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**AN ANALYSIS OF ONOMATOPOEIA IN WEBTOON COMIC:  
“PYRAMID GAME”**

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**Abstract**

This study focuses on analyzing the types of onomatopoeia found in the webtoon comic *Pyramid Game*. Onomatopoeia plays a significant role in graphic storytelling, as it bridges the gap between visual elements and auditory experiences. Using a qualitative research method, this study examines the different types of onomatopoeia employed in the webtoon, categorizing them based on their specific functions and characteristics. The research identifies various types of onomatopoeic expressions based on Elizabeth (2024). By focusing solely on the types of onomatopoeia, the study provides an in-depth understanding of how these sound-based words contribute to the comic's structure and reader immersion. The study found that the webtoon *Pyramid Game* features five distinct types of onomatopoeia: mechanical, fast motion, musical, food preparation and eating, and fighting onomatopoeia. However, animal-related onomatopoeia is notably absent from the webtoon. This may be because such sounds are typically associated with environments like zoos, while *Pyramid Game* is set in a classroom. The findings highlight the diverse applications of onomatopoeia in *Pyramid Game* and underscore their significance in enhancing the comic's overall storytelling and reader experience.

Keywords: Onomatopoeia, Comic, Pyramid Game

## I. INTRODUCTION

Onomatopoeia stands out as a powerful linguistic strategy that not only transmits sound but also provokes feelings and actions, providing the reader with a dynamic experience. This research looks at the webtoon "*Pyramid Game*," a popular series recognized for its intriguing tale and unusual graphic style, and how onomatopoeia contributes to the entire story.

Webtoons have become a popular trend in digital storytelling, with a global audience. The format encourages unique narrative strategies, allowing writers to explore with visual and audio components in ways that traditional comics do not. Onomatopoeia is an important linguistic strategy in this media since it enriches the story and increases reader engagement. The usage of sound phrases is especially prominent in "*Pyramid Game*," adding to the plot's suspense and excitement.

The major goal of this research is to identify and analyze types of onomatopoeias used in "*Pyramid Game*". By investigating how these sound words interact with visual features, we want to gain a better

understanding of their functions in improving the reader's experience and adding to the webtoon's overall effect.

This study was based on Elizabeth's (2024) theory. Elizabeth's framework demonstrates how onomatopoeias may produce a multisensory experience, helping readers to engage more intimately with the tale. This research showed how this theory applies to "*Pyramid Game*," with an emphasis on the relationship between onomatopoeic emotions and visual narrative. A qualitative study was undertaken on selected episodes of "*Pyramid Game*," with an emphasis on identifying and categorizing onomatopoeic terms.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines onomatopoeia as "The naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it, such as *buzz*, *hiss*, or *clang*." Similarly, Crystal (2008), a noted linguist, Onomatopoeia refers to words created by mimicking natural sounds. These words either closely resemble the actual sounds or provide a close approximation, and they are commonly used in both everyday language and

literary works. Finally, Bergen & Hoh (2005), in their research on cognitive linguistics, argue that onomatopoeia reflects how humans perceive and process sounds from the natural world. These words aim to capture auditory experiences through language, allowing listeners or readers to connect with the sensory nature of a sound.

In summary, experts commonly agree that onomatopoeia involves the creation of words that imitate or resemble the actual sounds associated with objects, actions, or phenomena. These words serve as auditory representations in language, helping to evoke a sensory experience for the reader or listener.

Moreover, several experts have proposed different classifications of onomatopoeia. Bredin (1996) identifies three main types: direct, associative, and exemplary onomatopoeia. First, direct onomatopoeia refers to words that directly resemble the sound of the object they describe, such as "bump," "crash," and "whirr." Second, associative onomatopoeia refers to words that represent sounds linked to an item or action, like "sparkle," "wink," and "bubble," and can vary in their degree of conventionality. Third,

exemplary onomatopoeia expresses a speaker's physical or emotional exertion, with examples like "yippee" and "hooray."

In contrast, Hinton et al. (1962) offer four categories: corporeal sound symbolism, imitative sound symbolism, synesthetic sound symbolism, and conventional sound symbolism. Corporeal sound symbolism expresses internal feelings or physical states through sounds, such as "slap" or "gulp." Imitative sound symbolism represents environmental sounds, for instance, "buzz" or "moo." Synesthetic sound symbolism uses specific sounds to convey sensory attributes, like size or shape, as seen in high vowels for small objects. Conventional sound symbolism links specific phonemes to particular meanings, as in "glow" or "clank."

Elizabeth (2024) presents six types of onomatopoeia: (1) Mechanical onomatopoeia, which includes sounds from machines like "buzz," "click," and "clatter"; (2) Fast Motion onomatopoeia, such as "zoom" or "whizz"; (3) Musical onomatopoeia, which represents sounds of instruments or music-related actions, like "twang," "plunk," and "clang"; (4) Food

preparation and eating onomatopoeia, such as "sizzle," "crunch," and "gulp"; (5) Fighting onomatopoeia, found in action scenes, with words like "bam," "smash," and "wham"; and (6) Animal onomatopoeia, where sounds like "meow" for a cat or "tweet" for a bird represent animal noises. These categories highlight the diverse ways onomatopoeia functions across different contexts.

Types of onomatopoeia by Elizabeth (2024) were used to identify and analyze types of onomatopoeia found in the webtoon comic *Pyramid Game* since she categorizes onomatopoeia into more types than the other two experts (Bredin, 2006 and Hinton et al, 1962).

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study took a qualitative approach to explore the use of onomatopoeia in the first 10 episodes of the webtoon *Pyramid Game*. The goal was to identify the different types of onomatopoeia used and understand how they contribute to the narrative, character development, and overall reader experience. The analysis focuses on both the written and visual forms of onomatopoeia, such as sound

effects in dialogue balloons and visual representations of sounds.

Data were collected by reviewing each episode for onomatopoeic expressions, which then were categorized into types—such as human, environmental, or object-related sounds. The researcher also analyzed the context of each instance to see how these sounds enhance the mood or plot. This process involved a descriptive and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and their role in the story's atmosphere.

### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Of six types of onomatopoeia according to Elizabeth (2024), there were only five types of onomatopoeia found in the webtoon comic *Pyramid Game* namely mechanical onomatopoeia, fast motion onomatopoeia, musical onomatopoeia, food preparation and eating onomatopoeia and fighting onomatopoeia.

First, mechanical onomatopoeias are words that phonetically reproduce the sounds produced by mechanical equipment or operations.



Figure 1. Mechanical onomatopoeia  
 "Clatter" is indicated as mechanical onomatopoeia because it exhibits noisy noises that are often created by mechanical or physical operations involving sliding doors in figure. In the image, it can be seen that Jaeun is opening the sliding door of her classroom. As the sliding door moves over the track, the metal pieces (tracks and rollers) can produce a clattering sound

Second, fast motion onomatopoeia refers to phrases that mimic noises associated with swift movement or motion.



Figure 2. Fast Motion Onomatopoeia  
 The "toss" sound is produced by the rapid flow of air and the ball coming into contact with the other person's hands. The "toss" sound is caused by the fast movement of air and the ball

making contact with the other person's hands. "toss" is classified as fast motion onomatopoeia because it imitates the swift action described in the image.

Third, musical onomatopoeia are words that reproduce sounds associated with music, musical instruments, or vocalizations.



Figure 3. Musical Onomatopoeia

Suji is shown above playing the flute in music class. The flute produces a "fwee" sound when it is played. . It is considered as musical onomatopoeia because it replicates sounds with distinct pitches and rhythms; "Ding" mimics high pitches, while "Dong" captures low notes

Fourth, food preparation and eating onomatopoeia is a term for phrases that mimic the sounds associated with cooking, preparing, and consuming food.



Figure 4. Food Preparation and Eating Onomatopoeia

The image shows that Jaeun was enjoying her drink, and a “*siiip*” sound appeared when she was sipping her drink. This sound is created because the air is frequently sucked in with the liquid during sipping. “*Siiip*” is the sound made as the liquid passes through a straw and interacts with the air. As it mimics the sound made when someone sips a drink, this sound is classified as food preparation and eating onomatopoeia.

Fifth, fighting onomatopoeia is the use of sound-imitating words to express the strong movements and emotions involved with battle in visual tales such as comic books and webtoons. These expressions—such as “bang,” “crash,” “wham,” and “swoosh”—not only convey the physicality of the battle, but also heighten the intensity and drama of the

scenario.



Figure 5. Fighting Onomatopoeia

This image above depicts Daeun kicking Suji’s body to the floor, resulting in the sound “*thump*”. This kick requires a great amount of force. When Daeun’s foot comes into touch with Suji’s body, the force is transmitted, resulting in a strong impact. “*Thump*” is classified as fighting onomatopoeia since it refers to a noise usually linked to physical battle. This noise conjures the sense of a heavy, strong effect, such as a punch or similar assault during combat.

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study identified five distinct types of onomatopoeia used in *Pyramid Game*, namely mechanical, fast motion, musical, food preparation and eating,

and fighting onomatopoeia. Each of these categories plays a significant role in enriching the narrative and enhancing the reader's experience by intensifying emotional and atmospheric elements. However, the research also found the absence of animal-related onomatopoeia, which is typically found in settings like zoos, not in the classroom environment of *Pyramid Game*. This aligns with previous studies that have emphasized how onomatopoeia is often tied to specific environments or contexts (Bergen & Hoh, 2005; Crystal, 2008), suggesting that the choice of onomatopoeic forms is influenced by the setting of the story. Overall, the use of onomatopoeia in this webtoon highlights its importance in conveying sensory experiences and shaping the atmosphere, character development, and emotional tone of the story.

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