

A Cross-cultural Study of Condolence Strategies: Comparing the Cases of Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI

ABSTRACT

In 2022, a year marked by high-profile deaths, the world experienced the loss of three influential and significant leaders. Leaders across the globe expressed their condolences and extended sympathy to Mr. Shinzo Abe, Queen Elizabeth II, and Pope Benedict XVI. The main aim of this study was to compare condolence strategies used to commemorate the death of these globally renowned figures. Considering the three influential and significant leaders, they were noticeably different in terms of role, gender, cause of death, and length of reign/term. Owing to these identifiable diversities, this study also delved into an examination of whether these social variables contributed to the performance of condolence strategies. The data were 150 official statements written in the forms of letters and texts on Twitter, consisting of 50 messages per deceased. The data were analyzed using a newly adapted coding scheme based on Morrow (2023) and Alemi et al. (2021). These taxonomies were chosen because they provided definitions and examples that were closely related to the condolence messages delivered by world leaders. The findings showed a wide range of strategies addressed to the deceased. Considering their dignity and social status, world leaders commonly employed the "use of address terms" to appropriately honor the three deceased. In addition, the strategies frequently used to pay tribute to Mr. Shinzo Abe were "cause of death" and "condemn the assassination" which were entirely different from those paid to the others who died of old age. It was shown that the cause of death influenced the use of condolence strategies. The "state a length of reign" and "note special quality" strategies were normally utilized in the case of Queen Elizabeth II. These strategies were utilized because she was one of the longest-reigning sovereign monarchs who had made substantial impact on her nation and the countries that were once in the British Empire. It became evident that the length of reign directly influenced the selection of condolence strategies. Furthermore, 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". This demonstrated the influence of his role as a spiritual leader of the Catholic Church. The analysis revealed that gender of the deceased did not make a notable contribution to the condolence strategies employed.