

Metaphoric Conceptualization of Death in the Chopi Language

Péricles Francisco Nhacudime

Department of Linguistics and Literature, Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique

Email: periclesnhacudime02@gmail.com

Abstract:

Death is a taboo for all human beings and inevitably a social norm. Our study seeks to identify the euphemistic resources used by Chopi speakers to refer to death within the framework of Brown & Levinson’s theory of Face and Politeness. In addition, given the penetrating nature of the metaphor in reference to human mortality, we analyze the role of conceptual metaphors in the *euphemization* of death. For the materialization of this study, 32 native speakers of Chopi language, 16 men and 16 women, were interviewed. The collected data was analyzed in the light of the qualitative approach, more specifically under the descriptive-explanatory prism. We found out that the term *kufa* or *afite* (the inflected form of the verb *kufa* ‘to die’) occurred 20 times, corresponding to 40% of the answers given. In the list of euphemistic terms, *kumwalala* ‘to lose’ (18 occurrences) and *kulusa* ‘to lose’ (3 occurrences) stood out. Regarding the metaphorical euphemisms, three conceptual metaphors have been identified, namely: TO DIE IS TO LOSE, TO DIE IS TO TRAVEL and TO DIE IS TO REST.

Keywords — Death, Euphemisms, Politeness, Conceptual Metaphor.

I. INTRODUCTION

Death is a taboo for human beings and inevitably a social norm. In almost all societies and almost all languages, death is one of the most sensitive and dark subjects that people avoid mentioning (Maoncha & Ndambuki 2017). Allan & Burridge (2006) claim that death is a taboo based on fear, in which different fears coexist, namely, the fear of losing loved ones, the fear of putrefaction of the body, the fear of evil spirits and the fear of what comes after death. According to Crespo-Fernández (2013: 202), death is a topic that far from having lost its interdictory power over time, it remains one of the greatest taboos in contemporary society. He stresses that despite the reluctance to mention death, there are communicative situations in which it cannot be avoided. In these communicative situations, speakers tend to soften the effect of what they intend to communicate using euphemisms. Therefore, our study seeks to identify the euphemistic resources used by Chopi speakers to refer to death

within the framework of Brown & Levinson's theory of Face and Politeness. Furthermore, given the penetrating nature of the metaphor in both language and thought, it is also necessary to know what are the conceptual metaphors underlying the possible euphemistic metaphorical strategies in Chopi language.

Chopi is identified by S60, being located in Zone four along with Xirhonga, Xichangana, Gitonga and Xitswa. (Ngunga 2004). It is spoken by about 245,591 people in the country. It has six variants: cindoje (spoken in Inharrime), cilenge (spoken in Chidenguele, Nhamavila and part of Chongene), citonga (spoken in Mavila, Quissico, Guilundo and Jangamo), cicopi (spoken from Mavila to Madendere), cilambwe (spoken near Lake Quissico and in the eastern part of Chidenguele) cikhambani (spoken in Homoine, parts of the districts of Panda, Manjacaze and Chibuto) (Ngunga & Siteo 2000).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The word *euphemism* derives from the Greek ‘*euphemo*’, meaning good speech. According to Wardhaugh (2003), euphemistic words and expressions allow us to talk about unpleasant things by covering up and neutralizing the unpleasantness. According to Rawson (1981), euphemisms are moderate, pleasant or indirect words used to refer to offensive concepts. These are generally called linguistic taboos. 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. Euphemisms as social *Savoir Faire* phenomenon

Most languages have a wide range of strategies for communicating politeness, although these are always very specific to culture and are strictly related to cultural norms that affect the application of Grice maxims (Warren-Rothlin 2007: 55). Therefore, to address politeness we resort to the Cooperation Principle, Rules of Politeness and Theories of Face and Politeness. Allan & Burridge (2006: 33) explain that social interaction is usually to keep (save) the face. Just as we look after our own face (self-respect), we are expected to be considerate of, and look after, the face-wants of others. Those who are skilled at this are said to have social *savoir faire*; they are said to be perceptive or diplomatic (Allan & Burridge 2006: 33). Emerson (1856: 325, quoted by Allan & Burridge *op.cit.*:30) emphasizes that Politeness is the ritual of society, as prayers are of the church; a school of manners, and a gentle blessing to the age in which it grew. Politeness is wedded to context, place and time. Allan & Burridge (2006) underline that the discussion on taboos naturally refers to the consideration of politeness. Thus, we move on to address the different theories of politeness.

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 quotes 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 the 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. According to Allan & Burridge (2006: 34), they are words used as alternatives to unacceptable expressions. They prevent the loss of the face of both the speaker and his interlocutor.

B. Euphemism as socio-cognitive phenomenon

During our research about euphemisms, we noticed that the studies on linguistic taboos are generally guided by semantics. They are often superficial lists of taboo words and their corresponding euphemisms. It is important to observe the linguistic taboos from a socio-cognitive point of view, but studies that follow this perspective are still few (Nhacudime 2013). Crespo-Fernández (2013: 102) reinforces this idea by emphasizing that cognitive issues have been largely excluded from the analysis of euphemisms. Some authors who consider euphemisms in the socio-cognitive prism are Dominguez (2004), Crespo-Fernández (2013) and Orwenjo & Anudo (2016). Crespo-Fernández (2013:103) states that euphemisms, as a linguistic manifestation of the cognitive system, offer significant information regarding the way in which certain tabooed topics are actually perceived, understood and mitigated. This author adds that euphemisms help us to understand how taboos are conceived in cultural groups and which beliefs are

accepted and rejected. Many 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.

Metaphors are not just a stylistically attractive way of expressing ideas through language, but a way of thinking about things (Ungerer & Schmid 2006:118). The cognitive model of the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor postulates that metaphors go beyond the indication of similarities or embellishment of a given object. Instead, they present themselves as means of creating, organizing and understanding reality (Crespo-Fernández 2006: 106). Lakoff & Johnson (2003: 4) highlight that if we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.

In Lakoff & Johnson (1980), the term metaphor is applied to a series of phenomena, which are not peacefully considered as metaphors in the strict sense. The approach proposed by the authors for the study of metaphor, came to be called the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor. Metaphorical models can be considered and characterized as follows:

1 ° There is a well - structured conceptual domain *A* (directly significant) called the source domain.

2 ° There is a conceptual domain *B* that needs to be structured for the purpose of understanding it: the target domain.

3 ° There is a mapping that links the source domain to the target domain: Metaphorical projection.

4 ° The metaphorical projection from *A* to *B* is naturally motivated by a regular structural correlation that associates *A* with *B*.

5 ° The details of the mappings between **A** and **B** are motivated by the structural correlation, the relationship being specified from **A** to **B**.

The transfer of part of the structure from the source domain to the target domain is understood not only as a stable, systematic and conventional process but also unidirectional. Ungerer & Schmid (2006: 118) emphasize that what is transferred by a metaphor is not only the properties inherent in individual concepts, but the structure, internal relations or the logic of a complete cognitive model. These authors assure us that the source and target concepts are not conceived in isolation; contrarily they are embedded in the cognitive and cultural models. Culture provides a basis for all situations that we experience in such a way that we are able to form a cognitive model. Therefore, cognitive models are particular domains that depend on cultural models.

It is highlighted that contemporary studies of metaphor and analogy have focused on the structural mapping of the source domain to the target domain (Turner & Fauconnier 2003). Turner & Fauconnier (2003) explain that such mappings can explore the common schematic structure between domains. However, the work of conceptual blending has shown, in addition to these mappings, that there are dynamic integration processes that are built in the blending mental spaces. These authors clarify that conceptual integration also known as blending –is a basic mental operation – whose uniform dynamic and structural properties apply in various areas of knowledge and action, including metaphor and metonymy.

Orwenjo & Anudo (2016: 323) comment that the theory of conceptual blending is part of a larger picture concerning cognition and language. They clarify that it combines explanations of linguistic creativity with explanations of other linguistic behaviour as well as various products of human imagination. Ignácio (2011:2039) reinforces that TCB consists of highly imaginative and creative operations, present in all our mental activities. In addition,

Orwenjo & Anudo (2016) highlight that this theory does not only explain the integration of knowledge from different sources in a coherent, independent and unique unit, the blending space, but also it enables us to build meaning from different concepts that on the surface do not have a connection or apparently ready commonality.

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 socio-cognitive and social savoir faire points of view. In the following section, we address the methodology that guided the collection, selection and analysis of the data.

III. METHODOLOGY

Our approach is based on the realization of subjective descriptions, analyzes and interpretations through procedures of rational and intuitive nature, so as to understand better the complexity of the phenomena under survey, within the framework of the

theories of Politeness and the theories of cognitive linguistics (TCM and TCB).

The target population consists of native speakers of chopi language. However, the accessible population was made up of 32 chopi-speaking individuals. This sample consisted of 16 female informants and 16 male informants. The age of the female group ranges from 15 to 65 years old. The age of male group ranges from 15 to 78.

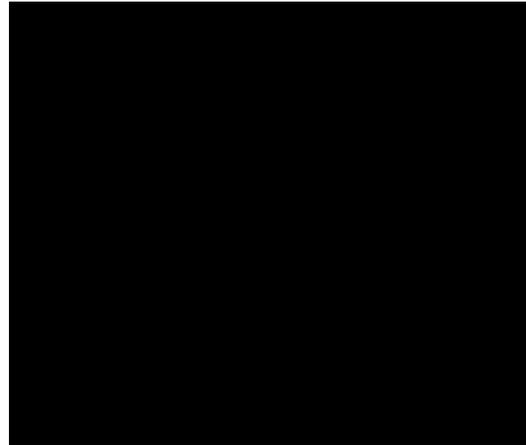
The interview was conducted in Quissico District, Inhambane Province. This technique is a procedure used in social research to collect data, with the purpose of providing insights for diagnoses, analyses, research, or even with the purpose of discussing and seeking solutions to any social issues. A standardized (structured) interview was launched. The script was composed by a closed question: when a person ceases to exist, what is said?

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Euphemism of Death in chopi language

From the analysis of the sample, we found the existence of 15 expressions referring to death, namely, *kufa* or *afite* (20 occurrences), *kumwalala* or *amwalati* 'lose oneself' (15 occurrences), *kulusa* 'to lose' (3 occurrences), *kutsula kuya ndzumani* 'going to heaven' (2 occurrences), *kulusa wutomi* 'to lose one's life' (1 occurrence), *kutsula m'ntini wogwita* 'to go to the last house' (1 occurrence), *kusiya* 'to leave someone/something behind' (1 occurrence) *kutsula uya humula* 'to go and rest' (1 occurrence), *kuhumula kuxaniseka* 'to rest from suffering' (1 occurrence), *kurwala thomo* 'to carry wet sand' (1 occurrence), *kupimwa ngulitsava* 'be measured by reed' (1 occurrence) *kupinda ha mafuni* 'to pass by the earth' (1 occurrence), *kuguma m'hefemulo* 'to lose one's breath' (1 occurrence), *kubwela mafu* 'to carry sand' (1 occurrence), *dipfumba dopwata salani* 'trip without farewell' (1 occurrence).

Graphic1 : Denominations referring to death



Source: Elaborated by the author

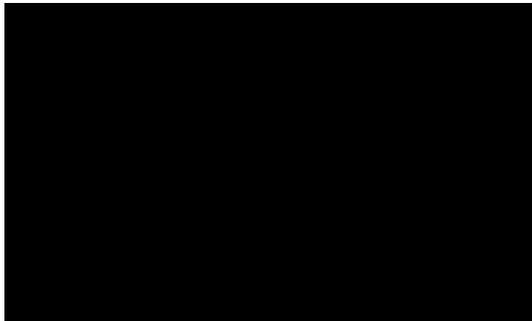
4.1.1. Metonymy

Death, in the responses to the interview, was conceptualized through metonymic expressions, namely, *kurwala thomo* 'to carry wet sand' (1 occurrence), *kupimwa ngulitsava* 'be measured by reed' (1 occurrence), *kuguma m'hefemulo* 'to lose one's breath' (1 occurrence), *kubwela mafu* 'to carry sand' (1 occurrence).

4.1.2. Metaphor

Death is euphemized by metaphorical strategies licensed by different conceptual metaphors, namely, TO DIE IS TO LOSE, TO DIE IS TO TRAVEL and TO DIE IS TO REST.

Graphic 2 : Frequency of Conceptual Metaphor referring to death



Source: Elaborated by the author

a) **Death is Loss**

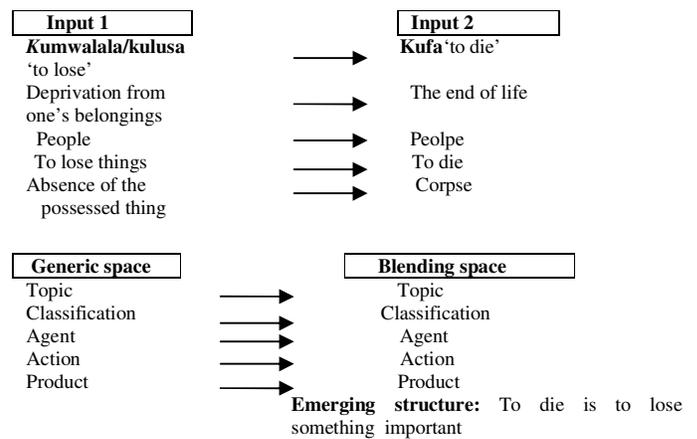
Kufa ‘to die’ (20 occurrences) was more conceptualized metaphorically using the metaphorical expressions *kumwalala* ‘to lose oneself’ (30%) and *kulusa* ‘to lose’ (6%). *Kumwalala* or *amwalati* (the inflected form of the verb *kumwalala* ‘to lose oneself’) were mentioned by nine women and six men. Meanwhile, *kulusa* or *alusili* (the inflected form of the verb *kulusa* ‘to lose’) were mentioned by three men. In addition, a male speaker mentioned the expression *kulusa wutomi* ‘to lose one’s life’.

As we observe the aforementioned data, we find out that there is a projection from the source domain *kumwalalal/kulusa* ‘to lose oneself/to lose’ to the target domain, *kufa* ‘to die’. It is in this correspondence between the source domain and the target domain that the metaphorical conceptualization fulfils its euphemistic function. The structural metaphorical linguistic expression *kumwalala / kulusa* ‘to lose’, licensed by the conceptual metaphor TO DIE IS TO LOSE, transforms the taboo into a mentionable and less offensive concept. Thus, this indirect language preserves, protects and enhances the positive face of the speaker and his/her interlocutor.

In the light of TCB, there are two mental spaces for *kumwalalal/kulusa* ‘to lose oneself/to lose’ and *kufa* ‘to die’. The euphemism occupies the source domain, whereas the tabooed concept occupies the target domain. *Kumwalalal/kulusa* ‘to lose oneself /to lose’ is projected onto the tabooed concept, *kufa* ‘to die’. Therefore, there are fixed homologous mappings

between the two input spaces (the features of *kumwalalal/kulusa* ‘to lose oneself/to lose’ and *kufa* ‘to die’). 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. 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.

Fig.1: The meaning of *kumwalalal/kulusa* in the light of CBT



Source: Model dapted from TCB Mental spaces diagram (Fauconnier &Turner 2002; Grady,Oakley & Coulson (1999) and Orwenjo & Anudo 2016).

The meaning of this euphemism is established through a vital relationship of *analogy*. This euphemism takes into account three constituent processes that allow the construction of its meaning. In the *composition process*, the elements of the source and target domains are projected, whereas in the *finishing process*, the frames of *deprivation from one’s belongings* (*Kumwalala / kulusa*) and *the end of life* (*kufa*) 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 that the principles of integration, network, unpacking, topology and good reasoning are satisfied by the euphemism.

As we reflected about the conceptual metaphor (TO DIE IS TO LOSE) and the meaning (loss of something important) underlying the metaphoric

euphemism *kumwalala/kulusa* 'to lose oneself /to lose', we concluded that *kumwalala / kulusa* 'to lose oneself/to lose' expresses a moment of deep pain, without consolation. Death is generally considered to be a loss for family and friends. It is seen as an evil destiny and it evokes an event over which those who remain have no control. Now, although this indirect language has this negative connotation, it sounds more polite and consequently preserves, protects and enhances the positive face of both the speaker and the interlocutor.

b) Death is Travel

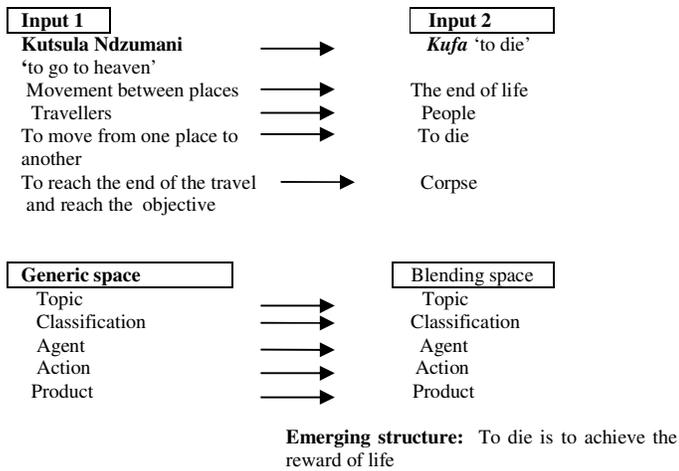
We have also noted the conceptualization of death through verbs that imply a certain movement. They are, namely, *kutsula ndzumani* 'to go to heaven' (2 occurrences), *kutsula m'ntini wo gwita* 'to go to the last house' (1 occurrence), *kusiya* 'to leave someone/something behind' (1 occurrence), *kupinda ha mafuni* 'pass by the earth' (1 occurrence), *kutsula uya humula* 'to go and rest' (1 occurrence) and *dipfumba dopwata salani* 'trip without farewell' (1 occurrence). All expressions were mentioned by male informants, except *kutsula ndzumani* 'to go to heaven'. This was mentioned by two informants, one male and one female. Now, when we reflect on these expressions we conclude that the conceptual metaphor that licenses its use is TO DIE IS TO TRAVEL. However, it is necessary to emphasize that each of these euphemisms has its own cognitive, stylistic and social effects.

The euphemistic expressions that imply a *certain movement*, source domain, are projected onto *kufa* 'to die'. The target, cognitive and cultural domain, *kufa* 'to die' is experienced and understood in terms of the source, cognitive and cultural domain, *kutsula ndzumani* 'to go to heaven', *kutsula m'ntini wo gwita* 'to go to the last house', *kusiya* 'to leave', *kupinda ha mafuni* 'pass by the earth', *kutsula uya humula* 'to go to rest' and *dipfumba dopwata salani* 'trip without a farewell'. Now, 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 courtesy or social etiquette. Therefore, they safeguard and reinforce the positive face of both the speaker and interlocutor.

As we reflected about the conceptual metaphor TO DIE IS TO TRAVEL, we realised that this conceptual manifestation is similar to the conceptual metaphor of the English language DEATH-IS-A-JOURNEY. It licenses expressions such as depart / departure, leave and pass from the sorrows of Earth. Here, due to the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL scheme in which our everyday experience can be organized (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 '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 process of interpretation, mapping the knowledge about the journey onto the knowledge about a reality from the domain of death. Therefore, there are traces of universality in the conceptualization of death in chopi language.

In the light of TCB, we will analyze the euphemism *kufa i kutsula ndzumani* 'to die is to go to heaven' through the four mental spaces diagram. The expression *kutsula ndzumani* 'to go to heaven', input 1, is projected onto the tabooed expression *kufa* 'to die', input 2. Therefore, there are fixed homologous mappings between the two spaces (the features of *kutsula ndzumani* 'to go to heaven' and *kufa* 'to die'). 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. 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 reward of life.

Fig.2: The meaning of *Kutsula ndzumani* 'to go to heaven' in the light of TCB



Source: Model adapted from TCB Mental spaces diagram (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Grady, Oakley & Coulson (1999) and Orwenjo & Anudo 2016).

The meaning 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 process*, the elements of the source and target domains are projected, whereas, in the *finishing process*, the frames of *kutsula ndzumani* 'to go to heaven' and *kufa* 'to die' are introduced. In the elaboration, the meaning of this euphemism is illustrated with the concept of death as achieving the reward of life.

However, the metaphorical construction of death as a journey is not a superficial subject of phraseology, because these euphemisms affect not only thought but also the social practice (Fairclough 1992) of mourning and burying the dead. We believe the speakers that use this euphemism face death peacefully, as they believe in the kingdom of heaven and the reward after death. That is, these euphemisms have a positive connotation.

c) Death is Rest

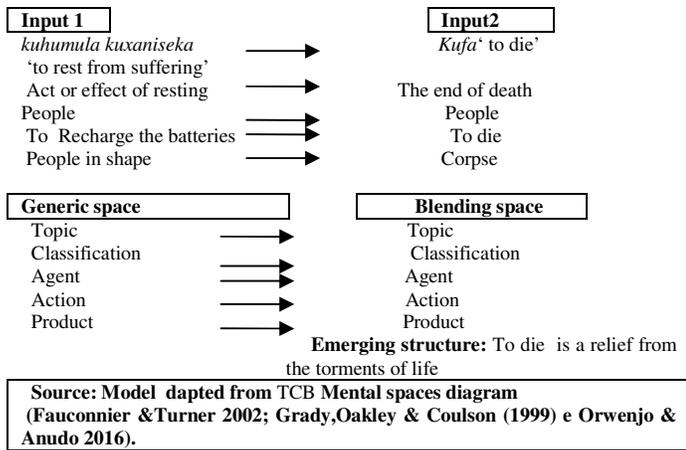
Death was also conceptualized through expressions that associate it with rest. Unfortunately, we have only noted one expression, *kuhumula*

kuxaniseka 'to rest from suffering'. It is clear that it is not a question of resting in its literal sense. It is clear that this is the physical disappearance of one's loved ones. However, it would be shocking to say *kufa* 'to die'. The source domain, *kuhumula kuxaniseka* 'rest from suffering', is projected onto the target domain, *kufa* 'to die'. It is in this correspondence between the target domain and the source domain that the metaphoric conceptualization fulfils its euphemistic function (Crespo-Fernández 2006:107). This metaphor breaks the maximum of clarity. On the other hand, it is more courteous and consequently protects and reinforces the positive face of the speakers.

However, death is not conceptualized as *resting* only in the chopi language, this metaphor exists, for example, in the English language. Here are some examples: eternal rest, rest in Him and rest in peace. Now, in the examples above we understand that *rest* and *kuhumula* are standard euphemisms for death in both English and chopi language. Therefore, there are traces of universality in the way of understanding and experiencing death between chopi and English language.

In the light of the TCB, the euphemism *kufa i kuhumula kuxaniseka* is viewed as follows: there are two mental spaces for rest and death that correspond to the source and target domains as exemplified in the TCM. *Kuhumula kuxaniseka* 'to rest from suffering', a euphemistic expression, is projected onto *kufa* 'to die', the tabooed expression. That is, there are fixed homologous mappings between the two inputs (the features of *kuhumula kuxaniseka* 'rest from suffering' and *kufa* 'to die'). Subsequently, the information common to the inputs is projected onto the generic space. The common information is topic, classification, agent, action and product. 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.

Fig.3: The meaning of *kuhumula kuxaniseka* 'to rest from suffering' in the light of TCB



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 process*, the elements of the source and target domains are projected, whereas in the *finishing process*, the frames of **act or effect of resting** (*kuhumula kuxaniseka*) and **the end of life** (*kufa*) are introduced. In the elaboration, the meaning of this euphemism is illustrated with the concept of death as 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.

Finally, when we reflected on the conceptual metaphor (TO DIE IS TO REST) and the meaning 'relief from the torments of life' underlying the euphemism *kuhumula kuxaniseka*, we concluded that this expression create better conditions to face death. Therefore, this conceptual metaphor has positive connotations.

V. CONCLUSION

Death is a taboo for all human beings and inevitably a social norm. When analyzing the answers of the interview, we found out that the term *kufa* or *afite* (the inflected form of the verb *kufa* 'to die') occurred 20 times, corresponding to 40% of the answers given. Additionally, in the list of metaphorical euphemistic terms, *kumwalala* 'to lose oneself' (18 occurrences) and *kulusa* 'to lose' (3 occurrences) stood out. We also concluded that the concept *kufa* 'to die' can be euphemized through metonymies, such as *kurwala thomo* 'to carry wet sand', *kubwela mafu* 'to carry sand', *kupimwa ngulitsava* 'to be measured by reed' and *kuguma m'hefemulo* 'to lose one's breath'.

Regarding the metaphorical euphemisms, three conceptual metaphors have been identified, namely: TO DIE IS TO LOSE, TO DIE IS TO TRAVEL and TO DIE IS TO REST. Among them, the euphemisms licensed by the first conceptual metaphors are the most frequent in the respondents' answers (70% of the occurrences). Meanwhile, the euphemism licensed by the latter only occurred once (4% of the occurrences). However, the second stands out for licensing six different euphemistic expressions (26% of the occurrences).

The second and third conceptual metaphors (TO DIE IS TO TRAVEL and TO DIE IS TO REST) have a positive connotation, whereas the first, TO DIE IS TO LOSE, has a negative connotation.

We could see that the studies on linguistic taboos are mostly guided by semantics and, generally, are limited to list the taboo words and their corresponding euphemisms in a superficial way. 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.

REFERENCES

[1] Abrantes, A. O Uso do Eufemismo na Imprensa. Um Estudo Contrastivo em Linguística Cognitiva. Dissertação Unpublisded Masters’Dissertation, Universidade de Católica Portuguesa, Portugal,2001.

[2] Allan, K. and Burrige, K. *Forbidden Words: Taboo and Censoring of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[3] Bakhtiar, M. Assessing The Offensiveness Level Of Taboo Words in Persian. *The Journal of International Social Research*,4, 2011, pp.15-22. www.sosyalarastirmalar.com. Acessado em 10 de Outubro.

[4] Brancaglioni Jr., A. O eufemismo da morte no Antigo Egito. *Classica*, 718, São Paulo, 1995, pp. 25-32.

[5] Brown, P. and Levinson, S. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language usage*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

[6] Crespo-Fernández, E. Euphemistic metaphors in English and Spanish epitaphs: A comparative study. *ATLANTIS, Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American studies* 35:2, 2013, pp. 99-118.

[7] Crespo-Fernández, E. EL eufemismo y el disfemismo:Procesos de manipulación del tabú en el lenguaje literario inglés.Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 2007.

[8] Crespo-Fernández, E. The language of death: Euphemisms and conceptual metaphorization in Victorian obituaries. *Sky Journal of Linguistics* 19, 2006, pp. 101-130.

[9] Crespo-Fernández, E. Euphemistic strategies in politeness and face concerns. *Pragmalingüística*, 13, 2005, pp. 77-86.

[10] Domínguez,P. La función social y cognitiva del eufemismo y del disfemismo. *Panace* 5:15, 2004, pp. 45-51. In:<http://www.medtrad.org/pana.htm>.

[11] Farias, E. *Elaboração de Instrumentos de Pesquisa-entrevistas e questionários*.1st ed.Brasil: Universidade Estácio Dias de Sá, 2002.

[12] Fauconnier, G. and Turner, M. *The Way We Think*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

[13] Fairclough, N. *Discourse and Social Change*. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.,1992.

[14] Grady, J., Oakley, T. and Coulson, S. Blending and Metaphor. In Gibbs Jr., R. and Steen, G. (eds) *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam:John Benjamins Publishing Company,1999:101-124.

[15] Grice, H. P. Logic and Conversation. In Cole, P. & Morgan, J. (eds) *Syntax and Semantics* 3. Vol III. New York: Academic Press. 1975:41-58.

[16] Hernando, B. La muerte mensajera. Las esquelas de defunción como elementoInformativo.2001.http://www.ucm.es/info/period/Period_I/EMP/Numer_07/7.5-Inve/7-5-03.htm].

[17] Ignácio, L.Mesclagem e Metáfora Conceptual em Manchetes de Jornal. *Anais do XV Congresso Nacional de Linguística e Filologia*, 15-5, 2011, pp. 2037-2048.

[18] James, C. *Contrastive Analysis*. Harlow: Longman,1980.

[19] Junod, H. *Usos e Costumes dos Bantus*. Vol.I e II. Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique,1996.

[20] Lakoff, R. Logic of politeness or minding your P’s and Q’s. In Colum, C. (eds.), *Papers from the Ninth regional meeting of Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1973: 292-305.

[21] Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. *Metaphors We live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,1980.

[22] Lakoff ,G. Women, Fire and Dangerous Things. What categories Reveal about Minds. Chicago/London: The university of Chicago Press,1987.

[23] Lopes, A. *Política Linguística: Princípios e Problemas*. Maputo: Imprensa Universitária,1997.

[24] Maoncha, J. N. and Ndambuki, J. M. Euphemism Use as a Mirror of the People’s.Worldview: The Case of the Abagusii Dirges of Kenya. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*,10:1, 2017, pp. 146-162.

[25] Mbaya, M. Linguistic taboo in African Marriage Context: A study of the Oromo *Laquu*. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 11, 2002, pp. 224-235. Senegal: University of Gaston Berger.

[26] Moses, R.. and Marelli, G. Obituaries and discursive construction of dying and living. *Texas Linguistic Forum* 47, 2004, pp. 123-130.

[27] Ngunga, A. *Introdução à Linguística Bantu*. Maputo: Imprensa Universitária, 2004.

[28] Nhacudime, P.F. Análise Contrastiva de Alguns Tabus Linguísticos entre o Português Europeu e Citonga. Unpublished Masters’s Dissertation, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, 2013.

[29] Orwenjo, D.O. and Anudo, C. A. A cognitive linguistic approach to Dholuo sexual euphemisms and dysphemisms. *Cognitive Linguistic Studies* 3:2, 2016, pp. 316– 346. Doi 10.1075/cogls.3.2.07och issn 2213–8722 / e-issn 2213–8730.

[30] Qanbar, N. A sociolinguistic study of the Linguistic taboos in Yemeni Society. In: *Mordern Journal of Applied Linguistics*3:2, 2011, pp. 86-104. <http://www.mjal.org/> Data de Acesso:20/6/ 2012.

[31] Rawson, H. A *Dictionary of Euphemisms & Other Doubletalk*. New York: Crown Publishers Inc.1981.

[32] Siteo, B. and Ngunga, A. Relatório do II Seminário de Padronização da Ortografia de Línguas Moçambicanas. Maputo: NELIMO/ Faculdade de Letras, 2000.

[33] Ullmann, S. *Semântica: Uma Introdução à Ciência do Significado*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbeinkian,1964.

[34] Ungerer, F. and Schmid, H. *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. Malaysia: Pearson Education Limited, 2006.

[35] Wardhaugh, R. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2003.

[36] Turner, M. and Fauconnier, G. Metaphor, metonymy, and binding. In: Dirven,R. e Parings, R. (eds) *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003.

[37] Warren-Rothlin, A. Politeness Strategies in Biblical Hebrew and West African Languages. *Journal of Translation*, 3: 1,2007.

[38] Zavaglia, C. and Orsi, V. Lexico-erótico obsceno em italiano e português: algumas considerações. Brasil: Universidade Estadual Paulista-NESP, 2011.

Appendix

Table 1

Informant	Age	School level	Gender	When a person ceases to exist, what do we say?
1	15	Secondary	M	Kufa
2	19	Secondary	M	Kumwalala, kufa
3	20	Secondary	M	Kufa, kulusa wutomi
4	20	Secondary	M	Kufa, kumwalala
5	20	Secondary	M	Amwaliti, alusili
6	20	Secondary	M	Kufa, kulusa
7	24	Secondary	M	Kufa, kumwalala
8	22	Secondary	M	Afite, amwalati, alusili, ahisiti
9	20	Secondary	M	Kufa
10	20	Secondary	M	Kuguma m’hefemulo
11	32	University	M	Kutsula uia humula
12	34	Primary	M	Kumwalala, kufa
13	54	Primary	M	Kuhumula kuxaniseka
14	65	M	Kutsula ndzumini Kubwela mafu
15	67	Primary		Kutsula m’nti wo gwita Dipfumba dopwata salani

16	78		M	Kupinda ha mafuni
17	15	Secondary	F	Kufa
18	18	Secondary	F	Kufa, kumwalala
19	20	Secondary	F	Kufa, kumwalala
20	22	Primary	F	Kumwalala
21	32	Primary	F	Kufa
22	38	F	Afite, amwalati
23	40	F	Afite, amwalati
24	42	Primary	F	Afite
25	42	Primary	F	Kumwalala
26	45	Primary	F	Kumwalala
27	43	Secondary	F	Kufa
28	50	Primary	F	Kufa
29	53	Primary	F	Kurwala thomu
30	55	...	F	Kumwalala
31	56	Primary	F	Kutsula ndzumani
32	65		F	Afite, amwalati, kupimwa ngulitsava