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Repositioning Self and Others in the translation of China's diplomatic responses

Qi Yuan Liu¹ & Lay Hoon Ang²  

Positioning is influenced by social and political contexts and constructs them in return. In political discourse, positioning refers to the construction of identity and power relations, and the shifts of positioning could cause shifts in power and identities. In order to analyse the variations of positioning in diplomatic translation, this study chooses press conferences held by China's Foreign Ministry and focuses on the responses and translation to the questions about COVID-19. It adopts Appraisal Theory together with framing strategies to check how appraisal resources are translated and how they affect the variations of positioning in the target text. By applying the Critical Discourse Analysis approach, the study finds that most subcategories of appraisal resources decreased in the target text. Different framing strategies were used with different distributions in each subcategory. These framing strategies repositioned the spokespersons and different participants involved in the press conferences and thus resulted in different diplomatic effects in the target text, which includes a more modest image of China, a clearer image of negative others, as well as an increase in the spokespersons' power.

¹School of Foreign Languages, Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, Jiangxi, China. ²Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. email: hlang@upm.edu.my

Introduction

Positioning and language are closely related in political discourse. According to Berlin (2020), positioning refers to the way speakers position themselves and others as well as audiences through language. Schäffner (2015) mentioned that in political discourse, positioning is related to the construction of identity and power relations. Speakers of political discourse could identify themselves, their audiences and other politicians in a particular way. For example, a politician can position himself as a supporter of tight budget control when the government plans to raise taxes (Schäffner, 2015). Besides, speakers could also position themselves in terms of power, which is reflected in forms of address, interruptions, topic initiation and so on. (Weizman, 2008). Therefore, positioning is very significant to political discourse because it can help the political texts to achieve different goals, including the maintenance of power, the declaration of stances and addressing the relationship between the speaker and other participants. However, when translating political discourse, translators or interpreters may mediate the positioning of the ST (source text) speakers and the TT (target text) audiences on purpose or unconsciously (Munday, 2018). This kind of mediation could cause shifts in positioning and thus result in 'shifts in power, access, or blocking of access, to certain features of claimed or desired identities' (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 49).

The language of diplomacy is regarded as one of the sub-genres of political discourse (Kirvalidze and Samnidze, 2016). While political texts are institutional means to maintain political power and ideology, diplomatic texts are used to achieve this political function in the international environment (Bánhegyi, 2014; Zhang, 2013). Representing and negotiating are mega-functions in international diplomacy (Faizullaev, 2022). According to Gilboa (2001), through negotiation, representatives express or defend their interests and grievances as well as issue their ultimatums. It is a means for them to clarify positions and persuade others to support the same position (Gilboa, 2001). Therefore, it can be inferred that positioning is also very important for diplomats to achieve diplomatic functions. With the development of globalisation and the increase in international communication, the translation of diplomatic discourse is becoming increasingly important. Consequently, when translating diplomatic discourse, shifts in the positioning of diplomatic discourse will lead to different influences on diplomatic functions.

In China, the regular press conferences held by the Chinese foreign affairs are one of the prototypical forms of diplomatic texts. At the conferences, the Chinese foreign affairs spokespersons answer questions from domestic and international media to introduce the situation, state their stances and offer replies to different comments from other countries towards specific diplomatic events and global issues. Among various global issues, the COVID-19 pandemic has drawn attention for its serious and long-term influence. Meng (2020) once mentioned that COVID-19 has caused a series of conflicts in and between countries in terms of social system, development patterns, race and religion, and that this epidemic has been politicised. Actually, it is now regarded as 'pandemic geopolitics', which does not see pandemics as purely medical crises. Instead, it reshapes narratives of power, governance and international cooperation (Bassil, 2021). From this perspective, a large-scale pandemic like COVID-19 interacts with various geopolitical events that can accelerate existing trends, such as the US-China rivalry (Bassil, 2021), promote one's governance models and tarnish the rivals (European Parliament, 2020), and create new forms of soft power.

These motivations and impacts can be obviously reflected in the interactions at the press conferences held during COVID-19. China, as the first country to suffer the large spread of the virus as well as the first to recover, has been asked a lot about the anti-

pandemic measures, fidelity of data, global cooperation, as well as blame from other countries. During this interaction, the different participants, including China's spokespersons, different domestic media, foreign media from different countries and even other politicians who are mentioned in the Q&A, represent different interests and thus hold different positions and different diplomatic goals, which could be changed through translation. Therefore, this study tries to examine whether there are any changes in the positioning when translating the responses of Chinese foreign affairs spokespersons, and if yes, how the positioning is changed and what kind of diplomatic impacts they may cause in the context of pandemic geopolitics.

Literature review

China's international discourse strategies. China's rise has been accompanied by an effort to shape its international narrative. The Chinese government attempts to increase its discourse power in international communication so as to improve its national image and diplomatic discursive governance. It is argued that discourse power is a key component of China's national power, which is directly linked to its political system (Shambaugh, 2013). China's policy frameworks, such as 'Belt and Road Initiative' and 'Community with a Shared Future for Mankind', are also designed to build an image of China as a benevolent, peaceful and cooperative country. However, there is a gap between the projected image and international perceptions. China's narrative is often negatively received, and China's assertion of universal values makes its discourse less resonant in the Western context (Brady and Yong, 2012).

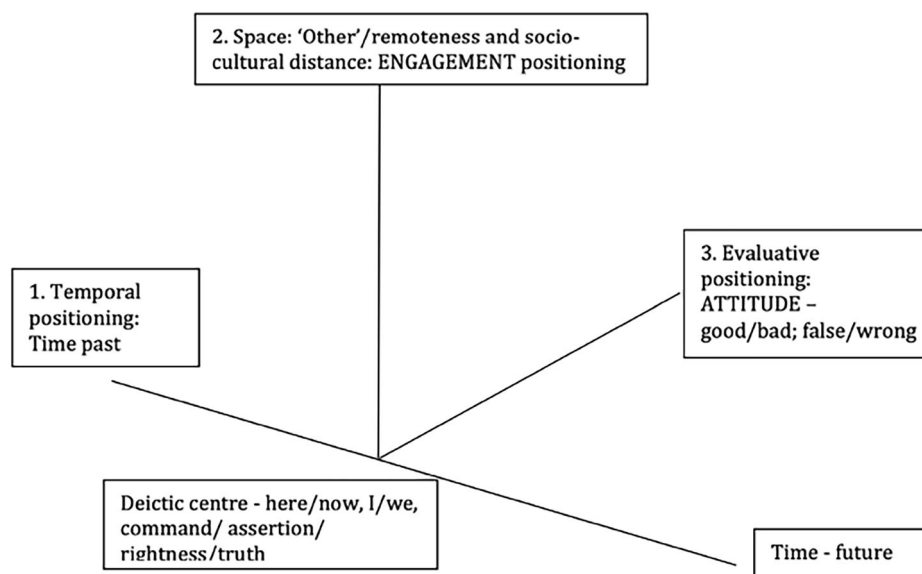
Traditionally, China's diplomatic discourse was characterised by the 'taoguangyanghui' (keep a low profile) principle, employing ambiguous and nonconfrontational language (Zhao, 2019). However, it has recently been popularly labelled as a more assertive and confrontational style by Western media, named 'Wolf Warrior Diplomacy'. It is claimed that China is shifting from defensive to offensive discursive governance, challenging Western accusations directly rather than seeking to evade them. This results in counterproductive influence for China's international image, reinforcing perceptions of an aggressive image (Kurlantzick, 2020).

In order to improve international perception of China's discourse and achieve better diplomatic effects, it is very significant for China to build an effective international discourse system, and translation should be a core strategic component of its international discourse project. The translation of Chinese political discourse should aim at a 'faithful' yet 'palatable' version for foreign audiences (Schäfer, 2019). Therefore, in this study, it is worthwhile to examine whether the translation of press conferences provides a more acceptable version for foreign audiences and whether it helps improve discourse power based on the observation of positioning.

Appraisal Theory and positioning. Munday (2015) believes that how the speaker positions themselves, and others, can be realised by appraisal resources. Therefore, Appraisal Theory (AT) is adopted in this study to help analyse the deviations of positioning between the ST and the TT. AT was proposed by Martin and White (2005) on the basis of Systematic Functional Linguistics. It deals with the interpersonal meaning of the text, which refers to the way of interacting with others and introduces the judgements and desires of speakers (Halliday, 2009). There are three domains of appraisal, including attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude resources concern our feelings, which involve the speaker's emotions, judgements of people and people's behaviour as well as evaluation of

Table 1 Appraisal resources (adapted from Martin and White, 2005 and Munday, 2015).

Domain of appraisal	Category	Subcategory	Value
Attitude	Affect	Happiness/security/satisfaction	Feelings and emotional reactions
	Judgement	Normality/capacity/tenacity/veracity/ propriety	Of ethics, behaviour, capacity
	Appreciation	Reaction/composition/valuation	Of things, phenomena, reactions
Engagement	Monogloss		Single-voiced
	Heterogloss: Expand	Entertain	Recognition of dialogistic alternatives
		Attribute: acknowledge/distance	
	Heterogloss: Contract	Disclaim: deny/counter	
		Proclaim: concur/pronounce/endorse	
Graduation	Force	Quantification/intensification	For intensity and amount
	Focus	Sharpen/soften	For categories not scalable

**Fig. 1** Dimensions of evaluation (Munday, 2015).

things (Martin and White, 2005). It involves three categories: affect, judgement and appreciation, and each of them has different sub-categories. Engagement resources are used to 'position the speaker/writer with the respect to the value position being advanced and with respect to the potential responses to that value position' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 36). It includes monogloss and heterogloss. Heterogloss contains dialogic expansion and contraction, and each of them also has different subcategories. Finally, graduation resources are used to grade attitudinal meaning and engagement through force or focus so that they can be up scale/sharpen or down scale/soften. The categories and subcategories of each domain are presented in Table 1, which are used for the identification and classification of data.

According to the content of AT and the meaning of positioning, it is not hard to find that these two elements are very much relevant. More specifically, attitude resources in appraisal help construct the social identity of self and others by giving judgements and appreciations. The feelings of the text producer (affect) could also indicate the power relation since a participant could position herself as confident, apologetic, dominant or submissive to show the power asymmetry (Weizman, 2008). Engagement resources directly refer to dialogic positioning, which are used to position the speaker/writer as well as the receivers. In addition, graduation, especially intensification, is also linked to positioning, because it shows the degree of the speaker/writer to commit to the value position and how the speaker/writer outlines the receivers to that value position

(Martin and White, 2005). In fact, some previous studies have also tested the feasibility of AT for the analysis of positioning.

For example, Munday (2015) discussed positioning in political discourse by analysing reporting verbs (engagement resources) and graduation resources. He (Munday, 2015, p.11) finds that different choices of reporting verbs cause changes in 'positioning the speaker in respect of the statement and at the same time in activating reader response'. Moreover, Munday (2012) also adapted a model to integrate appraisal resources with the 'deictic positioning' in political discourse (Chilton, 2004). According to Chilton (2004), all three axes start from the 'deictic centre', which stands for here, now, and I/we. 'Deictic centre' also stands for the highest level of 'true' and 'right' as well as 'closest relationship'. Munday (2012) used appraisal to replace Chilton's (2004) axes and applied it to help compare the positioning in both the ST and the TT, which is shown in Fig. 1. More specifically, the time axis is replaced as 'time positioning', the space axis is replaced as 'engagement positioning', while modality is adapted as 'evaluative positioning' (Munday, 2015). Since the interpretation of press conferences seldom has deviations in time positioning, this study adopts evaluative and engagement positioning to analyse the extent of 'repositioning'.

Munday's (2012, 2015) studies proved that AT is a meaningful tool for identifying evaluative words and expressions, which also sheds light on the application of the model combined with AT and deictic positioning. Nevertheless, there is a lack of other tools or models to help directly compare the shifts in terms of different

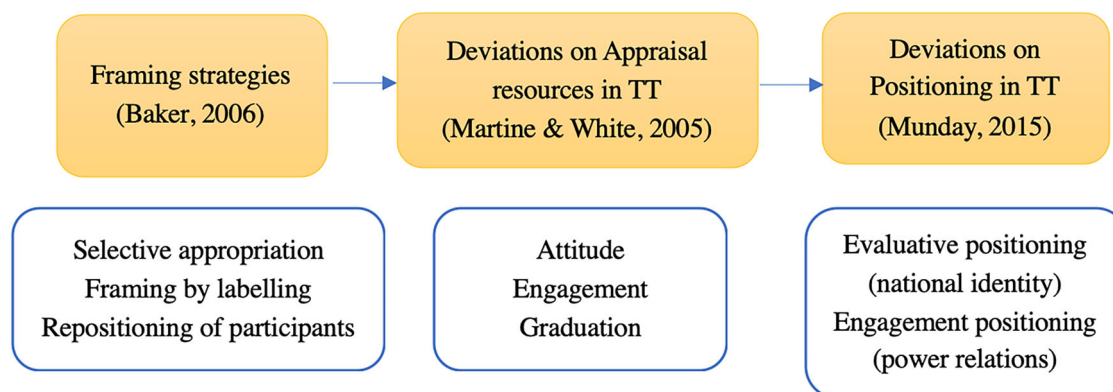


Fig. 2 Theoretical framework.

positioning axes. Moreover, it seems that Munday's (2015) model pays more attention to the dialogic positioning between the ST and the TT rather than the political positioning in the context. Therefore, there is a need for further comparison of the variations in engagement and evaluative positioning, as well as the political or diplomatic effects caused by the variations in translation.

Framing strategies in Narrative Theory. In order to better compare the variations, this study also adopts framing strategies to categorise the deviations of appraisal resources between the ST and the TT. Framing strategies are proposed by Baker (2006) on the basis of Narrative Theory. Baker (2007, p. 151) proposed that 'narrations are the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live, and it is our belief in these stories that guides our actions in the real world'. Based on this, Baker (2007) regarded frames as 'understandings' that emerged out of interactions that aim to anticipate and guide others' interpretation towards a set of events. Baker (2006) also believes that translators or interpreters could actively participate in the interaction by (re) framing aspects of narratives in the TT. There are different framing strategies that could be used in translation, including temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation of textual material, framing by labelling, and repositioning of participants. Temporal and spatial framing deals with the changes of the temporal and spatial framework in the narratives of the TT. Selective appropriation is often realised by the omission or addition of the textual material in the ST. Besides, framing by labelling refers to the use of 'a lexical item, term or phrase to identify a person, place, group, event or any other key element in a narrative' (Baker, 2006, p. 122). Finally, repositioning of participants is closely related to engagement in appraisal, which concerns the way in which participants are positioned in the interaction in relation to each other or to the event.

The specific relations of framing strategies, appraisal resources, and positioning can be seen in the different framing strategies. Firstly, selective appropriation could reflect translators' positioning to the (political) event or conflict, which can be realised by the deviations of attitude and graduation resources. For example, the translator can add or omit the specific evaluations on events/conflicts and thus change the positioning. Secondly, framing by labelling shows the identities reframed by the translation, which can also be realised by attitudinal resources. For instance, the translator can have different labels of himself or the other politicians/countries to show different identities. Besides, the repositioning of participants is directly related to the engagement resources in appraisal. Therefore, framing strategies are very

helpful for categorising the deviations of appraisal resources between the ST and the TT.

Moreover, framing strategies are often applied to discuss the reframing of positioning, conflict, or image in translation studies (Spiessens and Van Poucke, 2016; Qin and Zhang, 2017; Dubbati and Abudayeh, 2018; Pan and Liao, 2020; Zeng and Li, 2021). It was also used to analyse appraisal resources in some studies (Liu et al., 2022). For example, Zeng and Li (2021) analysed how framing strategies help present China's image in the translation of social media comments on news reports. Combined with AT, the study focused on the framing strategies used in the deviations of attitudinal resources that evaluate China. They (Zeng and Li, 2021) find that selective appropriation, framing by labelling and frame ambiguity are often used, which result in evaluation deviations to promote a finer pro-China narrative and retouch China's global image.

As a result, framing strategies can be regarded as an effective means to compare engagement and attitudinal positioning through different appraisal resources between the ST and the TT. Furthermore, it helps analyse how positioning is reframed in the TT, which contributes to further analysis on diplomatic impact. With the combination of AT and Munday's (2015) adaptation of 'deictic positioning', as well as framing strategies (Baker, 2006), the present study tries to fill the theoretical gap and finally check the translation effect on international communication. Framing strategies help the researcher to check the deviations of appraisal resources, and Munday's (2015) adaptation offers a model to compare the positioning between the ST and the TT through appraisal resources. In addition, it also provides a comprehensive analysis of appraisal resources from all three domains, which was neglected in the previous studies, as they mainly chose one or two domains to discuss. The theoretical framework of this study is presented in Fig. 2. The deviations in appraisal resources in the TT are caused by the framing strategies used by the translators. Then, these deviations can result in deviations in positioning in the TT, which can lead to a diplomatic impact on national identity and power relations, respectively.

Based on the conceptual framework, the present study aims to analyse positioning from the perspectives of appraisal and framing, and thus answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the deviations of appraisal resources in the TT compared with the ST?
- (2) What kinds of framing strategies are used in the deviations of appraisal resources?
- (3) How is positioning reframed by the deviations of appraisal resources in the TT?

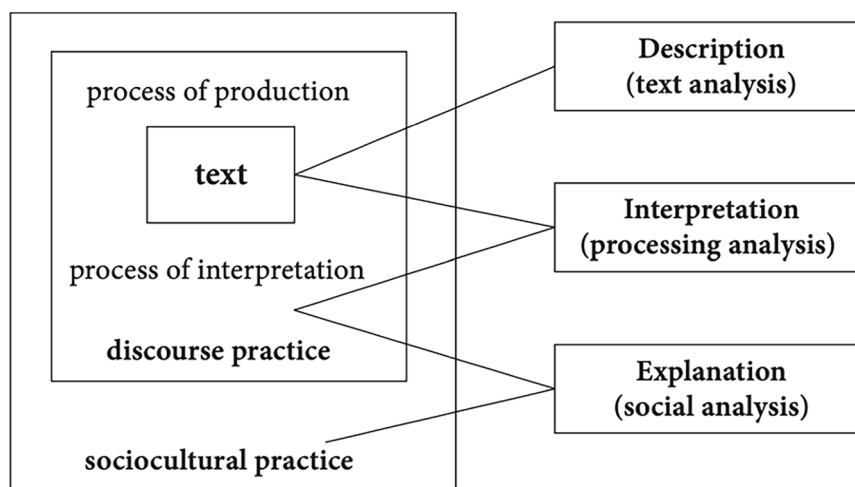


Fig. 3 Fairclough's Three-dimensional Model (Source: Titscher et al., 2000).

Methods

Sample and sampling. The sample of this study is the ST and the TT of the responses of China's foreign affairs spokespersons on the regular press conferences. The regular press conference is held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China on every working day for domestic and foreign journalists to ask questions about different diplomatic issues and events. Now there are three spokespersons in the ministry, and they take turns to host and answer questions on different days. Usually, journalists would ask in Chinese or English, while foreign affairs spokespersons always answer in Chinese. Both the questions and answers are interpreted simultaneously from Chinese to English or English to Chinese. The interpretation is done by the Department of Translation and Interpretation, which also belongs to the foreign ministry. The complete transcripts of every press conference are uploaded on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in both Chinese and English versions. Thus, the ST of this study is the Chinese responses of the foreign affairs spokespersons, and the TT is the English translation of the responses.

The sampling firstly chose the time period of the press conferences, which is May 2020. China was the first to suffer from the outbreak of COVID-19 in December 2019, and then it was also the first to curb the spread of the disease and reopen the country in late April 2020. Meanwhile, it was also the period during which the global pandemic began to expand. The dramatic reversal of China and the global situation of the pandemic have caused different international voices on China, including support, appreciation, doubts or even blame, which were often asked on the press conferences in May. Second, the study screened the questions and answers that are related to the topic of COVID-19. After sampling, there were 71 pairs of questions and answers about COVID-19 selected, with 36150 Chinese words and 21469 English words in total. The questions were only used for selecting data and analysing context, but were not regarded as part of the sample.

Data collection. The selected questions and answers were input into ATLAS.ti, which was used as the tool for data coding and analysis. The appraisal resources were identified and coded based on Martin and White's (2005) categorisation. They have listed some examples of lexicogrammatical markers for each subcategory, which offer the gist of the range of meanings for each appraisal subcategory. First, it identified appraisal resources of the three domains (attitude, engagement, and graduation), and coded the subcategory based on the categorisation in the ST. Then, the

first step was repeated in the TT, which was processed consecutively between the ST and the TT question by question, so that the deviations of appraisal resources can be found easily. Third, it found appraisal deviations in the TT and determined and coded which framing strategy was used according to Baker's (2006) categorisation. When coding the deviations, Baker's (2006) categorisation of framing by labelling was further classified as generalisation and specification. In Qin and Zhang's (2017) study, they found that translators tended to use generalisation and specification as labelling strategies to reinterpret frames in news reports.

CDA analytical procedure. This study adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach and the adaptation of Fairclough's (1995) CDA analytical model. CDA focuses on the relations between discourse and society, including social cognition, politics and culture (van Dijk, 1997). It is often used in translation studies to answer questions including who is translating for whom, what is being translated, and what are the effects on the receiving culture (Schäffner, 2002). Fairclough's (1995) CDA analytical model involves three procedures: description (text analysis), interpretation (processing analysis) and explanation (social analysis). In this model, CDA is firstly carried out through the description of linguistic properties in the text analysis; then, the productive and interpretive processes are interpreted in the processing analysis. Lastly, the relation between discursive and social practice is explained in the social analysis (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough's three-dimensional model is presented in Fig. 3.

This study adapts Fairclough's three-dimensional model to analyse the translation of diplomatic text with the combination of AT and framing strategies. In the text analysis, it compares the appraisal resources between the ST and the TT. Then, it analyses the framing strategies used in appraisal deviations in process analysis. Finally, social analysis is used to discuss the deviations in positioning as well as the possible diplomatic impacts that may be caused, such as national image and international perception. The analytical model is presented in Fig. 4.

Results

The frequencies of all three domains of appraisal are shown in Table 2. In general, the attitudinal resources are mostly used in both ST and TT. The frequencies of engagement and graduation resources are quite similar in the ST, while the graduation resources are much less than engagement resources in the TT. All

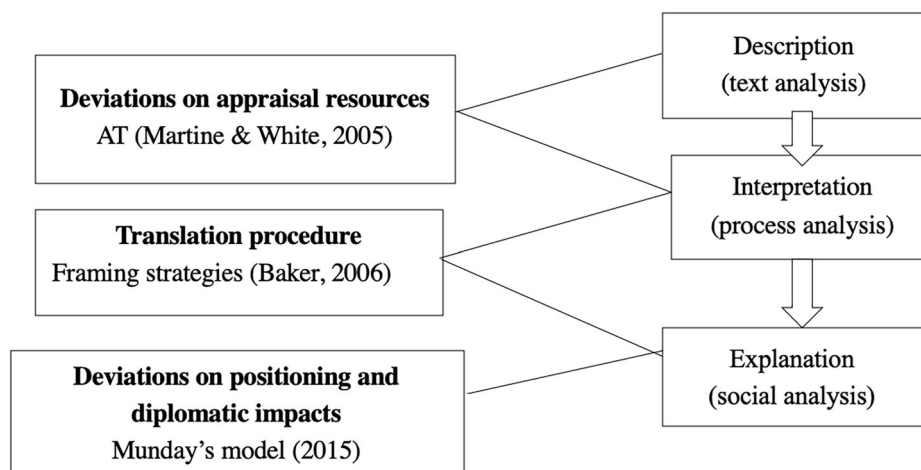


Fig. 4 CDA analytical model adapted from Fairclough.

Table 2 Frequencies of appraisal resources.

	Attitude	Engagement	Graduation	Total
ST	706	225	223	1154
TT	617	205	138	960

three domains in the ST witnessed a reduction in the TT, and there are 194 deviations found in total, but the situation of each subcategory differs from each other.

Deviations in appraisal resources. Firstly, attitudinal resources are mostly found in both ST and TT. Although its total number decreases in the TT, the situation of each subcategory differs from each other. According to Fig. 5, the affected resources were least found, which shows that the spokespersons seldom express their feelings when answering questions. There were only a few deviations on affect resources in the TT. By contrast, the frequency of judgement resources is the highest, especially that of propriety resources that are used to evaluate how ethical someone is. Most of the propriety resources are negative (169 out of 234), which reflects the high frequency for the spokespersons to give negative judgements (usually on the anti-China countries). While the propriety resources decreased in the TT, the decrease of tenacity resources in judgement is the most obvious. Tenacity resources are used to evaluate how resolute someone is. However, there are also some exceptions, whose frequencies increased in the TT, including happiness resources in affect and valuation resources in appreciation.

Secondly, among the engagement resources, contract resources were mostly found, but most of them decreased in the TT (see Fig. 6). This variation indicates that the dialogical contraction of the ST reduces, leaving more dialogical spaces in the TT. On the other hand, the entertaining resources of dialogic expansion, which deal with the speaker/writer's internal voice, increased in the TT. It is also consistent with the expansion of dialogical space. However, attribution, the other subcategory of dialogic expansion, saw reductions. Attribution deals with the external voice, which is divided into 'acknowledge' and 'distance'. Acknowledge takes place when there is no obvious indication of the authorial voice's preference for the proposition, while distance gives an explicit distancing between the authorial voice and the attributed proposition.

Third and last, in the graduation domain, force resources that apply to categories that are scalable (intensification and quantification) were largely used in the ST. Intensification is the scaling of qualities and processes, while quantification scales with respect to amount, extent, and the scope or proximity in time and space. However, both of them reduced a lot in the TT (see Fig. 7). On the contrary, focus resources which apply to categories that are not scalable were seldom used, and there was even no soft resource found. The frequencies of all the appraisal resources show the general trend of the differences between the ST and the TT. However, the appraisal deviations in translation are more complex than the changes in frequency. The following will discuss the framing strategies applied in appraisal deviations and how they change appraisal meanings.

Framing strategies in appraisal deviations. The appraisal deviations as well as the framing strategies applied in the deviations were also coded when comparing the appraisal recourse between the ST and the TT. Selective appropriation, framing by labelling and repositioning participants were often used, while frame ambiguity and temporal and spatial framing were not applied in the translation. According to Baker (2006), selective appropriation refers to the addition or omission of text materials during translation, while the framing by labelling can be realised by generalisation and specification (Qin and Zhang, 2017). The distribution of the different framing strategies applied is presented in Fig. 8. As we can see, selective appropriation has the highest percentage, which is 70% (135 in total), while framing labelling and repositioning of participants were much less used, accounting for 14% (27) and 16% (32), respectively.

Selective appropriation. The majority of appraisal deviations used selective appropriation, and omission is the most used strategy with 116 examples. Omission is mainly used in attitudinal and graduation deviations. The resources that were most often omitted are listed in Table 3.

Positive tenacity in judgement was largely omitted. In the first example of the table, the Chinese phrase '同舟共济' was often used to express that China is a dependable country that can share weal and woe with other countries and support them during the pandemic. Besides, the expression 'make effort' also shows China's tenacity for its hard work on anti-pandemic. However, these resources of positive tenacity were mostly omitted. Second, the spokespersons mainly used positive valuation (how

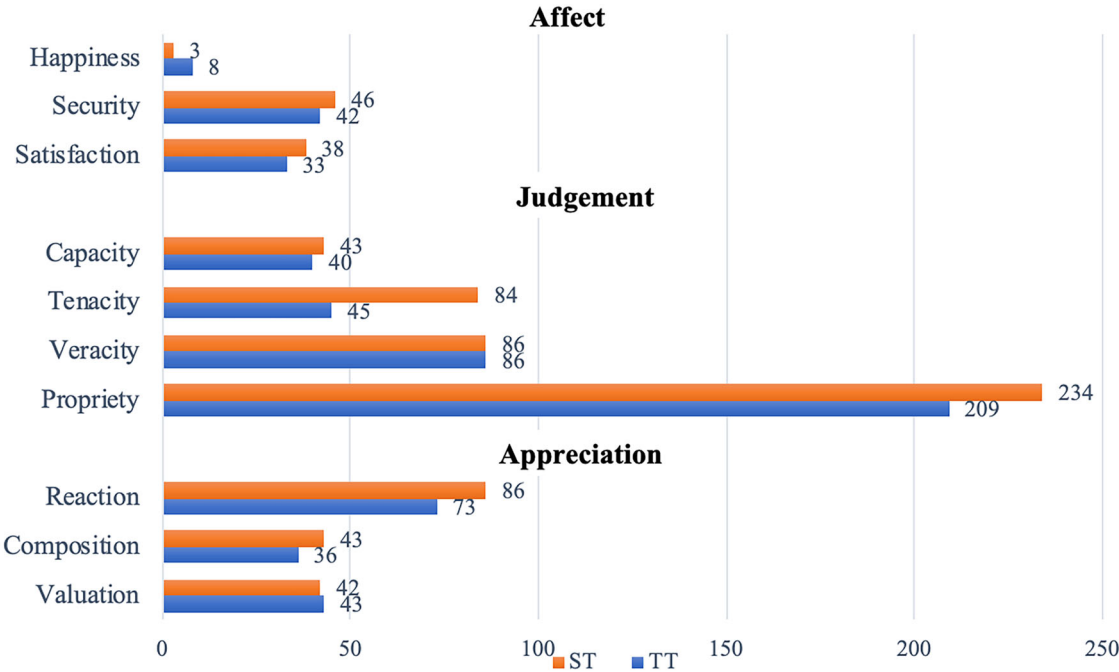


Fig. 5 Frequencies of attitudinal resources in ST and TT.

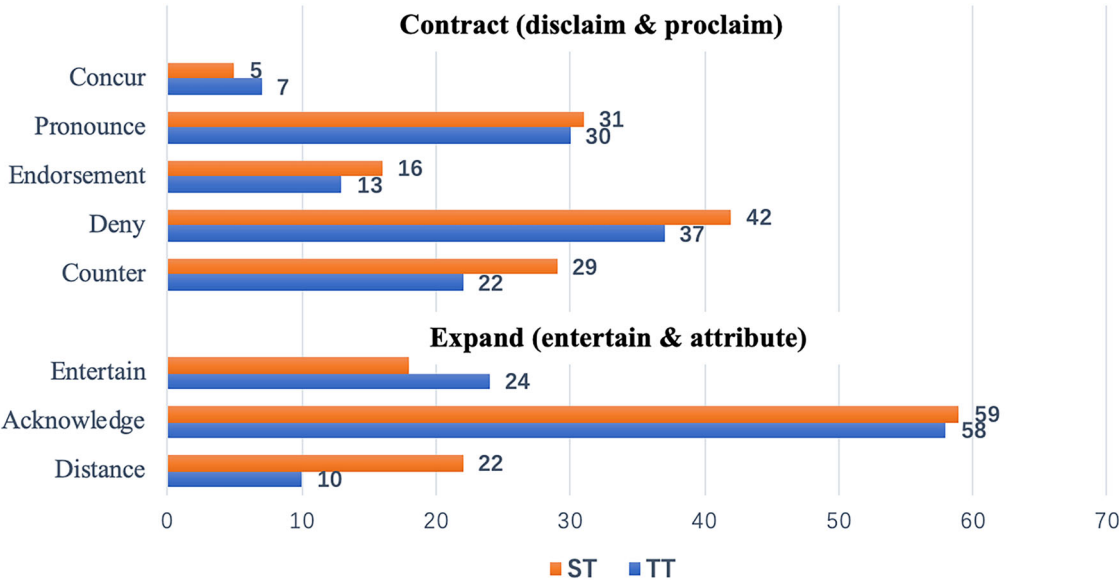


Fig. 6 Frequencies of engagement resources in ST and TT.

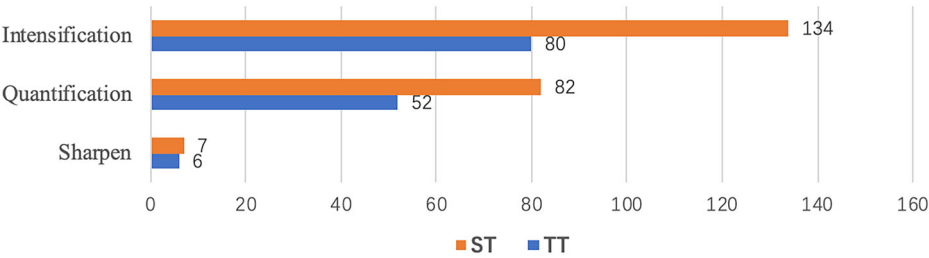


Fig. 7 Frequencies of graduation resources in ST and TT.

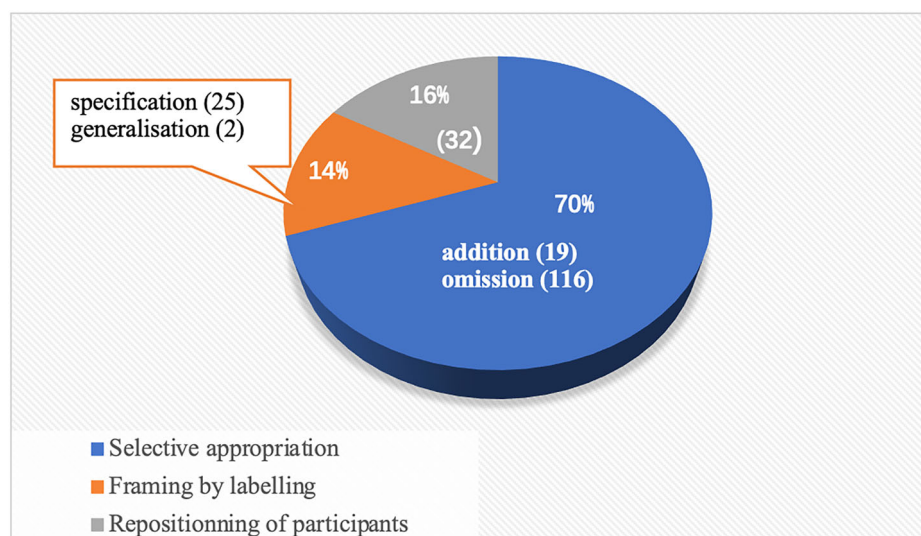


Fig. 8 Distribution of different framing strategies.

Table 3 Omissions in attitudinal and graduation resources.

Subcategory	ST (frequency)	Back translation (BT)	TT
positive tenacity	同舟共济(5) 努力(5)	share weal and woe make effort	omitted
positive valuation	及时(3)	timely	omitted
intensification	始终/一直(11) 积极合作(6) 高度赞赏(6)	always actively cooperate highly laud	omitted cooperate laud

worthwhile) in the appreciation category to show that China's performance to control COVID-19 was valuable; this included timely responses and precious medical support. Similarly, some of these resources were omitted repeatedly as well, reducing the positive appreciation of China's performance.

Apart from attitudinal deviations, omission was more frequently used for graduation deviations and intensification resources were mostly omitted. In the responses, the spokespersons often stated that China has always been open, transparent and responsible, and is always telling the truth. By using the word 'always', the spokespersons upscale China's veracity (how truthful) to the maximum. However, this word was mainly omitted in the TT; therefore, the degree of China's positive evaluation was scaled down. Besides, the spokespersons often stated that China actively cooperated with other countries to prevent the epidemic. 'Actively' is intensification resource that upscaled China's tenacity and propriety. These resources were often omitted in the TT as well, which reduced the vigour of China's efforts during the process of supporting others. Additionally, the spokespersons like to mention others commending China, saying that they highly laud China's anti-pandemic measures. In the TT, the intensification resource 'highly' was largely omitted. Thus, others' satisfaction and appreciation of China were scaled down.

In addition, intensification resources used with negative satisfaction, which involve our feelings of achievement and frustration towards the activities, were also omitted sometimes. Example 1 is the reply to the FBI's report accusing Chinese hackers of trying to steal research information on COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines. The spokesman expressed his attitude as 'strongly deplores and firmly opposes'. The two adverbs

'strongly' and 'firmly' are intensification resources used to upscale the degree of China's dissatisfaction. However, both of them were omitted in the TT. Thus, the negative attitude towards US smearing actions is down-scaled, and the spokesperson's positioning was softened.

Example 1

ST: 中方对美方的这种抹黑行为表示强烈不满和坚决反对。

BT: China strongly deplores and firmly opposes the smearing actions of US.

TT: China deplores and opposes such slanderous actions.

In contrast, addition was much less applied than omission. Most of the additions were found in attitudinal deviations, especially negative attitudinal resources. In Example 2, the spokesperson gave a negative judgement that 'Mr. Pompeo is endlessly attacking China', which was regarded as improper by the spokesperson. In the TT, the phrase 'spewing lies' was added as a negative veracity resource. It further explained the immoral behaviour done by Mr. Pompeo, and his image of dishonesty was also added.

Example 2

ST: 蓬佩奥先生没完没了地抹黑攻击中国...

BT: Mr. Pompeo is endlessly smearing and attacking China...

TT: Since Mr. Pompeo cannot stop attacking China and spewing lies...

Framing by labelling. As mentioned before, framing by labelling can be categorised into specification and generalisation. The result finds that the majority of framing by labelling is specification, while there are only two appraisal deviations used generalisation. Most specifications were applied in the translation of negative attitude, especially negative propriety. Example 3 shows the specification of negative propriety.

Example 3

ST: 由于美国国内出现的妖魔化和抹黑攻击中国的言论...

BT: Due to the demonisation and smearing of China in the United States...

TT: According to US media reports, due to inappropriate linkage of Asian groups with COVID-19, ...

It is an excerpt of the response to the question about the US-fuelled hostility towards China during the pandemic, which may result in military conflict between the two countries. The spokesperson mentioned that there were speeches in the US that demonised and smeared China. The spokesperson used the two verbs to express the impropriety of the US side to incite public hostility towards China. However, this behaviour was specified in a detailed action in TT as 'inappropriate linkage of Asian groups with COVID-19'. By saying this, the accusation on US became less severe, but the TT explained it with specific actions of the US media. Moreover, it was said in the ST that there was demonisation and a smearing of China; however, China was relabelled as 'Asian groups' in the TT. It seems that the translator had the intention of expanding the influence caused by this action—trying to convey that the United States not only smeared China, but all Asian groups and peoples. As a result, it reflects the positioning of the translator to align the audience in other Asian countries into the value position—with a negative evaluation of the United States.

Example 4

ST: 最近我们多次用时间线的方式, 花了比较长的时间, 介绍中方抗击疫情和开展国际合作的有关情况。

BT: Lately, we've spent a long time to introduce how China prevent epidemic and open international cooperation with a detailed timeline on many occasions.

TT: I've been answering similar questions lately and sharing a detailed timeline of China's efforts on many occasions.

Example 4 shows the generalisation in positive tenacity. The spokesperson stated that they have introduced many times on 'how China prevent epidemic and open international cooperation'. This expression was recognised as positive propriety in the ST in order to show that China was doing the right thing to prevent the epidemic and cooperate with other countries. However, it was generalised as 'China's efforts' in the TT, which was changed as positive tenacity. As a result, the detailed information on what China did for preventing epidemic was also deleted.

Repositioning of participants. Since engagement resources deal with the dialogic positioning in the text, the application of repositioning of participants was mainly observed in the deviations of engagement resources. There were deviations in both dialogic expansion and contraction, but more deviations were found in expansion, especially in the subcategories of entertain and distance resources.

Firstly, entertain resources in dialogic expansion were increased in the TT, which were different as the majority of appraisal resources decreased in the TT. This addition includes the locutions such as 'I think/I believe' or the modal words 'may/can'. However, these entertain resources were mostly added to non-sensitive issues. In Example 5, the spokesperson stated that the relevant information about the video conferences had been released. It is a monogloss to state the objective fact. In the TT, it was reframed as 'you can look for more details of these meetings from the press release we've already issued'. The TT became an inclination of dialogic expansion to explicitly suggest the journalist. Perhaps the real intention of the speaker is to ask the journalist to check the released information, but he did not say it explicitly in the ST. Thus, the dialogic space has enlarged,

and the distance between the speaker and the journalist has been decreased—making the spokesperson sound kinder.

Example 5

ST: 此前, 中方和欧盟方面也举行了两次视频会议, 就疫情防控工作进行了深入交流。有关的消息也已经发布。

BT: Before that, China and the EU also held two video conferences and had in-depth exchanges on epidemic prevention and control. Relevant information has also been released.

TT: Prior to yesterday's video conference, China has already had such communication with the EU via two video conferences. You can look for more details of these meetings from the press release we've already issued.

Second, distance resources were often omitted in the TT. Distance is often realised by the reporting verb of 'claim', which separates the speaker from the responsibility for what is reported (Caldas-Coulthard, 2002). As shown in Example 6, the Chinese word '所谓' means 'so-called' in English and is regarded as a distance resource of attribute. It indicates the non-factive meaning of the proposition and infers that the spokesperson positions himself at a large distance from the proposition with very little investment. The space for dialogic alternatives was maximised. However, it was changed as 'the letter said that' in the TT, which became an acknowledged resource. The word 'said' is a neutral reporting verb, and the TT used it to change the spokesperson's positioning to the statement that 'the Chinese leader pressured Director-General Tedros on January 21'. Thus, the explicit positioning of non-factive was eliminated.

Example 6

ST: 所谓'中方领导人1月21日向谭德塞总干事施压', 这纯属捏造。

BT: The so-called 'the Chinese leader pressured Director-General Tedros on January 21' is pure fiction.

TT: The letter said that on January 21, the Chinese leader pressured Director-General Tedros. This is pure fiction.

On the other hand, a few dialogic contractions were added as well. In Example 7, the phrase 'in fact' is added in the TT. 'In fact' is a pronounced resource in the proclamation of dialogic contraction. It usually refers to authorial interventions that assert the warrantability of the proposition (Martin and White, 2005). By adding the phrase, the spokesperson's subjectivity to the proposition became more salient, and the dialogic space for the contrary position was reduced, which produces more costly for others to propose opposing opinions.

Example 7

ST: 中方从来没有说过反对世卫组织工作, 从来都坚定支持世卫组织开展有关工作。

LT: China has never said it stands against WHO and has all along firmly supported the organization's work.

TT: China has never said it stands against WHO. In fact, we have all along firmly supported the organization's work.

Discussion

As can be seen from the findings, various appraisal resources were used in spokespersons' responses, and deviations of appraisal

resources were found in the translation. Moreover, different framing strategies were applied in the translation, which caused deviations of appraisal resources as well as appraisal meanings. These deviations would also have an impact on the positionings in the TT. The following is going to discuss the changes of positioning from three perspectives: repositioning of Self, repositioning of Others, as well as repositioning of spokespersons and audiences, through comparing evaluative and engagement positioning between ST and TT. Meanwhile, it will also analyse the relevant diplomatic impacts caused by positioning shifts mainly in terms of national identity, international perception and power relations, as well as the possible motivations behind the shifts.

Repositioning of Self. Self refers to the speaker and the group that the speaker stands for or is aligned with. In the sample of this study, Self involves China, the Chinese government and the Communist Party of China. In the ST, the spokespersons' evaluative positioning identifies China as a responsible, reliable, cooperative and contributive country through positive attitudinal resources. They have repeatedly mentioned that China has worked hard and taken effective actions to prevent the epidemic. It took the responsibility of a major country which actively cooperates and helps other countries and makes contributions to international health security. Besides, China's performance has also received many satisfactions and compliments from others. These statements are self-affirmations made by the spokespersons or others' evaluations quoted by the spokespersons. The spokespersons often used many flowery phrases and even repetitions to emphasise the positive Self in the ST. However, this positioning was largely omitted and softened in the TT as shown in Table 3. The expressions of self-affirmation and others' positive evaluations were reduced in the TT. Similarly, the graduation resources used to upscale the evaluations were often omitted. As a result, the evaluative positioning in the TT moved away from the 'deictic centre' in the ST. The positioning of positive evaluation on China was reduced or downscaled and thus became vaguer.

This softened positive Self positioning in the TT, which reduces self-affirmation, reflects a more modest and objective national identity compared with that of the ST. This impact was also argued in Zeng and Li's (2021) study. They have confirmed the omission strategy used in news translation to maintain modesty and objectivity, though more framing strategies were used to strengthen the pro-China positioning and retouch China's global image. The factors of different preferences of framing strategies may lie in the time limitation of interpreting and the different target audiences. Firstly, the TT of the present study is the transcription of the interpreting of the press conferences. Thus, the interpreters need to react and interpret instantly and fluently, and they have to select the most important information of the ST and omit the less important or repeated information. Second, the target audiences of the press conferences are foreign media, politicians and citizens other than China. It is inferred that the motivation of omitting and softening the positive Self is to avoid being boastful, which is more acceptable for the foreign audiences. The international perception of China's national image can be improved as well.

In addition, this kind of strategy also constructs a polite image of China. According to Leech (2014), politeness is a social phenomenon that is mainly realised through language. Li and Xu (2018) believed that translation is also restrained by politeness in the same vein as other social norms. They pointed out that the strategy of politeness is to depreciate self and respect other. They have found several omissions of graduation resources in the English translation of the contemporary Chinese political discourse, which are believed to downscale the positive role of

China and build a polite image of China. Similarly, the omission and generalisation used in the present study on self-promotion helped China from being arrogant or self-conceited, and thus presented a polite China that served the country's self-interests (Li and Xu, 2018). It can also explain the reason why the attitudinal and graduation resources, which are used for praising others, were seldom omitted.

Repositioning of Others. In this study, Others refer to the countries or people who stand on the opposite side of China. According to the data, the negative evaluations of other-presentation were mainly used for the United States, the U.S. government, and some of their national leaders or politicians when responding to the questions of their blames and accusations. It is very common in the context of pandemic geopolitics, which engages states in information warfare to assign blame and deflect responsibility, aiming to shape the global narrative about who is at fault and which political system is more competent. For example, there are the 'Wuhan Lab' theory, 'China-responsibility' theory and 'China-compensation' theory proposed by the United States. In the ST, the spokespersons expressed evaluative positioning through negative judgement and appreciation resources in the ST to identify Others as incapable, irresponsible and dishonest. They often mentioned that the United States responded slowly and executed poor actions, which wasted time in the early stages of epidemic prevention. They kept saying that the United States politicised the virus and smeared China in order to shift blame and responsibility. In contrast, some of these negative resources were omitted in the TT. Actually, most subcategories saw different levels of omission in the TT because of the time limitation of simultaneous interpreting. However, it is worth noticing that the majority of the two reframing strategies (specification and addition) were applied in the appraisal resources, which were used to identify negative Others. As presented in Example 2, the misbehaviour (negative veracity) of the US politician was added in the TT. In Example 3, the accusation of the US media's misleading (negative propriety) became less severe but was specified in the TT to further explain the inappropriacy of the media.

Therefore, the strategies of omission and relabelling reduced and softened the positioning to give negative evaluations on Others. However, this evaluative positioning was added and specified with more detailed information, which made the negative national image of others more explicit. By doing so, the translators decreased the hostility towards the United States, but they tried to make it easier for target audiences to accept the negative evaluations of the United States. Although omissions were also used in negative evaluations, they were much less used than those used for self-promotion. Politeness can also account for this kind of difference. According to van Dijk (1998), the translators' adherence to the strategy of politeness has a baseline, which is to serve the Self's interests. Thus, the translators tried to be polite and presented a less negative view of the United States on one hand, while also considering China's national interests and defending them on the other. Therefore, they carefully chose what was to be omitted or relabelled when dealing with the negative positioning on others.

Furthermore, the motivation to weaken the impression of China's 'Wolf Warrior Diplomacy' can also be taken into consideration. As mentioned in the literature review, this expression reinforces a tough and aggressive image, which is counterproductive for the international perception of China's discourse. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China believes that this term is a discourse trap created by Western public opinion, which distorts its justifiable defence stance of safeguarding

national sovereignty. In this context, it is possible that the translators use omission and relabelling strategies on the resources of negative Others in order to soften this negative tough image and thus improve the international perception of China's discourse. As pointed out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, it holds a defensive diplomacy aiming at other countries' smearing of China rather than active provocations.

Repositioning of the spokespersons and the audiences.

Engagement positioning directly reflects the power relations and solidarity among the participants. Power relations and solidarity are the realisation of diplomatic functions in terms of soft power, which can affect the behaviours of others (Nye, 2021). As mentioned earlier, the repositioning of the spokespersons and the audiences largely reflect on the deviations of engagement resources. The deviations of dialogic expansion and contraction show different positioning in the TT. As for dialogic expansion, entertain resources such as 'I think/believe' or modals like 'can/may' were often added in non-sensitive issues. By adding the entertain resources, the spokespersons allowed more space for alternative voices. It aligned not only the putative audiences who shared the same value position with the speaker, but also those who held different opinions. Although the power distance between the speaker and journalists was reduced, the solidarity was largely increased. It can be suggested that the translators try to align with more audiences and keep a more friendly image of the spokespersons when they have a chance (as shown in Example 5).

By contrast, distance resources 'so-called' in dialogic expansion were often omitted in the TT as presented in Example 6. In the ST, these distance resources were used when expressing others' negative evaluations on China. By using this expression, the spokespersons positioned themselves far away from the proposition. In fact, the dialogic space was opened to the maximum and even welcomed the alternative voices against this proposition. Thus, there was a strong sense of solidarity with the audiences that hold an opposite position in the ST., but they were omitted or replaced with neutral reporting verbs, which changed the positioning of the spokespersons from disagreement to neutral. However, the deviation reduced this solidarity, which also did not reflect the speakers' disagreement on this proposition.

In dialogic contraction, proclaim resources such as 'in fact' (see Example 7) were added in the TT. These resources are the means of authorial intervention (Martin and White, 2005). This kind of addition reflected the political manipulation to persuade the putative audiences into viewing the mentioned proposition as true. As a result, it emphasises the authenticity of the proposition, expressing that they were telling the facts. The dialogic space for other alternatives becomes very small, which hardly allows others to query or reject. These deviations of proclaim resources increase the power of the spokespersons in the dialogues.

Li and Zhang's (2021) study also shared some findings in common. When they analysed the engagement choices of the English translation of one Chinese press conference, they found the omissions of concur resources, which elevated the Minister's authoritative power. Furthermore, the power distance was reduced between the Minister and journalists when discussing non-sensitive issues (Li and Zhang, 2021). Nevertheless, the present result of the distance deviation is different from Li and Zhang's (2021) study. They found additions rather than omissions of distance resources ('so-called') in the translation of Chinese journalists' utterances when discussing the negative comments on China. It is believed that the addition was driven by an ideological alignment with the Chinese government, which positioned the Chinese journalists away from the voice against China (Li and Zhang, 2021). As a consequence, the omissions of

distance resources in the present study are not consistent with China's diplomatic ideology. This kind of omission may be unconscious or due to the language habits of the interpreters. However, it does have a negative influence on the spokespersons' authorial voice and manipulation of the audiences. Therefore, it can be inferred that the framing strategies used for engagement resources in Chinese diplomatic discourse do share some common norms, except for the distance resources. Generally, the translation tries to improve China's discourse power and the function of political manipulation on the critical diplomatic issues, while it decreases the distance between the spokespersons and the audiences and constructs a more friendly image on non-sensitive issues.

Conclusion

This study adopts AT and framing strategies to analyse the positioning in Chinese foreign spokespersons' responses to COVID-19 and their English translation. By using the CDA analytical procedure, it compares the appraisal resources between the ST and the TT. The study finds many deviations in the TT, especially judgement resources in attitude, graduation resources and distance resources in engagement. As for the framing strategies, selective appropriation, especially omission, was mostly used, while specification and repositioning of participants were used for specific appraisal subcategories. Furthermore, the study reveals that these deviations and preferences of framing strategies lead to the repositioning in the TT in terms of Self (China or the Chinese government), Others (the U.S and its allied countries), as well as the relations between the spokespersons and the audiences. Correspondingly, this repositioning reflects different diplomatic effects in terms of national image and power relations, either positively or negatively.

Omissions are mostly used in the judgement resources that express the positive evaluations on China, as well as the collocated graduation resources that upscale the positive evaluations. These omissions reduce and soften the spokespersons' positioning of self-affirmations and avoid the possibility of boasting, which helps construct a modest and objective national image compared with that of the ST. In addition, some omissions are found in the graduation resources used with negative evaluations on Others which soften the evaluative positioning to criticise Others. This may construct a more polite and less tough image of China. Furthermore, repositioning of participants is mainly used in engagement resources. The additions of dialogic contraction resources increase the power of the spokespersons and their manipulation to persuade the audience. On the other hand, the reductions of entertain resources reduce the power distance between the spokespersons and the journalists when discussing non-sensitive issues, which makes the spokespersons sound more friendly. The time limitation of interpreting and translators' habits can account for the high frequency of omission and some other preferences of framing strategies. Nevertheless, these preferences suggest that China holds a defensive diplomacy rather than active provocation. The translation tries to construct a peaceful and modest national identity of China, and to improve its discourse power at the same time.

This study highlights the importance and content of positioning in diplomatic discourse. Moreover, it justifies the relations between positioning, appraisal resources and framing strategies. It further tests the feasibility of the new approach to combine AT, framing strategies and Munday's (2012) adaptation of 'deictic positioning', which can offer some instructions for future studies. Practically speaking, this study stresses the translators' roles in diplomatic translation. It can also guide translators or interpreters to choose proper framing strategies so as to achieve different effects in diplomatic communication.

However, there are also some limitations of this study. First, there is a lack of peer debriefing for the identification and classification of appraisal resources as the categorisation proposed by Martin and White (2005) is quite complex. Second, the factors of these deviations are not systematically discussed. Some factors, such as time limitation and the motivation for better international perception, are inferred, but factors such as ideology and institution are not discussed. The authors have tried to contact the interpreters from the Translation Department of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to see if there are any translation principles leading them to specific translation choices. Unfortunately, the authors were refused due to confidential issues. Besides, the significance of COVID-19-related press conferences can be further discussed to check if it is a discursive turning point in China's global communication. In future studies, researchers could pay more attention to the factors behind the shifts based on different kinds of data. Comparative studies with different cases are suggested to examine different translation strategies and diverse motivations between COVID-19 and other crises, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Xinjiang.

Data availability

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Author contributions

LQY collected and analysed the data and wrote the article; LHA checked the content and revised the article.

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The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was not required as the study did not involve human participants.

Informed consent

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Additional information

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Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Lay Hoon Ang.

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