

## Analysis of a Father's Suicide Note: Forensic Stylistics

Rachel Pratiwi Siahaan<sup>1</sup>, Chintami Angelica Bacas<sup>2</sup>, Olga Adelia Daulay<sup>3</sup>,  
Muhammad Fikri<sup>4</sup>, Rahmadsyah Rangkuti<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Universitas Sumatera Utara

e-mail: [rachelsiahaan054@gmail.com](mailto:rachelsiahaan054@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [chintamiangelica10@gmail.com](mailto:chintamiangelica10@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>,  
[olgaadeliadaulay@gmail.com](mailto:olgaadeliadaulay@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>, [fikrimobarak15@gmail.com](mailto:fikrimobarak15@gmail.com)<sup>4</sup>, [rangkuti@usu.ac.id](mailto:rangkuti@usu.ac.id)<sup>5</sup>

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis catatan bunuh diri yang ditinggalkan oleh YAP yang mengakhiri hidupnya karena stres akibat hutang judi. Dengan menerapkan teori Prokofyeva tentang ciri-ciri bahasa khas yang terdapat dalam catatan, analisisnya berfokus pada penalaran yang jelas, ekspresi emosional, struktur teks, tata bahasa, dan tanda baca. Catatan bunuh diri ini mengungkapkan rasa putus asa YAP yang mendalam karena ia mengaku merasa tidak mampu membantu keluarganya dan perbuatannya telah menimbulkan banyak masalah. Struktur teks catatan tersebut mengikuti pola yang khas, dengan permintaan maaf awal, penjelasan alasan bunuh diri, ekspresi keprihatinan terhadap anggota keluarga, dan permintaan terakhir. Analisis tata bahasa menyoroti penggunaan waktu untuk menyampaikan tindakan masa lalu dan keadaan saat ini, yang mencerminkan keadaan mental dan niat YAP. Tanda baca dalam catatan tidak secara signifikan mempengaruhi interpretasi pesan YAP tetapi merupakan aspek penting dari analisis linguistik dalam stilistika forensik. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana stilistika forensik membantu dalam memahami pesan tertulis, terutama dalam kasus catatan bunuh diri berikut.

**Kata kunci:** *Catatan Bunuh Diri, Fitur Bahasa, Stilistika Forensik*

### Abstract

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the suicide note left by YAP, who ended his life due to stress due to gambling debts. Applying Prokofyeva's theory of typical language features found in notes, the analysis focuses on clear reasoning, emotional expression, text structure, grammar, and punctuation. This suicide note expresses YAP's deep feelings of despair, as he admits that he feels unable to help his family and that his actions have caused many problems. The text structure of the note follows a typical pattern, with an initial apology, an explanation of the reasons for the suicide, an expression of concern for family members, and a final request. Grammatical analysis highlights the use of time to convey past actions and current states, reflecting YAP's mental state and intentions. Punctuation in notes does not significantly affect the interpretation of YAP messages but is

an important aspect of linguistic analysis in forensic stylistics. This study shows how forensic stylistics helps in understanding written messages, especially in the case of the following suicide note.

**Keywords :** *Suicide Notes, Language Features, Forensic Stylistics*

## INTRODUCTION

A subfield of linguistics called stylistics serves as a bridge between the two related fields of literature and linguistics. It is made simpler to examine the text within a linguistic context by the analytical process. This subfield focuses on exposing the linguistic quirks in a writer's work. According to Crystal and Davy (1969), it refers to an effort to draw attention to, clarify, and talk about specific language elements that are seen to be particularly connected to and distinctive from a particular work. This implies that it is a specific application of language knowledge, similar to the sciences of sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, which study language in social contexts and the psychology of language, respectively.

Stylistics covers several aspects of language and linguistics, including phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and semantics. "Most stylistics aim to show the functional significance of the formal features for text interpretation or to link the literary effect with the 'linguistic cause' where this is deemed relevant," according to Wales (2014). The stylistic approach to text interpretation stresses the role of language. The text's practical significance as a writing medium makes it easier to interpret. While language features do not determine a text's meaning, an explanation of them can assist a stylistic interpretation and clarify why certain interpretations are conceivable (Simpson, 2004).

Stylistics has traditionally emphasized strict adherence to language, syntactic accuracy, and social correctness in terms of literary stylistics, which has led to the development of contemporary stylistics such as forensic stylistics, which is currently an area of innovative linguistic research. Forensic stylistics, a sub-branch of forensic linguistics, is the study of linguistic discrepancies between written languages in dispute (McMenamin 2012). Because it focuses on the continuous and variable use of language, the concentrate of a legal document under inquiry is on handwriting, computer-generated documents, inks, to mention a few. In 1968, Jan Svartvik, a prominent linguistics professor, invented the term Forensic Stylistics (also known as Forensic Linguistics). Svartvik's assessment of Timothy John Evans' statements was the first known use of the phrase in the field.

Forensic stylistics encompasses more than just stylistic analysis (Crystal, 1988). It also includes specialized language analyses used for expert testimony in civil and criminal cases. The major goal is to teach investigators how to analyze certain sorts of texts, rather than providing scientifically evaluated evidence to the court. In forensic linguistics, text types can vary depending on the context, with each circumstance resulting in a unique type.

In forensic stylistics, text types relate to several scenarios, each with its own set of text kinds. Olsson (2008) examines a variety of forensic texts, including emergency calls, ransom requests, suicide notes, death row statements, and public individuals' admissions and denials. For this study, the author intends to focus on a style of writing known as "suicide notes." It is worth noting that the concept of suicide notes is also known as "suicide

letters.” Suicide notes are interesting cases of written speech in forensic linguistics. Olsson (2004) found that most suicide notes include statements about committing suicide alone. Writing a note may be an attempt to convey emotions that were not expressed during the individual's lifetime. Suicide notes may include a complaint or cause for the suicide. Victims may seek help or blame others for their distress, leading to suicide. Regardless, the victim may file a complaint. Prokofyeva (2013) identifies five key characteristics of real suicide notes: clear reasoning, emotional expression, text structure, grammar, and punctuation. Moreover, she described the objective of the original suicide note, which may include providing a motive for suicide. (2) to communicate the author's or victim's final wishes, or (3) to bid farewell to the recipients of the message.

Previous research has examined the language used in suicide notes. Prokofyeva (2013) analyzed the linguistic differences and similarities between suicide notes and suicide posts. She concluded that if suicide posts have more characteristics of the original suicide notes, it is possible that they were written by a victim and later developed into a suicide note. Another study, which was conducted by Maulida et al. (2023) with the title Forensic Stylistic Analysis of Unnes Student's Suicide Note, investigates the linguistic features contained in the suicide note written by UNNES student. Based on their research, it is found that the notes show multiple expressions of regrets and in contrast to Prokofyeva's findings, grammar analysis revealed many tenses. Sudjana and Fitri (2013) analyzed Kurt Cobain's suicide letter using forensic language profiling to determine his reason. The investigation found that Cobain felt miserable about his life. He felt overburdened by minor issues.

The purpose of this study is to examine a man's suicide note from Ad-Dzikro Housing, Batukuning Village, West Baturaja District, Ogan Komering Ulu (OKU) Regency, South Sumatra. His suicide case is covered in a Detiksumbansel news report published on Wednesday, February 21, 2024. The victim's wife, DL, discovered his body in his chamber. Understandably, YAP was resolved to end his life in a strange way due to the stress of frequently losing at gambling and being embarrassed by his wife because he hardly provided for his family. According to the message, the victim was worried and felt bad for hurting his family. Using Prokofyeva's approach, researchers focused on finding linguistic patterns in suicide notes. The term “suicide” refers to a purposeful act that results in the death of another person, rather than those who participate in potentially harmful, illegal, or immoral activities. These letters were written before death and contain words that contributed to their death. This research focuses on forensic stylistics, which examines the language used and the victim's intentions, last desires, or reasons for suicide.

## METHOD

This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method. The natural setting serves as the data source for qualitative research. The researcher seeks to observe, describe, and interpret settings as they are (Patton, 1990). The analysis is concerned with describing information and drawing conclusions. This research aims to analyze the meaning behind the written words and provide valuable insights into the circumstances surrounding the individual's death through forensic stylistics.

The data source was taken from news from <https://www.detik.com/sumbagsel/berita/d-7204193/secarik-surat-wasiat-pria-ganti-diri-usai-stres-kalah-judi-slot> about a man who committed suicide due to stress due to gambling debts on 20th February 2024. Data was collected with documentation in the form of a suicide note left by YAP. Data were analyzed using Prokofyeva (2013) theory regarding the distinctive language features found in suicide notes, such as clear reasoning (1), expressing emotion (2), text structure (3), grammar (4), and punctuation (5).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Buat mama kembar

(For the mother of our twins)

Ma, maafin papa ya ma

(Dear, I am sorry.)

Papa sudah melakukan dosa besar kepada mama dan anak-anak.

(I have committed a big sin against you and the children.)

Papa melakukan ini (bunuh diri) karena papa sudah stres ma.

(I did this because I was stressed out, dear.)

Papa tidak bisa buat apa-apa lagi untuk keluarga ma.

(I cannot do anything else for our family, dear.)

Keluarga kita hancur karena ulah papa.

(Our family is destroyed because of my actions.)

Papa memang kejam sama keluarga.

(I am truly hurting our family.)

Papa sudah tidak kuat lagi bekerja.

(I am no longer strong enough to work.)

Papa sudah stres ma.

(I am stressed out, dear.)

Papa mohon ma, jaga adik kembar yang di perut (di kandungan) ma, dan kembar adik Inaya dan adik Inara.

(Dear, please take care of the twins in your womb, and the twins Inaya and Inara.)

Tolong ma, ini papa akhiri segalanya, biar beban hidup kalian tidak tersiksa lagi.

(Please, dear, I am ending everything, so the burden of my life does not weigh on you anymore.)

Carilah ma pengganti papa, pindahlah dari rumah ini.

(Find someone to replace me, leave this house.)

### Clear Reasoning

Genuine suicide notes often contain clear explanations for the act, typically answering the question “why?” This is shown through the frequent use of the word “because,” indicating the common and apparent reasons behind the decision to commit suicide. Prokofyeva (2013) divides the characteristics of clear reasoning into three categories of reasons for committing suicide; they are disease, offended by something, and blaming someone in despair.

This suicide note left by YAP explains why he committed suicide. He did this because he felt stressed due to his own actions.

“Papa melakukan ini (bunuh diri) karena papa sudah stres ma.  
(I did this (suicide) because I was stressed out, dear.)  
Papa tidak bisa buat apa-apa lagi untuk keluarga ma.  
(I cannot do anything else for our family, dear.)  
Keluarga kita hancur karena ulah papa.  
(Our family is destroyed because of my actions.)  
Papa memang kejam sama keluarga.  
(I am truly hurting our family.)  
Papa sudah tidak kuat lagi bekerja.  
(I am no longer strong enough to work.)  
Papa sudah stres ma.  
(I am stressed out, dear.)”

The suicide notes suggested that YAP blamed himself for his family's problems. He felt overwhelmed by stress and unable to support them anymore. When he wrote, “I did this (suicide) because I was stressed out, dear,” it was his way of admitting he thought it was his fault. This showed how much guilt he felt, which likely influenced his decision to end his life.

The suicide note did not explain what caused YAP to become stressed, but YAP's wife stated that YAP often spent money gambling. Therefore, YAP's involvement in gambling debts and the resulting financial difficulties became a major source of his stress and contributed to his decision to end his life.

### **Expression Emotion**

Another method to recognize an authentic suicide note is by examining the emotions conveyed by the writer within the suicide note left. Prokofyeva (2013) stated that the suicide notes convey various emotions, including fear of living, relief, hopelessness, and absence of doubt. The suicide note showed the dominant sense of hopelessness. Hopelessness has been identified as one of the core characteristics of depression and has been implicated in a variety of other conditions such as suicide (Beck, 1963). In the suicide note, YAP admitted he could not help his family and that his actions had caused a lot of problems. This feeling of hopelessness was also clear when he said they could not deal with the stress anymore, which made him decide to end his life.

The statement “Papa tidak bisa buat apa-apa lagi untuk keluarga ma. (I could not do anything else for our family.)” reflected his belief that he had reached the limit of his ability to impact the family's situation positively. This admission suggested that he saw no further actions he could take to improve their circumstances, reinforcing his sense of helplessness and lack of control over the situation.

Similarly, when he wrote, “Papa sudah tidak kuat lagi bekerja, (I was no longer strong enough to work,)” he was expressing a feeling of physical and emotional exhaustion. This statement implied that he felt overwhelmed by the demands of providing for the family and could not continue fulfilling this responsibility. This perceived inability to fulfill his role as a provider added to his overall sense of hopelessness, as he saw himself as incapable of meeting the family's needs.

The suicide note left by YAP reflects a profound sense of hopelessness, a common characteristic associated with depression and often implicated in suicidal behavior. YAP

expressed his belief that he could no longer help his family and acknowledged his actions had caused significant problems. This expression of hopelessness was further evident when he stated he could no longer cope with the stress, ultimately leading him to contemplate ending his life.

### **Text Structure**

Analysis of YAP Suicide Case Notes Structure:

1. Date

In the letter, the writer did not include the date of writing.

2. Greetings

The letter does not begin with a salutation or greeting. The writer immediately starts with "Buat mama kembar (For the mother of our twins)."

3. Content

a) The First Sentence

Ma, maafin papa ya ma.

(Dear, I am sorry.)

Papa sudah melakukan dosa besar kepada mama dan anak-anak.

(I have committed a big sin against you and the children.)

The letter begins with an apology to his wife, followed by a confession that the writer has committed a grave sin against his family.

b) The Body

Papa melakukan ini (bunuh diri) karena papa sudah stres ma.

(I did this because I was stressed out, dear.)

Papa tidak bisa buat apa-apa lagi untuk keluarga ma.

(I cannot do anything else for our family, dear.)

Keluarga kita hancur karena ulah papa.

(Our family is destroyed because of my actions.)

Papa memang kejam sama keluarga.

(I am truly hurting our family.)

Papa sudah tidak kuat lagi bekerja.

(I am no longer strong enough to work.)

Papa sudah stres ma.

(I am stressed out, dear.)

Papa mohon ma, jaga adik kembar yang di perut (di kandungan) ma, dan kembar adik Inaya dan adik Inara.

(Dear, please take care of the twins in your womb, and the twins Inaya and Inara)

In the body of the paragraph, the writer explains that he committed suicide because he felt stressed and was no longer able to take care of his family. He felt cruel towards his family and could not bear to work anymore. Apart from that, he also asked his wife to look after the twins who were still in the womb and their children named Inaya and Inara.

c) Purpose

The writer's purpose in sending this letter is to ask his wife to look after his children after he dies, and he intends to end all the suffering felt by the family. Apart from that,



he also asked his wife to find a replacement for him and requested that they move out of the house in the hope that his family would restart their lives without the burden and suffering caused by him.

d) Final

Tolong ma, ini papa akhiri segalanya, biar beban hidup kalian tidak tersiksa lagi.  
(Please, dear, I am ending everything, so the burden of my life does not weigh on you anymore.)

Carilah ma pengganti papa, pindahlah dari rumah ini.

(Find someone to replace me, leave this house.)

At the of the paragraph of the letter, the writer asks for help and permission so that he can end everything so that his family does not feel tormented by his behavior. After that, it was followed by a final request to the wife to find a replacement and move out of the house.

e) Closing

The letter ends without including a signature or the writer's name. The letters are only written with the words "Papa," where he functions as husband and head of the family.

### Grammar

Grammar is an essential part of the suicide note's linguistic structure. According to Galasinski (2017), a suicide victim may be inspired to shift the scenario from the present to the past by learning about its motivating components. The past is frequently discussed in the content, with little references to the present or future. The victims used a range of tenses to create their suicide notes, as shown by the data we discovered.

Buat mama kembar

(For the mother of our twins.)

Using the preposition "for" to indicate who the message is directed towards. Describing the recipient as "the mother of our twins" to specify the relationship.

Ma, maafin papa ya ma

(Dear, I am sorry)

Addressing the recipient affectionately with the term "Dear." Expressing apology using the present tense "am sorry" to convey immediate remorse.

Papa sudah melakukan dosa besar kepada mama dan anak-anak.

(I have committed a big sin against you and the children.)

Using the present perfect tense "have committed" to indicate an action that occurred in the past with relevance to the present, which was gambling. Describing the action (gambling) as a "big sin" to emphasize its severity.

Papa melakukan ini (bunuh diri) karena papa sudah stres ma.

(I did this because I was stressed out, dear.)

Using the past tense "did" to refer to a specific past action (suicide). Providing a reason for the action using the past tense "was stressed out" to indicate the state of mind at the time.

Papa tidak bisa buat apa-apa lagi untuk keluarga ma.

(I cannot do anything else for our family, dear.)

Using the present tense "cannot" to express a current inability. Addressing the recipient (the wife) affectionately as "dear." Expressing limitation in providing further support for the family.

Keluarga kita hancur karena ulah papa.

(Our family is destroyed because of my actions.)

Using the present tense “is destroyed” to indicate the current state of the family. Attributing the cause of the destruction to the speaker’s actions.

Papa memang kejam sama keluarga.

(I am truly hurting our family.)

Using the present tense “am hurting” to express ongoing actions or states. Acknowledging the impact of the speaker’s actions on the family.

Papa sudah tidak kuat lagi bekerja.

(I am no longer strong enough to work.)

Using the present tense “am” to express current state or condition. Describing the inability to work using the phrase “no longer strong enough.”

Papa sudah stres ma.

(I am stressed out, dear.)

Reiterating the state of stress using the present tense “am stressed out.” Addressing the recipient affectionately as “dear.”

Papa mohon ma, jaga adik kembar yang di perut (di kandungan) ma, dan kembar adik Inaya dan adik Inara.

(Dear, please take care of the twins in your womb, and the twins Inaya and Inara)

Addressing the recipient affectionately as “Dear.” Requesting care for the unborn twins and specifically naming the existing twins (Inaya and Inara).

Tolong ma, ini papa akhiri segalanya, biar beban hidup kalian tidak tersiksa lagi.

(Please, dear, I am ending everything, so the burden of my life does not weigh on you anymore.)

Repeating the address term “dear” for emphasis. Using the present continuous tense “am ending” to indicate an ongoing action. Explaining the reason for ending everything to alleviate the burden on the recipient.

Carilah ma pengganti papa, pindahlah dari rumah ini.

(Find someone to replace me, leave this house.)

Using the imperative mood “find” to give a command. Instructing the recipient to find a replacement for the speaker. Advising the recipient to leave the current house.

### **Punctuation**

The most important component of evaluating a suicide note is its punctuation. Schoene and Dethlef (2016) found that an individual’s punctuation style is impacted by their history, education, social position, and family circumstances. Punctuation can express emotions and disclose a victim’s mood. Based on the suicide notes, no specific punctuation used that is affect the writer’s intention.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this research utilized a descriptive qualitative method to analyze a suicide note left by YAP, who took his own life due to stress from gambling debts. By applying Prokofyeva’s theory on distinctive language features found in suicide notes, the



analysis focused on clear reasoning, emotional expression, text structure, grammar, and punctuation.

The suicide notes revealed YAP's profound sense of hopelessness, as he admitted to feeling unable to help his family and acknowledged his actions had caused significant problems. The text structure of the suicide note followed a typical pattern, with an opening apology, an explanation of reasons for suicide, expressions of concern for family members, and final requests. Grammar analysis highlighted the use of tenses to convey past actions and current states, reflecting YAP's mental state and intentions. Punctuation in the suicide note did not significantly impact the interpretation of YAP's message but is an important aspect of linguistic analysis in forensic stylistics.

This study demonstrates how forensic stylistics helps in understanding written messages, particularly in the case of suicide notes. By analyzing language patterns, researchers gain insights into individuals' emotions and mental states, contributing to a broader comprehension of the factors underlying these tragic events.

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