

**Queen Elizabeth II In Memoriam**  
– a thematic analysis of ten condolence statements

Saara Votka  
Bachelor's Thesis  
English language  
Department of Language and Communication Studies  
University of Jyväskylä  
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| <p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Kuningatar Elisabet II:n kuolema 8. syyskuuta 2022 kosketti monia ihmisiä ympäri maailmaa. Hän oli Yhdistyneen kuningaskunnan ja monien muiden alueiden hallitseva monarkki sekä Kansainyhteisön johtaja. Edesmennyt kuningatar hallitsi yli seitsemän vuosikymmentä ja oli tunnettu kaikkialla maailmassa. Suru-uutisen jälkeen internetissä julkaistiin lukemattomia kunnianosoituksia hänen muistolleen. Kirjoittajina olivat niin poliittiset päättäjät ja julkisuuden henkilöt kuin tavalliset kansalaisetkin.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus analysoi kymmentä virallista surunvalittelua. Lausunnot ovat antaneet valtion tai instituution johtajat, joilla on läheiset kulttuuriset ja diplomaattiset siteet Britannian monarkiaan. Kaikki lausunnot on kirjoitettu englanniksi ja ne ovat julkaistu internetissä kuningatar Elisabet II:n kuolinpäivänä. Tavoitteena oli selvittää, millaisia tekstit ovat ja oliko teksteissä yhteisiä teemoja.</p> <p>Tutkimus käsittelee osanoton ja surunvalittelun ilmaisuja. Laadullinen aineisto tutkittiin temaattista analyysiä käyttäen. Kaikki tekstit on kirjoitettu ammattimaisesti, mutta sydämellisesti. Lausunnot sisälsivät muistoja kuningattaresta tyylikkäänä ja älykkäänä hallitsijana. Toistuvia aiheita ja teemoja esiintyi lausunnoissa, mutta jokainen teksti oli kuitenkin omaperäinen. Tutkimustuloksena ovat viisi teemaa: menetyksen huomiointi, osanoton ilmaisut, valtakausi ja persoona, valtiovierailut ja erityiset muistot ja yleiset sanonnat. Analyysin ohessa esitetään lainauksia lausunnoista, jotka kuvastavat kutakin teemaa.</p> |   |
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

*“THUS it hath pleased Almighty God to take out of this transitory life unto His Divine Mercy the late Most High, Most Mighty, and Most Excellent Monarch, Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith, and Sovereign of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.”* (The Committal of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022: 13)

The death of Queen Elizabeth II has deeply touched many people around the world. She died the longest-reigning monarch in British history after devoting her whole life to public duty. The late Queen served as the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom and many other realms and territories, as well as head of the Commonwealth. She succeeded her father as Queen in 1952 and reigned for more than 70 years until her death on September 8, 2022, at the age of 96.

Queen Elizabeth II was well-known and respected all over the world for her strength of character and leadership. As a result, in the aftermath of her death, countless tributes were posted online in her honour by dignitaries, celebrities, and ordinary people. This occurred on a global scale. Many world leaders have issued statements on Queen Elizabeth II's death on their official websites, expressing their condolences and remembering a truly remarkable life and legacy. The aim of this research is to investigate how ten world leaders who have close ties to the United Kingdom remembered Queen Elizabeth II in their statements on the day she died. The goal is to determine whether there are any common themes in the texts and, if so, what those themes are.

This study sheds light on the expressions of condolences. Condoling deeds reaffirm the bond of humanity. By sending condolence messages, we show others that we are aware that they are experiencing adversity and convey our sadness for being unable to help (Campo Martínez 2012: 14). Because death is an inevitable part of life, condolences and commemorations are important interactions in interpersonal relationships as well as in diplomacy. The late Queen led an extraordinary life, and this study focused on her commemoration in the English language in official statements. Besides being an academic endeavour, this thesis serves as my personal tribute to Queen Elizabeth II. Aptly, I conducted this thematic analysis between the Queen's funeral and the coronation of King Charles III.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Words of condolence and remembrance

There is no longer any place in many societies for mourning and grief, and these emotions have moved beyond the everyday (Cann 2014: 4). While condolences may not be expressed in everyday life, they are nonetheless an important part of human interaction. According to Kivinen (2010: 125), grief can create communities of "we" who mourn and those who remain outside of that mourning by reinforcing the collective structures of the community and creating social structures that reproduce or maintain social power. The media is constantly determining who is and is not worthy of mourning (Kivinen 2010: 126). The influence of the media in shaping the public image of the monarchy is critical, and the late Queen Elizabeth II was considered an "affinity icon" (Baena 2021: 14).

The media of the twenty-first century can distribute any message instantly and globally. Aside from mourning for personally known individuals, this allows any grief to become more public, making it a more communal activity (Walter, Hourizi, Moncur and Pitsillides 2012: 295). Cann (2014: 12; 106) contends that if grief is pushed into the private sphere in the absence of public acknowledgement or acceptance of mourning, new mourning traditions and rituals will emerge and enter the public sphere, complementing and replacing more traditional social structures of grief. People have a need to be publicly recognized as bereaved and to grieve (Cann 2014: 12). The internet has democratised the grieving process, with a variety of consequences. Nevertheless, I will now discuss research on more traditional forms of mourning: obituaries and condolences.

Published announcements of death are called obituaries or necrologies, which typically include a brief biography of the deceased person (Oxford Learner's Dictionary n.d.). Because obituaries are mostly lists of things, the style is very simple, and the tone is primarily neutral and factual. However, according to Dahl (2013: 64), attempts are made through various linguistic means to give the obituaries a personal and warm tone. According to findings by Moses and Marelli (2003: 130), the universal component that represents life in obituaries is family, and all the texts they researched mentioned survivors, whether they were family-authored or edited texts.

Besides personal relationships, professional history is often included in an obituary when it represents a central part of the person's life. In the study by Dilevko and Gottlieb (2004: 160)

on the obituaries of librarians, for example, professional and work-related contributions made during their careers were grouped into five themes. In Abu-Humeid's (2018: 91) research on the letters of condolence, one major theme that the writers focused on was the lifetime achievements of King Abdullah, both nationally and internationally. Overall, the goal of an obituary is to honour the deceased, which has a strong influence on the language and content. In addition, the author must consider both the readers and the object of the writing (Dahl 2013: 64).

When news of a death becomes public, condolences are expressed. Condolences are expressions of sympathy when the addressee is involved in a negative situation. The noun condolence is derived from the Latin word *condolere*, which means "to grieve, suffer together" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary n.d.). These conventional acts of politeness demonstrate to others the awareness of someone's plight and express sorrow for being unable to help. An important aspect of condolence is the assumption that the speaker is unable to turn the addressee's negative situation into a positive one (Campo Martínez 2012: 14).

People react differently to various types of condolence situations, and no single standard can be applied to all. Elwood's (2004: 53-67) analysis model for the condolence speech act includes six condolence strategies: acknowledgement of the death, expression of sympathy, offer of assistance, future-oriented remarks, expression of concern, and other responses. In addition, Lotfollahi and Eslami-Rasekh (2011: 140) discovered semantic formulas such as seeking God's forgiveness and religious-oriented sympathy to attach to the list. Furthermore, Abudul-Majid and Salih (2019: 566) expanded semantic formulas to include non-linguistic actions and quoted lines. All three studies; however, discovered that expressions of sympathy were the most common semantic formula used in condolences (Abudul-Majid and Salih 2019: 567; Elwood 2004: 54; Lotfollahi and Eslami-Rasekh 2011: 143). According to Abu-Humeid (2018: 13), if an offer of sympathy is missing, the text cannot be considered a condolence statement because it will not fulfil the social function of participating in and "performing" the action of mourning.

The findings of Al-Shboul and Maron (2013: 160) suggest that cultural norms and religious background have a strong influence on the strategies and linguistic choices used in native language condolence responses. This thesis focuses on statements from people with similar backgrounds and using the same language, which has an effect and is also reflected in the study's findings. However, as research shows, death condolence traditions vary across different communities. Most condolences in English, according to Muhammed (2013: 9), are implicit because sympathy is expressed in an indirect manner. Delicate and polite language is commonly used to assist the bereaved person in coping with their grief. Many condolence

phrases are "stock" phrases and can be used in any religion or culture (Muhammad 2013: 9). Moreover, the use of religious expressions with care appears to be a characteristic of English speakers (Abudul-Majid and Salih 2019: 566). According to Abu-Humeid (2018: 176–177), there is a distinction between the Anglo and Arab condolences: the Anglo data clearly distinguishes between diplomatic and religious discourse, whereas the Arab does not.

Condolences can be expressed individually or institutionally through speech acts or written communications. This thesis is concerned with the latter, in a form of statements on the death of a world leader. According to Zunin and Zunin (2007, cited in Al-Humeid 2018: 17), corporate or government condolence letters can be interpreted in three ways: First, it conveys the condoler's and the group's sympathies. Secondly, it illustrates the significance of the deceased person to the organisation as well as to society at large. The third reason for institutional condolences is that they portray a positive image of the institution and express a sense of compassion toward the community in general. Zunin and Zunin (2007, cited in Al-Humeid 2018: 18) continue that it is important to ensure that the institutional condolence letter is meticulously edited and personable rather than rigid or overly formal. The goal is to write a message that honours and cherishes the deceased's personality, skills, and achievements without overstating them.

In interpersonal relationships, communities, and even international diplomacy, acts of condolence and written statements of remembrance are essential as death is an unavoidable part of life. Official entities may include features of both condolences and obituaries in their statements on death. Although the general style of the response to a death notice might be simple, it is still distinctive. Divergences may be discovered based on publication channels and author context. A life well lived, or any life, is worth some remembrance. Ultimately, there is only one chance to make a good last impression.

## 2.2 The Crown – the British monarchy

The British monarchy is hereditary, constitutional, and ceremonial (Otnes and Maclaran 2015: 7). In this constitutional monarchy, a queen or king is the head of state. Although the sovereign is the head of state, an elected parliament has the power to make and pass legislation. The monarch reigns but does not rule. The work of the sovereign primarily consists of tasks such as appointing prime ministers, approving new laws, receiving foreign dignitaries, and presiding over the opening and dissolution of parliament. The sovereign remains an important figure,

although she or he has only ceremonial power. The queen or king is a symbol of national identity, unity, and pride (The Royal Family n.d.; UK Parliament n.d.). The sovereign provides stability and continuity, officially recognizes success and excellence, and promotes the ideal of voluntary service. The royal family supports the Crown in these duties. The monarchy is a quintessential British cultural icon, and its ongoing contributions have had an important place in the lives of many people, not only historically but also today (Baena 2021: 14; Otnes and Maclaran 2015: 283).

Queen Elizabeth II enjoyed enduring and widespread popularity during her long reign, and she became a well-known and respected figure around the world. At the time of her death, the Queen was the Monarch of 15 countries. In addition to the United Kingdom, which encompasses England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, she was the Sovereign of the Commonwealth realms, including, among others, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Furthermore, she was the head of the Commonwealth of Nations, which is a voluntary association of 56 sovereign nations in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, and the Pacific (The Commonwealth n.d.). Aside from the Monarch's official role as Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England, the Queen was encouraged by her Christian faith, which was evident in her words and actions throughout her life (The Royal Family n.d.).

In 2022, Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Throughout her seventy-year reign, the Queen served her people by combining personal charisma with professional distance. For most of her working life, the Queen was supported by the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip. The couple had been married for 73 years when the Queen was widowed in April 2021. Queen Elizabeth II died peacefully, aged 96, on September 8, 2022. But the Crown lives on. The eldest of her four children, now King Charles III, succeeded her as monarch. The late Queen was also a grandmother and great-grandmother.

Mourners from all over the world have paid their respects in person or online to Queen Elizabeth II following the news of her death. This thesis focuses on the statements on the Queen's death given by world leaders. These statements will almost certainly be conventional and deferential. Condolences are certainly expressed to her successor and other royal descendants, but additionally to the general public. Moreover, the author of the statement may mention some personal and nation- or institution-specific memories. The statements' contents may reflect the continuity and stability that her long reign provided, as well as her lifelong dedication to duty.



### 3 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to investigate how ten world leaders who have close ties to the United Kingdom remembered Queen Elizabeth II in their condolence statements on the day she died. The goal is to determine whether there are any common themes in the texts and, if so, what those themes are. The thesis is a qualitative data analysis, or more precisely, a thematic analysis, of the statements. The two research questions are:

- 1) How is Queen Elizabeth II commemorated in the written statements on the date of her passing (8.9.2022) by ten world leaders?
- 2) Are there any repeating themes to identify in the statements? Are there many similarities or differences?

### 4 DATA AND METHOD

#### 4.1 Data

The data for this study consists of ten written statements on the death of Queen Elizabeth II. These statements were given by world leaders who were in office during the death announcement, except Prime Minister Johnson, who had left the post a couple of days before. A document prepared by or on behalf of a person in authority is referred to as an official statement. When an official statement or announcement is issued, information is provided in a formal and publicly visible manner on a particular occasion. The data texts were all dated September 8, 2022, and were published on the internet on that day. The statements are all written in English. Two of the statements were originally delivered in the form of a speech but were also published in written form. The length of the texts varied from around 300 words to 700 words.

The research data includes statements by Prime Ministers (PM) Liz Truss (UK), Boris Johnson (UK), Anthony Albanese (Australia), and Justin Trudeau (Canada). On behalf of Europe, the statements from Presidents Ursula von der Leyen (the European Commission), Charles Michel (the European Council), and Michael D. Higgins (Ireland) were analysed. New Zealand's Governor-General Cindy Kiro's statement was included. The statement of Commonwealth

Secretary-General Patricia Scotland was subsumed into the data. Finally, the analysis took a statement from the President of the United States Joe Biden, and First Lady Jill Biden into account. Altogether, six of the ten statements examined in this study are from the Commonwealth realms, where the Queen was the head of state.

## 4.2 Data collection

When the thesis topic was decided, a search on the internet for "official statement on Queen Elizabeth II's death" was conducted. The statements were published on the official websites of the heads of state. In addition, parts of these statements were shared on their social media accounts, including Twitter and Instagram. The statements were chosen in the months following the death of the Queen in 2022.

The ten statements were chosen from nations and organisations with close cultural and diplomatic ties with the British monarchy. Most of the chosen texts are from the Anglosphere. All the core nations of the world, in which the English language and cultural values predominate, are included. Furthermore, English is designated as the official language of the organisations that are part of the study. Following the selection, the statements were copied to a Word document and printed. Links to the webpages were saved alongside the texts so that the information could be retrieved again if needed.

## 4.3 Method of Analysis

In order to identify common themes and facts in the selected text documents, a content analysis was conducted. Themes are patterns that are actively constructed from data in response to the research questions. The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis because it is suitable for small scale studies with researcher involvement. The thematic analysis permits an extremely flexible approach, providing a detailed yet complex description of data. The framework for conducting thematic analysis involves a six-step process: familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules 2017: 4). A description, explanation, and interpretation of the data are provided to answer the research questions. However, the findings of this qualitative study may reflect the cultural and historical

context in which the research is conducted, as well as the researcher's personal values and experiences (Descombe 2014: 244).

I read the statements carefully several times to familiarise myself with the data. Following that, the search for themes began. Initially, the texts were coded based on their content. To encapsulate potential themes, colour codes, and later numbers were created and manually marked on hard copies and partially in the Word document. Simultaneously, I wrote notes in a separate notebook. The themes were evaluated and reviewed to refine the specifics that I generated for each. After the analysis, the themes were given final names and definitions. Eventually, the analytic interpretations of the source data were finalised and written up, including selected quoted excerpts from the statements to illustrate each theme.

## 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will present the findings of the study and discuss them. To begin with, each text in the data is beautifully written. The words are heartfelt, even though world leaders are paying official tribute to a stateswoman. Although the texts share certain similarities, each writer, country, and organisation are represented with an individual tone and content.

Five themes were discovered in the texts and will be discussed further below. The themes are loss acknowledgment, expressing sympathy, reign and character, state visits and special memories, and stock phrases. Since the statements are short and of the same genre, the themes are somewhat overlapping. For each theme, I have selected extracts from the statements that reflect the theme; Examples 1–23.

### 5.1 Loss acknowledgement

A healthy grieving process begins when the loss and grief experience of oneself and others is acknowledged. As Cann (2014: 12) states, it is a vital part of the private and public tradition of mourning rituals. Because almost all statements began with an acknowledgement of Queen Elizabeth II's death, the first theme is titled “loss acknowledgement”. The sadness and shock brought on by the news are expressed in the statements (Examples 1–3). In addition to personal

bereavement, national or organisational bereavement is conveyed, as the writers are speaking on behalf of a larger community.

Example 1. *“We are all devastated by the news we have just heard from Balmoral.”* PM Liz Truss

Example 2. *“It is with profound regret and a deep personal sadness that I have learnt of the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.”* President Michael D. Higgins

Example 3. *“It is with the heaviest of hearts that we learned of the passing of Canada’s longest-reigning Sovereign, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.”* PM Justin Trudeau

Recognizing loss is also repeated at the end of many statements in a more future-oriented tone (Examples 4–6). Some of the statements take a more personal style, while others look further into the future beyond the initial mourning period. The long-lasting impact of the Queen’s life is reflected in some statements. These statements refer to the legacy that she has left in the history of the world.

Example 4. *“I will miss her greatly, the Commonwealth will miss her greatly, and the world will miss her greatly. We will never see her like again.”* Secretary-General Patricia Scotland

Example 5. *“This time of mourning will pass, but the deep respect and warm regard in which Australians have always held for her will never fade.”* PM Anthony Albanese

Example 6. *“We will do our part to carry on her legacy. Her special legacy of building bridges and of building trust among nations.”* President Charles Michel

## 5.2 Expressing sympathy

“Expressing sympathy” is the second theme of the analysis. This theme can be considered the core of all the statements confirming the previous research findings (Abudul-Majid and Salih 2019: 566; Al-Humeid 2018: 13; Elwood 2004: 54; Lotfollahi and Eslami-Rasekh 2011: 140). The statements unanimously extend their condolences to the Royal Family and especially to the King. This conforms to the findings by Moses and Marelli (2003: 130) that survivors are always mentioned. Although, in this instance, among those who receive condolences are also people whose Monarch has passed. The primary recipient is the United Kingdom, but the Commonwealth is mentioned in all statements as well.

Because half of the statements come from Commonwealth realms, condolences are offered to others while they mourn the loss of their own Monarch as well. It could therefore be stated that sympathies are offered from a genuine place of understanding and empathy. In multiple texts, the entire world is mentioned as feeling grief over the loss of Queen Elizabeth II. In some respects, this contradicts Kivinen’s (2010: 125) argument that grief creates communities of

mourners and non-mourners. People across the world are instead united in the grief of losing Queen Elisabeth II (Examples 7–9).

Example 7. *“New Zealand shares with the people of Her Majesty’s Realms profound grief at the loss of a cherished monarch and honoured leader.”* Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro

Example 8. *“Wave after wave of grief is rolling across the world, from Balmoral – where our thoughts are with all the Royal Family – and breaking far beyond this country and throughout that great Commonwealth of nations that she so cherished and which cherished her in return.”* PM Boris Johnson

Example 9. *“Her passing leaves a sense of loss in the lives of many in the United Kingdom, in the Commonwealth and throughout the world. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who mourn and remember her.”* President Ursula von der Leyen

In addition to the bereaved family, the texts address the new head of state and his subjects. Charles III has not only lost his mother but has also been made King by her death. The messages renew and confirm the sustainability of the relationships (Examples 10–12). A common type of forward-oriented remark focused on emotional recovery and remembrance. The messages include assurances of understanding and support. The new King is encouraged to carry on the work and legacy of his predecessor.

Example 10. *“I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Majesty the assurances of my highest consideration.”* President Ursula von der Leyen

Example 11. *“We will convey the sorrow of Australians as well as our best wishes to him, and the Queen Consort, as he takes on his duties as Sovereign.”* PM Anthony Albanese

Example 12. *“In the years ahead, we look forward to continuing a close friendship with The King and The Queen Consort.”* President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden

From the perspective of the two British Prime Ministers, the accession might be summed up by ending the statement now with the expression *“God save the King”* instead of *“God save the Queen”*, as formal statements ended when issued in the Queen’s name over seventy decades.

### 5.3 Reign and character

In the role of queen, the career and personality are intertwined. The third theme is called *“reign and character”*. All statements on Queen Elizabeth II’s death acknowledge her lifelong dedication to service and commitment to duty. All mention her reign’s length, and almost all state the exact number, more than 70 years. Furthermore, many statements express that she was the only sovereign known to them. The late Queen’s reassuring presence is described unanimously as an anchor of stability, continuity, and unity, not only in the United Kingdom

but internationally. Likewise, Baena (2021: 14) notes the vital role of the late Queen through changing and challenging times. Moreover, these lines complement the study findings of Abu-Humeid (2018: 91) on condolence statements, stating that they focus on accomplishments.

Personal characteristics behind the lofty titles are also described. Her grace and dignity, as well as her wisdom, understanding, empathy, humour, and uniqueness, are frequently mentioned. There is a considerable sense of admiration and affection in the statements for the late Queen. She is described with epithets such as “*Elizabeth the Great/Steadfast*”. She is said to have defined “*the Second Elizabethan Age/Era*” (Examples 13–15).

Example 13. “*Her Majesty served the British people with exceptional dignity. Her personal commitment to her role and extraordinary sense of duty were the hallmarks of her period as Queen, which will hold a unique place in British history.*” President Michael D. Higgins

Example 14. “*As we think of the void she leaves, we understand the vital role she played, selflessly and calmly embodying the continuity and unity of our country.*” PM Boris Johnson

Example 15. “*Throughout her reign, and seven decades of extraordinary change and challenge, Her Majesty was the epitome of duty, stability, wisdom and grace.*” Secretary-General Patricia Scotland

Moreover, with her example alone, the late Queen inspired many lives. She was described as a personal and shared inspiration as well as an exemplary person in the statements (Examples 16 and 17). This was presented more explicitly in some texts and more subtly in others.

Example 16. “*She meant so much to so many and, on a personal note, has been an inspiration throughout my life.*” President Ursula von der Leyen

Example 17. “*She has been a personal inspiration to me and to many Britons. Her devotion to duty is an example to us all.*” PM Liz Truss

All statements show notable respect for the deceased, which is to be expected in a condolence message. The writers take into consideration both the audience and the object, as Dahl (2013: 64) recommends. Failure to express condolences appropriately can be damaging if the expression is perceived as insensitive or inadequate. With their outpouring of praise and gratitude for the late Queen, these ten statements more than meet all requirements. To a certain extent, memorialising is done to project the image of the institution and convey consideration to the global audience (Zunin and Zunin 2007, cited in Al-Humeid 2018: 17).

#### 5.4 State visits and special memories

All the statements mention or refer to state visits or other personal encounters with the late Queen. A theme named “state visits and special memories” is discussed next. This theme

emphasises the late Sovereign's significance to the organisation in general and to the individual addressing society in particular. Many of the texts emphasize the importance of the Queen's state visits. Particularly, this is relevant in statements from Ireland, Australia, and Canada (Examples 18–20). Over time, these reciprocal visits were crucial in strengthening the bilateral relationship between nations and the Monarch. Of curiosity, Prince Philip is mentioned in three of the memories. Aside from the visit, some texts also acknowledge the Queen's support during times of national crisis.

Example 18. *“As we know, the Queen often spoke of how much she enjoyed her own historic State Visit to Ireland in 2011, the first such Visit by a British monarch since Irish independence.”* President Michael D. Higgins

Example 19. *“From her first trip here, it was clear Her Majesty had a special place in our hearts. And we, in hers.”* PM Anthony Albanese

Example 20. *“She would proclaim ‘it was good to be home’ when returning to her beloved Canada. She was indeed at home here, and Canadians never ceased to return her affection.”* PM Justin Trudeau

In this theme, state visits and special individual occasions with the late Queen are somewhat mixed. These explicitly public encounters were also highly personal and meaningful to the statement's author. Because of the Queen's long reign, there could have been a number of meetings over the years (Examples 21–23). This type of writing gives the message a personal and warm tone, as mentioned by Dahl (2013: 64).

Example 21. *“During my audience with the Queen following my swearing-in as Governor-General, I was struck by her warmth and wonderful ability to put people at ease.”* Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro

Example 22. *“As the sixth Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, I will always be grateful for her warmth and kindness to me. Our interactions were a delight, and it was wonderful to see her passion and animation whenever discussing anything relating to the Commonwealth.”* Secretary-General Patricia Scotland

Example 23. *“We first met the Queen in 1982, traveling to the UK as part of a Senate delegation. And we were honored that she extended her hospitality to us in June 2021 during our first overseas trip as President and First Lady, where she charmed us with her wit, moved us with her kindness, and generously shared with us her wisdom.”* President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden

## 5.5 Stock phrases

Condolences frequently contain stock phrases. Avoiding generic, well-known phrases or clichés when offering condolences is challenging because they are almost part of the principles of diplomatic protocol and are required by etiquette. In accordance with Muhammed's findings



(2013: 9), some “stock phrases” were found in the statements, and the final theme focuses on them.

Intriguingly, the quote *"Grief is the price we pay for love,"* attributed to Queen Elizabeth II herself, appears in three statements. The quote is from the Queen's message about grief and loss following the 9/11 attacks in the United States more than 20 years ago. Furthermore, there are other citations of Queen's speeches in the statements. When interacting with the bereaved, “quoted lines” are employed, as stated by Abudul-Majid and Salih (2019: 566).

*"Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis"* is Gaelic, and its meaning in English is "May her faithful soul be at the right hand of God." It is used after naming a deceased person as a mark of respect in the Irish tradition, and the Irish president uses it to end his statement. The equivalent in English might be "rest in peace." *"May she rest in eternal peace"* is used only in one of the statements. The phrase *"thoughts and prayers"* is often used by officials in the United States as a condolence. In fact, in this instance as well by the U.S. President. Additionally, one other condoler used this phrase.

Some of these lines can be interpreted as having religious connotations, but they are rare in mainly secular statements. This is consistent with the findings of Abudul-Majid and Salih (2019: 566). Aside from cultural reasons, one explanation is that the statements are official communications and thus should be neutral to all religions. Nonetheless, some cultural content is invariably present in the statements on the death of a person.

To comfort people in times of grief, Bible verses or other religious quotes are frequently used in condolence messages. This is appropriate, especially when the deceased is known to be a devout person, like the late Queen, who was a Christian (Royal Family n.d.). One statement in the data starts with a Biblical verse [*John 14:27*]. This supports previous research findings that “religious-oriented sympathy” is part of condolence strategies (Lotfollahi and Eslami-Rasekh 2011: 143).

## 6 CONCLUSION

The main findings of this study showed that the ten statements on the death of Queen Elizabeth II commemorated her with the most laudatory words. The texts were skillfully and professionally written. Regardless of the solemn nature of the occasion, all statements included cherished memories of the late Queen as an elegant and intelligent stateswoman. Recurring



topics and themes were identified in the statements; however, each text was original, with its own voice and a different order and number of similar elements.

After conducting a rigorous and relevant thematic analysis of the data, five themes were identified. The research yielded these themes: loss acknowledgment, expressing sympathy, reign and character, state visits and special memories, and stock phrases. The examples presented from the statements clearly demonstrate how each theme was formed from the data. With the guidance of my thesis instructor, trustworthy qualitative research results emerged from the process of interpreting and representing textual data.

The death and mourning of Queen Elizabeth II are unrepeatable events. Because the late Queen was unique, the findings of this study can only be used as a testament to her reign. This fact, along with the small amount of similar data and possible author bias, are limitations of the study. Despite these limitations, the study's findings provide some useful insights, such as the themes and linguistic features used in public statements on deaths and official condolences in the English language in 2022. Furthermore, the findings may contribute to a better understanding of an old and powerful monarchy, its relationship with its people, and its global impact. One may also discover what attributes today's heads of state value in a leader.

This is a novel and topical study. Expressions of condolence and words of remembrance have been studied in the past, but due to the recent nature of Queen Elizabeth II's death, no similar research has yet been published. Although the findings have similarities with private condolence messages, complementing previous research, the context made this study exceptional, thus providing also new knowledge. Future research might compare the differences and similarities of condolence statements from a broader cultural and linguistic background than this thesis. Moreover, a study on the emerging ways to express grief and sympathy in the digital age might be worthwhile and rewarding.

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