

Planned or Spontaneous? Learning Forensic Linguistic Identification Through the Stylistic Analysis of Indonesian Suicide Notes

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines how linguistic features in Indonesian suicide notes reflect different degrees of suicide planning through forensic stylistic analysis. Using a descriptive qualitative forensic stylistic approach, twenty authenticated suicide notes published between 2020 and 2024 were collected from reputable Indonesian news outlets and analyzed across three stylistic dimensions: grammar, text structure, and punctuation. The findings reveal systematic distinctions between planned and spontaneous suicides. Planned suicide notes display coherent discourse organization, functional tense shifting toward future or posthumous reference, and controlled punctuation, typically following an address–explanation–instruction–closure sequence. In contrast, spontaneous suicide notes exhibit present-focused immediacy, fragmented structure, and reduced punctuation control, reflecting acute emotional crisis and cognitive constriction. Within the present dataset, these stylistic patterns appear analytically consistent across gender, age, and regional backgrounds. However, this consistency should be interpreted as corpus-specific and theory-validating rather than statistically generalizable beyond the analyzed cases. This suggests that, in this dataset, linguistic indicators of suicide planning are more closely associated with psychological state than with demographic variables, without implying statistical generalizability. The study demonstrates that forensic stylistic analysis provides an analytically informative and theoretically consistent linguistic basis for distinguishing planned from spontaneous suicides within the present corpus, with implications for forensic interpretation and suicide prevention in the Indonesian context.

Keywords: forensic stylistics; Indonesian suicide notes; linguistics forensic; planned or spontaneous suicide; suicide.

1. Introduction

Forensic stylistics is a subfield of forensic linguistics concerned with the analysis of linguistic style to support authorship attribution, authenticity verification, and the interpretation of communicative intent in disputed texts (Kingston & Stalker, 2006; Prokofyeva, 2013). While traditionally applied to legal documents and questioned authorship, forensic stylistic approaches have increasingly been extended to personal and highly sensitive texts, including suicide notes, where language functions as a final communicative act rather than a spontaneous emotional record (Rehana et al., 2023; Voice et al., 2025).

In such contexts, linguistic choices may encode not only emotional distress but also intentionality, cognitive organization, and audience orientation, providing critical insight into whether a suicide reflects deliberate planning or an acute crisis state (Allen Mark Jeffrey et al., 2024; Amalia et al., 2024; Pallocci et al., 2024).

Distinguishing between planned and spontaneous (unplanned) suicide is of central importance in forensic investigation and suicide prevention (Teixeira et al., 2021; Indelicato, 2024; Pallocci et al., 2025). Planned suicides are typically associated with sustained ideation, preparation, and stronger intent, whereas spontaneous suicides are more often triggered by acute stressors and emotional escalation (Conner, 2004; Chaudhury et al., 2016). Clinical research further indicates that planned and spontaneous suicides differ in risk profiles, psychological trajectories, and lethality (Conner et al., 2005; Jeon et al., 2024; Stephenson & Edwards, 2024). However, suicide notes are frequently linguistically ambiguous and emotionally charged, making it difficult to infer the degree of planning based solely on the content alone (Freedenthal, 2007; Byard, 2016; Hernandez, 2017; Lawrence et al., 2020; Teixeira et al., 2021; Stella et al., 2022a; J. D. Fekete & Fekete, 2024). Identifying reliable linguistic indicators of suicide planning is therefore crucial for developing more evidence-based and ethically grounded forensic assessments (Edwards et al., 2021; Padilla-

Navarro et al., 2022; Mejías-Martín et al., 2023; Belli et al., 2025).

1.1 Literature Review: Forensic Stylistic and Suicide Notes

Previous research demonstrates that forensic linguistic analysis of grammar, text structure, punctuation, and cultural context can reveal narrative coherence, psychological orientation, and communicative intent in suicide notes (Lee, Yong-hun & Joh Gi-Hyun, 2019; Jaafar & Jaafar, 2022; Kanyama, 2023; Sanni, 2025). These studies show that suicide notes are not merely emotional records but structured texts shaped by cognitive and discursive processes, supporting the relevance of stylistic analysis for forensic interpretation.

In the Indonesian context, existing studies have primarily focused on identifying explicit and implicit meanings, cultural values, and psychological expressions embedded in suicide notes (Fata et al., 2021; Amalia et al., 2024; Lubis et al., 2024). While these contributions offer valuable descriptive insights, they do not provide a systematic linguistic framework for distinguishing planned and spontaneous suicides based on converging stylistic evidence. Consequently, the linguistic dimension of suicide planning remains underexplored in Indonesian forensic research.

This gap is particularly critical given Indonesia's underrecognized suicide burden. Official records indicate more than 2,112 reported suicide cases over the past 11 years (Wiguna, 2024), yet multiple studies and media investigations suggest substantial underreporting. Estimates indicate that actual suicide rates may be at least four times higher than the official figure, with only a small proportion of cases captured in national statistics. Official figure (BBC News Indonesia, 2023), with studies estimating that only about 12.8% of suicides are captured in official statistics (Arlinta, 2024; Onie et al., 2024). Police data further indicate a rising trend, with 629 suicides reported in 2021, 826 in 2022, and 1,226 by December 2023 (Purwanto, 2024). Survey data also reveal that more than 61% of young people have

contemplated suicide (Arief, 2024). These conditions underscore the need not only to quantify suicide prevalence but also to examine the characteristics of suicidal behavior, particularly the distinction between planned and spontaneous acts, which remains largely absent from both academic analysis and public discourse (Sukma et al., 2024; Conner, 2004; Whiteside et al., 2024).

From a legal and investigative perspective, accurately distinguishing planned from spontaneous suicides supports more evidence-based case assessment, reduces speculative interpretation, and promotes ethically responsible reporting and adjudication (Conner, 2004; Violanti et al., 2019; Violanti & Steege, 2021; Allen Mark Jeffrey et al., 2024). Moreover, understanding suicide planning through linguistic evidence has direct implications for prevention strategies, particularly in identifying early warning signs in written communication (Pallocci et al., 2024).

1.2 Research Gap and Contribution

Despite growing interdisciplinary interest in suicide notes, significant limitations remain in how linguistic evidence is used to distinguish different forms of suicidal behavior. Existing forensic stylistic studies largely emphasize authorship attribution, authenticity verification, or emotional interpretation, while psychological and clinical research tends to classify planned and spontaneous suicides based on behavioral and psychiatric criteria, with limited attention to linguistic form. As a result, the systematic linguistic classification of suicide planning remains underdeveloped.

In the Indonesian context, no prior study has explicitly operationalized grammatical patterns, text structure, and punctuation as converging forensic indicators for distinguishing planned from spontaneous suicides using suicide note data. This study addresses this gap by applying Prokofyeva's (2013) forensic stylistic framework to examine how these linguistic domains interact to reflect degrees of suicide planning. By moving beyond descriptive analysis toward an integrated, evidence-based stylistic classification, the study

contributes novel, context-specific insights to forensic linguistics and demonstrates the practical value of linguistic analysis for forensic investigation and suicide prevention.

Research Questions

Based on the gaps identified above, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What grammatical, structural, and punctuation features characterize planned and spontaneous suicide notes in Indonesian cases?
2. How do these linguistic features differ systematically between planned and spontaneous suicide notes?
3. How do grammatical patterns, text structure, and punctuation converge to provide forensic stylistic evidence for classifying suicide planning?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative forensic stylistic approach to examine how linguistic features in suicide notes reflect varying degrees of suicide planning. A qualitative approach is appropriate because suicide notes constitute highly sensitive personal texts in which meaning, intentionality, and communicative orientation are embedded in linguistic form rather than in quantifiable variables (Zaško-Zielińska, 2022; Wahyu et al., 2023; Lubis et al., 2024). Accordingly, the analysis prioritizes close, systematic, and theory-informed textual examination to identify recurrent stylistic configurations that distinguish planned from spontaneous suicides, rather than hypothesis testing or frequency-based measurement.

Although the corpus size is limited, this study does not aim for statistical generalization. Instead, it seeks analytical and theoretical generalization by examining whether Prokofyeva's (2013) forensic stylistic indicators can be consistently and meaningfully applied to Indonesian suicide-note data through systematic, theory-guided comparison across cases. Interpretations of psychological states and suicidal intentionality are therefore text-based inferences grounded in linguistic evidence, rather

than clinical diagnoses or population-level claims. This positioning ensures that analytical conclusions remain methodologically bounded, theoretically justified, and appropriate to the qualitative nature of the data.

Language-editing assistance was provided using ChatGPT (OpenAI), based on the GPT-5.2 series language model, between September and December 2025. The tool was used to improve clarity, grammar, and academic tone. It was not used for data generation, analysis, or interpretation. All methodological decisions, analytical procedures, and interpretations remain the sole responsibility of the author.

2.2 Data Sources and Sampling

The dataset consists of twenty authenticated suicide notes reported by reputable media outlets and published between 2020 and 2024. These texts were collected directly from news reports rather than from a pre-existing research database and were treated as documentary textual data for forensic linguistic analysis.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic retrieval and screening process between January 2025 and July 2025. Relevant news articles were identified, verified, and selected based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Because the suicide notes were obtained from publicly available media reports, the study did not involve direct interaction with participants and did not constitute primary data collection.

Basic demographic and geographical information (gender, age group, and region) was recorded for each case to contextualize the linguistic analysis. These variables were not treated as analytical predictors but were interpreted comparatively in the discussion section to assess whether linguistic markers of suicide planning varied across demographic categories.

The use of secondary data is methodologically appropriate given the ethical, legal, and privacy constraints associated with access to authentic suicide notes in Indonesia. To ensure data credibility, only suicide notes reported by reputable news organizations adhering to

Indonesia's journalistic Code of Ethics were included. Furthermore, only suicide notes accompanied by original handwritten photographs were analyzed to ensure textual authenticity; reports lacking such visual verification were excluded. As explained by Aprilleo Abie (2025) from Suara Surabaya, suicide related news undergoes prior verifications and coordination with law enforcement authorities to confirm case details and the authenticity of suicide notes. Accordingly, suicide notes published through these outlets were treated as authentic documentary records, and no additional legal permission was required.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Each suicide note was included in the dataset based on three criteria. First, the note had to be explicitly attributed to the suicide victim by credible news sources. Second, the full text or a near-complete version of the note had to be available to allow meaningful forensic stylistic analysis. Third, sufficient contextual information regarding the author's background—such as gender, geographical location, and circumstances surrounding the case—had to be reported to support contextual interpretation.

Only suicide notes published between 2020 and 2024 and written in Indonesian or regional languages were included. To ensure textual authenticity, only suicide notes accompanied by original handwritten photographs were analyzed; reports lacking such visual verification were excluded. Notes were also excluded if they were summarized, paraphrased, or reported indirectly without access to the original wording of the text.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The analysis is grounded in Prokofyeva's (2013) forensic stylistics framework, which emphasizes the systematic examination of linguistic features to infer intent and communicative purpose in sensitive or disputed texts. Guided by this framework, the analysis focuses on three interrelated stylistic domains: text structure, grammar, and punctuation.

Text structure is analyzed, including organizational patterns, discourse coherence, and the presence of functional stages such as address, explanation, instruction, and closure. Grammatical analysis focuses on syntactic constructions, tense usage, and deviations from standard grammar that may signal emotional instability, cognitive constriction, or deliberate control. Punctuation analysis examines the use or absence of punctuation, including ellipses, exclamation marks, and run-on constructions, as indicators of urgency, emotional overload, or stream-of-consciousness narration.

Although these three stylistic domains were examined in separate analytical stages, their findings were interpreted collectively as

converging forensic indicators of crisis suicide planning

Result

A forensic stylistic analysis of twenty Indonesian suicide notes reveals systematic linguistic differences between planned and spontaneous suicides across grammar, text structure, and punctuation. Planned suicide notes are characterized by coherent discourse organization, controlled grammatical constructions, and restrained punctuation, whereas spontaneous notes display fragmented structure, present-tense immediacy, and reduced editorial control. Taken together, these observed patterns provide the empirical basis for classifying notes as reflecting planned or spontaneous suicide.

Table 1. Overview of Suicide Notes Analyzed (2020–2024)

Cases (year)	Online News Sources	Suicide Types	Prokofyeva's (2013) Categories
Case 1 (2020)	(December 14th, 2020 - Tribunnews.com) (https://bit.ly/4aL9hqG)	Planned	- Directive verb/post-death instructions - Calm, organized text structure - Present tense functioning as future tense - Minimal punctuation expression emotional control
Case 2 (2020)	(November 4th, 2020 - Sindonews.com) (https://bit.ly/4rT50ri)	Spontaneous (Unplanned)	- Repetition of the key phrase "bunuh diri" (suicide) - Absence of instructions/bequests - Chaotic, run-on structures - No structure - Emotionally saturated vocabulary
Case 3 (2020)	(March 11th, 2020 - Kompas.com) (https://bit.ly/3YkujoG)	Planned	- Dominant functional, practical directives - Calm, directive tone - Appeals for harmony - Minimal punctuation
Case 4 (2020)	(November 5th, 2020 - SuryaMalang.com) (https://bit.ly/4aMwrwN)	Planned	- Farewell and emotional closure - Past tense functioning as present - Present tense functioning as future - Calm punctuation and structure

Case 5 (2021)	(September 7th, 2021- SERU.co.id) (https://bit.ly/4pWxcrcq)	Planned	- Complete text structure - Past tense used as present - Present tense used as future - Imperative as posthumous instructions - Minimalist, controlled punctuation
Case 6 (2021)	(October 6th, 2021- Grid.id) (https://tinyurl.com/y64hkf4h)	Planned	- Defined addresses - Present tense functioning as future - Past/perfective used for the current state - Punctuation by restraint
Case 7 (2021)	(September 16th, 2021- DetikNews.com) (https://tinyurl.com/bdhyrw77)	Planned	- Implied addressee - Perfective aspect “wis” (already) in the Javanese language, indicating completion - Present tense functioning as future - Highly minimalist punctuation
Case 8 (2021)	(April 1th, 2021- Tribratanews.polri.go.id.com) (https://tinyurl.com/3j59kxy)	Planned	- Elaborate and layered text structure - Present tense functioning as future (religious and moral) - Past/perfective self-evaluation - Formal, restrained punctuation
Case 9 (2022)	October, 23th 2022 – DetikJatim.com) (https://tinyurl.com/yu5m8ejc)	Spontaneous (Unplanned)	- Dominant of present-tense emotional statement “aku bingung” (I am confused) and “hatiku sangat terluka” (my heart is hurt) - Unstructured, introduction and culmination merge chaotically - No controlled sentence closure
Case 10 (2022)	(December 9th, 2022 – SuaraSurabaya.Net) (https://tinyurl.com/3fyhkmx2)	Planned	- Present tense functioning as a posthumous evaluation “ayah tidak bisa membahagiakan kalian” (father can't make you happy) - Complete text structure - Dominant use of periods makes closure - Controlled use of periods
Case 11 (2022)	(July 29th, 2022 – Fokus Jateng.com) (https://tinyurl.com/3f56u73h)	Planned	- Present tense used as future/post-death action “aku pamit” (I say goodbye) - Extensive culmination: apologies, expressions of love, guilt, self-blame, advice - Consistent specific address

			- Minimalist and controlled punctuation
Case 12 (2022)	(March 9th, 2022- Klaus.com) (https://tinyurl.com/4csbdd62)	Spontaneous (Unplanned)	- Deliberative present tense “aku harus cari” (I must find), and “menyusun rencana yang lebih baik” (planning a better solution) - Minimal, neutral punctuation - Unstructured, suddenly ends with future planning
Case 13 (2023)	(February, 3th 2023 – RadarBali.id) (https://tinyurl.com/3jj5vamj)	Planned	- Clear implied specific address (mama) - Complete text structure - Present tense used as future “kalau mama nemu” if mama found), and “kalau kk mati” (If I die) - Minimalist but controlled punctuation
Case 14 (2023)	(October 18th, 2023 – DetikJatim.com) (https://tinyurl.com/3bs4f9ux)	Planned	- Explicit multi-addressee form of address - Complete text structure - Dominant pas as present construction “wis gk iso kuat” (I am not strong anymore) - Periods and commas used correctly
Case 15 (2023)	(June 3rd, 2023- DetikJatim.com) (https://tinyurl.com/3bjfjkfd)	Planned	- Complete structure - Used past tense for life evaluation “selama ini gawe salah” (all this time I've been doing it wrong) - Present used a future - Capitalization is used in formal
Case 16 (2023)	(July 4th, 2023- DetikJatim.com) (https://tinyurl.com/2cu9vxem)	Planned	- Explicit address - Dominant complete forms - Past as framing - The present tense functions as future - Extreme punctuation restraint
Case 17 (2024)	(June 21st, 2024 – DetikBali.com) (https://tinyurl.com/2uxtuijv)	Planned	- Complete text structure - Present tense used as future “tolong mayat ku...” (help my corpse) - Minimalist and controlled punctuation

Case 18 (2024)	(July 30th, 2024 – Kompas.com) (https://tinyurl.com/36jkrnm3)	Planned	- Complete text structure - Complex conditional construction “kalau, jikalau” (if) - The present tense is used for building future consequences - Conventional and precise punctuation (periods, commas, and parentheses)
Case 19 (2024)	August 28th, 2024- iNewsIndramayu.com) (https://tinyurl.com/bdzxmzky)	Planned	- Present tense replacing future “gak bisa pulang” (cannot go home) and “pengen dikubur” (want to be buried) - Past experience absorbed into present self-evaluation “selalu nyusahin” (always causing trouble) - Minimalist but functional punctuation
Case 20 (2024)	(April 01th, 2024- DetikSumbangsel.com) (https://tinyurl.com/tusmn864)	Spontaneous (Unplanned)	- Present tense dominant with immediate effect, minimal future planning - Implied addressed only - Extremely reduced punctuation

As summarized in Table 1, application of Prokofyeva’s (2013) stylistic criteria indicates that planned suicide notes predominate the corpus (16/20; 80%), while spontaneous notes constitute a minority (4/20; 20%). Planned notes more frequently exhibit directive formulations, systematic shifts toward post-death or future reference, and restrained punctuation. By contrast, spontaneous notes more often show structural compression, present-focused immediacy, and reduced punctuation regulation.

Contextual Supplementary Insights

To contextualize these results, supplementary insights were drawn from interviews with mental-health practitioners and the BISA Helpline, a national Indonesian NGO providing suicide-prevention services. These consultations did not form part of the empirical dataset; rather, they were used to situate the linguistic interpretations within established crisis-support practices. According to Diny Amenike, M.Psi., a clinical psychologist at Rumah Sakit Umum Bunda Padang, individuals seeking psychological support frequently articulate suicidal intent in

action-oriented and future-directed terms, for example, “I will take my medication,” “I will go to the bridge,” and “I am tired of living.” Such formulations suggest that suicidal ideation may, in some cases, be expressed as a formed plan rather than solely as a momentary emotional outburst.

Similarly, Ani Yulinda, a coordinator and frontline responder at BISA Helpline, reported that crisis messages often resemble suicide-note discourse and may include directive and posthumous orientation, such as “please tell my family,” “I want to kill myself,” and “how to die without pain.” Linguistically, these utterances parallel the directive, future-oriented, and audience-managed features identified in the planned suicide notes analyzed in this study (Balt et al., 2021; Sanni, 2025). Taken together, these practitioner perspectives provide contextual support for interpreting planned-note features as reflecting stronger communicative organization at the time of writing.

The present findings also align with prior research indicating that suicidal communication

in spoken, written, or online contexts can exhibit systematic linguistic tendencies, including increased use of self-referential forms and cognition-related language alongside elevated negative affect (Owen et al., 2012; Homan et al., 2022; Hao, 2024). In this sense, suicide notes may be understood as an intensified and final form of a broader communicative trajectory that can sometimes be observable in earlier help-seeking interactions. Accordingly, identifying convergent stylistic indicators—particularly future-directed language, directive formulations, and closure-oriented structuring—may offer practical value for risk assessment and timely intervention in crisis-support settings.

Linguistic Characteristics of Planned Suicide Notes (80%)

Planned suicide notes consistently demonstrate a high degree of textual stability and intentionality across Prokofyeva's three core stylistic domains: text structure, grammatical tense and aspect, and punctuation. Structurally, most planned notes follow a coherent progression from an explicit or implicit address to a culmination containing apologies, gratitude, self-evaluation, or moral reflection, and finally to a closure marked by farewell expressions or posthumous instructions. Several cases (e.g., Cases 5, 8, 11, and 18) exhibit layered and extended structuring, indicating more elaborate textual development.

Grammatically, planned suicide notes are characterized by systematic tense and aspect shifts that function beyond their literal temporal reference. A dominant pattern involves present-tense constructions functioning as future-oriented or post-death statements, as illustrated by “aku pamit” (I say goodbye), “tolong mayatku” (help my corpse), “kalau mama nemu” (if mama found), and “pengen dikubur” (want to be buried). These constructions are grammatically present but conceptually project actions or states that follow death. Planned notes also frequently contain past tense or perfective forms used for self-evaluation, for example, “selama ini gawe salah” (all this time I've been doing it wrong) and “selalu nyusahin” (always causing trouble), which

frame experience as moral assessment rather than narrative recounting. In notes containing regional languages, perfective markers such as “wis” (Javanese, meaning already) further intensify the sense of completion and finality.

Punctuation in planned suicide notes is typically restrained and functional. Periods and commas are used selectively to mark boundaries and closure, producing controlled sentence termination and a formal sense of finality. The relative absence of chaotic punctuation—such as excessive ellipses, exclamation marks, or fragmented syntax—co-occurs with the overall pattern of stylistic control.

Linguistic Characteristics of Spontaneous Suicide Notes (20%)

In contrast, spontaneous suicide notes display stylistic instability and reduced planning across the same domains. Structurally, these notes often lack a clear separation between introduction, culmination, and closure. In several cases (e.g., Cases 2 and 9), emotional expression dominates, resulting in collapsed stages, abrupt endings, and limited post-death orientation.

Grammatically, spontaneous notes are dominated by present-tense constructions expressing immediate distress, such as “aku bingung” (I am confused) and “hatiku sangat terluka” (my heart is deeply hurt). These forms foreground ongoing emotional experience rather than reflective evaluation or decisional closure. When future orientation occurs (e.g., Case 12), it tends to appear tentative, hypothetical, or internally inconsistent, suggesting unresolved deliberation rather than a finalized plan.

Punctuation in spontaneous notes is extremely limited or inconsistently applied, often with weak sentence boundaries, run-on constructions, and fragmented phrasing. Together, these features differentiate spontaneous notes from planned notes by signaling immediacy, instability, and reduced editorial control during acute crisis writing.

The explanation in Table 2 also clarifies this analysis.

Table 2. Linguistic Category Planned vs. Spontaneous Suicide Notes

Linguistic Category	Pattern	Linguistics Evidences (Quote/Highlighted)
Grammar	Present tense used as future (planned type)	- “Indah udah tenang mak” (Indah is at peace now mam) and “aku akan jaga dia di alam yang berbeda ini” (I will take care of him in this different realm). The present form describes a state or action that logically occurs after death. - “Aku tidak akan mengganggu kamu lagi” (I won’t bother you anymore) and “jangan tangisi kepergianku” (Don’t cry over my departure), Present-tense constructions function as future-oriented directives, indicating that the writer already conceptualized death as imminent and certain. - Religious imperatives in the Makassar language “Jangan ki tinggalkan shalat” (don't leave prayer) grammatically occur in the present but regulate behavior after the writer’s death, functioning as future directives.
	Past tense functioning as present (planned type)	- The writer repeatedly evaluates himself using past form “papa telah gagal” (papa has failed), “papa bukan suami yang baik” (dad is not a good husband) to describe states that are still psychologically relevant. - Past references to “kau pernah gagal” (you have failed) are not narrative but evaluative, used to justify current moral judgment. This aligns with Prokofyeva’s observation that the past tense can function as present relevance. - Expressions in the Javanese language like “aku wis ra kuat” (I am not strong enough) frame current psychological exhaustion as something already completed, aligning with the tendency to narrate the present as past.
	Present tense (spontaneous type)	- Relies exclusively on present-tense expressions such as “aku nggak kuat lagi” (I can’t take it anymore), “aku tidak sanggup menghadapinya sendiri” (I can’t face it alone), and “aku benar-benar menyerah” (I really give up). There is no tense shifting or future projection, indicating that the writer is cognitively confined to the immediate emotional crisis, a hallmark of spontaneous suicidal ideation. - Dominant use of the present tense to describe distress “aku bingung” (I am confused), “hatiku sangat terluka” (my heart is hurt), reflecting immediate emotional experience rather than reflection. - Phrases in the Palembang language like “aku tidok selamo nyo” (I will not be here for long) and “bawak tedok” (to go to sleep) use present forms to euphemistically refer to imminent death, signaling immediacy without elaboration.
Text Structure	Explicit form of address (planned type)	- Explicitly address “Mak” (mother), clearly identifying the intended recipient. This explicit address signals communicative

		intent and planning, as the writer consciously frames the note for a specific audience.
	Structure closing/farewell (planned type)	- Ends with “AKU PAMIT” (I am leaving), “ini akhir pertemuan kita” (this is the end of our meeting), and “jangan tangisi kepergianku” (don’t cry over my departure), these expressions function as ritualized leave-taking, marking psychological closure and fulfilling the conclusion component of a planned suicide note.
	Fully developed structure (planned type)	- The note progresses form salutation → justification → instructions → prayer → signature, showing deliberate and complete organization.
	Fragmented structure (planned type)	- The note lacks a clear opening address and ends without a ritualized farewell or signature, indicating incomplete organization.
	Absence of structure (spontaneous type)	- Lack of form of address. Progression, instructions, or farewell. The text consists of repetitive emotional statements “bunuh diri” (suicide) without narrative development, indicating an absence of cognitive organization typical of a spontaneous note. - There is no acknowledgment of death, apology, or farewell, which are core components of suicide-note structure - The addressee in Palembang language “kamu 3 beranak” (you have 3 children) is implied rather than formally addressed, reflecting intimacy but minimal audience management. - Introduction, justification, and acknowledgment of death are merged into a single compressed sequence, characteristic of spontaneous note.
Punctuation	Minimalist punctuation (planned type)	- Punctuation is limited to simple commas, periods, and orderly line breaks. The absence of expressive punctuation (ellipses, dashes, exclamation marks) suggests emotional containment and controlled self-expression, consistent with resolved intent.
	Chaotic or unregulated punctuation (spontaneous type)	- Shows repetition, run-on constructions, and a lack of punctuation, resulting in unclear meaning. This unstructured punctuation reflects emotional flooding and reduced self-monitoring, characteristic of acute crisis writing. - The absence of ellipses, dashes, or exclamation marks indicates resignation rather than emotional escalation.

Based on the analysis presented in Table 2, the linguistic patterns identified across grammar, text structure, and punctuation reveal systematic stylistic distinctions between planned and spontaneous suicide notes.

Grammar: Tense as a Marker of Cognitive Orientation and Psychological Resolution

Present Tense Functioning as Future in Planned Suicide Notes

In planned suicide notes, present-tense constructions frequently function as future-

oriented or post-death statements (Alario & Niciu, 2022; Jongkind et al., 2024). Expressions such as “Indah udah tenang mak” (Indah is at peace now mam) and “aku akan jaga dia di alam yang berbeda ini” (I will take care of him in this different realm) describe states or actions that logically occur after death but are linguistically framed as conceptually accessible at the moment of writing. From a forensic stylistic perspective, this grammatical pattern functions as a linguistic proxy for anticipatory orientation toward death, indicating how writers discursively position post-death states as conceptually accessible, without constituting a clinical assessment of psychological acceptance (Bekircan et al., 2025; Dor-Ziderman et al., 2025; Souza et al., 2025).

Consistent with Prokofyeva’s (2013) framework, such tense manipulation functions as a stylistic marker of planned suicidal intent. Linguistically, it enables meaning-making, identity renegotiation, and emotional closure by positioning death not as a future uncertainty, but as an already integrated outcome (K. Kim et al., 2019; Teixeira et al., 2021; Stella et al., 2022; Gay, 2025). Taken together, the convergence of tense shifting, structured progression, and punctuation control forms a coherent stylistic configuration characteristic of planned suicide notes, indicating deliberate communicative organization rather than isolated linguistic features.

Past Tense Functioning as Present in Planned Suicide Notes

Past-tense and perfective constructions in planned suicide notes often serve evaluative rather than narrative functions (Ahuja et al., 2024). Statements such as “papa telah gagal” (papa has failed) and “papa bukan suami yang baik” (dad is not a good husband) transform lived experience into moral self-assessment, legitimizing present self-condemnation (Prescott et al., 2018; Tsai et al., 2025).

A similar process is evident in Javanese expressions such as “aku wis ra kuat” (I am no longer strong enough), where the perfective marker “wis” (already) frames ongoing psychological exhaustion as a completed state. This temporal framing symbolically marks the

cessation of endurance and reflects emotional finality, a cognitive indicator consistently associated with resolved and planned suicidal intent (Knipe et al., 2022; Viner et al., 2022; Zisk et al., 2023; Bravve et al., 2025). Related studies likewise emphasize that past-tense and perfective constructions function as linguistic signals of self-evaluation, decisional closure, and affective resolution (Fatima & Farukh Arslan, 2025; Tahir & Jahrir, 2025).

Present Tense in Spontaneous Suicide Notes: Immediacy and Cognitive Constriction

By contrast, spontaneous suicide notes rely almost exclusively on present-tense expressions of acute distress, such as “aku nggak kuat lagi,” (I can’t take it anymore) “aku tidak sanggup menghadapinya sendiri,” (I am not facing it alone), and “aku benar-benar menyerah” (I am really giving up). The absence of tense shifting or future-oriented projection reflects cognitive constriction, whereby attention is confined to immediate emotional pain without temporal distancing or reflective evaluation.

Linguistically, this profile signals urgency rather than resolution and aligns with empirical evidence indicating that spontaneous suicidal states are characterized by narrowed cognition, heightened emotional intensity, and reduced narrative organization (Bruno et al., 2023; Dobbs et al., 2023; Hoptman et al., 2024).

Text Structure: Organization as a Reflection of Intentionality

Planned suicide notes consistently exhibit explicit forms of address, such as “Mak” (mother), ritualized farewell expressions “AKU PAMIT” (I say goodbye), “ini akhir pertemuan kita,” (this is the last of our meeting), or “jangan tangisi kepergianku” (don’t cry over my departure), and coherence progression from salutation to justification, instruction, and closure. Such an organization reflects preserved executive functioning, emotional regulation, and psychological acceptance of death, challenging the assumption of inherent impulsivity (Sinaga, 2025).

In contrast, spontaneous suicide notes frequently lack a clear address, closure, or acknowledgment of death. Emotional expression, justification, and intent are compressed into fragmented sequences with minimal audience management. Implied addressees and repetitive emotional statements, such as “bunuh diri” (suicide) in Palembang expressions such as “kamu 3 beranak” (you have 3 children), signal emotional overload and cognitive disorganization rather than deliberate communicative planning (Pastika & Widiatmika, 2025; Sinaga, 2025).

Punctuation: Emotional Regulation Versus Emotional Flooding

Punctuation in planned suicide notes is typically minimalist and controlled, reinforcing sentence boundaries and signalling sustained self-monitoring and affect regulation. Spontaneous suicide notes, by contrast, exhibit punctuation disorganization, run-on constructions, and fragmented phrasing, mirroring emotional flooding and diminished executive control. Notably, the absence of expressive punctuation often reflects resignation rather than emotional escalation. As argued by (Diana & Klau, 2023), such punctuation patterns provide reliable linguistic indicators distinguishing resolved suicidal intent from acute crisis states.

Taken together, these domain-specific findings demonstrate that distinctions between planned and spontaneous suicide notes emerge most clearly through an integrated interpretation of grammatical, structural, and punctuation features. The following discussion interprets these converging stylistic indicators as evidence of differing degrees of suicidal planning, consistent with Prokofyeva’s (2013) forensic stylistic framework.

3. Discussion

Building on the results across grammar, text structure, and punctuation, this study shows that Prokofyeva’s (2013) forensic stylistic framework can distinguish planned from spontaneous (unplanned) suicide notes in the Indonesian context through an integrated interpretation of converging linguistic indicators. While each

domain was examined separately for analytical clarity, the distinction between planned and spontaneous notes emerges most clearly when these domains are synthesized, revealing systematic contrasts in discourse organization, temporal orientation, and punctuation regulation at the moment of writing.

At the distributional level, the corpus is dominated by planned suicide notes (16/20; 80%), while spontaneous notes account for only (4/20; 20%). This pattern challenges the widespread assumption that suicidal communication is predominantly impulsive or linguistically chaotic. Instead, most notes exhibit purposive communication, including explicit or implied addressee orientation, a recognizable progression of meaning (e.g., address → evaluation/apology → instruction → closure), and punctuation used for controlled segmentation rather than emotional display. From a forensic stylistic perspective, these features indicate premeditation and post-death anticipation: the suicide note functions as a communicative artifact designed to manage posthumous interpretation, rather than as an uncontrolled emotional outburst. This finding closely aligns with Prokofyeva’s model and mirrors international research identifying linguistic markers of composure, planning, and resolved intent in suicide notes (J. Kim et al., 2015; Jaafar & Jaafar, 2022; Allen Mark Jeffrey et al., 2024; Conner et al., 2005; Kanyama, 2023; Sanni, 2025).

Among the three stylistic domains, grammar provides one of the clearest diagnostic contrasts between planned and spontaneous suicides. Tense selection systematically reflects whether the writer conceptualizes death as an unresolved crisis or as an accepted and imminent outcome (Liu, 2024; Potdar, 2025). Planned notes consistently demonstrate tense shifting and functional reinterpretation, particularly the use of present forms to project an inevitable or already integrated future (Verhagen, 2019; Chandekar, 2020; Kohn & Albl-Mikasa, 2021). Linguistically, this pattern reflects cognitive repositioning, whereby death is no longer hypothetical but

embedded within the writer's temporal framework (Abd Rahim & Alias, 2021; Wulfekühler, 2021; Yoon, 2022). In contrast, spontaneous notes remain anchored in present-tense immediacy, expressing distress as an ongoing crisis with minimal temporal distancing or narrative organization (Tucker & Lavis, 2019; Spinelli et al., 2020; Muntigl et al., 2023). Grammar, therefore, indexes whether suicidal communication emerges from an unresolved crisis or from a psychologically resolved endpoint (Freedenthal, 2007; K. A. Lawrence et al., 2021).

Text-structural patterns reinforce this distinction. Planned suicide notes consistently demonstrate audience awareness through explicit forms of address and conventional closure markers, including farewells and post-death instructions (Synnott et al., 2018; Abaalkhail, 2020). Such an organization requires deliberate discourse planning and signals an intention to regulate how the message will be received by survivors, rather than functioning as a mediated expression of immediate distress (Berezhnykh et al., 2019; Stasiuk, 2019; Sharon & John, 2025). Spontaneous notes, by contrast, frequently lack clear address or closure, compressing emotion, justification, and intent into fragmented sequences with limited audience management.

Punctuation further differentiates emotional regulation from emotional flooding. Planned notes are typified by punctuation restraint-periods, commas, and orderly line breaks that establish sentence boundaries and textual finality-reflecting preserved editorial control (Diliana & Klau, 2023b). Spontaneous notes more often display reduced or inconsistent punctuation, run-on constructions, and repetition, indicating cognitive overload and diminished self-monitoring during acute crisis writing (Kumar, 2019; Calil & Myhill, 2020).

An additional contribution of this study concerns language choice. The use of Bahasa Indonesia alongside regional languages such as Javanese, Makassarese, and Palembang Malay emerges as a functionally motivated stylistic resource, particularly in planned notes. Regional forms are employed to reinforce completion meanings,

intensify interpersonal intimacy, or convey moral and religious injunctions (Alkhawaldeh, 2022; Fuchs & González, 2022; Minor et al., 2023; Ingush language & Khadzieva, 2025). This finding suggests that suicidal planfulness is linguistically realized through an interaction between universal discourse features and culturally specific linguistic resources, underscoring the importance of contextualized forensic stylistic analysis in non-Western settings.

Demographic variables provide additional socio-pragmatic context but do not account for the observed stylistic distinctions (Gupta et al., 2022; Ghadipasha et al., 2024; Potdar, 2025). Although the corpus is geographically dominated by cases from Java (14/20; 70%), followed by Sumatra (15%), Sulawesi (10%), and Bali (5%), stylistic distinctions between planned and spontaneous notes remain consistent across regions (Stoychev et al., 2021; Geith et al., 2025), suggesting that the identified linguistic markers reflect psychological state rather than region-specific linguistic behaviour.

In terms of gender, the dataset includes 11 female authors (55%) and 9 male authors (45%), indicating that suicide note authorship in this corpus is not male-dominated. This finding is consistent with clinical observations reported by Indonesian mental health practitioners. Diny Amenike, M.Psi., a practicing clinical psychologist at Rumah Sakit Umum Bunda Padang, notes that women tend to express their psychological distress more directly and assertively during clinical consultations, articulating emotional exhaustion, relational pain, feelings of abandonment, and psychological fatigue in explicit terms. This communicative tendency highlights the importance of preventive mental health interventions that focus on emotional regulation, cognitive reassurance, and early psychological support for individuals experiencing depressive symptoms (Daros et al., 2021; Atta et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2025). Importantly, however, the stylistic distinction between planned and spontaneous suicide notes identified in this study does not align with gender boundaries, suggesting that suicidal intentionality

is linguistically realized independently of gender (Jaworski, 2010; E. Kim et al., 2023; Stanton et al., 2025).

Similarly, age distributions (20%), young adults (20%), adults (40%), and middle-aged adults (20%) indicate that age is not a primary predictor of suicide type. Across age groups, both planned and spontaneous notes exhibit comparable stylistic markers of intentionality and crisis, reinforcing the conclusion that linguistic patterns of suicidal communication are shaped more by psychological state than by demographic category (O'Dea et al., 2017; S. Fekete et al., 2018; Handley et al., 2018).

By identifying these linguistic warning signs, this study contributes to early preventive detection for individuals experiencing suicidal ideation. Linguistic markers-future-oriented directives, posthumous evaluation, structured closure, and punctuation control-may function as early indicators of elevated suicide risk. Practically, these findings can inform linguistic screening guidelines for crisis hotlines, suicide-prevention NGO, and forensic investigators by identifying language patterns that signal imminent risk or deliberate planning, enabling earlier intervention and more evidence-based case assessment. To contextualize the applied relevance of these findings, the author has engaged in professional dialogue with a national Indonesian non-governmental organization (NGO), BISA Helpline (<https://bisahelpline.org>), regarding how similar linguistic patterns recur in depressive and suicidal communication. This engagement did not form part of the empirical dataset but served to situate the findings within existing prevention practices.

Finally, these findings also support more nuanced and ethically grounded legal outcomes.

Distinguishing between planned and spontaneous suicides can inform case classification, allocation of investigative resources, and communication, while a clear interpretation of psychological state and communicative intent helps reduce stigma, speculation, and misinterpretation surrounding suicide cases.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that forensic stylistic analysis provides a reliable linguistic basis for distinguishing planned from spontaneous suicides in Indonesian suicide notes. Systematic differences in grammar, text structure, and punctuation reveal distinct patterns of suicidal intentionality: planned notes are characterized by future-oriented tense use, structured closure, and controlled punctuation, whereas spontaneous notes display present-focused immediacy, structural fragmentation, and reduced editorial control associated with acute emotional crisis. Importantly, these stylistic distinctions operate independently of gender, age, and regional origin, underscoring the primacy of linguistic organization over demographic variables in identifying suicide planning.

Despite ethical and data-access constraints that limit sample size, this study contributes empirical and methodological insights to forensic linguistics by demonstrating the diagnostic value of stylistic markers in suicide-note analysis. The findings highlight the potential of linguistic evidence to support forensic interpretation and inform early detection and prevention efforts, offering a linguistically grounded approach to understanding suicidal communication in the Indonesian context.

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