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Representing political attitudes through recontextualizing the metaphor ‘Shuai Guo’ in English-translated Chinese diplomatic discourse

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ABSTRACT

Diplomatic discourse has garnered a share of scholarly attention in translation studies, albeit the recontextualization of its metaphoric expression has remained underexplored across languages. This present study delved into the Chinese metaphor 甩锅 (‘shuai guo’, literally means ‘throw the wok’) as a case, aiming to examine how the metaphor was recontextualized in the new context to implicate diplomatic attitudes. The data for analysis were drawn from China’s Foreign Ministry spokespersons’ remarks at regular press conferences spanning from 2020 to 2022. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, this research scrutinized the patterns and forms of its English translations. Drawing upon Fairclough’s framework of recontextualization, this study discussed how the metaphors were recontextualized from aspects of absence, abstraction, addition, and arrangement. It was found that the English translations of ‘shuai guo’ predominantly revolved around blame-centered expressions, among other variations. The translations exhibited dynamic shifts in response to different contexts, shedding light on the discursive strategies to convey political attitudes towards the involved parties in the remarks, thereby aligning with the official ideologies. This study underscores the significance of the recontextualization process in translating metaphor in diplomatic discourse across languages, which may not be materialized by only focusing on the original text.

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1. Introduction

Metaphor plays a crucial role in human conceptualization by effectively mapping the source domain into the target domain beyond being a mere linguistic expression (Lakoff & Johnson, 2013). It serves as a common rhetorical device in political discourse, bridging the gap between linguistic and political realms (Chilton & Ilyin, 1993). However, translation has been employed as an instrument in political propaganda and competition. The complexity of metaphorical categories and the asymmetry in their use, coupled with cultural distinctions, dictate the challenges encountered in translation (Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017). According to Schäffner (2004), metaphors can present a translation challenge, as linguistic and cultural disparities may impede their smooth transition from one language and culture to another.

In the context of China, various atypical diplomatic expressions or newly coined terms have surfaced along with the nation’s expanding influence. These distinctive diplomatic expressions embrace versatile linguistic styles, occasionally incorporating language elements intentionally drawn from colloquial and internet discourse. Noteworthy for their ability to convey individual viewpoints, the frequent use of metaphors has gained more scrutiny recently (Chen, 2021; Ouyang, 2021; Xia & Huang, 2021). Among the metaphors, ‘shuai guo’ is a representative. It is an internet buzzword among Chinese netizens and a

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verb-noun phrase that can be separated into two parts: ‘甩’ (shuai, literally means ‘throw’) and ‘锅’ (guo, literally means ‘wok’). In particular, ‘guo’ is a metaphor referring to the wrongdoings and responsibilities of the actor, and ‘shuai guo’ is commonly translated as its calque ‘pass the buck’. Therefore, the netizens utilize the metaphoric expression to describe the phenomenon of avoiding responsibility and shifting blame outward, expressing their dissatisfaction and helplessness (Yang, 2012; Fang & Fan, 2022).

The metaphor ‘shuai guo’ has been employed frequently in diplomatic discourse by the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang, followed by other spokespersons. Due to various frictions between China and the United States, especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, some American politicians and media have made challenging statements against China. In order to defend national interests and discourse power and shape positive national images, diplomatic spokespersons frequently use the term ‘shuai guo’ when responding assertively to questions raised by foreign journalists during regular press conferences. The frequent use of this expression has attracted attention, while research on its translation is limited. Yang and Zhao (2020) proposed a model of ‘political equivalence + image representation’, analyzing the translation strategies for political metaphors. They discussed that the translation of ‘shuai guo’ should consider the target readers’ cultural background. Nonetheless, they only present one singular example to prove the strategy of free translation to represent the image. Later, Fang and Fan (2022) investigated its translation strategies based on the political equivalence principle and analyzed its influencing factors, but their samples are relatively small, and the context is ignored. However, metaphor cannot be understood apart from its context since it is the product of discourse (Gibbs & Lonergan, 2009). The construction of its meaning depends on the interaction of intention, language choice, and context (Charteris Black, 2011). In other words, the meaning of the metaphor in the new context is recontextualized (Pan & Huang, 2021). Studies on this aspect have remained underexplored. Therefore, the present study focuses on more selected data in the regular press conferences from 2020 to 2022 and discusses the translation of it from the perspective of recontextualization.

Recontextualization was initially coined by Bernstein (1990) in pedagogy, referring to the way in which social discourse becomes a part of educational knowledge. He considered it a collaborative phase where the knowledge is produced and reproduced, and the discourse can be transplanted from one context into another. Subsequently, the concept was developed and employed in other disciplines, such as discourse and translation studies. Van Leeuwen (2008), in his study, believed that the recontextualization of social practice produced the discourse intending to realize certain social actions and meanings. From his perspective, the text may be reappropriated and adapted by substituting, deleting, reordering, or adding to materialize the social meanings and actions.

As per the transmission across languages, Fairclough (2003) viewed recontextualization as a representation of social events where the language users may adjust individual ideas and understandings intertextually at the discursive level. He put forward four principles of recontextualization, namely presence, abstraction, addition, and arrangement. Presence tells which social events are present or absent, prominent or backgrounded. Abstraction means to what degree the concrete events are abstracted or generalized. Addition observes what contents are added to explain, legitimize, or evaluate the events, such as the reasons, causes, and purposes. Arrangement refers to how the events are reordered or reorganized. These principles were used by Pan and Huang (2022) in exploring the recontextualization of the political metaphor of national leaders’ speech in media discourse, concluding that the recontextualization of the metaphor may reshape the leader’s image into a negative one. Enlightened by their framework, the present study holds that Fairclough’s (2003) recontextualization framework is suitable for interpreting the contextual transformation of the metaphor ‘shuai guo’. Unlike traditional translation theories, which focus on linguistic equivalence, recontextualization is a critical model to analyze how diplomatic metaphors are transformed. Due to the changing context after the recontextualization of metaphors, different messages may be indicated, which may create new meanings and cause misinterpretations of the national policy and official attitudes (Pan & Huang, 2022). Diplomatic translation is not merely a linguistic process but also an ideological and discursive practice. Therefore, it is important to underscore the way in which the metaphors are transformed into a new language and new context.

In the present study, Fairclough’s (2003) recontextualization principles are used to analyze the metaphoric expression translated into another language and another new context, helping to explore the discursive practice of metaphors in diplomatic discourse. Based on the aforementioned information, two

research objectives are to be achieved in this study: (1) to identify the translations of 'shuai guo' in the English-translated diplomatic spokespersons' discourse; (2) to discuss the way in which the metaphor of 'shuai guo' is recontextualized in the target text. To achieve the two objectives, this study is conducted with a descriptive qualitative approach.

2. Methodology

2.1. Corpus

The bilingual corpus is accessed from the official website of China's Foreign Ministry. 'Shuai guo' and its related expressions are selected from the remarks the four Chinese diplomatic spokespersons delivered at the regular press conferences. The time spans 3 years, from 2020 to 2022. The diplomatic regular press conference in China plays a pivotal role for the government to convey its official stance on a range of domestic and international matters. This platform enables the dissemination of information and updates regarding official stances to audiences both within the country and globally. The three years are special for China and the whole world. The COVID-19 pandemic panic and the trade war between China and the US have greatly influenced human destiny and world tendencies. Chinese diplomatic spokesperson Geng Shuang used 'shuai guo' on 12 February 2020. Since then, other spokespersons, Hua Chunying, Zhao Lijian, and Wang Wenbin, also frequently employed this phrase in their remarks.

2.2 Data collection

Considering the large amount of the source material, the corpus is accessed through Python from the website. Then, the corpus is exported and saved in Excel and Word formats for later use. After that, the criteria are designed to systematically categorize instances of the metaphorical use of 'shuai guo' and its derived expressions. Sentences, phrases, or words related to 'shuai guo' or include the word 'guo' are selected into a database, which contains detailed information about each instance of the metaphor. For example, '这个锅太大了', which literally means 'the wok is too big', can be included in the database since it involves the word 'guo'. Following the compilation of the database, the repeated data is analyzed and checked manually according to the context to see whether they are consistent. If not, they are not included in the database. As per the English translations of the metaphor, they are also listed in the same Excel following the original Chinese versions to categorize their patterns. If they demonstrate a similar form, they are included in one category. If not, they are listed separately and categorized. This is how the translation patterns are categorized. After the categorization, manual cross-checking and verification are conducted to ensure their consistency.

2.3. Data analysis

The collected data is analyzed in a descriptive manner. Firstly, the metaphor 'shuai guo' and its related expressions are categorized, described, and interpreted. Their original and translated versions are compared and summarized to demonstrate the translations of the metaphoric expressions. Examples are selected to analyze their translations. Then, based on their translations and framework of recontextualization, it is discussed how the metaphors are recontextualized in the target text to practice the diplomatic discourse and realize the diplomatic goal. The analysis is conducted following the principles of presence, abstraction, addition, and arrangement. Each principle is used to guide the analysis using relevant real examples.

3. Findings

3.1 English translations of 'shuai guo'

The metaphor in diplomatic discourse is used to facilitate the spokespersons' discursive expressiveness and political stances (Yang & Zhao, 2020). The corpus of 'shuai guo' and its metaphoric expression in this

study covered the three years from 2020 to 2022, delivered by four spokespersons. After the selection, 163 items were selected, with 24,805 original Chinese characters and 15,381 English characters in the corpus. Table 1 shows the partially selected data of 'shuai guo' and its related expressions.

After the detailed categorization and analysis, it was found that the English translations of the metaphoric expression presented different patterns. The data showed a diverse range of expressions for translating '甩锅'; indicating that translators use various terms to convey the metaphor based on contextual differences (see Table 2). Despite the diversity, common themes of blame-shifting, strategic maneuvers, and avoidance of responsibility emerge across different translations.

3.1.1. Blame-centered translations

It was observed that the metaphor 'shuai guo' was translated into expressions centered upon blame, which maintained the derivative metaphoric connotation. There are four categories of blame-centered translations. The following Table 3 shows the patterns of it:

In Table 3, from the demonstration of the related translations, the use of 'v.+ blame (n.)' suggested a forceful and immediate transfer of blame, such as 'dump the blame', 'pin the blame on', 'deflect the blame, and 'shift the blame', and 'shirk blame', indicating a quick and decisive action and emphasizing a forceful and precise action in transferring blame. The article 'the' in front of the blame suggests a targeted effort to assign blame to a particular person or entity, introducing an element of precision. This pattern was the most frequently used in the blame-centered translation. The pattern of 'blame (v.) + pronoun', such as 'blame others', was a straightforward expression indicating the act of putting the blame on others without taking direct responsibility. Another pattern is 'blame + v-ing', such as 'blame-dumping' and 'blameshifting', emphasizing immediacy and completeness, highlighting continuous or repeated actions. 'Blame (n.) + n.' was displayed in the example of 'blame game', indicating the competitive nature of the action of blaming. In summary, the translation of the blame-centered expressions showed the action launched by the involved parties in the speech is forceful and targeted.

3.1.2 Other translations

Other translations of 'shuai guo' were not displayed with blame, but presented with other dimensions, showcasing different forms. They were mapped into the target source and replaced with different metaphors in the target culture, such as 'buck-passing', 'mud-slinging', 'political maneuvering', 'looking for

Table 1. Partial corpus of the metaphor 'shuai guo' in the context.

No	ST	TT
1	美方拿中国说事、甩锅的做法/甩锅的做法	The US practice of shifting blames to China
2	企图让中国背上制造疫情灾害的黑锅	ome media clearly want China to take the blame
3	向中国'甩锅'、推责'	trying to shift the blame to China
4	美方企图甩锅推责、转嫁矛盾	the US attempt of blame-shifting
5	采用混淆视听、甩锅别国的伎俩	confounding public opinion, deflecting responsibilities
6	将本国疫情暴发的责任'甩锅'给中国	trying to blame China for the pandemic outbreak
7	但是, 这个锅太大了, 对不起, 他们甩不出去的。	However, such an attempt is just impossible as the blame is too heavy to be shifted. Sorry, it won't work.
8	污蔑攻击、甩锅推责都弥补不了失去的时间	No one can make up for lost time by slandering others or shifting the blame
9	一些人急于要造锅、甩锅的心理	some in the US are trying so hard to shift the blame
10	污蔑抹黑、甩锅推责弥补不了失去的时间	slanders, smears and blame games cannot make up for lost time.
11	要避免将抗疫合作政治化及甩锅推责、转嫁矛盾的做法	they should avoid politicizing anti-pandemic cooperation and shifting blame to others.
12	栽赃甩锅赶不走病毒	blame-shifting will not make oneself immune to the virus
13	而不是试图到处'甩锅'、转移视线	To shift blames and deflect attention
14	而不是攻击抹黑中国、甩锅推卸责任。	instead of attacking and smearing China to deflect attention and shift the blame.
15	一些人在这一时刻甩锅、推责、诿过	some people are deflecting their responsibility
16	企图'甩锅'别国的行为都不可接受	dump the blame on other countries is unacceptable
17	美国政客把精力用在到处'甩锅'、推卸责任上	Spending much energy on scapegoating and buck-passing
18	你如何看待美方这种'甩锅'行为?	What do you think of such blame-shifting by the US side?
19	向中国'甩锅'	shifting the blame onto China
20	政客却忙于向中国'甩锅', 推卸责任。	but US politicians are busy blaming China and shifting responsibility

Table 2. Translations of the metaphor ‘shuai guo’ identified in the corpus.

Metaphor	Translations
甩锅 'Shuai guo'	shift the blame(s)
	shift blames
	dump the blame
	shirk responsibilities
	blame others
	Scapegoating
	looking for scapegoats
	pin the blame on
	blame-dumping
	blameshifting
	blame game
	political maneuvering
	buck-passing
	deflecting their responsibility
	shirk blame
	mud-slinging
	deflect blame
	blame
	shake off responsibility
	blame game

Table 3. Blame-centered translations.

ST	Blame-centered translations
甩锅 'Shuai guo'	v. + the blame (n.)
	blame (v.) + <i>pronoun</i>
	blame (n.) + <i>v-ing</i>
	blame (n.) + <i>n.</i>

scapegoats; and ‘shirk responsibilities’. The presence of idiomatic expressions like ‘buck-passing’ added cultural implications to the translations, which introduced strategic and deliberate dimensions, suggesting that blame-shifting was not merely a passive act but often involved maneuvering. In the expression ‘political maneuvering’, the use of ‘political’ emphasized the strategic nature of blame-shifting, particularly within a diplomatic or political context. Expressions like ‘mud-slinging’ and ‘looking for scapegoats’ introduced a more negative connotation, suggesting blame-shifting and engaging in negative attacks or defamatory actions. ‘Shirk responsibilities’ introduced the idea of avoiding responsibilities, aligning with the concept of evading blame, similar to which ‘deflecting the responsibilities’ deliberately redirected blame away from oneself. The patterns suggested that the metaphor was translated in ways that captured its complexity, cultural connotations, and the strategic nature of blame-shifting in diplomatic discourse. The diversity in expressions reflected the richness of the metaphor and its adaptability in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

3.2 Recontextualization of the metaphor ‘shuai guo’ in TT

Before discussing how the metaphoric expression of ‘shuai guo’ is recontextualized in the translation, it is necessary to inform the origin of this expression to shed light on the analysis process. ‘Shuai guo’, though frequently used as an internet buzzword in China, can be traced back to another expression, ‘Bei hei guo’ (背黑锅), literally meaning carry a black wok on one’s back. In Chinese culture, the ‘wok’ (锅) symbolizes the primary material for survival and the last line of defense for a family’s property. When moving, one must inevitably take the ‘wok’ with them. People in rural areas take down the wok from the stove and store it properly when they are away for an extended period. Even in ancient times, travelers to remote areas carried cookware. The ‘wok’ is something important that needs to be guarded. Its importance in life is self-evident. Therefore, it also symbolizes a heavy burden, responsibility, and pressure in life. In language expression, black often carries negative emotional connotations, signifying evil, injustice, darkness, and other emotionally charged semantic features. The metaphor ‘bei hei guo’ is created through associations and stimulation between different cognitive domains. This gives rise to the metaphorical meanings of bearing responsibility, facing false accusations, and being wronged. ‘Black wok’ thus encompasses meanings such as ‘responsibility’, ‘accusation’, and ‘injustice’. Later on, the

expression ‘*bei hei guo*’ evolved to mean taking responsibility for mistakes. From a visual perspective, the action of ‘*甩*’ (throw) carries the image of trying to break free or escape as quickly as possible. The combination of ‘*甩*’ and ‘*锅*’ vividly describes the act of shifting responsibility (Yin & Yang, 2020).

letcu-Fairclough (2008) posited that translations as recontextualized texts should be linked with the contexts and considered part of action strategies. The original author and the translator integrate their own social cognition and current context to choose their discourse, producing expressions that align with their own positions. This reflects the translator’s self-adjustment during translation (Miao & Zhong, 2023). In analyzing the translation of the metaphoric expression of ‘*shuai guo*’, the four principles of Fairclough (2003) are adopted, i.e., presence, abstraction, addition, and arrangement.

3.2.1. *Presence: emphasizing avoidance of responsibility*

Presence tells which social events are present, absent, prominent, or backgrounded (Fairclough, 2003). The metaphor of ‘*guo*’ in the source domain means ‘wok’, while in the target domain, it is mapped as ‘responsibility’ or ‘blame’. Blame is a simple and direct term indicating the responsibility for a fault or mistake. When the translation is collocated with other verbs, such as ‘shift (the) blame(s)’, ‘shirk responsibilities’, ‘shirk blame’, and ‘deflecting their responsibility’, it emphasizes a deliberate action of transferring responsibility, capturing the essence of ‘*shuai guo*’ in a clear and direct manner and highlighting the act of shifting blame.

Example 1 ST: 现在美国国内疫情那么严重, 我们非常同情。我能想象得到美国国内一些人急于要造锅、甩锅的心理。我们不想跟他们陷入无谓争论, 但是面对这几个人一而再、再而三的没有任何道德底线的造谣污蔑, 我别无选择, 不得不再费点时间, 把事实真相再跟你列举一下。

TT: We sympathize with the US people as they are facing a severe situation, and I can imagine why some in the US are trying so hard to shift the blame. We don’t want to get into any meaningless argument with them. But in response to their endless, immoral slanders, I feel I have no choice but to take a few moments to clarify the truth once again.

In this example, the focus of the ST is on implying the criticism of some politicians on the US side, who are busy making slanders about the pandemic and finding the potential origin of the virus, regardless of the difficult situation of the US people. In the source text, the spokesperson mentioned some people in the US are eager to ‘造锅、甩锅’ (create woks and shift woks), indicating their eagerness to shift blame. The presence of blame is explicit in the ST, portraying a critical stance toward those individuals. In the target text, the presence of blame is recontextualized in a way that maintains acknowledgment but also introduces an evaluative element, such as ‘I can imagine’, ‘trying so hard’, ‘I feel’, ‘endless, immoral slanders’, implies a rejection of the active blame-shifting behavior, suggesting the spokesperson’s accusation of US’s efforts and positive avoidance of responsibility.

3.2.2. *Abstraction: suggesting intentional maneuvering*

Under the recontextualized principles, abstraction means to what degree the concrete events are abstracted or generalized (Fairclough, 2003). Except for the frequently-used word blame, the translation of ‘*shuai guo*’ takes an abstract nature. Instead of using the word ‘blame’, other expressions are used to translate the metaphor, such as trick, play, and game. Accordingly, ‘*shuai guo*’ is condensed as other abstract concepts.

Example 2 ST: ...只会进一步暴露美方的险恶用心及其自身存在的严重问题。我们奉劝美国政客还是要好好反省自身问题, 想办法来尽快控制住疫情, 而不是继续玩弄‘甩锅’推责的把戏。

TT: Their behaviors will only further expose their ill intentions and serious domestic problems in the US. We urge these US politicians to repent what they did and put the epidemics under control as soon as possible. The last thing they should do is continue playing such tricks as duck-shoving and buck-passing.

Example 3 ST: 核心意思就是只要提到疫情, 就攻击中国。美国内这出甩锅大戏已经被严重剧透了, 再演下去没有意义。奉劝美国内那些人千万不要入戏太深、太沉迷。

TT: The core is to attack China whenever they mention it. There have been so many spoilers in the screenplay of this US blame game and there is no point in continuing. A word of advice to those certain individuals in the US: Don't be too immersed in and addicted to this **play**.

Example 4 ST: 我也想再次强调, 美国新冠肺炎疫情发展到今天的局面, 到底是谁的责任, 明眼人一看便知。美国一些政客不断向中国‘甩锅’、推责, 但这口锅太大太重太假, 他们想甩也甩不掉。

TT: I'd also like to re-emphasize that every sharp-eyed person can easily tell who should be responsible for the COVID-19 situation in the US as it is today. For those US politicians spending all their time on political maneuvering, the responsibility is too heavy to shake off and their excuses are too lame.

The three examples are concerned with the same issue of the virus origin. The TT recontextualizes the blame by abstracting it through another metaphor, transforming the straightforward act of shifting blame into a more complex and strategic process described as playing tricks, games, or plays. In example 2, the use of ‘duck-shoving’ and ‘buck-passing’ are categorized into the notion of ‘trick’, adding a layer of abstraction, framing the blame as a deliberate and ill-intentional trick launched by the American politicians rather than a direct accusation. In example 3, the ‘blame game’ is a playful or strategic element indicating a competitive or maneuvering aspect to assigning blame. Other words like ‘spoiler’ and ‘screenplay’ also showed that the virus originating from China is a playful game directed by the US side, meaning they are ill-targeted toward China. In example 4, the metaphor of ‘shuai guo’ is generalized as the phrase ‘political maneuvering’, demonstrating that the virus origin-seeking is not a simple event but is manipulated by political powers behind it. After that, the nouns of ‘responsibility’ and ‘excuses’ are used to indicate artificial and faked facts. By characterizing the blame as a ‘game’, ‘play’, ‘trick’, and ‘political maneuvering’, the TT suggests that the act goes beyond a simple assignment of responsibility. This abstraction may serve to portray the US's actions as not just blaming but engaging in a deliberate and calculated political strategy.

3.2.3. Addition: implying negative attacks

Addition of the recontextualization principle means that certain contents are added to explain, legitimize, or evaluate the events, such as the reasons, causes, and purposes (Fairclough, 2003). In translating the metaphor ‘shuai guo’, negative expressions, such as ‘scapegoating’ and ‘mud-slinging’, imply singling out a specific individual or group to bear the blame, often unfairly. It adds a dimension of unfairly blaming others and negative attacks.

Example 5 ST: 事实胜于雄辩, 中方的防控工作始终是公开、透明、负责任的, 中方的行动是迅速、及时、高效的。美国政客把精力用在到处‘甩锅’、推卸责任上, 这无助于缓解美国国内疫情, 也无助于抗疫国际合作。

TT: Facts speak louder than words. China has taken timely, swift and efficient epidemic prevention and control measures in an open, transparent and responsible manner. Spending much energy on scapegoating and buck-passing will neither alleviate the domestic situation in the US, nor promote international cooperation against the pandemic. These US politicians need to know that.

Example 6 ST: 近期, 美方为本国抗疫不力‘甩锅’, 宣布退出世界卫生组织。我们关注的是, 美国目前仍拖欠超过2亿美元的会费, 是不是会缴清后再正式退出呢?

TT: In 2020, the US government, looking for scapegoats for its botched response to COVID-19, announced its withdrawal from the World Health Organization. It should be noted that the United States still owes more than \$200 million in assessed contributions. Will it pay it off before exiting?

Example 7 ST: 事实再次证明, 加方所作所为完全是混淆是非、倒打一耙。中方对此坚决反对, 强烈谴责。加方应该正视问题, 停止误导舆论、甩锅推责, 停止对中方污蔑抹黑, 同时立即纠正错误, 释放孟晚舟并让她平安回到中国。

TT: Facts have proved again that what the Canadian side pursues is to confuse right and wrong and shift blames to China. China firmly rejects and strongly condemns that. The Canadian side should own up to the issue, stop misleading public opinion and mud-slinging, and stop slandering and smearing China. In the meantime, it should immediately rectify its mistakes, release Meng Wanzhou and ensure her safe return to China.

In the first two examples, the Chinese diplomatic spokespersons implied that while China is sparing no effort to prevent the spreading virus, the American government is taking actions to shirk responsibility and look for scapegoats. In example 5, the TT adds explicit details about the US government's actions, specifying that it is 'looking for scapegoats' and 'buck-passing' in the context of a 'botched response to COVID-19'. The addition of 'these US politicians need to know that' provides a more detailed and evaluative description of the scapegoating, reinforcing the negative action taken by the US. In example 6, the inclusion of information about the US government's withdrawal from the World Health Organization and the outstanding financial contributions adds depth to the critique. It suggests that the scapegoating is not just a rhetorical maneuver by the US but is also manifested in concrete actions such as withdrawing from international organizations and failing to meet financial obligations. In example 7, 'shuai guo' is blurred but translated into a more negative expression, 'mud-slinging', emphasizing that the behavior of arresting Ms. Meng Wanzhou is a negative result of slandering and smearing China. In summary, from the addition aspect, the TT recontextualizes the metaphor of '甩锅' by providing additional details that amplify the negative portrayal of the US government's actions.

3.2.4 Arrangement: Implicating purposeful actions

Arrangement refers to that some elements can be reordered or reorganized (Fairclough, 2003), in the sentence order or the sentence structure. The translation of the metaphor in the TT is recontextualized through the combination of sentence structure or sentence order, implicating that the actions of blaming are taken deliberately by the involved party in the event from the angle of the spokesperson. In the related corpus, the involved party mainly refers to the US.

Example 8 ST: 其实就是美国威胁、胁迫其他国家帮着美方一起栽赃中国。正如美国媒体披露出的信息, 美国一些政客出于国内政治需要, 一再罔顾事实, 推责甩锅。

TT: The US is exerting pressure on its Allies and on other countries as well. To say that it has asked them to stand with the US on the accountability issue is a polite and civilized way to put it, when the US is actually asking them to be accomplice in framing China. As we all know, the US, out of domestic political needs, has repeatedly ignored the facts so that it can dump the blame on others.

Example 9 ST: 101年后的今天, 如果华盛顿还有人想在疫情问题上对中国甩锅、推责, 霸凌中国, 14亿中国人民绝不答应, 我想李文亮医生的在天之灵也绝不会答应。

TT: Today, 101 years from then, if there are still people in Washington who want to act like bullies and pin the blame on China to get away with their poor handling of COVID-19, the 1.4 billion Chinese people will never allow it. The late Dr. Li Wenliang would never allow it.

The original context in the two examples emphasized that the US was framing and bullying China by purposefully dumping the blame on China. Example 8 provides a clear progression of events, starting with the external pressure, moving to the disguised request for support, revealing the true intention of political motives, and ending with the consequence of ignoring facts for 'dumping the blame on others'. In the ST, the spokesperson did not reveal this is the purpose, but in the TT, the translator combined the two sentences and with 'so that', revealing that the final target of the US is to shift the blame. In example 9, the metaphor 'shuai guo' in the ST comes before 'bully', while in the TT, it builds up the narrative, starting with 'act like bullies', moving to the metaphor 'shuai guo'. By adjusting the order of the sentence elements, the TT presents the US as bullying China, and blaming is the way of bullies, emphasizing that blaming China is Washington's purposeful and deliberate action.

4. Discussion

In the remarks given by China's Foreign Ministry spokespersons from 2020 to 2022, 163 items of the metaphor 'shuai guo' were identified, with 24,805 original Chinese characters and 15,381 English characters from the corpus amounting to over three million characters. Different patterns are presented in terms of the English translations of the metaphor: the blame-centered translation and other forms of translations. The blame-centered translation carries the term 'blame' in the form of 'v.+ the blame (n.)',

such as 'shift the blame,' 'deflect the blame,' and 'dump the blame.' Apart from that, other expressions are utilized to transform the metaphor. Notably, 'political maneuvering,' 'mud-slinging,' and 'scapegoating' can be the instances. The diverse range of expressions used to translate 'shuai guo' indicates that translators adopted various terms to convey the metaphor based on different contexts. It is evident that the translation of the metaphoric expression remains inconsistent, justifying that the construction of meaning relies on the interaction of the intention, language choice, and the change of the context (Charteris Black, 2011).

Inspired by the principles of Fairclough's (2003) recontextualization, namely presence, abstraction, addition, and arrangement, this study analyzed how the Chinese metaphoric expression 'shuai guo' is recontextualized in the English translation of the spokespersons' diplomatic discourse. In the aspect of presence, 'blame' is present frequently. It captures the essence of 'shuai guo' in a clear and direct manner, simply and directly indicating the responsibility for a fault or mistake, emphasizing a deliberate action of avoiding responsibility. As per abstraction, the metaphor 'shuai guo' is portrayed as a more strategic process, such as 'playing tricks,' 'game,' or 'play,' and a more abstract notion, such as 'political maneuvering,' implying the targeted political manipulation of 'shuai guo'. In the aspect of addition, additional details that explain the metaphor of 'shuai guo' are provided, and more derogatory expressions are used, not only suggesting the negative portrayal but also evaluating the deliberate action. For example, 'shuai guo' refers not just to blaming but unfair scapegoating or mud-slinging. In terms of arrangement, the order of the metaphor in the sentence is adjusted to comply with the cause-and-effect logic and the deliberate behavior made by the involved targeted party. From different aspects, the metaphor was translated in different contexts using diverse terms, showing different purposes. Thus, the translation of the metaphor in the new context proved Gibbs and Lonergan (2009) viewpoint that the translation of metaphor needs to consider the context.

The analysis of the real examples, taken from the English translation of the spokespersons' remarks, helps increase the understanding of recontextualizing metaphors in discursive practice. Translating the metaphor in the new contexts is presented in different forms, resulting in meanings that cater to the official mainstream ideology and values. The translation is beneficial for the spokespersons to retell a version of the story, safeguarding China's positive image and shaping a negative one for the US. As an internet buzzword in China, the metaphor 'shuai guo' has witnessed changes in cultures and societies and has become a political metaphor frequently used by institutional spokespersons to display the official attitude and strengthen the stance. Due to the differences in language and culture, the direct translation of the metaphor 'throw the wok' may deviate from the original text and political contexts but not convey the intention and consider the target audience, which is in alignment with Yang and Zhao (2020) analysis. They stated that the metaphor in political discourse is complex in cultural connotations and political sensitivity, and target readers' reception must be considered. Therefore, the translation of the metaphor is usually not transformed through the literal translation but other translation methods, such as calque 'buck-passing,' and substitution of 'scapegoating'.

It is evident that the more negative the metaphor is translated, the worse the bilateral political relations between the two big countries are reflected, particularly since the trade war in 2018 and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The worsening tension of the Sino-US relations within a certain time impact the usage of the diplomatic discourse and its translation. More derogatory political metaphors are adopted by the spokespersons in the regular conferences and their translations align with the institution's ideology and diplomacy to safeguard the national interests. However, a critical tone may be weakened in the discourse and its translation, implying better bilateral relations between the two countries. Thus, it can be said that the recontextualization of metaphor is the product of both the political regime and the social changes. In other words, it suggests that the recontextualization of metaphor in the TT, to some degree, serves political purposes.

5. Conclusion

This study has investigated the recontextualization of the metaphor, taking the metaphor 'shuai guo' in China's Foreign Ministry spokespersons' diplomatic discourse as the case. The English translations of the

metaphor revolved around blame and took other forms, showing inconsistent patterns. The inconsistent translation of the 163 items has demonstrated that the meaning of the metaphor in the source domain can be adapted in the target domain due to the changing context, which can be attributed to the differences in the social background, political landscapes, and cultural differences. However, the present study focused only on the context of diplomatic discourse, although there is an increase in the selected corpus compared with the past studies, more corpus covering more years in different contexts are suggested to be included in future research. Additionally, other commonly used political metaphors can be compared with 'shuai guo' to determine whether similar contextualization trends exist across different discourses.

This study offers a perspective to analyze metaphor in diplomatic discourse translation. The employment of the framework of recontextualization by Fairclough (2003) has proved the applicability of the model in analyzing metaphor translation across different languages, helping understand the diplomatic stance of the spokespersons. In the aspects of absence, abstraction, addition, and arrangement, the metaphor was recontextualized into different expressions. Along with the changes in the context, the metaphor in the ST, rich in cultural connotations, may be adjusted to consider the target readers (Yang & Zhao, 2020). Still, the generalization of the framework needs further practical support in other contexts, such as translation in the media discourse and the scientific discourse (Zhang et al., 2022), to see how the translation is recontextualized by the specific discourse genre and communicative purpose. Moreover, practically, future studies can compare the translation of political metaphors across different languages, such as Arabic, Russian, and French, and the use of corpus-based methods to quantitatively analyze translation patterns.

The recontextualization of 'shuai guo' in diplomatic translation can lead to shifts in meaning, with some interpretations potentially appearing more assertive or confrontational in the target language. However, it should be noted that the recontextualization of the metaphor may, on the one hand, to some degree, serve political purposes, on the other hand, not necessarily present deliberate attempts to escalate diplomatic tensions but may result from differences in linguistic structures, cultural perspectives, or strategic translation choices. This, conversely, may not be helpful to possibly recover bilateral relations and international cooperation and cause more misinterpretations of the target readers. That being said, translators need to understand the cultural and political context surrounding the metaphor to avoid unintended diplomatic consequences. Therefore, this study provides some insights to translators that they need to translate the metaphor based on the changing contexts, while they are also advised to get rid of the evaluative attitude and maintain the original information.

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