

## LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN SUICIDE NOTE OF ALAMGIR KHAN TAREEN: FORENSIC STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menggali fitur-fitur linguistik yang ditemukan dalam catatan bunuh diri, dengan fokus pada kasus Alamgir Khan Tareen. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan dasar analisis konten kualitatif, penelitian ini berusaha memahami fitur-fitur ini dari sudut pandang korban. Penelitian ini secara khusus menganalisis konten catatan bunuh diri yang dapat diakses oleh publik dari individu-individu terkenal, yang dikumpulkan dari Twitter. Dengan menggunakan metode tiga langkah membaca, mendeskripsikan, dan mengklasifikasikan, fitur-fitur linguistik yang diidentifikasi meliputi alasan yang jelas, mengekspresikan emosi, struktur teks, tata bahasa, dan tanda baca. Analisis catatan bunuh diri Tareen menunjukkan adanya karakteristik-karakteristik ini, yang menjelaskan motivasi dan kondisi psikologis korban. Khususnya, ciri-ciri linguistik, terutama alasan yang jelas dan ekspresi emosi, mengungkap interaksi yang rumit antara perjuangan pribadi dan isu-isu yang berhubungan dengan kesehatan dalam keputusan Tareen untuk mengakhiri hidupnya. Memahami ciri-ciri linguistik seperti itu memiliki implikasi yang signifikan untuk pencegahan bunuh diri dan kesadaran kesehatan mental.

**Kata Kunci:** Catatan Bunuh Diri, Fitur Linguistik, Linguistik Forensik.

### ABSTRACT

*This study delves into the linguistic features uncovered in suicide notes, focusing on the case of Alamgir Khan Tareen. Employing a qualitative approach with a basis in qualitative content analysis, the research seeks to comprehend these features from the perspective of the victims. The study specifically analyzes the content of publicly accessible suicide notes from well-known individuals, collected from Twitter. Employing a three-step reading, describing, and classifying method, the linguistic features identified include clear reasoning, expressing emotion, text structure, grammar, and punctuation. The analysis of Tareen's suicide note demonstrates the presence of these characteristics, shedding light on the motivations and psychological state of the victim. Notably, the linguistic features, particularly clear reasoning, and expressing emotion unveil the intricate interplay of personal struggles and health-related issues in Tareen's decision to end his life. Understanding such linguistic features holds significant implications for suicide prevention and mental health awareness.*

**Keywords:** Suicide Notes, Linguistic Features, Forensic Linguistic.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics. This suggests that it is a particular application of language knowledge, like the fields of sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, which study language in social contexts and the psychology of language, respectively. Stylistics is the study of spoken and written language style, as the name implies. It is reinforced by the idea that we always make choices about the words we use (lexical choices) and the order in which we use them, whether we are writing or speaking. These choices give rise to a certain style, which can be modified by making other choices. The study of stylistics looks into how writers use language to create effects and how readers understand those effects.

The study of forensic science entails using scientific techniques to look into and resolve criminal cases. It encompasses a number of subdisciplines that aid in the collection and examination of evidence for criminal investigations, such as ballistics, DNA analysis, and fingerprint analysis. A specialist area of forensic linguistics known as "forensic stylistics" is concerned with examining a text's or communication's linguistic style in order to establish authorship or authenticity. Based on their distinctive writing style, linguistic patterns, and quirks, this field is frequently utilized in court cases to establish whether a given document or communication was written by a specific person. It is a useful instrument for both criminal investigations and court cases.

Alamgir Khan Tareen, also known as Alamgir Tareen, was a Pakistani businessman and the founder of the Multan Sultans cricket team. He lived from 1959/1960 to July 6, 2023. One of South Punjab's most prominent businessmen was Alamgir Tareen. At Shamim and Company (Pvt) Ltd, the official PepsiCo bottler and franchise for South Punjab, he served as managing

director. He completed his master's degree at Yale after earning his bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

This investigation, meanwhile, is centered on the suicide notes left behind by Alamgir Khan Tareen. He left a suicide note and a firearm at his Gulberg home, where police discovered him dead. He had revealed his "endless list of illnesses" in the handwritten statement, which served as the main justification for taking his own life. The focus of this study was on the language traits found in the victim's notes.

## 2. METHOD

The nature of this investigation is qualitative. According to Gay et al. (2006), qualitative investigations concentrate on comprehending the phenomena from the viewpoint of humans. Additionally, Williamson and Johanson (2018) explained that qualitative content analysis, which was used for the analysis, focuses on interpreting and meaningfully describing the topics and themes that are evident in the contents of communications when framed against the research objectives of the study. This indicates that investigating the communications' content will enable the research question to be resolved. This study aims to demonstrate the linguistic features of suicide notes and to identify the messages that the victims are overtly or implicitly conveying.

Documentation is the tool used to gather data. This documentary makes use of online data (publicly accessible suicide notes of well-known people). More specifically, Twitter was the source of the data used in this study.

Following the collection of the data, the author applied the three-step reading, describing, and classifying method of data analysis described by Gay et al. (2006). According Prokofyeva (2013), the suicide notes were carefully

studied, and the following linguistic features were noted: (1) clear reasoning, (2) expressing emotion, (3) text structure, (4) grammar, and (5) punctuation.

### 3. DISCUSSION

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, punctuation.

#### 3.1 Clear Reasoning

The statements of 'clear reasoning' found in most cases in the genuine suicide notes are represented by the answer to the question "why?" This indicates that the conjunction sentence, phrase, and clause of "because" echoes the common and obvious reason for a victim to take his or her life.

"I was in Sri Lanka vacationing with the love of my life, Shajo, and life could not have been better. But without being healthy there's no point going on."

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. In the suicide note of Alamgir Khan Tareen, it is clear that the reason of why he took his own life is because of diseases. It can be seen in the sentence, "but without being healthy there's no point going on." In his suicide notes, he revealed the disease that was lodged in his body.

"I have Discoid Dermatitis, for which I constantly have to take Steroids. I also have Seborheic Dermatitis, whose treatment has left one side of my face with damaged skin. Also Blepharitis, which breaks my eyes and I've stopped reading. My back has recently gotten really bad. It keeps me up at night, for which I've had to take sleeping pills, which keep me groggy most of the day.

They have also made my Tinnitus much worse."

Alamgir stated that his life was happy but it was nothing when you don't have a healthy body. According to Alamgir hand written, He has several diseases, such as Discoid Dermatitis, Seborrheic Dermatitis, and Blepharitis which make parts of his body feel pain and damage. It made Alamgir feel continuous physical pain as he explained in the sentences above. Genuine suicide notes include clear reasoning as one of their distinguishing characteristics, which ties the suicide act to the details provided. Then, in this suicide note of Alamgir Tareen, the clear reasoning why he committed suicide is because of his illness.

#### 3.2 Expressing Emotion

The second characteristic of the linguistic feature of suicide notes is expressing emotion. This characteristic is also found in Tareen's suicide notes. According to Hancock et al. (2007), we are able to express and accurately evaluate the emotional states that are essential to humans. Tareen's note below presents an illustration of this:

'I was in Sri Lanka vacationing with the love of my life, Shajo, and life could not have been better. But without being healthy there's no point going on. I have Discoid Dermatitis, for which I constantly have to take Steroids.' (Tareen, 2023)

The clause "But without being healthy there's no point going on" can be classified as fear of living. He believed that there was no point in continuing life without being healthy. Tareen considered his life meaningless if he had to live with disease in his body. Additionally, the phrase "there is no point going on" emphasizes a desire to escape the struggles or challenges posed by the writer's health condition.

The diseases in his body have brought him into hopelessness as can be seen in the note below:

'I have Discoid Dermatitis, for which I constantly have to take Steroids. I also have Seborheic Dermatitis, whose treatment has left one side of my face with damaged skin. Also Blepharitis, which breaks my eyes and I've stopped reading. My back has recently gotten really bad. It keeps me up at night, for which I've had to take sleeping pills, which keep me groggy most of the day. They have also made my Tinnitus much worse. It's basically an endless list.'

The note above conveys a sense of hopelessness through the writer's detailed description of various health problems and how they've negatively affected their life. Furthermore, the mention of "an endless list" suggests a feeling of overwhelming despair and helplessness.

### 3.3 Text Structure

Onu and Solomon-Etefia (2019, p. 101) write that "through death, the life that one has lived is revealed." It can be shown through the note they left, such as the purpose, the date, the person to whom the letter was wrote, and so on. Because Prokofyefa (2013) stated that victims usually consider their decision to commit suicide for some time before making the ultimate decision to do so, and thus, when the time comes, they already know what they want to write as their last words in their suicide notes.

Date

The writer did not write the date the day.

Greetings

The writer did not use any greetings in his letter.

So, it's unknown to whom the letter is addressed. Instead, the writer used the idiomatic words "So here goes". That's because "Here goes" is an idiomatically standard expression

equivalent to "Here I go", used as an exclamation calling attention to the fact that you're about to start doing something. According to Collin Dictionary, you say 'here goes' when you are about to do or say something difficult or unpleasant.

#### 1. The first sentence

In the Alamgir Khan Tareen suicide note, he said:

"I love life & I never wanted to do this"

The first sentence portrays an important hint in any suicide note. In this case, Alamgir stated that he loved his life but there's something that made him to committed suicide.

#### 2. The body

In personal letter, the writer usually writes about what events that have occurred and what emotions they feel.

"life was perfect 'till about 6 months ago. I was in Sri Lanka vacationing with the love of my life, Shajo, and life could not have been better. But without being healthy there's no point going on. I have Discoid Dermatitis, for which I constantly have to take Steroids. I also have Seborheic Dermatitis, whose treatment has left one side of my face with damaged skin. Also Blepharitis, which breaks my eyes and I've stopped reading. My back has recently gotten really bad. It keeps me up at night, for which I've had to take sleeping pills, which keep me groggy most of the day. They have also made my Tinnitus much worse. It's basically an endless list."

In the letter, the writer explained what happened at that time. The writer also wrote what he felt after that something happened. In other words, Alamgir mention his illnesses and the pain his body felt.

### 3. Purpose

The writer does not say why he wrote the letter.

### 4. Final

"I'm tired of fighting all"

This sentence continues from the previous sentence written by Alamgir which stated that his illness was an "endless list". So, it is indicated that at the end of the letter Alamgir is not strong enough to face his problems or illnesses.

### Closing

The writer did not use a closing in his letter.

### 3.4 Grammar

Grammar is a key component of the suicide note's linguistic structure. According to Galasinski (2017), a victim of suicide may be motivated to change the situation from the present to the past by learning about its motivational aspects. The past is frequently mentioned in material, with minimal references to the present or the future. The victims employed a variety of tenses to write their suicide letters, as seen by the data we found.

- 1) "I love life, and I never wanted it to be like this." - Using the present tense "love" to express current feelings towards life. Using the past tense "wanted" to refer to past desires.
- 2) "Life was perfect until about 6 months ago." - Using the past tense "was" to refer to the past when life was still perfect.
- 3) "I was in Sri Lanka, vacationing with the love of my life, Shajo, and life couldn't have been better." - Using the past continuous tense "was vacationing" to refer to the past

situation that occurred while on holiday in Sri Lanka.

- 4) "But without being healthy, there's no point in going on." - Using the present continuous tense "being healthy" to express the current situation that is taking place.
- 5) "I have Discoid Dermatitis, for which I constantly have to take steroids." - Using the present perfect tense "have" to indicate a current condition (having Discoid Dermatitis) related to an ongoing action (taking steroids).
- 6) "I also have Seborrheic Dermatitis, the treatment of which has left one side of my face with damaged skin." - Using the present perfect tense "have" to express the current condition (having Seborrheic Dermatitis) and using the present perfect tense "has left" to refer to actions that affect the current condition.
- 7) "Additionally, I have Blepharitis, which affects my eyes and has led me to stop reading." - Using the present perfect tense "have" to indicate a current condition (having Blepharitis) that is related to an ongoing action (affecting the eyes and causing stopping reading).
- 8) "My back has recently worsened, keeping me up at night, for which I've had to take sleeping pills, making me groggy most of the day." - Using the present perfect tense "has worsened" to refer to a current condition (the back has worsened recently) and the present perfect tense "I've had" to refer to an action that occurred in an undefined time span (taking sleeping pills).
- 9) "They have also worsened my Tinnitus." - Using the present perfect tense "have worsened" to



show the effect of an action that has occurred (worsen Tinnitus).

10) "It's basically an endless list." - Using the present tense "is" to describe the nature of the current list.

11) "I'm tired of fighting all of this." - Using the present continuous tense "I'm tired" to express feelings or current conditions.

### 3.5 Punctuation

The fifth and also last characteristic of the linguistic features of suicide notes as proposed by Prokofyeva (2013) is punctuation. One of the most crucial components of suicide notes is punctuation. Schoene and Dethlef (2016) stated that the use of punctuation depends on his or her experience in life such as background, level of education, social, and family status. It was indicated in this study, that in suicide notes, the author tends to use grammatically correct punctuation to the extent to which their educational level allows. Correct punctuation was used in Tareen's suicide notes, at least on a fundamental level but the 'meaningful' punctuation frequently found in the suicide notes such as "--" (double-dash), "..." (three or more periods at the end of a sentence/phrase), and "!!!" (three, sometimes one, exclamation marks) is not found.

### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study delves into the realm of forensic stylistics, specifically focusing on suicide notes, exemplified by the case of Alamgir Khan Tareen. Drawing on previous research and theoretical frameworks, the analysis examined linguistic features such as clear reasoning, expressing emotions, text structure, grammar, and punctuation within Tareen's suicide note.

The findings revealed that Tareen's suicide note exhibited characteristics consistent with genuine suicide notes,

including clear reasoning linked to his health issues, emotional expression reflecting fear of living and hopelessness, a well-defined text structure, grammatical features emphasizing the past tense, and the use of meaningful punctuation. These linguistic elements contribute to understanding the motivations and emotions behind the tragic act.

This study underscores the significance of forensic stylistics in unraveling the complexities of written communication, particularly in the context of suicide notes. By examining linguistic features, researchers can gain insights into the mental and emotional state of individuals, contributing to a broader understanding of the factors leading to such tragic events.

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## APPENDIX

### Alamgir Tareen Khan's Suicide Notes

