

TRANSLATING ONOMATOPOEIAS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE IN THE TRANSLATION OF MANGA

Alexandra Costa Ferreira
NOVA-FCSH, Portugal

ABSTRACT: Today, Japanese comics, or manga, are one of the most famous types of comics in the world. However, its translation remains a relatively under-researched topic in the field of translation studies. The translation of onomatopoeia in manga, a distinctive and vital feature of the medium, presents difficulties both linguistically and graphically. Derived from the interaction between language and image, they are used to convey the sounds and circumstances of the story. Thus, considering that the Portuguese language has a very limited use of onomatopoeia, especially when compared to the Japanese language, the main purpose of this article is to identify and compare the main translation strategies adopted by Portuguese and Brazilian translators when dealing with this issue, as well as to determine whether the strategies used between the two differ significantly.

KEYWORDS: Japanese Comics; Manga Translation; Onomatopoeias; Translation Problems

1. Introduction

Japanese comics, also known as manga¹ (Kinsella, 2000, p. 3), are currently exported to various countries (Ito, 2005, p. 456) and, together with American comics and the Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*, constitutes one of the three major comics cultures in the world (Berndt, 2008, p. 299).

Renowned for its ability to captivate readers with its vivid storytelling (Berndt, 2021, p. 54), manga is a medium in which the hopes, disappointments, and adventures of its characters form the core of its stories (Kinsella, 2000). Manga acts as a bridge to Japanese culture, introducing habits, gestures, humour, and other cultural characteristics to Western audiences. Thus, for manga readers to access these cultural aspects as faithfully as possible, well-executed translations are necessary (Fonseca, 2011, p. 138).

Although manga employs a wide variety of symbols to convey meanings to the reader (Inose, 2010, p. 174), onomatopoeias are considered to be "... one of the defining features of manga" (Rohan et al., 2021, p. 61). Manga is a treasure trove for onomatopoeic words (Yomota, 2022, p. 80), with their number being far greater than in any other comic tradition in the world (Petersen, 2009, p. 163). Moreover, since the use of onomatopoeias in the Japanese language is more prominent when compared to other languages, this feature presents extra lexical challenges (Leitão, 2010, p. 283). Focusing on the comparison between the strategies employed to translate the same manga series in European and Brazilian Portuguese, the purpose of this paper is to (1) explore how onomatopoeias found

¹ Though currently the term is widely used to refer to Japanese comics in general, due to the increase interest in Japanese comics and the growing number of works inspired by them, it is also used to refer to the visual style (Kacsuk, 2018, p. 2). In this paper, the word 'manga' will refer only to comics created and published in Japan.

in manga are translated and (2) to understand if the strategies between the two language variants differ significantly.

2. Manga

Manga is a “true mass medium” covering every topic imaginable (Schodt, 1996, p. 28). From action to comedy, sci-fi, horror, or romance, all sorts of genres can be found in manga (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2016), to the point one may even consider describing all genres as meaningless since there will always be a manga that does not conform to this type of categorization (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 8).

Manga typically starts by being released in anthologies and then reprinted in smaller pocket-size books called *tankōbon* (Zanettin, 2008, p. 9). Numerous stories are printed in magazines, with each publication having between three hundred and five hundred pages per volume, and are published weekly, bimonthly, or monthly (Ingulsrud & Allen, 2009, p. 33). After being compiled into paperback, a successful story is usually turned into an animated television series, known as anime; thus, manga is responsible for the world’s largest animation industry, as well as an array of other manga-inspired items like CDs, figures, stationery, video games, TV dramas, movies, and novels (Schodt, 1996, pp. 20-21).

3. Onomatopoeias

3.1. Onomatopoeias in the Japanese language

In contrast to most European languages, onomatopoeic words are an essential part of the Japanese language. Due to their expressiveness and ability to convey information, they are abundant in both spoken and written language (Bartashova & Sichinskiy, 2014, pp. 222-223).

Onomatopoeias can be divided in a number of ways; however, they are usually categorised as: phonomimes (*giseigo* or *giongo*) (eg. *zaazaa*, ‘the sound of pouring rain’), phenomimes (*gitaigo* or *giyōgo*) (eg. *pikapika*, ‘shiny’), and psychomimes (*gijōgo*) (eg. *zukizuki*, ‘throbbing pain’). Phonomimes, which mimic sounds, are the closest to onomatopoeia in the traditional sense. Phenomimes mimic phenomena. Finally, psychomimes imitate psychological states (Irwin & Zisk, 2019, p. 136). In his book, *A thesaurus of Japanese mimesis and onomatopoeias: usage by categories*, author Andrew C. Chang (1990, p. v), presents yet another categorisation of Japanese onomatopoeias: *gijōgo*, which describes human emotions and psychological states (eg. *kankan*, ‘to boil with rage’); *gitaigo*, which describes nature events and human actions (*mogumogu*, ‘to chew with one’s mouth closed’); *giseigo*, which imitates the sounds of animated objects (eg. *chiichii*, ‘the sound of birds’); and *giongo*, which imitates the sounds of nature (eg. *jirijiri*, ‘the sound of sizzling’). The term *onomatope* is used to encompass all types of onomatopoeias (Flyxe, 2002, p. 54).

3.2. Onomatopoeias in the Portuguese language

The Portuguese word *onomatopeia* depicts the similarity, either through imitation or reproduction, between the sound of a word and the reality it represents, such as the voice of animals, the sound of musical instruments, or the sound that accompanies natural phenomena (Trilho, 2009).

Rodrigo de Sá Nogueira, in his book *Subsídios para o Estudo das Onomatopoeias em Português* (1936, p. 225-226), distinguishes between the purely phonetic onomatopoeias and the phonetic-ideological onomatopoeias; the purely phonetic onomatopoeias are onomatopoeias that are formed based on the imitation of the phonetic sounds they represent (eg. *trrrrrrim*), while the phonetic-ideological are onomatopoeias that imitate the sounds they represent using words or expressions that are more or less similar in pronunciation instead of phonemes (eg. *pouca terra, pouca terra*). He also distinguishes between vocabulised and non-vocabulised onomatopoeias, stating that non-vocabulised refers to all onomatopoeias that are not a part of the official vocabulary, either because they lack the structure or because they have yet to be recognised (eg. *pffff*).

José Herculano de Carvalho, on the other hand, in *Teoria da Linguagem* (1983, p. 186-194), categorises onomatopoeias into two groups: onomatopoeias in the strict sense and onomatopoeic words. He claims that onomatopoeias in the strict sense are to symbols that do not belong to the linguistic system and whose function, similar to gestures, is to reproduce a situation (eg. *zás*). Onomatopoeic words, on the other hand, are words that are fully integrated in the linguistic system and whose function is to name objects. However, these words can have a symbolic function, albeit more rarely (eg. *zumbir*). He also mentions a third unnamed group, which includes all sounds produced accidentally by man.

More recently, Azevedo (2022, p. 25) categorized onomatopoeias into authentic or pure onomatopoeia, those that roughly mimic a sound (eg. *tic-tac*); interpretive onomatopoeia, those that ideologically mimic a phonetic or morphological sequence (eg. *trinta-réis*); verbal onomatopoeia; interjective onomatopoeia (eg. *xô!*); and accidental onomatopoeia, those that are invented by someone in a particular situation.

3.3. Onomatopoeias in manga

Although the use of onomatopoeias is a key multimodal aspect of comics in general (Rohan et al., 2018, p. 5), when it comes to manga, it is considered to be a feature that sets it apart from other types of comics (Sasamoto, 2019, p. 153). Artists employ them to phonetically evoke a sound, image, or even an emotion in the minds of readers (Holt & Curtin, 2022, p. 77), which makes them crucial expressive units that are able to quickly convey details of a scene (Natsume, 2020, p. 3).

Onomatopoeias found in manga frequently undergo astonishing modifications, enriching the expressiveness of the story (Natsume, 2022, p. 169). These words, which appear outside of speech balloons, are depicted elaborately with varying shapes, sizes, and textures (Hiraishi, 2022, p. 7). The level of graphic representation is much higher than in

western comics since the onomatopoeia is fully incorporated into the structure of the comic, making it impossible for the unfamiliar reader to distinguish between onomatopoeia and artwork (Leitão, 2010, p. 300). Different alphabets or unique styles are employed in order to communicate various types of information. Additionally, they can be positioned in various reading orientations (excluding bottom to top), leading to diverse outcomes, resulting in different effects (Leitão, 2011, p. 8).

At the same time, the translation of onomatopoeias, particularly those that appear in manga, is very challenging (Xiaoxiao & Chen, 2019, p. 135). Although every language has onomatopoeias, they are not commonly used in everyday speech in western languages (Luyten, 2001, p. 180). Furthermore, not all languages represent sounds the same way; although there are instances where some onomatopoeias reflect conventions known to most readers, there are other cases where the meaning of onomatopoeias is only familiar to the readers of the source language (Valero Garcés, 2008, p. 238). Moreover, the flexibility of the use of onomatopoeias in manga is immense (Leitão, 2010, p. 292), and there are many onomatopoeic words that are unique to manga, with even Japanese readers being unable to understand their meaning outside of their manga context (Sell, 2011, p. 99).

3.4. Translating onomatopoeias in manga: previous works

Although studies regarding the translation of Japanese onomatopoeias largely focus on literary translation (Inose, 2008; Bartashova & Sichinskiy, 2014), some research on onomatopoeias found in manga has also been conducted. Leitão (2012), in a study conducted for her master's thesis on the translation of onomatopoeias in Brazilian editions of *shōjo* manga, identified eight strategies, which will be presented below. Inose (2010), in a case study about the translation of onomatopoeias and mimetics from Rumiko Takahashi's work *Maison Ikkoku* into Spanish and English, identified nine methods for each language. For the Spanish version, these involved: translation using an equivalent onomatopoeia; translation using a non-equivalent onomatopoeia; translation using an English onomatopoeia; translation using a Japanese onomatopoeia; translation using an original onomatopoeia; translation from onomatopoeia in the source language to a mimetic word in the target language or vice versa; translation using an adverb; translation through change of content (to dialogue, etc.) and deletion of the original onomatopoeia. For the English Version, they were: translation using an equivalent onomatopoeia; translation using a non-equivalent onomatopoeia; translation using a Japanese onomatopoeia; translation using an original onomatopoeia; translation from onomatopoeia in the source language to a mimetic word in the target language or vice versa; translation using a verb; translation using a verb with the spelling changed; translation through change of content (to dialogue, etc.); and deletion of the original onomatopoeia. In Sell & Pasfield-Neofitou's study (2015, pp. 256-257), which employed strategies from authors Catford, Baker, Tarone, and Harvey and focused on the words used to convey silence, four strategies were identified: equivalence; coinage; descriptive and

omission; and Rohan et al. (2021), while researching readers' behaviour patterns regarding translated onomatopoeia in digital manga, employed an original typology of translation strategies and presented four strategies that are typically used to translate onomatopoeias in manga: annotation; full-textual substitution; non-translation; and glossary.

4. Manga Translation

4.1. In Brazil

The first manga published in Brazil was Cedibra's *Lobo Solitário* in 1988. *Akira*, released by Globo in 1990, came after. These series followed in the footsteps of the translations made by North American publishers, but only *Akira* achieved success with the international release of the animated film (Pinto, 2014).

Manga returned to the Brazilian publishing market in the 2000s after a ten-year hiatus marked by a number of unsuccessful releases that were never published in their entirety due to low sales (Mussarelli & Miotello, 2016, p. 47), including *Crying Freeman* (Sampa, 1992), *Mai - Sensitive Girl* (Abril, 1992), and *A Lenda de Kamui* (Abril, 1993) (Pinto, 2014). Japanese comics grew significantly after the introduction of *anime*, or Japanese cartoons, the majority of which were based on manga, such as *Sailor Moon*, *Yuyu Hakusho*, or *Dragon Ball*. The popularity of these cartoons, which began to be broadcast in the late 1980s and early 1990s, increased the demand for manga translations (Vitorino, 2015). The rising popularity of Japanese pop culture, as well as the internet, were also key factors (Amaral & Carlos, 2013).

4.2. In Portugal

The manga series *Ranma ½* and *Striker*, also known as *Spriggan*, both published by Texto Editora, were the two first manga to be published in Portugal in September of 1996 (Sendai, 2021). Since then, and including the first two publications, there have been several failed projects, including titles such as *Akira* in 1998 by Meribérica, *Vampire Princess Miyu* and *Lupin III* by MangaLine, *Yu-Gi-Go!* and *Dragon Ball* by ASA (although there was a previous complete edition published by Planeta DeAgostini that, apparently, had very little financial return), and *Dark Angel*, the very first series published by Devir Portugal in 2004 (Leituras de BD, 2013). It was not until 2012 that the Portuguese market started to have regular publications of manga (Biblioteca Brasileira de Mangás, 2018), when Devir started publishing popular manga series such as *Death Note*, *Naruto*, and *Blue Exorcist* (Magazine HD, 2015).

5. Methodology

5.1. Manga Series

The data analysed for the creation of this study came from a corpus of the onomatopoeias extracted from the Japanese manga series *Chōjū Gitan* by artist Yuka Nagate. This series was chosen based on the following criteria: it needed to be a recent publication, specifically, from 2022 onward; to be a short series, between two and three volumes; to

have been published both in Portugal and Brazil, but by different publishers; and, finally, to have been directly translated from Japanese.

First released in 2011, *Chōjū Gitan*, whose first part consists of two volumes (aseita, n.d.), is a *seinen*² manga about Ochou, a shinobi who, disguised as a courtesan named Kochou, hunts other shinobi who have gone astray (myanimelist, n.d.). The manga was first published in Portugal by publisher A Seita, with the name *Butterfly Beast*. The first volume was published in August 2022 and the second volume in November 2022. It was translated by Raquel Saraiva, manga translator since 2018 (Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa, n.d.). As for the Brazilian edition, the two volumes were published in a two-in-one version by publisher Pipoca & Nanquim in December 2023, with the name *Borboleta Assassina*. It was translated by Drik Sada, manga translator since 2000 (Japan Foundation: São Paulo, n.d.).

5.2. Purpose and corpus

This paper examines and compares the strategies used to translate onomatopoeic words in manga in both European and Brazilian Portuguese. The comparison between the strategies used in both editions is based on the analysis of a parallel text corpus, which includes three subcorpora: (i) the source text in Japanese, (ii) the translation into European Portuguese, and (iii) the translation into Brazilian Portuguese.

First, the onomatopoeic expressions were extracted from the original Japanese and translated versions, concentrating on the onomatopoeia located outside the speech balloons. Different types of text can be found in manga, namely dialogue, character thoughts, narration, either by a narrator or a character, and onomatopoeia (Mooroka, 2010, p. 15). In contrast to dialogue, which remains inside the speech balloons, onomatopoeias in manga are incorporated into the artwork and, therefore, appear outside of the balloons (Sell & Pasfield-Neofitou, 2015, p. 254). Thus, only the onomatopoeias located outside the speech balloons were extracted and compiled in a textual corpus.

After extracting the expressions from both the original and translated versions, these were then aligned using an Excel spread sheet. They were manually extracted, as no digital versions of the Portuguese and Brazilian translations exist. The Excel sheet was divided into fourteen columns: 1. Series; 2. Volume; 3. Chapter; 4. Page Source Text; 5. Page Target Text PT-PT; 6. Page Target Text PT-BR; 7. Panel; 8. Japanese; 8. Romanization; 9. Type; 10. Meaning; 11. PT-PT Translation; 12. Strategy; 13. PT-BR Translation; and 14. Strategy.

The first columns contain details about the work being analysed, namely its name and volume, and where the onomatopoeia can be found within said work; the page where the onomatopoeia can be found in both the Japanese and Portuguese/Brazilian editions, as there can be differences between the two versions; and the panel where the onomatopoeia is located. These are followed by a column with the onomatopoeia written in Japanese and a column with transcription of the onomatopoeia into the Latin alphabet. The system of romanization adopted for transcribing the onomatopoeias is the Hepburn

² Manga aimed towards adult men which contains mature content (Sly, 2022, p. 13).

system, except for the notation of the vowel length and the small *tsu* at the end of onomatopoeias. Long vowels are transcribed by adding vowels, instead of using a macron, and the small *tsu* is represented as (T). This is followed by a column identifying the type and meaning of each onomatopoeia; for both this tasks, the Japanese specialised dictionaries *擬音語・擬態語 4500: 日本語オノマトペ辞典 (Giongo, gitaigo 4500: Nihongo onomatope jiten)* and the *擬音語・擬態語辞典 (Giongo, gitaigo jiten)* were consulted. Following their categorizations, the onomatopoeias were divided into *giongo*, *giseigo* and *gitaigo* types, Finally, the last two columns indicate the European and Brazilian Portuguese translations, and the translation strategies employed according to the typology chosen for the study. To be able to identify the translation strategies used, the specialised Portuguese dictionary *Dicionário de Onomatopoeias e Vocábulos Expressivos 2ª Edição* was consulted. This dictionary gathers words from a corpus that includes lyrics, literature, and comic strips from Brazil and Portugal (Azevedo, 2022, p. 19). Other tools used to identify the strategies were the online dictionaries *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* and *Infopédia*.

Once extracted, the translations were analysed and classified according to the typology proposed by Leitão (2012) in her master's thesis on how onomatopoeias in *shōjo* manga are translated into Brazilian Portuguese. This typology was chosen because it was created based on the study of the translation of onomatopoeias between the Japanese and Portuguese languages, which are also two languages being analysed on this study. The typology borrows from the typologies from authors Doi (as cited in Leitão, 2012), which identified seven strategies during her analysis of the translation of the novel *Kitchen* by Banana Yoshimoto into Portuguese and English, and Inose (2008), which identified nine strategies in a case study about the translation of onomatopoeias from Haruki Murakami's novel *Sputnik no koibito* into English and Spanish. Leitão's typology include the following strategies: 1) Translation using an equivalent onomatopoeia in the Portuguese Language; 2) Translation using a verb that expresses a similar meaning to the onomatopoeia; 3) Translation using an adjective that expresses a similar meaning to that of the Japanese onomatopoeia; 4) Translation using an adverb that expresses a similar meaning; 5) Translation using a noun that expresses a similar meaning; 6) Translation using a paraphrased form, or an interpretation of the onomatopoeia, that expresses its meaning; 7) Translation using an interjection; and 8) Translation through transliteration, leading to a loan word (Leitão, 2012, pp. 139-173).

6. Results

A total of 223 onomatopoeias were extracted from the first volume and 183 from the second volume. Table 1 shows the onomatopoeias divided by type according to each volume:

Table 1. Onomatopoeias according to type

Type of Onomatopoeia	Volume 1	Volume 2
<i>Giongo</i>	99	82
<i>Giseigo</i>	6	13
<i>Gitaigo</i>	96	70
No meaning was found	22	18
Total	223	183

Table 2 shows the translation strategies employed, as well as the number of onomatopoeias that were translated according to each strategy, in both editions:

Table 2. Translation strategies by volume and editions

Language	Volume 1	Number of Onomatopoeias	Volume 2	Number of Onomatopoeias
European Portuguese	Translation through transliteration	8	Translation through transliteration	3
	Translation using a non-equivalent onomatopoeia	12	Translation using a non-equivalent onomatopoeia	10
	Translation using a verb	3	Translation using a verb	4
	-		Translation using a noun	1
	Translation using an English word	36	Translation using an English word	37
	Translation using an equivalent onomatopoeia	14	Translation using an equivalent onomatopoeia	22
	Translation using an interjection	3	Translation using an interjection	3
	Translation using an original onomatopoeia	147	Translation using an original onomatopoeia	103
Brazilian Portuguese	Translation through transliteration	30	Translation through transliteration	44
	Translation using a non-	32	Translation using a non-	27

	equivalent onomatopoeia		equivalent onomatopoeia	
	Translation using an English word	23	Translation using an English word	17
	Translation using an equivalent onomatopoeia	22	Translation using an equivalent onomatopoeia	34
	Translation using an interjection	3	Translation using an interjection	3
	Translation using an original onomatopoeia	113	Translation using an original onomatopoeia	58

7. Discussion

It was found, during the course of the analysis, that Leitão's typology was not comprehensive enough to accommodate all the strategies present in the corpus. Therefore, new strategies needed to be added. Since Leitão based her typology on Inose's work (2008), and upon determining that Inose had developed a typology solely dedicated to the translation of onomatopoeias in manga, it was decided that the new typology by Inose would be used to complement Leitão's typology. From Inose's typology (2010, pp. 165-167), three strategies were borrowed: translation using a non-equivalent onomatopoeia; translation using an English onomatopoeia; and, finally, translation using an original onomatopoeia.

Another interesting aspect, which was referenced in Section 2.3, is the creativity of onomatopoeias in manga. This feature was confirmed by the existence of onomatopoeias, as shown in Table 1, whose meanings could not be found in dictionaries or where none of the meanings fit the image being depicted. In fact, the range of singular onomatopoeic words is such that it is not possible to create a truly complete dictionary of onomatopoeias in manga (Cseh, 2023, p. 71).

By looking at the above table, it becomes quite clear that there are major differences between the two editions. While the Portuguese edition employs seven strategies in volume one and eight in volume two, the Brazilian edition employs the same six strategies in both volumes. The two strategies that only appear in the Portuguese edition are 'translation using a noun' and 'translation using a verb'. However, although employed in the Portuguese edition, these two strategies do not seem to be very frequent, with only one instance of the use of nouns in volume 2 and seven instances of the use of verbs between the two volumes.

Regarding the use of nouns, the only instance is the word 'SILÊNCIO' (*silence*) (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2, p. 90), and it is used to translate the *giongo*-type word カタン

(KATAN). However, this word is not associated with the inexistence of sound; on the contrary, it means “the sound of a hard object falling or hitting something” (Ono, 2007, p. 31). This translation, it seems, needs to be understood from the perspective of the story itself and the characters in it, as the image being depicted shows the main character being left completely alone after someone closes a door, and since she does not speak or makes any sound, she remains in complete silence.

Verbs were mostly used to translate *gitaigo*-type words related to the act of smiling, namely ニヤ (NIYA), ニツ (NI(T)), and ニイ (NII), which indicate different ways of smiling (Ono, 2007, p. 312-314). All these were translated as ‘SORRI’ (*smiles*), which seems like an expected translation as the Portuguese language does not include words to describe the act of smiling, meaning that the translator can only use the verb itself. The other examples are the translation of the *giongo*-type チャプ (CHAPU), which means “the small, bright sound of waves rippling, waves hitting something, or water lightly splashing” (Ono, 2007, p. 251) and the *gitaigo*-type ヨロ (YORO), which means “the state of having an uncertain footing or an unsteady body” (Ono, 2007, p. 500). These were translated as ‘LAVA’ (*washes*) (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2, p. 11) and ‘CAMBALEIA’ (*staggers*) (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2, p. 139), respectively. The first translation relates not the meaning of the onomatopoeia itself but to the image of someone washing their hands and, subsequently, making that sound, while the second translation can be directly associated with the meaning of the onomatopoeia.



Figure 1. *Butterfly Beast 2* (2023) A Seita (Portuguese edition),³ p. 139 — originally by Nagate Yuka (2012)

The majority of the instances of translations using interjections encompass the word ‘AH’, and all appeared in the Portuguese edition. This translation is being used for the *gitaigo*-type ハツ (HA(T)), meaning “to be surprised by an unexpected event” (Ono, 2007, p. 340), and ビクツ (BIKU(T)), which means “the state of being startled and fearful” (Ono, 2007, p. 355). In the Brazilian edition, the onomatopoeia ハツ (HA(T)) is also translated using the interjection ‘HÃ’, which can be used when someone is surprised (Azevedo, 2022, p. 228). Nonetheless, the most interesting example is the interjection ‘HU’. Used for jeer” or “shout” according to Azevedo’s dictionary of onomatopoeias (2022, p. 229), in the corpus, the word appears as the translation for the already mentioned examples of ニヤ (NIYA), ニツ (NI(T)), and ニイ (NII). This contrast between the meanings of the words in Japanese and Portuguese may be an indication of the origin of a new meaning for the word, not as an interjection but as an onomatopoeia for laughter. This hypothesis seems to be supported by another entry, where the *giseigo*-type ククク (KUKUKU) (*Borboleta*

³ Portuguese edition A Seita, 2023, used with permission of the publisher

Assassina, p. 332), which means “a suppressed laugh” (Ono, 2007, p. 84), was translated as ‘HU HU HU’.



Figure 2. *Choujuu Gitan* (2023) by Pipoca & Nanquim (Brazilian edition)⁴ p. 332 — originally by Nagate Yuka (2012)

Despite the linguistic gap between the Portuguese and Japanese languages, there are still instances where equivalent onomatopoeias can be found. The more recurring onomatopoeia translated using an equivalent was the *giseigo*-type word ザワザワ (ZAWAZAWA), which means “a loud voice or sound” and it’s used when people make noise (Ono, 2007, p. 157). The onomatopoeia was translated using the equivalents ‘BLÁ BLÁ’ in the Portuguese edition and ‘BZZ BZZ’ in the Brazilian edition, an onomatopoeia commonly associated with the bussing sound of insects but that is also used to indicate whispering (Azevedo, 2022, p. 107). Other examples of onomatopoeias translated using Portuguese equivalents include the *gitaigo*-type ガツガツ (GATSUGATSU), with the meaning “to devour food with a lustful appetite” (Ono, 2007, p. 36), translated as ‘NHAC NHAC’ (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 204); and バアンツ (BAAN(T)), a *giongo*-type word that means “the sound of something being violently struck or hit” (Ono, 2007, p. 328), translated as ‘TRÁS’. There was even one instance where the translation of both editions happened to

⁴ Nagate Yuka/LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd. All rights reserved (c) Pipoca & Nanquim 2023 for the Brazilian edition

coincide, more specifically, the translation of フー (FUU), “the sound of strong breathing or sighing” (Ono, 2007, p. 388), as ‘PFFF’ (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2, p. 148; *Borboleta Assassina*, p. 332).

Another meaningful difference is the use of transliteration. There is a big discrepancy in the use of this strategy between the Portuguese edition and the Brazilian edition, with the Brazilian edition using it more frequently. Not understanding the meaning of the onomatopoeia does not seem to be a possible explanation for choosing this strategy, as there were only two instances, one in each volume, where the onomatopoeias could not be found in the dictionaries. As such, an inability to find a suitable solution to accurately convey the meaning seems to be the more logical explanation. The majority of the words translated using this strategy, around 54%, were of the *gitaigo*-type, which, according to Leitão (2010, p. 308) is the most challenging type of onomatopoeia since they correspond to a form that does not exist in the Portuguese language. Examples include the transliteration ‘ZAH’ (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 28) for ザッ (ZA(T)), which means “a coordinated, vigorous, and rapid movement” (Ono, 2007, p. 149); ‘GUH’ (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 235) for グ (GU), which means “to put one's strength into something” (Ono, 2007, p. 96); or ‘DAH’ (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 60) for ダッ (DA(T)), meaning “to jump out with great vigour” (Ono, 2007, p. 238). There were also some instances of the use of transliterations for *giongo*-type words, such as ‘SHAN SHAN SHAN’ (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 287), for シャンシャンシャン (SHANSHANSHAN), which means “the sound of a bell or other object ringing continuously and lightly” (Ono, 2007, p. 185); or ‘CHARIN’ for チャリ—ン (CHARIIN), meaning “the high-pitched sound of metal touching each other or hitting something hard” (Ono, 2007, p. 252).



Figure 3. *Choujuu Gitan* (2023) by Pipoca & Nanquim (Brazilian edition),⁵ p. 60 — originally by Nagate Yuka (2012)

The strategy of using non-equivalent onomatopoeias refers to the cases when a target language onomatopoeic word is used in a translation, but their meanings do not correspond to those of the source language (Inose, 2010, p. 169). This occurrence seems to be explained by the fact that translators must use the more limited number of onomatopoeic words available in their respective languages (Taran, 2014, p. 99). Examples of words translated using this strategy include ゴオオオ (GOOOO), which means a “a heavy, rumbling, low sound” (Ono, 2007, p. 117) and was used in a panel depicting a battle scene, translated as ‘UÓÓÓÓ’ (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 1, p. 51), an onomatopoeia used for indicating “the sound of a siren” (Azevedo, 2022, p. 448); ゴシ (GOSHI), which means “the sound made when something is rubbed repeatedly with great force” (Ono, 2007, p. 121) and was used in a panel where a character was rubbing lipstick from her lips, was translated as ‘GLUP’ (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2, p. 27), an onomatopoeia used to indicate the sound of swallowing or choking (Azevedo, 2022, p. 216); or ガクツ (GAKU(T)), a *gitaigo*-type word meaning of “a body shaking from shock” (Yamaguchi, 2015, p. 36) and was used in a panel that depicts the outcome of character being stabbed, was translated as ‘VUP’ (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 355), an onomatopoeia used to indicate the sound of stumbling or slipping, as well as indicating speed (Azevedo, 2022, p. 457).

Another contrast between the two editions is the use of English words. Though both editions employ this strategy, the Portuguese one adopts this strategy much more frequently. With 53 instances, the most frequent example is the use of the word ‘TAP’. This translation was used for translating different words, the majority related to movement, more specifically, movement of the feet. Examples of words translated as ‘TAP’ include ゴ

⁵ Nagate Yuka/LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd. All rights reserved (c) Pipoca & Nanquim 2023 to the Brazilian edition

ツ (ZA(T)) (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 1, p. 28), which means “the sound of multiple, regular footsteps” (Ono, 2007, p. 151); タタタ (TATATA) (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 1, p. 11), meaning “the sound of footsteps running regularly” (Ono, 2007, p. 237); ザザツ (ZAZA(T)) (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2, p. 97) meaning “the sound and appearance of kicking the ground and moving quickly” (Yamaguchi, 2015, p. 195); or ドカドカ (DOKADOKA) (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2, p. 78), which means “the sound of someone stomping their feet, advancing, retreating, or moving around without any restraint at all” (Yamaguchi, 2015, p. 327). Interestingly, this strategy resulted in some similar translations between the two editions, such as ‘TAP’ for ヒタ (HITA), a *giongo*-type onomatopoeia that means “the sound of walking quickly across a flat surface wearing flat-soled, non-hard shoes such as zori sandals or tabi socks” (Yamaguchi, 2015, p. 419), or ‘FLAP’ for バサツ (BASA(T)) “the sound and appearance of a bundle of paper, fiber, or other material being shaken or touching a hard surface” (Yamaguchi, 2015, p. 378), and is commonly used for the sound of wings flapping. The most likely explanation for the usage of English words is the fact that, similarly to what happened in Spain (Inose, 2010, p. 169), American comics were introduced into the Portuguese and Brazilian publishing markets long before manga was, more precisely since the late 1920’s in Brazil (Porto & Oliveira, 2017, p. 5) and the late 1940’s in Portugal (Pinto, 2016, p. 300). This exposure had a lasting effect as many onomatopoeias from these comics were simply left untranslated, leading to their assimilation into certain European languages (Taran, 2014, p. 99)

Nevertheless, despite the various translation strategies employed throughout the series, the majority of the onomatopoeias were still translated using ‘original words’. This occurs when the source language does not have a fixed repertoire of onomatopoeia that is equivalent to the Japanese words, which forces the translator to compensate by creating new words (Teshome, 2024, p. 25). This is clearly the case when translating from Japanese to Portuguese, as onomatopoeias are less common in the Portuguese language (Fonseca, 2011, p. 147). Examples of translations using coined words include ‘TZIN TZIN’ in the Portuguese edition (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 1, p. 30) and ‘KLIM KLIM’ in the Brazilian Edition (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 34) used to translated キンキン (KINKIN), a *giongo*-type word meaning “a metallic, sharp, high-pitched sound that resonates in the ear” (Ono, 2007, p. 80); or ‘SHSH’ in the Portuguese edition (*Butterfly Beast*, vol. 1, p. 23) and ‘TZZ’ in the Brazilian edition (*Borboleta Assassina*, p. 27) for ジジ (JIJI) “the faint sound of something burning” (Ono, 2007, p. 164).



Figure 4. *Butterfly Beast 1* (2022) A Seita (Portuguese edition),⁶ p. 30 — originally by Nagate Yuka (2012)

Although the most commonly used strategy in both editions, it is much more recurrent in the Portuguese edition than in the Brazilian one. This may be explained by the publishing market itself, as manga has been translated for longer in Brazil than in Portugal, which may imply that Brazilian translators have more experience in dealing with this issue. In fact, when comparing the difference in strategies used in the Brazilian edition with all occurrences of onomatopoeias translated using coined words in the Portuguese edition, it is possible to see that almost half of the translations using new words in the Portuguese edition were translated using different strategies in the Brazilian edition. However, if the reverse comparison is made, less than 35% of the words translated using coined words in the Brazilian edition were translated using other strategies in the Portuguese edition. It is important to note that more than 65% of the words with no meaning in dictionaries present in the corpus were translated using this strategy. In these instances, this strategy can almost be seen as a safeguard, allowing the translator to convey the meaning based solely on the image but without misleading the reader. Furthermore, in both editions, the biggest group of words that were translated using this strategy were *gitaigo*-type. This finding once again emphasizes the previously mentioned difficulty in translating this type of word.

⁶ Portuguese edition A Seita, 2023, used with permission of the publisher

8. Conclusion

Although initially intended only for Japanese readers, Japanese comics are now a global phenomenon (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 10), with the term manga having been assimilated into various languages (Kern, 2016, p. 106). Onomatopoeias, abundant in the Japanese language, are an essential element that contributes to immersive reading (Holt & Curtin, 2022, p. 77). However, its translations constitute one of the most complex issues (Petersen, 2009).

The first purpose of this paper was to identify how onomatopoeias in manga were translated in European and Brazilian Portuguese. To do this, a typology created from the study of the translation of onomatopoeias in manga was used. However, the variety of strategies present in the corpus required the addition of other strategies from a second typology, also based on the translation of onomatopoeia in manga. Accordingly, through analysis of the corpus, a total of eight translation strategies were identified. Thus, through the analysis of the corpus, a total of eight translation strategies were identified. This leads to the first conclusion that can be drawn from this study: that the variety of strategies used in the translation of onomatopoeia in manga is vast, which corroborates the opinion of most authors regarding the difficulty of translating them, not only because of their diversity but also because of their originality (for example, Petersen, 2009; Valero Garcés; Sell, 2011; Natsume, 2022).

The second objective was to assess whether there are significant differences in the strategies used in both editions. The analysis reveals a difference in the number of strategies, with the Portuguese edition presenting more strategies. However, all the strategies present in the Brazilian edition can be found in the Portuguese edition, and the number of occurrences of the two additional strategies present in the Portuguese edition is very low, indicating that their use is very sporadic. In addition, examples of coincidental translations have also been observed. This leads to the second conclusion that can be drawn from this study: although Brazilian translators seem to have more experience in dealing with this unique aspect of manga, particularly with regard to the use of coined words, translators from both countries are still constrained by the same linguistic limitations of the Portuguese language.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

- Nagate, Y. (2022a) *Butterfly Beast*, vol. 1. A Seita.
Nagate, Y. (2022b) *Butterfly Beast*, vol. 2. A Seita.
Nagate, Y. (2023) *Borboleta Assassina*. Pipoca & Nanquim.

Secondary Sources

- Amaral, A. and Carlos, G. S. (2013) 'Caracterizando o "estilo mangá" no contexto brasileiro: hibridização cultural na *Turma da Mônica Jovem*', *Vozes e Diálogo*, 12(1), pp. 18-33.
Azevedo, W. (2022) *Dicionário de onomatopoeias e vocábulos expressivos (2nd edn)*. Editora Moan.

- Bartashova, O. A. and Sichinskiy, A. E. (2014) 'Japanese-English onomatopoeic and mimetic parallels: The problem of translatability', *Journal of Siberian federal university. Humanities & social sciences*, 2, pp. 222-229.
- Biblioteca Brasileira de Mangás (2018) 'Os raros mangás em Portugal' [online]. Available at: <https://blogbbm.com/2018/04/30/os-raros-mangas-em-portugal/> (Accessed: 28 October 2024).
- Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa (n.d.) 'O regresso de Naruto' [online]. Available at: <http://id.bnportugal.gov.pt/bib/bibnacional/1999974> (Accessed: 18 November 2024).
- Berndt, J. (2008) 'Considering manga discourse: Location, ambiguity, historicity' in MacWilliams M. W. (ed.) *Japanese visual culture: Explorations in the world of manga and anime*. M. E. Sharpe, pp. 295-310.
- Berndt, J. (2021) 'Manga flows: Reading the paneled spread against handscroll and webtoon' in K. Trinh (ed.) *Love, fight, feast: The multifaceted world of Japanese narrative art*. Scheidegger & Spiess, pp. 50-55.
- Chang, A. C. (1990) *A Thesaurus of Japanese mimesis and onomatopoeia: Usage by categories*. Taishūkan Shoten.
- Cseh, L. Z. (2023) 'How does that sound? Onomatopoeia in manga', *Revue Internationale d'Études En Langues Modernes Appliquées*, 16, pp. 65-75.
- Flyxe, M. (2002) 'Translation of Japanese onomatopoeia into Swedish (with focus on lexicalization)', *Africa & Asia*, 2, pp. 54-73.
- Fonseca, R.S.P. da. (2011) 'Tradução e adaptação de mangás: reflexões e (im)possibilidades', *Cadernos de Literatura em Tradução*, 12, pp. 137-151.
- Herculano, J. G. C. (1983) *Teoria da linguagem, natureza do fenómeno linguístico e análise das línguas, 6.ª edição*. Coimbra Editora Limitada.
- Hiraishi, N. (2022) 'Japanese sound-symbolic words in global contexts: From translation to hybridization' [version 2; peer review: 2 approved], *F1000Research*, 10, p. 1024.
- Holt, J. and Curtin, K. (2022) 'Translation essay: "the problems of onomatopoeia in manga" two-chapter essays from the principles of manga (manga genron) by Yomota Inuhiko', *Multimodal Communication*, 11(2), pp. 75-91.
- Ingulsrud, J. E. and Allen, K. (2009) *Reading Japan cool: Patterns of manga literacy and discourse*. Lexington books.
- Inose, H. (2008) 'Translating Japanese onomatopoeias and mimetic words', *Translation Research Projects*, 1, pp. 97-116.
- Inose, H. (2010) 'Translating Japanese onomatopoeias and mimetic words in manga', *Interpreting and Translation Studies*, 10, pp. 161-176.
- Irwin, M. and Zisk, M. (2019) *Japanese linguistics*. Asakura publishing.
- Ito, K. (2005) 'A history of manga in the context of Japanese culture and society', *The journal of popular culture*, 38(3), pp. 456-475.
- Japan Foundation – São Paulo (n.d.) 'Tradução em foco' [online]. Available at: https://fjso.org.br/traducaoemfoco_driksada/ (Accessed: 18 November 2024).
- Johnson-Woods, T. (2010) 'Introduction' in Johnson-Woods, T. (ed.), *Manga: An anthology of global and cultural perspectives*. Continuum, pp. 1-16.
- Kern, A. L. (2016) 'East Asian comix: Intermingling Japanese manga and Euro-American comics' in Bramlett, F., Cook R. T. and Meskin, A. (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Comics*. Routledge, pp. 106-115.

Ferreira, A. - Translating onomatopoeias

Translation Matters, 6(2), 2024, pp. 80-99, DOI: https://doi.org/10.21747/21844585/tm6_2a5

- Kinsella, S. (2000) *Adult manga: Culture and power in contemporary Japanese society*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i press.
- Kacsuk, Z. (2018) 'Re-examining the "What is Manga" Problematic: The tension and interrelationship between the "style" versus "made in Japan" positions', *Arts*, 7(3), pp. 1-18.
- Leitão, R.G.C. (2010) 'Estratégias na tradução de onomatopoeias japonesas nos mangás: reflexões e classificação', *Tradterm*, 16, pp. 281-311.
- Leitão, R.G.C. (2011) 'Representações dos sons nos mangás', *Jornadas Internacionais de Histórias em Quadrinhos (1ª edn.)*. Escola de Comunicações e Artes, Universidade de São Paulo.
- Leitão, R.G.C. (2012) 'O "som" do silêncio: traduções/adaptações de onomatopoeias e mimésis japonesas nos mangás traduzidos para a língua portuguesa', MA Diss., Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo.
- Leituras de BD (2013) 'Manga em Portugal' [online]. Available at: <http://bongop-leituras-bd.blogspot.com/2013/03/manga-em-portugal.html> (Accessed: 28 October 2024).
- Luyten, S. M. B. (2001) 'Onomatopéia e mimesis no mangá: A estética do som', *Revista USP*, 52, pp. 176-188.
- Magazine HD (2015) 'Animes e mangas: O fenómeno japonês em Portugal' [online]. Available at: <https://www.magazine-hd.com/apps/wp/animes-mangas-em-portugal> (Accessed: 28 October 2024).
- Mooroka, T. (2010) 'The onomatopoeias in manga', *Studies In Literature and Culture*, 47, pp. 15-24.
- Mussarelli, F. and Miotello, V. (2016) 'O contexto brasileiro da chegada do mangá e as particularidades de sua publicação no Brasil', *9ª Arte*, 5(1), pp. 45-57.
- Natsume, F. (2020) 'The grammar of manga: Manga's inherent Hyōgen "stylistics"' (translated by Kroo, J.) in Toku, M. and Dollase, H. (eds.), *Manga!: Visual Pop-Culture in ARTS Education*. InSEA Publications, pp. 1-10.
- Natsume, F. (2022) 'The power of onomatopoeia in manga' (translated by Holt, J. & Fukuda, T.), *Japanese Language and Literature*, 56(1), pp. 157-184.
- Ono, M. (2007) 日本語オノマトペ辞典: 擬音語・擬態語 4500. Shōgakukan.
- Pasfield-Neofitou, S. (2016) 'Introduction – Tuning in to manga: Cultural and communicative perspectives' in Pasfield-Neofitou, S. and Sell, C. (eds.) *Manga vision: cultural and communicative perspectives*. Monash University publishing, pp. 1-12.
- Petersen, R. (2009) 'The acoustics of manga' in Heer, J. and Worcester, K. (eds.) *A comics studies reader*. University press of Mississippi, pp. 163-171.
- Pinto, F. L. R. (2014) 'Mangás (in)traduzidos no Brasil', *Cultura e Tradução*, 3(1), pp. 364-376.
- Pinto, R. L. (2016) 'Salazar contra "Superman" banda desenhada e censura durante o Estado Novo: o caso das publicações periódicas infanto-juvenis e o papel da Comissão Especial para Literatura Infantil e Juvenil e da Comissão da Literatura e Espectáculos para Menores (1950-1956)', *História: Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto*, 6, pp. 289-321.
- Porto, B. de A. and Oliveira, S. R. N. (2017) 'Do Superman ao Super-homem: trajetória da revista em quadrinhos de super-herói no Brasil no século XX', *Jornadas Internacionais de Histórias em Quadrinhos*, 4.
- Rohan, O., Sasamoto, R. and O'Brien, S. (2021) 'Onomatopoeias: A relevance-based eye-tracking study of digital manga', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 186, pp. 60-72.

- Sá Nogueira, R. (1936) *Subsídios para o estudo das onomatopoeias em português*. Centro de Estudos Filológicos.
- Sasamoto, R. (2019) *Onomatopoeia and relevance: Communication of impressions via sound*. Springer international publishing.
- Schodt, F. L. (1996) *Dreamland Japan: Writings on modern manga*. Stone Bridge press.
- Sell, C. (2011) 'Manga translation and interculture', *Mechademia*, 6, pp. 93-108.
- Sell, C. and Pasfield-Neofitou, S. (2015) 'The sound of silence: Translating onomatopoeias and mimesis in Japanese manga' in Pasfield-Neofitou, S. and Sell (Eds.), *Manga vision: Cultural and communicative perspectives*. Monash University publishing, pp. 251-270.
- Sendai (2021) 'Os 25 anos de mangás em Portugal' [online]. Available at: <https://www.sendaieditora.com/blogue/os-25-anos-de-mangas-em-portugal> (Accessed: 28 October 2024).
- Sly, C. (2022) 'Guide to a better understanding and appreciation of manga texts', *Scan*, 41(1), pp. 12-20.
- Taran, T. (2014) 'Problems in the translation of comics and cartoons', *Analele Științifice Ale Universității De Studii Europene din Moldova*, 3, pp. 90-100.
- Teshome, M. (2024) 'Onomatopoeia in a Japanese-to-English translation of All Out!! – a case study', *Nippon Bunri University bulletin*, 52(1), pp. 17-26.
- Trilho, L. A. (2009) 'Onomatopoeias', *E-Dicionário de termos literários* [online]. Available at: <https://edtl.fcsh.unl.pt/encyclopedia/onomatopoeia> (Accessed: 28 October 2024).
- Valero Garcés, C. (2008) 'Onomatopoeia and unarticulated language in the translation of comic books, the case of comics in Spanish' in Zanettin, F. (ed.) *Comics in Translation*. Routledge, pp. 237-250.
- Vitorino, M. S. (2015) '*Práticas linguístico-culturais presentes nas traduções e adaptações de mangás*', Bachelor's Diss., Universidade Nove de Julho.
- Xiaoxiao, W. and Chen, D. (2019) 漫画オノマトペの特徴及び翻訳手法についての研究 – 『まんぷくマラソン旅』を例として – ('A Research on Characteristics and Translation Techniques of Comic Onomatopoeia: Take "The Tour of Marathon with Delicious Food" for Example'), *Sapporo University Research Institute Journal*, 11, pp. 117-136.
- Yamaguchi, N. (2015) 擬音語・擬態語辞典. Kodansha.
- Yomota, I. (2022) 'Translation essay: "the problems of onomatopoeia in manga" two-chapter essays from the principles of manga (manga genron)' (translated by Holt, J. & Curtin, K.), *Multimodal Communication*, 11(2), pp. 75-91.
- Zanettin, F. (2008) 'Comics in translation: an overview' in Zanettin, F. (ed.) *Comics in Translation*. Routledge, pp. 1-32.

About the author: Alexandra Costa Ferreira is a doctoral student in Translation and Terminology at NOVA FCSH. She holds a BA in Oriental Cultures and Languages from the University of Minho and an MA in Translation from the University of Porto. She currently works as a professional manga translator, having translated several series into Portuguese, such as *Made in Abyss* by Akihito Tsukushi, *Attack on Titan* (since volume 4) by Hajime Isayama or *A Distant Neighborhood* by Jirō Taniguchi.