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GSU, Gombe, Gombe State.

**Phone No:** +2348039511789

**E-mail:** alameenalfira@gmail.com

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For further enquiries, please contact: Editor-in-Chief

SAJOLLCOS, HOD's Office,

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Gombe State University, Gombe

[sajollicos@gsu.edu.ng](mailto:sajollicos@gsu.edu.ng),

C/o: [amgombe2@gsu.edu.ng](mailto:amgombe2@gsu.edu.ng)

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## Investigating Linguistic Features of North-East Nigerian Suicide Notes

**Yunana Ahmed Ph.D**

Department of English Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria.  
[ahmedyunana@gmail.com](mailto:ahmedyunana@gmail.com)

**Danladi, Daniel Boyi**

Department of English Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria  
[danladidanielboyi@gmail.com](mailto:danladidanielboyi@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

*Notes left by those who have killed themselves are known as suicide notes. The feelings of the victims which were not conveyed when they were alive were now expressed in the suicide notes. The goal of this qualitative study is to look into linguistic elements of thirteen male and female suicide notes. Qualitative content analysis is the method used in this investigation. The five linguistic features are based on Prokofyeva's (2013) framework, which are clear reasoning, expressing emotions, text structure, grammar and punctuation, employed by the researcher to analyse the data. The findings demonstrated cases of code-switching as evidence of multilinguality in some of the victims. The trait of clear reasoning was the most frequently observed while the lack of uncertainty and the manners of address were not common. In the end, the findings of this study may contribute to further research on forensic linguistics, especially analyzing the use of language in suicide notes with the view to unravel suicide cases in Nigeria.*

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### Introduction

Currently, there is an increase of deaths worldwide caused by suicide and suicidal behavior that does not only occur in adolescents or young people, but can occur in all age groups, as World Health Organization reports that suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among the productive age of 15-29 years, and seventy-seven per cent of global suicide occurs in low- and middle-income countries. This makes suicide a global public health concern, and Africa is not left out in this alarming trend. O'Connor & Nock (2014) says that "suicidal behavior refers to thoughts and behaviors related to individual intentions to end their own lives".

Bridge et al., (2006) summarize some of the terminology that is often used in understanding the definition of suicide. The idea of suicide refers to thoughts about hurting or killing oneself. Suicide remains a critical health concern globally, with varying linguistic expressions observed across different cultural and geographical contexts. In the North-East region of Nigeria, a region plagued by insurgency and socio-political unrest, understanding the linguistic features within suicide notes can provide invaluable insights into the psychosocial dynamics of suicidal behavior. Despite the increasing prevalence of suicide in this region, there remains a paucity of research examining the linguistic



characteristics of suicide notes specific to this context. The aim of the study is to explore linguistic features from North-East Nigeria suicide notes. And the objective of the study is to bridge this gap and contribute to knowledge in the field of the study.

### **Literature Review**

There are previous studies related to the linguistic analysis of suicide notes mostly outside Nigeria. Among them are Sudjana and Fitri (2013), who studied the content of Kurt Cobain's suicide note by identifying the motive of his suicide through forensic linguistic profiling analysis. Another study by Prokofyeva (2013) also investigated the linguistic differences and similarities that are found amongst suicide notes and suicide posts. The results of her research showed that it is possible for a suicide post written by a prospective victim to later develop into a suicidal note, which implies that it is possible to detect a suicide attempt from the written notes of the writer long before the act is committed. Furthermore, Roubidoux (2012) examined how power was manifested in the pronouns used in suicide notes. For this research, attention is given to analyzing unfolding linguistic features of individuals who committed suicide in their notes. In Nigeria, the few available studies are not on the suicide note themselves, but rather on how suicides are analyzed via media. For example, Adebayo and Makwambeni (2021) using critical discourse analysis, examined suicide stories in Nigerian newspapers. Their studies found out

that the most salient frame found in the news coverage of suicide cases is the method of suicide, especially how the victims died. Similarly, Lawal (2018) analyzed online news articles about suicide, as well as posts in response to those news articles. The focus on newspaper reporting does not allow us to identify and understand linguistic features that emerge in the narratives of people who committed suicides, hence, this research is to investigate linguistic features of North-East Nigerian suicide notes for a better understanding of the experiential truth emerging from these narratives.

One of the traits of genuine suicide notes is clear reasoning, which connects the act of suicide to the details provided in the note. The response to the query "why?" is often used to illustrate the statements of this feature (Prokofyeva, 2013). This indicates that the conjunction, phrase, clause and sentence of "because" mirror the typical and obvious motive for a victim to commit suicide. The three kinds of motivations for committing suicide that Prokofyeva (2013) lists are illness, being offended by something and placing blame on someone else out of desperation. Expressing emotions is another traits of genuine suicide note. By examining the feelings that the author's note expresses can be another approach to tell if it is a genuine suicide note. The suicide notes convey a variety of feelings, including: fear of living, relief, helplessness, and lack of doubt (Prokofyeva, 2013). The emotion most frequently expressed in suicide

notes, whether expressly or implicitly, is fear of living. The feeling of hopelessness is another emotion that is frequently seen in suicide notes. Huen et al. (2015), state that hopelessness is a negative expectation of something to be done in the future without prior consideration of the purpose for pursuing it. Lack of hope and absent of doubt causes a person to lose interest in living, which may cause that person to commit suicide (Fata, et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the third linguistic feature is text structure: Typically, victims usually consider their decision to commit suicide for some time before making the ultimate decision to do so, and thus, when the time comes, they already know what they want to write as their last words in their suicide notes (Prokofyeva, 2013). Form of address is aimed to deliver the note to whom the suicide note is made. Sudjana and Fitri (2013), stated that victims addressed their suicide notes to someone or a group of people for several reasons. An introduction portrays an important hint in any suicide note. It is when the victims explain why or show the only option of committing suicide. Ioannou and Debowska (2014), stated that in ordinary, the author of suicide notes uses the stereotype of suicide motive as their explanation and it is frequently expressed by negative emotion. For grammar being the forth linguistic feature, It's fascinating to examine the verb tenses used in victims' suicide notes. Galasinski (2017), stated that victims of suicide notes typically

write the situation from present to past, and the statements referring to present and future are fewer compared to past. Therefore, the past tense is the most frequently used tense rather than the other tenses in suicide notes (Prokofyeva, 2013).

The most crucial aspect of examining a suicide note is the punctuation. According to Schoene and Dethlef (2016), a person's punctuation style is influenced by their background, education, social status, and family situation. Punctuation can therefore be a tool to convey emotion or reveal the victim's state and clarify a sentence's meaning. Prokofyeva (2013) put forward some examples of frequent punctuation models found in suicide notes: "--" (double-dash): it is used as a sign which can function as a comma, a dash, or periods. "..." (Three or more periods at the end of a sentence/phrase): they are used to express the idea of an 'open-ended or a continuation. This sign gives hope that what has said is not the end. "!!!" (Three, sometimes one, exclamation marks): they are used to strengthen the meaning of a sentence or phrase. An exclamation point (!) denotes a mood ranging from playful to desperate. A semicolon (;) denotes likely excessive effort. Details in the victim's thinking can be denoted with the apostrophe ('). Left and right bracket ([ ]) means probably too logical. Asterisk (\*) means the readers are not as well recognized as the victim. The plus sign (+) means extreme affection. Emoticons (..., ....., etc.) mean bringing the communication to be alive. Ellipsis (...)



indicates that there is a meaning between the lines. Question mark (?) does not always a mark for a question; if it is used more than once, the meaning will be changed according to the sentence before (Eber-Schmid, 2017).

The last linguistic feature used under this study is code-mixing. The multiplicity of languages in Nigeria bring to fore, the increase tendencies of switching codes in social interactions. Code-mixing refers to embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clause that participants use in conversations (Wayar, 2018).

## Research Method

The research design uses qualitative research methods, which focuses on total description and breaking down of the data. Ary et al. (2006) explained that qualitative studies focus on understanding the phenomena from the human perspective. Accordingly, this study intends to identify the linguistic features that appeared in the selected suicide notes specifically, North-east Nigeria.

The data was collected from organizations and parastatals such as: State Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Divisional Police Headquarters, Nigeria Army Regiment (record keeping section), in the North Eastern part of Nigeria in order to get the genuine and accurate suicide notes to be used for the purpose of this research. The

theoretical framework is Based on the work of Prokofyeva (2013) who suggests that there are five characteristic features of genuine suicide notes, namely clear reasoning, expressing emotions, text structure, grammar, punctuation. And the researchers sees the need for adding one linguistic feature that had not been used by Prokofyeva, which is code-mixing linguistic feature that guide the analysis of the study.

## Results and Discussion

The study was designed to identify and discuss linguistic features based on Prokofyeva's (2013) characteristic features of genuine suicide notes, such as clear reasoning, expressing emotions, text structure, grammar, punctuation; and code-mixing.

**Clear reasoning:-** Is the most used feature in the suicide note, by the thirteenth individual that was analyzed. For example, data 1;

D1- "Kuyi hakuri, kabawa yayanmu hukuri, don ni mahaukachiya ne baza ku zauna da mahaukachiya ba, don lallai inna da hauka. Bana jin dadin haka, allah yagafarce ni. Diftina T. (Be patient, inform our children to be patient, because I'm a mad woman, you won't continue to live with mad woman. This is because I'm really mad. I am not happy about that. May God forgive me.) Diftina T".

This clause is classified as the first type of clear reason, which is a



disease. Diftina used "... I'm a mad woman..." "... I am not happy about that". This showcased how upset, boring, and valueless she felt her life was. Diftina had been diagnosed with stroke, which caused part of her mental illness. Roberts and Lamont (2014) stated that existential crisis is a consequence borne by a contradictory encounter between the individual's desire to understand the struggle with the suffering of life and the lack of a comprehensive meaning to life. In the note, Diftina also used "...not happy..." to refer to her life. In Diftina's opinion, her life had reached the limit of its real meaning. In the phrase "you won't continue to live with mad woman", showed that she had had enough of life, with people she dearly loved, but her health condition worth nothing more than regret and disappointment of life to them.

Another type of clear reasoning was found in Aishatu's suicide note as follows:

Data 2 - "Assalama alaikum, tunda kace sai kayi min kishiya to ba a idonaba, ...domin in sami sauki shiya sa nasha guba.... Nagode. Aishatu Bello

Peace be upon you, since you say you are adding another wife, ill not live to see it. ... I take the poison for me to have relief and peace of mind... Thank you. Aishatu Bello.

Aishatu's words in D2 are classified as blaming her husband. For example, "...since you say you are

adding another wife, ." Aishatu used her husband to blame the things that happened in her life. It is in line with Ioannou and Debowska (2014) who defined blame as the conflict that becomes the direct reason behind the decision of committing suicide; here the victim refuses to take any blame for her failures. Thus, Aishatu says "...adding another wife..." as an object to blame her husband. Aishatu defended herself by blaming her husband's plan for her act of committing suicide. Aishatu felt that her husband's plan to add another wife is unjust and she wanted to inform the people who would read her suicide note. Therefore, she wanted to inform readers that she was one of the victims of men's evil plans towards their wives. Ioannou and Debowska (2014) stated that in this type of clear reasoning, it is common that the victim's suicide notes fictitiously expressed anger and blame to others for the difficult circumstances they experienced.

Meanwhile, data 3 shows a type of despair in clear reasoning in Musa's suicide note.

D3 - "Matata bani da lafiya, kuma ina cikin damuwa da bakin ciki saboda wannan ciwo, ni na kwaso ta a waje... Ina roko kikula da mama da yaran don Allah kada ki aikata abinda nayi. Sallam. Musa Audu.

My wife I'm sick. And I'm in sorrow and pain because of the sickness... For God's sake, look after our children and forgive me. ....look after our





mother and the children...  
Thanks. Musa Audu".

The sentences in D3 are classified as despair. For instance, "My wife I'm sick. And I'm in sorrow and pain because of the sickness. Also, I'm the one that brought it;". Here, Musa's feeling of guilt is expressed. And Musa believed that committing suicide was the only hope to solve this problem he caused. In this sentence, Musa wrote "Please, for God sake, don't do what I did." to show that he felt guilty, and doesn't want somebody to follow his footsteps. On the other hand, he believed that his action was not a good example for the people around him. Musa further expressed his worries toward his children and mother in the statement. "... please, look after our mother and the children". Though he decided to commit suicide, Musa showed some concern about his children and mother when he is no more. This is following Manning's (2011) opinion that in condition of despair, a person is more vulnerable to having a sense of guilt towards themselves and that must be overridden.

**Expressing Emotions:-** The second characteristic of the linguistic feature of suicide notes is expressing emotion. This is also found in all thirteen of the individuals' suicide notes. As suggested by Hancock et al. (2007), we can express and accurately assess the emotional states that are important to humans. This is illustrated in Pilomina's note below.

Data 5 - "Very very soon. The testimony you expected will

be a tribute to me from the mouths of those who truly cared. I came to this world, I sojourned but this world is actually not my place. I have beautified myself with pain and glory in tears, but soon, I will only watch the world from a distance. I will only read from shadows...the tributes you will write to me. Death is peaceful, don't be deceived. Emoticon (4 head with 3 love symbol). Once I conquer this phase of depression, trust me, an alien is created (emoticon; 2 head with tears in their eyes)"

The sentence "...I sojourned but this world is actually not my place. I have beautified myself with pain and glory in tears, but soon, I will only watch the world from a distance." is classified as a fear of living. She believed that there was no reason or something that made her excited to live. Therefore, Pilomina saw her life as meaningless and her existence was only to face problems.. Here, Pilomina think that, she had been patient with all the problems that she faced until she had come to the point where she believed this life was terrible enough, and this is shown in this sentence "Death is peaceful, don't be deceived". Additionally, Pilomina's desire to end her life was not only affected by the fear of living, but by the motto of her life. The sentence was "Once I conquer this phase of depression, trust me, an alien is created". Shariatinia (2015) continued to say that through death, a person becomes aware of his actions and limitations.



Data 6 “Forgive me. In case you are the one who found the body. I am really sorry. It had to be someone, you know. I have chosen Jo Nketaih’s poem as my suicide note: ‘They said you came looking for me. I did not drown; I was the water.’ Where do atheists go to when they die? Lol. Amen.” My mental health has been on life support for a while now. Thanks to those who call. Text. Visit. Speak to me. May we always remember. May we never forget. You may have added a few hours, months or days to my time here. But you know life support is expensive, right? Thanks for trying. Amen.”

In D6, the sentence is classified as a relief, where Chuku used the sentence “My mental health has been on life support for a while now. Thanks to those who call. Text. Visit. Speak to me. May we always remember. May we never forget. You may have added a few hours, months or days to my time here. But you know life support is expensive, right? Thanks for trying” to show that he would not regret his decision to commit suicide. It was because Chuku believed that death was a better way to ease people who are helping hand to his survival. The victims believed that death is the only way that human beings can be free from their fear (Shariatina, 2015).

Furthermore, in D6, the relief sentence was signified by “I have chosen Jo Nketaih’s poem as my suicide note”. Chuku had thought about the effect of what would happen when he committed suicide. It also means that he had carefully

thought over his action before he undertook it. Another thing is that, the suicider is conscious of his loved ones, when he says “Forgive me. In case you are the one who found the body. I am really sorry. It had to be someone, you know. ... Thanks to those who call. Text. Visit. Speak to me...”. The victims who commit suicide have realized the effect that would happen to his/her surroundings after he/she died (Stincelli, 2004). Also in D6 “My mental health has been on life support for a while now. ... But you know life support is expensive, right?” This sentence is classified as hopeless emotion. Huen et al. (2015) stated that hopelessness is a negative expectation of something to be done in the future without prior consideration of the purpose for pursuing it. It can be said that this emotion is frequently used to show how the victim felt disappointed about something that makes him or her have no desire to live. Chuku put hopelessness sentence to show that even though other people had done something to help him and the results were effective, he still believed in the hope that would bring him and his helpers yoke free. The question quoted in Jo Nketaih’s poem and acronym in D6 “Where do atheists go to when they die? Lol.” is an absence of doubt. When Chuku used this kind of emotion, he wanted to tell the readers that death was not a hindrance to him but a relief. The emotions were associated with high confidence. The victim believed he can commit suicide anytime and anywhere as he wished. Pridmore (2012) stated that mental disorders



make someone have an absence of doubt to choose suicide as an escape from an unacceptable situation.

**Text Structure:-** The next trait of the linguistic feature of suicide notes which was found in the data is text structure. It is the basic framework in suicide notes; the annotations of suicide notes include two layers of linguistic structural (Marcinić et al., 2011). These characteristics normally occur in suicide.

Data 7 - "To Akweme. You know that I collected loan from bank and you are my guarantor and I also collected some money from you for me to improve my business, and the market is not favoring me and the shop is almost without anything, without even paying the debt. I am sorry I cannot afford this condition, life is unbearable for me. I'm killing myself, please tell my wife to carry my children back home to my parent and tell them that I'm sorry this is the solution for me. Yebube."

There is a phrase in D7 that is categorized as a form of address. Yebube put "To Akweme" as the object addressed in his suicide note. Sudjana and Fitri (2013) stated that victims address their suicide notes for several reasons. Nevertheless, in the case of Yebube, he entrusted his suicide notes to Akweme who is a friend or a business partner, as one might call. Another reason Yebube might have addressed the text to Akweme was that he believed

Akweme have been extending a helping hand to him throughout his challenges. For instance in D7, "...you are my guarantor and also I collected some money from you for me to improve my business". Therefore, in his mind, Akweme is the perfect individual to him.

In data 8 - "Dear Dad and Mom. I love you very much, I am sorry for any problems and shame that may cause from the way I deviate from your advice and treated the family. I try and wanted to be strong and good daughter but I went wrong way..."

The phrase in D8, "Dear Dad and Mom" it indicates a form of Sera's dearly address to her parent in the suicide note.

Data 9. "Somewhere in this life are your answers. I could not find it. Mom you should have known what was about to happen after I told you my troubles now I will get my rest. ...And my customers think I cheated them base on this transaction done so far but I'm not, they can't understand and dad you are not helping matters at all. Now they are avoiding me, is this the best way out? Now out of my money and the goods left, sell it and pay them. Let me take rest... I know it hurt you dad and mom, but pls don't blame each other, it's my fault, that make this thought this way to finish it. Your son xx".



These sentence "Somewhere in this life are your answers. I could not find it. Mom you should have known what was about to happen after I told you my troubles, now I will get my rest" is classified as the introduction. According to Ioannou and Debowska (2014), victims use the stereotype of suicide motive as their explanation and this explanation is frequently expressed by negative emotions. In D9, xx wrote, "And my customers think I cheated them base on this transaction done so far but I'm not, they can't understand and dad you are not helping matters at all". By this negative emotion, he wanted to explain that he was a victim of being accused for a crime that he did not commit. And he was disappointed with his father's act toward him.

Furthermore, in D9 another text structure identified in xx suicide note as shown in D9, even though xx did not put a form of address into this suicide note but there is specific indication as to whom this note was intended for, but all parts of the text structure, i.e., introduction, body, conclusion and subscription/signature are present in this suicide note. The line "Somewhere in this life are your answers" can be classified as the introduction that serves as the opening part with ambiguous words that are only known by the writer and the reader who is direct or indirect. He wrote the body of the suicide note to explain his worries. "Mom you should have known what was about to happen after I told you my troubles now I will get my rest. Dad, I am in this jam because I trusted people

(namely you) and some people trusted me, in my present state, a menace to me. And my customers think I cheated them base on this transaction done so far but I'm not, they can't understand and dad you are not helping matters at all. Now they are avoiding me, is this the best way out? Now out of my money and the goods left, sell it and pay them. Let me take rest". Pestian et al. (2012) stated that genuine suicide notes frequently included statements or reasons for what happened in his or her life. The conclusion, revealed xx's negative emotion of his parent when they read or come across the suicide note, which was shown by "I know it hurt you dad and mom, but pls don't blame each other, it's my fault, that make this thought this way to finish it" which means that xx tried to take responsibility for his action. The last phrase "Your son xx" serve to be subscription/signature of loyalty to his parent by putting his name, though no signature in the suicide note.

Data 10. "AX my darling, I know you did everything possible to avoid this, but please don Allah (for God sake) forgive me don (because) I think it was the only way out. Allah (God) forgives me and helps take care of my children. Your sweet heart".

The phrase in D10, "AX my darling" is classified as the type of text structure that refers be form of address. It indicates that this note has an intended reader which could have been someone he loved. In this note,

the husband wrote it to the person he loved, namely his wife. It can be classified as an introduction because this phrase contains ambiguous meaning and is only known by the victim. The phrase "...you did everything possible to avoid this..." in this case looks like something was blocking him from living his life fully. The phrase "...please don Allah (for God sake) forgive me... ...Allah (God) forgives me and helps take care of my children" is identified as a conclusion. He used the phrases to end his life with request.

**Grammar:-** Another characteristic of the linguistic features of the suicide note is grammar. Galasinski (2017) explained that motivationally, the characteristic of suicide might interest the victim to make the situation from present to past. In most content, references to the present and future are few, and more references are to the past. Hence, in data 4, we found various forms of tenses used by the victim in writing the suicide note. For example;

Data 4 - "Naso da inbayana ma wani ya fahimta (How I wish to explain to someone to understand), I am afraid because it's something I can't put into writing or words for someone to understand. My entire life is full of a lot of regret... I think about death. Mutuwa shine salamata (to die is my peace)... Just to take my leave and rest. Not my faults God forgive me. I'm sorry. XX".

In D4, the phrase "Just to take my leave and rest". It states the speaker's intention to leave for the purpose of resting. That indicate XX' belief about death. In some religions or beliefs in this world, death denotes 'end of the body' or going to the other world' (Sahoo, 2014, p. 31). This is a peep into part of what XX believes in, as death being a place where peace can be found after leaving his worldly problems. Then in

Data 12 - "To my parents. I left the letter for you to read after I'm no more. It is good for me to do that, I don't have chance to write all but my mine is telling me to put smile on your face. I hope my dead will bring comfort to you and uncle Yila... you, dad and mom keep on accusing me of cultist. Dad and Mom agreed to keep on calling me names. What you are all accusing me, I'm not into it, but you hate me with passion. I'm not comfortable and you are not comfortable too. I feel to ease the situation for you to be happy (especially Mom)... My heart in grief, really disturb. Not my fault- God forgive me. Somebody has won (tears). MX".

MX's grammar mostly used simple present tense in her suicide note, and the content of her message further detailed some instructions for her burial, which shows that she thought she was already halfway to her death.



Likewise, Sera, referred to D8, and AX's husband, referred to D10, also used simple present tense for grammar in their suicide notes. In SX's note, it shows that while she was stating the reasons for her decision to commit suicide, she was still reliving the pain at the time. In the meantime, for AX's husband, this seems to be related to the way he was sorrowfully asking for forgiveness from his wife, and forgiveness can only be asked when one is alive. It is clear that most of the sentence used by suiciders was past tense. The suicide note was written before they committed suicide. He used the past tense as if to show that he had died already. Prokofyeva (2013) stated that the use of past tense in suicide notes is to show that the victim has felt as if he is dead and is ready to die before committing suicide.

Finally, the tense used by XX was simple future tense, as shown in D13;

D13 "My R Audu because of you I will kill myself and you will never ever see peace and I will never forgive you".

XX use of simple future tense in sentences "I will kill myself and you will never ever see... and I will never...". D13 shows different visions of the future. In the former sentence, he was talking like he would still be alive and be engaged in situations where he could not "forgive her". However, at the beginning of his note, he told the readers that the person responsible for his death was "Risfer Audu". He believed Risfer was the main cause of his death.

**Punctuation:-** The last characteristic of the linguistic feature of suicide notes as proposed by Prokofyeva (2013) is punctuation. Its characteristics are to give meaning to the sentence. Some examples are found in D12.

D12 - "To my parents. I left the letter for you to read after I'm no more. It is good for me to do that, I don't have chance to write all but my mine is telling me to put smile on your face. I hope my dead will bring comfort to you and uncle Yila. Even though uncle is responsible of raising me up, from childhood to my present adolescent, thank you; you, dad and mom keep on accusing me of cultist. Dad and Mom agreed to keep on calling me names. What you are all accusing me, I'm not into it, but you hate me with passion. I'm not comfortable and you are not comfortable too. I feel to ease the situation for you to be happy (especially Mom). Now, allow the cultist to bury me immediately. Don't do anything to that but bury me immediately without delay or keeping the corpse. The hour has come, is moving fast. My heart in grief, really disturb. Not my fault — God forgive me. Somebody has won (tears). MX".

In D12, the focus is on Mercy's use of long hyphens (—) and parentheses brackets (especially

Mom) in her note. She used the long hyphen (—) to make a separation of meaning between the first phrase to the second phase of the sentence that shows weakness and worries, where the second phrase is connected to the phrase before it, that indicate Mercy's request to her creator i.e "God forgive me". Another punctuation that occurred in the note is the parentheses brackets (especially Mom); the term is used by the victim as a purpose of reinforcing the meaning of the sentence. Here, Mercy just wanted to strengthen her sentence to show readers that her mother is one of the forefronts of accusers that led her to committing suicide. And finally, the uses of intrusive comma all over the Mercy's suicide note are identified, which indicate level of her education.

Data 5, "Very very soon. The testimony you expected will be a tribute to me from the mouths of those who truly cared... I will only read from shadows... the tributes you will write to me. Death is peaceful, don't be deceived".

Here, the focus is on the three periods (...) that occur in the note of D5. Prokofyeva (2013) states that "... (three more periods at the end of a sentence/phrase) are used to express the idea of an 'open-end or a continuation. Thus, Pilomina used this mark to make a continuation of the next sentences that are related to each other.

Another example of punctuation that was identified in data 11 is exclamation marks (!!!). In

D11, "ITS MY BIRTHDAY!!!" that serve to be the heading of the note. And "LET ME REST!!!" that serve to be the end of the suicide note. The three exclamation marks (!!!) are used to strengthen the meaning of her words. She wanted to stylistically show and draw the attention of readers to the problems and pains she faced in her life. From this note, it can be concluded that, it is not a surprise Ms Edina would love to fight for women's right, be hard on rapist and being a voice for the voiceless was the reasons for her to end her life.

**Code-mixing:-** The next trait of the linguistic feature of suicide notes that was found in the data is Code-mixing, which was not used in the Prokofyeva framework that is guiding the study. And from the suicide notes collated, only suicide notes that contained traces of code-mixing received prominence. The lexicons and clauses which the suiciders code-mixed were presented in bold for easy identifications. The used of code-mixing is in;

Data 10. "Amina my darling, I know you did everything possible to avoid this, but please **don Allah** (for God sake) forgive me **don** (because) I think it was the only way out. Allah (God) forgives me and helps take care of my children. Your sweet heart".

And data 4 - "**Naso da inbayana ma wani ya fahimta**, I am afraid because it's something I can't put into writing or words for someone



to understand... A sound of life disappointment is winning my soul to have a peace is growing. Thought to die will help me ease the situation. I think about death. **Mutuwa shine salamata.** It hurts me always. I don't want to hurt anyone. Just to take my leave and rest. Not my faults God forgive me. I'm sorry. Jairus Darius".

These justify how an individual uses languages within a single conversation, sentence, or even a phrase. In D10, "...please **don Allah** (for God sake) forgive me **don** (because) I think it...". It shows proficiency in the use of the two languages (English and Hausa) by the suicider, and how Amina's husband is begging for forgiveness. In another dimension, it indicates the level of education of Amina's husband by changing language within the same written text. Likewise, D4, Jairus' use of code-mixing and punctuation marks in the suicide note also portray his level of education. Schoene and Dethlef (2016) state that the use of punctuation depends on his or her experience in life such as background, level of education, social and family status. Therefore, code-mixing can be a tool to express multiplicity and proficiency level of language used by the victim.

## Conclusion

The data (suicide notes) had all of the linguistic traits that Prokofyeva (2013) suggested for suicide notes. They are clear reasoning, expressing emotion, text

structure, punctuation and grammar. Victims encountering sickness, being offended by something, blaming someone or something and sorrow are only a few examples of clear reasoning revealed in the notes. Then emotion expression, in which sentences communicate fear of living, lack of relief, hopelessness and lack of doubt. Furthermore, all the suicide notes contain literary structures. The text structural elements include an address, body and a conclusion. Grammar and punctuation, which are two of the linguistic traits least present in the suicide note, are the final two characteristics suggested by Prokofyeva's framework; code-mixing can occur for various reasons, includes cultural identity, ease of communication, or the availability of specific words or expressions in one language but not in another. Therefore, by studying the veracity of the suicide notes, we may learn the messages the victims were trying to express, either openly or implicitly, in order to determine the reasons for their suicide.

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### Author's Bio-data

**1. Yunana Ahmed** holds Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Theory and Culture from Michigan Technological University, Houghton, US. His research interests fall within the intersection of critical discourse analysis, rhetoric and decoloniality. He is a Senior Lecturer from the Department of English, Gombe State University.

**2. Danladi, Daniel Boyi** is an administrator and security analyst. He holds Diploma in Law at CLS Yola, Executive Diploma in Database Management/Application of artificial intelligence at GOFCECON FCE'T' Gombe and obtained his B. A English Language from Gombe State University. He is presently a Master of Arts (M.A) student in the Department of English, Gombe State University. His research interests are: Discourse Analysis, Research, Stylistic and application of artificial intelligence.