

Why Write an End-of-Life Plan? A Genre Analysis of the Introduction Sections of Ending Notes in Japan

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なぜ人生の最後のプランを書くのか？ エンディングノートの序論章のジャンル分析

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This paper investigates the genre of ending notes in Japan. Ending notes are notebook-like writing pads that are commonly published and distributed by a variety of businesses, NPOs, and governmental bodies. In the ending notes, writers can record their personal information and their wishes and requests regarding aging, dying, and death. This study conducted a genre analysis of 15 introduction sections of ending notes. The findings indicate that introductions are used to persuade readers about the importance of end-of-life planning, to explain the structure and function of an ending note, and to introduce *shūkatsu* to future writers. The results contribute to the fields of aging and death in Japan as well as to the broader field of writing studies.

本稿は、エンディングノートのジャンル分析を行ったものである。エンディングノートとは、企業やNPO、行政などが発行し、販売・配布しているノートのようなものである。エンディングノートには、老いや死のあり方に関する希望や要望、個人情報などを書き込むことができる。本稿では、エンディングノートの導入部15箇所について、ジャンル分析を行った。その結果、エンディングノートの序文には、読者を作家にするための説得、エンディングノートの構造や機能の説明、未来の作家に向けた終活の紹介などの役割があることが明らかになった。本稿で得られた結果は、日本における「老い」と「死」の研究、さらには「ライティング」研究に貢献するものである。

Japan's super-aged society has long been a cause of economic concern, particularly with regard to issues such as pensions and the decreasing size of the labor force. However, recently, the same phenomenon has gained a new social and cultural dimension. Japanese media and scholars have called this the "2025 problem" (Asahi Shimbun's Impending 2025 Shock Reporting Team, 2016; Suzuki, 2012), the year when Japanese baby boomers will move from early-stage elderly (between the ages of 65 and 74) to latter-stage elderly (over the age of 75). The main consequence of this demographic change is that latter-stage elderlies require more medical and nursing care. Consequently, they also require others to spend more money and time caring for them. Moreover, Japanese scholars have also suggested that there will be a heavy burden on the country's hospital capacities from 2025 due to a large increase in the number of elderlies in terminal phases and dying in hospitals. With this background, recent research on

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aging and death has started to explore the preparation for aging and death movement in Japan, known as *shūkatsu* (Allison, 2018; Chan & Thang, 2021; Mladenova, 2020), and its most popular genre, the ending note (Kimura & Ando, 2015; Kobayashi et al., 2016; Shimojima, 2014, 2015; Takeshima et al., 2015).

Shūkatsu is a movement that promotes end-of-life planning and preparation. The movement includes NPOs, businesses, local governments, scholars, and professionals in the fields of nursing, aging, and death. *Shūkatsu* advocates claim that ending notes are both the entry point and the guide for aging and death preparation in Japan (Fukuda, 2015; Onoue, 2015; Shinya, 2014; The Association of *Shūkatsu* Counselors, 2013). Ending notes have differing titles, sizes, lengths, and colors depending on the publisher. Common to all ending notes are the sections in which writers are prompted to write or fill out with their requests and choices concerning a variety of topics regarding the end of life. These topics include personal history, personal finance, elderly care, and funeral and grave requests, among others.

Given the importance of the genre of ending notes in aging and death preparation in Japan, it is surprising that the number of research on the topic is still small. Research conducted on ending notes so far has focused on analyzing the overall content and organization of the genre (Shimojima, 2014, 2015), on reporting on writers' reasons for writing an ending note (Kimura & Ando, 2015), and on the use of ending notes to promote aging in place (Kobayashi et al., 2016). Although these studies have contributed to furthering the understanding of ending notes, no study has analyzed ending notes from a linguistic perspective. Only a linguistic analysis of ending notes can reveal their rhetorical purposes and linguistic features in relation to the bigger picture of aging and death in the country. Thus, the aim of this paper is to present a genre analysis of the introduction section of ending notes.

Literature Review

Genre Theory

Genre is part of our everyday lives. It is commonly understood as the classification of texts, movies, and music into specific categories. Nonetheless, the influence of genres in our daily lives is larger than just a method of categorization. Genres are also tools that help people organize their lives. As Frow (2015) writes:

Genre is, amongst other things, a matter of discrimination and taxonomy: of organising things into recognisable classes. In this respect, it belongs to a much larger group of classifying activities that permeate every aspect of daily life, from informal and ad hoc ones like sorting out clothes that need ironing from clothes that don't, to more formalised ones like planning a meal or buying the right set of tools for a job. All of these activities involve the use of knowledges which are embedded in the flow of everyday practice. (p.56)

This understanding of genre as embedded in everyday practice is at the core of what is known today as genre theory. Since the late 1980s, scholars from the field of English for specific purposes (Swales, 1990), rhetoric (Miller, 1984), and linguistics (Martin & Rose, 2003) have suggested new ways of understanding, researching, and teaching genres. First, they expanded the concept of genre to include other types of texts besides literature, such as scientific articles (Bazerman, 1988; Swales, 2004), business letters (Bhatia, 1993; Navarro, 2015), and personal statements (Ding, 2007), among others. Second, if in the

past genre was mostly a way of categorizing texts with ‘similar’ textual characteristics, genre is now perceived as part of a social context in which it is a representative and shaper (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). In brief, this new view of genre suggests that a genre is a group of texts with similar linguistic and rhetorical characteristics that serve a common social purpose. For instance, the resume is a genre that serves the purpose of presenting a job applicant’s achievements and qualifications for a certain position. To do so, the resume has certain linguistic and rhetorical features that allow the genre to achieve that purpose.

Even though this view of genre has a few differences depending on which tradition is followed, namely the Sydney school, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP/Genre), or the Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), according to Johns (2002), the three traditions agree on two important points for a definition of genre. First, the three traditions propose that “texts are socially constructed. The influence of community and culture, however these are defined, is considerable, in both text processing and production” (Johns, 2002, p.12). Second, they suggest that “texts are purposeful, and their functions are at least partially determined by the context and community long before the writer (or reader) begins to process them” (Johns, 2002, p.12).

These two characteristics of genres are fundamental for researching texts. They allow researchers to find in the texts social and cultural aspects of a community or society that influence the creation and production of a genre, what Devitt (2004) calls the contexts of situation and culture. Moreover, another advantage of understanding genre as texts that are socially created and purposeful is that it allows researchers to focus their investigation on the action a genre is performing instead of focusing only on its textual characteristics. Studying the actions of a genre then reveals the purposes for the use and creation of that genre. In turn, because genres are socially constructed, the purposes and actions they perform are answers to social and cultural concerns, desires, and expectations. In the case of a genre such as ending notes, this implies that ending notes represent the social and cultural concerns, desires, and expectations regarding aging and dying in Japan. Therefore, a genre analysis of ending notes is a valuable contribution not only to the field of writing studies but also to the study of aging and death in the country.

Ending Notes

Studies on ending notes are still few and quite recent. In the field of psychology, Shimojima has produced two research articles on the topic of ending notes. In her first study (Shimojima, 2014), the author conducted a textual analysis of the topics in ending notes and how much space was dedicated to different topics. Shimojima found that more pages were dedicated to the topic of personal history, where writers write about their past, than to any other topics such as end-of-life treatment, funerals, or graves. According to the author, this result was unexpected since ending notes were supposed to be a genre for writers to record their wishes concerning aging and death. Shimojima suggests that the aim of having more pages dedicated to personal history than other topics such as medical care or funeral is that writing about one’s history “eases” the path into writing about one’s death. In other words, writing and reflecting on one’s past could reduce writers’ negative feelings connected to considering and planning for aging and death. In her second paper (Shimojima, 2015), after analyzing the frequency of sections and their distribution inside ending notes, Shimojima concluded that the structure and organization of ending notes can help writers consider difficult topics such as terminal care and death. This is

because ending notes usually start with the personal history section and have topics such as end-of-life care, funeral, and graves at the end. According to the author, by first giving the writer several pages to write about their past and then pages to write about the end of life, the ending note helps reduce the writer's anxiety and negative feelings concerning aging, dying, and death. Unfortunately, Shimojima did not conduct interviews with ending note writers that could prove her assertions of the benefits of such a writing structure.

Kimura and Ando's (2015) study on ending notes provides a wider perspective on ending notes by analyzing the text and interviewing the writers of ending notes. Their investigation had two phases. First, the authors conducted a brief textual analysis to determine the most common topics in ending notes. Kimura and Ando found that the most common topics in ending notes were medical and nursing care decisions, funeral and grave decisions, messages to loved ones, estate planning, organizing belongings, career history, contact information, inheritance and wills, and personal history. In the second phase of their study, the authors interviewed six ending note writers to learn about their reasons for writing an ending note and their experience of writing one. The authors describe five findings from this qualitative data. First, they found that all writers decided to write an ending note because of the death of someone close to them. According to the authors, there were two patterns in the writers' reasons. One was the realization that death was something closer to them than they had imagined, the other was realizing that there were things that needed to be done before their deaths. Second, all the writers revealed that they wrote the ending note to avoid burdening their families in the case of their deaths. Third, the writers mentioned that they had more difficulty writing about emotional topics such as personal history and messages than 'businesslike' topics such as properties and contacts. Fourth, the writers described having a different awareness of death than those close to them and having difficulties discussing it with their loved ones. Lastly, Kimura and Ando's writers stated being unable to write or having difficulties with topics such as long-term care or medical care because they could not imagine such negative future perspectives. According to the authors, the writers also revealed feelings of relief after writing the ending note and an increased awareness of things they still need to do before death. Kimura and Ando (2015) concluded their research by stating that people write ending notes for two reasons: one, they do not want to cause trouble for others; and two, they find it difficult to have conversations about death with family members and loved ones.

One last relevant study on ending notes is by Kobayashi et al. (2016). The authors recommend the creation of ending notes by Japanese universities as an instrument to assist with community-based comprehensive systems for the elderly. Kobayashi et al. state that for a community-based comprehensive care system to function effectively, older people need to communicate to the system a series of personal details such as preferred medical institutions, life-prolonging treatment choices, living arrangements, and what should be done with their bodies after death, to name a few. According to the authors, the challenge for such a system is to obtain this type of information about older people, particularly older people living alone. For Kobayashi et al., the ending note can be the instrument that provides community-based comprehensive care systems with this relevant information. The authors believe that the ending note can support community-based comprehensive care systems because it is capable of storing personal and medical information as well as older people's requests and desires concerning end-of-life and death-related issues.

As this brief literature review on ending notes shows, research on the topic is limited. Consequently,

there are still many areas and perspectives to be explored by further research. For instance, although Shimojima (2014, 2015) and Kimura and Ando (2015) conducted text analysis in their studies, their research only produced the most common topics in the ending notes. Despite being valuable information, an in-depth text analysis of ending notes that can reveal the main functions of the text and how these functions are performed is still needed. This leads to a second area that needs further exploration. No study on ending notes so far has used writing theories to analyze the text of ending notes. Only through writing theories, such as genre theory and its research methods, is it possible to conduct an in-depth text analysis of ending notes. That is because writing theories and their methods provide researchers with the tools to investigate the four fundamental aspects of a text: content, rhetoric, lexicon, and grammar. Therefore, this research paper reports a genre analysis of the introduction section of ending notes with the aim of contributing to a deeper understanding of ending notes and their relation to aging and death in Japan.

Research Method

Move Analysis

Move analysis was created by Swales (1987; 1990) as a method for conducting discourse analysis and as a tool for teaching non-native learners of English the rhetorical structures of research articles. Although a method most commonly applied to genres in academic and business settings, move analysis has also been used to analyze genres as varied as adoption letters to birthmothers (Upton & Cohen, 2009), personal statements (Ding, 2007), and manuals for household appliances (Frutos, 2015) to name a few. Its importance in genre theory is based on two factors. First, genres are recognized and differentiated by their moves. Connor et al. (2007) state that “while related genres will certainly share common move types, each will have their own unique structural characteristics that reflect the specific communicative functions that the genres have” (p.29). Second, moves are how genres fulfill their communicative purposes.

[The move’s] goal is to describe the communicative purposes of a text by categorizing the various discourse units within the text according to their communicative purposes or rhetorical moves. A move thus refers to a section of a text that performs a specific communicative function. Each move not only has its own purpose but also contributes to the overall communicative purposes of the genre. (Connor et al., 2007, p.23)

Therefore, moves are fundamental to any genre analysis because they can reveal the ‘identity’ of a text as well as the ‘blueprint’ of how it works.

Moves have certain characteristics that make it easier to understand what they are and what they do. First, moves are functional units. This means that they perform actions in and for the text. In other words, moves are recognized and identified by the action they perform in a given genre. Another characteristic of moves is that they vary in length. Hyon (2017) points out that “some moves can be as small as a word or two (e.g., a ‘Sincerely’ at the end of a business letter) or as large as several paragraphs (e.g., assessment of food in a restaurant review)” (p.29). Furthermore, moves also vary in frequency. Certain moves happen more often than others within the same text or genre. According to their frequency

moves can be categorized as obligatory, conventional, or optional (Connor et al., 2007; Ding, 2007). Moves can also be interrupted by other moves and then continue after the move that interrupted it. Lastly, grammatical and lexical features may also indicate the type or nature of a move (Swales, 2004). Some scholars divide moves into two types: rhetorical and structural (Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013; Yunxia, 2000). Rhetorical moves, as the name suggests, perform rhetorical purposes, while structural moves function as indicators inside a text, for example, the titles and subtitles of a text.

The last component of a move analysis is the step. Steps can be considered “sub-parts to the moves” (Hyon, 2017, p.33). A move can have one or multiple steps. It is their combination that allows a move to be realized. “The steps of a move primarily function to achieve the purpose of the move to which it belongs” (Connor et al., 2007, p.24). Lastly, it is important to point out that not all moves have steps. Some moves can be realized without steps (Connor et al., 2007), while other moves may have steps and sub-steps (Frutos, 2015). Therefore, steps are not obligatory elements for moves to exist. Taking into consideration the explanations given above, move analysis was conducted in this project in the introduction section of ending notes.

Corpus

The corpus for this research consists of 15 introduction sections from 15 ending notes. The ending notes in the corpus are published by neighborhood associations, funeral businesses, *shūkatsu* companies, city prefectures, NPOs, one-hundred-yen shops, and publishing companies. Most of the ending notes were purchased in *shūkatsu* seminars, bookstores, Amazon, or one-hundred-yen shops; some of them were given to the researcher by the creators themselves. The ending notes bought in bookstores were selected by their popularity and selling rankings. Only the most popular and most sold ending notes were selected for the corpus.

Results and Findings

The introduction sections of ending notes have two main purposes. First, they introduce the ending note to future writers. This purpose is achieved through moves and steps that give reasons why one should write an ending note, explain the structure and function of an ending note, and define and introduce *shūkatsu*. Second, the introduction sections give writers suggestions and advice on how to go through the writing process as well as how to best use the ending note. This includes instructions on how to start writing, what to write, how to revise the text, and how to handle the ending note. Given the limited physical space available for this paper, only the rhetorical moves of purpose one, introducing the ending note, are presented here.

Since moves and steps are used in different orders in different ending notes, they are presented in this paper according to their frequency in the ending notes. The most common moves and steps are presented first and the least common ones later. The frequency of moves and steps in the introductions of ending notes is indicated in parentheses next to the title of each move and step. For example, if a move happens in 10 of the 15 ending notes analyzed, it will be indicated as (10/15). Lastly, examples taken from the introduction section of ending notes are presented after the description of a move or step.

Move Analysis

Move 1 – Persuading Readers into Writing an Ending Note (15/15).

This move consists of steps with claims to persuade writers about the importance of writing an ending note. The claims often mention the benefits of writing an ending note for writers and/or their families. They may also mention issues in Japanese society, existential ideas such as the meaning of life and *ikigai*, the possibility of unexpected events happening in life, or make connections between the ending notes and the *shūkatsu* movement.

Step 1 - Claiming Benefits for the Writer (10/15). Step 1 makes claims about the benefits of writing an ending note for writers. The claims made in this step revolve around five main ideas. One, ending notes are a tool of reflection that can help writers plan and live a better present and future. Two, ending notes can help writers organize their feelings and thoughts in the process of writing one. Three, ending notes are powerful communication tools that allow writers to express their thoughts and feelings to loved ones, even in circumstances in which they may be unable to communicate verbally. Four, ending notes can help writers self-manage their health as well as receive adequate medical treatment in the future. Five, ending notes can help writers organize themselves financially and avoid family conflicts over inheritances.

- 1) By writing down your thoughts and feelings, you will be able to organize your feelings and discover things you have never noticed before. Please use this as an opportunity to think about how you will spend your life from now on. (*Rashisa Nōto*)
- 2) By writing down what you want people to know about you, what you want to tell your loved ones in case something happens to you, and so on, you will be able to organize your feelings and thoughts. (Komae City Health and Welfare Department Ending Note)
- 3) This [ending note] is useful not only when life comes to an end, but also when a person is unable to express his or her wishes due to dementia or illness. (*Ichiban Wakariyasui Endingu Nōto*)

Step 2 - Claiming Benefits for the Family (6/15). Step 2 tries to persuade writers by claiming the benefits of writing an ending note for the writers' families. Introduction sections suggest that by writing an ending note and preparing for the end-of-life, writers can avoid creating problems for their families in cases of death, emergencies, and when family members need to act as surrogates. In addition, the introduction sections also claim that ending notes can be used as a message that family members can cherish in the future.

- 4) This is why it is so important to clearly leave behind your wishes and intentions for after your death, so as not to place a burden on distant family members. (*Ohitorisama Demo Dai-jōbu Nōto*)

Step 3 - Making a Connection Between Topics in Japanese Society and End-of-Life Preparations (6/15). Step 3 tries to persuade writers about the importance of preparing for the end of life and writing an ending note. To achieve this goal, the introduction sections relate Japanese traditions and societal values to preparation for the end of life. The topics mentioned by ending notes in this step include aging society, longevity, natural disasters, *pokkuri* (sudden death) temples, the taboo of discussing death with

loved ones, and the idea of living *jibun rashii* (living a life true to one's self).

- 5) It can be said that the purpose of end-of-life preparations is the expression of the “compassion” that the Japanese have. (*Tsutaete Okitai Kotoba ga Aru, Nokoshite Okitai Omoide ga Aru: Endingu Nōto*)

Step 4 - Claiming Benefits for the Writer and Family (5/15). Step 4 is similar to Steps 1 and 2. The difference is that in Step 4 the benefits for the writer and family are claimed together, often in the same sentence. One of the benefits suggested in Step 4 is that ending notes can be a topic of conversation between the writer and his or her family. This step also mentions that ending notes can help writers and their families have a better life in the future and peace of mind. Lastly, Step 4 suggests that ending notes can be useful in cases of emergency.

- 6) In order to be prepared for such “what-ifs,” this notebook provides you with important information that will be useful to you and your family in an easy-to-understand manner. (*Moshimo no Toki no Endingu Nōto*)

Step 5 - Questioning Writers and Their Preparedness for the Future (4/15). In this step, the introduction sections question writers about various topics related to aging and death. Questions often concern writers' preparedness for retirement, aging, end-of-life, and death. The implied objective in this step seems to be to lead writers to reflect on their future and realize their lack of preparedness for those contingencies.

- 7) What will happen if you need nursing care? Can you live on your pension? Are you blindly saving money or buying insurance because of vague concerns such as “What if I can live on my pension but need nursing care”? Do you have a lot of credit cards because you think it will save you money? (*Moshimo ni Sonaeru Anshin Nōto*)

Step 6. Reminding Writers that Unfortunate Events Can Happen at Any Time (3/15). This step reminds writers that unfortunate and unexpected events can happen to anyone at any time. Introductions using this step also remind writers that for this reason, it is important to be prepared for any eventuality in life.

- 8) We never know what will happen to us in our lifetime. Accidents, illnesses, and unexpected events can happen to anyone, regardless of age. (*Moshimo no Toki no Endingu Nōto*)

Step 7. Claiming Similarities in the Behavior of People in Relation to the End of Life (3/15). Step 7 claims that people are similar when it comes to both actions and thoughts concerning the end of life. The similarities proposed by the ending notes refer to the unpreparedness of people for death, the fact that even among married couples there are unknowns, and that everyone has something particular to them that matters at the end of life.

- 9) However, when the time comes, the reality is that there are many things that even a spouse does not understand, such as your ideas about funerals, thoughts about caregiving, friendships, insurance, inheritance, and others. (*NALC Endingu Nōto*)

Step 8 - Claiming a Connection Between *Shūkatsu* and Ending Notes (2/15). In this step, the intro-

duction sections use the preparation for the end-of-life movement, *shūkatsu*, to make claims about the usefulness of ending notes. Some of the claims made in this step include saying that ending notes are the entry point to *shūkatsu* and that they offer an opportunity to think and discuss *shūkatsu* with family and friends.

- 10) Using an ending note is a very straightforward means of taking the first step in end-of-life planning. (*Mai Uei: Anata no Jinsei o Motto Yori Yoku Ikiru Tame no Shūkatsu Nōto*)

Step 9 - Telling Fictitious Stories (2/15). In Step 9, ending notes use short manga stories to show writers the positive effects of writing an ending note and the negative effects of not writing one. The topics of death in the family and hospitalization are common. The stories suggest that writing an ending note can prevent a series of problems in those two situations. One short story also mentions how ending notes can help writers organize their finances for a better retirement, while another story suggests the usefulness of ending notes in everyday life situations such as losing one’s wallet, changing internet provider, or finding a relative’s address.

Step 10 - Using Famous Quotes (1/15). Step 10 was found in only one ending note. It utilizes a famous quotation to make writers think about the meaning of their actions in their present life.

- 11) “If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?”
2005, June 6, Steve Jobs, Speech at Stanford University. (My List 100)

Move 2. Explaining the Ending Note (13/15)

Move 2 explains what an ending note is or is not in general terms. It explains the purpose and function of the ending note. It also describes how the ending note was created and its structure.

Step 1. Describing the Structure and Content of the Ending Note (9/13). One way in which Step 1 is realized is by describing how the ending note is divided. When performing this action, ending notes commonly use the phrase “composed of” (in Japanese, *kousei ni narimasu*) to describe, for example, how many chapters the ending note has. The second way ending notes realize Step 1 is by describing the content the writer will find inside the ending note.

- 12) This book consists of three chapters. In Chapter 1, you will write information about your health, assets, family, and friends; in Chapter 2, you will describe your thoughts and wishes regarding “What-if” situations, such as terminal care, death with dignity, funeral, grave, and will; and in Chapter 3, you will write about your life and memories, including what you have cherished, and messages to those around you. (*Moshimo no Toki no Endingu Nōto*)

Step 2. Describing What an Ending Note is and its Function (8/13). Step 2 explains what the ending note is and its uses. Each introduction section in this step describes their ending note differently, according to what they see as the function of their ending note. This function can be, for example, to support writers with aging and end-of-life procedures, to guide writers to reflect on their past, to assist with *shūkatsu* activities, or to help in case of emergency.

- 13) My List 100 is to live your life better and in your own way. It is an ending note to write down what you want to do, how you want to organize your information, and what you hope

to do in the future. (My List 100)

Step 3. Describing How the Ending Note was Made (4/13). Step 3 describes the process of making the ending note and the people involved in creating it. This step is usually realized by mentioning how the ending note was created based on the expertise of the maker, the opinions of specialists, or the requests of *shūkatsu* seminar attendees.

14) This book is based on the experiences of my company specialized in organizing the belongings of the deceased, whereby I have organized more than 20,000 cases to date, and on the stories I have heard visiting the homes of people who were having trouble sorting out their personal belongings before their death. I have put together this ending note in my own way to help everyone lead a more fulfilling life until the end of their lives. (*Ohitorisama Demo Daijōbu Nōto*)

Move 3 - Creating Visual Attractiveness (3/15)

To make their introductions more attractive and the content easier to understand, some ending notes use visual aids such as drawings. The drawings used in the introduction section of ending notes reflect the reasons for writing an ending note previously discussed in Move 1 in this paper. For instance, one ending note has a drawing of a large happy family with three different generations waving at the reader. Another has an older man holding a babe in the air. These two drawings refer to the idea of end-of-life preparation as a gesture of kindness and protection toward one's family. A third introduction section has a drawing of a man organizing his finances in his mind as he writes the ending note with a smile on his face. A representation of the suggested 'peace of mind' that writing an ending note can bring to the writer.

Move 4 - Introducing Shūkatsu to Writers (3/15)

In this move, ending notes introduce *shūkatsu* to the writers by defining and explaining it. This move is sometimes connected to Move 3 - Step 8 Claiming a Connection Between *Shūkatsu* and Ending Notes.

Step 1. Defining Shūkatsu (3/3). In Step 1, the introduction sections of ending notes give their own definition of *shūkatsu* and examples of *shūkatsu* activities to writers. These definitions point out that *shūkatsu* is not only about preparation for the end of life and death, but also about reflecting on life and communicating one's thoughts and feelings.

15) Recently, the term "*shūkatsu*" has been heard on TV and other media. However, although you may have a vague idea of what the term "*shūkatsu*" means, you may not know what it actually means and for what purpose. It is important not only to prepare for death, but also to understand why we are preparing for it and the feelings that lie deep within us. We are living in the "now". *Shūkatsu* activities are activities that help us reflect on our lives and live more fully in the present moment. (*Mai Uei: Anata no Jinsei o Motto Yori Yoku Ikiru Tame no Shūkatsu Nōto*)

Step 2. Choosing a Key Person for Shūkatsu (1/3). Step 2 is quite specific. It was found in only one

introduction section. It describes the importance of selecting a surrogate, or ‘key person’, in *shūkatsu*.

- 16) The “key person” is the person who will act on your behalf in the event of an emergency to carry out the wishes you have expressed in your ending note. The key person may be a family member who lives with you, a nearby relative, or even an acquaintance or friend. If there are no relatives to rely on, it is important to decide who will be the key person. (*Ichiban Wakariyasui Endingu Nōto*)

Linguistic Characteristics of the Moves and Steps in the Introduction Section

The moves and steps of the introduction sections of ending notes are also supported by certain linguistic characteristics of the section. For instance, a hierarchical relationship between the ending note, as a specialist/teacher, and the reader, as a learner, is established in the introduction section through certain language structures such as *mashō* and *te kudasai*. Both of these language structures are commonly used in Japanese to give instructions, suggestions, advice, or make polite requests and commands. For example, in the sentence *Nōto o teikitekini minaoshite, jōkyō ga kawattara kōshin shimashō* (Review your notes regularly and update them if circumstances change) the writer is instructed to check and revise their ending notes regularly by using *shimashō* at the end of the sentence. Another linguistic characteristic found in the moves of the introduction section of ending notes is a semi-formal tone in the text. The use of the polite form *masu* at the end of verbs instead of the plain form or the honorific form indicates that the relationship between maker and writer is one of semi-formality. For instance, the sentence *Jinsei ni wa, omoimoyoranai koto ga okorimasu* (Unexpected things happen in life) shows this type of semi-formality, which is also common in hierarchical relationships between instructors/teachers and pupils in the Japanese educational context.

Furthermore, the vocabulary used in the introduction section of ending notes clearly expresses the ideas of preparation for aging, death, and emergencies. The topic of preparation for any future eventuality can be seen in the introduction sections in the use of words such as *moshimo* (meaning in an emergency, for unexpected circumstances) which appears 32 times and is frequently followed by the verb *sonaeru* (to prepare). Besides lexicon, the strongest indicator of the idea of preparedness is the constant use of the language structure *te oku*, meaning an action done in advance or in preparation for a specific purpose. This structure appears 79 times in the introduction section of ending notes. For example, in the sentence *Dakarakoso, izoku ni futan o kakenai tame ni mo, jibun naki ato no kibō ya ishi o hakkiri to nokoshite oku koto wa totemo taisetsuna no desu* (Therefore, it is very important to clearly leave your wishes and intentions after your death in order to avoid burdening your distant family members). Lastly, the following sentence presents the lexicon and language structures discussed here as evidence of the message of the importance of preparation: *Sonna ‘moshimo no toki’ ni sonaete, kono nōto ni anata jishin ya gokazoku ni yakudatsu taisetsuna jōhō wo, wakari yasuku matomete okimashō* (Let’s put together in this notebook, in an easy-to-understand manner, important information that will be useful for you and your family in case of an emergency).

In summary, the linguistic analysis above reveals two functions of language in the introduction section of ending notes. First, certain language structures are used to establish a slightly hierarchical semi-formal relationship of specialist (the ending note) and beginner (the reader). Second, lexicon and grammar are used to emphasize the value of preparedness regarding the end of life.

Discussion and Final Remarks

As stated in the literature review, ending notes are considered to be the guidebook and the entry point to *shūkatsu* (Fukuda, 2015; Onoue, 2015; Shinya, 2014; The Association of *Shūkatsu* Counselors, 2013). The moves and steps found in the introduction sections of ending notes seem to corroborate this claim through two main functions. The first is persuasion. The introduction sections of ending notes try to persuade readers to become writers by claiming benefits for writers and their families, making connections between Japanese society and *shūkatsu*, and questioning writers about their preparedness for future contingencies. This action is clear in Move 1 – Persuading Readers into Writing an Ending Note. In this move, the introduction sections use a common strategy from the field of business known as persuading by connecting emotionally (Conger, 1998). This can be seen, for example, in steps 2 and 4 of Move 1 in which ending notes appeal to writers’ feelings toward their family and loved ones as reasons for writing an ending note. It can also be observed in step 5, where ending notes question readers about their preparedness for emergencies and the end of life. The intention of this step seems to be to create a certain level of anxiety in readers that will lead them to reflect and, consequently, start preparing for the end of life by writing an ending note. Move 2 - Step 3 Describing How the Ending Note was Made uses another persuasion strategy pointed out by Conger (1998) known as establishing credibility. When the introduction sections describe the process of creating the ending note, they also use it as an opportunity to claim the credibility of their ending notes by describing the expertise of the creators or how the ending note was created based on the writers’ needs. The second function related to the idea of the ending note as the entry point and guide to *shūkatsu* is the action of explaining *shūkatsu* and ending notes to readers. This can be seen in Move 4 -Introducing *Shūkatsu* to the Writers. In this move, the introduction section defines and explains *shūkatsu* to the readers. Move 2 - Step 2 Describing What an Ending Note is and its Function is another example of this action. This move explains the functions of an ending note with respect to the topics of aging and death in Japan.

Lastly, the introduction section of ending notes are also revealing of the concerns and expectations regarding aging and death in Japan, particularly in relation to the importance of preparing and planning for the end of life. Move 1 – Persuading Readers into Writing an Ending Note, for instance, demonstrates how planning can produce several benefits for writers and their families, such as avoiding burdening others and living a better present. In addition, linguistic structures such as *te oku* and verbs such as *son-aeu* together with the frequent use of expressions such as *moshimo* emphasize the idea of preparation as an ideal to be aimed for in aging and dying in Japan.

To conclude, it is important to point out that move analysis is a qualitative methodology; thus, it requires judgment from the researcher to identify and describe the moves and their purpose. As Connor et al. (2007) state: “a functional approach to text analysis calls for cognitive judgement, rather than a reliance on linguistic criteria, to identify the intention of a text and the textual boundaries” (p.32). Therefore, the moves and steps identified in this research are a first interpretation of the introduction section of ending notes that still needs further validation. Nevertheless, the findings presented in this paper can contribute to a further understanding of ending notes in Japan and their relation to aging and death concerns in the country.

Note.

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