Linguistic markers in cross-nation suicide notes and their implications for authenticity verification

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ABSTRACT
The relevance and validity of linguistic markers in distinguishing genuine from fabricated suicide notes remain a subject of unresolved debate as highlighted by past studies. However, much of the existing research relies on the same corpus; thus, the need for fresh insights using newer datasets is required. This study investigates linguistic markers in recent cross-nation suicide notes and their implications for authenticity verification. Grounded in Olsson's (2008, 2012) linguistic feature theory, the research analyzed ten genuine and five fabricated suicide notes drawn from real cases across eight countries. The data were sourced from verified news reports with validation ensured through intertextual reports. Using a qualitative approach, the study identified both overlapping and distinctive linguistic markers between genuine and fabricated notes. Key markers consistently associated with genuine suicide notes include suicidal propositions, the framing of suicide as the only viable option, explicit references to death, and emotional ambivalence. These markers are shown to be difficult to convincingly replicate in fabricated notes, providing a potential basis for authenticity verification. Although this study has several limitations, including the small sample size, translation issue of non-English or non-Indonesian notes, and the inherent subjectivity due to qualitative nature, it contributes to clarifying the reliability of linguistic analysis in determining the authenticity of suicide notes and underscores the importance of four specific linguistic markers in distinguishing genuine from fabricated notes. This study also strengthens the relevance of suicide note linguistic markers by connecting psychological reasonings represented by linguistic expressions.

Keywords: Authenticity; cross-nation; forensic linguistics; linguistic marker; suicide note

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing cases of language-based crime (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024; Faguy, 2023; Negi, 2024; Riadi et al., 2022; Zifana et al., 2022), such as hate speech, cyberbullying, fake news, perjury, and so on, forensic linguistics has established its position as a resort of resolution through the provision of linguistic evidence acting as legal evidence (Heydon, 2020; Maudisha, 2023; Pastika, 2018; Shuy, 1996). As a part of applied linguistics, forensic linguistics is fundamentally based on the intricate connection between language and the legal system (Alduais et al., 2023; Pastika, 2021). The connection encompasses the study of language as legal evidence and language as legal discourse (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014; Sitanggang, 2023). One of the various applications of forensic linguistics is investigating suicide notes to ascertain their authenticity.

Within the framework of forensic linguistics, there is forensic stylistics. Forensic stylistics involves the examination of identifiable style markers characteristic of an individual or a group of individuals (McMenamin, 1993). It further identifies

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patterns of style in a text (Adepoju, 2016) and what those patterns mean in forensic context (Canning, 2023). In regard to suicide notes, forensic stylistics holds a pivotal role in analyzing their authenticity, a term commonly used in the context of suicide note analysis as a synonym for authenticity (Olsson, 2008). The primary goal is to determine whether a given note is written by the deceased or if it has been fabricated. This analysis is grounded in the premise that genuine notes have particular linguistic patterns and markers that can be identified and compared to their fabricated counterparts. Consequently, such linguistic analysis can offer evidence to verify the authenticity of a suicide note.

Considerable research has been conducted that aims to analyze the authenticity of suicide notes. However, findings of several studies lead to a debate on the validity of stylistic analysis in determining a suicide note's genuine quality. An argument argues that it is not feasible to distinguish between genuine and fabricated suicide notes based on a study conducted in South Africa (Grundlingh, 2020). She posits that there are no distinctive characteristics that can reliably identify and classify suicide notes as genuine or fabricated. Furthermore, there is impossibility to differ genuine and fabricated suicide notes because people can replicate the expressions of genuine suicide notes (Osgood & Walker, 1959). When psychiatrists and psychologists were asked to identify, only 14% of them could distinguish genuine and fabricated notes (Arbeit & Blatt, 1973). Obscurity is also found in measuring authenticity of suicide notes (Leenaars & Lester, 1990).

On the other hand, there are studies that acknowledge significant contrast between genuine and fabricated suicide notes. A study found that genuine and fabricated notes have different linguistic markers, such as expressions of love, guilt, separation, declarations of self-identity, achievements, recollections of past memories, and instructions are found in genuine notes, whereas the use of names, unusual phrase structures, inconsistent meanings, and unnatural expressions of sadness are found in fabricated notes (Shapero, 2011). Genuine and fabricated suicide notes can also be delineated by themes (Ioannou & Debowska, 2014) There are also insider and outsider languages that represent distinct styles between genuine and fabricated suicide notes (Olsson, 2008, 2012). Other markers that differ genuine suicide notes are the reasons for suicide, discussing illness, crime, self-blame, suffering, emotional statements, text structure, grammar indicating past events, and specific punctuation such as double dashes, ellipses, and exclamation marks (Prokofyeva, 2013). However, it is important to note that the genuineness of the suicide notes analyzed in Prokofyeva's study (2013) is questionable as the data were sourced from websites that did not provide verifiable information

about the suicide cases. This lack of validation undermines the reliability of the findings and highlights the need for studies that utilize verified real-world cases to ensure the quality and authenticity of the data.

Most of previous studies (Arbeit & Blatt, 1973; Grundlingh, 2020; Ioannou & Debowska, 2014; Leenaars & Lester, 1990; Osgood & Walker, 1959; Shapero, 2011) used similar data collected from Shneidman & Farberow's (1957) corpus. Therefore, an issue has been identified, namely the varying analysis and interpretation of the same corpus. Although Grundlingh (2020) asserts the impossibility of distinguishing between genuine and fabricated suicide notes, she still recommends further research to collect data consisting of both genuine and fabricated notes from actual situations since the fabricated ones from Shneidman and Farberow's (1957) corpus were created for research purpose. Based on this statement, it is necessary to collect genuine and fabricated notes derived from factual suicide and homicide cases. The necessity of having newer datasets is also driven by the unsuitability of previous corpora in contemporary time. First, the data from previous corpora are outdated and may no longer accurately reflect modern linguistic patterns or sociocultural contexts, limiting their relevance to contemporary research. Second, the fabricated notes in these corpora were artificially constructed for research purposes, which calls into question their comparability to real-world fabricated notes. Status-quo suggests that fabricated notes have become increasingly adept at mimicking genuine ones through the replication of linguistic markers. This ability to mimic may be influenced by the growing public exposure to genuine suicide notes over time; thus, creators of fabricated notes are able to refine their imitations. Consequently, newer datasets may yield novel insights that were not apparent in earlier studies. For instance, if fabricated suicide notes have evolved to the point where they lack distinct differentiating markers, it is possible that genuine suicide notes now exhibit unique and robust markers that cannot be convincingly replicated. This potential shift underscores the importance of analyzing contemporary datasets to identify such markers and refine methods for authenticity verification. With the conflicting perspectives upon authenticity implication of linguistic markers in suicide notes, current study is present to provide authentic data to clarify the debate, which includes to confirm the relevance of linguistic markers in distinguishing suicide notes.

Furthermore, previous studies (Arbeit & Blatt, 1973; Black, 1993; Ioannou & Debowska, 2014; Leenaars & Lester, 1990; Osgood & Walker, 1959) mostly analyzed data from one country, or even from one specific town, such as from Los Angeles, the United States of America since most studies

only used Shneidman & Farberow's (1957) corpus. Two other studies incorporated another corpus from another area, such as Birmingham, the United Kingdom (Shapero, 2011) and South Africa (Grundlingh, 2020). The fact that previous linguistic research on suicide notes has only examined data from a single country underscores the necessity for a comparative identification study that can produce representative results. The narrow focus derived from data from one country may overlook linguistic variations that can significantly influence the authenticity of suicide notes. By examining notes from multiple countries, universal markers can be identified, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and psychological aspects of suicide notes. For this reason, current study analyzed suicide notes derived from eight countries.

Previous studies have predominantly concentrated on linguistic analysis, resulting in comparisons based solely on the data at hand. These comparisons have led to conflicting claims, which have been further substantiated by juxtaposing and contrasting them with prior research. In order to elucidate this ongoing debate, the current study adopts a novel approach by integrating findings with psychological premises as it owes to the fact that language serves an interrelation with the cognitive system of a human both as an individual and as a member of societal system (Widdowson, 1996). This integration aims to fortify the role of linguistic markers in distinguishing between genuine and fabricated suicide notes, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors.

Based on the foregoing background, current study answers the following problems: 1) what are the shared linguistic markers of genuine and fabricated cross-nation suicide notes? and 2) to what extent can linguistic markers determine the authenticity of suicide notes from psychological perspective? Incorporating interdisciplinary study combining linguistics and psychology provides analysis for why certain linguistic markers appear in genuine and fabricated suicide notes.

The current study differs methodologically from prior research in several key ways. While previous studies (Grundlingh, 2020; Olsson, 2008, 2012) predominantly relied on simulated suicide notes developed for research purposes, this study utilizes real-world cases obtained from verified sources, including news reports and official records. Simulated suicide notes, often created in controlled environments, may not fully capture the linguistic complexity and emotional authenticity of genuine suicide notes. In contrast, fabricated suicide notes in real-world cases are often written by individuals who have been exposed to genuine suicide notes through media or other sources, making them more realistic and challenging to distinguish from genuine

ones. While Olsson's (2008, 2012) linguistic feature theory provides a foundational framework for analyzing suicide notes, Olsson's theory was developed primarily using simulated suicide notes, which, as discussed earlier, may not fully replicate the linguistic and emotional complexity of real-world cases. Similarly, Grundlingh's (2020) findings, while valuable, are based on a limited dataset that does not account for cross-national variations. The current study addresses these limitations by utilizing real-world data from multiple countries, thereby offering a more robust and contextually grounded application of Olsson's theory. By doing so, this study not only clarifies debates in forensic stylistics but also extends the theoretical framework to accommodate cross-national and real-world contexts. By analyzing data from multiple countries, this study also provides insights into whether linguistic markers in suicide notes are consistent across different cultural and linguistic contexts.

METHOD
This study employed a qualitative approach within the framework of forensic linguistics. While the primary focus is on qualitative analysis, frequency counts of specific linguistic markers were used to identify patterns and support the qualitative findings. This approach aligns with the research questions, which seek to explore the linguistic markers of suicide notes.

Data Collection
The corpus analyzed in the current study comprised 15 suicide notes verified through online news platforms. These data were sourced from online news media reports that had been authenticated by local authorities, as indicated by the remarks within the news articles. The credibility of these reports was further validated through intertextual analysis, which involved cross-referencing multiple news articles from various online media platforms concerning specific suicide cases. This verification process included checking the publication dates of the news articles, ranging from the initial report to the latest updates, to ensure the data's accuracy and relevance, thereby assembling a factual corpus for analysis.

The 15 suicide notes were composed in English, Indonesian, Korean, Mandarin, and Hindi, and originated from various countries, including Indonesia, Nigeria, India, South Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States, and South Africa. Among these, there were 10 genuine suicide notes and 5 fabricated ones. The disparity in sample sizes is attributable to the relative rarity of fabricated notes from staged suicides compared to genuine notes from actual suicide cases. Despite the unequal sample sizes, qualitative analysis can reveal

distinctive characteristics and patterns that differentiate genuine from fabricated notes. Although the number of data is small, the data involve diverse geographical area that enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Data collection was conducted using a documentation method. The collected data included images of suicide notes, copies of their handwritten content, and related documentation. The linguistic markers analyzed encompassed language style, sentence structure, punctuation, lexicon, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, propositions, meanings, textual coherence, and non-verbal markers, if present. The data collection process involved the following steps: searching with the keyword 'suicide note in X' on Google (where 'X' denotes a country), opening online news sites reporting suicide cases, verifying the case details to distinguish real or fake suicides, cross-referencing multiple news sites for intertextual verification, examining the earliest and latest reports on the same case for relevance, and obtaining images or text of the suicide notes. For non-English notes, official English translations were sourced from online news media providing direct translations. However, the English translations of these notes cannot be used as a reliable standard for word count feature as translations are not always literal and do not necessarily match the original word count; thus, this

is also a limitation of this study. Furthermore, the potential semantic shifts could also influence the uniqueness of suicide notes.

To address linguistic diversity, this study analyzed suicide notes in English and Indonesian, as the authors are proficient in these languages. Indonesian notes were translated into English by the authors. For non-English/Indonesian notes, we selected web sources that provided verified English translations to prevent meaning loss. Our selection criteria focused on suicide notes in English or with English translations that were publicly available through verified news reports. While some linguistic markers may not fully translate across languages, our focus on universal stylistic markers minimized distortion risks. Countries were selected based on data availability and linguistic diversity, aiming to include notes from distinct cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The year of publication is within a contemporary timeframe, which is within the last 10 years, to reflect current trends in suicidal discourse and maintain relevance to modern forensic and linguistic analysis.

Below is the list of suicide notes analyzed in this study. Each note is coded differently for reference and cohesion purposes. The code 'GS' is for genuine suicide notes, while 'FS' is for fabricated suicide notes.

Table 1
List of Selected Suicide Notes

No	Code	Country	Year	Length in Word	Source	Date Accessed
1	GS-1	Nigeria	2024	66	Oloniniran & Aina (2024)	September 5th, 2024
2	GS-2	South Korea	2017	NA	Chung (2021)	September 5th, 2024
3	GS-3	South Africa	2022	161	Sithole (2022)	September 5th, 2024
4	GS-4	Singapore	n.d	NA	Sameer (n.d.)	September 5th, 2024
5	GS-5	United States	2020	22	Carrega & Katersky (2020)	September 5th, 2024
6	GS-6	United States	2020	183	Edelman & Italiano (2020)	September 5th, 2024
7	GS-7	United States	2022	181	Solomon (2022)	September 5th, 2024
8	GS-8	India	2024	250	Gurjar (2024)	September 5th, 2024
9	GS-9	Indonesia	2024	158	Gunawan (2020)	September 5th, 2024
10	GS-10	Indonesia	2021	134	Dirhantoro (2021)	September 5th, 2024
11	FS-1	Indonesia	2023	44	Monalisa (2024)	September 5th, 2024
12	FS-2	United Kingdom	2021	230	Shah (2021)	September 5th, 2024
13	FS-3	United Kingdom	2022	39	Bardsley (2022)	September 5th, 2024
14	FS-4	United States	2012	214	Court Records (2012)	September 5th, 2024
15	FS-5	Indonesia	2023	153	Wisely (2023)	September 5th, 2024

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a mixed-methods approach. The descriptive-qualitative method was employed to analyze the data within the framework of Olsson's (2008, 2012) classification of suicide note linguistic markers, given the comprehensiveness of his categorization. Olsson (2008) produced six linguistic markers that distinguish genuine suicide notes from their fabricated counterparts based on his observation and analysis on Schneidman and Farberow's corpus (1957). They are unequivocal proposition of suicide, proposition is related to suicide or with the suicide

note, the proposition should be thematic and direct, expression of suicide is the only course of action, less than 300 words, and not really obvious situational context. Olsson (2012) further developed these markers, which led to the creation these two terms, insider language and outsider language. The six markers identified earlier (Olsson, 2008) became parts of the insider language. Insider language arises from individuals with suicidal intent or those who have genuinely committed suicide (Olsson, 2012). The markers are expression of being constrained and unable to find an escape, expression of love and apologies, admiration for the living, expression of

inability or weakness to continue living, self-blame, emotional ambivalence, and reference to death. In contrast, outsider language mimics the responses of people about suicide or originates from individuals without suicidal intent (Olsson, 2012). The outsider markers are negative label, expression of blame and anger, and highlight of external matters, including other people and situations.

The quantitative method was utilized to count the occurrences of each identified marker. The steps for data analysis included: (1) identifying linguistic units in the suicide notes based on Olsson's classification of authentic and fabricated markers, (2) quantifying the frequency of these markers, (3) interpreting the quantitative results through qualitative analysis, (4) comparing the findings with Olsson's theory to assess its relevance, and (5) identifying the psychological representations of the observed linguistic markers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
This section presents three discussions, namely the linguistic markers of genuine and fabricated suicide notes across different countries, the psychological implications of these markers, and the relevance of linguistic markers in determining the authenticity of suicide notes. The first discussion identifies linguistic markers found in genuine and fabricated suicide notes. The second discussion delves into the psychological conditions of victims or individuals with suicidal tendencies. In this second discussion, the relationship between linguistic markers of suicide notes and the psychological states of the victims is also analyzed, aiming to affirm the validity of these linguistic markers. The third discussion explains the relevance of linguistic marker theories in the context of suicide notes.

Shared Linguistic Markers of Genuine and Fabricated Cross-nation Suicide Notes
The findings of this study suggest that both genuine and fabricated suicide notes may contain linguistic markers associated with both authenticity and fabrication simultaneously as seen on Table 2. However, it is important to highlight that certain authenticity-related markers are found exclusively in genuine suicide notes. These include suicidal proposition, expression of suicide as the only option, reference to death, and emotional ambivalence. The table below presents the frequency of these markers in the suicide notes analyzed in this study.

Table 2
Frequency of Linguistic Markers in Genuine and Fabricated Suicide Notes

No	Marker	Genuine Suicide Notes		Fabricated Suicide Notes	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Suicidal Proposition	8	80	0	0
2	Proposition Directed to Recipient	8	80	4	80
3	Words Less than 300	10	100	5	100
4	Expression of Suicide is the Only Option	2	20	0	0
5	Obscure Context	6	60	1	20
6	Apology	5	50	4	80
7	Expression of Love	6	60	2	40
8	Reference of Death	5	50	0	0
9	Emotional Ambivalence	2	20	0	0
10	Self-blaming	5	50	1	20
11	Prescriptive-Directive Communication	3	30	1	20
12	Expression of Inability to Live	3	30	1	20
13	Negative Self-labelling	1	10	1	20
14	Anger	0	0	1	20
15	External Narrative	0	0	2	40

Based on Table 2, the most frequently occurring linguistic markers in genuine suicide notes are suicidal proposition, proposition directed to recipient, and words less than 300. In contrast, the least common markers are anger, external narrative, and negative self-labeling, with respective frequencies of zero, zero, and one. The absence of these three markers in genuine suicide notes is consistent with expectations, as they are typically associated with fabricated suicide notes. The fabricated suicide note section shows that the markers words less than 300, proposition directed to recipient, and apology rank as the top three in fabricated suicide notes. However, fabricated suicide notes lack markers such as suicidal proposition, expression of suicide as the only option, reference to death, and emotional ambivalence. Additionally, when compared to genuine suicide notes, the linguistic markers anger and external narrative are found only in fabricated suicide notes. Therefore, these findings align with the empirical data examined.

The marker of suicidal proposition appears only in genuine suicide notes, but none in fabricated

ones; therefore, it suggests a critical marker in determining authenticity. Based on eight data of suicidal proposition found in genuine suicide notes, recurring expressions appear in varied nations such as 'good-bye' from GS-2 and GS-10, 'I am gone' from GS-3, GS-6, and 'I won't be alive' from GS-5, GS-7, GS-8, and GS-9. These similar expressions show identical cognitive system of viewing suicide among suicidal people in cross-nations. These propositions can be expressed either explicitly or implicitly. Although written implicitly, they still convey the act of suicide through textual interrogation (Tarrayo, 2020), as they are supported by the context established within each suicide note, through preceding or following sentences. For example, an expression from GS-5 is classified as a suicide proposition due to the victim's additional clarification regarding the end of their life, expressed as 'my time to be on this earth has come to an end' after an expression 'I am gone' which at first is not necessarily about suicide. The metaphorical expression signifies death. Thus, the expression is unambiguous and cannot be interpreted as anything other than a suicide proposition.

Proposition directed to recipient marker is equally common in both genuine and fabricated suicide notes, which means this marker demonstrates insignificant contribution. The propositional marker is directed toward the recipient and reveals the relationship between the victim and the intended party. The implication of the victim's relationship with the intended recipient serves as an indication of these internal matters. This marker can be detected in the data when it contains forms of address, such as in GS-1 'I'm sorry mum, I'm sorry dad' and FS-1 '*Yang, aku mohon maaf…*', or second-person pronouns, such as in GS-3 'Mama, I hope this letter finds you' and in FS-4 '…and to you Daniele…' that indicate direct communication between the victim and the recipient of the message.

Regarding word count, the data presented indicates that all suicide notes contain fewer than 300 words. However, this study encountered challenges in counting the word count for suicide notes not written in English due to limitations in identifying the word count in the source language. Among the data that could be measured, the word count ranges from a minimum of 39 words from FS-3 to a maximum of 250 words from GS-8. Some notes could not be precisely counted due to language barriers, such as GS-2, which was written in Korean, and GS-4, which was written in Mandarin. The English translations of these notes cannot be used as a reliable standard for word count, as translations are not always literal and do not necessarily match the original word count. It is also observed that fabricated suicide notes consist of fewer than 300 words. This suggests that having

fewer than 300 words is not a significant marker in determining the authenticity of a suicide note.

Marker of expression of suicide is the only option is found only in genuine suicide notes. The finding illustrates that the victims believed suicide to be the only remaining option that could not be prevented. This suggests that, from the victims' perspective, they had explored or considered various alternatives and found no other solution to their problems aside from suicide. The data from GS-6 'None of you could have done anything – or done more – to prevent this from happening' and from GS-8 '*Yahi* last option *hai*' which has the meaning 'this is the last choice' provide a condition that no other solution remains for the victims. The data convey a sense of despair, reflecting the victims' psychological state, which may have involved feeling trapped or hopeless.

The next marker is obscure context. It is a characteristic commonly associated with genuine suicide notes. This lack of clarity often operates within the realm of internal matters. Genuine suicide notes tend to focus more on internal aspects (Olsson, 2012), such as the mental state of the victim, often enveloped in deep emotional pain. Data from GS-7 'I cry almost every day now, like I'm in mourning. I wished for death for years…' is an example of how the victim kept going around internal experience. The note from GS-7 does not have details on what incident the victim had gone through.

In some cases, the suicide note explicitly states that the reason for the suicide is confidential, and the victim expresses a desire not to share their story. An example of this can be found in note GS-7 'I cry almost every day now, like I'm in mourning. I wished for death for years. And I know you would want to know and want to help, but I haven't wanted to share this weight with anyone'. The statement 'I cry almost every day now, like I'm in mourning' indicates significant sadness, yet there is no specific explanation of what causes this sadness. Throughout the note, the victim does not detail the source of their despair. The clause 'And I know you would want to know and want to help, but I haven't wanted to share this weight with anyone' reveals the victim's decision to maintain the secrecy of her motives for committing suicide.

Next is apology marker. It is one of the frequently observed characteristics in suicide notes found in both genuine and fabricated notes. All findings use explicit apologies indicated by the use of the word 'sorry' like in GS-8 'Sorry mummy papa', GS-9 '*Maafkan papa*', and FS-2 'I am sorry to everyone'. This marker can be part of the proposition directed at the recipient. Although the victim expresses an apology, the reason or situation prompting the apology is often not explained, aligning with the marker of obscure context.

The expression of love is a notable marker of genuine suicide notes, often appearing alongside

apologies. This marker emerges in genuine suicide notes because victims are permanently leaving those close to them. As seen in apology marker, expression of love is always explicit and always uses the word 'love' like in GS-5 'Please let my children know that I love them', GS-6 'I love you', and FS-3 'I love you, please forgive me'. Therefore, as a final act of affection, victims express their love in writing.

References to death are a marker commonly found in genuine suicide notes. This marker is similar to a suicide proposition but does not go so far as to explicitly state that the victim is committing suicide. Its function is to emphasize that the victim's psychological focus is on death. The presence of death references indicates that the victim is contemplating self-harm or suicide. These references can be expressed either literally or metaphorically. In a literal sense, data from GS-7 expresses the victim's strong desire for death seen through line 'I wished for death for years'. In a metaphorical sense, data from GS-5 contains a figurative reference to death. The phrase 'if it takes my head to end this, so be it' connotes suicide. The use of the word 'head' serves as a synecdoche, symbolizing the victim's whole self and life.

Emotional ambivalence is a linguistic marker frequently found in genuine suicide notes. This marker typically appears in cases where the victim commits suicide due to feelings of anger toward certain individuals but still harbors affection for them. The data from GS-10 '*Maafkan papa, selama mendampingimu, blm bisa buat mama bahagia. Ma'af papa tdk mengatakan mama istri yg* baik' which has the meaning 'forgive me, during my time with you, I have not been able to make you happy. I'm sorry, I could not say that you are a good wife' indicates that the victim chooses to direct anger inward resulting in the form of self-blaming. The data reflects that the victim cared for his wife and marriage, yet he also held complaints to his wife.

The marker of self-blaming is a characteristic of genuine suicide notes. Examples are data from GS-1 'My brain is clogged up. My decisions are wrong' and GS-2 'I hated myself. It's all my fault'. Expressions of self-blame depict victims who perceive themselves as the source of suffering, believe that things around them are not going well, feel inadequate, and think they are causing problems for those around them. Their feelings of guilt are predominantly framed by the belief that they are a burden.

The marker of prescriptive-directive communication explains that genuine suicide notes contain requests from the victims regarding what should, may, or must not be done by the message recipients, such as in GS-9 '*Aku mohon sama kalian semua… biarkan orang yang benar-benar yang aku sayang datang'* which has the meaning 'I am begging you all… let the person I truly love come'.

As a final form of communication, suicide notes serve as the primary medium through which victims express their desires for others to act, either for their own benefit or for that of others. This marker involves the use of directive speech act verbs to create sense of request, which typically present the message in a direct manner to eliminate any ambiguity.

Expressions of an inability to continue living represent a significant marker of genuine suicide notes. These expressions indicate that the victims are unable to endure the pain and suffering in their lives, leading them to reject the prospect of continuing their existence. Data from GS-1 'I can't bear the pain anymore' and GS-7 'I cannot bear the crushing weight of persistent sadness, hopelessness, and loneliness any longer' show how the victims had experienced overwhelming amount of pain and to live with this much of suffering is not just a feasible choice.

The marker of negative self-labeling is characteristic of fabricated suicide notes. This marker reflects an outsider's perspective, as it embodies the general societal perceptions regarding individuals who contemplate suicide (Olsson, 2012). The presence of negative self-labeling in both genuine and fabricated suicide notes is associated with different emotional backgrounds. Genuine notes entail negative labelling with sadness and self-blaming, while fabricated ones are followed by anger. Data from GS-8 'I am loser, I worst daughter' and FS-5 '*Aku adalah orang paling bodoh di dunia*' which translates to 'I am the dumbest person in the world' have negative self-label; however, the emotion of the whole note between GS-8 and FS-5 is different. GS-8 is covered with sadness of not being able to fulfill parents' desire. In contrast to FS-5 that is filled with anger towards the father.

The marker of anger is significantly contrasted with the characteristics of genuine suicide notes, which typically emphasize feelings of sadness and despair. This expression of anger often includes blame directed towards others. Data from FS-5 '*Aku hari ini sangat membencinya. Sebelumnya juga, namun hilang kemudian hari ini perasaan benciku teramat dalam. Aku muak dengan drama perceraiannya. Aku jijik dari dulu hingga sekarang kepada istrinya*' which translates to 'I really hate him today. Previously too, but the feeling disappeared for a while, then today my feelings of hatred become very deep. I'm sick of his divorce drama. I have been disgusted from the past until now towards his wife' is the perfect example of anger shown by lexical choices of 'hate', 'hatred', and 'disgust'. Anger towards external parties is frequently associated with fabricated suicide notes or false wills. Anger can also emerge in individuals with genuine suicidal ideation, but it is typically directed inward (Baumeister, 1990). This is supported by an argument saying that individuals

contemplating suicide tend to perform self-attack when experiencing anger (Anilesh, 2024). Consequently, Olsson's theory regarding outsider language aligns with psychological explanations, as it incorporates the dimension of anger.

A distinctive marker of fabricated notes is their focus on external factors rather than personal feelings. This characteristic indicates that the writer lacks the psychological background typically associated with genuine suicidal ideation. When a note lacks personal emotion, it often suggests that the perspective presented is not that of someone experiencing suicidal thoughts but rather that of an outsider attempting to mimic such a state as seen from FS-2 '*I have taken what g I have left with sleeping pills so if it does kill me it's what I deserve. Feeling dizey now as took 10 min ago so hoping you understand my writing. I dropped my phone on way here so it should be in the grass somewhere*' that shows lack of internal emotion. This external focus can serve as a crucial marker in differentiating between genuine and fabricated suicide notes, providing insight into the psychological authenticity of the text.

From the analysis of the linguistic markers of fabricated suicide notes, it can be concluded that very few fabricated notes exhibit the linguistic markers typically associated with falsification, as theorized by Olsson (2008, 2012). Interestingly, when examining the linguistic markers of genuine suicide notes, the fabricated notes show more authenticity-related markers than fabricated-related ones. Therefore, it is possible that the linguistic markers of fabricated suicide notes hold weaker significance in determining the authenticity of suicide notes compared to those found in genuine notes.

The universality of linguistic markers in determining the authenticity of suicide notes appears to be significantly influenced by psychological factors rather than social or cultural elements since some of the notes come from different context, such as GS-1 with structural economic problem, GS-8 with parents' expectation issue, and GS-10 with unhappy marriage, yet they share the same linguistic markers indicating their suicides. This study, which analyzed cross-national suicide notes built upon varying social and cultural contexts, found that these external factors did not contribute substantially to the text construction of the notes. Instead, authentic suicide notes consistently exhibited unique linguistic markers that were inherently tied to genuine emotional and psychological states. In contrast, while fabricated notes attempted to mimic these authentic markers, they often included distinct fabricated elements that were absent in genuine notes. This distinction highlights that the construction of suicide notes is driven more by the psychological state of the writer, whether authentic or fabricated, than by their cultural or social background. Thus, the findings suggest that psychological factors play a dominant role in shaping the linguistic authenticity of suicide notes.

The distribution of findings, as illustrated in Table 2, can be explained through psychological reasoning in the next sub-section, which underscores that suicidal ideation is a universal phenomenon transcending cultural, social, or geographical boundaries. This universality suggests that the emotional and cognitive processes underlying suicidal thoughts are shared across individuals, regardless of their background. While this study acknowledges that authentic suicide notes may occasionally include markers typically associated with fabrication, such as negative labelling, it also highlights an important entailment: the presence of such markers in authentic notes is consistently accompanied by other markers of genuine emotional distress, such as sadness and self-blaming. These traits are hallmarks of authentic suicide notes and reflect the deep psychological turmoil experienced by the writer. Thus, while negative labelling might superficially appear to be a fabricated marker, its co-occurrence with sadness and self-blaming in authentic notes, as described above when comparing GS-8 and FS-5, reinforces the idea that psychological authenticity is defined by the interplay of multiple emotional and linguistic cues, rather than isolated markers. This finding further emphasizes the centrality of psychological reasoning in understanding the construction and interpretation of suicide notes.

This study has identified four exclusive authentic markers that are uniquely associated with genuine suicide notes, a finding that is particularly significant given the ability of fabricators to mimic other authentic markers. For instance, the fabricated note FS-3, which is notably short at only 39 words, incorporates elements often found in authentic notes such as expressions of apology, love, and an inability to continue living. At first glance, such a note might appear genuine as it lacks overtly fabricated markers, which make it challenging to authenticate. However, the discovery of the four exclusive authentic markers provides a stronger framework for evaluating the authenticity of suicide notes. These markers serve as critical indicators that can help distinguish genuine notes from deceptive ones, even in cases where fabricators successfully replicate other authentic elements. Consequently, notes like FS-3, despite their seemingly genuine appearance, should be approached with caution and subjected to further interdisciplinary investigation.

Psychological Representation of Suicide Note Linguistic Markers

The presence of a suicidal proposition in genuine suicide notes, but its complete absence in fabricated ones, can be understood through linguistic determinism. According to linguistic determinism,

the structure of language is influenced by the psychological state of the speaker or writer (Whorf, 1956). In the case of genuine suicide notes, the suicidal proposition serves as a direct expression of the victim's cognitive and emotional state, they are experiencing a psychological condition that leads them to take their own life and this mental state is reflected in the explicit communication of their intent through language. In contrast, fabricated suicide notes, written by perpetrators rather than victims, do not exhibit a suicidal proposition because the writer is not experiencing the psychological distress associated with the act of suicide. As such, they do not feel the need to express such an intention. The absence of this marker in fabricated notes aligns with linguistic determinism, in that the language of the note is shaped by the mental state of the writer. Murderers do not write suicide propositions because they are not cognitively processing the concept of suicide in the same way a genuine victim would. Thus, the pattern of suicidal proposition emerges universally.

The proposition directed to the recipient has psychological implications, shedding light on the relationship between the victim and the intended recipient. This relationship may provide insights into the events and experiences that reinforced the victim's motivation for suicide. Supported by the idea that suicide notes represent the victim's final communication (Olsson, 2008), the presence of propositions addressed to recipients strengthens this idea. The emergence of this marker in both genuine and fabricated suicide notes can be explained through psychological principles related to emotional expression. When individuals experience intense emotions, they often feel compelled to communicate these feelings to others, particularly those who are central to their emotional experiences (Kane et al., 2019; Rimé, 2009). In genuine suicide notes, the emotions expressed are typically rooted in sadness, loneliness, or despair, reflecting the victim's internal struggle and desire for connection or understanding (Joiner, 2005), as depicted in GS-7 where the victim intended the note for her mother because the mother really loved the victim shown in the note 'I love you mom, and you are my best friend, and the person I've lived for years'. In contrast, fabricated suicide notes may also include propositions directed to the recipient, but these are often characterized by expressions of anger, blame, or resentment.

The marker 'words less than 300' may be influenced by the emotional and cognitive pressure the victim experiences, limiting their ability to articulate extended communication. Suicide is often the result of a cognitive deficit in problem-solving, characterized by irrational beliefs, impaired decision-making, poor problem-solving skills, faulty deductions, dichotomous thinking, cognitive rigidity, narrowing of thoughts, and cognitive

distortions (Adams & Adams, 1996; Beck, 1987; Dour et al., 2011; Ellis & Rutherford, 2008; Kral, 2019; Schotte & Clum, 1987). As a result, the victim's narrowed focus on suicide corresponds with the brevity of their note, reflected in a word count of fewer than 300 in genuine suicide notes.

The expression of suicide as the only option and the inability to continue living are markers closely tied to the psychological condition of suicide victims. The primary reason for suicide is to escape psychological pain and stress (Boergers et al., 1998). Suicide victims feel trapped and lost due to perceived failure, believing no solution can help them recover (Szasz, 1999). Suicide is also seen as a way to avoid suffering (Kral, 2019). Victims often feel that their problems have persisted over time, and despite their efforts, the issues continue to follow them. Therefore, instead of solving their problems, they seek to end their lives. This aligns with the psychological concept of cognitive constriction, a state in which individuals experiencing intense emotional distress are unable to see alternative solutions or perspectives (Ellis, 2006). Therefore, this marker only occurs in genuine notes since fabricators do not experience such strong despair, which leads to more external story to be written in fake notes.

The obscure context in suicide notes often reflects the complexity of internal aspects experienced solely by the victim. Individuals with suicidal motivation are often highly focused on the desire to end their life, making their notes more emotionally charged and centered around their personal worldview. In this state, victims frequently feel isolated and experience profound emotional suffering, causing their expressions in the note to be direct reflections of their psychological state (Van Orden et al., 2010). The lack of clarity in these notes often reveals the depth of their despair and alienation, which may not be fully comprehensible to others. Consequently, the notes are more reflective of the victim's inner world, full of internal conflicts and emotional struggles, rather than offering clear, logical explanations to others (Hillman, 1964). Fabricated notes, on the other hand, tend to be more structured, reflecting the writer's deliberate effort to appear credible rather than the genuine turmoil experienced by suicidal individuals. Fabricated notes have the tendency to explain some details, such as chronology and incident; thus, majority of fabricated notes is centred in external narrative.

Expressions of apology in suicide notes represent the victim's self-blame for what has happened. As social beings, suicide victims still maintain relationships with others. When they blame themselves, they feel they have caused harm to others (Baumeister, 1990), as shown by GS-8 'I worst daughter, sorry mummy papa' in which this line can give sense of a daughter that cannot fulfill

the ideal condition of a child. Additionally, victims often perceive themselves as burdens. This perception has an interpersonal function, leading the victim to believe they are deeply flawed and have become a burden to others (Durkheim, 1897; Joiner, 2005).

Expressions of love in suicide notes often appear alongside emotional ambivalence, as suicide victims typically identify with people whom they either love or hate (Kral, 2019). Thus, suicide notes often express appreciation for loved ones, but they may also convey disappointment toward the same people. In fact, such expressions of love frequently arise in suicide notes motivated by romantic factors (Barbagli, 2015).

References to death are also common in suicide notes and are rooted in the psychological state of the victim. Suicide victims are driven by three desires: the wish to kill, the wish to be killed, and the wish to die (Menninger, 1933). These desires can be expressed either implicitly or explicitly, resulting in numerous references to death in their notes. Therefore, it is understandable if a genuine suicide note has more than one reference to death. The exclusive presence of this marker in genuine notes can be driven by cognitive constriction, which makes the suicide victims recursively think of death. This state becomes even more critical because of cognitive inflexibility, a state where a person is unable to shift their decision (Lezak et al., 2012); thus, suicide victims constantly think of committing suicide and death (Miranda et al., 2012). These cognitive states influence the presence of negative mood (Miranda et al., 2013), which then aligns with the presence of self-blaming and inability to continue life.

Prescriptive-directive communication serves to affirm a sense of control in situations where the victim may feel otherwise powerless. This phenomenon can be understood through a psychological lens, emphasizing the human need for autonomy and self-determination. One of the six motivators for suicidal action is a reduction in self-restraint, meaning a weakening of self-control over actions, behaviors, and emotions (Baumeister, 1990). When this self-control diminishes, individuals may act in ways they previously restrained. If a victim had previously been unable to communicate with those around them due to fear or feelings of burden, they were unlikely to make requests. Therefore, prescriptive-directive communication appears as a demonstration of the victim's newfound freedom. Additionally, this communication may be influenced by the victim's feelings of love, prompting them to convey specific messages, such as in GS-9 '*Untuk para sahabat terbaikku, Aku mohon biarkan orang yang aku tunjuk ini mengangkat jasadku*' which translates to 'for my best friends, I beg for these people I appoint to carry my body' that shows the directive force is driven by the victim's close relationship.

The linguistic markers of genuine suicide notes truly represent the psychological condition of suicide victims or individuals with suicidal tendencies. Psychologically, suicide victims experience a mix of overwhelming pain, shame, loneliness, fear, or anger, but ultimately, they feel frustrated with themselves. Suicide victims do not typically direct their anger outward at others, meaning expressions of anger should not be present in their notes (Kral, 2019). Moreover, the psychological state of suicide victims, feeling trapped in their circumstances, leads them to focus solely on their suicidal thoughts. As a result, suicide notes are predominantly centered on internal matters and reflect the victim's personal perspective.

This study acknowledges the presence of authentic markers in fabricated suicide notes. Fabricators can successfully mimic expressions of apology, love, and inability to continue living because these markers are easy to replicate. Any individual can produce these expressions, but some of these can be empty (Slocum et al., 2011). Furthermore, in practical perspective, fabricators may actually mimic these expressions due to media exposure. Studies have shown that copycat behaviour have significant association with suicides (Gualtieri et al., 2024; Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2009). Therefore, there is a high possibility rate that the more genuine notes are exposed in media, such as the internet, the more fabricators can actually replicate these expressions. For instance, FS-1 is a short-fabricated note that have apology, love expression, and proposition directed to recipient. These three markers are easy to copy because there are specific words for each marker. However, as stated early in this section that murderers do not process cognitive system as victims do, such markers become less relevant without the presence of four exclusive authentic markers.

Suicide Note Linguistic Markers and Their Implication towards Authenticity

Based on the foregoing discussion about the interrelation between suicide note-linguistic markers and psychological condition of suicidal individual, it can be known that the genuine markers and fabricated markers have their own psychological reasoning acting as justification for the relevance regarding the application of suicide note-linguistic markers in investigating authenticity. The issue is that fabricated suicide notes can replicate several markers of genuine suicide notes that may make the investigation more difficult to conduct (Lester, 2008; Osgood & Walker, 1959).

According to the findings of this study, it is proven that fabricated suicide notes, found cross-nationally, can mimic genuine ones by applying genuine linguistic markers as shown by Table 2.

Markers that can be replicated are proposition directed to recipient, words less than 300, obscure context, apology, expression of love, self-blaming, prescriptive-directive communication, and expression of inability to live. However, these markers can also be found in other texts that are not suicide-related. Farewell texts also have such markers (Widiatmika, 2024). Based on the comparison he conducted, there are several similarities between suicide notes and farewell texts. These similarities include the presence of apologies, expressions of love, words less than 300, negative self-labeling, and directive messages.

Furthermore, fabricated suicide notes can mimic expression of sadness and hopelessness as well as reference to suicide act (Grundlingh, 2020). However, current study has found that only four markers that are exclusive in genuine suicide notes, including suicidal proposition, which can refer to the act of suicide done by the victim. However, her finding of replicated suicidal proposition is not like what Olsson (2012) has stated. Olsson's (2012) theory of suicidal proposition in genuine suicide notes must be thematic, which means it should be an independent clause. her example shows that the suicidal proposition is a dependent clause. Therefore, this feature still holds a significant application in determining authenticity.

Olsson's (2008, 2012) theory of suicide note-linguistic markers clearly differentiates linguistic styles of genuine and fabricated suicide notes. He also has applied the markers in investigating suicide notes. However, based on current findings, several genuine linguistic markers can be replicated by people who fabricate suicide notes as mentioned earlier; thus, they cannot be used completely to determine the authenticity of a suicide note. This is the limitation of Olsson's theory. Although limitation is present, current study has proven that there are still exclusive markers that fabricated suicide notes cannot imitate, namely suicidal proposition, expression of suicide is the only option, reference to death, dan emotional ambivalence. Therefore, these four markers should be the ultimate markers to be found and analyzed to investigate authenticity of suicide notes.

Prior studies have predominantly relied on a single corpus, notably from Los Angeles (Shneidman & Farberow, 1957), which limited opportunities for comparative analysis. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the universality of linguistic markers in authenticating suicide notes across nations. This study addresses that gap by incorporating data from multiple countries, allowing for a more robust assessment of the universality of linguistic markers. Current study suggests that while previous research identified 12 markers (Olsson, 2008, 2012) of genuine suicide notes, only four are consistently exclusive to authentic notes. The remaining eight markers can be mimicked in fabricated notes. This insight underscores the impact of cross-nation suicide note analysis that has been done by current study.

This study, with its stronger framework consisting of four exclusive authentic suicide note markers, holds significant practical value. Specifically, it has the potential to serve as a guide for law enforcement in investigating suicide cases where a suicide note is present. Law enforcements can utilize the findings of this research to formulate hypotheses, which are grounded in a comprehensive linguistic analysis that examines the victim's language style, cognition, and motivations. This approach provides a robust and evidence-based foundation for their investigations. Consequently, this study not only contributes to advancing the body of scientific knowledge but also offers tangible benefits to the public by enhancing the accuracy and reliability of suicide case investigations.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of cross-nation suicide notes in this study demonstrates the universality of linguistic markers in distinguishing between authentic and fabricated suicide notes grounded in psychological reasoning. While Olsson's theory (2008, 2012) remains relevant, this study advances the field by identifying and strengthening the presence of four distinct authentic markers, namely suicidal proposition, expression of suicide as the only option, reference to death, and emotional ambivalence. These markers are exclusively found in authentic notes and are not replicated in fabricated ones, providing a robust framework for differentiation.

The practical implications of this study are significant for law enforcement and forensic investigations. Although certain fabricated notes may incorporate authentic markers, which can impose challenges in authentication, the identification of the four exclusive authentic markers offers a stronger and more reliable framework for analysis. This enables investigators to approach ambiguous cases, such as those involving highly deceptive notes, with greater confidence and precision.

Furthermore, the psychological underpinnings of the linguistic markers reveal that cultural differences across countries do not substantially influence the determination of authenticity. The markers are consistently tied to the emotional states of the victims and fabricators, rather than cultural or social elements. This universality underscores the centrality of psychological factors in the construction of suicide notes.

To further strengthen these findings, future research should expand the dataset by collaborating with researchers from multiple countries. Such efforts could address limitations like language barriers and potentially uncover culturally-bound

markers that were not identified in this study. By doing so, the framework for authenticating suicide notes can be refined and made more comprehensive, which will benefit both academic research and practical forensic applications.

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