

**LANGUAGE STYLE AND GENRE ANALYSIS OF EULOGY**  
**A Eulogy by Lee Hsien Yang at the Funeral Service of Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims at investigating the role of language as well as its characteristics and genre components in eulogy involving social function, generic structure, and linguistic features in eulogy. The eulogy analyzed was delivered by Lee Hsien Yang, the son of former Singapore Prime Minister, at the funeral service of Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew at Mandai Crematorium on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Employing discourse analysis, focusing on how the text is structured in terms of the sequence of words, clauses, sentences, and paragraph to unveil language style and genre components of eulogy. Although it is delivered orally, the eulogy can be regarded as written text based on several considerations such as one-way communication (monologic organization), context independence, synoptic organization, polished draft through the use of standard grammar and formal language, nominalization and lexical density. The eulogy purposes to commemorate someone deceased by praising and giving high honor, and it is generally in the form of speech (a piece of writing) in memorial service. The structure consists of initial event leading to other events/memories, sequence of events in particular time and place, and conclusion which functions to paraphrase the speaker's feeling towards someone he/she loves. Eulogy also has distinct features such as the use of past tense, focusing on specific participants, the use of material processes, circumstances of time in initial position, and the use of evaluative words.

**Key words: language style, genre, eulogy**

**INTRODUCTION**

This study investigates the role of language as well as its characteristics and genre components in eulogy involving social function, generic structure, and linguistic features in eulogy. The term language in this study also refers to text. When people are interacting, they create text. The term '*text*' can be simply interpreted as a product of interaction Halliday and Hasan (1976) define text as any passage, either spoken or written, of whatever length, that creates a unified

whole. Two kinds of text are then recognized – spoken text and written text. Spoken text is created through verbal communication. On the contrary, written text is the one created through written interaction. Spoken language differs from the written one. To determine the role of language playing in the eulogy, there are some characteristics to be analysed, including its organization (monologic or dialogic), context dependency (dependent or independent), structure (dynamic/synoptic), lexis (everyday

lexis/prestige lexis), grammar (complexity/simplicity), and lexical density. In this case, it is a bit problematic since eulogy is delivered orally, but there is an indication of written text since the speaker only reads the text.

Rarely found in Indonesia, eulogy in fact is a kind of genre in English society. Eulogy is frequently found in memorial service. It has particular purpose to commemorate someone who passed away, and it is commonly delivered in memorial service. To achieve the goal, it has to be structured in sequential order and contain distinct features with other genres, and it follows the statement given by Martin (2009) that genre is a staged goal-oriented social process. In addition, there are distinct features in eulogy that differentiate it from other texts.

The study is expected to provide vivid explanation of why the role of language used in the eulogy is regarded either written or spoken style and how the eulogy achieves its social goals. In this case, the eulogy analyzed in this paper was delivered by Lee Hsien Yang, the son of former Singapore Prime Minister, at the

funeral service of Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew at Mandai Crematorium on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Therefore, this study seeks to find answers of the following two questions.

1. What role of language is playing in the eulogy delivered by Lee Hsien Yang at the funeral service of Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew?
2. How are social function, generic structure, and language features in eulogy to achieve its social goal?

## LITERARY REVIEW

### *Text*

The term either 'spoken' or 'written' does not concern about the medium through which language is transmitted, but the way the meanings are encoded. For instance, when someone reads an academic paper aloud, the features of the text are more like those of written text rather than spoken text. Conversely, when we transcribe a speech, the written version has more common with spoken text. Gerot and Wignell (1994) portray differences between spoken and written texts in the following diagram.



**Figure 1 Shifts between spoken and written texts**

From the diagram above, it can be inferred that spoken text is context dependent in which the speakers rely on context to help delivering the meaning. For instance, the expression '*can you hold this?*' characterizes spoken features as the context explains what '*this*' is. On the

contrary, written text is context independent. The writers have two burdens, creating content as well as context for the sake of clarity. Everything needs to be complete, so written text is considered lexically dense.

Then, spoken text can also be said as language in action. It means that when one is interacting with others, he/she also produces speech act or speech function such as demanding information/goods and giving information/goods. Indeed, they do not just exchange information; they also exchange roles (as information demander, as information giver, etc.). On the other hand, written text is language as reflection, which means there is no role exchanging. The writer is the primary source of information, giving the information to readers in one-way interaction. In addition, spoken text is structured dynamically so that it is language as process. The meaning is achieved through turn taking and interactive staging. Meanwhile, written text is dynamically structured. The draft is planned and edited to be final draft. Written text also contains greater nominalizations rather than spoken text.

Based on the differences above, in the context of EFL learning, teachers and learners are expected to raise awareness of such differences in perceiving texts or providing model as learning materials. Thus, they can use language appropriately and accurately based on particular context as native speaker of English do.

### **Genre**

When people are interacting each other to exchange meaning, it obviously involves how people use language to achieve goals, as well. In other words, the overall purposes of the interaction can be said as genre. Eggins (1994) offers two definitions of genre. First, a genre is a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture. And second, genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them. In language learning, the term genre, as Martin and Rose (2003)

stated refers to different types of texts that enact various types of social context. A text can be identified as belonging to a particular genre as genre through the schematic structure and realizational patterns. Schematic structure functions to express goal-oriented organization linguistically through a functional constituent structure in the text. On the other hand, realization pattern expresses the boundaries between stages, and the function of each stage of the genre through language choices.

For instance, recount, which is one of the text-genre examples, has its obvious order. It consists of orientation, events, and re-orientation which come up together to retell events for the purpose of informing or entertaining. The authors cannot reserve this order because it will not be said as a recount text unless it has the certain one. Besides, we can define selling and buying as a genre by recognizing that when two people are talking together, beginning with one offering, then the other demanding, followed by one providing and the other accepting, followed by one asking for money, and the other handing it over.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study is discourse analysis, focusing on how the text is structured in terms of the sequence of words, clauses, sentences, and paragraph to unveil language style and genre components of eulogy. The analysis of language style used the theory proposed by Eggins (1994) while the genre analysis was based on the theory proposed by Martin and Rose (2003). The transcription of the eulogy was downloaded from the internet. The analysis is presented in two major points, stylistic analysis of language and genre analysis followed by description

and justification to provide clear explanation.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Analysis of language style**

The first point of analyzing the eulogy in this paper deals with the role language is playing in the interaction – either spoken or written style. To determine the language role used in the eulogy, it can be seen from two different types of distance in the relation between language and situations, which involve:

#### **Spatial/interpersonal distance**

Although it is delivered orally, eulogy occurs in one-way communication, in which there is no possibility of immediate feedback from the listeners. The speaker just delivers a speech that contains great praise to commemorate someone who recently died in front of the audience.

#### **Experiential distance**

Delivering eulogy also contains no social process going on. The speaker has to create both content and context to be understood by the listeners. In this case, language is creating and constituting social process. Thus, it is used to reflect someone's experience (language as reflection).

From two dimensions above, I can infer that the eulogy analyzed occurs in written discourse although it is delivered orally. In addition, there are some distinct implications of written language proposed by Enggis (1994) to characterize it. The implications were analyzed as follows.

#### **Monologic organization**

The eulogy is organized monologically to commemorate someone who died. It can be seen from the way that the script is organized. It consists of 13 paragraphs developed from one sentence to another. The text is organized from the

speaker's point of view regarding Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew, and pronoun '*I*' which refers to the speaker is frequently used. In this case, the organization does not allow the listeners to give feedback or to create turn-taking as the script read by the speaker resembles written text.

#### **Context independent**

Since delivering the eulogy also means reading written text, the text is context independent. For instance, the noun phrases '*chubby cheerful toddler taking my first tentative steps*' in paragraph 1 shows that the speaker has to make sure that the listeners understand what is said. The speaker tends to make complete noun phrase instead of just saying 'this toddler' such in a conversation. Another example is the sentence of '*I have not returned to Cameron Highlands*' in the paragraph 2. The place has initially mentioned in the first line, but the speaker chooses to reuse the name in the fifth line instead of using deixis '*I have not returned there*' to avoid listeners' misunderstanding. The use of dense lexis shows how written text is independent from the context, and the analysis of lexical density is analyzed deeply in the next few points. Lastly, the language choice in the eulogy is also based on the imagined audience. The audience seems to be Mrs. Yew's family, colleagues, and friends. The speaker tells the listeners about the memories shared together and praise to her, so the speaker shares the same discourse by using the words related to situation such as 'wonderful memories', 'historic significance', and 'moments of crises' in which the audience can easily comprehend the content as well as the context.

#### **Synoptic structure**

The eulogy is not organized dynamically with one sentence leading to another, but it is structured synoptically. It has the beginning ^ middle ^ end generic structure. The speaker introduces the starting point by mentioning things memorable, in this case 'photos', in his life to tell how the memories began. Then, it is developed in the following paragraphs which tell about different topics as the middle part of the eulogy. Finally, there is a statement that briefly concludes the text by telling that the speaker's family felt sad about Mrs. Yew's death, and his family would always keep the memories in mind.

***'final draft' polished and indication of earlier draft removed***

Spoken text such in casual conversation would contain features of spontaneity such as hesitations, false start, repetition, and interruption. Those characteristics are typical. However, there is no evidence that the eulogy text shows such features because they might be polished and removed even though it is delivered orally.

#### ***Standard grammar***

The eulogy also uses prestigious vocabulary and standard grammatical constructions. The vocabulary chosen are such as *independent, invigorating, comprehend, excellence, interfering, etc.* They show significant differences from spoken text such in conversation in which speakers might use less-prestigious words. In addition, since it occurs in formal occasion to commemorate someone, there is no evidence showing the use of slangs and non-standard grammar. For instance, in paragraph 3 the speaker said, *'In August 1965, when I was not yet 8, our family ...'*. The speaker chooses not to use *'wasn't'* construction since it is considered informal.

#### ***Grammatical simplicity***

Written language as in eulogy script grammatically contains different features from spoken one. There are many nominalizations found in the text. The nominalizations in the text are commonly derived from verb form by 23 times while those formed by adjective are only 8 words. In the eulogy, nominalized words might sound pretentious and make the meaning obscure. However, as argued by Eggins (1994), the main purpose of nominalization is to be able to do things with the text that we cannot do in unnominalized text, and it covers two benefits – rhetorical organization and increased lexical density. Rhetorical organization allows the text organized in terms of ideas, reasons, causes, etc. This might not suit the eulogy in which it concerns on oneself – telling about memories and praising someone. Thus, such organization in written text is optional because writing allows someone to organize sentences to give priority to different parts.

#### ***Lexically dense***

As asserted by Eggins (1994), written language generally has high rate of lexical density, and the table reveals that the eulogy text contains considerably high rate of lexical density by 51%. On the contrary, written language tends to have few clauses per sentence so that it contains low rate of grammatical intricacy. The grammatical intricacy rate, which is 1.8, is considered low. Each paragraph generally consists of 3-5 sentences, and each of them is formed by different numbers of clauses which is mostly has greater number than the sentences.

#### ***Genre analysis***

The second point of this paper deals with genre analysis. Genre, based on Martin (2009) is defined as staged goal-

oriented social process. It is staged because it consists of more than one phase of meaning to work through a genre. Goal oriented means that unfolding those phases aims to get something done, and there will be sense of incompleteness if we are stopped. Finally, it is social because we participate genre with others. Eulogy is considered one of the genres in the society, and it is generally written as the eulogy analyzed in this paper. Genre has three elements which differ from one to another – social function, generic structure, and linguistic features. The analysis of those three features in eulogy is presented as follows.

### **Social Function**

Eulogy purposes to commemorate someone deceased by praising and giving high honor, and it is generally in the form of speech (a piece of writing) in memorial service. It is expressed in sympathy and tells about life history or shared memories. The eulogy analyzed in this text was delivered by Lee Hsien Yang for Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew at the funeral in Mandai Crematorium on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Written in 13 paragraphs, the text mainly tells about the life histories of Mrs. Yew and memories Yang shared with his mother.

Yang started to eulogize his mother by recalling one of the childhood photos showing that Mrs. Yew was a helpful and responsible mother. It can be seen from the praising words '*...ready to catch me if needed ...*' and '*always there for us if needed but helping use becoming strong independent individuals*'. Then, Yang relived the memories with his family during holidays. He felt the warmth of his family spending pleasant moments. In the third paragraph, Yang told about a critical situation (a crisis) at

that time forcing his mother to take him to some places.

Yang, in the fourth and fifth paragraphs, also praised his mother in terms of how she supportively encouraged himself to strive for academic and some interests. Afterwards, Yang recalled how his mother noticed his relationship with Fern, and his mother showed warmth with Fern by sharing common interests. In the next paragraph, it is also mentioned that Mrs. Yew wanted Yang to start a family with Fern as she got older. Soon, Yang showed how excited his mother was when she heard Fern's pregnancy. Mrs. Yew was so prescient that the firstborn would be a boy so that she made few booties with no pink color. It is also explained that Mrs. Yew was so delighted knowing that her second grandchild was a boy again. Despite giving up hope of more grandchildren, Mrs. Yew was still glad that at that time she had one granddaughter and one grandson. Although she wanted to have one more grandson, neither her daughters in law obliged to have any.

In the following paragraph, Yang sadly recalled how his mother firstly suffered stroke that made his mother frustrated. Sequentially, Yang remembered that his father loved Mrs. Yew very much. He took care of his wife, helping and encouraging her in rehabilitation. His father also showed patience, kindness, and humor. Yang said that the love showed by his parents became his inspiration on how he maintained the relationship with Fern. Yang described that his family have shared good and difficult moments together so that they bounded his family closer.

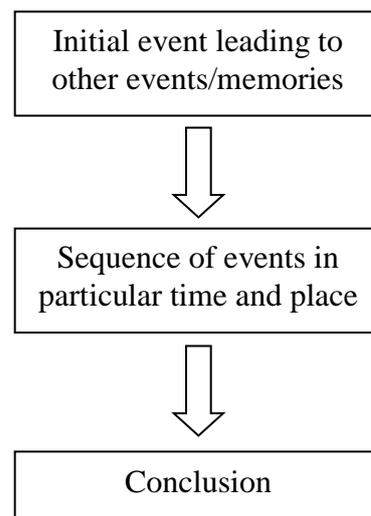
The memories and praises explained in each paragraph of the eulogy

meet the social function of the genre. The speaker eulogized by shaping the text for the listeners in commemorating someone deceased.

### **Generic Structure**

Eulogy, which aims to commemorate someone deceased by praising and giving honor, are closely related to the personal recount which moves beyond the series of events to a series of episodes that make up a person's life history.

Yang begins the eulogy by introducing initial event that leads to other memories shared with his family, especially with his mother. Then, it is followed by sequence of events in particular time and place which are significant stages of the family's life. In the end of the eulogy, Yang summarizes the whole praises and memories with a conclusion. The generic structure of the eulogy delivered by Lee Hsin Yang can be simply depicted as follow.



**Figure 2 Generic Structure of the Eulogy**

The initial event in the eulogy introduces a childhood photo showing Yang at Fraser Hills with Mrs. Yew hovering him. The event shows that Mrs. Yew was a helpful and responsible mother. Later, it leads to other events that happened in a particular time and place. At least, there are six main events that are recalled in the eulogy. At the beginning, Yang tells the audience about his childhood life in which he spent wonderful holiday at Cameron Highland despite sudden crisis that forced Mrs. Yew to take him to Kuala Lumpur and then Singapore. The second event

deals with Yang's academic life. Mrs. Yew always supported his sons to strive for academic excellence and interests. Although Mrs. Yew was worried about Yang's achievement, it was completely unfounded.

The next stage of Yang that was shared together with his mother is how Yang built relationship with Fern. Moreover, Mrs. Yew shared common interests with Fern, and finally she wanted Yang to start a family with Fern. Soon, the next life stage shows that Mrs. Yew was excited as well as delighted to hear she

would have grandchildren so that she prepared making booties. The excitement continued when she had the third grandchild. In fact, Mrs. Yew was already 74.

However, the broken-hearted event happened when Mrs. Yew suffered her first stroke that made her weaker. Despite her frustrating moment, Mr. Yew patiently took care of his wife and encourages her in rehabilitation. The love showed by his parents made Yang learn something to maintain the partnership. In the end of the eulogy, Yang closed the speech by concluding that Fern and himself, as well as his three sons would miss Mrs. Yew and cherish her memory.

### ***Linguistic Features***

There are several noticeable linguistic features in the eulogy analyzed in this paper.

#### **The use of past tense**

First, since it shares memories the speaker had with his mother, it mainly uses past tense to recall series of events that happened in a particular time and place. For instance, when Yang told about his holiday that was suddenly cut due to crisis, he used past tense to recall past events. The use of past tense, then, continues to tell stages of life in which Mrs. Yew dealt with Yang during his study, the time when he started family with Fern, and the time Mrs. Yew got three grandsons. However, present tense is also found in the eulogy to address the current condition leading to the memories he shared with his mother.

#### **Focusing on specific participants**

The participants in the eulogy are mainly the speaker (Yang), his mother (Mrs. Yew). The speaker and his mother place themselves as the main participants in the eulogy. It can be seen from the use of pronoun 'I' that occurs 13 times, the

possessive pronoun of 'my' by 8 times, and the object pronoun 'me' by 7 times. All of them refer to the speaker, Lee Hsien Yang. In addition, he also frequently uses the word 'Mama' to address his mother by 18 times, and it is significantly replaced by the pronoun 'she' by 11 times and object pronoun 'her' by 12 times.

#### **The use of material processes**

Material processes are those occurring when obvious action takes place or when someone or something is carrying a physical action. Actions involve actors or participants which are realized by nominal groups. In the eulogy, since the speaker tells about memorable events he shared with his family, especially his mother; mental processes are used to state actions done by the participants. Each paragraph contains material processes. There are overall 39 material processes to state actions carried out by the participants. However, the last paragraph does not have any material process as it concludes the memories. Rather, it contains mental processes.

#### **Circumstances of time in initial position**

Since the eulogy deals with a lifetime of experience rather than a few successive events, in which the speaker jumps from one significant phase to another, circumstances of time play important role in managing the phases. More importantly, such circumstances are put in the beginning as Theme. According to Martin (2008), such pattern is stronger in written biography.

#### **The use of evaluative words**

The eulogy is about negotiation of social relationship in which the speaker tells the listeners how he feels (his attitudes) about his mother. To negotiate such meaning, he evaluates someone's characters and his feelings. The attitudes

are also gradable, based on Martin (2003), and it varies in terms of how intensively he feels. Thus, evaluative words are commonly used to show feelings.

### CONCLUSION

This paper aims to investigate two points – the characteristics of the role of language that is playing in the eulogy and genre analysis including social functions, generic structure, and linguistic features.

1. Although it is delivered orally, the eulogy can be regarded as written text based on several considerations. First, it is delivered in one-way communication (monologic organization) with no possibility of any feedback. Second, the speaker also creates content and context clearly in the text since the speaker cannot rely on the context. Third, it has particular structure (beginning – middle – end) to achieve social function of the text, which is to commemorate someone who passed away. Fourth, there is also possibility of earlier draft removed by the use of standard grammar and formal language. Fifth, there are a few evidences of nominalizations, in which such changing might sound pretentious and aim to achieve grammatical simplicity. Lastly, the eulogy has 51% proportion of lexical density. It is based on the theory proposed by Eggins that written text generally has high rate of lexical density.
2. The eulogy purposes to commemorate someone deceased by praising and giving high honor, and it is generally in the form of speech (a piece of writing) in memorial service. It is also closely related to personal recount

which moves beyond the series of episodes making up a person's history. The structure consists of initial event leading to other events/memories, sequence of events in particular time and place, and conclusion which functions to paraphrase the speaker's feeling towards someone he loves. Eulogy also has distinct features such as the use of past tense, focusing on specific participants, the use of material processes, circumstances of time in initial position, and the use of evaluative words.

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