throughout the story, and identifying their type and function. This research shows 99 data of onomatopoeic words found in the manga, consisting of 55 direct onomatopoeia, 14 associative onomatopoeia, and 32 exemplary onomatopoeia. The significance of the narrative's sensory engagement allows readers to visualize and 'hear' the action more vividly. Furthermore, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of onomatopoeia's role in manga storytelling, emphasizing its capacity to enrich characterization, atmosphere, and dramatic effects.

Keywords: *onomatopoeia, Attack on Titan, sound symbols, manga*

INTISARI

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan jenis-jenis onomatope yang terdapat dalam manga *Attack on Titan* Volume 1 karya Hajime Isayama. *Attack on Titan* merupakan judul bahasa Inggris dari serial manga *Shingeki no Kyojin* yang ditulis oleh Hajime Isayama. Peneliti memilih *Attack on Titan* Volume 1 sebagai objek penelitian karena alur pada awal cerita menggunakan berbagai onomatope untuk meningkatkan adegan aksi dan intensitas pertarungan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif untuk mendeskripsikan jenis-jenis onomatope dengan menggunakan teori yang dikemukakan Brendin (1996). Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan membaca seluruh bab dalam manga *Attack on Titan* Volume 1, mencatat onomatope yang ditemukan, dan mengidentifikasi jenis serta fungsinya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat 99 data onomatope dalam manga tersebut, yang terdiri dari 55 *direct onomatopoeia*, 14 *associative onomatopoeia*, dan 32 *exemplary onomatopoeia*. Keterlibatan sensorik narasi memudahkan pembaca memvisualisasikan dan 'mendengar' aksi dengan lebih jelas. Selain itu, penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman lebih dalam mengenai peran onomatope dalam penyampaian cerita manga, yang menekankan pada peningkatan karakterisasi, suasana, dan efek dramatis.

Kata kunci: onomatope, Attack on Titan, simbol bunyi, manga

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INTRODUCTION

Onomatopoeia is one of the stylistic devices used in a language. Onomatopoeia imitates the sounds of living things and sounds that exist in the environment or describe a particular state (Purwani et al., 2020). Firdaus et al. (2021) stated that "onomatopoeic" refers to words that phonetically imitate or resemble the sound they describe. Sounds produced by humans, plants, animals, or any object are treated with another object that allows it to make a sound. Onomatopoeia is an essential tool writers use to infuse narratives with unique, expressive qualities, occupying a distinctive and compelling role within language and literature. Dofs (2013) defines onomatopoeia as "a form of auditory icon symbol," a linguistic construct that faithfully mirrors the sounds generated by objects or actions. Tiwiyanti (2016) also supported this thought. She mentioned that in onomatopoeia, people build words by echoing the senses by simply putting the sounds they hear into written text. As mentioned before, these words are formed to mimic or resemble the actual sound linked with the described concept; hence, writers or speakers create words that phonetically imitate the sound of the object they refer to. Bredin (1996) reinforces this concept by highlighting the intrinsic relationship between onomatopoeic words and their ability to convey meaning through the faithful replication of corresponding sounds. Significantly, these words transcend linguistic boundaries and manifest in diverse languages, each with a unique set of onomatopoeic expressions. For example, the sound attributed to gunshots varies from *Dor!* In Indonesian to *Bang!* In English, *Pan!* In French, *Bakyun!* In Japanese, and many more, showing the universality of onomatopoeia in language.

Onomatopoeia is commonly located in the comics. Bennett in Muin et al. (2016) states that comics are not a genre but a medium of human expression, just like movies and prose, that can express our ideas, feelings, and emotions in any genre. The researchers see comics as a high visual medium, where visual elements such as character images, facial expressions, settings, movement, and action are crucial in the formation of the story. However, to convey scenes and events in comics more powerfully and vividly, onomatopoeia plays an important role. When a character is walking, eating, or doing other activities, onomatopoeia describes the sounds associated with the activities, adds dimension to the story and keeps the reader more engaged. For example, when a character drinks water, onomatopoeia such as *Glug... Glug... Glug...* will give an image of the sound of water being drunk quickly. This not only conveys the sound but also brings the scene to life and helps the reader imagine the situation. Thus, the relationship between comics and onomatopoeia is that onomatopoeia enriches the visual experience in comics by bringing in auditory elements that make the story more vivid and understandable to the reader.

Many types of comics can be found in various countries. Manga refers to a style of comic book that originated from Japan. Over the years, manga has gained immense popularity by covering a wide range of themes and genres. Manga often uses onomatopoeia to portray non-dialogue sounds, such as action, background noise, and related diegetic effects, presented in highly stylized fonts embedded in aesthetics, which are different from typeface used in speech bubbles and narrative text (Rohan et al., 2021). The statement highlighted how onomatopoeia in Japanese manga or comics serves a unique purpose in depicting the non-dialogue sounds visually appealing and stylized, contributing to the distinctive aesthetic of *manga* storytelling.

Attack on Titan is the English title of the manga series created by the author Hajime Isayama, known initially as *Shingeki no Kyojin* in Japanese. This manga was originally published by Kodansha from September 2009 to April 2021. 34 volumes have been adapted into anime series. The narrative revolves around the story of the protagonist, Eren Yeager, who lives in a world where gigantic creatures known as titans prey on humans. In response, human survivors have constructed large walls to shield themselves from these monstrous titans. Eren

Yeager, along with his companions, are striving to uncover the Titans' origin and the truth behind it while trying to survive for their lives.

The researchers selected Volume 1 of *Attack on Titan* as the object of analysis because the plot explains the beginning of the battle between humans and titans, which contains various onomatopoeic words to enhance the action scenes and the intensity of the battles. The use of gear weapons in the battles between humans and titans produces the sounds of crashing, shattering, explosive, slicing, and clanging, as well as the sounds of Titans' footsteps. These sounds are represented by the onomatopoeia words. This manga is a fascinating subject of analysis to understand how visual and textual elements can be produced to express reality and make readers understand the actions and nuances in the story.

Several researchers have conducted previous studies related to onomatopoeia in comics. First, a study by Wijaya et al. (2022) titled "Onomatopoeia Analysis in The God of High School Webtoon Comic" focuses on finding different types of onomatopoeia in *The God of High School* Webtoon Comic. Second, a study by Giyatmi et al. (2023) titled "Onomatopoeia in Tintin Comics" analyzes different types of onomatopoeia in *Tintin* Comics. Third, a study by Langus et al. (2023) titled "Onomatopoeia Found in Shazam Comics" focuses on finding different types of onomatopoeia in *Shazam* comics. Fourth, a study by Miarta and Ayu (2023) titled "Types of Onomatopoeia Found in Comic Jojo's Bizarre Adventure: Jojolion" discusses the types of onomatopoeia used in *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure: Jojolion* comic. The following study by Ardipa et al. (2021) titled "An Analysis Type of Onomatopoeia Words in Justice League Comic," also focuses on finding the types of onomatopoeia and how its context shaped the *Justice League* comic. Previous studies have discussed the types of onomatopoeia found in several comics but have not delved deeply into how these are used to create atmosphere, characterization, and dramatic effects in manga works.

This research examines different types and uses of onomatopoeia in Volume 1 of Hajime Isayama's *Attack on Titan* manga to identify its linguistic and narrative significance. The researchers will analyze how onomatopoeia is used to create atmosphere, characterization, and dramatic effects in this manga. In addition, through this research, the researchers aim to assist readers in understanding how to interpret onomatopoeia elements in manga. Thus, the researchers hope to provide a deeper understanding of language use in manga and how onomatopoeia contributes to the narrative.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. The researchers have read several articles and books regarding the research subject. According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), qualitative methods serve a different approach than quantitative research as qualitative methods rely on text and image data, unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs. The data resource in this research was acquired from the *Attack on Titan* Volume 1 manga by Hajime Isayama. The data were collected by specific procedures that manage the critical information for the research. There are four steps in collecting and analyzing the data: First, the researchers read all of the chapters of *Attack on Titan* Volume 1 manga, from page 1 until page 195, as a way to understand the whole story of the manga itself. The next step is taking notes of the onomatopoeic words found in the *Attack on Titan* Volume 1 manga. Then, the data will be classified into three categories of onomatopoeia using Bredin's Theory (1996): direct onomatopoeia, exemplary onomatopoeia, and associative onomatopoeia. The process of describing and analyzing the data that has been accumulated in this research is conducted using manual methods. All the onomatopoeia data collected was ensured to be listed accurately and in detail through peer validation in the process of compiling this research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research analyzes the types of onomatopoeia words found in *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga based on Bredin’s theory (1996). According to the theory proposed by Bredin, there are three ways to differentiate onomatopoeia by which sound it represents. The three onomatopoeia classifications are direct onomatopoeia, exemplary onomatopoeia, and associative onomatopoeia. The appearance of each onomatopoeia can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Onomatopoeia in *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga

Types of Onomatopoeia	Frequency
Direct Onomatopoeia	53
Associative Onomatopoeia	14
Exemplary Onomatopoeia	32
Total	99

(Source: *Attack On Titan* Volume 1 manga, 2010)

Onomatopoeia in *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga

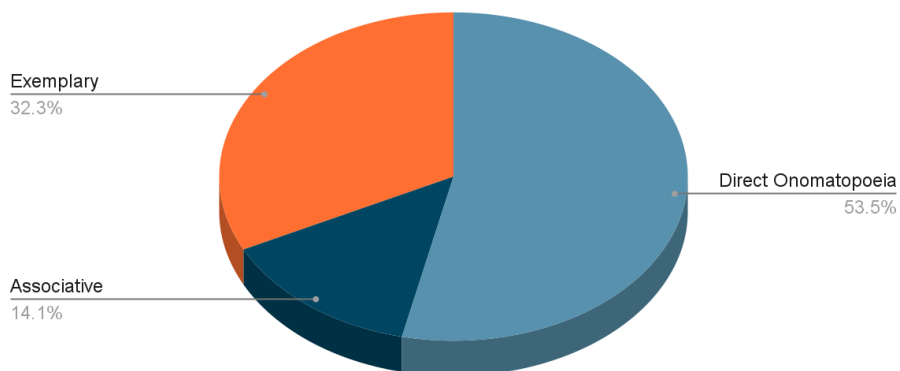


Diagram 1. Onomatopoeia in *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga

1) Direct Onomatopoeia

Direct onomatopoeia is the first of the three types introduced by Bredin (1996). As Bredin (1996) stated, direct onomatopoeia refers to imitating actual sound. It is used to convey the sensory experience of a specific sound, phonetically imitating the natural sound with the action being described. The *Attack On Titan* Volume 1 manga features many direct onomatopoeic elements, enhancing the reader’s imagination regarding events within the story. Researchers have also found that direct onomatopoeia makes the manga panels more engaging and memorable.

Table 2. Direct onomatopoeia in *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga

No.	Onomatopoeic Words	Representative Sound Of
1.	Clop Clop	Represents the sound of horses' hooves.
2.	Whoom	Represents the sound of titans crashing a wall.
3.	Krik	Represents the sound of titans gripping a wall.

(Source: *Attack On Titan* Volume 1 manga, 2010)



Figure 1. Page 8 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

On page 8 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga, we can see the corps riding their horses to ambush the enemy behind trees. The Commander orders soldiers to kill the Titan that has been targeted without fail. The sound of horses galloping toward the Titan is represented by the onomatopoeic word *Clop Clop*. This word imitates the horse hooves' rhythmic sound upon hitting the ground. The onomatopoeic word *Clop Clop* is classified as direct onomatopoeia because it directly imitates the sound it describes and mirrors the sound it represents.



Figure 2. Page 55 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

On page 55 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga, the Colossal Titan kicked the wall and caused damage to the wall. His gigantic foot crashing into the thick wall resulted in a *Whoom* sound. The onomatopoeic word *Whoom* is often used to represent the sound of a sudden, loud impact or explosion. The use of the word *Whoom* employed a description of an event with a significant impact and creating intensity. *Whoom* is a direct onomatopoeia, as the word can easily be recognized and associated with a specific sound—in this case, a loud explosion noise.



Figure 3. Page 137 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

On page 137 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga, Eren Yeager has already experienced a time skip, now finding himself as a 15-year-old teenager. Eren Yeager finally becomes a cadet of the soldiers tasked with wiping out the Titans. However, in his first duties as a soldier, the same Titan that had previously breached the wall in his village reappears by gripping the wall. The sound of the giant Titan's hands gripping the wall is illustrated with the onomatopoeic *Krik* sounds, implying the intensity of the Titan's grasp as it creates cracks. The onomatopoeia *Krik* is included as a direct onomatopoeia, mimicking the sound that closely synchronizes with the reader's actual auditory experience of the Titan gripping the walls and creating cracks. As mentioned earlier, direct onomatopoeia helps the reader evoke tension and emotion, allowing them to participate more fully in the experience within the scene.

2) Associative Onomatopoeia

Bredin (1996) describes associative onomatopoeia as words whose sounds are associated with the concept they represent, even though the sound of the word might not directly imitate the object or action itself. Words like *Cuckoo*, *Bubble*, and *Whip* fall under this category. First is *Cuckoo*. It does not directly sound like the bird itself but somewhat imitates the song produced by the bird. The association here is more with the sound the bird makes rather than its physical name. The second is *Bubble*. This word does not sound like the object or the action of bubbles, but it is similar to the sound produced by a bubbling liquid. Third is *Whip*. *Whip* might have meant initially a quick movement; its onomatopoeic association with the whip's sound could have developed later, even though its original motivation might not have been onomatopoeic.

Table 3. Associative onomatopoeia in *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga

No.	Onomatopoeic Words	Representative Sound Of
1.	Whump Whump	Represents the heavy steps and powerful vibrations of a walking titan.
2.	Huff Huff	Represents the heavy breathing or panting sound when a character is running.
3.	Gulp	Represents the action of swallowing.

(Source: *Attack On Titan* Volume 1 manga, 2010)



Figure 4. Page 9 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

In the scene on page 9 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1, the Survey Corps is depicted exploring the terrain on horseback in search of Titans. Suddenly, amid the forest, a titan emerges, its arrival marked by the onomatopoeia *Whump*. The onomatopoeia *Whump* can be classified as a form of associative onomatopoeia within this context. While it does not directly replicate the specific sounds of a titan's footsteps or resulting vibrations, it creates an association with the concept of heavy steps and powerful vibrations commonly attributed to giants or titans in the narrative. This aligns with Bredin's concept (1996), illustrating how onomatopoeia establishes a connection between sound and the represented concept, even if it does not precisely imitate the sound itself. The use of *Whump Whump* effectively enhances the impression of the Titan's presence by evoking associations with weighty steps and intense vibrations, vividly portraying their strength and magnitude within the storyline. In the narrative context, this onomatopoeia enriches the scene's atmosphere, heightening the urgency and threat of the Titan's sudden appearance amidst the Survey Corps. Its usage significantly contributes to create immersive atmospheres in visual storytelling, such as manga, thereby enhancing reader engagement and comprehension of the narrative dynamics.



Figure 5. Page 45 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

On page 45 of Volume 1, an episode unfolds where a male character named Armin faces bullying from a group of children. Witnessing this distressing incident, his friend Eren rushes breathlessly towards Armin to intervene, depicted by the onomatopoeia *Huff*. Within Bredin's theory of associative onomatopoeia, *Huff* represents an association between the onomatopoeia and the concept it signifies. Despite not directly mimicking the precise sounds of footsteps or breathing, *Huff* powerfully evokes associations with rapid running and the accompanying breathing difficulties due to exertion. In the context of this *Attack on Titan* scene, the use of *Huff* vividly portrays Eren's swift and daring attempt to rescue Armin, intensifying the narrative's tension and urgency.



Figure 6. Page 176 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

Page 176 reveals a distressing scene in *Attack on Titan* as a member of the Survey Corps faces the grim fate of being devoured alive by a Titan. The onomatopoeia *Gulp*, an instance of associative onomatopoeia, symbolizes this act of consumption. According to Bredin's theory, *Gulp* exemplifies a word whose sound is related to the concept it signifies. While not precisely mimicking the sound of swallowing, *Gulp* creates a vivid association with the action, evoking a graphic mental image despite not directly replicating the physical act. In the context of *Attack On Titan*, the use of *Gulp* intensifies the graphic depiction of this grim incident, amplifying the

narrative’s visceral impact and establishing a chilling association with Titan’s gruesome act of consumption.

3) Exemplary Onomatopoeia

Bredin (1996) stated that exemplary onomatopoeia is based on the total amount and aspect of the physical work applied when a speaker utters a word. Thus, it refers to how much effort and energy is used or released when someone pronounces this onomatopoeia word. However, this onomatopoeia is different from the two others in two points; also stated by Bredin (1996), the second element in the onomatopoeic connection is situated within a word’s connotative meaning rather than its literal definition. Additionally, the association between these two elements is one of embodiment, not resemblance.

Table 3. Associative onomatopoeia in *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga

No.	Onomatopoeic Words	Representative Sound Of
1.	Quiver	Represents a character trembling terribly because of fear.
2.	Mumble	Represents the people muttering.
3.	Flash	Represents the return to the past time.
4.	Dash	Represents the sound of people sprinting.
5.	Throb	Represents a throbbing head because of pain.
6.	Squeeze	Represents a character grasping or gripping something with pressure.

(Source: *Attack On Titan* Volume 1 manga, 2010)



Figure 7-8. Page 66 and 30 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

In these pictures, we can see the words *Quiver* on page 66 and *Mumble* on page 30 of this manga. These words will regarded as the exemplary onomatopoeia. The word *Quiver* is the representation of the character in this manga, *Attack On Titan*, Armin feeling scared and trembling because of the situation that happened in their town. However, the sound of the word *Quiver* is not similar to something that can be represented by the word. The same goes with the word *Mumble*, which refers to the state when a person talks to oneself; the phonetic resonance of those two words does not align with a sound that the word itself can directly encapsulate. The auditory manifestation of the words diverges from any readily apparent similarity to the actual sound it signifies. In essence, a notable disjunction exists between the pronounced

articulation of the term and the auditory experience it seeks to evoke, underscoring the intriguing intricacies and nuances inherent in the linguistic phenomenon of onomatopoeia. Pronouncing these words demands a significant amount of energy.

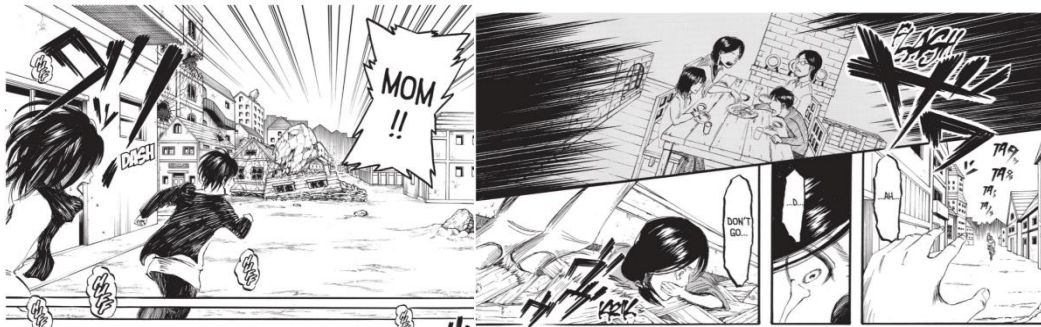


Figure 9-10. Page 68 and 78 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

In these pictures, exemplary onomatopoeia was found on pages 68 and 78 with the words *Dash* and *Flash*. The word *dash* denotes the action of Eren and Mikasa running to meet Eren's mother, who was in danger, while *Flash* denotes the state of Eren's mother suddenly returning to a memory in the past. Pronouncing these particular words involves less effort and energy compared to the exemplary onomatopoeic expressions discussed earlier, highlighting variations in linguistic articulation dynamics. Likewise, in two examples that have been discussed, the sound of the words *Dash* and *Flash* does not represent any sound of the action in the scene above.



Figure 11-12. Page 68 and 78 of *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga
(Source: *Attack on Titan* volume 1 manga)

Next, the researchers found that the words *Throb* and *Squeeze* are included in exemplary onomatopoeia on pages 83 and 165. The word *Throb* shows a state in which a person feels pain that continues into a pulsation in his head. In this context, Mikasa felt the pulse in her head leaning to the pain. The second word, *Squeeze*, indicates a situation where someone is pressing something or any part of the other person's body that has a muscle to grip as much as possible. Here, we can see Mikasa gripping Eren's jacket, which is represented by the word *Squeeze*. Exemplary onomatopoeia only focused on the energy expended when someone voiced the words *Throb* and *Squeeze*, showing that these words released more muscular effort than the previous words. When speakers pronounce the word *throb* and *squeeze* sound, it does not resemble any sound of the word they signify on the scene. This onomatopoeia only adds detail to the situation by not connecting the sound of the action being denoted. In line with Bredin's (1996) theory, the onomatopoeic words researchers have found concentrate on the amount of

energy expended when someone utters the word. It does not relate to the sound represented by the action in which the word appears.

CONCLUSION

The analysis using Bredin's theory (1996) types of onomatopoeia used in this research is to inspect the kind of onomatopoeia in Attack on Titan Volume 1 Manga and a more detailed description regarding the circumstances that occurred when the existing onomatopoeia appeared. The results of the analysis determine the onomatopoeia type that is commonly used in the manga. Based on the findings and discussion, it can be inferred that the three types of onomatopoeia stated by Bredin (1996) are used in this manga. There are 99 data of onomatopoeic words obtained in this manga consisting of 53 direct onomatopoeia, 14 associative onomatopoeia, and 32 exemplary onomatopoeia. The high frequency of direct onomatopoeia in this manga/anime reflects the intensity of action scenes, specifically designed to emphasize the physical presence of characters within a particular environment. Direct onomatopoeia refers to the imitation of real sound, which enhances the reader's imagination about the events within the story. It is concluded that onomatopoeia cannot be separated from how the sounds made by someone or something in certain situations can affect words that become imaginable forms of the sounds released.

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