

Euphemization of Death in the Obituaries of Notícias Newspaper

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Abstract:

Language lives on voices, but also on silence. Words can be a mask with which speakers and listeners partially hide the face of truth. This complicit muteness is the ritual conventionally followed in reference to sensitive or delicate experiences, given the emotional impact they have on those who speak or hear about them (Abrantes 2001). Fear of death evokes the same emotions for words related to it and comes as a result of people associating symbols with the things they symbolize. Our study seeks to identify the euphemistic resources used to refer to death in the obituaries of the Notícias Newspaper. For the materialization of this study, 224 obituaries from the Notícias Newspaper were collected. The collected data was analyzed in the light of the qualitative approach, more specifically under the descriptive-explanatory prism. We concluded that the speakers protect and maintain their positive face using metaphors, metonymies and synonyms. However, there is a tendency of euphemizing death with metaphoric expressions licensed by conceptual metaphors of religious origin.

Keywords — **Death, Euphemisms, Politeness, Conceptual Metaphor.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Human language is extremely complex, because it does not only involve sounds, words and syntactic structures, but also rhetoric, cognition, ideology, culture, etc. Allan & Burridge (2006) state that language is constantly subject to censoring: individuals who do not censor their language, and so normally say whatever first enters their heads without considering the circumstances of utterance, are deemed mentally unstable. Therefore, the speaking individual must be able to identify the social and linguistic constraints that threaten both his face and that of his interlocutor. Referring, for example, to an inappropriate topic is a threat to the positive face and replacing a tabooed term with an indirect expression is the strategy to reduce that threat (Brown & Levinson 1987).

The linguistic taboo concerns any lexical unit that, for religious, superstitious, social or moral reasons, is reprimanded within the linguistic community and should be avoided (Ferraz 2003). Although every natural language has the capacity to express any concept of its surrounding world, languages organize these concepts in a specific way. Therefore, what is taboo in one language may not be in another. For example, in the British society, aspects related to sex, menstruation, deities and money are no longer seen as taboo as they were 40 years ago. Now, racial and tribal expressions are really taboo. Conversely, in the Italian society, it is a profound depravity to mention some aspects related to sex, menstruation and money. Furthermore, racial taboos are not yet discussed. Therefore, the taboo is specific to the culture and language of the speakers.

In this article, we identify the euphemistic resources used to refer to death in the obituaries of the Notícias Newspaper. This is a daily Mozambican Newspaper published in Portuguese. The Portuguese language is the official language of Mozambique. It is not only the means of instruction at all levels of education, but also a symbol of national unity. Approximately seventy percent of the Mozambican population speaks Portuguese. According to Lopes (1997), this language gives its speakers unprecedented power with respect to their mobility and social ascension.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Allan & Burridge (2006), the word 'taboo' was coined by the English navigator James Cook (1728-1779). In the account of his last trip to Oceania, he recorded the behaviour called *tapu* of the native people of the Tonga Islands. Guérios (1979) states that although the word taboo came from Polynesian languages, it is an Australian word that passed from old India to the Polynesians. It corresponds to *tapu* (Máoris; New Zealand; Samoa, Tahiti, Marquesas Islands); *taboo* (Tonga); *tambu* (Solomon Islands); *kahu* (various regions of Polynesia) and *kapu* (Hawaii). However, it is still unknown what the primitive or the oldest form of taboo is (Guérios 1979).

Polynesians used *tapu* to refer to everything that was both sacred and forbidden. It referred not only to the sacred character of the tabooed thing, but also the devices assembled to deal with it (Freud 1950). This notion was similar to *sacer* of the Romans, *hagios* of the Greeks and *koudauch* of the Hebrews. Several Bantu peoples share the notion of taboo despite their differences and the names they use, for example, the terms *imi-ziro* in Kinyarwanda (Rwanda), *bi-kila* in Lingala (Democratic Republic of Congo), *bi-jila* or *bi-bindi* (Democratic Republic of Congo) just to mention a few. Additionally, it corresponds to *sabi* (western tribes of New Guinea); *poto*, 'taboo referring to shares' and *koin*, 'taboo referring to things and places' (between the Diaks – West Indies and Maltese Peninsula); *pukimani* (between the Tiuis of the Melville and Bathurst islands, Australia); *aina* (among the poor, New Guinea); *genna* (Assam); *cheguila*, 'food taboo' (Congo); *wakan* (among the Dakota, North America); *urgharta* and *geasa* (Ireland) and

infandum (among the Romans). Finally, Junod (1996) mentions *yila* of the Tsongas.

According to Guérios (1979), it was Millet (1906), who introduced the concept of taboo in Linguistics, in a communication of February 1906 to the Paris Linguistics Society. This concept was used in the Portuguese language for the first time by João da Silva Correia, then Assistant at the Faculty of Arts of Lisbon, in "philological note" entitled *Tabus Linguísticos*, published by *Diário de Lisboa*, and reproduced in the Study "The euphemism and Dysfemisms in Portuguese Language and Literature" in the Archive of the University of Lisbon (Almeida, 2007).

Freud (1950) says that taboo is characteristic of primitive peoples. However, according to Zavaglia & Orsi (2011), contrary to what is thought, the *taboo* mentality is not restricted to communities considered primitive, in Western society there are also taboos. Freud (1950) insists that taboos have no rational reason and that they are of unknown origin. However, Allan & Burridge (2006) say that it is clear that taboos usually arise from social constraints. They arise when and where the actions cause discomfort or damage to the speaker and others. These authors state that the taboo is the ban on behaviour that affects daily life. Guérios adds that the linguistic taboo is a '[...] modality of taboo in general, or is an extension of the other taboos. If a person, thing or act is forbidden, the name or the word that refers to them is also prohibited. Thus, in each culture there are topics and words that are considered "forbidden" and avoided in public.

This article focuses on the linguistic taboo of death. Fear of death evokes the same emotions for words related to it and comes as a result of people associating symbols with the things they symbolize (Hysi 2011). For example, English speakers instead of saying died use expressions like 'passed away, went to his reward, departed or went west'. In Japan, the word *shi* 'death' is homophonic with the number four. This coincidence results in confusing linguistic situations when people avoid the word *shi*. Thus, when discussing numbers and prices, they use *you*. In Africa, among the Masai, the name of a dead person is never spoken. If there is a word that is similar, it will soon be replaced by another one.

In this article, we look at euphemisms not only from the point of view of social etiquette, but also from a socio-cognitive perspective. In the next section, we talk about the theoretical tools that allow us to explain the euphemisms in these perspectives.

A. Euphemism as a Social etiquette phenomenon

Lakoff was one of the first linguists to examine the concept of politeness in relation to pragmatics. He defines it as “a system of interpersonal relationships designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potentiality for conflict and confrontation inherent to all human exchange. This scientist reduces the Grice maxims to two: be clear and be polite. The clarity requirement is explained by Grice's four maxims, and Lakoff focuses on the rules of politeness. Nevertheless, the second rule (be polite) seems to conflict with the first (be clear), because people violate the rule of clarity in order to be polite. If the main concern is to establish a harmonious relationship with the listener and to avoid coercion, then politeness prevails.

The politeness rule is associated with a group of three rules. They are: i) “don't impose yourself on others”; ii) “give options” and iii) “make him/her feel good—be friendly”. However, we are only interested in the first. It has to do with “minding your own business”, that is, not to intrude into the listener's private life or embarrass him with quotation of *non-mentionables* or taboos. These can be understood more broadly in the light of other theories of politeness.

Brown & Levinson (1990) created one of the most exquisite theories of politeness. These scholars developed a model person (PM), who has two special qualities: rationality and face. By rationality, Brown & Levinson (1990: 58), mean that the model person would be able to use a specific mode of reasoning to choose the means that satisfy his objectives. They define the second as a public self image that each member wants to claim for oneself. The face is made up of two related aspects: (a) negative face is the desire of each competent adult member that his/her action is not impeded by others, and b) positive face is the desire of each member that his/her desires are acceptable for at least some, the perennial desire that his/her desires (or actions, acquisitions,

values resulting from it) should be seen as acceptable and desirable (Brown & Levinson *op.cit.*: 62).

Lakoff (1973) and Brown & Levinson (1990) concepts of politeness are really similar (although they differ in central schemes) in that they incorporate the Cooperation Principle, but more importantly because they see politeness as a way of avoiding conflicts and maintaining a harmonious interaction. The lack of politeness is related to the use of taboos. These are offensive, dysphemistic and are therefore condemned to be replaced by indirect or euphemistic expressions. Thus, we would say that euphemisms break the Cooperation principle (be direct and be clear), as Brown & Levinson (*op.cit.*:216) explain that the ambiguity resulting from making new metaphoric euphemisms flout the cooperation principle and give rise to conversational implicatures. Simultaneously, they minimize imposition or avoid confrontation with taboo topics (Brown & Levinson *op.cit.*:177). However, they are a class that is in accordance with the Principle of Politeness.

B. Euphemism as socio-cognitive phenomenon

During our research about euphemisms, we noticed that studies on linguistic taboos, for the most part, are guided by semantics and generally limit themselves to listing taboo words and their corresponding euphemisms superficially. scholars, such as Dominguez (2004), Crespo-Fernández (2013) and Orwenjo & Anudo (2016), examine euphemisms as socio-cognitive phenomena in the light of the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor and Theory of Conceptual Blending.

Grady, Oakley & Coulson (1999: 101) emphasize that the Theory of Conceptual Blending (TCB) shares many aspects with the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor (TCM). They not only treat metaphor as a conceptual phenomenon, but also as a systematic projection of language, mental images and inferential structure between conceptual domains. However, there are also important differences between them: i) TCM postulates a relationship between pairs of mental representations, whereas TCB allows more than two; ii) TCM defines metaphor as a strictly unidirectional phenomenon, whereas TCB is bidirectional; iii) the analysis of the conceptual metaphor is typically linked to conventional

metaphors, in contrast TCB is interested in new conceptualizations and not very long lasting. Finally, I would like to emphasize that euphemisms are metaphorical and, of course, cognitive, so they can be interpreted in the light of TCM and TCB.

In this section, our aim was to present the theoretical tools that allow us to explain the euphemisms related to death from a socio-cognitive and social *savoir Faire* points of view. In the following section, we propose to address the methodology that guided the collection, selection and analysis of the data.

III. METHODOLOGY

Our focus is based on the realization of subjective descriptions, analyzes and interpretations through procedures of rational and intuitive nature, for a better understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon under study, within the framework of the theories of Politeness and the theories of cognitive linguistics (TMC and TCB).

The collection, organization and analysis of the empirical data that make up our sample are based on the qualitative research.

The technique used to collect the data for this research is documentary research. We have read several *Notícias* Newspapers in order to select obituaries. A sample of 224 obituaries was selected randomly from several copies of the *Notícias* Newspaper dated March 2015.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Euphemism of Death

From the analysis of the sample, we found out the existence of 17 expressions referring to death, namely, *falecimento* 'death' (126 occurrences), *paz a sua alma* 'peace to your soul' (40 occurrences), *desaparecimento físico* 'physical disappearance' (38 occurrences), *descansar em paz* 'rest in peace' (9 occurrences), *morte* 'death' (4 occurrences), *partida* 'departure' (3 occurrences), *partida prematura* 'premature departure' (1 occurrence), *perda* 'loss' (1 occurrence), *vá em paz* 'go in peace' (1 occurrence),

viagem sem regresso 'journey without return' (1 occurrence), *onde estás não estás só* 'where you are you are not alone' (1 occurrence), *morte bárbara* 'barbaric death' (1 occurrence) *falecimento súbito* 'sudden death' (1 occurrence), *separação* 'separation' (1 occurrence), *morte súbita* 'sudden death' (1 occurrence), *exéquias* 'funerals' (1 occurrence) and *assassinato* 'assassination' (1 occurrence).

We found out that death is euphemized through synonymy, metonymy and metaphor. Next, we carefully analyze each strategy related to death.

A. Synonym

In 126 (54%) obituaries, we found out that the death taboo generated anxiety and the need to remove the situation that causes fear. So, the bereaved families resorted to a delicate way of communicating the physical disappearance of their loved ones. Here are some examples:

- i)... Seus pais ...comunicam com profunda dor e consternação o *falecimento* do seu ente querido ...
'Your parents... communicate with deep pain and dismay the **death** of your loved one'
- ii)...*participam com pesar o falecimento do seu ente querido...*
'participate with regret the **death** of their loved one'
- iii)...comunicam com profunda mágoa o *falecimento* do seu filho e irmão...
'communicate with deep sorrow the **death** of their child and brother'
- iv) ...*dever de comunicar o falecimento...*
'must report the **death**'
- v) ...*comunicam o falecimento do seu tio e irmão...*
'report the **death** of their uncle and brother'

In these obituaries, speakers avoided the forbidden concept by resorting to an orthofemic synonym. Orthophemism is typically more formal and more literal than the corresponding euphemism. In general, this orthofemism occurred in informative obituaries, whose general objective was to provide information about the physical disappearance of the deceased, the place and time of the funeral. The language used in them to refer to death not only broke the principle of clarity, but somehow reduces the shock that would emanate from the taboo concept. Nevertheless, we detected two cases in which the tabooed concept only suffered phonetic adulteration: *falicimento* 'death' (1) and *faleciemnto* 'death' (1).

However, as this is an embryonic study, we cannot yet make any generalizations.

B. Metonymy

Social interaction is generally geared towards keeping (saving) the face. The taboo of death is unmentionable, dangerous and above all powerful. This power forces the bereaved families to avoid the prohibited concept. See the examples set out below.

vi) ...a pesar do tempo, a dor da *separação* ainda aflige os nossos corações...(1)

'despite the time, the pain of **separation** still afflicts our hearts'

vii) a família comunica profunda saudade o *desaparecimento físico*...(38)

'the family informs with deep regret the **physical disappearance**'

viii) ...seus padrinhos lamentam *desaparecimento físico*...

'his godparents lament **physical disappearance**'

ix) ...familiares, netos, genros comunicam *desaparecimento físico*...

'family, grandchildren, son-in-law communicate **physical disappearance**'

x) ...6º do *desaparecimento físico* do seu ente querido...

'6th year of the **physical disappearance** of your loved one'

Bereaved families are perceptive or diplomatic, that is why they resort to metonymic expressions, namely '*separação*' separation and '*desaparecimento físico*' physical disappearance to avoid the prohibited concept.

C. Metaphor

Death, in the *Notícias* Newspaper, is also euphemized by metaphorical strategies licensed by different conceptual metaphors, namely, DEATH IS REST, DEATH IS TRAVEL and DEATH IS LOSS.

i) Death is Rest

In 49 (84%) obituaries, bereaved families report the death of their loved ones. But, the taboo of death forced them to unconsciously resort to the linguistic trigger, which neutralizes any negative charge, so they claim that :

xi).....*Que sua alma descanse em paz*...

'may your soul **rest** in peace'

xii).... *eterno descanso*...

'eternal **rest**'

In these obituaries, bereaved families wish the deceased to rest in peace. It is clear that it is not a matter

of resting in its literal sense. *Descanso* 'rest' refers to death. Thus, to rest, source domain, is projected onto the target domain, *morte* 'death'. It is in this correspondence between the target domain and the source domain where conceptualization fulfils its euphemistic function (cf. Crespo-Fernández 2006:107). Consequently, it breaks the maximum of clarity. However, it protects and enhances the positive face of the family and the readers.

When examining the meaning of *descanso* 'rest' in the forty-nine obituaries, we found out that it is licensed by the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS REST. However, death is not conceptualized as resting only in the Portuguese language, this metaphor exists, for example, in the English and Chopi language. Here are some examples: *eternal rest*, *rest in Him*, *rest in peace* (English) and *kuhumula kuxaniseka* 'to rest from suffering' (Chopi). Now, in the examples above, we understand that these words are standard euphemisms for death in English and Chopi. Therefore, there are traces of universality in the way of understanding and experiencing death in Portuguese, English and Chopi languages.

In the light of TCB, the euphemism DEATH IS REST is viewed as follows: there are two mental spaces for rest and death that correspond to the source and target domains. *Descanso*, euphemistic expression, is projected onto *morte*, the taboo expression. Thus, there are fixed homologous mappings between the two input spaces. Subsequently, the information common to the input spaces is projected onto the generic space. The common information is topic, classification, agent, action and product. The topics *descanso* 'rest' and *morte* 'death' are classified as an **act or effect of rest** and **end of life** respectively. Finally, the blending space contains combined information projected from the generic space, as well as the meaning of the euphemism. This euphemism means that death is a relief from the torments of life.

The meaning of the euphemism is established through a vital relation of analogy, taking into account three constituent processes that allow its construction. In the *composition*, the elements of the source and target domains are projected, whereas in the *finishing* process, *frames* of rest as well as death are introduced. In the elaboration, the meaning of death euphemism is relief from the torments of life. Regarding optimization, it was found that the principles of integration, network,

unpacking, topology and good reasoning are satisfied by the euphemism.

When we reflected on the conceptual metaphor that licenses the use of *descanso* 'rest' (DEATH is REST) and its meaning (relief from the torments of life) identified through TCB, we concluded that this expression creates better conditions to face death. Therefore, this conceptual metaphor has positive connotations. The expression peace to your soul is used in both informative and opinion obituaries.

ii) Death is Travel

In five obituaries, bereaved families report the death of their loved ones with deep sadness and dismay. However, the risk of violating the rules of social etiquette becomes imminent, so they resort to indirect language or an act of mitigation, thus repressing the negative charge that would emanate from the use of the tabooed term. When communicating the death of their loved one, they state the following:

xiii)...*vá em paz...*
'go in peace'

xiv)...*vá em paz querida sobrinha, que finalmente descansas.*
'go in peace dear niece, may you finally rest'

xv) ...*pela passagem do 90^o dia da sua partida precoce.*
'by passing the 90th day of your early departure'

xvi) ...*recordam com saudade a passagem do primeiro ano da tua partida prematura para a eternidade*
'longingly remember the passage of the first year of your premature departure for eternity'

xvii) ...*onde estas não estas só...*
'where you are you are not alone'

xviii) *Passados 5 aare nos rumo a uma viagem sem regresso são imensuráveis as saudades que se apossaram de nos.*
'After 5 years on the way to a journey of no return, the longings that have taken hold of us are immeasurable.'

In the aforementioned obituaries, bereaved families claim that it is with great pain and dismay that they communicate what happened. They say that X *vá em paz* 'X go in peace' (xiii and xiv), 90^o dia da sua *partida* precoce '90th day of your early departure' (xv), a tua *partida* prematura para a eternidade 'your premature departure for eternity' (xvi), *onde estas não estas só* 'where you are you are not alone' (xvii) and *uma viagem sem regresso* 'a journey without return' (xviii). When we reflected on these expressions, we concluded that the

conceptual metaphor that licenses its use is DEATH is TRAVEL.

In these opinion obituaries, whose objective is the production of particular effects on readers due to the emphasis on social status, virtues and religious fervour of the deceased, it would be impolite to refer to the tabooed concept using direct expression, therefore, bereaved families use an indirect language. Death is euphemistically represented as a journey to a better place for the soul. The metaphorical expressions resulting from this conceptual metaphor are to *leave* 'partir', to *pass* 'passar', to *arrive at a resting place* 'chegar a um lugar de descanso' (c.f. Allan & Burridge 2006).

The expressions *vá* (xiii e xiv), *partida* (xv e xvi), e *viagem* (xviii), source domains, are projected onto *morrer ou morte* 'to die or death'. The target domain *death* is experienced and understood in terms of the source domains, *vá* (i e ii), *partida* (xv e xvi), e *viagem* (xviii). It is in this correspondence that the metaphorical disguise is fulfilled. In this way, the principle of clarity is broken, however, in return they are in accordance with the rules of social etiquette. Therefore, they safeguard, preserve and enhance the positive face of speakers.

As for the conceptual metaphor MORTE é VIAGEM, we believe it is a conceptual manifestation similar to the conceptual metaphor of the English language DEATH-IS-A-JOURNEY. This licenses expressions like *depart/departure*, *leave e pass from the sorrows of Earth*. Here, due to the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL scheme in which our daily experience can be organized (c.f. LAKOFF 1987: 275) death is understood as a process with a beginning, an end point and a period of time. The act of dying corresponds to the act of leaving and, consequently, the dead person is clearly the person who embarks on this journey. The final destination of this trip would be eternal rest. Therefore, the source domain *viagem* 'travel' is used not only to verbalize the target domain of death, but also to reason it in terms of a different domain of experience. This set of conceptual correspondences is reversed in the interpretation process, mapping the knowledge about the journey to the knowledge about a reality from the domain of death. Therefore, there are traces of universality in the conceptualization of death in the Portuguese language.

In the light of TCB, the euphemism 'Death is Travel' is mapped in different mental spaces. The expression *viagem* 'travel', input space 1, is projected onto the taboo expression death, input space 2. Therefore, there are fixed homologous mappings between the two spaces. Subsequently, the information common to the input spaces is projected onto the generic space. The common information is topic, classification, agent, action and product. The topics *viagem* 'travel' and *morte* 'death' are classified as movement between places and ending life respectively. Finally, the blending space contains the combined information projected from the generic space, but also the meaning of the euphemism. This euphemism means achieving the goal of life.

The meaning of the expressions of this euphemism is established by a vital relation of representation. This euphemistic expression takes into account three constituent processes that allow the construction of its meaning. In the composition, the elements of the source and target domains are projected, whereas in the finishing process *frames* of 'movement between locations', as well as death 'life ending' are introduced. In the elaboration, the meaning of this euphemism is illustrated with the concept of death as achieving the purpose of life. The metaphorical construction of death as a journey is not only a superficial subject of phraseology, as these euphemisms affect not only thought, but also the social practice of death (cf. Fairclough 1992). Families face death peacefully, as they believe in the kingdom of heaven and the reward after death. That is, these euphemisms have a positive connotation.

iii) Death is Loss

In one obituary, the friends of the deceased address their condolences to the bereaved family. However, making direct reference to the tabooed concept would be a sign of lack of social etiquette; they resort to a euphemistic language. Here is the example:

XIX)...*endereça a família enlutada as mais sentidas condolências e votos de muita força e coragem neste momento difícil por esta perda...*"
'address the mourning family the most heartfelt condolences and wishes of great strength and courage in this difficult time for this loss'

In this obituary, the friends of the deceased address their condolences. However, it would be embarrassing for the speakers to make explicit reference

to the physical disappearance of their friend, so they resort to the euphemistic expression *perda* 'loss'. There is a projection of the source domain, *perda* 'loss', onto the target domain, *morte* 'death'. It is in this correspondence between the source domain and the target domain where the metaphorical conceptualization fulfils its euphemistic function. Therefore, the structural metaphorical linguistic expression *perda* 'loss', licensed by the Conceptual Metaphor DEATH IS LOSS, transforms the unmentionable into the mentionable and less offensive. This indirect language protects and enhances positive the face of the speaker.

In the light of TCB, the metaphorical linguistic expression, *perda* 'loss', and the forbidden concept, *morte* 'death', are mapped in different mental spaces. *Perda* is projected onto the taboo expression. Therefore, there are fixed homologous mappings between the two inputs. Subsequently, the information common to the two input spaces is projected onto the generic space. The common information is topic, classification, agent, action and product. The topics of *perda* 'loss' and *morte* 'death' are classified as the act or effect of losing and ending life, respectively. Finally, the blending space contains combined information projected from the generic space as well as the meaning of the euphemism. This euphemism means the loss of something important.

The meaning of this euphemism is established through a vital relationship of analogy. It takes into account three constituent processes that allow the construction of its meaning. In composition process, the elements of the source and target domains are projected; whereas in the *finishing* process, loss and death *frames* are introduced. In the elaboration, the meaning of this euphemism is illustrated with the concept of death as loss of something important. Regarding optimization, it was found out that the principles of integration, network, unpacking, topology and good reasoning are satisfied by the euphemism.

When we look at the conceptual metaphor (DEATH IS LOSS) and the meaning (Death is the loss of something important) underlying *perda* 'loss', we conclude that it expresses a moment of deep pain and his friends are inconsolable. Death is generally regarded as a loss to family and friends. It is seen as a loss of the valuable possession of life. It is seen as an evil destiny and evokes the unfortunate lack caused by an event over

which those who remain have no control. Now, although this indirect language has this negative connotation, it breaks the maximum of clarity. In contrast, it sounds more polite and consequently maintains, protects and enhances the positive of friends and the interlocutor.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Death is a taboo for human beings and inevitably a social norm. It is one of the most sensitive subjects in the Portuguese language spoken in Mozambique. Although there is a reluctance to mention it, the Notícias Newspaper obituaries constitute a communicative situation in which it cannot be avoided. Bereaved families tend to soften the effect of what they intend to communicate using synonymy, metonymy, metaphors and phonetic adulteration.

In general, synonymy and phonetic adulteration occur in informative obituaries, whose sole purpose is to provide information on the physical disappearance of the deceased, the place and time of the funeral.

We found out that the metaphorical expressions are licensed by three conceptual metaphors, namely, DEATH is REST, DEATH is TRAVEL and DEATH is LOSS. These euphemistic metaphorical strategies are often used in opinion obituaries. The first and second conceptual metaphors (DEATH is REST and DEATH is TRAVEL) have a positive connotation, whereas DEATH is LOSS has a negative connotation.

The studies on linguistic taboos are mostly guided by semantics and generally limit themselves to listing the tabooed words and their corresponding euphemisms in a superficial way. Thus, it is important to observe the taboo from a sociolinguistic and cognitive point of view. Therefore, we recommend that research be done to help fill this gap in the context of linguistic taboo studies.

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