

A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF CONDOLENCE STRATEGIES: THE CASES OF MR. SHINZO ABE, QUEEN ELIZABETH II, AND POPE BENEDICT XVI

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ABSTRACT

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In 2022, a year marked by high-profile deaths, leaders worldwide expressed their condolences for the passing of Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI. This study primarily compares the condolence strategies employed to honor these distinguished figures. An analysis of the deceased individuals naturally revealed some significant differences, such as their role, gender, cause of death, and length of reign or term as a leader. This study investigates how these differences influenced the choice of condolence strategies. The dataset comprises 150 official statements, including letters and Twitter messages, written in English by world leaders, with 50 messages dedicated to each deceased individual released to the public shortly after their passing. A modified coding scheme, focusing on linguistic realizations, was applied to perform the relevant analysis on these official condolence communications. While there were a variety of condolence strategies used for the three deceased individuals, direct strategies prevailed over indirect strategies, with slight variations among sub-strategies. Among the direct sub-strategies, the use of an address term, was the most commonly utilized. Differences in role, cause of death, and length of reign or term as leader contributed to the choice of condolence strategy made by well-wishers, while gender did not.

Keywords: Cross-cultural study; condolence strategies; high-profile deaths

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of death has been a subject of debate for many centuries, and it remains one of the most mysterious topics for humankind. Over three thousand years ago, Socrates compared death to a blissful night of sleep: *Now if death be of such a nature, I say that to die is to gain; for eternity is then only a single night.* The idea of death is still at the forefront of contemporary thought. The subject is even discussed several times in *Harry Potter*, the relatively recent series of all-time best-selling novels. In his farewell address to Harry Potter, the character Dumbledore exclaims, "Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and, above all, those who live without love." This quote went viral across the internet, showing that regardless of how many centuries have passed, the nature of death remains a subject of universal interest and concern.

Death causes grief and suffering for everyone touched by it. In fact, the impact of loss-related emotions is more severe than one might think, with serious physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral effects. Grief can result in "broken heart syndrome," with symptoms including chest pain and shortness of breath, similar to a heart attack (DiLonardo, 2024; Lunche, 2009). The loss of a loved one can also bring about mental problems, including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, PTSD, phobias, panic attacks, and alcohol and substance abuse. Emotional problems can include shock, pain, grief, suffering, profound sorrow, anger, and disbelief, while changes in behavior can include changes in sleep patterns or nightmares. ("Common reactions to grief and loss," 2022). This shows that while we are mortal and know we must die, it is difficult to accept death when it finally comes.

While it is difficult, people must confront and learn to accept the loss that comes with death. In every culture, expressing condolences is a means of sharing sorrow and suffering with the relatives of the dead. People write condolences to convey sympathy to the family and respect for the deceased. When a person hears about someone's death, it is typical to share his or her feelings (Behnam et al., 2013, as cited in Twumasi, 2022, pp. 159–192). Accordingly, condolences offer comfort and support during a difficult time. They express feelings of grief, sadness, suffering, and heartbreak, while sharing memories of the deceased and offering best wishes to the survivors. In other words, condolences are a means to acknowledge and respond to the reality of death.

In 2022, world leaders and people from around the world sent condolences in response to the loss of important world leaders, including Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI (listed in chronological order of the dates of their deaths). Mr. Shinzo Abe, Japan's former prime minister, passed away on July 8, 2022 at the age of 67 while speaking at a campaign event outside Yamato-Saidaiji Station in Nara city, Nara prefecture, Japan. He had been Japan's longest-serving prime minister. Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, died of old age on September 8, 2022 at the age of 96. She died peacefully at her Scottish estate, where she had spent the majority of the summer. Her reign lasted for 70 years, which makes her the longest-serving British monarch in history. Pope Benedict XVI, the leader of the Catholic Church, died due to old age on December 31, 2022 at the age of 95. He died at the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in Vatican City. After John Paul II passed away in 2005, Benedict was elected Pope and held the position for eight years until his resignation in 2013.

Previous studies (e.g., Alemi et al., 2021; Al-Manduriy, 2021; Al-Shboul & Maros, 2013; Behnam et al., 2013; Hei, 2017; Moghaddam, 2012; Versalle & McDowell, 2005) have analyzed anonymous condolence messages, often in response to the deaths of ordinary people. However, 2022 was marked by high-profile deaths, as the world mourned these three influential leaders. In each case, world leaders expressed their heartfelt sympathy and condolences. This research fills a gap in the literature by examining both the writers of these condolence messages and the deceased leaders themselves. Accordingly, this study presents an opportunity to observe the condolence strategies used by world leaders when commemorating the deaths of distinguished figures. The three leaders differed with respect to role, gender, cause of death, and length of reign or term. Owing to these differences, this study explored whether these social variables contributed to the choice of condolence strategies offered by world leaders. Therefore, this paper addresses two research questions.

1. What are the similarities and differences among the condolence strategies used after the deaths of Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI?
2. Considering the differences among the three leaders with respect to role, gender, cause of death, and length of reign or term, what differences do we see in the subsequent choice of condolence strategies?

2. CONDOLENCE MESSAGES

This part is divided into three sections. First, the authors give various definitions of condolence messages. Second, the characteristics of condolence messages are given, comparing those written in traditional letter form with those written for online platforms like Twitter. The third section examines the factors that may influence the performance of the condolence speech act, including the role, gender, cause of death, and the length of reign or term of the deceased.

2.1 Definitions

The term "condolence" is typically used to show sorrow or offer sympathy to a grieving person or someone who has suffered a loss; however, the definitions of this term might vary according to cultural standards, religious views, societal expectations, individual experiences, and other contextual factors. Moghaddam (2012) defined a condolence as a message of sorrow or sadness sent to someone who has suffered a loss. Based on Hei (2017), condolences are notes sent to someone whose loved one has recently died. Moreover, Al-Shboul and Maros (2013) suggested that it is usual for family and members of the community to

use a wide range of language techniques to honor the deceased and show respect to the living while adhering to the religious and social norms pertaining to such circumstances. Twumasi (2022) pointed out that expressions of condolence include words like "sorry for your loss" and "deepest sympathy" that people use to show support when someone has experienced a loss. Therefore, it seems that one common element lies at the heart of condolences: the sharing of grief. Frequently, they show empathy and support, acknowledge the loss, and honor the deceased.

It is evident that condolences, in accordance with the definitions above, involve notes or messages sent to someone who has recently lost a loved one. The language of condolences honors the deceased and shows respect to those left behind. Expressions of condolence offer support during times of loss. They also show that, regardless of the different backgrounds of the writers, or the differences among the individuals who have passed away, the main purpose of every message is to express sadness and sorrow for the loss, express empathy and support, recognize the sorrow, and honor the departed.

2.2 Characters of condolence messages sent via letter and online platforms

World leaders write a variety of condolence messages to the deceased. There are official letters or posts on social media. Official statements are more formal, adhering to conventions of structure and format. These formal messages also tend to be longer than online condolences, taking a page or two to show genuine thought and feeling (Morrow, 2023; Phillips, 2023). On the other hand, Hei (2017) found that condolence messages sent on Facebook often contain five distinct features: short in length, short forms and abbreviations, superlatives, eccentric exaggerations, and varied use of language. More interestingly, individuals often express their sympathies using superlatives such as "deepest." For instance, a common expression would be: *My deepest condolences to Whitney Houston's family and friends*. Moreover, Facebook writers frequently employ short forms and abbreviations. One example is the use of *RIP* to signify *Rest in Peace*, as in, for example, *RIP Whitney Houston. Sending my love and deepest condolences to her family and friends*. However, these are the general characteristics of condolence messages and not necessarily of those addressed to influential and significant figures.

2.3 Factors influencing condolence strategies

This study took into account four aspects of the deceased: their role, gender, cause of death, and length of reign or term. It did not consider how the writer's linguistic, cultural, or religious background affected his or her choice of condolence strategies. After identifying these four variables among the deceased, the analysis determined whether these variables influenced the choice of condolence strategies.

2.3.1 Role

In a qualitative study, Twumasi (2022) investigated the condolence messages posted on the portals of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in order to determine the identity enacted for the deceased. The sample consisted of twenty condolence messages posted when one of its members, Professor Gallieno Denardo, passed away. The study indicated that there were two main kinds of identity enacted for the deceased: "role identity" and "social identity." Role identity is enacted by a person's duties (Turner, 1985; Turner, 1978), while social identity considers how people determine their own identities in relation to social groupings, and how such identities maintain and strengthen self-identity (Turner, 1985; Turner, 1978). Twumasi's (2022) study demonstrated that the deceased were often seen in different roles, including, in order of frequency, as a friend, academic, colleague, father, leader, or achiever. On the other hand, these different social identities significantly influence the way people employ condolence strategies, even after the individual has passed on. It is crucial to consider these identities and their impact on the expression of condolences. With reference to Twumasi (2022), the data analysis uncovered four main social identities for the deceased. The deceased was seen primarily as a member of a family, as an international figure, as a group member, or as someone with a good personality.

2.3.2 Gender

There is limited research regarding the impact of the gender of the deceased on the choice of condolence strategies. Previous studies have, however, focused on how the writer's gender determines the features of condolence messages. For example, Versalle and McDowell (2005) studied gender differences among those who are grieving, and found that the level of sympathy shown was not significantly influenced by the mourner's gender.

2.3.3 Cause of death

Al-Manduriy (2021) examined the condolence strategies used by Indonesians responding to obituary updates on Facebook. The subjects included a lecturer's wife, an artist, and a girl who died while having an abortion. The findings revealed that obituaries written for the lecturer's wife received favorable responses such as, *I hope that the acts of worship of Mrs. Fitriana Suhartati will be accepted by Allah SWT*. She

appeared to be a good person. There were no negative comments for her. Reflecting on the artist who died after a long illness, he received positive comments and numerous prayers indicating that he was a good person, such as, *He has made a lot of people happy, or I still hope I can see him on screen again*. Several negative comments appeared in response to the death of the girl who died while having an abortion, for instance, *Hahaha that is a punishment from God or Want to do, not want to be responsible*. This implies that recently deceased people viewed as "bad" will generate some unfavorable reactions. The deceased individuals in the selected article, however, are not prominent or globally renowned figures. Analyzing the condolence messages directed towards Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI may provide further insights into this specific speech act.

2.3.4 Length of reign or term

In their study, Alemi et al. (2021) recognized that condolences are a speech act that has received limited research attention. Investigating social variables outside the conventional gender and age factors added challenges. However, King Bhumibol of Thailand, who reigned for a remarkable 70 years, presents an illustrative case. Following his passing, world leaders sent their condolences to the Thai people, as reported by VOA News (2016). Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah of Brunei stated that, *Throughout more than 70 years of his reign, Thailand saw tremendous socioeconomic progress*. President Joko Widodo from Indonesia commented that, *The king was a world leader who was close to his people and brought prosperity during his reign of 70 years*. President Abdulla Yameen of the Maldives expressed his condolences by stating that *As the longest serving monarch of the Kingdom of Thailand, his Majesty made immense contributions toward the progress and prosperity of Thailand*. All three examples mention the length of King Bhumibol's reign, although there is no specific research on how length of reign or term affects condolence strategies.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section has three subheadings. Data is presented, then a newly adjusted coding scheme based on some empirical studies is described. The coding scheme is displayed in a table which outlines and gives examples of each sub-strategy. Lastly, we explain how the data are analyzed.

3.1 Data

This study collected condolence messages expressed through official statements in letters and on social media. The official condolences were addressed by world leaders to three recently deceased influential figures. World leaders, in this study, include individuals holding positions of substantial global influence and authority. Specifically, the study classifies world leaders into three groups: (i) heads of state, (ii) heads of government, and (iii) other significant roles. "Head of state" pertains to the primary public representative of a country, such as a president or monarch, and including current and former heads. "Head of government" includes positions like prime minister and chancellor, and also including current and former members. Notably, in countries like Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Australia, the prime minister is independently elected, distinguishing this role from the head of state. Moreover, the study acknowledges the importance of including individuals in "other significant positions." This category includes roles like secretary-general, director-general, vice president, foreign ministry spokesperson, foreign secretary, ordained priest, house speaker, a Spanish People's Party politician, and the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. As a result of the widespread recognition of the stature of the deceased, the expressions of sympathy from world leaders hold great weight. These are not only acts of international diplomacy, but world leaders also share similar qualities including leadership ability, a strong commitment to their role, and devotion to public service. Interestingly, even though world leaders have different cultural backgrounds and language, they all use English as a medium of intercultural communication.

The data were obtained from condolence messages and texts written by world leaders and sent to Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI. Condolences were extended to Mr. Shinzo Abe during July 8–11, 2022, following his untimely death on July 8, 2022. Queen Elizabeth II received condolences September 8–9, 2022, following her passing on September 8, 2022. The period of condolence for Pope Benedict XVI was observed from December 31, 2022 until January 2, 2023. Following each death, within a brief yet consistent timeframe, the nature of condolence strategies is reasonably uniform. In contrast, a longer period affords writers the opportunity to tailor their messages, introducing variations in the dataset. To mitigate such variables, the researchers gathered a sample of 150 condolence messages from official statements in both letters and on Twitter, maintaining a balanced distribution among the three deceased individuals, with 50 messages each. Table 1 delineates this distribution and specifies the sources of these collected messages.

Table 1: Number of condolence messages

The Deceased	Official Statements	Tweets	Total
Mr. Shinzo Abe	13 [26%]	37 [74%]	50 [100%]
Queen Elizabeth II	15 [30%]	35 [70%]	50 [100%]
Pope Benedict XV	14 [28%]	36 [72%]	50 [100%]

A comparison of the condolences selected for this study shows that the number of condolence messages assigned to each deceased is comparable. Official statements dedicated to honoring the three deceased accounted for 26–30 percent, while tweets constituted a substantial majority of 70–74 percent. The prevalence of tweets highlights the widespread use of social media for sharing messages of sympathy and support, underscoring the ongoing transition towards digital communication. It is important to emphasize that while tweets dominate the communication landscape, official statements remain significant. Furthermore, these tweets serve as a valuable resource for capturing immediate and live reactions from global leaders in response to the passing of influential individuals. To ensure the credibility and authenticity of data obtained from this online platform, researchers examined only those twitter accounts of world leaders validated with a grey checkmark. The grey checkmark indicates that the account represents a government entity, a multilateral organization, or an official figure. The grey checkmark on Twitter is typically granted to heads of state (e.g., presidents, monarchs, and prime ministers), deputy heads of state (e.g., vice presidents and deputy prime ministers), national-level cabinet members or their equivalents, primary official spokespeople for executive branches of governments, and individual members of supranational or national congresses, parliaments, or similar bodies.

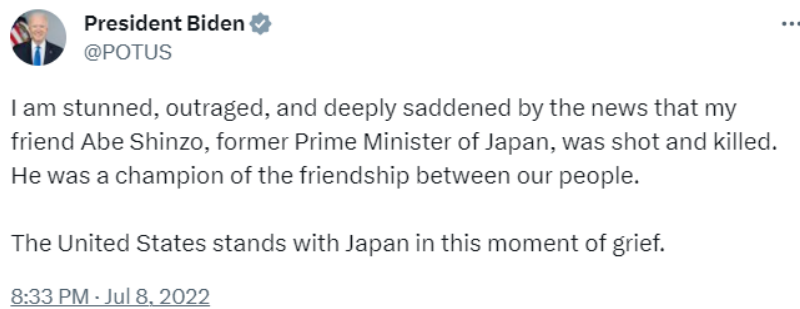
**Figure 1:** Twitter account of President Joe Biden

Figure 1 is a tweet from the Twitter account of Joe Biden, President of the United States, with the grey checkmark confirming its authenticity. World leaders' accounts lacking the grey checkmark shown in Figure 1 were excluded from this study.

3.2 Development of a coding scheme

Prior to the data analysis, the researchers created a coding scheme adapted from Alemi et al. (2021) and Morrow (2023). Not only were the two selected taxonomies recently developed, they also provided definitions and examples that were closely related to the condolence messages in which world leaders expressed their heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the three world leaders. Condolence strategies were initially classified as "direct" or "indirect." As shown in Table 2, there were four direct sub-strategies and nine indirect sub-strategies.

Table 2: Condolence strategies based on Alemi et al. (2021) and Morrow (2023)

Strategies	Definition and Example
Direct Strategies	
Acknowledge the loss	Talking about the loss, e.g., <i>I wanted to share how very sorry we are for your loss.</i>
Express sympathy	Being sincere and express feelings of sympathy, e.g., <i>By your demise you made all of us extremely sad.</i>
Use an address term	Referring to the deceased by an appropriate title, shows both formality and respect for the departed, e.g., <i>On the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the Royal Family...</i>
Offer a condolence	Expressing their condolence without adding any metaphoric or any utterance to flavor and color the main condolence statement, e.g., <i>Extend my condolence, or I hereby extend sincere condolences to the...</i>

Table 2: Condolence strategies based on Alemi et al. (2021) and Morrow (2023) (continued)

Strategies	Definition and Example
Indirect Strategies	
Note a special quality	Sharing something positive about the person who has died—for example, a talent or skill—helps make the note more personal, e.g., <u><i>Sarah was such a talented writer. I was always amazed by her poetry.</i></u>
Include a memory	Sharing a favorite memory of the person who has died, e.g., <u><i>I will never forget the frog prank! It makes me smile just thinking about it.</i></u>
Remind the bereaved of their own strengths	A grieving person may feel lost, helpless, or alone. Condolence messages often try to remind them of their own qualities that can help them cope during this hard time, such as their faith, optimism, or resiliency, e.g., <u><i>I hope that you will find strength in the love of your church family.</i></u>
Offer to help	Offering a practical and specific thing they can do, e.g., <u><i>I can stop by on Tuesday night to bring dinner for your family.</i></u>
Express shock	Being in a state of shock after the death of the person, e.g., <u><i>I don't believe it,</i></u> or <u><i>I am shocked.</i></u>
Make an allusion to religious and metaphoric concepts	Referring to religious ideas, e.g., <u><i>When there are many people mourning for Morteza, [it means that he has such great position near God.]</i></u>
Express gratitude	Being thankful for the deceased's works, e.g., <u><i>On behalf of all Canadians, I thank Queen Elizabeth II for honouring this vow and for a lifetime of service.</i></u>
Make a wish for the deceased	Making good wishes for the dead, e.g., <u><i>May God have mercy on him, wishing you happy spirit and be in everlasting peace.</i></u>
End with a hopeful thought sign-off	Ending with active, hopeful thoughts reflecting ongoing sympathy and support, e.g., <u><i>You are in my thoughts, or I will always be here to support you.</i></u>

3.3 Data analysis

The researchers and two English-speaking research assistants, who know how to use the new coding scheme based on Alemi et al. (2021) and Morrow (2023), analyzed the 150 condolence messages on the syntactic level. The condolence strategy used in each sentence was identified in four rounds of analysis. Where there was disagreement in codifying a particular expression, consensus was reached through group discussion. An example of a condolence message written by the Burundi President, Evariste Ndayishimiye, addressing the loss of Queen Elizabeth II, is given below to show how messages of condolence were classified.

I am deeply saddened by the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the Royal family and the friendly people of the United Kingdom. She has been an inspiration for generations around the world and will be remembered for her great leadership.

Table 3: Analysis of the condolence message written by the Burundi President

	Condolence messages	Condolence strategies
1.	<u><i>I am deeply saddened by the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.</i></u>	Express sympathy (direct strategy)
2.	<u><i>I am deeply saddened by the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.</i></u>	Use a term of address (direct strategy)
3.	<u><i>I extend my heartfelt condolences to around the world and ...will be remembered for her great leadership."</i></u>	Offer a condolence (direct strategy)
4.	<u><i>She has been an inspiration for generations around the world and ... will be remembered for her great leadership."</i></u>	Express gratitude (indirect strategy)
5.	<u><i>She has been an inspiration for generations around the world and ... will be remembered for her great leadership."</i></u>	Include a memory (indirect strategy)

The analysis in Table 3 shows that the condolence message written by the President of Burundi uses both direct and indirect strategies. Under direct condolence strategies, three specific sub-strategies are evident: (i) express sympathy, (ii) use a term of address, and (iii) offer condolences. In contrast, indirect condolence strategies consist of two sub-strategies: (i) express gratitude and (ii) include a memory.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In addressing the two research questions, the results and discussion are presented in two sections. The first section presents the use of direct and indirect condolence strategies, and discussion. The second section analyzes the four factors (role, gender, cause of death, length of reign or term) that were investigated for their influence on the strategy choices employed by world leaders in expressing their condolences.

4.1 Condolence strategies

Based on the preliminary analysis of the condolence message written by the President of Burundi, the same analysis was applied to all messages of condolence written by world leaders addressing the passing of the three world leaders. Results show that single messages contained various strategies, making the number of condolence strategies used higher than the number of condolence messages. However, among the three deceased, the total number of condolence strategies was comparable, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of condolence strategies

	Mr. Shinzo Abe	Queen Elizabeth II	Pope Benedict XVI
Condolence messages	50	50	50
Condolence strategies	209	215	189

In messages addressing the death of Mr. Shinzo Abe, a total of 209 strategies were identified, while there were 215 strategies used for Queen Elizabeth II, and 189 for Pope Benedict XVI. The number of condolence strategies appears to align with the length of time the deceased held his or her position, from longest to shortest. However, this hypothesis may require further investigation, as the adoption of condolence strategies may be influenced by other factors, including the length of the message and the channel of communication. After determining the raw number of condolence strategies, they were classified into direct and indirect strategies according to our modified version of the taxonomy by Alemi et al. (2021) and Morrow (2023). The findings are presented in Table 5 and provide a comparative analysis of the condolence strategies, showing similarities and differences.

Table 5: Frequency of condolence strategies

Condolence Strategies	Mr. Shinzo Abe	Queen Elizabeth II	Pope Benedict XVI
Direct strategies	118 [58.6%]	126 [58.7%]	103 [54.5%]
Acknowledge the loss	9 [4.3%]	11 [5.1%]	9 [4.8%]
Express sympathy	24 [11.5%]	25 [11.7%]	30 [15.9%]
Use an address term	50 [24%]	50 [23.2%]	48 [25.4%]
Offer condolence	35 [16.8%]	40 [18.7%]	16 [8.4%]
Indirect strategies	91 [43.4%]	89 [41.3%]	86 [45.5%]
Note a special quality	13 [6.2%]	26 [12%]	13 [6.9%]
Include a memory	10 [4.8%]	20 [9.3%]	12 [6.3%]
Remind the bereaved of their own strengths	-	2 [1%]	-
Offer to help	2 [1%]	-	-
Express shock	19 [9%]	-	-
Make an allusion to religious and metaphoric concepts	-	-	6 [3.1%]
Express gratitude	23 [11%]	24 [11.1%]	28 [14.9%]
Make a wish for the deceased	10 [4.8%]	7 [3.2%]	16 [8.4%]
End with a hopeful thought sign-off	14 [6.6%]	10 [4.7%]	11 [5.9%]
Total	209 [100%]	215 [100%]	189 [100%]

The findings presented in Table 5 answer the first research question, affirming that world leaders normally used the strategies to honor the deceased in the same manner. For the three deceased individuals, direct condolence strategies were used more often than indirect. The appearance of direct sub-strategies in the

cases of Mr. Shinzo Abe and Queen Elizabeth was exactly the same, ranging from “use a term of address,” the most used direct sub-strategy, to “acknowledge the loss,” the least-used. In the case of Pope Benedict XVI, however, it was found that the “express sympathy” strategy was used more than the “offer condolences” strategy. Noticeably, the table shows that every condolence message written for Mr. Shinzo Abe and Queen Elizabeth II contained the “use a term of address” sub-strategy, and it was utilized in 48 of the 50 condolence messages directed to Pope Benedict XVI. Table 6 exemplifies the terms of address chosen by world leaders to convey respect in 50 messages when addressed to Mr. Shinzo Abe and Queen Elizabeth II.

Table 6: Terms of address for Mr. Shinzo Abe and Queen Elizabeth II

The Deceased	Terms of Address
Mr. Shinzo Abe	Abe Shinzo, Mr. Abe, Abe San, Protagonists, Leader, Friend, Statesman, Politician, Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
Queen Elizabeth II	Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Her Majesty the Queen, the Queen, Queen Elizabeth II, Public Figure, Universal Figure

Table 6 shows that world leaders used various forms of address when acknowledging the deceased. The choice of terms of address seems to reflect the relationship between the individuals involved. For example, in the case of Mr. Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan, world leaders used a range of terms of address, from his full name to casual terms like “friend,” indicating a personal connection with the deceased. Contrarily, Queen Elizabeth II was consistently referred to by her full name and official titles, highlighting her elevated status compared to that of a prime minister. This observation aligns with Twumasi's (2022) suggestion that using a first name implies a personal relationship between the writer and the deceased, a concept less evident in the case of Queen Elizabeth II. The consistent use of formal address for Queen Elizabeth II emphasizes the distinction in role and status. In the context of Mr. Shinzo Abe, we observe a parallel power relationship between Mr. Shinzo Abe and the writers, who are typically world leaders. Referring to Mr. Shinzo Abe as a “good friend” or “dearest friend” suggests a personal bond, as discussed in Twumasi's (2022) study. The choice of terms like “best friend” by some world leaders, such as Narendra Modi and Luis Arce, in reference to Mr. Shinzo Abe, illustrates varying levels of closeness and formality in their relationships. These terms convey personal connections and also have diplomatic implications. The use by world leaders of various terms addressing Mr. Shinzo Abe indicates the nuances of the social distance between the individuals, reflective of their position and relationships with each other. While Narendra Modi's use of “dearest friend” suggests an emotional connection transcending diplomatic ties, Luis Arce's formal address as “Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe” indicates a respectful acknowledgment of Mr. Abe's role and achievements. Additionally, King Abdullah II of Jordan addressed Mr. Shinzo Abe as “my dear friend former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo,” showing the varied styles of address and relationships among world leaders. These interactions indicate a complex interplay of personal relationships and official formalities in international communications, as discussed in Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of social distance in politeness theory. The diverse choice of terms of address provides insight into the nature of relationships and the dynamics of power and social distance between individuals, shaping diplomatic exchanges and personal connections on an international scale.

Apart from the “use an address term” strategy that was used in nearly all condolence messages, three other direct strategies were used, as shown in Tables 7, 8, and 9.

Table 7: Use of the “acknowledge the loss” strategy

The Deceased	Linguistic Realizations
Mr. Shinzo Abe	<i>The world <u>lost a great leader</u>.</i>
Queen Elizabeth II	<i>The loss of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is <u>a great loss</u>.</i>
Pope Benedict XVI	<i>Today the world <u>has lost one of the greatest theologians</u> of the 20th and 21st centuries.</i>

“Acknowledge the loss” involves utilizing explicit language to convey the sense of loss felt by the international community. For instance, in the case of Mr. Shinzo Abe, world leaders acknowledged his demise as the loss of a great leader. This highlights his significant contributions and influence, not only within his own country but also in the international political landscape. By labelling his passing as a *great loss*, leaders emphasized the magnitude of his impact. Similarly, the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was also acknowledged as a great loss. This direct expression underscores her pivotal role as a leader and symbolizes the deep respect and admiration held for her on a global scale. The use of the phrase *a great loss* in this context

communicates the profound effect she had during her reign. Furthermore, the mention of Pope Benedict XVI's passing as the world losing *one of the greatest theologians of the 20th and 21st centuries* acknowledges his profound intellectual contributions to theology and his enduring influence. This approach commemorates his life and his broader impact on religious discourse.

Table 8: Use of the "express sympathy" strategy

The Deceased	Linguistic Realizations
Mr. Shinzo Abe	<i>It is <u>with profound sadness</u> that we learn of the passing of...</i>
Queen Elizabeth II	<i>I <u>am deeply saddened</u> at the passing of...</i>
Pope Benedict XVI	<i>It is <u>with great sadness</u> that I have learned of the passing of...</i>

For the "express sympathy" strategy, various world leaders conveyed their condolences with a level of emotional depth transcending ordinary expressions of sorrow. Using intensified adjectives amplifying the sense of sorrow, world leaders conveyed the significant personal and global impact of the death of these individuals. Through employing upgraders such as "profound," "deeply," and "great" alongside the terms "saddened" or "sadness," these leaders adeptly articulated nuanced and heartfelt emotions. This strategy serves to honor the legacy of the deceased individuals by expressing the profound impact of their death and the extent of the grief experienced by world leaders and the global community. Through these carefully chosen words, leaders pay tribute to the lasting influence these figures have had on the world.

Table 9: Use of the "offer a condolence" strategy

The Deceased	Linguistic Realizations
Mr. Shinzo Abe	<i><u>Our deepest condolences to</u> his family, and the people and government of Japan.</i>
Queen Elizabeth II	<i>I extend <u>my heartfelt condolences to</u> the Royal Family, the government and the people of the United Kingdom.</i>
Pope Benedict XVI	<i>I express <u>my sincere condolences to</u> Pope Francis.</i>

In the use of the "offering a condolence" strategy, world leaders use a particular performative expression to convey condolences in a formal and deliberate fashion. Within these performative sentences, the phrase "...condolences to..." serves as a head noun, explicitly indicating the intention to provide sympathy and support to those impacted by the loss of the deceased. Furthermore, adjectives denoting varying degrees, such as "deepest", and those without degree, like "heartfelt" and "sincere", are commonly utilized when extending condolences in official statements, letters, and Twitter posts. For instance, phrases like *Our deepest condolences to his family, and the people and government of Japan* are often used. This aligns with Hei's observation (2017) that in Facebook condolences, superlatives are commonly used to express strong emotions, as seen in statements like, *RIP Whitney Houston. Sending my love and deepest condolences to her family and friends.*

While the use of direct sub-strategies remains consistent among the three deceased individuals, notable differences emerge when considering the presence of indirect sub-strategies. Although the most commonly used indirect sub-strategy for all individuals was express gratitude, there were distinct variations in the use of other sub-strategies. For instance, expressing shock was used in 9% of cases involving Mr. Shinzo Abe, but was absent in the condolences for Queen Elizabeth II and Pope Benedict XVI. "Note a special quality" was observed in 12% of the messages of condolence related to Queen Elizabeth II, outnumbering its occurrences for the other two individuals. Additionally, "remind the bereaved of their own strengths" was mentioned exclusively in relation to Queen Elizabeth II. Furthermore, "make a wish for the deceased" appeared in 8.4% of cases involving Pope Benedict XVI, surpassing its use for the other two world leaders. Moreover, the sub-strategy "make an allusion to religious and metaphorical concepts" was utilized solely in the case of Pope Benedict XVI. These significant variations prompt further discussion in the following section as to whether these differences hint at distinct social variables that triggered the use of these sub-strategies in condolence messages for the three deceased individuals.

4.2 Identifiable social variables

In reviewing the direct strategies in Table 5, it is evident that the utilization of direct condolence sub-strategies is consistent for the three deceased individuals. However, the deployment of indirect sub-strategies varies noticeably. A closer analysis reveals that three specific indirect strategies were tailored for each of the three deceased leaders. This exploration enabled researchers to address the second research question, and

solid evidence was found to show the differences that influenced the choice of condolence strategies. These findings are detailed in Tables 10, 11, and 12.

Table 10: Use of the “express shock” and “offer to help” strategies

The Deceased	Linguistic Realizations
Mr. Shinzo Abe	<i>Profoundly shocked</i> and... [express shock] <i>We will do everything we <u>can</u> to help our friends carry the burden of this loss.</i> [offer to help]

Building upon Al-Manduriy's (2021) study which suggests that the cause of death can influence the nature of condolence messages, it is observed that expected deaths without any immoral implications tend to elicit positive expressions of condolence. Conversely, unexpected deaths linked to immoral deeds by the deceased may provoke negative or sarcastic messages of condolence. In the case of Mr. Shinzo Abe, his passing was unforeseen, yet the immoral act of assassination was carried out by a third party. It is important to note that blame is not directed towards Mr. Abe for his death, and the perpetrator of the assassination does not face severe criticism in the condolence messages. This is likely because the primary purpose of such messages is to convey sorrow and empathy for the deceased individuals and the Japanese people. The two strategies used to pay tribute only to Mr. Shinzo Abe were "express shock" and "offer to help," which were entirely different from those paid to the others who died of old age. The "express shock" strategy was particularly prevalent when commemorating Mr. Abe. This expression conveys not only the depth of sorrow but also the unexpectedness of his passing. The use of the word "profoundly" intensifies the emotional impact, indicating a deep sense of disbelief and sadness. In the context of "offer to help," world leaders extended their support and solidarity to alleviate the burden of loss felt by Mr. Abe's loved ones and the nation. This strategy reflects a sense of partnership and a willingness to help during a time of grief due to the sudden loss. In other words, it is evident that the cause of death influenced the choice of condolence strategies. These two distinct strategies in conveying condolences were specifically noted in the context of Mr. Shinzo Abe's situation. This observation aligns with Al-Manduriy's assertion (2021), which suggests that the approach to offering condolences varies with the cause of death.

Table 11: The use of “note a special quality” strategy

The Deceased	Linguistic Realizations
Queen Elizabeth II	<i>Her Majesty <u>was an extraordinary & world-renowned public figure who lived a remarkable life.</u></i>

Although the "note a special quality" strategy appeared among messages for all three deceased, the presence of this strategy in the case of Queen Elizabeth II outnumbered those in the cases of Mr. Shinzo Abe and Pope Benedict XVI. This indirect strategy was utilized because she was one of the longest-reigning monarchs and had made a substantial impact on her nation and the countries that were once part of the British Empire. It became evident that the length of reign influenced the choice of condolence strategies.

Table 12: Use of the “make an allusion to religious and metaphoric concepts” strategy

The Deceased	Linguistic Realizations
Pope Benedict XVI	<i>Following the calling to God of His Holiness the Pope Emeritus #BenoitXVI.</i>

In the case of Pope Benedict XVI, who was the former head of the Holy See, world leaders commonly utilized the condolence strategy of "allusion to religious and metaphoric concepts." For example, *Following the calling to God of His Holiness the Pope Emeritus #BenoitXVI* demonstrated the influence of his role as a spiritual leader of the Catholic Church. In addition, since Twitter served as the primary data source, concise expressions were used by world leaders in offering condolences. This is exemplified by instances like *RIP His Holiness XVI Benevolent the Pope Emeritus*. This aligns with Hei's findings (2017), which revealed that Facebook writers often employ short forms and abbreviations. For instance, the widely used abbreviation "RIP" effectively communicates "Rest in Peace," as demonstrated in messages like "RIP to your brother." This is because the character limit imposed by Twitter necessitates the use of short forms and abbreviations when expressing thoughts or condolences.

Finally, the data shows that the role of the deceased, the cause of death, and their length of reign or term, affected the choice of condolence strategies. No solid evidence was discovered showing that gender played a significant role.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of condolence strategies from world leaders for Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI reveals both similarities and differences. World leaders consistently employed direct strategies in their messages to all three deceased individuals, including acknowledging the loss, expressing sympathy, using an appropriate term of address, and offering condolences. While expressions of gratitude were common for all three cases, there were variations in other indirect condolence strategies, providing insights into the unique factors surrounding each of the deceased individuals. After the unexpected passing of Mr. Shinzo Abe, tributes included expressions of shock which differed significantly from approaches used for individuals who had passed away due to old age. This difference suggests that the cause of death can influence the choice of condolence strategies. Interestingly, these expressions were absent in the messages for Queen Elizabeth II and Pope Benedict XVI. Furthermore, the strategy of noting a special quality was frequently used in messages for Queen Elizabeth II, reflecting her long reign and significant influence as a monarch. This shows how the length of reign can impact the selection of condolence strategies, although it may not be the sole determining factor. Global leaders have recognized and appreciated her contributions, and expressed gratitude for her dedicated service. In the case of Pope Benedict XVI, former head of the Holy See, world leaders often made allusions to religious and metaphoric concepts in their condolences, a strategy not seen in messages for Mr. Shinzo Abe or Queen Elizabeth II. This reflects the spiritual leadership role of Pope Benedict XVI within the Catholic Church. The researchers did not, however, find any concrete evidence to suggest that the gender of the deceased influenced the choice of condolence strategies. In conclusion, these findings demonstrate that identifiable differences including role, cause of death, and length of reign influenced the linguistic expressions of condolence strategies used, while gender did not seem to play a role.

This study emphasizes the need for a more detailed examination of the linguistic characteristics used in condolence messages, whether in letters or tweets. Future research could include a comparative analysis of condolence strategies across various communication platforms. While gender did not appear to influence condolence strategies in this study, further research on the roles of both the sender's and deceased individual's gender could be beneficial. Additionally, exploring gender-specific condolence practices through cross-cultural comparisons may reveal whether gendered expressions remain consistent or vary in different societies. By investigating these aspects, researchers can determine the universal impact of gender norms on condolence communication, or whether these norms are subject to cultural variations.

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