

**NIHARIKA'S SUICIDE LETTER ANALYSIS USING FORENSIC
STYLISTICS**

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ABSTRACT

Suicide letter was one of the source when doing analysis of forensic stylistics. This research was using suicide letter written by Niharika for her parents to express her emotions and reasoning as the researchers source to reveal the linguistics features, purpose and interpretation of the suicide letter by using descriptive qualitative as the research method while applied Prokofyeva's theories of linguistics features and letter's interpretation. The suicide letter could be found in online website India Today News. This research aims to analyze forensic stylistic approach from suicide letter written by Niharika by reveal it linguistics features, purpose and interpretation of the letter. Reseachers found clear reasoning, expressing emotion, and grammatical error and purpose of the letter as the gap from the previous study. The finding of this research might help the future research regarding of forensic stylistics analysis of suicide letter.

Keywords: *Stylistics, Forensics Stylistics, Suicide Letter, Linguistics Features.*

INTRODUCTION

Language possesses a remarkable capacity to convey not only ideas and emotions but also intricate nuances of thought. Beyond mere communication, it acts as a mirror reflecting our individuality, societal norms, and cultural backgrounds. Stylistics, a field within linguistics, delves into the intricate dynamics between language and significance. It examines how linguistic selections can shape, convey, and enrich meaning, shedding light on how language intricately intertwines with human expression and perception. Through stylistic analysis, we uncover the depth of meaning embedded within language choices, revealing the profound impact they have on communication and understanding.

Stylistics, a branch of applied linguistics, is concerned with analyzing the styles present within textual contexts. Its focus lies in interpreting the content of texts, aiming to understand the influence of language on literary effects. This approach emphasizes the significance of language in textual interpretation, as indicated by Abdulmughini (414). Stylistics, as described by Abrams (165-167), is the study of language usage and style within literary compositions.

Suicide, the deliberate act of ending one's own life, is not inherently criminal, yet laws often penalize actions such as aiding or counseling someone in committing suicide. Scholars from various disciplines, including psychiatry, philosophy, sociology, and ethics, have sought to understand the motivations behind this act of self-destruction. Carven (1959:533), outlines several key factors contributing to suicide, including frustration leading to inwardly directed hostility, loss of love, feelings of rejection or guilt, and a desire for vengeance or escape from physical pain.

In contrast to homicide, where emotions are directed outwardly toward another person, suicide involves directing emotions against oneself. Suicide notes, often left behind by those who take their own lives, serve as crucial artifacts offering insight into the psychological states and motivations of the deceased. These notes provide an unsolicited account of the individual's thoughts and emotions regarding their intended action, shedding light on the factors they believed led to their decision.

Although suicide notes vary widely in form, content, and style, they share certain common characteristics. Osgood and Walker (1959), have identified structural features common to suicide notes, noting that they often consist of shorter, more fragmented sentences. This structural simplicity may stem from the heightened emotional state in which suicides are typically committed, where only the most salient aspects of the message are conveyed (cited in Jones & Bennell, 2007:220).

This research aims to analyze a suicide note from the Rajasthan's Kota, India student suicide case that can be found in India Today news article posted on Jan 29, 2024. The victim, who was preparing for JEE Mains (The Joint Entrance Examination is an engineering entrance assessment conducted for admission to various engineering colleges in India), hanged herself in the room of her house in the Shiksha Nagri, area of Kota. Her examination was scheduled to be held on January 31. In a suicide note recovered by the police, Niharika called herself "the worst daughter" and said it was "her last option". In the letter she wrote "Mummy and Papa, I can't do JEE. So, I am committing suicide. I am a loser. I am the reason. I am the worst daughter. Sorry, Mummy and Papa. This is the last option," the letter read. Kota, known for its coaching institutes for engineering and medical entrance examinations, saw 29 student suicides in 2023. Authorities are urgently trying to tackle the mental health issues faced by students in the high-pressure academic environment of coaching centres.

By studying the linguistic features used in suicide notes, this article aims to explore the complex issues of forensic stylistics. It seeks to gain insights into the clear reasoning, victim's emotions, text structure and the purpose of the letter. The goal of this analysis is to

increase awareness of the area of forensic stylistics, which has to do with using language analysis in legal situations like suicide investigations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term forensic linguistics first appeared in 1968 when Jan Svartvik, a Swedish professor of linguistics. Forensic stylistics is frequently presented simply in terms of stylistic analysis (Crystal 1987:69), and the subject is quickly developing including a variety of different forms of specialized language analyses that serve as the foundation for expert opinion testifying in civil and criminal actions. This interdisciplinary field applies linguistic knowledge to several aspects of the forensic setting, including law, language, criminal investigation, trial proceedings, and judicial procedures. Olsson (2008) posits, as cited in Umiyati (2020), that forensic linguistics pertains to the field of investigative linguistics.

In this research, the author wants to examine the type of writing called "Suicide Note" and that this idea is also called "Suicide Letter". In forensic linguistics, suicide is one of the things that is quite interesting to analyze, where the idea of suicide is made the center of attention for scholars in the field of linguistics. With that, several attempts were made to examine the suicide note. Individuals who commit suicide or who have suicidal thoughts often leave notes for loved ones before taking their own lives (Shapero, 2011).

The messages left by victims may be in the form of written or otherwise recorded forms, such as notes, letters, notebooks, diaries, or transcribed audio cassettes. These types of recorded forms may also include audio tapes. According to Rany et al.'s (2015) research, between 25 and 30 percent of the suicide notes that were left behind as pieces of evidence were written down.

According to Olsson (2004), the majority of suicide notes contain a statement that refers to the act of committing suicide by oneself. The individual who writes a note may be making an effort to communicate feelings that the person did not have the opportunity to express while they were still living.

Banikalef (2021) stated that how speakers of society carry out various speech functions by utilizing particular linguistic expressions is governed by the linguistic and social norms of that society. Speakers employ several strategies to convey the meanings of the messages they aim to convey (Hassouneh and Zibin. 2021)

Accordingly, in suicide notes, Chaski (2012) proposes six elements of texts that can be found in them, which are apology, love, anger, complaint, business, and trauma. Based on the work of Prokofyeva (2013), she suggests that there are five characteristic features of genuine suicide notes, namely clear reasoning, expressing emotions, text structure, grammar, and punctuation.

Moreover, she outlined the purpose of the original suicide note as perhaps, but not limited to, (1) a desire to give a reason for their suicide. (2) to express the last wish of the author/victim, or (3) to say their final farewell to the addressees of the note.

Previous research also carried out several topics, namely the study of language in suicide notes. Prokofyeva (2013) explains that there are differences and similarities found in the suicide notes and posts, then concludes. This makes people who read the letter believe that someone wrote the letter before she committed suicide. Previous studies analyzed suicide records consisting of: a large number of completed suicide cases. This research analyzes the language characteristics contained in the suicide note left by an 18 years old boy in the city of Rajasthan on Monday. The aim is to be able to contribute to this study on the relationship between suicide notes and forensic stylistics.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research method. According to Sugiyono (2019, p. 18) qualitative research methods are research methods based on postpositivism philosophy which are used to examine objects in natural conditions (real conditions, not set or in experimental conditions) where the researcher is the key instrument.

According to Nazir (2014, p. 43) that the descriptive research method is a method of researching the status of a group of people, an object, a condition, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present with the aim of creating systematic descriptions, images or paintings, factual and accurate regarding the facts, properties and relationships between the phenomena being investigated.

The aim of this research is to analyze the forensic stylistics contained in the victim's suicide note by showing the characteristics and interpreting the message conveyed by the victim in the note. The steps taken by researchers in conducting research:

1. The data source is taken from India Today News documentation of the victim's suicide note.
2. Data were analyzed using Prokofyeva's (2013) theory which explains the linguistic characteristics contained in the suicide note, emotional expression, text structure, grammar and punctuation.
3. Researchers make conclusions based on the results of the data found and analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Clear reasoning

A clear reasoning refers to the connection between the reason for suicide and the message conveyed in the suicide note. Prokofyeva (2013) categorized clear reasoning into three categories, namely illness, violation, and self-blame. She also explained that obvious reasoning is found because it is represented by the answer to the question "Why? And the subordinate conjunction 'because' will reflect the reason. Based on Niharika's suicide note, this is categorized as despair and disappointment with herself, which can be seen in the sentence 'I am loser. I am worst daughter. Sorry, Mummy and Papa'. Despair occurs when a person feels an emotional feeling of hopelessness. Niharika, as the writer and the victim, may feel guilty that her efforts were not what her parents expected. Meanwhile, she says suicide is her last option in overcoming the problem. The clause 'This is last option' explains that she had no other solution and chose to end her life.

2. Expressing Emotions

Analyzing the emotions expressed by the author of the suicide note within the note itself is another way to determine whether the note is authentic or not. Suicide notes convey several emotions, including fear for living, relief, despair, and absence of doubt (Prokofyeva, 2013). Doubtlessness is one of the emotions shown in these suicide notes. Heidegger, in Fata et al. (2021), said that he once met a person who felt secure in the face of death; the person faced death with peace of mind rather than fear. The authenticity of a suicide note can be seen from the clear display of intense emotion conveyed by the author. For example, 'I can't do JEE. So, I suicide'. This example shows the absence of fear from the writer when she decided to end his life because she could not do what his parents wanted. The flat writing shows that she seemed to be on the verge of disappointment so she was afraid that her parents would be disappointed in her. Regarding suicide notes, the dominant emotion is a sense of belonging that leads to a "violation" or an existence that has become "tiresome" (Prokofyeva, 2013). This sentiment is expressed in the sentence 'Sorry, Mummy and Papa. This is last option' shows that the victim implies that she already disappointed her parents.

Moreover, it is evident that victims accept responsibility for their decision to end their own lives (Prokofeva, 2013). An expression of regret can be found in the note, the author blames herself for what happened, and she apologizes to her parents for failing to do jee.

Text Structure

Suicide records, like any other written material, have patterns or structures comparable to other suicide records. (Prokofyeva, 2013) stated that normally, people think about their desire to commit suicide for a long time before making a final decision. The final decision, so that when they chose to do it, they had already determined the necessary words to be written in the notes. According to Sudjana and Fitri (2013), the victims usually make a suicide record of their suicide records for a variety of reasons. The address of the note is usually the first line of the suicide note. In the suicide record written by Niharika, the victim referred the suicidal record to his father and mother explicitly at the beginning of the letter.

'Mummy and Papa, I can't do JEE. So, I suicide.' The word 'mummy and papa' was the first word written in the suicide record, so that the person who reads it can understand that the record is directed at his parents. The 'I can't do JEE' clause was presented as the reason for suicide which was the introduction to the messages in the note.

The concluding structure of the record includes the last request of the victim, Niharika's last request and the last apology in the record, also followed by a closing statement indicating his will for a constant final decision.

From the closing statement 'This is last option' it can be seen that Niharika's last request is that she stresses her final decision and in the record implies that she does not return from the decision she made.

1. Grammar

There are some grammatical characteristics in the suicide record. According to Galasinki (2017), suicide records are often more directed to the past, which attracts the victim to write about the situation from now to past. Usually, not a lot of statements indicate the situation from now to the future. To conclude, the use of past tense is more common in suicide records than any other tense. (Prokofyeva, 2013). Therefore, various forms of tension are found in the data.

'Mummy and Papa, I can't do JEE' (Present Participle) So, I suicide. I am loser. I worst daughter' (Present Participle) 'Sorry, Mummy and Papa. This is last option' (Present Participle)

However, because there are grammatical errors written by the author, making the sentence present tenses, if we correct that sentence will tend to be past tenses.

2. Punctuation

The most important aspect in checking suicide records is punctuation. According to Schoene and Dethlef (2016), a person's style of conversation is influenced by background, education, social status, and family situation. Punctuation can be used to convey emotions or reveal the victim's condition. Prokofyeva (2013) gives the following examples of common punctuation patterns seen in suicide records:

- “--” (double-dash) is a symbol that can be used as a substitute for a compass, dash, or period.
- “...” (three or more periods after a sentence or phrase) is the common way to convey the impression of an open or continuous statement. This indication increases the likelihood that what is said is not the end.
- “!!!” (three, occasionally one, exclamation marks): they are used to emphasize a word or phrase's significance.

However, researchers couldn't find punctuation patterns in the letter.

Purpose of the letter

The purpose of the letter was for the victim family and to let them know the reason why she did the suicide. It shows in:

‘I can’t do JEE’ Was the reason why she suicides and said she is the worst daughter by doing so.

‘mummy, papa’ was the victim parents.

So, the purpose of the suicide letter was specifically for victim’s parents and gave up on JEE was victim reason for doing the suicide action. Victim write this letter to let her parents know that suicide was the last option and saying sorry because she couldn’t be a good daughter. This letter didn’t contain victim’s last wishes.

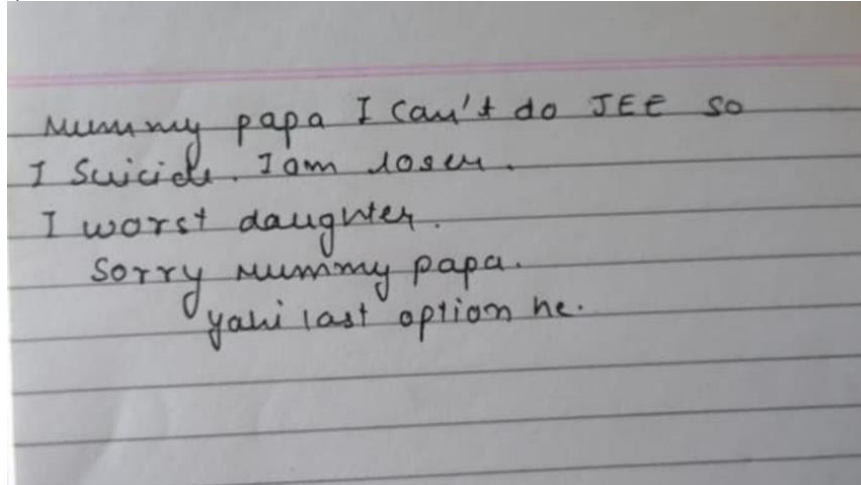
CONCLUSION

This paper aims to reveal the clear reasoning behind the letter, victim’s emotions, text structures, and purpose of the letter. In the letter interpretation, researchers found that victim write a clear reasoning and express her emotion on the letter and the letter aims. The reason was because she couldn’t do something, her emotion was sad and no choice but suicide. In linguistics features researchers found that are several grammatical error for using present tense instead of past tense which typically for suicide letter. But researchers didn’t find punctuation patterns in the letter. Also, the letter aims was for her parents. The letter was purely written by Niharika for her parents because the letter didn’t use formal style but casual style with paragraph gap for each and also using a simple sentence. This letter was full of the victim’s feeling emotionally and physically and was a good source for forensic stylistic analysis.

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A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in black ink. The text is written in a cursive, somewhat slanted style. The paper has horizontal lines and a pink margin line at the top. The handwriting is as follows:

Mummy papa I can't do JEE so
I suicide. I am loser.
I worst daughter.
Sorry mummy papa.
yahi last option he.