

AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH ONOMATOPOEIA IN DOG MAN: BIG JIM BEGINS COMIC BY DAV PILKEY

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada penggunaan onomatopoeia dalam komik Dog Man: Big Jim Begins karya Dav Pilkey. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis onomatopoeia, menjelaskan perannya dalam membangun suasana, aksi, dan ekspresi karakter, serta menganalisis dampaknya terhadap pemahaman pembaca terhadap cerita. Penelitian ini menerapkan klasifikasi onomatopoeia dari Körtvélyessy dan Štekauer (2024) dalam buku *Onomatopoeia in the World's Languages* dan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat 87 data onomatopoeia yang diklasifikasikan ke dalam kategori air (5), udara (11), mamalia (2), tubuh (26), kendaraan (2), instrumen perang dan kehancuran (26), serta peralatan dan perangkat mekanik atau elektronik (15). Jenis yang paling sering muncul adalah bunyi tubuh serta instrumen perang dan kehancuran, masing-masing sebanyak 26 data. Secara keseluruhan, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa onomatopoeia memiliki peran penting dalam komik karena mampu menciptakan suasana, memperjelas aksi, dan mengekspresikan emosi, sehingga membuat cerita menjadi lebih menarik dan mudah dinikmati oleh pembaca.

Abstract

This study examines the application of onomatopoeia in Dog Man: Big Jim Begins, utilizing the classification proposed by Körtvélyessy and Štekauer (2024) in *Onomatopoeia in the World's Languages*. A qualitative descriptive technique discovered and categorized 87 samples into the following groups: water (5), air (11), mammals (2), body (26), vehicles (2), tools of war and destruction (26), and mechanical and electronic equipment and devices (15). Auditory signals from the body and instruments of war and destruction were predominant. Findings demonstrate that onomatopoeia substantially enriches the comic's ambiance, depicts activities, and communicates character emotions, so rendering the narrative more captivating and comprehensible. This comprehensive taxonomy provides profound insights into how sound effects enhance storytelling in comics.

INTRODUCTION

Onomatopoeia refers to the creation or utilization of words that mimic the sounds associated with the objects or actions they denote. Onomatopoeia is a term that mimics the sound or motion it denotes, so elucidating a situation or occurrence effectively. It also functions to depict a scenario or moment succinctly, enabling the reader to swiftly comprehend the events without requiring an elaborate explanation (Prihadi, Jayanti, & Resen, 2021). In other words, onomatopoeia can be succinctly defined as the nomenclature that signifies the relationship between the sounds of a word and other things in our surroundings. Onomatopoeic terms are frequently employed in comics, a distinctive fusion of art and text. In contrast to conventional literature, which depends exclusively on text, comics are distinguished by their integration of visuals with written language, establishing a unique relationship between images and words.

In contrast to earlier research that mostly concentrated on identifying and classifying various forms of onomatopoeia, this study goes one step further by utilizing a more recent and comprehensive theory created by Lívía Körtvélyessy and Pavol Štekauer (2024). Their method provides a novel perspective by looking at the formation and linguistic function of onomatopoeia in addition to categorizing it. This makes it possible to conduct a more thorough and in-depth analysis.

This study centers on *Dog Man: Big Jim Begins* by Dav Pilkey as its primary subject. Comics are preferred over novels or films due to their unique method of conveying language, particularly in the usage of onomatopoeia. In comics, onomatopoeic words such as “BANG!”, “CRASH!”, or “ZAP!” are typically depicted in huge, bold typography, integrating them into the images for prominence. While novels depend solely on written language and films utilize authentic sound effects, comics amalgamate imagery and text, facilitating readers’ auditory imagination. This amalgamation renders comics an excellent medium for examining onomatopoeia, as the auditory words are prominently shown and frequently employed in an engaging, inventive manner that enhances the narrative’s action and ambiance. In contrast to typical superhero comics frequently employed in study, the *Dog Man* comic utilizes humorous and exaggerated vocabulary, rendering it a compelling subject for examining the function of onomatopoeia in a whimsical and imaginative context. The distinctiveness of this study arises from employing a contemporary a theoretical perspective accompanied by a comic that employs a novel and whimsical use of language. This combination is anticipated to provide a novel perspective on the utilization of onomatopoeia in humorous narratives.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive methodology to examine onomatopoeia in *Dog Man: Big Jim Begins* by Dav Pilkey, employing the classification framework established by Körtvélyessy and Štekauer (2024). The data source is the *Dog Man* comic series, specifically the 13th volume, published on December 3, 2024, which comprises 17 chapters focused on Big Jim’s beginnings and his conflict with the Space Cuties. Onomatopoeic expressions were gathered from narration panels and character exchanges, thereafter categorized according to the selected framework. The investigation concentrated on categorizing their types, frequency, and functions in establishing atmosphere, illustrating action, and expressing emotion within the narrative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher employed Körtvélyessy and Štekauer’s (2024) approach to identify the forms of onomatopoeia in *Dog Man: Big Jim Begins* comic, and as a result, 87 pieces of data were found. The following is a data table presentation of them:

Table 1. Total Data Found in *Dog Man: Big Jim Begins* Comic

No	Categories of Onomatopoeia	Subcategories	Sound Types	Data
1	Natural Sounds	4 Elements	Water	5
			Air	11
			Earth	0
			Fire	0
		Animals	Mammals	2
			Birds	0
			Reptiles and Amphibians	0

		Insects	0
		Fish and Sea Creatures	0
	Human	Voice	0
		Body	26
2	Artifact Sounds	Musical Instruments	0
		Vehicles	2
		Mechanical and Electronic Equipment and Devices	15
		Instruments of War and Destruction	26
		Bells, Gongs and Other Signaling Equipment	0
Total			87

The researcher identified 5 data points on water, 11 on air, 2 on mammals, 26 on the body, 2 on vehicles, 26 on instruments of war and destruction, and 15 on mechanical and electronic equipment and devices. The researcher identified a total of 87 data points, with the majority being from the human subcategory, specifically concerning body sounds, and the subcategory of instruments of war and destruction, each comprising 26 data points. Furthermore, the remaining categories of onomatopoeia, including those related to earth, fire, birds, reptiles and amphibians, insects, fish and sea creatures, voice, musical instruments, and signaling devices such as bells and gongs, are absent from the Dog Man: Big Jim Begins comic.

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Picture 1. Water

According to Körtvélyessy and Štekauer's (2024) theory, the word "SPLASH" in the image above falls into the category of natural sounds, specifically the 4 elements subdivision of water sound types. This category contains noises produced by flowing or striking water in the wild, such as dripping, splashing, or breaking waves. The sound produced when a character falls into water and creates spray is replicated by "SPLASH." According to Körtvélyessy and Štekauer (2024), water sounds can be identified by their environmental origins and the unique acoustic characteristics of liquids. The harsh, moist-sounding characters in "SPLASH" and its association with the image of water spraying make this very evident.

By instantly conjuring a sound in the mind that complements the comic's setting and tone, the word "SPLASH" gives the situation a more realistic feel. Despite the fact that readers cannot hear it, the word conveys motion, moisture, and vitality, giving the still image a dynamic impression. According to Pischedda (2024), sound words are employed in comics to evoke sounds and feelings, allowing readers to relate to the situation through their emotions and senses. "SPLASH" functions as a marker in time, indicating the precise moment the water is struck. This supports Körtvélyessy & Andrej's (2023) assertion that ideophones frequently use their appearance and repetition to convey when something occurs and how powerful it is. The character's joyful demeanor and the loud "SPLASH" convey enthusiasm and fun, demonstrating that the sound effect captures not only the sound but also the character's feelings.

The word "SPLASH" helps the reader understand what it means. It makes the action clearer, draws attention to the moment the water hits, and brings the scene to life with sound and touch. Badiozaman, Sharififar, Rahimi, and Samani (2024) say that writers can quickly tell where and how loud a sound effect is because of the way it is put and designed. For example, the bold block letters built into the water splash help readers do this. This mix of writing and picture helps people understand better and takes them further into the scene. There was a study in 2024 by Bhatia et al. that found sound effects in comics can change how people see things and get them more interested. By putting the picture next to the word "SPLASH," the panel makes the reader not only see the water hit, but also almost hear and feel it, making the moment more clear and easy to remember.



Picture 2. Barking

The phrase "RUFF RUFF RUFF" mimics the sound of a dog barking and falls within Körtvélyessy & Štekauer's (2024) natural sounds category, specifically the mammals subcategory. This category comprises animal sounds such as barking, meowing, or growling that are written to mimic the original noise. The words in the image are placed near the dog's wide mouth and portrayed in harsh, jagged characters to match the movement of barking loudly and urgently.

According to Körtvélyessy and Štekauer's (2024) theory, the phrase "RUFF RUFF RUFF" represents the sound of a dog bark. They contribute to answering both role-related questions. To create atmosphere, motion, and expression, they use imagined sounds to create a busy and humorous scene. The repeated "RUFF" indicates that the barking occurs repeatedly, creating a sense of movement and intensity. According to Pischedda (2024), noises used in comics can convey emotions over time. According to Körtvélyessy and Andrej (2023), using repeated animal sounds in comics enhances timing and action by mimicking real-life events. The use of letter type, size, and location helps readers understand the story by indicating who is creating the sound, its volume, and urgency. Research on comic sound effects indicates that these signals aid readers in understanding the situation by connecting sound, action, and emotion.



Picture 3. Eating

The term "munch munch munch" refers to the sound of chewing and falls within the category of natural sounds, specifically human noises. The comic depicts the sound of someone eating. Körtvélyessy and Štekauer's

approach categorizes natural noises into four categories: animals, humans, and other sounds. Examples of human sounds include chewing, crunching, and slurping. Körtvélyessy & Štekauer (2024) suggest that body noises such as gulping, sniffing, sneezing, and chomping fall within this category.

The phrase “munch munch munch” accomplishes three main goals, it establishes the scene’s mood by making it seem funny, relaxed, or hungry; it depicts the action, which is someone eating at the moment; and it reveals the character, which, depending on the circumstance, may indicate that the person is being impolite, distracted, or simply enjoying their food. In summary, readers don’t need further conversation to comprehend the situation because the textual chewing sound combines what we would hear and what is happening into a single visual indication. According to Ardianto, Mataram, Ismail, and Wicaksono (2023), this combination of music and visuals heightens the drama of the panels and aids in directing readers’ interpretations of them. Additionally, research indicates that onomatopoeia placed close to the action draws readers’ attention, allowing them to concentrate on that section of the panel and visualize the timing of events (Rohan, Sasamoto, & O’Brien, 2021). According to Cohn, Cardoso, Klomber, and Hacimusaoğlu (2023), these onomatopoeias are a component of the visual grammar of comics, which aids readers in visualizing timing and even off-panel occurrences.

The phrase “munch munch munch” helps readers visualize the sound, movement, and adjust their reading pace. Onomatopoeia serves more than merely adornment, since it directs attention, establishes time, and allows readers to understand aspects not visible in the picture. Translators and editors must exercise caution when changing or eliminating human auditory effects, as this can alter the tone and expectations of readers.

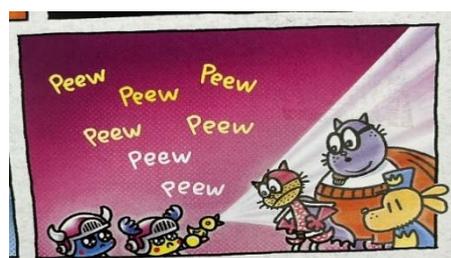


Picture 4. Sirens

The ambulance panel’s “wee-ooo-wee-ooo” is a vehicle sound since it mimics an emergency vehicle’s siren. Sounds that mimic engines, horns, sirens, and other vehicle noises are classified as vehicles, according to Körtvélyessy & Štekauer (2024). Its color, position above the ambulance, and repeated wailing in the image make it obvious where the sound is originating from, where it is going, and that an emergency vehicle is approaching. This is how the comic directly labels a sound produced by an object using onomatopoeia.

In the image above, the word “wee-ooo-wee-ooo” accomplishes three basic goals: character expression, action, and mood. First, it establishes a sense of movement and urgency, giving the scene a sense of urgency and importance. Second, it displays the time of the ambulance’s arrival or departure. As a result, readers are aware of events as they occur. Thirdly, it conveys the characters’ desires and emotions; for example, the driver is on a mission and someone needs assistance. According to Ardianto, Mataram, Ismail, and Wicaksono (2023), sound-words are the way onomatopoeia functions in comics, combine with the image to convey events, atmosphere, and timing without the use of further words.

Onomatopoeia such as “wee-ooo-wee-ooo” helps draw the reader in and regulate their reading speed. The reader can slow down or speed up in response to the frequent siren noises, which help them visualize movement and urgency as they follow the ambulance. Eye-tracking studies by Rohan, Sasamoto, and O’Brien (2021) show that sound effects draw the reader’s attention and serve as anchors that influence how long they stay on a page and how they navigate it. According to Cohn, Cardoso, Klomber, and Hacimusaoğlu’s (2023) corpus and annotation research, onomatopoeia are systematic components of comics’ visual grammar that aid readers in understanding timing and off-panel occurrences. In summary, the siren sound effect is a little, potent hint that expedites comprehension, establishes the tone, and directs the reader’s gaze and expectations. It is not merely ornamentation.

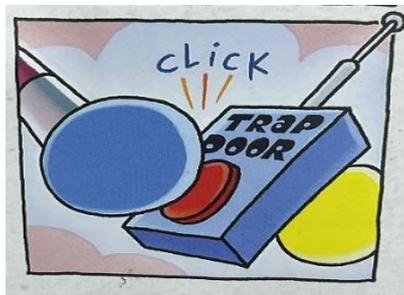


Picture 5. Gunshot

The phrase “Peew Peew” in the panel indicates fast, short shooting sounds from the small weapon held by the little guy. According to Körtvélyessy and Štekauer (2024), this type of sound falls within the genre of instruments of war and devastation. The word is repeated in a small and light style, with brilliant colors and spread-out positioning, indicating quick and continuous shooting. The sound effect’s appearance, color, repetition, and position indicate its strength, source, and mood even before the text explains it.

According to Cohn (2021), sound words in comics aid readers in imagining the noises and emotions in a scene and are a component of the visual language of the work. Because of the sound effect’s small size, font style, brilliant color, and frequent appearance, the constant “Peew Peew” in this instance gives the scenario a playful, slightly chaotic atmosphere rather than a spooky one. According to Rohan, Sasamoto, and O’Brien (2021), onomatopoeia functions similarly to a narrative cadence. The frequent “Peew” indicates that the firing is still going on, provides us with the time, and clarifies the cause and effect. The word choice also conveys the characters’ feelings and actions; repeated “Peew” sounds like frenzied or fun shots from little guns, giving the shooters a cheeky or innocent appearance. It would appear more menacing if the wording were large, sharp, and red.

According to Bhatia et al. (2024) in applied visual language research and Kim & Hong (2025) in accessibility studies, the way sound effects are represented can impact the reader’s perception and comprehension of the meaning. The sound effects in this scenario impact the reader’s perception of the short war scene, including its pace, tone, and anticipated outcome. When studying comics in different languages, it’s crucial to understand that changing or removing noises associated with war and devastation might impact the scene’s tone and timing due to cultural significance.



Picture 6. Remote Control

The “CLICK” in the image above is a mechanical or electronic sound effect that mimics the sound of a button being pressed. This falls within the category of onomatopoeia for mechanical and electronic equipment and devices. According to Körtvélyessy & Štekauer (2024), this category encompasses words that mimic the sounds of machinery, switches, and electronics. The picture’s visual context, a red button labeled “TRAP DOOR” with the phrase “CLICK” above it, clarifies the meaning immediately.

The mechanical “CLICK” conveys the action, establishes the tone, and describes the character’s actions. It creates tension, indicates when something occurs, and demonstrates that a character has acted. To put it briefly, the term integrates meaning and sound into a single, brief visual cue, allowing readers to understand that “something mechanical just happened” without additional explanation. According to research on visual language, sound words are a component of a comic’s visual lexicon and aid in directing readers’ comprehension of the narrative. Additionally, eye-tracking studies reveal that readers are more likely to focus on the action-related portion of the panel when they see onomatopoeia close to it (Rohan, Sasamoto, & O’Brien, 2021).

According to Rohan, Sasamoto, and O’Brien (2021), sound effects determine where readers look and how long they stay in a scene, influencing how quick or slow it feels. For example, a series of “peews” makes the action seem to carry on, but a single loud sound abruptly ends it. Onomatopoeia is a component of a comic’s grammar, according to Cohn, Cardoso, Klomber, and Hacımusaoglu (2023). Repeated “Peew” allows viewers to visualize shots, impacts, and reactions. Kim & Hong (2025) and Bhatia et al. (2024) demonstrate how the sound effect style can alter readers’ perceptions and comprehension of the scene, making it more expressive and clear. This indicates that the “Peew” in this instance influences readers’ emotions and how they follow the action in addition to adorning the panel. Furthermore, Körtvélyessy & Štekauer (2024) point out that altering or eliminating weapon noises can have an impact on the tone and tempo, which is important when translating comics because they have cultural connotations.

CONCLUSION

This study suggests that onomatopoeia in *Dog Man: Big Jim Begins* serves as a crucial narrative and visual tool that enriches storytelling by establishing atmosphere, delineating activities, and conveying characters’ feelings. According to Körtvélyessy and Štekauer’s (2024) classification, 87 instances of onomatopoeia were identified, categorized as follows: water (5), air (11), mammals (2), body (26), vehicles (2), instruments of war

and destruction (26), and mechanical and electronic devices (15), with body sounds and instruments of war and destruction being the predominant categories. The findings illustrate the comic's action-centric and humor-infused style, indicating that, in contrast to prior studies centered on novels, films, and other comics, this research utilizes a more comprehensive and contemporary framework that facilitates enhanced categorization and a profound comprehension of onomatopoeia in modern visual narratives. It underscores that onomatopoeia serves not merely as ornamentation but as a crucial narrative component that integrates sound and visuals to foster immersion, clarity, and emotional resonance for readers.

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