

Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Kim Jong-Hyun's Suicide Report from South Korea and United Kingdom's Online Articles

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ABSTRACT

This study reports Multimodal Discourse Analysis on thirteen English-language online articles from South Korea's and United Kingdom's news media which reporting Kim Jong-Hyun's suicide at 18th - 19th December 2017. This qualitative study refers to Halliday's ideational metafunction and Kress & van Leeuwen's representational meaning. This study is limited to analyze online article's headline and lead image to find how does news media from South Korea and United Kingdom differ in reporting Kim Jong-Hyun suicide. Upon the analysis, both South Korea and United Kingdom's news headlines are mostly employing material process. Yet, South Korea's news headline is not only written about Kim Jong-Hyun's death but also the impact to the society. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom's news headlines provide more information about the reason background of why did Kim Jong-Hyun take his own life. Also, within the representational meaning analysis, it is found that South Korea's lead images are more variative especially when its lead image combines narrative and conceptual processes compared to United Kingdom's lead image that is more general and more or less stable and timeless essence. This study is also significant to the discourse of suicide news report which rarely analyzed.

Keywords: Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Ideational Metafunction, Representational Meaning, Suicide Report, News Media Comparison.

INTRODUCTION

News report, ideologically inclined and with an agenda to influence its intended audience, can give a negative impact on increasing the risk of a copycat suicide when it is reported and portrayed with glorify or described the method explicitly (Carmichael & Whitley, 2019; Cheng et al., 2007; Victor et al., 2019; White, 2006). In addition, it is very easy to access and read relevant news with no barrier of language such as English-language online article. According to Ghannam (2011) language can be used in many ways to enhance or manipulate message. Furthermore, the use of language is still inclined with human social history as the background in which it has shaped them in terms of religion, race, social class, and more (White, 2006; Yu,

2022). Therefore, an English-language online article would have characteristics based on where it came from.

There are some previous studies which analyzed suicide news report such as Cheng (2007), Carmichael & Whitley (2019) and Victor (2019). The objective of Cheng (2007) study is explained the increasement of suicide rate in Taiwan after media reporting celebrities' suicide. Meanwhile, Carmichael & Whitley (2019) analyzed United States' newspaper which similar with Victor (2019) from Malaysia's that the suicide news report's content is still mainly focus with the method used by the victims. Therefore, those previous studies were discussed the effect of reporting suicide and its content meanwhile this recent study would analyze the discourse or the use of language from suicide news report specifically an English-language online article.

When access an online article there are two important parts that always pop up on the screen, those are the news headline and the lead image. The role of headlines is very important because headlines could help the reader to summarize the article's main idea or select the articles they want to read, and able to maximize reader's interest to read the article (Ifantidou, 2009) Also, the role of lead image in news discourse was initially seen as the illustrative connection to the verbal reporting. Even though, the verbal took most control with the description but by putting lead image in the news could help the reader not only identify such figures, but also to humanize and empathize with them (Economou, 2006). Therefore, it is important to use multimodal approach since many combinations of modes included in an online article (Bednarek & Caple, 2014; Lim, 2011; O'Halloran et al., 2018; O'Halloran & Lim, 2014).

Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016) introduce Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as a field of discourse which deals with the grammar of semiotic resources, aiming at understanding semiotic resources' functions and the meaning that conveyed when semiotic choices interact over space and time in multimodal phenomena. Thus, it will be adequate and able to reach a deeper understanding of meaning from the discourse since the analysis combines more than one theory (Ventola et al., 2004). The theories used for this study are Systemic Functional Linguistic from Halliday and Matthiessen (Halliday et al., 2004) ideational metafunction and Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020) about visual grammar of representational meaning.

Theory from Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) is suitable because ideational function role as the representation of the world around especially this is the component through which the language encodes the cultural experience, and the speaker encodes his own individual experience as a member of the culture (Halliday, 1978). Also, the ideology of "showing themselves" exists in the structure of transitivity namely participant, process and circumstance. Meanwhile, Kress and van Leeuwen theory (2020), the metafunction experiential or representational is concerned with the experience depiction and also conceptual relationship between person, location, and object which can be seen inside the visual image (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020).

Kim Jong-Hyun suicide was chosen as the topic considered the effect on copycat suicide and the rising of suicide rate in South Korea after his death (Coconuts Jakarta, 2017;

Suzuki, 2019). Furthermore, this study not only analyzed English-language online article where the celebrity came from, South Korea, but also popular news media from United Kingdom (Majid, 2022). Therefore, this study is directed to answer questions on English-language online article from South Korea and United Kingdom news media as follows: What is the ideational meaning constructed from the news's headline? What is the representational meaning constructed from the lead image? How does news media from South Korea and United Kingdom differ in reporting Kim Jong-Hyun suicide?

METHOD

This study is a multimodal discourse analysis on English-language online articles from South Korea and United Kingdom about Kim Jong-Hyun's suicide news report from the first announce of his death in 18th until 19th December 2017. On analyzing the data using multimodal, this study refers to theories from Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2020). A qualitative method is applied for this study because it conveys the result properly in the form of detail text. As stated by Creswell and Creswell (2017), qualitative research as a type of interpretative investigation in which the researchers interpret what they see, hear, and understand.

The data analysis for this study are thirteen online articles from four news website, The Korean Herald, The Korea Times, BBC and The Guardian. The data were taken by deploying keyword searching strategy, "Kim Jong Hyun" + "suicide", directly in each website. The Korea Herald was chosen because it is one of the largest English news sources from South Korea and a member of Asia News Network (ANN) also The Korea Times is well known as one of the oldest news media in South Korea. Meanwhile, BBC and The Guardian were chosen due to its popularity as the most used news website in United Kingdom (Jigsaw Research, 2020).

Later, the data findings would be grouped by it modes to answer question on transitivity analysis of process, participant, and circumstance according to Halliday and Matthiessen's ideational meaning (2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen's representational meaning (2020) then it compared to find the difference and similarity between South Korea and United Kingdom English-language online article on reporting Kim Jong-Hyun suicide.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing thirteen online articles, the summary for news headline ideational meaning and lead image's representational meaning is tabulated.

IDEATIONAL MEANING

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), an ideational meaning is the reflection of language that provides the theory of human experience as a representation of the language which can answer what is happening question. The analysis focused on the structure of transitivity which are participant, process and circumstance. Thus, the dominant transitivity

types of each element could show the purpose and point of view between South Korea and United Kingdom’s English-language online article.

PROCESS IN THE NEWS HEADLINE

TABLE 1. Types of Process from News Headline

Process	South Korea’s News Headline (n=8)	United Kingdom’s News Headline (n=5)
• Material	3	5
• Mental	2	-
• No Process	3	

Table 1 showed that there are two types of process from the news headline which are material and mental process also three news headlines from South Korea that do not have any process because it is a phrase. The most dominant process from South Korea’s is material process with three findings and all process from United Kingdom’s is a material process. Material process is a clause of doing-&-happening, it is construes a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy (Halliday et al., 2004). Thus, it is implied that the news headline from South Korea and United Kingdom English-language online article are mostly describes physical activities and want to show the fact to the audience. The example how news headline shows the reality using material process can be seen in the figures 1 and 2.

[Update]	SHINee’s Jonghyun	dies	in hospital
Qualifier	Participant: Actor	Process: Material	Circumstances: Location (Place)

FIGURE 1. Material Process from The Korea Herald’s News Headline

Shinee Singer Jonghyun: Kpop boy band superstar	dies
Participant: Actor	Process: Material

FIGURE 2. Material Process from BBC’s News Headline

Both news headline from South Korea and United Kingdom use material process to give proper descriptions on the death of Kim Jong-Hyun that presented by the verb *dies*. The verb *dies* is an intransitive action verb which do not take any direct object and typically answer the question of “How”. Yet, as a material process, the verb implied to the way something was happened due to the participant, actor, action. Also, it answers question about what did the participant do (Butt et al., 2003). Moreover, the context was Kim Jong-Hyun action to take his own life. Therefore, both news headline at figure 1 and 2 was tried to deliver the same idea of Kim Jong-Hyun’s death due to suicide.

But even though both news headline from figure 1 and 2 were similar, other material clause from South Korea’s news headline was less variative than United Kingdom’s. The South Korea’s was mainly conveying about Kim Jong-Hyun death as in other example *Singer*

Jonghyun of Shinee found dead in studio meanwhile United Kingdom's wrote deeper discussion, *Jonghyun: Note shows K-pop star's struggles with depression* and *K-pop singer Jonghyun's death turns spotlight on pressures of stardom*. Therefore, the material clause from United Kingdom's news headline could provide their readers more information about the background why did Kim Jong-Hyun take his own life than South Korea's.

Despite those finding, the South Korea's online article still reported the way society perceived Kim Jong-Hyun's death. The example is *Kpop act Shinee Mourns Loss Because of Singer Kim Jong Hyun*. This kind of headline would carry an emotion such how people feeling, thinking, and perceiving on Kim Jong-Hyun death also encodes the inner world of cognition and perception or in transitivity called as mental clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Hence, the news headline in South Korea could provide their readers with an idea about the sadness towards Kim Jong-Hyun lost instead focused only with the suicidal.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE NEWS HEADLINE

Following with the process, the participant in transitivity element usually a nominal group. Participant meant differently based on which process occur in the clause also it could show controller of the process (Plemenitaš, 2004). The finding on news headlines participant can be seen on the table 2.

TABLE 2. Types of Participants from News Headline

Participant	South Korea's News Headline	United Kingdom's News Headline
• Actor	3	5
• Goal	2	2
• Senser	2	-

In the table 2, it showed that there are three types of participants from the news headline which are senser, actor, and goal. The dominant participant from South Korea's headline is actor and it same for United Kingdom's. The participant actors are the controllers of the process which actively defining who involved with the happening action (Plemenitaš, 2004)

In South Korea's news headline, it was found that the actor participants was a noun phrase, *Singer Jonghyun of Shinee*, *Shinee's Jonghyun*, and *Jonghyun's Death*. Also, the noun phrase was a possessive deictic. Halliday and Matthiessen (Halliday et al., 2004) explained that possessive deictic was specific subset of the thing that reference to person as defined from the standpoint of the speaker. Meanwhile, the participant from United Kingdom' news headline found 4 headline's articles had same actor participant which is *Kim Jong Hyun* and only a headline from BBC news was different which is not a human but a thing, *Jonghyun: Note*, and most of it are a noun phrase with colon, 3 from 5 data, *Shinee Singer Jonghyun: Kpop Boyband Superstar*, *Jonghyun: Note*, and *Kim Jong-Hyun: Shinee Star*. The participants with colon mostly used as the substantial information and it did not have a big effect on the headline clause also the finding. For an example *Shinee Singer Jonghyun: Kpop boy band superstar*. The participant combined two phrases with colon and the phrase from the right side is the qualifier.

As qualifier, the phrase only gives more detail to the main phrase, *Shinee Singer Jonghyun*, so it only embedded in that group and has no independent status as phrase (Butt et al., 2003).

From these findings it concluded that both South Korea and United Kingdom's news headline was mainly use Kim Jong-Hyun as the process controller in every action. Thus, the news headline made Kim Jung-Hyun as the central attention which its also grab the readers interest with the celebrity's name because it could easily recognize.

CIRCUMSTANCE IN THE NEWS'S HEADLINE

The last transitivity element is circumstances. Circumstances was used to show the purpose of the text or kind of text in terms of time, place, condition, reason, comparison, etc. and its usually in the form of propositional or adverbial phrases. The circumstance finding on South Korea and United Kingdom's news headline was shown at table 3.

TABLE 3. Types of Circumstance from News Headline

Circumstance	South Korea's News Headline (n=8)	United Kingdom's News Headline (n=5)
• Location (place)	3	-
• Cause (reason)	1	2
• No Circumstance	4	3

Table 3 showed that there are two types of circumstance which are location (place) and cause (reason) in the news headline. In South Korea's, the dominant circumstance was location of place also it showed that half of the headline have no circumstance. Meanwhile in United Kingdom's news headline, it was found that all headlines are a cause (reason) circumstance and three news headlines do not add any circumstance. The example of South Kore and United Kingdom news headline can be seen on the figure 3 and 4.

Singer Jonghyun of Shinee	found dead	in studio
Participant: Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Location (place)

FIGURE 3. Location Circumstance from The Korea Herald's Headline

The location of place circumstance showed that it expanding the clause on where the exact place of the process happened. Especially, a location of place circumstance is a type of circumstance to enhance or expanse e clause to construe the unfolding process by the space or to answer where question (Butt et al., 2003). This type of circumstance is in the form of prepositional phrase and it is a definite spatial phrase. In compared, another datum from The Korea Herald, *through kpop scene*, of location circumstance have an indefinite and temporal phrase which the location of the place does not have an exact position or in the Halliday theory it was called as abstract location (Halliday et al., 2004). The abstract location from *Through Kpop Scene* explained on how culture which is the destination of the actor, effect the goal

participant by sending a shock wave. This datum also a temporal type of circumstance because the phrase does not have a clear limit of location to focus which mean it indicate various area such the music and entertainment industry, or even to the culture of K-pop as a whole.

Kim Jong-hyun: SHINee star	dies	amid an unforgiving K-pop industry
Participant: Actor	Process: Material	Circumstance: Cause (Reason)

FIGURE 4. Cause Circumstance from The Guardian Headline

From the figure 4, the circumstance is *amid an unforgiving K-pop industry* classified as a cause of reason circumstance. The circumstantial element of cause construes the reason why the process is actualized (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). In the figure 4, the circumstance is explained the cause of the death by Kim Jong-Hyun which in the articles talked about the pressure from K-pop industry started from the harsh training until limited freedom that lead K-pop artist to get depression especially they asked to be perfect all the time (Beaumont- Thomas, 2017).

Afterall, the finding on South Korea and United Kingdom news headline could implied that South Korea’s headline used circumstance to marks about where the situation happened meanwhile the headline from United Kingdom’s news media used circumstance to reporting the reason why is the death of Kim Jong-Hyun occurred.

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING

TABLE 4. Representational Meaning of Lead Image

	South Korea’s Lead Image (n=8)	United Kingdom’s Lead Image (n=5)
Narrative Process	3	1
Conceptual Process	3	4
Combination	2	-

Representational meaning is a process of multimodality which focus on analyzing the image based on its content that contain active and passive participant (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). Table 4 showed that the finding on representational meaning in South Korea indeed more variative compared to United Kingdom’s lead image. The finding in from South Korea’s lead image are three conceptual processes, three narrative processes, and two combine process of conceptual and narrative. Meanwhile, most lead image from United Kingdom’s online article is a conceptual process. The findings on conceptual process from South Korea and United Kingdom lead image was shown in figure 5 and 6 below.

Figure 5 is a conceptual of symbolic process with two participants which is Kim Jong-Hyun’s photograph and flowers as the carrier. First carrier participant, Kim Jong-Hyun’s photograph, in the figure had a purpose to show other people with no action involved or vector by the participant. Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) explain that human participants in symbolic attributive processes usually pose for the viewer, rather than being shown as involved in some

action. So, the photograph of Kim Jong-Hyun was displayed only to show the viewers. Second carrier participant was flowers. The flower was a symbol of sympathy and mourns when someone's passed away so both of the carrier participants from the lead image was conceptual of symbolic process of Kim Jong-Hyun's funeral.



FIGURE 5. Conceptual Process in The Korea Times Lead Image



FIGURE 6. Conceptual Process from BBC's Lead Image

Figure 6 was a conceptual of analytical process which the image taken with close-up shot and emphasize the participant face. As analytical process, the picture did not have a vector and it serves to identify a carrier which allow viewers to scrutinize this carrier's possessive attributes (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). Thus, the participant, Kim Jong Hyun, in the figure 6 was a carrier with some possessive attributes. The possessive attributes were the hair, accessories, and clothes. Those possessive attributes shown by the carrier was not ordinary especially in fashion its implied that the carrier participant as an important person. Also, the background from the lead image in figure 6 shown brand logos which it indicates that this photo was taken in a special occasion or event.

Also, the lead image from South Korea's was more complex especially when its lead image combines narrative and conceptual processes compared to United Kingdom's lead image

which more general and more or less stable and timeless essence (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). The example of South Korea lead image with combination process can be seen in the figure 7 below.



FIGURE 7. Combination Process in The Korea Herald's Lead Photograph

In figure 7 from The Korea Herald, a lead image was displayed a combination of conceptual and narrative processes. The lead image is a screen capture taken from Instagram with two participants that divided into the left side, Kim Jong-Hyun, and right side, Instagram's captions. In the left side, Kim Jong-Hyun photograph, was a narrative process yet it changed from actor to carrier participant because even though the participant accompanied with microphone and in-ear monitor which explain an action process but the context from this picture is the participant not doing any action. In addition, the participant in the right side was recognized as the last note written by Kim Jong-Hyun and it is classified as verbal participant. Therefore, the process was shown by the relation between Instagram's caption and Kim Jong-Hyun which this lead image combined both conceptual and narrative process.

Moreover, this study could prove the relation of headline was less direct towards the lead images as in Economou (2006) which explained news headline merely had less or no connection with the lead image and headline more like an extension from the lead paragraphs from the verbal text. Moreover, it was found that most South Korea and the United Kingdom's headlines that employ material process had lead image of conceptual process and those headlines that employ noun phrase had a lead image of narrative process. Therefore, the lead image with a noun phrase headline would identify the content better compared to lead image with a clause headline

CONCLUSION

The multimodal discourse analysis of suicide news reports concluded that South Korea's headline was mostly a material process that not only give descriptions on the death of Kim Jong-Hyun but also explained the way society perceiving his death, Also, South Korea's headline use circumstance to mark where the situation happened. Meanwhile, United Kingdom's news headline with its dominant process of material process, could provide more

information about the background why did Kim Jong-Hyun take his own life. Furthermore, South Korea's lead image is more complex especially when the article's lead image combines both processes compared to United Kingdom's lead image that most of it was a conceptual process and mostly it represents participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning, in other words it more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence.

This study limited only on the online article's headline and lead image. So, it cannot really convey the characteristics of South Korea and the United Kingdom's English-language online article on reporting suicide of Kim Jong-Hyun since many data from visual and text modes still can be analyzed. Therefore, future study can explore more with the theory on Systemic Functional Grammar and visual grammar or any other theories depend on the context of the objects of the study to enrich the analysis from these theories.

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