Forensic Stylistic Analysis in A Pragmatic Approach to an Indian Teenage Girl's Suicide Note

Karina Dea Amalia[1], Amelia Amanda Putri[2], ZarahKhodijah Yasmin[3], Hanny Shah RahmaReswara Lubi[4], Rahmadsyah Rangkuti[5]

[1]Universitas Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
karinadheaamalia@gmail.com
[2]Universitas Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
ameliaamanda031@gmail.com
[3]Universitas Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
zahrayasmin100803@gmail.com
[4]Universitas Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
hannyshah795@gmail.com rangkuti@usu.ac.id
[5]Universitas Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
melakrismawati99@gmail.com

Abstract

The background of this research stems from the need for an in-depth understanding of suicide notes, where language is used as evidence in a legal context. Utilization of a forensic stylistics analysis technique is crucial in the assessment of written texts in criminal investigations, with the objective of revealing indications of deception, narrative coherence, and implicit connotations within the text. This research aims to uncover the hidden meanings contained in the language used in suicide note writing. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research methodology to examine suicide notes obtained from the India Today news website using a Google search. The method of data collection entails obtaining, reading, comprehending, and analyzing the suicide notes as major sources of evidence. The results of this study reveal the importance of understanding suicide communication from a pragmatic point of view and that social and psychological elements should be considered in dealing with suffering. The contributions of this study are that it can be proven that language as evidence can have a major influence on the investigation process; it can show the audience that the words are not just words but words that have the meaning implied in the word.

Keywords: forensic stylistics, Indian, linguistics pragmatics, suicide note

1. INTRODUCTION

Forensics, as defined by KBBI, is an area of medical science where surgical techniques are utilized to identify the remains of individuals with connections to the judiciary and justice system, in the context

of judicial situations. Stylistics is the study of how language is used and how it impacts the reader (Leech, 1996). He makes it clear that stylistic isn't just about how beautiful language is; it's also about how it can be used for a certain reason.

Instances of suicide are frequent, with a significant number of those who take their own lives doing so by means of a written document. Therefore, suicide records frequently play a crucial role in police investigations and the judicial proceedings surrounding suicide cases. They can offer valuable insights into an individual's psychological condition, their urges, and the determinants that impact their choice to terminate their existence. Therefore, the utilization of forensic stylistic analysis is vital for evaluating written texts in criminal investigations. It involves utilizing linguistic techniques to discern the distinctive attributes of individual writing styles, which might offer supplementary insights to the judiciary and investigators.

According to India Today, on January 29, 2024, in Kota, Rajasthan, a tragic tale of an eighteen-year-old girl who decided to take her own life shortly before her JEE exam broke (Gurjar, 2024). Only days before the much-anticipated test, she gave in to the heavy constraints of scholastic expectations. Writing a heartbreaking suicide letter to her parents, she described her extreme feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness and argued that she had the fortitude necessary to face the demands of the upcoming test. Referring to herself as "the worst daughter," her moving words revealed the extent of her mental suffering. Full of self-loathing and regret, the letter left her parents very saddened, struggling to fill the deep hole left by their child's premature death.

Forensic linguistics, placed at the intersection of language research and legal inquiry, offers significant insights into the dynamics of communication in legal contexts. In order to evaluate language in legal circumstances, this interdisciplinary field draws on concepts from psychology, linguistics, and law. In forensic linguistics, pragmatic analysis is a crucial aspect that centers on the way language is employed in context to transmit meaning that goes beyond literal interpretation. Understanding the author's underlying goals and feelings is crucial when dealing with delicate topics like suicide notes; hence, this approach is especially pertinent in these cases. Pragmatic analysis is a tool used to help interpret the complicated language used in forensic situations by looking at speech acts, linguistic signals, and implicit meanings.

Suicide rates are on the rise, particularly among young people, which makes them a serious public health problem and emphasizes the need for efficient methods to treat underlying mental health conditions. Suicide notes, which are frequently the last words spoken by people who are thinking about or have committed suicide, are important documents that help researchers comprehend the nuanced reasons

and mental states that preceded these tragic events. These notes reveal important details about the author's mental state, including their inner turmoil, problems, and suicide motivations. Considering the seriousness of these notes, it is essential to use forensic stylistic analysis methods in order to extract the language details and psychological undertones that are hidden within suicide notes.

The number of student suicides in Kota, Rajasthan, which is known for its demanding coaching institutes and high-stress academic atmosphere, has caused serious concern. Students, especially those getting ready for competitive tests like the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), face a difficult environment due to the rigorous academic rivalry, societal expectations, and personal demands. Given this context, it becomes critical to comprehend the linguistic elements of the suicide notes left by teens in Kota. This study attempts to shed light on the psychological pain and difficulties that young people in this scholastic pressure cooker suffer by analyzing the language employed in this note.

This depressing incident highlights the dark underbelly of the prevailing culture of ruthless rivalry and high performance standards in educational districts like Kota, which are known for their strict coaching institutes. It is a moving example of the damaging effects that academic pressures have on developing minds and emphasizes the urgent need for strong mental health support systems in these kinds of learning environments. Communities are still dealing with the devastating fallout from this tragic loss, but there is a clear need for coordinated efforts to prioritize students' overall health in order to provide them with the necessary support systems and coping mechanisms to match the complex challenges they face. In order to prevent similar catastrophes in future eras, proactive mitigation techniques can only be successfully implemented through diligent efforts to address the underlying causes of mental health crises.

Stylistic analysis can aid in evaluating the veracity of suicide records by identifying indications of falsehoods, coherence or lack thereof in the narrative, conventional or atypical language usage, and other pertinent features. While suicide records might offer valuable insights, they present challenges when used as evidence in legal procedures. There are three primary domains of study in forensic linguistics: Language as a Legal Product, Language in Court Processes, and Language as of Evidence (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010). However, this study only concentrates on examining language as of evidence. The definition itself is connected to the act of writing and communication, which necessitates the application of linguistic theories to resolve it. These theories encompass phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and discourse.

This study also emphasizes pragmatics, aiming to uncover implicit meanings in the evidence, namely in the written notes left by the owner. Pragmatics is the examination of the relationship between

meaning and context, as well as how speakers convey that meaning and listeners understand it (Levinson, 1983).

The novelty in this research is to examine the pragmatics in forensic stylistics in the case of teenage suicide in India which leaves evidence in the form of suicide paper, from that evidence the language is analyzed using pragmatics to find its meaning.

In this research of suicide notes: forensic linguistic profiling analysis (Surahman, 2022). in his research used a quantitative cumulative sum calculation strategy for elements: SL, Pron, Prep, Ver, Adj, Adv, Conj, CSS-SL, CSS-Pron, CSS-Prep, CSS-Ver, CSS-Adj, CSS-Adv, & CSS-Conj, the data used is two suicide notes, and then the results from his research show the comparison of both suicide notes. In the research that entitled 'Identifying Suicide Notes Using Forensic Linguistics and Machine Learning' (Lee & Joh, 2019), This study demonstrates how to use forensic linguistics analysis techniques to pinpoint the distinctive qualities of suicide notes and how to apply that understanding to machine learning research.

Six documents, including Virginia Woolf's literary works and suicide notes, were assembled into a corpus for this reason. Next, the LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) program was used to examine each text. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to reduce the dimensionality of the analysis results due to their complexity. (Fitrah et al., 2023) entitled 'Crime Investigation in the Mahabharata Novel by Nyoman S. Pendit (Forensic Linguistic Study)' in their research used descriptive qualitative to find ways and forms of crime through a forensic linguistic approach, the data used is novel, and the researcher used five theories namely: Fraser's (1998), Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Löbner's (2013) and Maslow's (2017). Forensic Linguistic Analysis of South Korean Artist Jang Ja–Yeon Suicide Letter (Safitri & Suhardi, 2023).

Jang Ja-yeon's suicide note is the main subject of the researcher's attention. A descriptive and qualitative technique is used in this investigation. The process of observation is employed as the data collection method. documenting it, examining it with the same approach as the sorting procedure, and finally providing a description. Jang Ja-yeon's suicide note serves as the study's source of data. The study's findings demonstrate that the letters have nothing to do with Jang Ja Yeon's actual handwriting. Grammatical mistakes are a common occurrence in the letters Jun writes to herself.

Linguistic Meaning of Xi'an Student Suicide Letters, used a qualitative approach and the research data is suicide letters (Khoirunnisa & Delijar, 2023). In their research found that suicide perpetrators used words referring to traumatic situations during sexual abuse and continued to commit suicide as a way to overcome the trauma they experienced. In their research used a theory according to Chaer, If the object of investigation is the language lexicon, then the meaning of the semantic type is called lexical semantics.

This research shows some similarities with previous studies that share a focus on suicide notes while one previous study used a novel as its research data. The theory used in the previous study is different from the theory in this study which is where the previous study used the theory: Fraser's (1998), Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Löbner's (2013) and Maslow's (2017), moelong 2017, chaeer and two other studies use different theories. The research uses forensic theory according to (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010) and the study uses pragmatic theory according to (Levinson, 1983).

This research aims to uncover the hidden meanings contained in the language used in suicide note writing. This will be done using pragmatic analysis, which focuses on how meaning is communicated and interpreted in a particular context. The research's contribution is rooted in an in-depth understanding of suicidal communication achieved through the pragmatic study of suicide note.

The study highlights the significance of contextual elements, such as social stress and psychological states, in understanding suicide note. It emphasizes the crucial role of empathy and assistance in addressing those going through mental crises. The practical consequences of this include providing training for mental health professionals and emphasizing the need for practical insights in order to enhance the effectiveness and empathy of interventions for mental health support.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research methodology to examine suicide notes obtained from the India Today news website using a Google search. The method of data collection entails obtaining, reading, comprehending, and analyzing the suicide notes as major sources of evidence. The criteria for picking suicide notes may encompass factors such as their relevance to the study's focus or other preset qualities. The examination of the data is carried out in a practical manner, using the language found in suicide notes as proof. We justify the use of Google and IndiaToday as data sources due to their ease of access and abundance of pertinent content. The selection of language as the principal type of evidence is based on its appropriateness for capturing the nuances and emotions conveyed in suicide notes. This comprehensive method ensures transparency and enables other researchers to effectively develop this research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This part elaborates the research findings and discussion. The research findings may contain tables, graphs, and/or diagrams. The discussion gives information on data analysis, logic interpretation on the findings, and the relation of the findings to relevant theories. Further research can be inserted in this part. This part also enables the writer to use sub-headings. Sample table and picture are displayed in the following.

Forensic stylistic analysis with a focus on pragmatic theory offers a deeper understanding of the communication dynamics at play in suicide notes. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, examines how language is used in context to convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. In the case of suicide notes, pragmatic principles illuminate the subtle nuances of communication, highlighting the intentions of the writer and the interpretation of the recipient.

As (Levinson, 1983) states, pragmatics is concerned with examining the relationship between meaning and context, and how speakers convey that meaning and listeners understand it. Pragmatic analysis allows for an exploration of what is embedded in suicide notes that serve as a direct expression of the writer's emotional state and their ultimate decision.

Pragmatic analysis of suicide notes offers valuable insight into the complex communicative dynamics at play in the text. By uncovering the meanings implicit in the evidence, we can reveal the layers of meaning embedded in the author's final words and highlight their emotional state. furthermore through a pragmatic lens, suicide notes emerge not only as written documents but also as poignant reflections of human emotion, empathy, and the search for understanding in the face of profound despair.
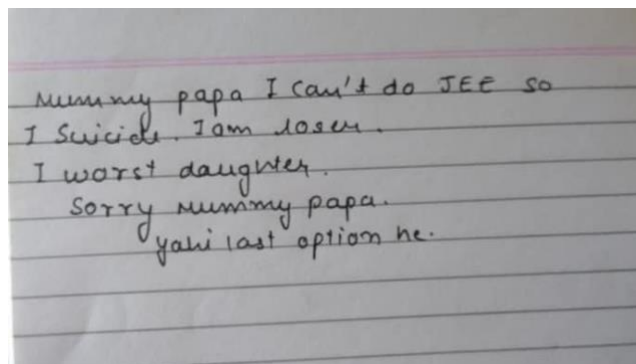

Figure 1 Suicide notes of Indian Teenage Girl.

3.1.1 Multifaceted Meaning and Context

The sub-heading refers to the article's topic. If a sub sub-heading is needed, the numbering is proceeded as follows:

The suicide note is a powerful expression of the author's internal distress, encompassing an intricate interaction of feelings, thoughts, and outside factors. The essence of the note reveals a deep feeling of extreme sadness and lack of hope, as indicated by the clear statement of the intention to take one's own life, "I suicide" and the self-critical sentiment, "I am a loser". Nevertheless, the significance of these words goes beyond their direct understanding, intricately connected to the wider framework in which they are placed. The author's use of terms like "Mummy and Papa" provides valuable information about their interpersonal ties, while the mention of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) suggests the significant external pressures and expectations that the author is facing. Therefore, the suicide note is a complex object that represents not only the personal challenges faced by the author, but also the influences of society and family that have shaped their experiences.

3.1.2 Nuanced Conveyance of Meaning

The suicide note exhibits a sophisticated use of language, employing several linguistic tactics to effectively portray the author's aims and emotions. Direct speaking acts, such as explicitly declaring one's intention to commit suicide, leave no space for ambiguity and serve as clear affirmations of the author's intent. Simultaneously, the note contains implicit statements of regret and self-reflection, seen in phrases such as "I worst daughter" and "Sorry mummy papa" The author's expressions reflect their intense emotional suffering, exposing a strong feeling of remorse and humiliation that underlies their choice to take their own life. Therefore, by skillfully combining direct and indirect communication, the suicide note successfully portrays the intricate nature of the author's mental state, encouraging readers to explore the profound depths of their suffering.

3.1.3 Interpretation and Understanding

The analysis of the suicide note depends significantly on the reader's capacity to comprehend and decipher the implied connotations and emotional subtleties hidden within the text. The author's parents, as the recipients of the note, have the responsibility of interpreting the hidden signals and fully understanding the importance of their child's words. References to familial relationships and sentiments of regret are important contextual indicators that offer valuable insights into the author's emotional state and motives. Moreover, the structure and linguistic selections of the note function to direct the reader's understanding, indicating the writer's objectives and evoking particular emotional reactions. Hence, the

analysis of the suicide note is a profoundly subjective undertaking, influenced by the reader's personal encounters, viewpoints, and emotional responses.

3.1.4 The relationship between Speaker and Listener

The suicide note relies heavily on the dynamic relationship between the author (the speaker) and their parents (the listeners). The author aims to create a deep emotional bond with the intended audience by employing language strategically, evoking empathy, comprehension, and validation for their hardships. Politeness methods, such as expressing guilt and offering apologies like "Sorry, mummy papa", are used to lessen the possible impact of the author's words and make their ultimate judgment less harsh. Simultaneously, the note's explicit and unequivocal wording demonstrates the author's intention for their message to be comprehended and recognized without any hesitation. A nuanced interplay of vulnerability and resilience marks the communication process in the suicide note, as the writer carefully manages the intricacies of expressing their deepest thoughts and emotions to their loved ones.

3.2 DISCUSSION

The findings of this pragmatic analysis offer a profound insight into the subtle dynamics of suicidal communication, providing light on the complexity involved in transmitting and evaluating meaning within the context of a suicide note. By unraveling the complex layers of language, context, and emotion inherent within the text, we acquire a deeper knowledge of the author's inner world, interpersonal interactions, and societal influences. One of the important outcomes of this study is an understanding of the environmental elements driving suicidal communication. By identifying the broader social, familial, and psychological environment in which suicidal thoughts occur, mental health providers can develop more customized and effective therapies geared toward addressing the underlying causes of distress. Understanding the intricate interaction of individual and societal factors contributing to suicidal ideation is vital for establishing comprehensive methods for suicide prevention and support.

Furthermore, the data underlines the need for empathy, compassion, and understanding in responding to those in distress. By appreciating the depth of emotion and complexity of communication in suicide notes, support networks can better fulfill the needs of persons in distress, offering validation, assistance, and a path towards healing and recovery. Providing a secure space for individuals to share their thoughts and emotions openly can build a deeper connection and foster a sense of understanding and acceptance.

Continuing from the last sentence, using pragmatic analysis to help prevent suicide can also make interventions more successful by making them more relevant to the unique linguistic and contextual cues

found in suicidal communication. This personalized method considers that everyone's experience is different, but it also looks for patterns and themes that show up in many cases. Mental health workers and support networks can better find the balance between respecting a person's autonomy and making sure they are safe if they understand the subtleties of suicidal communication. Understanding the subtle clues that are hidden in language can help you spot people who are at risk and take the right steps to help them, whether that's through direct conversation, crisis intervention, or referring them to specialized services.

The information gained from pragmatic analysis can also be used to create specific training programs that teach parents, teachers, and community members how to spot and respond to signs of suicidal communication. Providing people with the right information and tools can help us build a more caring and alert support system that can step in quickly and effectively. Adding pragmatic analysis to attempts to stop suicide can also help make talking about mental health and suicide less of a taboo subject. By emphasizing that suicidal thoughts and actions are communicative, we stress that getting help is a normal and acceptable reaction to stress and not a sign of weakness or failure. This change in attitude can make people more likely to ask for help without worrying about being judged or embarrassed, which can lower the barriers to getting care.

Overall, this study highlights the role of pragmatics in uncovering the subtle dynamics of suicidal communication. By investigating the connection between language, context, and meaning, researchers get significant insights into the thoughts, emotions, and motives of those contemplating self-harm, opening the way for more nuanced and successful suicide prevention efforts and support interventions. Through a deeper knowledge of the nuances of suicidal communication, the researchers and the readers may strive towards establishing a more compassionate and supportive society, where individuals feel valued, understood, and empowered to seek help when required.

4. CONCLUSION

As a result, this pragmatic examination of a suicide note provides a valuable understanding of the intricate characteristics of suicidal communication. The study enhances the comprehension of the author's emotions and motives by analyzing language, context, and meaning. The results underscore the need to take into consideration wider social and psychological elements when managing suffering. Empathy and understanding are essential for providing help to people experiencing a crisis.

Potential future studies may delve into the examination of culture and gender disparities in the realm of suicide communication. Practical implications involve the instruction of mental health workers to accurately identify and promptly address indicators of psychological distress. This study emphasizes the importance of pragmatics in comprehending and dealing with suicide thoughts, leading to more compassionate and efficient interventions in mental health assistance.

REFERENCES

Anindita, W. K. (2022). Forensic Analysis in The Will of The Suicidal Bomber. In NATIONAL SEMINAR OF PBI (English Language Education) (pp. 369-376).

Coulthard, M., & Johnson, A. (2010). The Routledge Handbook of Forensic Linguistics (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203855607.

Fitrah, Y., Putra, Y. M., Putri, A. K., & Fitriah, S. (2023, December). Crime Investigation in the Mahabharata novel by nyoman S. Pendit (Forensic linguistic study). In Proceeding International Conference on Malay Identity (Vol. 4, pp. 8-20).

Gurjar, C. (2024, January 24). Mummy, Papa, I can't do JEE': Teen dies by suicide in Kota, second this year. Indian Today. Retrieved from https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/18-year-old-jee-aspirant-dies-by-suicide-in-kota-second-this-year-2494831-2024-01-29.

Herman, Y. A., Aivira, S., Jannah, M., Khotimah, K., Selian, R. A. D., & Rangkuti, R. (2023). Linguistic features in suicide note of Alamgir Khan Tareen: Forensic stylistic analysis. Jurnal Basataka (JBT), 6(2), 337-343.

Jasim, H. A., & Jaafar, E. A. (2022). Studies on linguistic stylistic analysis of suicide notes and suicidal thoughts posts. International Journal of Research in Social Sciences & Humanities, 12(1), 100-124.

Jazilah, N. I. (2016). Forensic linguists should be hired in the legal system for the sake of their assistance in investigating into criminal cases. In Seminar Tahunan Linguistik 2016.

Khoirunnisa, H., & Delijar, R. (2023, June). Forensic Linguistics Autopsy: Linguistic Meaning of Xi'an Student Suicide Letters. In Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Language, Literature, Education, and Culture, ICOLLEC 2022, 11–12 November 2022, Malang, Indonesia.

Leech, G. N. (1966). Linguistics and stylistics. London: Longman.

Levinson, Stephen C. (1983). Pragmatics. Cambridge University Press.

Malini, N., & Tan, V. (2016). Forensic linguistics analysis of Virginia Woolf's suicide notes. International Journal of Education, 9(1), 53-58.

Maulida, D. E., Andira, M. A., Onggatta, R., Balqis, S., Hamzah, S. F., & Rangkuti, R. (2024). Forensic Stylistic Analysis of UNNES Student's Suicide Note. International Journal of Research on English Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 4(2), 26-33.

Nawaz, T., & Hussain, I. (2021). A forensic linguistic analysis of language of news crime reports in Pakistan. Harf-o-Sukhan, 5(4), 585-595.

Prof. Dr. Subyantoro M. Hum. (2022). Linguistik Forensik: Sebuah Pengantar. CV Farishma Indonesia.

Safitri, R. (2023). Forensic Linguistic Analysis of South Korean Artist Jang Ja–Yeon Suicide Letter. Britain International of Linguistics Arts and Education (BIoLAE) Journal, 5(2), 89-98.

Siddiqui, A. (2018). The principle features of English Pragmatics in applied linguistics. Advances in language and literary studies, 9(2), 77-80.

Sitepu, E. F. B., Manao, K. C., Sitompul, N. O. B., Situmeang, A. L., Gaol, S. L., Surbakti, I. R. U., & Ranggkuti, R. (2023). A Stylistic Forensic Analysis of Mahira's Suicade Notes. Journal on Education, 6(1), 10580-10585.

Surahman, A. (2022). Suicide Notes: Forensic Linguistic Profiling Analysis. IJFL (International Journal of Forensic Linguistic), 3(2), 105-108.

Widad, F., & Zawawi, M. (2023). Crime Investigation in the Novel "And Then Were None" By Agatha Christie (Forensic Linguistic Studies). IJFL (International Journal of Forensic Linguistic), 4(1), 147-154.

Yong-hun Lee, & Gihyun joh. (2019). Identifying suicide notes using forensic linguistics and machine learning. The Linguistic Association of Korean Journal, 27(2), 171-191.

[This page intentionally left blank.]