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The Analysis of Metaphor, Hyperbole, and Irony in Indonesian Webtoon Translated from English

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Abstract

This study investigates the translation of metaphor, hyperbole, and irony in the Indonesian translation of the popular Webtoon Lookism, addressing the vulnerability of non-literal language in multimodal media where text and image are inseparable. Employing a qualitative descriptive method with a comparative analysis of 23 figurative instances from the first 20 episodes, data were categoried using Molina and Albir's (2002) translation taxonomy and interpreted through Audiovisual Translation principles and Barthes' (1977) concept of visual anchorage. The key finding is that strategy selection is systematically governed by figurative type and its multimodal interaction. Metaphors show a dichotomy: Literal Translation for universal concepts versus adaptive strategies for culture-specific ones. Notably, irony relies predominantly on Literal Translation (71% of cases)—a strategy enabled by visual context providing essential pragmatic cues. Hyperbole requires Modulation and Equivalence to recalibrate expressive intensity for the target culture. This study's specific novelty lies in three contributions: (1) it extends Molina and Albir's taxonomy by demonstrating that strategy viability is contingent on multimodal support—a dimension absent in text-only translation; (2) it empirically validates Barthes' visual anchorage in the underexplored context of digital comics, showing that static images actively constrain linguistic choices; and (3) it provides the first systematic mapping of how metaphor, hyperbole, and irony each predict distinct strategic patterns in Indonesian Webtoon translation. This study contributes to translation theory by reframing figurative language translation as a multimodal negotiation rather than a purely linguistic transfer, and offers practical, evidence-based guidance for localizers of graphic narratives on how visual elements systematically influence translation strategy selection.

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INTRODUCTION

The global digital comics market has experienced unprecedented growth, with Webtoons emerging as a dominant force in contemporary visual storytelling. Originating in South Korea, this digital comic format has transcended national boundaries, amassing over 100 million monthly active readers worldwide, with Indonesia ranking among the top markets (Jin, 2020). The platform's success hinges on its unique multimodal presentation—vertical scrolling, panel-by-panel narratives, and the inseparable integration of text and image—which presents both opportunities and challenges for translation (Istiqomah et al., 2020). As Indonesian readership continues to surge, the demand for high-quality translations has intensified; yet the translation of Webtoons involves far

more than word-for-word transfer. It requires careful attention to tone, nuance, and cultural context (Rusyana& Nugroho, 2022).

The translation of figurative language within this multimodal context represents a particularly critical challenge. Figurative expressions such as metaphors, hyperboles, and irony are deeply embedded in cultural and pragmatic frameworks (Ionescu, 2022), often leading to meaning distortion when transferred across languages (Wicaksono, 2018). Metaphors enable abstract concepts to be understood through familiar domains (Keil, 1986); hyperboles dramatise experiences by magnifying emotions (Manu et al., 2024); and irony operates through the gap between literal and intended meaning to produce humour or critique (Attardo, 2020). In translation, these devices are particularly vulnerable: metaphors can sound flat, hyperboles awkward, and irony can be easily lost. This vulnerability is amplified in digital comics, where text and image function as an integrated semiotic unit, making the translator's task uniquely complex (Larasati & Rasikawati, 2022; Zhang & Wang, 2023). Research on Webtoon translation has demonstrated that figurative expressions such as irony and hyperbole present distinct challenges, requiring strategic adaptation to preserve pragmatic meaning across languages (Syahrani, 2024).

The research urgency is underscored by an identifiable gap in the existing literature. Although research on figurative language is expanding, most studies have concentrated on novels, poetry, or films (Adila & Hilman, 2024). When attention turns to Webtoons, scholars often emphasise visual storytelling or cultural impact (Alyfia& Ali, 2021), but systematic linguistic analyses of translated versions remain scarce. Nasution et al. (2021) examined visual semiotics in the Webtoon Sweet Home, while Hartati et al. (2023) explored Webtoon media for educational purposes; yet neither focused on the translation of figurative language. Previous related studies, such as Adila and Hilman's (2024) analysis of figurative language in novels and Alyfia and Ali's (2021) examination of beauty-term translations in Webtoons, highlight the need for cultural adaptation. Chakhachiro (2022) underscores the fragility of irony in translation, while Burgers et al. (2018) demonstrate that these figurative devices often co-occur and interact in written discourse. Collectively, these studies confirm that figurative language is often altered in translation and that multimodality demands a unique approach. However, a significant gap remains: no previous study has systematically examined how the type of figurative device, whether metaphor, hyperbole, or irony, predicts distinct translation strategies within the multimodal constraints of Webtoons, nor has any research explicitly investigated how static visual elements actively anchor and constrain these strategic choices in the Indonesian translation context. This gap is particularly critical given Indonesia's position as one of the largest Webtoon readership markets globally (Jin, 2020), where translation quality directly impacts reader engagement and cultural reception.

This study introduces its novelty by addressing this gap through an integrated theoretical framework. It adopts Molina and Albir's (2002) operational taxonomy of translation strategies—including Adaptation, Literal Translation, Modulation, and Equivalence—to systematically classify translator decisions. Furthermore, it contextualises these strategies within the framework of Audiovisual Translation (Díaz-Cintas &Remael, 2014) to account for the medium's unique constraints, such as spatial limitations and visual-textual synergy. Most importantly, this study applies Roland Barthes' (1977) concept of visual anchorage, which posits that in comics translation, the static image anchors and constrains the translator's linguistic choices. This novel integration of theories allows the research to investigate not just what strategies are used, but how the visual design fundamentally dictates their selection.

Given this background, the objectives of this research are threefold. First, it seeks to identify and classify instances of metaphor, hyperbole, and irony in the English version of the popular Webtoon Lookism. Second, it analyses how these instances are rendered into Indonesian using Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy. Third, it investigates how the multimodal nature of Webtoons shapes these translation decisions. These objectives lead to the following research questions:

1. How are metaphor, hyperbole, and irony represented in the English version of Lookism?
2. What translation strategies are employed to render these figurative elements into Indonesian?
3. How do the visual elements in the Webtoon influence the choice and outcome of these translation strategies?

METHOD

Research Design

This study was designed to systematically investigate the translation of figurative language in Webtoons. A qualitative descriptive approach with a comparative case study design was employed to achieve an in-depth analysis of translation strategies and their multimodal interactions. A qualitative descriptive design was adopted, as it enables the detailed description and interpretation of translation phenomena within their authentic context without pursuing statistical generalisation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach was deemed most appropriate because figurative language is inherently context-dependent, and in Webtoons, this context is multimodal. The study focused on analysing the product of translation through a comparative case study of the Lookism Webtoon.

Data Source

The research was conducted as a desktop analysis. The data corpus, consisting of digital episodes from the Webtoon Lookism, was accessed and analysed between September 17, 2025 and November 6, 2025. The source and target texts are publicly available on the official Webtoon platform. The population of this study encompasses all figurative language instances within the English version of the Webtoon Lookism.

Population and Sample

The population of this study encompasses all figurative language instances within the English version of the Webtoon Lookism. From this population, a purposive sample was selected. The sample consisted of the first 20 episodes of the series, as these episodes establish the core narrative and characters and are rich in dialogue, providing a foundational and dense collection of figurative language for analysis.

A purposive sampling technique was applied. This non-random technique was chosen to ensure the selected data were information-rich and directly relevant to the research problem. Episodes 1–20 were deliberately selected because they contain a high frequency of the figurative language types under investigation—metaphor, hyperbole, and irony—allowing for a focused and in-depth analysis.

Analytical Framework

Data were measured and categorised using an integrated analytical framework operationalised through a structured codebook. The primary instrument for measurement was Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy of translation strategies (e.g., Adaptation, Literal Translation, Modulation, Equivalence), which provided clear, observable categories for classifying translational choices. This framework was complemented by principles from Audiovisual Translation (Díaz-Cintas &Remael, 2014) to account for multimodal constraints.

Data Collection Procedure

A parallel corpus was created by compiling digital panels from the Source Text (ST – English) and Target Text (TT – Indonesian). A close reading of the ST was conducted to identify all instances of metaphor, hyperbole, and irony based on established linguistic definitions. Each identified ST instance and its corresponding TT segment were extracted and coded using a codebook that recorded the figurative type, ST string, TT string, visual context, translation strategy, pragmatic effect, and the role of visual elements.

Data Analysis Procedure

The coded data were analysed qualitatively to identify dominant patterns and relationships. The process involved: (a) categorization, whereby each data pair was systematically classified according to the translation strategy used; (b) pattern analysis, whereby the categorized data were reviewed to identify tendencies and strategic patterns linked to each type of figurative language and its interaction with visual elements; and (c) in-depth interpretation, whereby the most illustrative examples of each pattern were selected for a detailed discussion, interpreting the functional outcomes of the strategies within the multimodal context, guided by Barthes' (1977) concept of visual anchorage.

Research Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, the scope is limited to a case study of a single Webtoon (Lookism) and a select number of its episodes; therefore, the findings offer deep qualitative insights rather than broad statistical generalizations. Second, the identification of irony and the judgment of "pragmatic effect" involve a degree of interpretative analysis, though this was mitigated by the use of clear definitions and a transparent coding process. Finally, the analysis is confined to three types of figurative language, leaving other rhetorical devices beyond its scope.

interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of 23 instances of figurative language in Lookism Episodes 1–20. The results are structured around the three types of figurative language investigated: metaphor, irony, and hyperbole. For each type, the translation strategies employed are identified and the role of visual elements in the translation outcome is described.

Metaphor Translation

The analysis of metaphors reveals how translators navigate between cultural universality and specificity. Universal concepts like dreams and physical sensations are often translated literally, while culture-specific references require more adaptive approaches. The following table demonstrates the strategic choices made for ten metaphor instances, highlighting the role of visual elements in facilitating certain strategies.

Table 1. Analysis of Metaphor Translation in Lookism

No.	ST (English)	TT (Indonesian)	Translation Strategy	Analysis & Multimodal Interaction
1	"What happened today was like a dream."	"Kejadianhariinisepertimimpi."	Literal Translation	The universal concept of a "dream" transcends cultural boundaries, allowing for a direct and effective transfer.
2	"What an Ogre."	"Kayak ogre."	Borrowing	The cultural term "ogre" is borrowed. The visual panel, showing a large, intimidating character, provides crucial compensation for the potentially obscure reference.
3	"Many thoughts whirled around in my mind today."	"Banyak sekali yang kupikirkanseharianini."	Modulation	The motion metaphor "whirled around" is modulated into a quantitative emphasis "banyaksekali." This adapts the expression to a more natural Indonesian pattern for conveying mental overload.
4	"Awesome! Fire!"	"Hebat!"	Equivalence	The youth slang "fire" as a metaphor for excellence is replaced with a functionally equivalent and common Indonesian praise word, preserving the enthusiastic tone.
5	"He's a ten!"	"Keren banget!"	Adaptation	The culture-specific numerical rating is replaced with a high-impact local expression, prioritising naturalness over the original schema.
6	"Feel their eyes on me."	"Aku bisamerasakantatapanmereka!"	Literal Translation	The sensation of "eyes" on one's back is a universally understood metaphor for scrutiny and discomfort. The translation is effective and natural.
7	"The daytime is like a beautiful dream."	"Saat siangakubahagiasepertimimpi."	Literal Translation	The dream metaphor for an ideal state is again translated directly, demonstrating the cross-cultural validity of this comparison.
8	"At night I come back to the cold reality."	"Saat malamakukembalikekenyataan yang dingin."	Literal Translation	The temperature metaphor "cold reality" for harsh truth is effectively preserved through literal translation, as this conceptual mapping is shared in Indonesian.
9	"The squeeze of death."	"Kena kekuatangiladia"	Modulation	The violent, extreme metaphor is modulated into an expression of "crazy strength." This avoids potential awkwardness and aligns with common Indonesian hyperbolic descriptions.
10	"Eye of the storm."	"Di saat yang paling tenangsebelumsemuanyaterjadi"	Adaptation	The idiom "eye of the storm" is explained rather than translated directly, making the metaphor of impending chaos accessible to readers unfamiliar with the English idiom.

Of the 10 metaphor examples, 4 (40%) employed Literal Translation for universal concepts, 3 (30%) used Modulation, and 1 instance each (10%) was handled by Adaptation, Borrowing, and

Equivalence. This demonstrates a strategic dichotomy whereby universal concepts are preserved directly, while culture-specific or complex metaphors require adaptive strategies for naturalness.

Irony Translation

The translation of irony demonstrates a unique pattern where literal translation becomes the predominant strategy. This approach is feasible because the Webtoon's visual elements provide essential contextual cues that help convey ironic intent. The table below presents seven cases where multimodal support enables effective irony preservation through minimal linguistic adaptation. Analysis of seven irony instances revealed a dominant trend, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of Irony Translation in Lookism

No.	ST (English)	TT (Indonesian)	Translation Strategy	Analysis & Multimodal Interaction
1	"Hey! It's too cold... It's cold."	"Hei! Anginnyadingin!" → "Dingin"	Literal Translation	The situational irony is clear from the context—complaining about cold while in a cold environment. The visual setting makes the ironic contrast obvious.
2	"Oh, are you cold!" (sarcastic)	"Wadh, Mijin dinginya?"	Literal Translation	The sarcasm is conveyed by the character's exaggerated, insincere tone and facial expression. The translator relies on these multimodal cues.
3	"If I force him awake, the body that was awake passes out..."	"Kalau dipaksabangun, badan yang tadinyabangunlangsungterpaksatidur..."	Literal Translation	The situational irony of the cause-effect reversal is evident from the absurd logic itself, preserved effectively in translation.
4	"Holy."	"Wah."	Equivalence	The ironic understatement is contextually clear from the exaggerated situation. The strategy substitutes a culturally appropriate exclamation while preserving the ironic tone.
5	"A valuable time for only friends!" / "It's not"	"Acara khusus yang hanyadapatdilakukandenganteman!" / "Enggak juga sih"	Literal Translation	The immediate verbal contradiction signals ironic intent clearly. The pragmatic marker works equally well in Indonesian.
6	"He protects the weaklings, hates the cool kids. Robin Hood" (Verbal irony)	"Selalumelindungi yang lemah dan bencianak yang terkenal... 'Si body yang kuat'"	Adaptation	The core description is ironic because the visual context (the character acting selfishly) creates the essential ironic gap. The nickname is adapted for local flavour.
7	"But I'm more handsome" (when comparing to someone who is more handsome; this person is jealous)	"Tapi akulebih tampan kan?"	Literal Translation + Adaptation	The verbal irony is preserved literally, while the boasting style is slightly adapted. The character's visual appearance—contrasting with the claims—ensures the irony is clear.

Analysis reveals that 5 out of 7 irony examples (71%) utilised Literal Translation. This heavy reliance on a strategy often considered risky for pragmatic elements demonstrates that the

multimodal context provides the necessary cues for the target reader to infer ironic intent, making the "unit of translation" the text-image combination.

Hyperbole Translation

Hyperbole translation requires careful calibration of expressive intensity to suit target-culture norms. The analysis shows a balanced use of Modulation and Equivalence strategies to maintain the emphatic function while ensuring naturalness in Indonesian. These six examples illustrate how translators adjust hyperbolic expressions while considering visual reinforcement. The translation of six hyperbole instances showed a varied strategic approach, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis of Hyperbole Translation in Lookism

No.	ST (English)	TT (Indonesian)	Translation Strategy	Analysis & Multimodal Interaction
1	"Holy."	"Wah."	Equivalence	The English exclamation of surprise is replaced with a functionally equivalent Indonesian exclamation, preserving the pragmatic effect.
2	"I can't believe the day to wear this size has come."	"Hari di saatakubisapakai baju inidatang."	Modulation	The extreme exaggeration "can't believe" is modulated into a more neutral statement. The core surprise is maintained, but the hyperbolic intensity is reduced for naturalness.
3	"Many thoughts whirled around in my mind today."	"Banyak sekali yang kupikirkanseharianini."	Modulation	The metaphorical hyperbole "whirled around" is modulated into a quantitative emphasis "banyaksekali," a more natural Indonesian pattern for expressing mental overload.
4	"You're freaking tall."	"Tinggi banget."	Equivalence	The slang intensifier "freaking" is substituted with the common Indonesian intensifier "banget," maintaining the exaggerated, informal tone.
5	"He's pretty imposing!"	"Kekuatanintimidasinyaluarbiasa!"	Modulation	The understated exaggeration "pretty imposing" is reframed as a qualitative assessment, making the hyperbolic praise clearer and more natural in Indonesian.
6	"I'm really popular."	"Aku jadi popular loh."	Literal Translation	This straightforward exaggeration is translated literally. Its effectiveness relies on the visual context, which shows the character's actual, non-popular social situation.

Hyperbole translation was characterised by Modulation (3 instances, 50%) and Equivalence (2 instances, 33%), reflecting an adaptive approach to recalibrate expressive intensity for the target culture. The single instance of Literal Translation (17%) was viable because the visual narrative reinforced the hyperbolic nature of the claim.

Discussion

The analysis of 23 instances reveals that the translation strategy is not chosen arbitrarily but is systematically influenced by the type of figurative language and its interaction with the visual context. The most striking pattern emerged in the translation of irony, where Literal Translation was the dominant strategy (71% of cases). This finding is significant because it challenges conventional translation wisdom, which often deems literal translation inadequate for pragmatically complex devices like irony. In the multimodal context of Lookism, this strategy is not only viable but effective. The visual elements—such as a character's sarcastic facial expression or a situation that blatantly contradicts the statement—provide the necessary pragmatic cues for the target reader. This finding strongly supports Barthes' (1977) concept of anchorage, demonstrating that in Webtoon translation, the visual message anchors the linguistic one, constraining and enabling the translator's choices. The "unit of translation" effectively expands from the text alone to the text-image combination, a principle central to Audiovisual Translation (Díaz-Cintas &Remael, 2014). For metaphors, the strategic approach was dichotomous. Universal concepts (e.g., "dream,""cold reality") were successfully translated using Literal Translation (40% of cases), as their conceptual mapping crosses cultural boundaries. However, culture-specific or complex metaphors (60% of cases) required adaptive strategies such as Adaptation and Modulation. This aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, which emphasises the cultural grounding of metaphorical thought. A notable example was the adaptation of "He's a ten!" to "Keren banget!". Here, the translator prioritised cultural accessibility and naturalness over preserving the original cultural schema—a domesticating approach that ensured immediate comprehensibility for the Indonesian reader. The use of Borrowing in one instance ("ogre") further highlighted the role of visuals, as the meaning was disambiguated by the image of a large, intimidating character, showcasing multimodal compensation.

Hyperbole translation demonstrated the most varied strategic approach, dominated by Modulation (50%) and Equivalence (33%). This reflects the need to recalibrate expressive intensity and exaggeration norms between English and Indonesian communicative styles. For instance, the understated hyperbole "pretty imposing" was modulated into the more explicit and natural Indonesian assessment "Kekuatanintimidasinyaluarbiasa!". This shows the translator's sensitivity to pragmatic equivalence, ensuring the emphatic function of the hyperbole was preserved in a culturally resonant form. The visual context offered less direct support for hyperbole than for irony, which explains the greater reliance on linguistic adaptation strategies.

The findings of this study both align with and extend previous research on figurative language translation. Consistent with Adila and Hilman's (2024) analysis of novel translation, this study confirms that culture-specific metaphors frequently require adaptation rather than literal transfer. However, the present research reveals a novel dimension: the multimodal context enables greater use of Literal Translation for irony—a strategy that previous studies (Chakhachiro, 2022) identified as problematic in text-only translation contexts. This suggests that the presence of visual cues fundamentally alters the viability of certain translation strategies.

The study's findings on hyperbole translation corroborate Wicaksono's (2018) observation that figurative expressions often undergo semantic shift in Indonesian translation. However, the present research demonstrates that such shifts are not arbitrary but strategically calibrated to maintain pragmatic equivalence while adapting to target-culture norms of expressive intensity. The

predominance of Modulation and Equivalence for hyperbole (83% combined) reflects a conscious effort to balance faithfulness with naturalness—a tension that Rusyana and Nugroho (2022) identified as central to Webtoon translation.

Furthermore, the study extends Istiqomah et al.'s (2020) work on Webtoon translation strategies by providing a systematic categorisation of how specific figurative types correlate with particular strategies. While Istiqomah et al. focused broadly on translation strategies across text types, this research demonstrates that figurative type—not just textual genre—significantly influences strategy selection. This finding aligns with Burgers et al.'s (2018) assertion that metaphor, hyperbole, and irony function differently in discourse and therefore require distinct translational approaches. The findings also extend Alyfia and Ali's (2021) analysis of cultural terms in Webtoon translation by demonstrating that visual elements can compensate for cultural gaps, as seen in the borrowing of "ogre." This multimodal compensation mechanism has not been systematically explored in previous Webtoon translation research, highlighting the originality of the present study's theoretical contribution.

Importantly, the findings corroborate Syahrani's (2024) analysis of satirical expressions in Webtoon translation, which identified modulation as the dominant technique (38.8%) for rendering figurative language. The present study extends this by demonstrating that the specific figurative type—whether irony, metaphor, or hyperbole—systematically predicts the choice of strategy, with irony uniquely favouring Literal Translation due to multimodal support. This nuanced understanding of strategy selection based on figurative category has not been previously documented in Webtoon translation research.

The findings of this study validate and extend the integrated theoretical framework of Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy, Audiovisual Translation principles, and Barthes' (1977) concept of visual anchorage. The taxonomy proves effective for categorising translator decisions, but its application must be interpreted through a multimodal lens. In text-only translation, Molina and Albir's strategies operate primarily on the linguistic level; however, in Webtoon translation, the strategies function within a semiotic system where text and image jointly construct meaning. This finding challenges the traditional view of translation strategies as purely linguistic operations and suggests that the taxonomy should be expanded to account for multimodal constraints and affordances.

Barthes' (1977) concept of visual anchorage provides a powerful explanatory framework for understanding the strategic patterns observed in this study. In Lookism, the static image does not merely illustrate the text but actively anchors its interpretation. This anchorage function is particularly evident in irony translation, where the image provides the pragmatic cues necessary for understanding the gap between literal and intended meaning. The visual context effectively reduces the ambiguity that typically makes irony challenging to translate, enabling strategies that would be risky or ineffective in purely textual contexts. This finding extends Barthes' theory from its original application in static advertising images to the dynamic, narrative context of digital comics.

The study also contributes to Audiovisual Translation theory (Díaz-Cintas &Remael, 2014) by demonstrating that the principles developed for film and television subtitling—such as spatial constraints and semiotic coherence—apply to Webtoon translation, but with important modifications. Unlike audiovisual media, where text and image are temporally sequential, Webtoons present text and image simultaneously in a fixed spatial layout. This simultaneity affects how translators perceive and respond to multimodal cues, potentially enabling greater literalness in

certain contexts (as seen in irony translation) while requiring greater adaptation in others (as seen in hyperbole).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; see also Kövecses, 2020) further explains the dichotomous pattern observed in metaphor translation. Universal conceptual metaphors—those grounded in shared bodily experiences—are more likely to survive literal translation because their cognitive mappings are cross-culturally accessible. In contrast, culture-specific conceptual metaphors require adaptation because their grounding is particular to the source culture's experiential framework. The visual context does not typically provide the same pragmatic support for metaphor as it does for irony, which explains the greater use of adaptive strategies for metaphor translation. The integration of these theoretical frameworks offers a robust model for understanding Webtoon translation as a multimodal negotiation. The findings demonstrate that strategy selection is not solely determined by linguistic factors but is fundamentally shaped by the visual-textual relationship. This integration extends existing translation theory by moving beyond binary oppositions (e.g., literal vs. free, foreignisation vs. domestication) to consider how medium-specific constraints and affordances systematically influence translational choices.

CONCLUSION

This study systematically analyzed the translation of metaphor, hyperbole, and irony in the Indonesian Webtoon Lookism, revealing that strategy selection is systematically governed by figurative type and its multimodal interaction. Analysis of 23 figurative instances from Episodes 1-20 demonstrated that metaphors require a dichotomous approach—Literal Translation (40%) for universal concepts versus adaptive strategies (60%) for culture-specific ones; irony predominantly utilizes Literal Translation (71% of cases), challenging conventional assumptions about its inadequacy for pragmatic devices; and hyperbole requires Modulation (50%) and Equivalence (33%) to recalibrate expressive intensity for target-culture norms. The visual context in Webtoons provides essential pragmatic cues—particularly for irony—enabling strategies that would be risky in text-only translation, validating Barthes' (1977) concept of visual anchorage and extending Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy beyond purely linguistic analysis. The "unit of translation" effectively expands from text alone to the text-image combination, a principle central to Audiovisual Translation (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2014). This multimodal negotiation framework explains why irony can be translated literally when visual cues provide pragmatic support, why metaphors show a dichotomy between literal and adaptive strategies, and why hyperbole requires intensive linguistic adaptation.

This study makes three significant contributions to the field:

Theoretical Contribution: This research provides the first systematic empirical evidence that translation strategy selection for figurative language in Webtoons is fundamentally shaped by the visual-textual relationship. It extends Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy by demonstrating that in multimodal contexts, strategies operate within a semiotic system where text and image jointly construct meaning—not as purely linguistic operations.

Empirical Contribution: This study establishes a predictive model showing that figurative type (metaphor, hyperbole, irony) systematically determines strategy selection. Irony uniquely favors Literal Translation (71%) due to multimodal anchorage; hyperbole requires Modulation/Equivalence (83% combined); and metaphors show a dichotomous pattern (40% Literal, 60% adaptive) based on cultural universality.

Methodological Contribution: By integrating Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy with Audiovisual Translation principles (Díaz-Cintas &Remael, 2014) and Barthes' (1977) visual anchorage, this study offers a replicable analytical framework for multimodal translation research.

This study acknowledges several limitations: the scope is limited to a single Webtoon (Lookism) and 20 episodes, limiting generalizability; the identification of irony involves interpretative analysis; the analysis is confined to three figurative types; and the qualitative approach cannot establish broad statistical representativeness. Based on these limitations, future research should conduct comparative analyses across different Webtoon genres and a broader range of episodes, implement reader-response studies to empirically validate translation strategy effectiveness, expand the scope to include other figurative devices and sound effects (SFX), investigate cross-cultural differences in visual literacy and humor perception across multiple language pairs, and develop translator training programs that systematically account for the role of visual elements in translation decision-making. Ultimately, this research concludes that the visual component of a Webtoon is not a mere backdrop but an active, constraining force that anchors the translator's decisions, with clear practical implications: effective Webtoon localization requires primary analysis of the visual-textual relationship, as it directly dictates the feasibility and success of specific translation strategies.

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Credit Author Statement

Mona Artades Saulina Simbolon: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing. **Allen Josephine Irene Mailangkay**: Data Curation, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing. **Daniel Sebastian**: Supervision, Visualization, Writing – Review & Editing.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

DeepSeek was used solely to assist with language polishing, grammar refinement, and readability improvement of the manuscript. All AI-assisted outputs were subsequently reviewed, edited, and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final content.

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