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[Artigo]

Phraseological units and humor in dubbing translation: A descriptive study of *Modern Family*

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. This research investigates the translation of humor in the dubbing of the American sitcom *Modern Family*, with a particular focus on phraseological units and the complexities they pose in audiovisual translation. **Objective**. Grounded in Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 1995) and informed by the works of Chaume (2012) and Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), the study analyzes how humorous instances involving idioms, fixed expressions, and multimodal elements are adapted into Brazilian Portuguese. **Methodology**. The analysis considers the interplay of linguistic, cultural, and performative dimensions, emphasizing the role of cultural adaptation, and the technical constraints of dubbing, such as lip-sync and timing. **Results and Discussion**. The findings reveal that the effective translation of humor depends on more than linguistic equivalence; it requires a creative and collaborative process involving the translator, dubbing director, and voice actor. **Conclusion**. By examining the intersection between language, sound, and performance, this research contributes to the understanding of how phraseological and sound-based humor can be successfully recontextualized in dubbed audiovisual products.

KEYWORDS: Audiovisual translation. Dubbing. Humor. Phraseological units. *Modern Family*.

Unidades fraseológicas e humor na tradução para dublagem: Um estudo descritivo de *Modern Family*

RESUMO

Introdução. Esta pesquisa investiga a tradução do humor na dublagem da série cômica americana *Modern Family*, com ênfase nas unidades fraseológicas e nas complexidades que elas apresentam para a tradução audiovisual. **Objetivo**. Fundamentado nos Estudos Descritivos da Tradução (Toury, 1995) e ancorado nos aportes teóricos de Chaume (2012) e Díaz-Cintas e Remael (2007), o estudo analisa como ocorrências humorísticas envolvendo expressões idiomáticas, frases fixas e elementos multimodais são adaptadas para o português brasileiro. **Metodologia**. A análise considera a interação entre dimensões linguísticas, culturais e performativas, destacando o papel da adaptação cultural e das restrições técnicas da dublagem, como a sincronização labial e o tempo de fala. **Resultados e Discussão**. Os resultados indicam que a tradução eficaz do humor vai além da equivalência

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linguística, exigindo um processo criativo e colaborativo entre o tradutor, o diretor de dublagem e o ator de voz. **Conclusão**. Ao explorar a interseção entre linguagem, sonoridade e performance, esta pesquisa contribui para a compreensão de como o humor fraseológico e sonoro pode ser recontextualizado com sucesso em produtos audiovisuais dublados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tradução audiovisual. Dublagem. Humor. Unidades fraseológicas. *Modern Family*.

1 INTRODUÇÃO

Audiovisual translation has established itself as a fundamental field within Translation Studies, particularly in light of the increasing global circulation of cultural products such as television series. Within this domain, dubbing stands out due to its technical and linguistic complexity, as it demands not only the transfer of meaning but also the adaptation of auditory and visual elements to ensure the naturalness and coherence of the translated text. According to information released by *ABC Entertainment*[1](2025), *Modern Family*[2] (2009-2020 / 11 seasons) is a sitcom that portrays the everyday life of an extended American family composed of three interconnected household units: (i) the Pritchetts, (ii) the Dunphys, and (iii) the Tucker-Pritchetts. Set in Los Angeles, California, the series explores a wide range of themes (including family dynamics, cultural issues, gender and sexual diversity, homophobia, social challenges, and adoption) while using humor as a key narrative device to present ordinary situations in engaging and relatable ways.

The data retrieved from the dubbing portal *Dublapédia* (n.d.)[3] indicate that the Brazilian Portuguese dubbing of *Modern Family* was produced in São Paulo and, across its eleven seasons, the series underwent work in three different dubbing studios: (i) Dublavídeo (Season 1; Seasons 10–11), (ii) Sigma (Season 2 through Season 8, Episode 4), and (iii) Centauro (Season 8, Episode 5 through Season 9). In this context, the American series *Modern Family* serves as a privileged object of analysis, given its diverse humor that ranges from verbal jokes and comedic situations to cultural references and phraseological units. Humor, by its nature, is heavily dependent on linguistic and cultural contexts, posing specific challenges for translation, especially when linked to phraseological expressions, which carry figurative and conventionalized meanings.

In this article, phraseological units are understood as articulated by Corpas Pastor (1996), who defines Phraseological Units as lexical segments composed of at least three written words, potentially extending to complex sentence structures. What distinguishes these units is the high frequency with

[1] The American Broadcasting Company (ABC) is a major U.S. television network responsible for producing and distributing numerous popular series, such as *Modern Family*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *How to Get Away with Murder*, among others.

[2] *Modern Family* was created by Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan, who also served as the series' showrunners and executive producers throughout its run (2009–2020). The production team additionally included executive producers such as Jeff Morton, Danny Zuker, Paul Corrigan, Brad Walsh, and Abraham Higginbotham. Across its eleven seasons, the series was directed by a wide range of professionals, with frequent contributions from directors such as Gail Mancuso, Steven Levitan, Michael Spiller, Beth McCarthy-Miller, and Jim Hensz, all of whom helped shape the show's distinctive comedic and documentary-style aesthetic.

[3] Available at: https://dublagem.fandom.com/wiki/Fam%C3%ADlia_Moderna. Accessed on: November 27, 2025.

which their components co-occur, pointing to a systematic collocational pattern that reinforces their semantic cohesion. Such consistency underscores their value in language analysis, revealing communicative practices that transcend the sum of individual words and fulfill specific pragmatic roles within discourse.

This article investigates the translation strategies employed in the Brazilian dubbing of *Modern Family* to handle phraseological units and humorous instances present in the original English text. This research seeks to understand how these elements are preserved, adapted, or altered, taking into account the constraints imposed by the dubbing process, such as lip synchronization and dialogue duration.

The analysis intends to contribute to a better understanding of translation practices in dubbing and their implications for the reception of humor by Brazilian audiences. To this end, a descriptive comparative study will be conducted between selected excerpts from the original version and their respective dubbed versions, with a focus on the linguistic and cultural characteristics involved in the phraseological units and humorous instances.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Dubbing translation

In Brazil, as noted by Silva (2009), the practice of dubbing initially emerged within the realm of animated films, primarily targeting young audiences. Over time, with the growing popularity of television, dubbing evolved into a necessity, particularly due to the country's high illiteracy rates. As Silva (2009, p. 12) points out, dubbing became "the most effective way to reach the majority of the population," given its ability to communicate audiovisual content to a broad and heterogeneous audience.

In addition to these historical and social factors, the contemporary context is Brazilians' widespread lack of proficiency in English. This linguistic gap reinforces the cultural and communicative importance of dubbing, since translated audio becomes the primary means through which large segments of the population access foreign media. Consequently, dubbing in Brazil functions not only as a mode of language transfer but also as a mechanism that ensures linguistic accessibility and sustains audience engagement with global audiovisual products.

As discussed by Pinto (2016) and Nunes (2018), dubbing is a translation practice that typically involves replacing the original audio of a given audiovisual production with a version recorded in the target language. However, the author also points out that dubbing can occur within the same language, particularly in cases "where audio capture issues arise or for specific genres such as musicals or commercials" (Pinto, 2016, p. 9, translated by the authors).

According to Pinto's (2016) analysis, one of the most critical elements in dubbing is lip-syncing, which plays a fundamental role in ensuring a seamless and immersive viewing experience. In this regard, the author emphasizes the importance of carefully selecting and calibrating the number and rhythm of words used in the dubbed script. Furthermore, Pinto (2016, p. 11) underlines that in order for a dubbed version to feel authentic and resonate with the audience, it is essential that both the translated script and its performance reflect "an oral register that closely resembles everyday spoken language".

Konecsni (2016) and Nunes (2018) argue that it is the responsibility of the dubbing translator not only to understand the characters' actions, gestures, communication styles, and behaviors, but also to make the necessary adaptations to ensure that the dubbed script aligns accurately with the characters' lip movements. Based on the author's observations, it can be inferred that the dubbing process requires a deep understanding not only of the verbal content but also of the emotional and contextual nuances embedded in each scene. The ultimate aim is to preserve the integrity of the original work while offering viewers an immersive cinematic experience, one that brings the cultural references of the "other" into the audience's own everyday reality.

The insights provided by Pinto (2016) are reinforced by Bergo and Bahia (2021), who highlight the centrality of lip-sync in producing a convincing dubbed version for the audience. In addition, the authors introduce the notion of "make believe" (Bergo; Bahia, 2021, p. 51, translated by the authors), which refers to dubbing's ability to create the illusion that the language in which the content is being experienced is, in fact, the original.

Properly dubbing an audiovisual production requiresan initial translation process. In this regard, the role of the translator is crucial, as emphasized by Ramalho (2007). Within the Brazilian context, the translator "receives a video file containing the film and a separate text file with the script. After watching the film, the translator timestamps the dialogues to ensure synchronization, and then proceeds with the translation" (Ramalho, 2007, p. 3, translated by the authors).

This procedure enables the translator to grasp not only the verbal content but also the contextual elements of the work, the subtle nuances of each character and the semantic function of each utterance, thereby facilitating the adaptation of the text for dubbing and making it more natural and coherent with the original narrative.

As noted by Oliveira (2010), contextual information not explicitly conveyed through dialogue (such as character behavior, facial expressions, and other visual cues) is typically left for voice actors to interpret during the recording session. Thus, the responsibility of conveying these nuances falls to the dubbers, who must rely solely on their performance without the benefit of a contextually annotated translation.

Konecsni (2016) emphasizes that the translator's role in preparing the dubbing script is crucial to ensuring the smooth progression of the dubbing process. The dubbing director relies heavily on this translated script to cast voice actors appropriately. Based on Konecsni's analysis, the translator's absence during the recording phase underscores the importance of meticulous attention to detail during the translation stage.

In her work, Konecsni (2016) presents a range of technical terms related to dubbing that are essential for understanding both the translation and adaptation of the script and the dubbing process itself. She highlights lip-sync as a fundamental criterion for evaluating the quality of dubbed content: "this is the part that matters most and is essential for dubbing to be considered good. Nothing should be missing or in excess in the characters' mouth movements" (Konecsni, 2016, p. 14, translated by the authors).

To ensure accurate lip synchronization, the translator must pay close attention to the original dialogue and seek target language equivalents that match the rhythm and timing of the character's speech in a natural way. Another term introduced by Konecsni (2016) is *AD LIB*, which refers to the

insertion of additional dialogue in the dubbed version when, in the original audiovisual content, a character is seen moving their lips without producing any sound. According to the author:

> Sometimes the actor/character in the video does not say anything, but moves their lips. In Brazil, if the actor/character moves their mouth and there is no sound, we consider it a poorly executed dubbing. Therefore, the director may ask for the insertion of a 'hmm,' 'right,' or even, when necessary, the creation of an entire line. The script does not always include all the necessary information [...] (Konecsni, 2016, p. 22, translated by the authors).

Konecsni (2016) also presents two additional terms relevant to this discussion: *Off Screen* and *On Screen*. In the first case, *Off Screen*, since the actor or character is not visible on screen, there is no need for lip synchronization. However, the translator must refrain from introducing lines that do not appear in the original script. In contrast, the *On Screen* case involves characters visibly speaking on screen, which once again demands careful attention to lip-sync accuracy, as Konecsni emphasizes.

As in any branch of translation, dubbing follows a distinct set of procedures. According to Villela, Bustamante Teixeira, and Frois (2020), this specific modality faces its own set of technical constraints during execution, which must be navigated carefully by all professionals involved in the dubbing workflow.

> As can be observed, dubbing translation must conform to a series of constraints of various kinds, which ultimately determine its success. Unlike literary translators, who enjoy greater freedom to restructure sentences, shift elements, or expand and clarify ideas to ensure fluency in the target language, dubbing translators operate within much stricter limitations. The main challenge they face lies in condensing the spoken content to fit within the time dictated not only by the actor's original delivery but also by the syntactic and lexical economy of the source language. This constraint is particularly evident in language pairs with differing levels of conciseness. For instance, translators working from English into Italian are well aware of this issue, especially when dealing with lengthy, content-rich utterances that require a considerable effort of condensation (Villela; Bustamante Teixeira; Frois, 2020, p. 224, translated by the authors).

In addition to such aspect Villela, Bustamante Teixeira, and Frois (2020) note that although lip-sync remains one of the key elements requiring special attention, it should not hinder the communicative function of the dialogue. The authors further assign to the translator the responsibility of "[...] paying attention to those moments in which the actor does not speak, although they move their lips: [...] in the original language, this may go unnoticed, but if not adequately 'filled in' during the dubbing phase, it is frequently perceived" (Villela; Bustamante Teixeira; Frois, 2020, p. 225, translated by the authors).

As becomes evident, the dubbing translation process goes beyond purely linguistic considerations. The translator must demonstrate the ability to grasp the characters' emotions and appropriately interpret the visual nuances of the audiovisual work. Accordingly, the translated text should harmoniously integrate all the elements present in the production, resulting in a natural and fluid rendering for the target audience.

2.2 The role of phraseological units in meaning-making and translation

For Monteiro-Plantin (2014), phraseology, as an autonomous discipline, underscores the complexity and richness of language by concentrating on lexical combinations that, though often used unconsciously, are fundamental to the development of discursive competence. These multi-word units (relatively fixed and spanning from phonetic to discourse-pragmatic levels) expose conventional usage patterns that not only signal mastery of one's native language but also shape the acquisition of

additional languages. Therefore, phraseology extends beyond the mere cataloguing of idioms; it seeks to explain how certain lexical sequences become socially and functionally crystallized in particular contexts, fulfilling communicative functions and offering insights into the cognitive and cultural frameworks of speakers.

Building on this foundational perspective, Henriques (2018) offers a definition of phraseology that centers on stable lexical units, ranging from minimal expressions consisting of two written words to more extensive phrasal structures. This view emphasizes the cohesive nature of such units within discourse, highlighting their fixedness and predictability. Positioned within the domain of lexicography, phraseology thus reveals its dual concern with both the form and function of language, contributing to the systematic description of the lexicon and its recurrent, conventional expressions as they circulate in communicative practice.

Expanding on these insights, Nunes (2025) argues that isolated words possess limited expressive power when used independently, and that their full semantic potential is only activated when they are embedded in specific contexts. This perspective draws attention to the dynamic and multifaceted character of language, which functions as a complex system through which speakers deploy linguistic forms to express emotions, ideas, and facts with greater nuance and appropriateness. Consequently, phraseology not only identifies and classifies stable lexical units but also deepens our understanding of how meaning is shaped by the interplay between language and context, illuminating the interpretative and communicative potential inherent in all languages.

Phraseological Units (PUs), in this regard, represent a broad category of fixed and recurrent expressions, each serving distinct roles in communication and meaning-making. These include metaphors, which rely on implicit comparisons to convey figurative meaning; idiomatic expressions, marked by their non-literal interpretations; and phraseological utterances such as *parēmia* and proverbs, which carry embedded cultural and traditional values.

Additionally, this category encompasses collocations, stable word pairings that frequently co-occur in usage; popular sayings, which embody collective oral knowledge; and swear words, often charged with emotional and pragmatic significance. Other notable types include set phrases, which involve conventional combinations frequently used in speech and writing, and pragmatemes, expressions that fulfill specific communicative functions depending on the situation. Together, these diverse forms are essential for linguistic inquiry and present unique challenges in the field of translation studies, where preserving their meaning, function, and cultural resonance often demands careful adaptation.

Following the claims of Baptista (2014), the absence of consensus regarding the classification of phraseological units. Despite ongoing debates, scholars generally agree on the importance of distinguishing between commutable phraseological units (those that can be replaced by a clause or utterance and function collectively as complete discourse segments) and those that do not attain such structural autonomy. This distinction is fundamental to understanding the internal variability and complexity of phraseological units, as it differentiates between expressions that function as self-contained communicative blocks and those whose composition does not correspond to an independent clause, reflecting varying degrees of fixity and syntactic independence.

Among the subtypes of phraseological units, metaphors occupy a particularly prominent place. Ferreira (2009) explains that Aristotle conceived metaphor as a figure of speech in which meaning is constructed through an implicit connection between two distinct elements. In *Rhetoric*, this link is characterized by an indirect comparison between terms, while in *Poetics*, metaphor is framed as the transfer of meaning across hierarchical categories (such as from genus to species or vice versa) as well as through analogy. This conceptualization emphasizes metaphor's rhetorical function in expanding the semantic potential of words, enriching discourse by enabling new interpretative possibilities and cognitive associations.

In a complementary discussion, Baptista (2014) stresses the importance of idiomatic expressions in the process of language acquisition and comprehension, pointing out that their meanings are deeply embedded in the cultural context of the language community. In line with that Nunes (2025) adds that the translator's ability to effectively render these expressions is a key indicator of their proficiency. Successfully translating idioms requires not just linguistic knowledge, but also the capacity to grasp and convey cultural, pragmatic, and communicative nuances that go beyond literal meaning, a core challenge in translation studies.

Turning to phraseological utterances, Barreiros and Telles (2017) define these units as fixed expressions within oral language that are embedded in the sociocultural fabric of a community. These formulaic utterances, passed down through generations, embody the beliefs, emotions, habits, and worldview of a people. Functioning as complete speech acts, they may be context-specific or used in more general communicative situations. Their structure demonstrates internal fixedness in both form and meaning, as well as external stability regarding their position and usage within the broader linguistic and cultural repertoire.

Within this category, paremiological units (such as proverbs) occupy a central role. Monteiro-Plantin (2014) identifies them as key elements of phraseology due to their didactic function, often conveying moral lessons, practical advice, and culturally inherited wisdom. In the English language, for instance, it is possible to find proverbs such as the Irish saying "*beware of people who dislike cats*" (Holbrook, 1996, p. 243) which conveys the idea that individuals who do not appreciate cats may be considered untrustworthy. This proverb acquires cultural significance within the Irish context, where black cats are traditionally regarded as symbols of good fortune, an interpretation that contrasts with beliefs in other cultures, such as Brazil, where black cats are often associated with bad luck or superstition.

In a related vein, popular sayings represent another form of phraseological unit deeply rooted in the cultural and oral traditions of linguistic communities. Alencar (2021) observes that such sayings reflect shared experiences and cultural values, emerging in specific contexts of use and transmitted across generations through oral tradition. Oliveira (2022) further defines popular sayings as concise and accessible expressions that encapsulate everyday knowledge.

The *Cambridge Dictionary* (2025) defines the popular saying *"Nothing ventured, nothing gained"* as a phraseological unit that highlights how valuable achievements or personal goals inevitably require taking risks along the way. By combining empirical observations with symbolic language, these sayings serve as vehicles of collective memory and folk wisdom, reinforcing their function as culturally embedded communicative tools.

Swear words also constitute a particular class of phraseological units characterized by their intense emotional load. Drawing on Oliveira's (2018) reflections, these expressions frequently surface in contexts marked by frustration, pain, or anger, where emotional responses override rational constraints. Although often socially stigmatized due to their association with vulgar or obscene behavior, swear words may be used involuntarily and instinctively. The *Cambridge Dictionary* (2025) present the words *shit*, *dumb*, *bitch*, and *fuck* are examples of swear words in English. Beyond their emotive force, swear words fulfill a distinct expressive role, one that is universally recognized across languages.

Collocations represent yet another form of phraseological unit, characterized by the habitual co-occurrence of certain words. According to Monteiro-Plantin (2014), collocations consist of recurrent associations between a central word and one or more semantically or syntactically compatible elements. These pairings (such as *make the bed*, *get some air*, or *pay attention*) demonstrate the predictability and naturalness perceived by native speakers. Their familiarity stems from repeated exposure to entrenched lexico-syntactic patterns, which become internalized over time and contribute to fluent, idiomatic language use.

Lastly, pragmatemes (expressions closely tied to specific communicative contexts) play a vital role in social interaction. Monteiro-Plantin (2014) points out that individuals are socialized from an early age to use expressions such as *please* and *excuse me*, often reinforced by parental figures who model and correct behavior according to social norms. Pinheiro (2015) complements this view by asserting that the field of pragmatics investigates how meaning is shaped by context and how interlocutors infer intentions beyond literal content.

2.3 Humor in translation

The process of identifying humor in translation demands an analytical approach that surpasses literal interpretation, encompassing structural, stylistic, and contextual dimensions. Zabalbeascoa (1996) emphasizes that comedic effect often emerges from incongruous or unexpected scenarios, including irony, dramatic reversals, or even tragic events portrayed in a humorous light. In his view, humor depends on the recreation of a recognizable stylistic framework, where incongruities function as interpretive cues guiding the reader toward a humorous understanding of the scene or utterance.

This understanding is further developed by Pedersen (2011) and Ranzato (2016), who stress the importance of assessing the cultural centrality of textual elements when translating humor. They argue that culturally central references (those fundamental to the comedic situation) necessitate greater fidelity to the original, while peripheral elements permit more creative freedom. Additionally, the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual texts, in which verbal, visual, and auditory elements intersect, can either amplify or diminish the humorous effect.

Humorous elements grounded in cultural specificity demand particular attention to transculturality, the extent to which a cultural reference is recognizable across both source and target cultures. The translator's cultural competence and strategic application of dubbing techniques are vital to preserving comedic resonance.

The complexity of translating humor lies not only in the inherent difficulty of defining what constitutes humor, as noted by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2021), but also in its multifunctional nature. Humor can serve to entertain, criticize, or provoke, and its reception is mediated by cultural norms, linguistic structures, and the audiovisual medium itself. This multiplicity of functions heightens the

translator's responsibility to navigate the intricate interplay between form, content, and audience perception in order to ensure the successful transference of comedic meaning.

Accordingly, for dubbing translators, it is essential to distinguish between humorous elements that are central to the narrative and those that are peripheral. Central elements demand greater fidelity to preserve the comedic effect, while peripheral ones allow for more creative flexibility (Pedersen, 2011; Ranzato, 2016). Building on Tagnin (2005) humor frequently arises from the unexpected, occurring when established norms and conventions are broken or subverted. This suggests that translators working with humorous texts should not confine themselves to the mere literal transposition of words but must grasp and recreate the implicit humor, preserving the element of surprise and the impact that elicits laughter. As the author states:

> Humor is achieved when there is incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. If we understand 'what is expected' as the conventional in language, that is, what has been established by usage, then humor can be obtained through the violation of conventionality (Tagnin, 2005, p. 247, translated by the authors).

This breach of social expectations represents an act of subversion that can range from subtle nuances to more overt manifestations of rebellion against cultural norms. Luiz (2016) reinforces that, to translate humorous texts effectively, the translator must possess specialized knowledge, combining linguistic proficiency and translation techniques with a deep understanding of the source material. This process involves the use of tools such as dictionaries, annotated editions, and the identification of humor strategies including wordplay, irony, and chiasmus, reflecting the complexity that goes beyond a simple transfer of meaning between languages.

Bergson (2018) complements this perspective by emphasizing that the comic is intimately linked to surprise and innovation, emerging from the unexpected rupture with the familiar. According to him, social norms establish a rigid order of behaviors and expectations, and it is precisely the transgression of these norms that triggers laughter, a natural response to the temporary deconstruction of normality. This view highlights the close relationship between social structures, cultural conventions, and humor, indicating that the comic realm arises from the clash between the conventional and the transgressive, thereby underscoring the importance of social comprehension for the effective translation of humor.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive approach, as defined by Triviños (1987), with a focus on a qualitative comparative analysis between the original English script of the series *Modern Family* and its Brazilian Portuguese dubbed version. The methodological framework is grounded in Corpus Linguistics, following the principles outlined by Berber-Sardinha (2000), which enables a systematic and contextualized examination of linguistic data.

The corpus is parallel, bilingual, and unidirectional, comprising four selected episodes of *Modern Family*. Including: (i) the pilot episode (Season 1), with a duration of 23 minutes; (ii) Episode 6 – *Run for Your Wife* (Season 1) with 21 minutes; (iii) Episode 2 – *The Kiss* (Season 2), also 21 minutes; and (iv) Episode 17 – *Two Monkeys and a Panda* (Season 2), likewise totaling 21 minutes. These episodes were chosen due to their high frequency of phraseological expressions and humorous

situations that are representative of the show's stylistic features. Scenes rich in idiomatic expressions, puns, and cultural references were prioritized.

Once the episodes had been selected, the transcription of both the source text and the dubbed version was carried out in two stages: (i) an initial transcription using the AI tool available in *Microsoft Clipchamp*, and (ii) subsequent manual correction. For the first stage, the episodes were downloaded and uploaded into Microsoft Clipchamp, which generated automated subtitle files.

After the AI-based transcription was completed, an *.srt* file containing the transcribed text was downloaded. At this point, it became clear that the output contained several discrepancies between the spoken dialogue and the text produced by the software. For this reason, a second stage of manual correction was required. With both the episodes and the AI-generated transcript at hand, it was possible to adjust the text, supply missing words, and ensure overall accuracy.

A linguistic transcription of both the original dialogues and their dubbed counterparts was conducted to facilitate detailed and comparative analysis of the phraseological units and instances of humor present. Each example was categorized according to the type of phraseological units (including Idiomatic expressions, metaphors, swear words, pragmatemes) and the nature of the humor involved (including verbal, physical, sound-based and visual humor). Following the linguistic transcription of the selected *Modern Family* episodes, quantitative data extraction was conducted using the corpus-analysis tool *AntConc*. This stage provided a range of quantitative metrics for each episode, including (but not limited to) total token counts and word frequency distributions. All instances relevant to the study (such as phraseological units, humor strategies or translational choices) were manually identified and coded by the authors.

For the classification of translation strategies, the typologies proposed by Chaume (2004; 2012) and Zabalbeascoa (1996) were adopted. These include procedures such as retention, cultural adaptation, substitution with functional equivalents, omission, and explicitation. Additionally, the technical constraints inherent to dubbing (particularly lip synchronization and timing) were taken into account, as discussed by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007; 2021). The data analysis was conducted in light of Nunes's (2025) studies on the translation of phraseological units, the reflections of Chiaro (2010) on humor translation in audiovisual contexts, and the theoretical contributions of Bergson (2018) concerning the nature of humor, which underpin the understanding of the comic effect in translation.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the bilingual parallel corpus from the series *Modern Family* was structured into categories encompassing the main phenomena observed in dubbing translation: (1) translation of phraseological units; (2) how the instances of humor were translated. Each category is discussed with reference to examples drawn from the selected episodes.

4.1 Quantitative results

The quantitative analysis and discussion aimed to compare the total figures obtained through the linguistic transcription of episodes from the sitcom *Modern Family*, based on the following aspects:

(i) total number of words[4] in the source text as well as in the dubbing translation; (ii) type/token ratio; (iii) number of characters with and without spaces; (iv) number of sentences; and (v) number of syllables in each transcription. These data are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Total number of types, tokens, ratio, characters, sentences, and syllables of the analyzed corpus.

Transcription	Number of words (types)	Number of words (tokens)	Ratio (approx. %)	Number of characters (with spaces)	Number of characters (without spaces)	Number of sentences	Number of syllables
Source text	2.287	14.918	0,1533	71.522	58.866	2.599	19.124
Dubbing	2.807	13.977	0,2008	73.073	60.344	2.245	23.447
TOTAL	5.094	28.895	0,3541	144.595	119.210	4.844	42.571

Source: elaborated by the authors using *AntConc* (Version 4.3.0).

According to the data presented in Table 1, regarding the number of types/forms, dubbing is the modality with the highest number of words (forms), followed by the source text. However, in terms of the number of tokens/items, the source text has the highest number of words (items), followed by dubbing.

This suggests that the source text may contain more detail or expanded content compared to the other modality (e.g., grammatical structure of the English language). According to Chaume (2012), the difference in the number of words (items) between the source text and the dubbing can be attributed to necessary adaptations to fit the content to the dubbing format, such as lip synchronization and time constraints. Through the calculation of the type/token ratio, it was possible to verify that dubbing presents a higher lexical density (20.1%) compared to the source text (15.34%). These data, obtained through the ratio calculation, demonstrate that the vocabulary in dubbing is more diversified than in the source text.

Regarding the most frequent words in the corpus, several differences can be observed, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Total number of types, tokens, ratio, characters, sentences, and syllables of the analyzed corpus.

Order	Frequency	SourceText	Frequency	DubbedVersion
1º	688	*I*	587	que
2º	582	*You*	472	eu
3º	363	*The*	470	não
4º	341	*A*	395	é
5º	324	*It*	328	o
6º	305	*To*	287	a
7º	266	*That*	272	de
8º	210	*And*	267	você
9º	163	*We*	243	e
10º	153	*Is*	167	tá

[4] As presented by Sardinha (2000), using a Corpus Linguistics approach, words can be tokenized as either forms or items. Words understood as "forms" refer to a broader concept encompassing the linguistic unit itself, regardless of its frequency. Conversely, a word is considered an "items" when its frequency of occurrence within a specific corpus is analyzed.

Source: elaborated by the authors using *AntConc* (Version 4.3.0).

Based on the analysis presented in Table 2, subject pronouns emerge as the most frequent items in the source text. This predominance is explained by Diniz and Eiró (2019), who note that in English syntax the presence of an explicit subject is mandatory for clause formation (e.g., *I*, *you*, *it*), whereas this requirement does not apply to Portuguese. In the source text, the most frequent item is *I*, which appears 688 times, accounting for 5% of the data. In the dubbed version, however, *eu* ranks second, occurring 472 times and representing 4% of the analyzed material.

The data indicate a reduction in the occurrence of subject pronouns in the dubbed version when compared with the source text. This decrease results from structural differences between English and Portuguese, reflecting a linguistic adjustment to comply with the norms and conventions of Portuguese. As previously noted, Portuguese syntax allows for the omission of subjects, which naturally leads to lower frequencies in translated or revoiced material.

4.2 Qualitative results

This section presents the qualitative results. The data were organized into two categories of analysis and discussion: (i) phraseological units; and (ii) instances of humor.

4.2.1 Phraseological units

The presentation of the results concerning Phraseological Units (PUs) was organized into three subcategories of analysis and discussion: (i) metaphors; (ii) idiomatic expressions; (iii) pragmatemes. Table 3 below presents the metaphors identified in the source text and their respective dubbing translations.

Table3: Phraseological Unit – Metaphors.

Eg.,	CHARACTER	SOURCE TEXT	DUBBING TRANSLATION
(1)	**GLORIA**	Oh, yeah, cause that's where you live **down here**. But I live **up here**.	*Ah tá, é que **você é assim**. Acontece que **eu não sou**.*
(2)	**GLORIA**	He's like a **bullfighter.**	*Humm, ele é como um **toureiro**.*
(3)	**GLORIA**	I don't know what's gonna happen to him over there. But you're his family now, and that means only one thing: you be **the wind in his back**, not **the spit in his face**.	*Olha, eu não sei o que vai acontecer com ele lá. Mas você é da família dele agora, e isso significa apenas uma coisa: ser **o vento nas costas dele**, e não **o cuspe na sua cara**.*

Source: transcribed and elaborated by the authors, 2025.

Example (1) ("down here/up here") is configured as a metaphor, as defined by Ferreira (2009), symbolically suggesting a spatial comparison to represent different perspectives and/or lifestyles. It is a figurative way of saying that one person is at a lower or less sophisticated level, while another is at a higher or more refined one. The expressions "down here" and "up here" refer not to physical location but to differences in status, attitude, or behavior, highlighting the speaker's perceived superiority over the other because "these spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have

and that they function as they do in our physical environment. [...] for example, HAPPY IS UP. The fact that the concept HAPPY is oriented up leads to English expressions like 'I'm feeling up today'" (Lakoff; Johnson, 2003, p. 15).

In the dubbing translation ("você é assim/eu não sou" – "you're like that/I'm not"), the metaphor is not preserved, but there is an adaptation that maintains the semantic meaning of the source text. The metaphorical contrast between "down here" and "up here" is replaced by an explicit explanation of the differing attitudes between the individuals.

One possible translation into Portuguese for the metaphor in example (1) ("down here/up here") would be "ser lento/devagar" and "ser rápido/acelerado" ("to be slow" / "to be fast"), which, although they lose part of the metaphorical force of the source text, could still align with the dubbing parameters proposed by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) and Konecsni (2016). According to Alvarez (2014) and Nunes (2025), metaphors use symbolic elements to express opinions or feelings that are understandable within the cultural contexts they belong to, as shown in Table 3.

Example (2) ("bullfighter") represents a comparison between an individual and the way he is perceived. The dubbing translation ("toureiro") is a literal rendering (Barbosa, 2020), which results in a loss of meaning in the Brazilian Portuguese context, as the sociocultural environment in Brazil does not evoke the same associations. These references are rooted in the Colombian/Spanish context, refering to a man traditionally perceived as brave, virile, skilled, and, in certain contexts, a symbol of seduction and masculinity. By employing this metaphor, the utterance likely implies that the individual embodies (or is expected to embody) these traits, as explained by Maldonado (2015).

In example (3), the metaphors ("the wind in his back / the spit in his face") suggest two contrasting ways of treating people: "the wind in his back" as a representation of support or encouragement, and "the spit in his face" as a form of disdain or humiliation. Metaphors, as Alvarez (2014) explains, serve as a medium for transmitting values and knowledge across generations. The dubbing translation ("o vento nas costas dele/o cuspe na sua cara" – "the wind at his back / the spit in your face") does not function effectively in the Brazilian context, similar to examples (1) and (2), as the semantic load of these metaphors only makes sense within the cultural framework of the source text. A translation that could better convey the meaning of the source text ("the wind in his back / the spit in his face") might be "a mão que acalma / o punho que golpeia" ("the calming hand / the striking fist"), as it presents a similar semantic weight in Portuguese and complies with dubbing norms, in line with the lip-sync parameters set out by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) and Konecsni (2016).

Table 4: Phraseological Unit – Idiomatic Expressions.

Eg.,	CHARACTER	SOURCE TEXT	DUBBING TRANSLATION
(4)	**JAY**	Gloria, they're 0-6. **Let'stake it down a notch**.	*Gloria, eles estão perdendo por seis a zero.* ***Fique menos empolgada****.*
(5)	**JAY**	I don't need any younger clothes. And I don't care what some **jackass** in a pair of ripped jeans thinks about me.	*Eu não preciso de roupas mais joviais. E não me importo com o que um* ***imbecil*** *com jeans rasgados pensa de mim.*

Source: transcribed and elaborated by the authors, 2025.

According to Alvarez (2014) and Riva (2014), idiomatic expressions are defined as a means of transmitting knowledge across generations in a subtle manner. Table 4 presents two examples of idiomatic expressions. In example (4), "Let's take it down a notch" is an idiom used to suggest that someone should lower the intensity of a situation, typically when emotions are running high or someone is overreacting. In the dubbing ("Fique menos empolgada"), it is evident that the translator chose to convey the same meaning by adapting it to the context of the Portuguese language and culture. Instead of translating the phrase literally, the expression was restructured to communicate the same idea in a way that is accessible to the target audience. However, even though the dubbed version conveys the semantic load of the source text, it lacks the same level of idiomaticity in Portuguese.

As discussed by Baptista (2014) and supported by Fonseca and Parreira (2014), idiomatic expressions are fixed structures that adapt and can be used in different contexts. The idiomatic expression in example (5), "jackass," according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2025), refers to a stupid or foolish person. Although the dubbed translation ("imbecil") is not an idiomatic expression in Portuguese, it retains both the semantic and pragmatic meaning of the source text.

Table5: Phraseological Unit – Pragmatemes.

Eg.,	CHARACTER	SOURCE TEXT	DUBBING TRANSLATION
(6)	**CLAIRE**	**Language!**	***Modere essa linguagem!***
(7)	**JAY**	**Hey, watch it!**	***Ei, olha como fala!***

Source: transcribed and elaborated by the authors, 2025.

The third category of phraseological units analyzed comprises **pragmatemes**, as illustrated in Table 5. Example (6) ("Language!") and its dubbed translation ("Modere essa linguagem!"), as well as example (7) ("Hey, watch it!") and its corresponding dubbed version ("Ei, olha como fala!"), are instances of pragmemes typically used by parents to correct children after they have said something inappropriate. Furthermore, the defining features that characterize these utterances as pragmemes, as presented in the theoretical framework by Monteiro-Plantin (2014), were preserved in the Portuguese translation.

After presenting the results related to Phraseological Units (PUs), the following section focuses on the instances of humor identified in the source text, with the aim of examining how they were translated into the dubbed version.

4.2.2 Instances of humor

This section presents the identification of humor instances in the source text and how these instances were translated in the dubbed version. To this end, the occurrences were divided and grouped into the following subcategories: (i) physical/visual humor (which may be identified through body-related situations, such as falls, and/or scenarios in which visual elements contribute to the comedic effect); (ii) sound-based humor (identified through laughter, awkward sounds, as well as auditory elements used with the intention of eliciting laughter from the audience); and (iii) verbal humor (e.g., irony, jokes, sarcasm, etc.).

Table6: Physical/Visual Humor.

Eg.,	CHARACTER	SOURCE TEXT	DUBBING TRANSLATION
(8)	**MALL SECURITY GUARD**	Oh, excuse me, sir. **We ask that all mall walkers stay to the right**.	*Ah, desculpe senhor.* ***Mas os que fazem caminhada devem permanecer a direita****.*
	JAY	**Ugh**?	***Quê****?*
(9)	**PHIL**	That's cool. Ow! **Oh god, that's my back**!	*Tá legal.* ***Ai, caramba, minhas costas****!*
(10)	**PHIL**	No, no, no, no, no. **You're very strong, homes**.	*Ai!* ***Como você é forte, hein amigão****?!*

Source: transcribed and elaborated by the authors, 2025.

The first subcategory analyzed was physical/visual humor. In example (8) ("We ask that all mall walkers stay to the right. / Ugh?"), the humor arises from the use of exaggeratedly formal language in an ordinary and seemingly trivial situation, in addition to the implicit cultural reference to the phenomenon of *mall walkers*, a group generally composed of elderly Americans who use shopping mall corridors for morning walks. The translation retains the core content of the utterance but omits the specific reference to the mall. The term *mall walkers* is replaced by "os que fazem caminhada" [those who go for walks], a reformulation that makes the content more accessible to Brazilian audiences, where this practice is not widely known or specifically named. This decision may be classified as a strategy of cultural adaptation, according to Nedergaard-Larsen (1993), as it seeks to avoid cultural opacity that could hinder the understanding of the joke.

By choosing "Quê?" as the translation for "Ugh?", the dubbed version also preserves the sense of strangeness and confusion present in the original interaction, using a brief and effective discourse marker in Brazilian Portuguese. This reveals a concern for the naturalness of the dialogue and the maintenance of the communicative function of the scene. In terms of translation strategies, this is an example of domestication, as defined by Venuti (1995), that is, a cultural approximation aimed at ensuring fluid reception and spectator identification.

In example (9) ("Oh god, that's my back!"), the comic effect stems from the contrast between the initially relaxed attitude expressed by "That's cool" and the immediate reaction of pain ("Ow! Oh god, that's my back!"), which suggests a sudden and physically painful event in an apparently controlled situation. Moreover, the comedic impact is heightened by the multimodal nature of the material, as the visuals in the scene amplify the humorous effect. The Brazilian dubbed version succeeds in preserving this contrastive effect by employing expressions typical of informal speech, such as "Tá legal" [That's fine] and "Ai, caramba" [Ow, damn]. The choice of "caramba" is particularly significant, as it replaces "Oh god" with an interjection that, while neutral in religious terms, retains the expressive and emotional tone of the original utterance. This substitution aligns with one of the unwritten norms of Brazilian dubbing: the avoidance of expressions that could spark religious, political, or moral controversy (Chaume, 2012).

Furthermore, the translation avoids the use of profanity or stronger language, which is common practice in content intended for broad and family-oriented audiences, such as sitcoms. By preserving the original utterance's structure of surprise and pain, the translation achieves a dynamic equivalence, as proposed by Nida (1964), prioritizing the pragmatic effect of the statement over literal fidelity. Thus, the physical and unexpected humor is maintained, reinforcing the natural flow of the scene in the target language.

In example (10) ("You're very strong, homes.") illustrates a broader adaptation process, which includes the complete reformulation of certain lexical elements and the insertion of markers typical of spoken Brazilian Portuguese. The original utterance features the term "homes," a slang expression associated with Chicano English (spoken by Latino Americans in the U.S.), which carries specific cultural and sociolinguistic connotations, referencing the speaker's ethnic identity and the informality of the register. The choice of "amigão" [big buddy] in the dubbed version represents a case of cultural compensation, as there is no direct equivalent in Portuguese that conveys both the cultural nuance and the informal tone of the original slang. Nonetheless, "amigão" is a widely recognizable colloquial form that conveys affection and informality.

The use of "Ai!" at the beginning of the line is not present in the source text but adds a performative tone and helps mark the speaker's physical reaction to the interlocutor's strength. Similarly, the use of "hein" reinforces the oral nature of the phrase and contributes to a more natural prosody in Portuguese. This reformulation, while not literal, effectively recreates the comic tone of the scene and fulfills the expected discursive functions within the sitcom genre.

According to Chaume (2004), the recreation of believable orality is one of the fundamental requirements of dubbing, which must sound spontaneous to the local audience. Therefore, this translation demonstrates technical mastery of Brazilian dubbing norms while also illustrating the flexibility and creativity required to maintain translingual humor.

Table7: Sound-Based Humor.

Eg.,	CHARACTER	SOURCE TEXT	DUBBING TRANSLATION
(11)	**PHIL**	Yello? Oh, hey, jay. Just a sec. I'll go get Claire.	*Alô. Ah, oi Jay, só um segundo, vou chamar a Claire.*
	JAY	**Oh, actually, it's you I'm calling. What was that?**	***É com você que quero falar. O que foi isso?***
	PHIL	**The cat. There's a cat.** What's up?	***Foi o gato. Foi um gato.*** *Que é que foi?*

Source: transcribed and elaborated by the authors, 2025.

The second subcategory of analysis pertains to sound-based humor. In example (11) ("Oh, actually, it's you I'm calling. What was that? / The cat. There's a cat. What's up?"), Phil's attempt to deny the source of the noise through the utterance "The cat. There's a cat. What's up?" reveals the inherent complexity involved in translating auditory humor for dubbing in *Modern Family*. In this instance, the comedic effect does not rely solely on verbal content but crucially on the specific sonority of the speech,

which includes elements such as hesitation, denial, and repetition, thereby generating a humorous situation characterized by embarrassment and surprise.

The Brazilian Portuguese dubbing ("Foi o gato. Foi um gato. Que é que foi?") endeavors to preserve both the repetition and the rhythm of the original utterance, essential components for maintaining the humor. Nevertheless, the sonic dimension of the denial gesture, which is fundamental to the original, heavily depends on the vocal performance of the dubbing actor to convey the same hesitant and uneasy tone, ensuring that the Brazilian audience comprehends the irony and humor embedded in the scene. This example underscores the significance of adopting a multimodal approach to audiovisual translation, particularly concerning sound humor. As Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) emphasize, dubbing must transcend mere textual transposition by accounting for lip synchronization, intonation, prosody, as well as visual and auditory elements within the scene.

In *Modern Family*, humor frequently arises from the interplay between dialogue, vocal intonation, and the visual context, thereby requiring the dubbing translation to reconstruct this complex interaction to preserve the comedic effect. Consequently, the voice actor's performance and dubbing direction are crucial for effectively conveying the humor, enabling the sonic denial and the character's comic discomfort to be successfully communicated to the Brazilian audience.

Table8: Verbal Humor.

Eg.,	CHARACTER	SOURCE TEXT	DUBBING TRANSLATION
(12)	**CLAIRE**	I was… out of control growing up. There, you know, I said it. I… I just don't want my kids to make the same bad mistakes that I made. If Hayley never wakes up on a beach in Florida half-naked, I've done my job.	*Eu era... incontrolável na adolescência. Pronto, já disse. Eu... Eu só não quero que meus filhos cometam os mesmos erros que eu cometi. Se a Hayley não acordar seminua numa praia da Flórida... cumpri meu trabalho.*
	PHIL	**…Our job**.	***Nosso trabalho***.
	CLAIRE	**Right. I've done our job.**	***É, cumpri nosso trabalho***.
(13)	**PHIL**	All the women at work were too busy to use this certificate, so I called the spa and asked them to extend the expiration date. But they said no. Really? **Here's something they didn't count on. You mess with Phil Dunphy, the claws come out**.	*A mulherada do trabalho tava muito ocupada pra usar os cupons, daí eu liguei para spa e pedi gentilmente pra estenderem o vencimento, mas disseram que não. Sério.* ***Só não contavam com uma coisinha. Se mexer com Phil Dunphy, as garras dele aparecem***.
(14)		Let's see this bad boy. Oh, a p-750. Nice unit. I would	*Deixa eu ver essa danadinha. Ah, p-750, muito boa. Eu teria*

	PHIL	have sprung for the 840, But I get it... Not everyone can handle that kind of horsepower.	*escolhido a 840, mas entendo, nem todo mundo pode lidar com tanta potência.*
	JAY	I thought maybe the cordless phone was interfering, So I unplugged it.	*Achei que o telefone sem fio podia estar interferindo e tirei da tomada.*
	PHIL	**Good idea. Maybe we should run downstairs and unplug the toaster while we're at it**.	***Boa ideia. Talvez a gente devesse descer e tirar a torradeira da tomada enquanto estamos lá***.
(15)	**CLAIRE**	How come we don't have the same number of containers and lids? Why would they ever get separated?	*Por que a gente nunca tem a mesma quantidade de potes e tampas? Por que sempre se separam?*
	PHIL	**Built-up resentment, money issues, met a younger lid. Huh**?	***Ficam magoados, problemas de grana, uma tampa mais jovem. Hã****?*

Source: transcribed and elaborated by the authors, 2025.

The third and final subcategory analyzed within the instances of humor refers to verbal humor. In example (12) ("…Our job. / Right. I've done our job."), the original utterance presents a subtle irony in "Right. I've done our job.", where the character emphasizes that she has single-handedly assumed both maternal and paternal responsibilities, given that the father is infantilized and emotionally absent in the family dynamics. This line reinforces a type of humor based on social critique and character construction, where irony emerges from the contrast between traditional expectations of the paternal figure and the reality of the familial relationship portrayed. In the dubbing, this nuance is maintained but simplified to "É, cumpri nosso trabalho." [Yeah, I've done our job.], a translation that preserves the irony by using the possessive pronoun "nosso" [our], implying that the parental "job" was a shared task, although in practice the character carried out this role alone. This choice reveals a functional modulation that balances the need for clarity and fluency in Brazilian Portuguese with the preservation of the implicit humor.

Maintaining this irony is essential for character portrayal and humor construction, as it reinforces the audience's perception of dysfunctional family relationships, explored with lightness and sarcasm throughout the series. As Attardo (2001) points out, humor often depends on incongruities and subversions of social norms, such as the inversion of traditional family roles, which in this case is subtly expressed through verbal irony. Moreover, this translated utterance highlights the translator's role as a cultural and emotional mediator, who must capture not only the literal meaning but also the implicit layers of meaning that contribute to the humorous effect. The simplicity of the translation, while preserving the content, facilitates reception by the target audience, who will recognize the irony in the line and the family dynamics, thereby strengthening the connection with the dubbed text.

Humor is deeply rooted in culture, and its translation requires the reconstruction of references so that the target audience can recognize and respond to the comedic content (Gambier, 2013). In example (13), the metaphor “the claws come out” was translated literally as “as garras dele aparecem,” an expression which, although not a common Brazilian idiom, works effectively within the context by evoking an aggressive and protective image that aligns well with Phil Dunphy’s character profile. This decision reflects a balance between preserving the original imagery and adapting to the target cultural system, ensuring that the joke functions both linguistically and emotionally. By opting for a literal yet comprehensible translation, the translator secures the transmission of the character’s humorous stereotype. Baker (2018) highlights that cultural substitution can be total, partial, or absent, depending on the expected degree of recognition by the audience; in dubbing, this choice must also consider factors such as lip-sync and audio duration, making substitution both a practical and theoretical strategy.

In example (14) ("Good idea. Maybe we should run downstairs and unplug the toaster while we're at it."), Phil delivers a subtle joke grounded in the stereotype of elderly individuals struggling with technology, a trope deeply embedded in popular culture. The original utterance employs absurdity (suggesting unplugging a toaster) as a comic extension of exaggerated concern about technological interference, thereby reinforcing the father-in-law’s portrayal as technologically inept.

The dubbed version translates this line literally as “Boa ideia. Talvez a gente devesse descer e tirar a torradeira da tomada enquanto estamos lá,” preserving both the humorous effect and the implicit irony. This choice exemplifies a functional equivalence strategy, where the translator opts to retain the original joke considering that the stereotype is readily recognizable and acceptable to the Brazilian audience. Such effective translation strengthens the construction of verbal humor through incongruity and exaggeration, elements identified by Chiaro (2010) as central to comedy. The naturalness and fluency of the dubbed speech, combined with the voice actor’s performance, enhance the comedic impact, making the joke accessible even without specific cultural knowledge about the character. This joke underscores humor’s role as a social mechanism for addressing generational differences, simultaneously creating a connection between characters and viewers through identification with everyday situations. As Raskin (1979; 1998) argues, humor often operates by exploiting cultural and social clashes, and translation must preserve this dimension to ensure proper reception.

In example (15) (“Built-up resentment, money issues, met a younger lid. Huh?”), Phil employs an implicit metaphor to describe married life, combining humor with social critique about marital challenges. The Brazilian dubbing translates this metaphor effectively as “Ficam magoados, problemas de grana, uma tampa mais jovem. Hã?”, using the familiar pair “potes e tampas” (pots and lids) as a symbol for couples (an image deeply rooted in Brazilian culture) which facilitates comprehension and comedic impact. This adaptation illustrates a dynamic equivalence strategy (Nida, 1964), prioritizing the preservation of the humorous effect on the target audience even if it entails a formal modification of the original text. The translator successfully retains the underlying metaphor comparing marital relationships to “pots and lids” that “always separate,” reinforcing the notion of wear and conflict characteristic of conjugal life.

The phrase “uma tampa mais jovem” preserves the wordplay’s double meaning, suggesting both the literal “lid” and an allusion to a possible extramarital affair, creating the ambiguity essential for humor. According to Bell (2009), linguistic play and ambiguity are central elements of verbal humor, especially in situational comedies. The translation also maintains colloquial intonation and a relaxed

tone, facilitating audience identification with the dialogue and ensuring dubbing naturalness. This adaptation highlights the importance of the translator's cultural knowledge to reproduce metaphors and allusions that function effectively in the target language and culture while respecting dubbing's technical constraints.

5 CONCLUSION

This research has examined phraseological units and the complexities involved in translating instances of humor in the dubbing of *Modern Family*. The analysis has demonstrated that humor in the series often arises from the creative use of fixed expressions, idioms, and other phraseological constructions, which are deeply embedded in cultural and linguistic contexts. Translating such units into Brazilian Portuguese requires more than literal equivalence, it demands careful consideration of pragmatic function, cultural resonance, and audience expectations.

In addition to phraseological density, the humorous effect in *Modern Family* frequently relies on multimodal features, including timing, intonation, sound effects, and facial expressions. This makes the dubbing process particularly demanding, as translators and voice actors must reproduce both the linguistic content and the performative nuances that contribute to the humor. The success of the dubbed version often depends on the ability to balance fidelity to the original with naturalness and fluency in the target language, while also preserving the comic timing and rhythm.

By focusing on phraseological units within a multimodal framework, this study highlights the importance of integrating linguistic, cultural, and performative perspectives in audiovisual translation research. It reinforces the idea that dubbing is a collaborative and interpretive act, in which humor must be reimagined through voice, expression, and adaptation. Future studies may benefit from further exploring how viewers perceive translated humor and how different translation strategies influence the reception of phraseological content in dubbed audiovisual media.

Thus, the study offers a meaningful contribution to the scholarship on audiovisual translation, despite its inherent limitations. The analysis is based on a relatively small sample and centered on a single programme and genre. Furthermore, the study necessarily reflects the specific translational choices made by the dubbing translators involved in the selected material, without access to production rationales or alternative versions that might shed light on divergent strategies.

Finally, the research does not include reception data, meaning that the audience's interpretation, comprehension, or evaluation of the translated humorous instances remains outside the analytical frame. That's because given the descriptive nature of this research, reception data were not incorporated, since the primary focus lies on examining translational strategies rather than measuring viewer interpretation. Acknowledging these limitations reinforces the transparency of the study and highlights avenues for future research, such as expanding the corpus, comparing genres, or integrating viewer-response methodologies.

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