Language Use in Two Types of Suicide Texts

Tatiana Prokofyeva

Supervisors: Jan Anward and Mats Wirén

Examiner: Charlotta Plejert

Linköping University
Department of Culture and Communication
Master’s Programme
Language and Culture in Europe

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Introduction

This paper is the result of the deep and sincere interest in the subject of forensic linguistics. The long and curvy path that preceded the study first led its author overseas and then, by the will of fate, helped her to encounter people dealing with the issues of forensic and computational linguistics and then finally resulted in the appearance of this investigation of suicide letters.

The study actually began taking form when the question arose of whether or not the words that people use to express their emotions are capable of revealing the actual feelings that they experience at the very moment a text is composed. Can people control the messages they send even when they are overly emotional, or will their manner of expression give their true feelings away? While research was being conducted for the present study, it became obvious that it is not necessary to search for the idea conveyed by the text in question but instead one ought to look for the emotions that are encoded in the message. The question then arose of whether or not these emotions are actually reflected in the particular way that the text is built.

If the texts that were examined for the purposes of this paper were to be classified stylistically, the letters (both computer-mediated and “real” ones) fall into the category of what could be called conversational style (messages). However, the letters can within themselves contain elements of genres such as business letters, personal letters, short notes, emails and suicide notes, as well as others. For each and every category of letter in existence, there is a particular reason for writing it as well as a special category of reader to whom it is aimed. The body of writings of interest for this particular study is a collection of suicide notes and a number of comments that have been posted on the Internet.

The aim of the study is to investigate if there are any linguistic differences and similarities between suicide notes and suicide posts and to find out if these differences and similarities can then be applied to similar types of notes. As is known, certain behaviors are a call to action and could thus inspire one to make the transition from talking about suicide to actually taking one’s own life. The object of the research is a sample of writings found on the Internet comprised of such types of texts as suicide letters, comments about suicide and replies to posts on the Web.

There are two research questions that are addressed in this work. First of all, the present study will locate the differences between genuine suicide notes and suicide posts. Secondly, it will be investigated how these differences are expressed linguistically.
Theoretical Background

People who want to die: Who are they, what makes them choose suicide as a method of solving problems and why? To answer these questions in order to have something upon which to base explanations of linguistic phenomena, we should first of all investigate related subjects that examine society in general and individuals in particular. Without having general knowledge about suicide as a phenomenon, it would be extremely difficult to begin the investigation from a linguistic point of view.

Sociology

One of the sciences that studies society and social behavior in order to develop a way of understanding human society is sociology. According to the broader definition of sociology given by Max Weber and introduced by Walter Garry Runciman, sociology is:

[...] the science whose object is to interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which the action proceeds and the effects which it produces. By 'action' in this definition is meant the human behavior when and to the extent that the agent or agents see it as subjectively meaningful ... the meaning to which we refer may be either (a) the meaning actually intended either by an individual agent on a particular historical occasion or by a number of agents on an approximate average in a given set of cases, or (b) the meaning attributed to the agent or agents, as types, in a pure type constructed in the abstract. In neither case is the 'meaning' to be thought of as somehow objectively 'correct' or 'true' by some metaphysical criterion. This is the difference between the empirical sciences of action, such as sociology and history, and any kind of prior discipline, such as jurisprudence, logic, ethics, or aesthetics whose aim is to extract from their subject-matter 'correct' or 'valid' meaning (1991:7).

Thus, sociology is another science that is useful in searching for explanations of human actions. The earliest sociological study of suicides was produced by Emile Durkheim and was described in his book *Suicide* (1897). In his monograph, Durkheim was the first who tried to examine statistics regarding suicide rates between Catholic and Protestant populations. With this study, he intended to prove that sociology would be able to determine whether a society is “healthy” or “pathological”.

Durkheim’s book remains one of the most influential scientific books written about suicide. According to Durkheim, suicide represents “all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly
from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result” (Durkheim: 44). He also speaks of the classification of acts of suicide. In his book, Durkheim introduces the idea that suicide is possible in two psychological states: insane and sane. As the two states vary, the suicide occurring in connection with a psychological disorder should be distinguished from the one committed by an individual without this diagnosis. When discussing suicide triggered by mental illness, Durkheim utilizes the following classification of suicide: *maniacal suicide, melancholy suicide, obsessive suicide* and *impulsive suicide* (Durkheim: 63-65). Each type is motivated by special reasons. In the present study, the characteristic features of the melancholic type of suicide have been observed in the majority of suicide notes examined. This type is characterized by “extreme depression and exaggerated sadness, causing the patient no longer to realize sanely the bonds that connect him with people and things about him” (Durkheim: 63). However, it cannot be ascertained whether or not the notes have been written by people with mental disorders.

The *maniacal suicide* is characterized by hallucinations that pursue an individual and thus cause her or him to commit suicide in order to “escape from imaginary danger or disgrace” (Durkheim: 63). *Obsessive suicide*, in its turn, is not caused by a particular reason other than the idealized notion of suicide itself. Having no motive to kill themselves, they are instead obsessed with the idea of ending their lives. The *impulsive suicide* is also characterized by the absence of a motive to commit suicide. However, as opposed to the *obsessive* type, suicide in this case “results from an abrupt and immediately irresistible impulse” which has not been preceded by any thought about it (Durkheim: 65).

With respect to the social reasons for suicide, Durkheim has distinguished the following three types: *egoistic, altruistic* and *anomic suicide*. Among the factors that influence the victim’s decision to commit suicide, Durkheim names religion, marital status, age, gender and political situations as reasons that may cause *egoistic suicide*. When using the term *egoistic suicide*, Durkheim introduces the individual who does not have “a basis for existence in life”, one who mournfully regrets life, which seems empty to them.

*Altruistic suicide* type is caused by the agent’s belief that it is his or her duty to commit suicide for one reason or another. Among these reasons, Durkheim (219) highlights:

1. the suicide of men on the threshold of old age or stricken with sickness;
2. the suicide of women upon their husbands’ deaths;
3. the suicide of followers upon the death of their leaders.
Under this classification, Durkheim not only names the reasons for altruistic suicides but also makes distinctions about gender on the grounds of contemporary statistics. Although we cannot rely upon these same numbers now, the reasons for the so-called altruistic suicide were indeed found in some of the suicide notes used in the current study. Thus, we can see that victims view their suicide as an act of sacrifice and consider it as an altruistic deed.

The last type of suicide described by Durkheim is anomic suicide. It is caused by feelings of anger, irritation and disappointment. Durkheim states that anomic suicide may be preceded by murder or homicide as the individual who commits suicide in this case tends to blame someone else for his or her misfortune. Alternatively, the individual can blame themselves and then, according to Durkheim, “he takes it out to himself” (Durkheim: 285).

In general, among the sociological factors that may cause suicide, the following are widely recognized: religion, marital status, unemployment, poverty, homelessness and discrimination. They should be distinguished from the various medical conditions such as chronic pain, mild brain injury or traumatic brain injury that may also trigger suicide.

Psychology

Alongside the social aspect of suicide as a phenomenon, there are also a number of factors that explore the roots of suicide inside the person performing it. Psychology emerged as an area of inquiry long before sociology. The first works dedicated to it were written by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. In this context, it can be said that psychology developed from philosophy. The founding father of psychology as an independent study, however, can be said to have been Wilhelm Wundt, who created a psychological laboratory that carried out research at Leipzig University in 1879.

Originally established to study states of consciousness, psychology later on developed and started “defining itself as ‘the science of behavior’” (Myers, 2009: 64). Since the very beginning, psychological studies have taken many directions. Some are widely known, such as the branches of psychoanalysis, behaviorism, humanism, structuralism, functionalism and cognitive psychology.

Psychology as a science has always been very interested in suicidal behavior, and every branch of psychology has investigated the phenomenon of suicide from different angles. In this work, we will look at those disciplines that are of the strongest relation to the phenomenon of suicide.
Social psychology shows, in common with sociology, interest in suicides as it studies how the feelings, behavior and thoughts of individuals are affected by the people around them. Social perception, non-verbal behavior, conformity, aggression, prejudice and leadership are areas that are investigated by social psychologists.

Neuropsychology, on the other hand, examines the relation of brain structure to the behavior and feelings of an individual and is helpful in understanding how suicidal brain functions.

Forensic psychology applies psychological knowledge to the investigation of criminal cases. Suicides are also very often investigated by forensic psychologists due to the necessity of proving if a suicide took place or if it was in fact a murder covered up by the act of suicide.

The current study would not have been possible without some fundamental books on the disciplines involved in the work dedicated to suicide texts. Exploring Psychology by David Myers (2009) and Psychology and Life by Richard Gerring and Philip Zimbardo (2007) contributed a great deal to the understanding of what psychology actually is and what its objects of study are.

The psychological states of the individual are important to know in order to find out why suicidal thoughts occur, i.e., if the act was sparked by agitation, depression, anxiety, calmness, irritation, etc. Psychological states are closely related to the emotions that individuals experience. Studies utilizing a psychological perspective can help to trace the evidence of emotions one may express through behavior or record on a piece of paper.

A significant contribution to the attempts of psychologists to explain the origins of suicide from a psychological point of view has been made by Thomas Joiner. The interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behavior was developed in his book Why People Die by Suicide (2005). In it, he suggests that suicide is impossible without two components: the desire to commit suicide and the ability to do it.

The desire originates from two psychological states – perceived burdensomeness and social alienation – and from the aspect of time. Joiner emphasizes that these two states are held by the individuals in their minds simultaneously. In regard to the aspect of time, it is implied that when people experience feelings of social alienation and perceived burdensomeness for a long period, the desire to commit suicide develops.

Examples of perceived burdensomeness may include ideas of being onerous to society including family and friends. Joiner (21, 531-545, 2002) found upon examining the suicide notes of those
who succeeded in taking their lives and those who attempted suicide but survived that the first category used more expressions of burdensomeness than the latter.

With social alienation, the feeling of distance between the individual, on the one hand, and society, family and friends, on the other hand, is understood. The study of diverse groups carried out by Joiner has demonstrated the connection between suicidality and social alienation. Another study by Joiner et al. (25, 180-196, 2006) has shown that suicide rates go down during times of celebration as well as during the times of tragedy or hardship either on the national or individual level (inherent in one social group such as family, for example).

The ability to commit suicide arises after being confronted with the instinct of self-preservation which Joiner views as being powerful although it is possible to overcome it by developing fearlessness in regard to any kind of pain or death. He suggests that tolerance of pain results from the repeated and long-term experience of harmful actions (e.g., both conscious and unconscious self-injury), any kind of violence and even occupations that are related to being exposed to pain and injuries (e.g., doctors, police officers or servicemen). Joiner’s work from 2006 thus shows that “the likelihood of suicide attempts is greater in individuals who have a longer history of self-injury, use a greater number of methods, and report absence of physical pain during self-injury” (Nock et al.: 144). All of these features indicate the ability to tolerate pain.

By studying the history of suicide attempts, Joiner et al. (114, 2005) claim that people who have attempted suicide in the past tend to express suicidal behavior more often than those who have not done so.

Suicidology

After the appearance of numerous studies of suicide as well as its forms and reasons in different fields of numerous studies of suicide, it is hardly surprising that an area of inquiry emerged aided by researchers interested in the study of suicide as a phenomenon.

Suicidology was developed on the basis of, but not limited to, the two disciplines discussed above, namely sociology and psychology. Suicidology concerns the study of suicide and suicide prevention. Such a definition was given in 1993 by Edwin S. Shneidman, who is considered to be the father of suicidology. He is also the author of “Clues to Suicide”, published in 1957 and co-authored by his colleague Norman L. Faberow. The article is dedicated mainly to the investigation of the psychological factors of suicide: “Our purpose at this time is to describe the
experimental approach in the investigation of psychological factors in suicide and to report a few tentative results” (1957: 109).

In 1958, he founded the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center. Suicidology is a relatively new science that encompasses all of the works dedicated to suicide from related disciplines, including Durkheim’s *Suicide*, Shneidman’s *Clues to Suicide*, Freud’s ideas on the origins of suicide and Camus’s vision of suicide as a philosophical problem. Other disciplines related to and contributing to suicidology are psychiatry, philosophy, neurology, physiology and linguistics.

Suicidology is doubtlessly the discipline that can answer the question “what is suicide?”.

According to the Collins Concise English Dictionary (3rd Edition, p.1346), suicide is “The act or an instance of killing oneself intentionally”. However, if we are to define suicide in an academic sense, this description is incomplete. One of the first successful attempts at explaining suicide was made by Durkheim. According to him, “the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result” (Durkheim, 1951: 44). It is Durkheim’s definition that is taken into consideration in the present study.

The *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* by Ronald Maris was found to be very helpful in supplying much information about studies conducted on suicidal acts, which was crucial when the project began. The range of scientific branches that examine suicide from different points of view is so broad that it is almost impossible to study suicide notes solely as a linguistic phenomenon. Apart from that, “[t]heory usually contrast[s] with practice. The suspicion […] often is that theory is secondary to practice and at worst that theoreticians are only web spinning, impractical dilatants who really lack the skills to be able to do much of anything…” (Maris, 2000: 26). However, without having the theoretical background to the problem, it was impossible to understand upon which factors the focus should be put. Beginning from the history of suicide studies and statistics and continuing with the collection of the significant works from sociological, psychiatric and psychological points of view, the *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* ends with a section dedicated to different methods of treatment and ways of preventing suicides. This book was the point of departure for the comparison of suicide notes that follows below.

As suicide is a very well-known phenomenon, it is no wonder that there are many myths that surround it of which many scholars are aware and which they try to disprove. Joiner’s book *Myths about Suicide* is a good example of a collection of myths which he reveals as being false.
by providing both facts and detailed explanations. There are also other works that compile different myths about suicides. The most popular myths that people encounter when facing the phenomenon of suicide for the first time are listed below:

1. People who talk about suicide will not commit suicide.

“Although some attempted suicides may seem to be motivated by the desire for attention or manipulation, most suicides and suicide attempts appear to be responses by those who desire to end the extreme and unbearable psychological pain they feel” (McIntosh, 1988: 130).

2. All suicidal people want to die.

“Most suicidal people are undecided about living or dying, and they “gamble with death,” leaving it to others to save them. Almost no one commits suicide without letting others know how he is feeling” (Leenaars et al., 1992: 62)

3. All suicidal people are mentally ill.

“Studies of hundreds of genuine suicide notes indicate that although the suicidal person is extremely unhappy, he is not necessarily mentally ill” (Leenaars et al., 1992: 63)

4. If you ask someone if he/she wants to commit suicide you might give him the idea; so avoid any such direct questioning.

“When the topic of suicide is brought up the suicidal person is provided an opportunity to discuss a taboo topic that is not often allowed an open discussion. Others may not permit discussion or acknowledge the presence of suicide ideation on the part of the suicidal individual” (McIntosh, 1988: 129-130)

5. Improvement following a suicidal crisis means that the suicidal risk is over.

“Most suicides occur within about three months following the beginning of ‘improvement,’” when the individual has the energy to put his morbid thoughts and feelings into effect” (Leenaars et al, 1992: 63).

**Forensic linguistics**

The discipline of forensic linguistics is still in an emergent state. However, for the past two decades, the subject has grown steadily, leading to the establishment of the International
Association of Forensic Linguists as well as two online journals: *The International Journal of Speech Language and the Law* and *The International Journal of Law, Language and Discourse*. It may be said that forensic linguistics implements the common knowledge, methods and analyses of general linguistics for forensic settings such as trials, crime investigations, judicial procedures, etc. As a stable word combination, the term ‘forensic linguistics’ was first used in 1968 by Professor of Linguistics Jan Svartvik who in his well-known work analyzed statements made by Timothy John Evans\(^1\) and pointed out that “this uncultivated field ['forensic linguistics'] has been interesting for a number of reasons” (Ellegård, 1968: 6). Since then we may speak of a gradual emergence of a separate field of science called ‘forensic linguistics’. In 2004, John Olsson writes in his book: “[A]nd so when we put forensic next to linguistics as in the title of this book we are effectively saying forensic linguistics is a genuine science just like forensic chemistry, forensic toxicology, and so on. Of course, insofar as a science is a field of endeavour in which we seek to obtain reliable, even predictable results, by the application of a methodology, then forensic linguistics is a science” (32).

The areas addressed by forensic linguistics vary, but the main topics of the study involve the analysis of legal texts, understanding the language use common to judicial processes and the provision of linguistic evidence including voice and author identification. The types of forensic texts examined also vary and range from emergency calls to death row statements. In the present study, the author is interested in the close examination of a type of text known as ‘suicide notes’. It should be mentioned here that the concept of suicide notes is also well known by the name ‘suicide letters’, but for the sake of consistency, only the terms ‘suicide notes’ or ‘genuine suicide notes’ are used in the following.

From the point of view of forensic linguistics, suicide notes are interesting samples of written texts. The language choice of people with suicidal thoughts has been an object of interest for many linguists, and, as a result, many works have been dedicated to suicide notes and their analysis.

Many of the studies conducted in this field have been dedicated to the comparison of genuine suicide notes and fabricated ones. Also, many have been written about the differences in

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\(^1\) *Timothy John Evans* (20 November 1924 – 9 March 1950) was a [Welshman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_Evans) accused of murdering his wife and infant daughter at their residence at 10 Rillington Place in Notting Hill, London. In January 1950 Evans was tried and convicted of the murder of his daughter, and he was sentenced to death by hanging. During his trial, Evans had accused his downstairs neighbour, [John Christie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Christie), of committing the murders. Three years after Evans's execution, Christie was found to be a [serial killer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Christie) who had murdered a number of other women in the same house. Before his own execution, Christie confessed to murdering Mrs. Evans. An official inquiry concluded in 1966 that Christie had also murdered Evans's daughter, and Evans was granted a [posthumous pardon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_Evans).
stylistics that exist between suicide notes and other text types. Linguists’ deep studies of suicide texts have resulted in discovering a number of patterns that are particular to suicide notes.

The analysis made by Carole E. Chaski (2012) revealed elements of other text types that are possible to find in suicide notes. In the current study, all of the elements represented by Chaski have been found in both the suicide notes and the suicide posts as well. The elements and text types that they represent are:

1. The apology text type represented by “I’m sorry/Please forgive me” phrases and expressions;
2. The love letter text type represented by “I love you/I cannot live without you” phrases;
3. The angry letter type represented by “I cannot please you/I hope you are happy now” expressions;
4. The complaint letter type represented by “the situation is not acceptable/I can no longer tolerate” expressions;
5. The business letter type represented with “the insurance policy/be sure to pay” phrases;
6. The trauma narrative text type represented by “since the divorce” statements.

It is important to remember that not all suicide notes contain a full set of text features (Chaski, 2012). All of the above-mentioned elements can also be found in suicide posts. In the current study, it was found that general suicide notes as well as suicide posts can contain between one and four different text types within the same note or post. Notes or posts containing all six elements of text types in use simultaneously have not been found. It has been established that the longer the text, the more likely it is to contain elements from other text types (Chaski, 2012).

Different elements of text types represent different emotions expressed in suicide notes and posts. Every emotion expressed in a suicide text conveys a separate meaning and shares the particular mood of its author. By extracting these elements, it becomes possible to see the differences between suicide notes and suicide posts.

**What is a ‘suicide note’?**

Despite the existence of many studies concerning last words and suicide texts, notes are not found in all cases of suicide. On the contrary, statistics show that suicide notes are only located in 10-15 % of suicides. Moreover, suicide notes never follow any stereotypical pattern (Chaski, 2012). That makes it difficult to identify them. Moreover, there is no one generally accepted definition of what a suicide note actually is. However, common knowledge could lead us to identify a suicide note as a message (written or otherwise recorded) which is left by an individual.
who either committed suicide or intended to commit suicide at the moment he or she wrote the note in question. The problems that cause difficulties in the precision of the term have been taken up by Jess Jann Shapero in his dissertation *The Language of Suicide Notes* (2011): “What people, including the Coroner’s Office, call a ‘suicide note’ also seems to be influenced by the number of other notes left (by the same person), their size in words, and the sub-genre” (84).

One of the problems with defining the term ‘suicide note’ is determined by the various forms that the message can take. They may have been written on a piece of paper or recorded by a video/audio device. The words may have been posted as a blog entry somewhere on the Internet or left in the form of a phone call to a police department. They may even appear as a text written on a wall with the victim’s blood. The great variety of forms that suicide notes can take ranges from “notes, letters, notebooks” to “diaries, poems, greetings cards, and transcribed audio tapes” (Shapero, 2011:84).

In addition, the kind of message that could be considered a proper suicide note is still a matter of discussion among researchers. However, in the present study, a suicide note is perceived as being a text written either on paper or on the Internet in the form of a comment addressing a a blog post and in both cases is composed by an individual who has committed suicide or has expressed the desire and intention to do so. According to Salib, Cawley & Healy, “Suicide notes are traditionally considered markers of the severity of the suicide attempt and often provide valuable insights into the thinking of suicide victims before the final act” (2002: 186).

The term ‘genuine suicide notes’ refers to suicide texts that are beyond a doubt the products of people who committed suicide. Further, there can be no question in regard to the fact that they have indeed been written by the individual to which they have been attributed.

The aim of genuine suicide notes may be, but is not limited to, (1) a desire to give the reasons for their suicide, (2) to express the last wish of the author, or (3) to say their final farewell to the addressees of the note.

**What is implied by ‘suicide post’?**

The term ‘suicide post’ was implemented in this study in order to be able to distinguish between the two types of suicide texts under examination. ‘Suicide post’, in this case, indicates a typed piece of text published within the global network in the form of chats, forums, blogs, comments, etc., and which belongs to the category of suicide texts. These kinds of texts are written on
thematic webpages dedicated to suicide and/or suicide prevention. The authors of the suicide posts are in most cases anonymous.

The term ‘post’ has been chosen in order to reflect and underline the belonging of a given text to the web genre. Thus, ‘suicide post’ represents a relevantly short piece of text devoted to the topic of suicide posted on the Internet and published on a thematic webpage.

‘Suicide post’ is used instead of the term ‘suicide note’, which was discussed in the previous section. The content of suicide posts has been found to be quite similar to that of the suicide note. However, the background information of the suicide post is not known nor is the fate of its author after the publication of the post on the Internet.

The term ‘suicide post’ has not been used in any previous literature or publication due to the fact that no similar research has been made concerning the topic of comparison between the above-mentioned categories of suicide texts.

The aim of suicide posts is, first of all, to function as a cry for help and, secondly, to reveal all of the ways in which the author has suffered. The suicide post thus becomes an attempt to find another way to solve the problems of the author.

**Methodology**

**Discourse Analysis**

Written text is one of the forms of communication developed by mankind in order to express and retain ideas. Writing is, in fact, speech that is fixed on a piece of paper. However, the writing itself cannot be aimless. There is always something behind the text that triggers the author to produce it. Knowing this universal truth, linguistic scholars have always been interested in answering such questions as: What motivates people to write texts? Why do people use the exact text constructions and words that they do? What do authors really want to say with their texts? These are the questions that discourse analysis (henceforth DA) strives to answer.

Although, the first studies utilizing DA date back to the early 1930s, the term ‘discourse’ did not enter into use until 1950s. The discipline itself, however, had been developed by the middle of the 1960s and the early 1970s at which point works on DA started appearing rapidly. The fields of scholarship that developed DA include, first of all, linguistics, philosophy, sociology and
anthropology. The founding father of the discipline can be said to have been the philosopher and historian Michel Foucault who wrote many works dedicated to the theory of discourse. Since that time, the field has grown enormously. In general, it may be said that discourse requires analysis beyond the level of the sentence. However, despite the existence of many works on DA written by various scholars, it is still difficult to find one universally accepted definition of the term ‘DA’. The authors of *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2001:1), Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton, point out that:

“So abundant are definitions of discourse that many linguistics books on the subject now open with a survey of definitions. In their collection of classic papers in discourse analysis, for example, Jaworski and Coupland (1999: 1–3) include ten definitions from a wide range of sources. They all, however, fall into the three main categories noted above: (1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language”.

Thus, DA examines systems at the communicative level, i.e., it explains what is expressed or implied in a live conversation (written, spoken or signed), what helps the conversation to successfully achieve its goal, how language is used to create different social effects, etc. Despite the multiplicity of vague definitions, one common description of what DA is has been expressed by Gillian Brown and George Yule (1983:1):

“The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs”.

Therefore, the object of DA becomes discourse itself, which is represented by any act of communication such as oral conversation or written texts. In this study, the focus of DA is on written/typed texts. According to Jay L. Lemke’s statement found in George Tobin and Barry Fraser’s book (2012), it is important to remember that “DA is also contextual. If you are interested in the language of any particular kind of event or text, you also should collect ‘around’ it its probably relevant intertexts. [...] Written texts also carry considerable visual information such as: handwriting forms, page layout, typography, accompanying drawings and illustrations, etc. This information, which can be very important for interpreting the meaning of verbal text, should not be lost to the analysis.” (1472-1473).
Meanwhile, with worldwide technical development and the era of globalization, the Internet has become the main means of communication for humanity. What was originally meant to be written on actual paper is now commonly constructed on a virtual piece of paper. Not only are texts written with the help of personal computers, but they are also posted, cited, shared and quoted online. Thus, the original types and genres of texts have nowadays fallen out of favor to the benefit of the virtual mode of communication – the Internet. At present, modern linguistics studies as well computer-mediated communication, aiming to examine (in most cases) text-based messages. These messages are represented in different forms as mails, chats, comments on various posts, blogs, discussion groups, etc. The linguistic features of these messages “vary depending on the kind of messaging system used and the social and cultural context embedding particular instances of use” (Schiffrin et al., 2001: 612). These kinds of texts could escape the notice of linguists. Since the 1990s, interest in computer-mediated discourse (henceforth CMD) has become worldwide, and academic works on this topic started to appear rapidly at that time. CMD is characterized by its focus on “language and language use in computer networked environments and by its use of methods of discourse analysis to address its focus” (Schiffrin et al., 2001: 612).

CMD has a number of linguistic features that differ from standard written language. Thus, it is common to find “spoken language features: contraction, abbreviations, use of lower case in place of upper case, omission of punctuation and omission of grammatical function words” (Schiffrin et al., 2001: 618). In most cases, the participants choose to use these features deliberately in order to save space and/or economize typing efforts. Another characteristic feature of CMD is the possibility to express almost every kind of emotion in writing, from laughter (e.g., “hahhhhhahah”) to excitement (e.g., “WOW!”), but the most well-known of these emotional expressions are the so-called “smiley faces” made in ASCII characters (American Standard Code for Information Interchange). Not only can facial expressions be expressed in CMD but actions as well (ex. <frown> or *sigh*).

The drawback of CMD consists of the difficulty inherent in attempting to extract statistical information about the participants such as age, gender, race, social class, educational level or geographical location. However, some pieces of information are easier to find than others. Age, gender and educational level may be possible to extract from some texts, as there are certain common features that are peculiar to particular social groups. Educational level can be measured by the presence or absence of grammatical errors; at the same time, it is also possible to see if the mistakes have been made on purpose. Gender can be extracted from the participants’ names or
the manner of the text structure. Age is also often disclosed from text structure or from the level of life experience communicated in the messages (Schiffrin et al., 2001: 621).

**Comparative Analysis**

In addition to DA, it is important to employ comparative analysis in order to reveal the kinds of linguistic differences found between the two types of suicide texts.

Comparative analysis involves a collation of two or more alternatives and is known as one of the oldest methods in sociology. Comparison, as a means of approach, is used within the frame of qualitative research methods and tends to answer the questions “why?” and “how?”. The roots of comparative analysis in the social sciences go back to eighteenth century when J. Hume and A. Smith first mentioned the constant comparative method which was then further developed by B. Glaser and A. Strauss into grounded theory. Since then, many researchers involved in the social sciences have published works on the constant comparative method and grounded theory.

Renata Tesch (1990) defines comparison as “the main intellectual tool” and states that “[t]he method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns” (96).

According to Hennie Boeije (2002), comparison goes together with “theoretical sampling” which determines the researcher’s decision about what kind of data should be gathered next and where to find it on the basis of preliminary theoretical ideas. The data, thus, should be chosen very carefully and in a way that enables questions to be answered efficiently and effectively, thereby allowing the process of comparative analysis to progress.

As the peculiarity of this research is targeted at a special type of text – “suicide messages”, it is no less important to highlight the best-known studies that have been helpful while conducting the research for the present study.

The most influential works written about suicide as a phenomenon and suicidal actions are represented by various fields of scholarship. The psychological research conducted by Joiner made a great impact on the modern study of suicide. His book “Why People Die by Suicide”
(2005) introduced the interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behavior where such questions as why acts of suicide take place and what kind of individuals are capable of committing them are addressed. Joiner suggests that two components of suicide must be included in order for a suicide attempt to occur irrespective of if it was successful or not.

Data

The material analyzed for the purpose of this study consists of a collection of suicide texts that is primarily divided into two types. The difference between them is to be found in the authors of the texts. The first type of texts is called in this study ‘genuine suicide notes’, and their authors are known to have taken their own lives. The second type is called ‘suicide posts’, and they represent the comments posted on weblogs dedicated to suicide. How events played out after they were posted is unknown due to the fact that the identities of their authors have not been revealed. What unites all suicide posts is the fact that they all have been posted on the Internet, having been inspired by the ‘suicide theme’ found by their authors in suicide blogs or on suicide websites.

Originally, three categories of notes were to be examined: the two categories of notes mentioned above and notes that express happy or neutral emotions that might be represented by joyful posts about marriage, giving birth, or even texts about travelling or favorite books. It initially seemed relevant to examine expressions of depressive or suicidal behavior in contrast with expressions of happiness or neutrality in order to be able to isolate the most characteristic features of the expressions dedicated to suicide, depression and isolation. However, during the course of the study, the difference between positive (happy/neutral) and negative (depressive/suicidal) expressions became very prominent. Moreover, the difference between the expressions in the genuine suicide notes and those found in the suicide posts was found to be subtle to the point of being almost impossible to distinguish. For this reason, it was decided that the two categories of suicide notes should be examine thoroughly instead of trying to distinguish the peculiar characteristic features of the two types of emotions by contrasting them.

In the middle of the project, it seemed that it might be interesting to include a third category of suicide notes to the research, namely that of notes written by people who attempted to commit suicide but survived. This third category could be of significant interest to compare with the two suicide note types already mentioned as they could be the intermediate category connecting the successful suicides with the notes that are composed with the aim of gaining attention. Unfortunately, suicide notes left by people who made suicide attempts but survived have been impossible to find using the open sources on the Internet. However, similar research has been
carried out by Joiner and his colleagues in an attempt to locate the presence or absence of connections between expressions of burdensomeness and suicide notes.

The bulk of the genuine suicide notes dataset consists of suicide letters taken from Art Kleiner’s article “How not to commit suicide”. The article itself can be found in many weblogs dedicated to suicide and suicide prevention with open access. One of them was found by the author of this study before coming across the original article at http://ns1.makeahistory.com/index.php/recent-news/42960-how-not-to-commit-suicide. All of the letters in this corpus have been gathered at different coroner’s offices by a psychiatrist who decided to remain anonymous as is stated in the article: http://www.well.com/~art/suicidenotes.html. However, the rest of the dataset consists of real suicide notes published in a weblog: http://russelljohn.net/journal/2008/03/a-collection-of-suicide-notes/. The dataset of suicide posts has been collected from Internet-based weblogs dedicated to suicide and its methods and has been found by means of random searches using search engines due to the initial criteria that the data should be represented as a small piece of written text appearing in social networks such as forum posts, chats and comments on blog posts or newspaper articles, etc. During the course of conducting research for the study, the criteria for the dataset have been fulfilled, and the data analyzed represents short posts and comments written by ordinary people. The content of the texts reflects either the suicidal or depressive mood of their authors.

In total, twenty genuine suicide notes and twenty suicide posts have been analyzed with the help of discourse analysis and comparative research methods. The limitation to twenty items for each type of suicide text was chosen in order to provide a more detailed analysis of each text without using any computational tools. The category of genuine suicide notes contains nine males and nine females ranging from thirteen to seventy-four years of age. Two individuals belonging to this category have been impossible to identify. In regard to the category of suicide posts, the individual identities have not been easy to detect, and that is why there is no reliable information to offer in terms of, e.g., exact numbers of men and women or the marital status of the authors. The ages, however, have been possible to ascertain in the vast majority of the suicide posts. Thus, the age group ranges from thirteen to twenty-two years of age.

The identities of the authors of suicide letters have been obscured, and all identifying information (such as real names or dates of death) has been removed. In the case of suicide notes where there was not much revealing information given to begin with, all of the nicknames as they appear in weblogs on suicides have been changed.

2 It should be noted that although the original dataset was first found in Art Klein’s article, the suicide notes used in his research were later found on many non-research web resources dedicated to suicide.
Procedure

When this study was planned, it was decided that the main method of data analysis would be discourse analysis and that it would be carried out “manually” without the use of any computational tools. DA requires much more time and attention from the author and therefore the size of the data set which can be used is comparably less than what would be the case for a computer-based analysis.

Despite the insights gained by performing DA, the main method utilized in this study ultimately became the comparative analysis of the two text types described above. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to make a comparison of the language employed in the texts, constructions used to represent the emotions of their authors.

As soon as it was decided that the data set was going to consist of genuine suicide notes as well as suicide posts, a comparative analysis of these two types of texts could be undertaken. Originally, the focus was put on revealing any linguistic signs of the true intentions of the person composing the suicide-related text. However, as the study progressed, the features of emotional states became visible. At first sight, the two types of notes seemed to exhibit a large number of the same emotions, but closer investigation of the suicide problem and text comparison revealed a slight difference in the transmission of emotions. The problem of author identification and their further destiny brought attention to itself immediately. In the genuine type of texts, there was no doubt from the beginning, due to the fact that the notes were found in coroners’ offices, that they were composed by individuals who took their own lives. On the other hand, there was no expectation, nor could there be, that the rest of the data, consisting of posts that represent potential suicide notes, would disclose any information concerning the fates of their authors.

After the initial division of the suicide texts, each category was examined separately for the purpose of extracting all of the possible similarities within each group. Initially, there was an attempt made to group genuine notes by the cause/reason for the suicide as claimed by their authors. The four most frequently encountered causes, as they emerged, were: having committed an offence, blaming someone, disease, and despair. However, this division did not make any significant impact on the research being conducted. The suicide posts were shown to encompass, in most cases, a combination of several reasons for suicide, and this made it impossible to compare four respective categories between the two text types.

When genuine suicide notes have been examined, they have proven to have several characteristic features. In the case of Chaski’s project concerning the differences between genuine suicide
notes and control documents, the results indicated that there are a number of elements in real suicide notes that are also inherent in other text types, e.g., (in Chaski’s terms) the ‘apology’, ‘love letter’, ‘angry letter’, ‘complaint letter’, ‘business letter’ and ‘trauma narrative’ (2012: 439). In the case of the present study, similar elements were found prior to having any knowledge of Chaski’s findings. However, while doing the literature review, their analysis was found, and this served to strengthen the argument that genuine suicide notes encompass within themselves many other text types. It was then decided to make use of Chaski’s results and the taxonomy they implement in her work.

Suicide posts have also shown to have their own characteristic features as well. Despite the initial expectation to find as many distinctive features as possible, both categories displayed one feature that united them. All of the notes expressed the same emotion – fear – which at first seemed to be the common feature and nothing more. However, after many days of reading suicide notes and posts again and again, inspecting each word and phrase construction and consulting with psychologists and exploring the study of basic psychological models, it became obvious that the categories reflected different connotations of fear. The fear of living has been clearly expressed in the genuine suicide notes examined while the fear of death was possible to see in the suicidal posts. Once it became clear that different connotations of the same emotion could be found in the texts, many more were discovered.
Results

The language of ‘genuine suicide notes’

The following section is dedicated to discussing the characteristic features of genuine suicide notes revealed through the comparative analysis of genuine suicide notes and suicide posts.

First of all, genuine suicide notes have been examined in the case of this study in regard to various linguistic levels such as semantics, pragmatics and syntax. Phonetics and phonology have not been included due to the reason that the data in question is comprised of written texts. In addition, morphology was not found to be of relevance to the present analysis.

‘Clear Reasoning’

From a pragmatic point of view, the context and background information about the act of suicide has been investigated based upon the information given in the suicide texts. Thus, genuine notes have been initially divided into four categories concerning reasons for committing suicide: disease; offence with something, blame of someone by the author and despair. These notes have been compared with one another in order to locate any possible features specific for each category. Although this grouping has not made any significant impact on the search for features, the fact that it became possible to distinguish the causes of suicide from the genuine notes led to the development of an idea that a clear statement of reasoning should be present in genuine suicide notes either with a direct statement or an implied one. Thus, all of the genuine suicide notes examined have been analyzed in accordance with this idea. The notion of ‘clear reasoning statement’ was then developed.

The statements of ‘clear reasoning’ found in most cases in the genuine suicide notes are represented by the answer to the question “why?”. Thus, the most frequent and obvious element that indicated the reason for suicide was reflected by the subordinate conjunction ‘because’. However, to state or imply some kind of reason is not enough to belong to the category of ‘clear reasoning’. As has been stated in this section, the original motivation for finding the reasons for the acts of suicide in question was to be able to divide genuine notes into relevant categories. That is why the reasons should be clear enough to be defined without difficulties.

In three of the notes examined, disease is stated as the reason for committing suicide. The diseases themselves vary in nature. Physical pain and the costs of treatment are named as the set
of reasons in a note written by 59-year-old married female (#1): “After six weeks of streptomycin shots [...] we have conclusive proof that the ulcers in my bronchial tubes have not healed. [...] I can't bleed my family for any such amount of money”. A mental illness was named as another reason for suicide by a middle-aged, divorced female (#2): “I am taking this way out - - before mere nuisance attacks and rages against others assume a more dangerous form”. A soul pain was presented as another type of a disease by married man of 52 years old (#3): “You remember when I returned from the hospital I broke down. That was the beginning of my illness.”

For these types of notes, complex sentences with subordinate clauses linked by the conjunctions ‘because’, ‘since’, ‘until’, ‘after’ or ‘when’ are characteristic and reflect ‘clear reasoning’ by these means (#2: “Because of a growing conviction that a hereditary insanity is manifesting itself beyond my control, I am taking this way out...”)

Causing offence by some event, accident or action has been singled out as the reason for suicide in six of the notes. The types of offences committed by the author vary from the concrete, such as a lack of love and understanding from the parents of a teenage girl (#7): “I have tried to be good to you both. [...] It is just that I am afraid of you both at times”, to the abstract, such as having committed an offence by living in general (#10): “I lived 61 years too many” by 61-year-old divorced male.

The characteristic feature of this type is the frequent use of impersonal sentences when trying to explain the decision to end their lives as well as subordinate clauses with the conjunctions ‘so’, ‘until’ and ‘where’ (#9: “there aren't 47 days I would live over again”). In order to show the desire to remain aloof, metaphors may be used in this category of suicide notes (#11: “I am tired of this life so am going over to see the other side”/ “Though I am about to kick the bucket [...]

Blame put on someone else is the easiest to detect and most frequently met category. In the case of this study, seven suicide notes wherein the authors blame other people for the action they are about to take have been found. Examples of people blamed in these letters are, for example, wives, husbands, girlfriends, bosses and, in one case, a mistress.

The reasoning of the ‘blame’ category is expressed mostly with the negative forms of words, negations and words that are negative in meaning (#13: “No more I will pay the bills. No more I will drive the car. No more I will wash, iron & mend any clothes.”/ #17: “When a "man" doesn't know where to take his wife -- then she isn't a wife any more”/ #16 “[...] but you didn't seem to

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3 All of the items quoted in this section correspond with the data of ‘genuine suicide notes’ from Appendix B.
care. You had great plans which didn't include me. You didn't respect me.). The conjunctions ‘because’ or ‘since’ are not often met in this type of suicide note; instead, the reasoning is given the primary position in the suicide note (#18: “It seems as if I have been spending all my life apologizing to you for things that happened whether they were my fault or not”/ #15: “My boss, […], seduced me and made me pregnant. He refuses to help me. I had not had intercourse in two years. He says that I will have to suffer through it by myself”).

One of the notes examined has been identified as indicating a clear but concealed reasoning which may fall into the category of guilt/shame (#20): “I know what I am doing. [she] found out”. At the same time, as we do not have any proof of what actually triggered the suicidal act, this type can only be said, then, to be related to the category of ‘clear reasoning’. However, this suicide note has the characteristic features peculiar to the category of “offence” suicide notes.

The ‘clear statement’ of why the suicide takes place is an integral part of almost every genuine suicide note examined as it is an aim of its author to explain to a reader why such a decision has been made. Very often it is the desire of an author to express their last feelings before they go, an attempt to communicate their last words to the public.

**Expressing emotions**

By dividing genuine suicide notes into categories pertaining to reasons for the act, the difference of what feelings a suicide note expresses becomes apparent. It was also seen during the course of the analysis that in each category of clear reasoning it has been possible to distinguish one emotion as the prevalent emotion of the particular category of note. In addition to the main emotion characteristic for each category of reasoning, it has also been noticed that there is always someone or something to be blamed for the act. The difference between the expressions of ‘blame’ and ‘regret’ has been found.

Thus, in regard to the disease suicide notes, the emotion of internal ‘weariness’ was the most frequently met in all of the suicide notes belonging to this category (#1: “I am defeated and exhausted physically and emotionally”/ #5: “but I am afraid. I'm so cold”).

In this category, we can see that the authors take responsibility for the decision they have made to take their own lives. A large number of expressions of being ‘sorry’ can be found here, written in the first-person singular (#5: “I know she has been a lot of worry to mama and I'm sorry” / #1: “It was mostly my fault, please forgive me”). The authors blame themselves for what is happening, and they express their regret to their relatives and friends over being the reason for their pain. However, the authors that can be assigned to this category tend to explain that they
feel that there is no other way out for them and that the unfortunate decision has been made for a number of reasons.

The main emotion of the next category is characterized by the general feeling of having committed an “offence” against the world or even that life has become ‘tiresome’ (#12: “because I am too sick to go on”/ #11: “I am tired of this life”/ #10: “I lived 61 years too many”).

The responsibility for the suicide belonging to this category of notes is not assumed by their authors, nor is anyone else blamed by them. The cause of the action is the circumstances in which they find themselves. However, the authors feel shame because of the decision they have made, and the expressions of feeling ‘sorry’ thus become the integral part of this category.

The emotion that conveys within itself the overall mood of the ‘blame’ category is, not surprisingly, an ‘aggression’ towards the people who are accused in the suicide note of having been the cause of the suicide (#13: “I married the wrong nag-nag-nag”/ #17: “your whole tribe is partly responsible for this -- from your mother on down -- hope they are satisfied”/ #19: “May her guts rot in hell”).

The authors of this type of suicide note refuse to take responsibility but instead blame others, very often those to whom the letters are addressed, for the suicide. Expressions of being ‘sorry’ have not been found here, only expressions of the pity the authors feel for themselves about a situation that they feel is inevitable. (#14: “I've got to the point where there is nothing to live for, a little bit of kindness from you would of made everything so different, but all that ever interested you was the dollar”/ #13: “What is a few short years to live in hell. That is all I get around here”).

However, being colored by one prevalent emotion does not exclude the presence of other emotions expressed in the suicide notes as well. One of the most important emotions found in the genuine suicide notes examined represents the key difference between the notes and the posts. This, the emotion of ‘fear’, will be discussed in more detail below.

- ‘Fear of living’

Expressions of fear have been found in all of the notes and posts examined; whether composed in a concealed or open manner, repeated a number of times or stated just once, communicated
directly or indirectly, fear is to be found in every suicide text that was read and analyzed for the purposes of this study. However, despite the initial suspicion that the fear expressed is one emotion which unites genuine suicide notes and posts, the feeling of fear turned out to have different connotations and became one of the main features differentiating the two suicide text under investigation.

Under closer examination, the ‘fear of living’ and the ‘fear of death’ have been distinguished as the two types of fear represented in the two sorts of texts. The fear of living is characterized by various expressions of longing to escape from everything causing pain, misery, loneliness, lack of love, etc. This kind of emotion was found in all of the genuine notes irrespective of the category of reasoning to which they belong. The fear of living is never isolated but instead is the emotion which is always grounded in various torments described by the author.

The expressions of fear of living take on different forms and depend very much upon the context of each particular suicide note, but in all of the cases the markers of fear can be found. Sometimes, they are represented by (a) the words ‘scare’ or ‘afraid of’, but most often these words are only implied. Death is regarded as a way out of the troubled world, and this is why (b) expressions of ‘freedom’, (c) prepositions that may show the desire to leave the life or the difficulty to stay alive for the author such as ‘from’, ‘without’ and ‘on’ or (d) conjunctions of time such as ‘before’ are used as the markers of the feeling of fear. Another marker of being afraid of life may be given by (e) the modality form in the future tense.

(a) “I can't go on I'm afraid I would break down” (#5)
(b) “I am at least free from the miseries and loneliness” (#1)
(c) “I cannot go on longer in these terrible times” (#4) / “Without you life is unbearable” (#16)
(d) I am taking this way out -- before mere nuisance attacks and rages against others assume a more dangerous form.” (#2)
(e) “He says that I will have to suffer through it by myself.” (#15)

The examples of expressions of the fear of living listed below are not the only ones to be found. Instead, the more suicide notes that are examined, the more forms of fear of living expressions that can be found.

In a few cases, however, the fear of a continued existence is expressed indirectly such as in note #11 where the author implies that he is tired of life and is going to set himself free from his miseries and try a new way of living. In this particular note, it is expressed by constructions such
as “going over” and “see the other life”. Despite the absence of obvious markers of ‘freedom’ and the prepositions ‘from’, ‘without’ or ‘on’, the construction of the note shows the author’s feelings indirectly and covers them by foregrounding the desire to escape from life.

Such indirect markers of the fear of life have been found in only one of the genuine suicide notes under investigation. However, it seems safe to assume that similar examples would also be found in other examples of this type of note.

- ‘Relief’

Among other things, the fear of living is very often supported by a feeling of ‘relief’ in association with being freed from life that is found in many of the genuine suicide notes that were examined. Thus, while life is depicted as being terrifying and torturous, death is cast in the role of a ‘saviour’ by the authors of the notes. The ‘relief’ marker usually indicates (a) the feeling of being at peace or rest; (b) a painless existence; (c) showing the way ‘out’ from a life of suffering to a brighter life after death or (d) the solution to the perceived problem. The indicators of the feeling of relief are represented by various words and expressions such as peace, rest, painless, live over, way out, solve problems, etc.

(a) “Now that it is all said I feel at peace” (#1)/ “Be glad I am at least free from the miseries and loneliness I have endured for so long and that at last I'll have peace and rest...” (#1)/ “Though I am about to kick the bucket I am as happy as ever” (#11)
(b) “I feel calm and at peace and grateful that I can go to sleep painlessly” (#1)
(c) “[...] aren't 47 days I would live over again if I could avoid it” (#9)/ “I am going out -- and I hope it is out” (#9)/ “What is a few short years to live in hell” (#13)
(d) “This is the best way. This will solve all our problems” (#16)

- ‘Hope’ versus ‘Desire’

As we have proofs that the authors of suicide notes are less scared of death than they are scared to continue living under the same conditions as before, they express the feeling of the absence of ‘hope’, which leads them to carry out the suicide. The same happens with their feeling of ‘desire’ which is supposed to be initially inherent in every living being. Not having hope causes the absence of desire for the author of the note. In this respect, the forms that communicate the absence of hope vary. Thus, in the genuine suicide texts, we can meet expressions of (a) feelings of failure in regard to attempts made to improve conditions or even feelings of utter defeat; (b) no hope for recovery/happiness and also having a broken heart due to the absence of hope; (c)
loss of life/everything or the absence of life goals; (d) desiring that there be no obstacles to ending one’s life; and, finally, it is possible to find (e) metaphors or general sentences indicating an overall belief in the uselessness of life.

(a) “I did desperately want to get well -- I still had much to live for -- hope for recovery -- hope of a reunion with the children -- work which I loved and which could have given me financial security and great satisfaction. But it was not to be -- I am defeated and exhausted physically and emotionally.” (#1) / “I have tried” (#7)

(b) “I shan’t recover this time” (#4) / “Alice I wanted to help you paint but how could I with a broken heart. And my head aches so much any more my nerves are ready to break and what would happen if they did” (#5)

(c) “One of the great ones is leaving this world when you want to and have nothing to live for.” (#10) / “I married the wrong nag-nag-nag and I lost my life.” (#13) / “I've lost every thing” (#5)

(d) “The sun is leaving the hill now so hope nothing else happens.” (#10)

(e) “And the devil was a human being now killed and cast into hell and the angel with the keys of the bottomless pit is in hell casting out all the good souls which these evil people have cast into hell for no reason. The good Seers who serve our God are 1/3 to 2/3 of the evil ones in this world.” (#8)

- ‘Absence of Doubt’

The concept of the ‘absence of doubt’ conveys within itself the determination to die by one’s own hand. The most important indicator that the suicide text is a real suicide note that has been left as the last words of one who has taken his or her own life is probably the ‘absence of doubt’ concerning the event that was allegedly supposed to occur once the note was written. At the same time with the plainness of this notion, the difficulty of what markers can be found to indicate the ‘absence of doubt’ arises.

However, some features can be singled out as markers of the absence of doubt in the notes analyzed. First of all, a clear structure\(^4\) indicates that the author had already planned to terminate his or her life by the time the note was written. What is most interesting for the expressions of

\(^4\) A detailed discussion about the structure of suicide notes will be introduced later on in the study.
the absence of doubt in all of the text structures is (a) the ‘business arrangements’ that are mentioned in nearly all of the genuine suicide notes that have been used as a dataset for the present study. The so-called ‘business arrangements’ represent the will to organize everything before death occurs. Most often, the authors try to make their final preparations and take care of the living, but some of them just give instructions regarding what to do with their body and to whom not to give their money. Below are a few examples of the variety of business instructions found in genuine suicide notes:

(a) “I hereby bequeath 1) my body to medics for dissection; also 2) To Mark B. all personal effects -- to be divided as whim decrees -- with Dr. Lois J., L.A. and to each -- a deep fondness and love. 3) To Joe A. the greatest devotion -- the kind that "passest all understanding." 3a) And my life.

Anita R.

4) To my father, Vincent M., the sum of one dollar ($1)” (#2)

“I want Dr. B. to officiate at my funeral. I think Joe would like to have him with him at that time.” (#1)

“Let us, for a moment be sensible. I do not remember if the partnership agreement provides for a case like this -- but if it doesn't and I think it doesn't, I would much prefer - - I haven't time to make this a legal requirement -- but, I would much prefer that you, as executrix under my will, do not elect to participate in profits for 2 or 3 years or whatever it may be that is specified there. My partners have been generous with me while I worked with them. There is no reason why, under the circumstances of my withdrawal from the firm, they should pay anything more.” (#9)

Another aspect of the absence of doubt is (b) the use of the past tense when the authors talk about themselves or their feelings. These kinds of expressions are found quite often in the genuine suicide notes examined. The choice of the past tense mixes with the usage of the present tense in many of them and indicates that those who write the notes consider, or want to consider, themselves as ones who already have left this world. The examples below illustrate this idea:

(b) “You cops will want to know why I did it, well, just let us say that I lived 61 years too many.” (#10) / “You had great plans which didn't include me. You didn't respect me.

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5 The relevant frequency of tenses used in suicide notes and posts will be examined in detail in subsection ‘Grammar’ dedicated to ‘genuine suicide notes’ part.
That was the trouble. You treated me like a child. I couldn't reach you as a man and woman or man and wife as we've lived.” (#16) / “I tried to keep the yard up that seemed to be the only comfort I had. I loved it but that wasn't anything” (#5)

As another part of the text structure of suicide notes, it is quite common to meet (c) variations of saying “goodbye”. These probably serve as the most popular and visible markers of a solid decision. The “goodbye” expressions, despite their popularity, have not been found in all of the suicide notes but are to be seen, however, in a great deal of them. Some of them contain a direct farewell written as “goodbye”-type words, while others just expressed love or wishes for good luck followed by the author’s signature.

(c) “So Long Your loving daughter (#7) / “Love – Elizabeth” (#15) / “I love you all” (#20) / “Good luck to all” (#11) / “Give me liberty or give me death” (#13) / “Good By Kid” (#14)

Finally, the indicators of the absence of doubt in the genuine suicide notes are represented by (d) expressions that mention life after death. As is also the case with the past tense constructions and the ‘business arrangements’, expressions naming life after death show a previous concern about the events that might take place after the act of suicide has been carried out.

(d) “To live on in the hearts of our dear ones is all that I can conceive of immortality” (#1) / “[...] in Heaven God is almost over come and I kill myself so I may go and help him [...]”(#8) / “I will love you even after death [...]” (#16)

**Text structure**

Before making the final decision to commit suicide, depressed or suicidal individuals usually consider it carefully for a long period of time. That is why when they come to this decision, the authors of suicide notes already know what they want to record as their last words. Consequently, the structure of the genuine suicide notes is consistent. A well-defined structure has been found in all of the genuine suicide notes examined in the present study. It consists of the following components:

- Form of address (more often someone specific)
- Introduction (stating the reason for suicide without naming the action)
- Culmination/body (acknowledging the act itself and providing further instructions/arrangements/apologies)
- Conclusion/closing words (farewell; signature; post-scriptum; other types of final words)

The result of the examination of twenty genuine suicide notes showed that each one followed a similar structure. Not one had been written without it. Though, the structure of the notes should not necessarily be fixed and follow the order stated below, all or, in some cases, most of the elements can be found in the genuine suicide notes under examination.

Sometimes, the introduction and culmination parts are included in the same sentence. However, as they are the most important elements of a genuine suicide note’s structure, they are always present and make it clear for the reader what is going to happen and why.

Form of address is quite an important part of suicide notes. When such a note is planned, it is by default aimed at an audience whether it is imagined to be friends or relatives or even a mortician. Otherwise, there would be no point in writing it. Thus, in the vast majority of cases, the notes are addressed to someone. The addressee may be (a) defined by the author, (b) generalized or (c) implied or undefined.

(a) “Dear David” (#1) / “My dearest Andrew” (#18) / “Mommie, my Darling” (#16) / “Dear Children” (#3)
(b) “To No-one and Everyone” (#2) / to the undertaker” (#13) / “To who it may concern” (#11) / “We have made many discoveries” (#8)
(c) “You cops will want to know [...]” (#10) / “Ask Cara [...] I love you all.” (#20) / “I hope you will be ‘free’” (#17)

The introduction is an integral part of any suicide note. As the note is aimed at explaining why the suicide took place, the introduction in which the author explains why he or she viewed it as the only option is present in every note that was examined.

The following examples illustrate the introductory part of suicide notes: “My mind -- always warped and twisted -- has reached the point where I can wait no longer -- I don’t dare wait longer” (#9) / “You cops will want to know why I did it, well, just let us say that I lived 61 years too many.” (#10) / “My boss, Kenneth J., seduced me and made me pregnant. He refuses to help me. I had not had intercourse in two years. He says that I will have to suffer through it by myself.” (#15) / “And I kill myself so I may go and help him, because I have a funny little quirk in my brain which helps.” (#8) / “No more I will pay the bills. No more I will have to eat the
leftover articles that was cooked the day before.” (#13) / “May her guts rot in hell -- I loved her so much.” (#19) / “I know what I am doing. Annette found out.” (#20)

A culmination has also been found in every suicide note relevant for this study, as it is the acknowledgement of the act of suicide itself despite the difficulties the author has in doing so. Moreover, it is a chance to express affection for loved ones, ask for forgiveness, assign blame or give instructions for the future. The culmination is very often the richest part of a suicide note as emotions are foregrounded here. The examples below represent this part of the suicide notes:

“All of a sudden all will and determination to fight on has left me. I have long ago prepared myself for the time when I reached the end of the trail. I feel calm and at peace and grateful that I can go to sleep painlessly” (#1) / “and I kill myself so I may go and help him, because I have a funny little quirk in my brain which helps.” (#8) / “Though I am about to kick the bucket I am as happy as ever.” (#11) / “Let us, for a moment be sensible. I do not remember if the partnership agreement provides for a case like this -- but if it doesn't and I think it doesn't, I would much prefer -- I haven't time to make this a legal requirement -- but, I would much prefer that you, as executrix under my will, do not elect to participate in profits for 2 or 3 years or whatever it may be that is specified there.” (#9) / “I married the wrong nag-nag-nag and I lost my life.” (#13) / “May her guts rot in hell -- I loved her so much.” (#19) / “I love you all.” (#20)

Finally, the conclusion is the part that is not necessarily present in the suicide notes analyzed. However, it very often becomes the part of the note that indicates the final farewell before the fatal event takes place. By writing ‘good bye’ or an equivalent expression, the author has a chance to postpone the execution of the sentence that they have imposed upon themselves as well as to say some last words to those they hold most dear. This type of structure is mainly found in the ‘disease’ and ‘offence’ types of suicide notes.

The conclusion is represented by the following examples: “Please forgive me. Love, Frank” (#3) / “So Long. Your loving daughter that will always love you, Mary” (#7) / “Good luck to all. Benjamin P.” (#11) / “Give me liberty or give me death, W.S.” (#13) / “Henry” (#19) / “Bill” (#20).

In regard to the category of structure, different types of feature elements found in other types of texts can be discussed. As the structure of genuine suicide notes is very clear, characteristic elements of other genres are used regularly. As was mentioned in Theoretical Background part
(subsection “Forensic linguistics”), there are six such types that are encountered very often in genuine suicide notes. In contrast to suicide posts, these elements appear more frequently in the genuine notes. Thus, for example, the ‘apology’ text type can be found in the introductions and the conclusions of suicide notes. Characteristics of the ‘love letter’ type are used by many authors in the forms of address as well as the bodies and conclusions of their suicide notes. The ‘angry letter’ as well as the ‘letter of complaint and the ‘business letter’ can also be detected in the bodies of the notes. Finally, the ‘trauma narrative’ can be found in introductory sections of the suicide notes under study. The same ‘other text’ type can be repeated in two or three parts of the note simultaneously. However, the most well-defined ‘other text’ types are clearly represented in only one part of the suicide letter whereas they are used in other parts as subsidiary expressions that help to strengthen the emotional part of a suicide note.

**Grammar**

The frequent occurrence of the past tense in suicide notes led to an interest in quantifying the relative frequency of the past tense versus other tenses in both genuine suicide notes and suicide posts. Thus, the use of the past tense was found in fifteen notes out of twenty versus twenty out of twenty notes with the present tense and fourteen out of twenty notes using the future tense. However, it was noted that (a) the present tense functions quite often as the future tense (eleven items out of twenty), and the past tense (b) at the same time has been used in the function of the present tense (twelve items out of twenty).

(a) “I am tired of this life so am going over to see the other side.” (#11) / “I am going out -- and I hope it is out” (#9) / “I know what I am doing”. (#20)

(b) “I loved you and was proud of you. I loved the children dearly and could not see them suffer so much on account of me.” (#3) / “You cops will want to know why I did it, well, just let us say that I lived 61 years too many.” (#10)

To compare the genuine suicide notes with the suicide posts, the quantification of the past tense versus other tenses has also been made for the posts in question. In the suicide posts, the occurrence of the past tense was also found in fifteen items out of twenty while the present tense was used in all twenty suicide posts. Meanwhile, the future tense has been found in just eleven posts out of twenty. Such phenomenon as the usage of the present tense when speaking about future events and using the past tense when referring to events in the present was found only in a
few of the posts. Thus, four posts out of twenty contained the present tense used to express future events and only two posts out of twenty have demonstrated the usage of the past tense instead of the present.

The tendency to use the past tense when referring to present events may be explained by the desire of the author to show that they see themselves as dead already. The use of the present tense instead of the future tense may be chosen by the authors to underline that the act of suicide is happening now, thus serving as an emphasis of the seriousness of their intention to commit suicide.

**Punctuation**

Punctuation is one of the most important parts of suicide notes. Despite the fact that the manner in which a specific author uses punctuation depends very much upon his or her background, e.g., their level of education and social and family status, it was indicated in this study, however, that in suicide notes, in contrast to posts, the authors tend to use grammatically correct punctuation to the extent to which their educational level allows. In all of the suicide notes investigated, correct punctuation, at least on a fundamnet level, was used. For example, all of the forms of address are separated by commas as well as are all the enumerations of homogenous members of the sentence.

Notes have been also examined in order to find out whether they convey within themselves a special pattern of punctuation that is peculiar to genuine suicide notes. It has thus been observed that the notes consist of ‘meaningful’ punctuation which helps the author to express their emotions.

The term ‘meaningful’ punctuation refers to some frequently met models of punctuation. Several such models expressing the same or similar meaning have been found.

1) “--” (double dash):

The double dash is often used as a universal sign which can function as any other sign such as a comma, a dash or even a period. The purpose of using the double dash is to replace other existing punctuation signs in order to make it easy for the author to write and not think too much about which sign to use in the sentence.

However, it can also be used in order to separate two parts of the same idea and insert between them a specification or details.
2) “...” (three or more periods at the end of a sentence / phrase):
Three or more periods are used to express the idea of an ‘open end’ or a continuation. This sign gives hope that what has been said is not the end.

3) “!!!” (three, sometimes one, exclamation marks):
Three exclamation marks are used for the purpose of strengthening the meaning of a given sentence or phrase.

The punctuation models introduced above are the most frequently met signs that have been found in the set of genuine suicide examined. Apart from these signs, other meaningful punctuation marks that authors tend to use in suicide notes have not been discovered. This fact makes the genuine suicide notes differ very much in terms of punctuation from the suicide posts that were studied.
The language of ‘suicide posts’

This section is dedicated to the discussion of suicide posts and the features that differentiate them from the genuine suicide notes and that have been found during the study of the differences between two types of suicide posts.

As was the case with suicide notes, suicide posts used for the purposes of this study have also been examined in regard to such linguistic levels as syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The examination of the suicide posts has revealed several distinguishing features which are described below.

**Unclear reasoning**

First of all, in the case of this study, it proved impossible to divide suicide posts into categories based on ‘reasons for death’. On the contrary, the posts seem to represent a separate group as a whole primarily because similarities between the posts have been found and not differences.

Despite the fact that the reason for the suicide is never underlined clearly in the posts analyzed, it is still possible to find some references to the causes of depression. Depression, as is known, may very often be followed by an act of suicide (Barraclough and Pallis, 1975: 55-61). As a matter of fact, it is impossible to divide suicide posts into categories according to clear reasons for committing suicide although it is possible to discern the reasons that make people write the posts.

In the posts investigated for the purposes of this study, a tendency to use a combination of reasons for depression in the same suicide post became apparent, and because of this the main reason was obscured. In this, we find the difference between suicide posts and genuine suicide notes as, in the case of the latter, one main cause for the suicide is always found. This primary motivation might in some cases lead to the other minor reasons, but these minor reasons are never stated as the cause for the outcome.

Keeping in mind the multiple reasons for the episode of depression, the authors of the posts express their condition as being emotionally worn, but at the same time some references to
having something to live for are given. Thus, the expressions of desire\(^6\) to have *something* can be found recorded in the present simple tense (e.g., I want/wish vs. I would want).

Examples of the reasons given for depression are expressed in the following ways:

Ex: “I have no reason to live [...] they all hate me... I’m never loved” (#3)\(^7\) / “I’ve been raped, beaten, and hurt in every way possible pretty much” (#4) / “I hate my life i look forward to nothing [...] i am so stupid” (#5) / “I hate this life”/ “I’m basically the black sheep in my family. They’re all christians, but I’m an atheist, my parents don’t like any gays, and I’m bi.” (#7) / “Conflicted and troubled from an early age. I struggle with reality, alone. Hurting. My boyfriend doesn’t understand.” (#8) / “I’m tired of trying to please you.” (#9) / “I just lost my baby girl I was 6 months pregnant” (#17) etc.

**Emotions**

The expression of emotions is an inevitable part of suicide posts as well as suicide notes. However, the emotions given voice in the examined suicide posts differ from those of the genuine suicide notes. It was discovered that, despite the generally negative content of the post, its components consisted of positive connotations of feelings and emotions. They are aimed at communicating the desires of the author rather than expressing his or her last wish. In the category of suicide posts, we find three types of emotional expressions.

- ‘Fear of death’

The most prominent expression of an emotion state is that of the ‘fear of death’ which is the opposite of that which is expressed in the genuine suicide notes examined in this study. Despite the fact that *fear* as an emotion can be found in both of categories in question, the fear of death adds to it a positive connotation. This is achieved by the self-preservation instinct that is inherent in the expressions of the fear of death.

The fear of death expressions, being the most frequently encountered expression of fear, are coupled with a sense of uncertainty and hesitation. The feeling of hesitation is very often used in

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\(^6\) The expressions of ‘desire’ will be discussed in detail in the subsection ‘Expressions of desire’ dedicated to the ‘suicide posts’ part.

\(^7\) All of the items quoted in this section correspond to the data of the ‘suicide posts’ in Appendix C.
phrases instead of expressions of fear, as the authors tend to try to obscure the fact that they are scared of dying. That is why the same negative emotional expressions, which were supposed to be the indicators of reasons for committing suicide, are quite often repeated in the same suicide post.

Examples of the expressions of hesitation and a fear of death are to be found in the following phrases: “don’t kill me god […] i don’t know what i’m feeling some part scared” (#2) / “I want to go to sleep…but I’m afraid of hell…” (#3) / “i have tried but got to scared” (#6) / “I tried a few times, got real close, something always stopped me a song on the radio, or a strange voice within wispering ‘what if, what if, twisting me” (#10) / “i’m suicidal, and scared” (#11) and many more

It is also sometimes possible to meet formulations in which the author pledges to commit suicide at some unspecified point in the future, as is the case in the following examples: “im going to kill myself this summer so my friends will have time to forget about me before school starts back up” (#4) / “this will be my last seconds of life so goodbye people [...] this is my last design and its happening now my last seconds are now” (#5) / “yours soon to not exist” (#6) / “I’m going to do something about it. This is my last letter…” (#15) / “when he dies [...] I decided to kill myself” (#16).

By stating their intentions to postpone the act of taking their own lives, the authors reveal their fear of death.

In suicide posts like #13, the element of the fear of death is not shown explicitly, and its presence is quite ambiguous. However, the absence of the direct intention to commit suicide and the presence of indefinite pronouns (e.g., “I cannot do this anymore. Life is not for me”) may testify in favor of a still strong instinct of self-preservation.

The reason why the authors express their fear of death is that their self-preservation instinct is still strong enough, and this makes the suicide less likely.

- Expressions of ‘desire’

As a result of the fear of death expressions, the desire to live a normal or less painful/problematic life arises. The more expressions with the ‘desire statements’ in the post, the more obvious it becomes that the author still has goals and hopes in life, and the more difficult it is for them to
die. The decision is taken mostly in cases where the person has admitted to not wanting anything else in this life. Below, we find examples of such expressions: “I want peace. I want to smile again. [...] I seek God [...] I just want to be loved. [...] but I seek love. I seek understanding. I just want a hug. I just want a hand to hold.” (#8) / “but I want to be loved.” (#9) / “If I can not live a normal life like I used to about 3 years ago when I was never depressed without the use of medications then why would I prolong my life any longer.” (#14) / “i just want to hate my self” (20) / “i just want to say to all of you i relate” (5) / “I just wish the world would disappear” (#15) etc.

The reason for using expressions of desire such as we see above is the natural wish of a human being to live a happy life.

- Expressions of ‘doubt’

Even more obvious expressions that show the author’s uncertainty in regard to the act of suicide are expressed by statements of doubt. These can be represented by such expressions as ‘I don’t know’ as well as a request for help such as ‘please give me advice/ let me/ maybe’ targeted to the reader. The expressions of doubt represent the hesitation of authors in their decision to commit suicide and serve as one last chance for them to seek another way of solving their problem.

Expressions of doubt are not rare in the suicide posts because the authors have not lost their hope for a “normal” life.

The most frequently met expressions of doubt in the posts examined are: “i don’t know what i’m feeling [...] don’t know what is up there” (2) / “I don’t even know why I’m commenting [...] I just don’t know what to do.” (#7) / “I don’t understand” (#8) / “Maybe I’ll meet a new family after I’m gone” (#9) / “wispering ‘what if, what if, twisting me” (#10) / “idk what to do.” (#11) / “please give me some advise!!!” (20)

Allusion to previous suicide attempts

Except the markers of authors’ emotion expressions, it is also possible to find in some of the suicide posts descriptions of previous suicide attempts, an element which was not found in the genuine suicide notes examined. Along with the description of previous suicide attempts, the age
of the author is a frequently met component of the posts. This is not the case in regard to the genuine suicide notes.

By quantifying the number of previous suicide attempts, we can see that in four suicide posts out of twenty, allusions to previous suicide attempts (one or several) have been made. In three posts out of twenty, the authors mentioned that they had started cutting themselves, i.e., stressing the point that they have already begun preparing themselves for a possible act of suicide by means of causing themselves physical pain. In nine suicide posts out of twenty, the authors have emphasized their age. In two out of the four suicide posts in which previous attempts have been mentioned, the authors have also mentioned their age. In all three suicide notes in which the act of cutting has been stressed, the authors also mentioned their age. Thus, we can see that in five suicide posts, the authors preferred to mention their age together with previous suicide attempts or physical pain that they inflict upon themselves.

The references to previous suicide attempts can be viewed as a very sensitive part of every suicide post because by touching upon this topic in detail, especially in connection with drawing attention to the topic of age, the authors may, firstly, try to show that they are too young to die and their death will therefore be an unjust event and, secondly, try to show that they already suffer so much that they have tried to commit suicide.

In genuine suicide notes, such references to previous attempts may not seem relevant to the authors themselves due to the fact that their final decision has already been made. Thus, in only two out of the twenty genuine suicide notes examined have the authors chosen to emphasize their age. Meanwhile, no allusions to previous suicide attempts have been found in the genuine notes.

Examples of the types of references mentioned above are represented by the following expressions: “I tried sleeping pills when I was 14 and mixing many and lots of meds….I started cutting a while a go….one time I went to a water park…knowing I cannot swim…I went to the deep end of the pool hoping to die..” (#3) / “I tried a few times, got real close” (#10) / “I tried to kill myself and took more than 50 sleeping pills, didn’t worked out [...] I took more pills today I’m having a glass of vodka hope this time it works” (#17).
In contrast to genuine suicide notes, the structure of suicide posts cannot be traced. Being full of emotion, all of the suicide posts under investigation have been written as a monolithic text which very often lacks punctuation, and the thoughts of the authors are expressed chaotically or even repeated several times within the same text. Moreover, the thoughts themselves are never separated one from another, and no links from one idea to the other are to be found. The post, then, unlike the suicide note, is rarely divided into paragraphs which might be caused by the use of CMD but it might as well indicate that the authors are writing their texts under the influence of strong emotions. Taking into account that it is impossible to trace the fate of suicide posts’ authors, it becomes difficult to say what exactly caused the lack of structure in suicide posts.

However, elements of structure such as ‘form of address’ and ‘signature’ can be met in the posts, but their positions are not fixed. For example, it is possible to find the addressee of the post in any part of the post, although, in the vast majority of the posts, the addressee is either unknown or generalized in a manner such as “you” or “people/world”. Addressing the post to someone unspecified might indicate two things: that it belongs to the web genre of text which is aimed at a worldwide audience of readers and an unwillingness to dedicate the post to loved ones, which can be a feature of an uncertainty in to the decision to commit suicide. The choice of the authors to post suicide notes on the web may refer to their inner hesitation to take their own life as no one can keep track on what happened to these authors. Meanwhile, as soon as suicide notes are written on the piece of paper, the authors may feel obliged to commit suicide directly afterwards as these notes are physical and may therefore feel more real. If posted online, on the other hand, suicide posts do not oblige author to do anything. They can be left on a relevant webpage, and the author can come back to the same page later, write another suicide post or give up the idea to commit suicide altogether.

Ex: “it’s sorry mom…” (#2) / “Amanda and chelsea…if u ever read this [...] amanda please keep the promises” (#4) / “i just want to say to all of you” (#5) / “Millie. X O X O X” (#6) / “Alex, why can’t you understand” (#8) / “Dear Mom and Dad [...] Bye.Love, Sara” (#9) / “well ppl” (#12) / “I love you all” (#13) / good bye selfish world” (#18) / “good bye” (#19) / “please give me some advise” (#20).

As it is impossible to locate a clear line of thought in the suicide posts examined, it is a rarity to find elements of other text types there. However, the most frequently met are the ‘apology’ and ‘love letter’, illustrated by the following examples: “im so sorry i was a burden to u and in sorry
for everything i ever did to hurt you” (#4) / “I love you so much” (#8) / “I love both of you but you don’t love me back” (#9).
Those suicide posts in which characteristics of other text types are used can be said to have a greater chance of eventually turning into genuine suicide notes.

Punctuation

Punctuation as a new aspect of the suicide texts under examination has proved to be especially interesting in regard to the suicide posts. A number of features have been found which are characteristic for the suicide posts but not for the genuine suicide notes.

- When reading suicide posts, the number of question marks encountered is striking. The tendency to use plenty of interrogative questions underlines the hesitation of the author. In some cases, for the purpose of strengthening the interrogative meaning of the sentence, an exclamation mark is used alongside a question mark.
  Ex: “where idk?” (#5) / “I seek God, but is He there? […] God, nature, evolution or what?” What is true? It is all relative to the person. Is there truth?! It truth what I make of it?!” (#8).

- It is possible to find ellipsis in the middle of the sentence. Ellipsis is most often a sign of missing words but can also signal an unfinished or interrupted thought.
  Ex: “or with god……” (#2) / “they all hate me…..I’m never loved…never will be….. […] Well…..I never asked to be born…..” (#3) / “it doesnt help anymore…..im 16” (#4) / “i am a failure all together … i am so stupid” (#5) and so on.

- Mixed punctuation is expressed in the use of as many punctuation marks as possible everywhere in the text. Such a tendency may indicate that the author is in a hurry or does not know or care about correct punctuation at all.
  Ex: “my mom is gone……where idk :)” (#5) / “They’re all christians but I’m an atheist; my parents don’t like any gays, and I’m bi.” (#7) / “Me 17 going on 18; Conflicted and troubled from an early age; I struggle with reality; alone; Hurting. […] Never good at school; I lack discipline. […] I don’t care of what lays beyond my death; let atheists and theists debate over that” (#8).
As a result of mixed punctuation, a great number of commas can be found in this type of suicide text.

Ex: “I know that Dad is okay with losing a child because he has four others that don’t remind him of his pain. I know Mom will be fine because she tells me I’m stupid, lazy, inconsiderate, unlovable, self centered, whiney, and a bum.” (#9) / “I want to die, I want out of this miserable world, I just lost my baby girl I was 6 months pregnant, I tried to kill myself and took more than 50 sleeping pills, didn’t worked out I ended locked up in a psychiatric hospital tied up to a bed, yesterday I had a huge fight with my husband he verbally and physically abused me he called me crazy, I can’t do this anymore.” (#17) / “i either wanted to die, i just want to hate my self because of what i did please give me some advise!!!” (#20).

- Being a computational genre of text, the suicide posts contain lower case letters after periods more often than is the case with the genuine suicide posts written on paper. This could be interpreted as a sign of being in a hurry.

Ex: “see me again, i hate 2morrow, i don’t want getup and start to cry, i wasn’t like this i was happy” (#2) / “i am a failure all together, i am so stupid and i have been beaten multipul times this is stupid of me, but i dont want to live” (#5) / “i wouldn’t have been born, i hate this life” (#6) / “i m 21 life is just pain, no happy hours left in this life, i wont start over, i just end it” (#12).

- Another popular expression of emotions in a computational text is the use of the symbols called ‘smiley faces’. The most frequently found ‘smiley face’ symbol in regard to the characteristic ‘mood’ of suicide texts is the ‘sad’ symbol. The usage of these symbols functions as a means to stress the general ‘mood’ of the text.

Ex: “he always knows when to stop:( ” (#4) / “nvm goodbye everyone :)” (#5)” / “you people are the only people that know how i feel, but im afraid of telling anyone else. :/” (#11).

It should be also mentioned that the punctuation of suicide posts depends very much upon their origin. Being a result of CMD, the punctuation of web texts differs a great deal from texts traditionally written on a piece of paper. Thus, the difference in punctuation methods in this category of texts is natural. However, the meaning of the punctuation of the suicide posts that have been discussed in this subsection should not be underestimated.

8 ‘Smiley faces’ have been discussed previously in the theoretical background section appearing on page 4 of this study.
Conclusions

This study has compared two types of suicide texts, the results of which have pointed out the linguistic differences between the genuine suicide notes and the suicide posts examined. The initial questions concerning the differences between the two text types and how are they expressed linguistically have been answered and examples have been given throughout the study. The problem of interest regarding the characteristic features specific to each category has also been illustrated by the use of examples taken from the dataset of suicide texts.

The conclusions drawn from the study can thus be divided into two parts: the features of genuine suicide notes and the features of suicide posts.

In the first part, the language of genuine suicide notes was investigated. The first feature revealed to be distinctive for this category of suicide texts was called ‘clear reasoning’. It was demonstrated that suicide notes as a category aim to express the last wish of the author. Consequently, being a product of an act of good will, the reason for the suicide is given in all genuine suicide notes. In the vast majority of them, it is possible to detect the main reason for the act of committing suicide. That is why ‘genuine suicide notes’ have been divided into four categories: “disease”, “offence”, “blame” and “despair”. It should be noted that there might be more categories of reasons for suicide. However, in the dataset used for this study, only these four categories were found.

Another feature typical for genuine suicide notes has been represented by expressions of the emotional state of the author. The main emotion that distinguishes genuine suicide notes from suicide posts is the fear of living. This emotion shows us that the author of the note has chosen to commit suicide due to being scared to continue living under their life’s current conditions. The presence of expressions of relief has also been found in the genuine suicide notes in contrast to the suicide posts. They indicate that the author thinks of death as a ‘savior’ from a ‘fearful life’. The third emotion expressed in genuine suicide notes has been represented by the absence of hope and desire. No hope for a happier life or recovery led to the lack of desire to strive for a better way of living. The expressions of such an emotional state are found very often in the genuine suicide notes and serve as an additional argument in support of the authors’ desire to commit suicide. The absence of doubt was the final distinctive emotion expressed in genuine suicide notes to be found. The absence of doubt regarding the decision to commit suicide is the
consequence of the characteristic emotions expressed previously. By showing this emotion, the author’s determination is revealed.

The third distinctive feature of genuine suicide notes has been located in their structure. All of the suicide notes studied share a very similar structure. Such elements as ‘form of address’, ‘introduction’, ‘culmination’ and ‘closing words’ are present in all of them, even the shortest ones. The structure of genuine suicide notes was found to be very similar to that of a letter. That is why the elements of other text genres such as “love letter”, “apology”, “angry letter”, “business letter”, “complaint letter” and “trauma narrative” have been detected. Depending upon the length of the note in question, these features can be represented either completely or only partially. The more elements of other texts it is possible to identify, the easier it is to classify the text as a suicide note.

The last two distinctive features of suicide notes concern grammar and punctuation. The relative frequency of past tense usage versus the use of other tenses was calculated. The results have shown that the present tense is used in every suicide note while the past tense is employed in fifteen items and the future tense can be found in fourteen notes. The function of the past and present tenses, however, differs in some of the notes examined. Thus, the present tense is often used instead of the future tense, and the past tense sometimes acts as the present tense. Such interchanges may be deliberately chosen by the authors in order to stress the fact that the act of suicide is happening at that moment (present tense instead of future tense) and the authors see themselves as dead already (past tense instead of present tense). The relative frequency of the past tense versus other tenses was checked in suicide posts as well in order to do a comparison. While present tense and past tense usage did not show any differences in suicide posts, the use of the future tense decreased in number and was found in eleven items out of twenty. Although such phenomena as ‘tense interchange’ have been also found in some posts, it appeared much more infrequently. Thus, the present tense used for future actions appears in four items, and the past tense used for present actions can be found in only two posts.

Punctuation considered to be meaningful was characterized by three models discerned in genuine suicide notes and was represented by the double dash, multiple periods at the end of a sentence and exclamation marks.

In the second part, the language of suicide posts was examined. ‘Unclear reasoning’ was shown to be the pure opposite feature of suicide posts in contrast to genuine suicide notes. Moreover,
the results of the research conducted have shown that the reasons for depression are given in suicide posts, but not for the suicide itself. It was also shown that it is typical for the authors of suicide posts to give multiple reasons for the episode of depression. Among these reasons, however, it was impossible to single out the primary one. Thus, it was not possible to divide the posts according to categories.

The expression of certain emotions was also shown to be different in the case of the genuine suicide notes examined. For instance, the emotion of fear which is visible in every suicide post was revealed to imply a fear of death rather than a fear of living. Such a fear may be the result of a very powerful instinct of self-preservation which, while still present, keeps one alive, as is generally known. Expressions of ‘desire’, in contrast to genuine suicide notes, are clearly seen in the posts and occur very often with verbs in the present indefinite tense, which indicates the author’s desire to change their life and avoid committing suicide. A new emotion found which is expressed in this type of suicide text is ‘doubt’. The expressions of doubt appear frequently in suicide posts and tend to illustrate that the decision to die is not as strong as it is in the genuine suicide notes.

In contrast to the genuine suicide notes examined, allusions to previous suicide attempts or self-mutilation is another characteristic feature of the suicide posts and one which is never found in the genuine notes. In total, seven suicide posts have been found having these kinds of allusions. Quite frequently, the authors’ reflections indicate has shown that their previous life experiences were still important for them and, thus, the connection to life had not yet been lost. Mentions of age have been found to be accompanied by expressions of self-pity and have in this way underlined a desire to change the situation for the better. Emphasis on age has been found in nine suicide posts out of the twenty examined, while in the genuine suicide notes, authors mentioned their age in only two cases.

The structure and punctuation of the suicide posts were found to be chaotic. It is very difficult to discern not only paragraphs but also sentences in these monolithic texts. Repeated and mixed punctuation marks appear often, which, in their turn, may be features of their genre as web texts as well as writings produced in a hurry or under the influence of strong emotions. The texts rich in questions may signal that the intentions of their authors are uncertain.

In general, the genuine suicide notes express a lack of interest in life, an unwillingness to continue living, and a final decision to die. Meanwhile, in the suicide posts, we find expressions
of a desire for better life conditions and a sense of hesitation in regard to carrying out the act of suicide.

Any of the features that support these general descriptions of each suicide text type may be present in any type of suicide. However, the combination of these features indicates a clear division of suicide texts into two different types: genuine suicide notes and suicide posts. It can be said that the more features characteristic of genuine suicide notes present in a suicide post, the more probable it is that the post may be developed into a genuine suicide note in the future, i.e., the closer its author is to actually committing suicide. Thus, it can be said that the aim of the research has been reached.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that this study grants the possibility to compare the language of two types of suicide texts that have not been compared before. At the same time, it leaves the discussion open in regard to the topic of the characteristic features of different kinds of suicide texts and in regard to their classification.

It also seems necessary to continue this line of research by bringing into the initial comparison of suicide texts such a category as notes written by those who have attempted to take their own lives. It seems interesting for the author to compare the results of the present study with the results of the work conducted by Joiner et al. and published in 2002 in the future. Using the third category in such a comparison may add to the examination the missing features that might appear during the transformation of suicide posts into genuine suicide notes. This type of research may prove to be useful for the purposes of suicide prevention as well as be the first step in further investigation of the detailed linguistic differences found in suicide text types.


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**Presentation**


**Dictionary**


**Dissertation**

Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

DA  discourse analysis
CMD  computer-mediated discourse
ASCII  American Standard Code for Information Interchange
PC  personal computer
Appendix B: Genuine Suicide Notes

1. **Married Female, age 59**

Dear David,

After six weeks of streptomycin shots and a total of eleven weeks of rest in bed we have conclusive proof that the ulcers in my bronchial tubes have not healed. The short period of the streptomycin inhalations could not have brought on the results if the ulceration had even partially healed. To try further would mean many more months of bed rest -- more shots and inhalations -- I can't remain at the hospital for the winter months and a prolonged stay at a rest home is out of the question. I did some figuring -- the weekly rate there -- the amount of streptomycin for shots and inhalations plus the doctor's weekly visits would total to over $200 a week -- I can't bleed my family for any such amount of money, and that means that as soon as the money I have in my checking account runs out I would have to return home -- back to the same conditions which caused me to go downhill so steadily. It's a vicious circle from which there seems no escape. I could of course use up the money from the sale of our furnishings and silver as well as some I put aside for the furnishing of our home -- but all it put together would be like a drop ion the bucket -- besides I am now convinced that my condition is too chronic and therefore a cure doubtful.

All of a sudden all will and determination to fight on has left me. I have long ago prepared myself for the time when I reached the end of the trail. I feel calm and at peace and grateful that I can go to sleep painlessly. I feel justified in terminating a life which no longer holds any hope of having the essentials which make it worth living -- I did desperately want to get well -- I still had much to live for -- hope for recovery -- hope of a reunion with the children -- work which I loved and which could have given me financial security and great satisfaction. But it was not to be -- I am defeated and exhausted physically and emotionally.

Please tell the children that I loved them always and that my love has never faltered. I grieve that I could not have had the joy of being close to our babies, but that is no one's fault. Thank God they are well -- with my passing all menace to their wellbeing will have disappeared.

I want you to know that I have a deep affection for you. I am deeply grateful for all your kindness. I wish I could have made a happier life for you. It was mostly my fault, please forgive me.

Please write to Fran and Tony and to Marilyn and Jim and tell them that my love and gratitude could not possibly be put into words. Their generosity, devotion, love and tact made it possible for me to accept their financial help over a long period of time. I wish with all my heart that they might have been better rewarded -- All of you, my dear ones, I ask to keep my memory alive in your hearts -- To live on in the hearts of our dear ones is all that I can conceive of immortality. Please think of me kindly. Remember that which was good and lovely in our relationship and forgive me for the many mistakes I have made. Now that it is all said I feel at peace.

I want Dr. B. to officiate at my funeral. I think Joe would like to have him with him at that time.

Dear David,

I am said that I must go just a few days before your birthday -- but it so happened to pan out. I see no good in incurring the expense and misery of the bronchoscopy. I wish I could spare you the ordeal you have ahead. Try not to grieve. I ask all of you, my dear ones, not to mourn my passing. Be glad I am at least free from the misery of the bronchoscopy. I wish I could spare you the ordeal you have ahead. Try not to grieve. I ask all of you, my dear ones, not to mourn my passing. Be glad I am at least free from the miseries and loneliness I have endured for so long and that at last I'll have peace and rest...

2. **Divorced female, age 37**

To No-one and Everyone:
Because of a growing conviction that a hereditary insanity is manifesting itself beyond my control, I am taking this way out -- before mere nuisance attacks and rages against others assume a more dangerous form.

Because I am an agnostic and believe funeral fanfare to be nonsense -- I ask that it be forgotten. Instead, knowing there to be a marked shortage of cadavers for the medical profession, for which I have endless respect, I hereby bequeath 1) my body to medics for dissection; also 2) To Mark B. all personal effects -- to be divided as whim decrees -- with Dr. Lois J., L.A. and to each -- a deep fondness and love. 3) To Joe A. the greatest devotion -- the kind that "passeth all understanding." 3a) And my life.

Anita R.

1. 4) To my father, Vincent M., the sum of one dollar ($1)

3. Married man, age 52

Dear Joan,

For 23 years we lived happy together. Our married life was ideal, until two years ago when I witnessed Kristy die in the hospital something snapped in me. You remember when I returned from the hospital I broke down. That was the beginning of my illness. Since then my condition was getting progressively worse, I could neither work or think logically. You have been thru "Hell" with me since then. Only you and I know how much you have lived thru. I feel that I will not improve and can't keep on causing you and the children so much misery. I loved you and was proud of you. I loved the children dearly and could not see them suffer so much on account of me.

Dear Children:

Please forgive me.

Love, Frank

4. Unknown

“I have a feeling I shall go mad. I cannot go on longer in these terrible times. I shan't recover this time. I hear voices and cannot concentrate on my work. I have fought against it but cannot fight any longer.”

5. Widowed female, age 52 (Her husband died three months before.)

Please tell Ron's folks I love them very much but my heart breaks when I see or hear from them. Also all our friends especially Irene and Charles and Ella I love them also. Forgive me for not seeing them.

Everyone seems so happy and I am so alone. Amy. I wanted to visit you but I am going around in a dream. Alice I wanted to help you paint but how could I with a broken heart. And my head aches so much any more my nerves are ready to break and what would happen if they did.

You will say I am crazy and I can't go on this way just half living.

I loved this house once but now it is so full of memories I can't stay here. I have tried to think of some way to go on but can't. Am so nervous all the time -- I loved Ron too much but is that a sin, with him gone I have nothing. Oh I have the girls and family but they don't fill the vacant spot left in my heart ...

Xmas is coming I can't go on I'm afraid I would break down. I've thought of this so many times. I love every one but I can't be one of you any more. Please think kindly of me and forgive me. I only hope this is fatal then I can rest and no more trouble to any one. Do with Lisa what's best I know she has been a lot of worry to mama and I'm sorry. I tried to keep the yard up that seemed to be the only comfort I had. I loved
it but that wasn't anything. I've lost every thing so why go on. I worshipped Ron and when he went I lost my whole world and everything.

I'm so tired and lonely.

There goes a siren. Oh how can I stand being left. I need to go to a Dr. but I am afraid. I'm so cold.

Mother Love, Louise

6. Unknown

"Dear Mom, I love you with all my heart. I just wasn’t meant for this world! I hope I can find a place of peace and happiness, a place I am child enough to live, yet man enough to survive. I love you! I hope you can truly believe me. Maybe on my journey I’ll find Jesus. Pray for me mom. Pray I will find happiness. I hurt so bad inside! I want it all to go away. I want a new beginning. I am not afraid to die mom. I'm just so afraid of tomorrow!

To all my friends and loved ones, I ask of you one last favor: don’t let my spirit die. Remember me for the laughs and the good times, the thrills we all had together. I hope I made a place in all your hearts and touched each and every one of you in a special way. I have chosen to die, but I haven’t chosen to be forgotten. I must find a new world, a world of peace and happiness. I want you all to know I am not afraid to die, only to quit living. I’ll miss you.”

7. Single female, age 16

Dear Mother & Dad,

Please forgive me. I have tried to be good to you both. I love you both very much and wanted to get along with you both. I have tried.

I have wanted to go out with you and Dad but I was always afraid to ask for I always felt that the answer would be no.

And about Bud, I want to dismiss every idea about him. I don't like him any more than a companion, for a while I thought I did but no more, in fact, I am quite tired of him, as you know, I get tired of everyone after a while.

And mother, I wish that you hadn't called me a liar, and said I was just like Hap. as I'm not. It is just that I am afraid of you both at times, but I love you both very much.

So Long

Your loving daughter

that will always

love you

Mary

P.S. Please forgive me. I want you to, and don't think for one minute that I haven't appreciate everything you've done.

8. Married female, age 56

About the Evil god (yes)

About the Evil Seers killing people for their money (yes)

I am a profit at my death
I am a root of the stem of Jesse (yes)

We have made many discoveries. We have found out who the people with the mark of the beast are. And the devil was a human being now killed and cast into hell and the angel with the keys of the bottomless pit is in hell casting out all the good souls which these evil people have cast into hell for no reason. The good Seers who serve our God are 1/3 to 2/3 of the evil ones in this world. We are better than holding our own but in Heaven God is almost over come and I kill myself so I may go and help him, because I have a funny little quirk in my brain which helps.

6 palmy each at a few years sport. Our god will send them into the world.

9. Married male, age 48

Elaine, Darling,

My mind -- always warped and twisted -- has reached the point where I can wait no longer -- I don't dare wait longer -- until there is the final twist and it snaps and I spend the rest of my life in some state run snake pit.

I am going out -- and I hope it is out -- Nirvanha, I think the Bhudaists (how do you spell Bhudaists?) call it which is the word for "nothing." That's as I have told you for years, is what I want. Imagine God playing a dirty trick on me like another life!!!

I've lived 47 years -- there aren't 47 days I would live over again if I could avoid it.

Let us, for a moment be sensible. I do not remember if the partnership agreement provides for a case like this -- but if it doesn't and I think it doesn't, I would much prefer -- I haven't time to make this a legal requirement -- but, I would much prefer that you, as executrix under my will, do not elect to participate in profits for 2 or 3 years or whatever it may be that is specified there. My partners have been generous with me while I worked with them. There is no reason why, under the circumstances of my withdrawal from the firm, they should pay anything more.

I could wish that I had, for my goodbye kiss, a .38 police special with which I have made some good scores -- not records but at least made my mark. Instead, I have this black bitch -- bitch, if the word is not familiar to you -- but at least an honest one who will mean what she says.

The neighbors may think it's a motor backfire, but to me she will whisper -- "Rest - Sleep."

Albert

P.S. I think there is enough insurance to see Valerie through school, but if there isn't -- I am sure you would out of the insurance payments, at least --

I hope further and I don't insist that you have the ordinary decency -- decency that is -- to do so -- Will you see Valerie through college -- she is the only one about whom I am concerned as this .38 whispers in my ear.

10. Divorced female, age 61

You cops will want to know why I did it, well, just let us say that I lived 61 years too many.

People have always put obstacles in my way. One of the great ones is leaving this world when you want to and have nothing to live for.

I am not insane. My mind was never more clear. It has been a long day. The motor got so hot it would not run so I just had to sit here and wait. The breaks were against me to the last.

The sun is leaving the hill now so hope nothing else happens.
11. **Single male, age 51**

Sunday 4:45 PM. Here goes

To who it may concern

Though I am about to kick the bucket I am as happy as ever. I am tired of this life so am going over to see the other side.

Good luck to all.

Benjamin P.

12. **Married male, age 40**

Jimmy!

Remember what I told you and always respect, protect and obey your mother and always remember that I love you so much. I am going to leave you forever because I am too sick to go on. God bless you my Son and when your time comes to go to Heaven you will find your ole Pappy waiting for you.

Daddy

13. **Married male, age 74**

What is a few short years to live in hell. That is all I get around here.

No more I will pay the bills.

No more I will drive the car.

No more I will wash, iron & mend any clothes.

No more I will have to eat the leftover articles that was cooked the day before.

This is no way to live.

Either is it any way to die.

Her grub I can not eat.

At night I can not sleep.

I married the wrong nag-nag-nag and I lost my life.

W.S.

to the undertaker

We have got plenty money to give me a decent burial. Don't let my wife kid you by saying she has not got any money.

Give this note to the cops.

top

Give me liberty or give me death.

W.S.

14. **Married male, age 45**

Dear Claudia,
You win, I can't take it any longer, I know you have been waiting for this to happen. I hope it makes you very happy, this is not an easy thing to do, but I've got to the point where there is nothing to live for, a little bit of kindness from you would have made everything so different, but all that ever interested you was the dollar.

It is pretty hard for me to do anything when you are so greedy even with this house you couldn't even be fair with that, well it's all yours now and you won't have to see the Lawyer anymore.

I wish you would give my personal things to Danny, you couldn't get much from selling them anyway, you still have my insurance, it isn't much but it will be enough to take care of my debts and still have a few bucks left.

You always told me that I was the one that made Sharon take her life, in fact you said I killed her, but you know down deep in your heart it was you that made her do what she did, and now you have two deaths to your credit, it should make you feel very proud.

Good By Kid

P.S. Disregard all the mean things I've said in this letter, I have said a lot of things to you I didn't really mean and I hope you get well and wish you the best of everything.

Cathy -- don't come in.

Call your mother, she will know what to do.

Love

Daddy

Cathy don't go in the bedroom.

15. Single female, age 31

My boss, Kenneth J., seduced me and made me pregnant. He refuses to help me. I had not had intercourse in two years. He says that I will have to suffer through it by myself.

Several people know about this -- my doctor, Dr. James R., and Pete M., who works at Williams. Pete and I never had a love affair, although Kenneth would like to drag Pete into it. Also, Dr. Arnold W. knows about it.

I have always been such a good girl.

Daddy dear --

As much as it hurts me, I cannot make it this Friday. I may be in very serious trouble. I have always been a very good person, but it looks like I really got in a mess, through no real fault of my own.

I must have been born to suffer.

Love - Elizabeth

P.S. Call me if you can. When will Sally be back? I may need her desperately.

16. Single male, age 35 (He committed suicide after he killed his girlfriend.)

Mommie, my Darling,

To love you as I do and live without you is more than I can bear. I love you so completely, wholeheartedly without restraint. I worship you, that is my fault. With your indifference to me; is the difference. I've tried so hard to make our lives pleasant and lovable, but you didn't seem to care. You had great plans which didn't
include me. You didn't respect me. That was the trouble. You treated me like a child. I couldn't reach you as a man and woman or man and wife as we've lived. I let you know my feelings toward you when I shouldn't have. How I loved you, what you meant to me. Without you life is unbearable.

This is the best way. This will solve all our problems. You can't hurt me further and anyone else. I was a "toll" while you needed me or thought you did. But now that I could use some help, you won't supply the need that was prominent when you need it. So, good bye my love. If it is possible to love in the hereafter, I will love you even after death. May God have mercy on both our souls. He alone knows my heartache and sorrow and love for you.

Daddy

17. Married female, age 50

When a "man" doesn't know where to take his wife -- then she isn't a wife any more --

I hope you will be "free" to take anyone any place and I'm sure you will not have any trouble as to places --

Please don't tell my mother the truth -- your whole tribe is partly responsible for this -- from your mother on down -- hope they are satisfied.

18. Single female, age 21

My dearest Andrew,

It seems as if I have been spending all my life apologizing to you for things that happened whether they were my fault or not.

I am enclosing your pin because I want you to think of what you took from me every time you see it.

I don't want you to think I would kill myself over you because you're not worth any emotion at all. It is what you cost me that hurts and nothing can replace it.

19. Married male, age 45

My darling,

May her guts rot in hell -- I loved her so much.

Henry

20. Single male, age 13

I know what I am doing. Annette found out. Ask Cara. I love you all.

Bill
Appendix C: Suicide Posts

1. nickname#1

i have been suicidle since ive been 11 and ive tried many times but all to no avail.i was adopted as baby step dad abused me family hated me was homesless for 2years got in abusive relationship had 3kids and found out their dad had been sexually abusing them when they babyi all my kids was taken into care and found for 2years i fought for them but i lost i had to say goodbye for good a few weeks ago and try and explain to a 5 n 6yr old why they wouldnt see me again that was the last straw for me i was agood mom and love my kids more than anything thats why i fink its better if i end my life for good and i cant hurt them anymore and i cant take the pain anymore of people judgeing me.i cant stand to be around kids anymore and lock myself up i have a wonderful bf who has stuck by me but he doesnt understand how i feel and why i would want to end my life i needed to get this out to someone before i did it

2. nickname#2

Ooh god never think this day will came here it’s sorry mom you will not going to see me again.i hate 2morrow i don’t want getup and start to cry.i wasn’t like this i was happy more than anybody when i was in college,when my gf really loves me now have nothing feel like i’im killing some dudu b/c me don’t kill me god i don’t know what i’m feeling some part scard don’t know what is up there,some part happy when i wake i could be some where new amazing or with god……thank you for having me love you mom.

3. nickname#3

Every single day of my life I want to die...I tried sleeping pills when I was 14 and mixing many and lots of meds....I started cutting a while a go...one time I went to a water park...knowing I cannot swim...I went to the deep end of the pool hoping to die.. I have no reason to live...it seems like everyone around me would be much better...they all hate me....I’m never loved...never will be...I’m tired of being hurt by the ppl I care about, raped, threaten, ect....I’m just tired...and I want to go to sleep...but I’m afraid of hell... Ppl are always going around saying “people would kill to be in my spot...thank god for waking you up” Well...I never asked to be born...

4. nickname#4

ive been raped,beaten, and hurt in everyday possible pretty much...my dad beats me almost every night, stan rapes me at least once a month and im buliemic, i cut to try and forget about the pain but it doesnt help anymore...im 16 and im going to kill myself this summer so my friends will have time to forget about me before school starts back up, thats if my dad hasnt murdered me by then...that would make things easier but he always knows when to stop:(...my best friend and the girl im in love with know about everything but i wont let them help me...i love them so much but i cant take this anymore...im going to hold out as long as i can for them but i know thats not gonna be very long...Amanda and chelsea if u ever read this im so sorry i was a burden to u and im sorry for everything i ever did to hurt you...and amanda please keep the promises u made to me...and im sorry u had to see my cuts

5. nickname#5

I hate my life i look forward to nothin i am 11 and everything i have tried to make work fails i am a failure all together ... i am so stupid and i have been beaten multipul times this is stupid of me ..but i dont want to live .. life as we know it just gets harder i am lonely and no one loves me and i am all alone this will be my last seconds of life so goodbye people ... And to all of those that read this and think she is self sentered and selfish F*ck off .. i didnt ask for any of this my family is not real my dad beats me and my mom is gone , where ? idk ! ): this is my last desion and its happening now my last seconds are now i am taking sleeping pills now and cutting there is blood everywhere i want nothing else to be gone i am 11 and ending my life i just want to say to all of you i relate at only the age of 11 and truthfully ...nvrm goodbye everyone :)
6. **nickname#6**

I’m only 13 and wishing my life away. I have tried but got too scared if there was a god then I wouldn’t have been born. I hate this life but only have one solution...to die I am wondering which is easier and less messy I feel for those I will leave behind but they are not aloud to cry because they had almost 14 years to cry for my pain already but they ignored me. This isn’t something I have copied this is how I feel.

yours soon to not exist Millie. X O X O X

7. **nickname#7**

I don’t even know why I’m commenting, maybe I just want someone to relate to. I’m almost 15, and I’m basically the black sheep in my family. They’re all christians, but I’m an atheist, my parents don’t like any gays, and I’m bi. I get this crushing pain in my chest, and all I want to do is end it all. I’ve actually started cutting, and I try to keep it all inside. And I can’t even go to anyone for this. I’ve got two friends that enjoy life and wouldn’t understand, and my family always accuses me of just wanting attention. I just don’t know what to do. One time my family had started insulting me, and I had started crying. No apologies were offered, only laughter at my expense. I remember when my grandfather died. My family (besides me) was only sad for a week, then just seemed to forget about him. We don’t even visit his grave! I can’t forget about him though, about when he used to babysit my siblings and I, or when he picked me up from nursery school with candy. I’m sick and tired of just breathing. If my family can forget about him so easily, then they’ll do so with me when I am gone. I pretty much was cooped up in my room when I wasn’t at school anyways.

8. **nickname#8**

Me. 17 going on 18. Conflicted and troubled from an early age. I struggle with reality, alone. Hurting. My boyfriend doesn’t understand. He yells at me for being sad. I feel so chastised, so alone. I seek God, but is He there? I want peace. I want to smile again.

I enjoy the feeling of being unknown, but I seek love. I seek understanding. I just want to be loved. Staying in my bed feels like the only safe haven; never do I want to leave that bed. I cry often. I have low self-esteem. Never good at school; I lack discipline. I’m just too sick and tired of the pain. I’m sick of it all. I don’t care of what lays beyond my death; let atheists and theists debate over that until the end of the world. I just want a hug. I just want a hand to hold. I feel so alone in this world, I always have. Death isn’t something I’ve ever looked into, but Death is starting to look friendlier and friendlier each and every day. My body is at peace when I think about escaping from this world. For once, I feel relaxed. God, nature, evolution or what? What is true? It is all relative to the person. Is there truth?! It truth what I make of it?!

...I don’t understand...I’m so tired...so exhausted...let me sleep. Alex, why can’t you understand...I love you so much...why must you yell at me...

I just don’t know...

9. **nickname#9**

Dear Mom and Dad,

I’m tired of trying to please you. All I’ve ever done sense I was seven is work my butt off to make you guys happy. I’ve played messenger, I’ve smiled even when I felt like dieing, and I’ve tried repeatedly to help both of you. I know that Dad is okay with losing a child because he has four others that don’t remind him of his pain, I know Mom will be fine because she tells me I’m stupid, lazy, inconciderate, unlovable, self centered, whiney, and a bum. I’m just another mouth to feed in your guys eyes but I want to be loved. Mom you have gone off the edge quite a few times and have no idea how much stress you have put on me. Dad you ignore me as if I don’t exist... I hope you have fun with your new family... Maybe I’ll meet a new family after I’m gone... Hopefully one that loves me. I love both of you but you don’t love me back. I wish you the best of luck in your lives considering mine is ending.

Bye.

Love, Sara
10. **nickname#10**

I tried a few times, got real close, something always stopped me a song on the radio, or a strange voice within whispering ‘what if, what if, twisting me… living is more of a challenge…happy is a delusion its a state of mind… a true personality disorder… living with the truth is tough

11. **nickname#11**

Ive cried to notes like these all night. i’m suicidal, and scared. idk what to do. im 20 years old and i feel i have nothing to look forward to. i love my girlfriend, my dad, my sister, my mom, and my grandma, but yet i feel it isnt enough. when i think of life i think of problems, worries, un-needed problems. im sorry. you people are the only people that know how i feel, but im afraid of telling anyone else. :/it hurts so bad everyday. i think of suicide regularly, im not afraid of dying, just afraid of living.

12. **nickname#12**

well ppl i will do it in few sec. i m 21 life is just pain. no happy hours left in this life i wont start over i just end it

13. **nickname#13**

I love you all very much, but I cannot do this anymore. Life is not for me.

14. **nickname#14**

I took someones meds the other day and I was as happy as ever. I have not been happy for so long and when I took them I became so happy that I had one of the best days of my life. I realized that I will never be happy while going threw life without meds so life really is not worth it. If I can not live a normal life like I used to about 3 years ago when I was never depressed without the use of medications then why would I prolong my life any longer.

15. **nickname#15**

I just wish the world would disappear. I hate it an I hate my life. I want it to end. I don’t want to exist. Everything sucks. I can’t concentrate on anything any more. I want it to stop. to finish. We’re all fallen angels, the in-between. I hate the middle. It sucks always did always will and I’m going to do something about it. This is my last letter...

16. **Nickname 16**

My granpa has cancer and is dying when he dies I will have no one so I decided to kill myself I have lived long enough im 15

17. **nickname#17**

I want to die, I want out of this miserable world, I just lost my baby girl I was 6 months pregnant, I tried to kill myself and took more than 50 sleeping pills, didn’t worked out I ended locked up in a psychiatric hospital tied up to a bed, yesterday I had a huge fight with my husband he verbally and phisycally abused me he called me crazy, I can’t do this anymore, last time I cut my wrists and my legs I’m on antipressants and antianxiety pills and I took more than twice my dose and nothing happened, I feel worthless, I’m all alone and all I can think about is turning the gas on and that he finds me lying dead on the floor, he makes me want to kill myself, I took more pills today I’m having a glass of vodka hope this time it works
18. nickname#18

funny how google helped me to get a perfect suicidal note am not that dumb to write just been empty from inside i have a few regrets and apologies good bye selfish world

19. nickname#19

I feel there is no hope. many of you may think this is just another coment but... no. i cant do any of this anymore. after reading these i feel the pain more deeply then ever before. good bye.

20. nickname#20

i either wanted to die,,i just want to hate my self because of what i did please give me some advise!!!i really want to die!!