

A Study on Chinese-English Fused Typeface Design in Cross-Cultural Brand Visual Communication

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Abstract:

With brand globalization and the rise of cross-cultural communication, the concurrent use of Chinese and English has become common in brand design. However, differences in structure, writing logic, and visual form between Chinese characters and Latin letters often lead to recognition inconsistencies and cultural disjunctions. Chinese-English fused typefaces integrate the two scripts into a unified visual system, achieving coordination and complementarity that enhance brand recognition and cultural affinity. This study outlines their design features and construction strategies, and analyzes two representative cases—Bilingual Lettering and Baimo Typeface Lab—to compare stylistic fusion, cultural embedding, and communicative effectiveness. Findings show that such typefaces offer notable advantages in visual unification and cultural communication, providing strategic insights for cross-cultural brand design.

Keywords:

Chinese-English Fused Typeface, Cross-Cultural Communication, Brand Visual Identity

1. Introduction

In the context of accelerating brand globalization, cross-cultural communication has evolved from being an optional supplementary consideration to becoming a core proposition in brand design and communication systems. As brand boundaries expand into international markets characterized by diverse languages, cultures, and aesthetic systems, the question of how to ensure the effective transmission of brand identity and the fostering of emotional resonance across cultural contexts has emerged as a critical component of corporate competitiveness. As one of the most direct and enduringly recognizable elements in brand image construction, the Visual Identity System (VIS) plays a decisive role in determining the flexibility and adaptability of a brand when addressing multicultural audiences. These qualities directly influence the success of a brand's international communication strategy. Against this backdrop, the function and value of typefaces have undergone a significant transformation—they are no longer

merely vehicles for language and information delivery, but are now also entrusted with conveying cultural identity, shaping visual style, and constructing brand narratives.

With the increasing frequency of interaction and competition between global and local brands, an ever-growing number of companies face the challenge of bilingual communication involving both Chinese and English. However, the structural, orthographic, and visual disparities between Chinese characters and Latin letters often result in disunity in visual recognition, inefficiency in information delivery, and a disconnect in cultural context when the two scripts are juxtaposed. Such mismatches in visual form and semantic content not only undermine the immediacy and clarity of brand communication but may also, over time, erode audience trust and weaken cultural affinity toward the brand.

In response to this challenge, Chinese–English fused typefaces have gradually emerged as a focal point of design practice. The core strategy involves integrating the visual structures of Chinese characters and Latin letters within a unified typographic system, mapping strokes, proportions, contours, and spatial rhythms to achieve both visual harmony and functional complementarity between the two scripts. This approach not only creates a highly unified linguistic-symbolic system but also establishes cross-linguistic emotional connections at the cultural level, thereby enhancing brand recognizability, cultural affinity, and market adaptability in multicultural environments.

Unlike traditional bilingual layouts that rely on spatial separation of Chinese and English, fused typefaces dissolve the physical boundary between the two scripts, producing a more integrated and narrative-driven typographic style. This characteristic aligns with the visual unification demands of international brands implementing localization strategies, and it demonstrates unique advantages across multiple application scenarios. Particularly in youth culture, urban creative industries, cultural tourism promotion, and festival branding, Chinese–English fused typefaces—by virtue of their formal innovation, cultural extensibility, and symbolic potential—can immediately capture audience attention while enhancing message memorability and emotional engagement through culturally dual-oriented visual symbols.

From an academic perspective, however, research on Chinese–English fused typefaces remains at a relatively early stage. Existing studies have predominantly focused on stylistic features, typographic performance, and individual case analyses, with insufficient systematic exploration of their design construction pathways, cross-linguistic semantic mechanisms, cultural communication logic, and audience perception. In particular, comprehensive studies grounded in brand communication and cultural integration perspectives remain scarce, which to some extent limits the theoretical development and broader practical adoption of this typographic form.

In light of this gap, this study adopts brand communication and cultural integration as its primary analytical lenses. It systematically examines the construction strategies and design methods of Chinese–English fused typefaces, investigates their functional roles and communicative effectiveness within visual identity systems, and employs representative case studies to validate their design value and applicability in cross-cultural contexts. The aim is to provide a theoretically grounded and methodologically practical reference framework for future research on typeface integration, while offering actionable insights for brand design, cultural communication, and cross-linguistic visual system development.

2. Related Word

2.1. *Historical Evolution of Typeface Fusion Design*

The development of fusion typefaces can be traced back to the traditional Chinese character construction methods of huiyi (ideographic compounds) and variant forms, such as the characters “囍” (double happiness) and “鑫” (prosperity), which combine multiple components to generate new meanings [1]. These morphological practices reflect the high flexibility of Chinese characters in terms of spatial composition and semantic expansion. In contemporary visual design, this principle of “structural merging” has been reactivated—particularly in the exploration of Chinese-English typeface fusion—offering insights for cross-linguistic visual expression.

Driven by the forces of global branding and experimental design, fusion typeface design has gradually moved beyond the practical function of writing, toward the visual reinvention of symbolic forms. Some scholars argue that such designs leverage the plasticity of Chinese character structures and the simplicity of Latin letters to push the boundaries of cross-cultural visual language [2]. Through techniques such as stroke fusion, structural docking, and proportional adjustment, designers explore the visual and compositional commonalities between the two writing systems. This design approach not only challenges the conventions of traditional typography but also serves as a strategic visual response in the globalized cultural context.

Guo Wei [3] notes that the core challenge of fusion typeface design lies in balancing visual innovation with legibility. The design must maintain visual appeal without compromising linguistic clarity. Wu and Lin [4], through visual language analysis of specific cases, classify fusion typefaces as a genre that emphasizes “structural experimentation,” characterized by strong exploratory and diverse tendencies. All hypertext links and section bookmarks will be removed from articles during the processing of articles for publication. If you need to refer to an Internet email address or URL in your articles, you must type out the address or URL fully in Regular font.

2.2. *Current Research on Cross-Cultural Brand Visual Design*

In recent years, cross-cultural brand visual identity has become a prominent topic in design research. The central concern is how to construct a coherent and impactful visual system across different languages and cultures [5]. As a key element of visual communication, typography carries the dual task of linguistic conversion and cultural adaptation. Lupton [6] emphasizes that typefaces are not merely tools for delivering textual content, but also carriers of cultural expression. Typographic styles often reflect specific aesthetic preferences and cultural identities.

In bilingual brand environments, visual inconsistency and misalignment between language systems frequently hinder effective brand communication. Zhu Xudong [7] identifies differences in visual rhythm, spatial density, and structural arrangement between Chinese and Latin scripts as major causes of design dissonance. To mitigate such issues and enhance visual coherence, designers often adopt approaches such as stroke similarity, weight consistency, and mirrored structural layouts [8].

Fusion typefaces offer an alternative solution to these challenges. They are not merely a compromise in form but can be understood as a strategy for visual language integration. Cao Fang [9] argues that fusion typefaces strengthen cultural identification by creating a visual bridge between local and global contexts, thereby

enhancing a brand's expressive power and cultural affinity in multicultural environments.

2.3. Typography and Brand Identity Systems

The role of typography in brand identity systems has been widely discussed. Henderson et al. [10] suggest that different typographic styles elicit distinct consumer perceptions and psychological impressions, playing a vital role in shaping brand personality. Arnheim [11], from the perspective of visual psychology, emphasizes the direct relationship between type structure and human perception, asserting that typeface design significantly affects the efficiency of information processing.

In multilingual communication settings, typographic design must also address the issue of systemic coherence. Huang Yan [12] contends that typography serves as the “visual gateway” to brand culture and must harmonize with the overall brand character. Li Haoran [13] further proposes that in brand systems where Chinese and English coexist, typographic integration should follow a “system reconstruction” approach, establishing visual standards that transcend linguistic boundaries.

Within this context, fusion typefaces—viewed as a visual solution for “bilingual identity integration”—have gained increasing importance. Drucker [14] points out that typefaces convey not only linguistic meaning but also structure, identity, and symbolism. Fusion typefaces, in this sense, function as tools for the “re-encoding of visual language,” enabling more diverse forms of cultural expression and contextual adaptation in brand communication.

3. Strategies of Typeface Fusion Design

As a significant manifestation of cross-linguistic typographic integration, Chinese-English fusion typefaces are concerned not only with the formal logic of visual design but also with the communication needs arising from linguistic and cultural intersections. In actual design practice, the construction strategies of fusion typefaces must strike a balance between “formal integration” and “semantic coherence.” Based on the analysis of existing design works, three primary strategies can be identified: structural correspondence, stroke style integration, and semantic linkage.

3.1. Structural Correspondence Strategy

The structural correspondence strategy serves as the foundational approach in fusion typeface design, with the central aim of achieving “form compatibility.” Chinese characters are characterized by a square frame and structural stability, whereas Latin letters typically follow a linear, horizontal layout with varying shapes. The primary challenge is how to reconcile these differing visual structures within a unified design system.

Designers often adopt techniques such as spatial inclusion and structural recomposition to nest Latin letters within or alongside components of Chinese characters. For example, the letter “E” may be embedded into the lower-right quadrant of the character “巨” (ju), using proportional adjustments to maintain visual symmetry. Alternatively, the outer box of the character “口” (kou) can be fused with the circular form of the letter “O” to create a cohesive glyph.

The critical issue in this strategy lies in balancing structural integration with legibility. Designers must ensure that neither script is compromised in recognition

while achieving formal coexistence. To this end, visual techniques such as symmetrical composition, alignment axes, and contrast emphasis are often employed to guide perception, allowing both writing systems to “borrow visual strength” from each other and attain structural harmony.

This strategy is frequently applied in brand logos, festival identities, exhibition themes, and event-related typography. It emphasizes spatial and structural compatibility, offering a foundational platform for bilingual visual expression.

3.2. Stroke Style Integration Strategy

Following structural integration, achieving stylistic consistency in the strokes of Chinese characters and Latin letters is essential for refining the visual precision of fusion typefaces. The stroke style integration strategy focuses on harmonizing the detailed features of both scripts—such as stroke thickness, curvature, stroke terminals, and connections.

This strategy generally follows two approaches. The first involves applying the expressive characteristics of Chinese strokes to Latin letters. For example, the vertical bar of the letter “T” may be extended to resemble the Chinese stroke “|”, while the crossbar may be angled upward to evoke the brush movement of regular script, creating visual rhythm and stylistic resonance. The second approach is to simplify Chinese strokes based on Latin letterforms—for instance, replacing the vertical strokes of the character “木” (mu) with a diagonally cut “X”-like structure, thus establishing a consistent visual rhythm.

A key to this strategy is the concept of “stroke modularity.” By deconstructing Chinese and Latin components into basic stroke elements and reconstructing them under a unified modular system, designers ensure consistency in stroke width, angle, and rhythm across scripts.

Stroke style integration enhances both the quality of design and the viewer’s reading experience by creating a smoother, more coherent visual flow. This is particularly crucial in the development of brand font systems, where stroke consistency determines legibility and systemic coherence.

3.3. Semantic Linkage Strategy

Fusion typeface design is not merely a matter of visual integration—it also plays a crucial role in meaning-making. The semantic linkage strategy emphasizes the interaction and coexistence of Chinese and English elements at the level of meaning. Designers intentionally incorporate semantic relationships and symbolic associations between the two languages, thereby generating new visual-semantic units.

Common techniques include combining characters based on semantic similarity—for instance, merging the character “家” (home) with the letter “H” to form a visual symbol resembling a house. Another method is to use graphic metaphors to extend meaning, such as fusing “爱” (love) with the letter “L” to enhance emotional resonance. These designs go beyond the visual logic of either language alone and tend to adopt an imagistic expression, reflecting a process of creating new visual language.

This strategy is often applied in cultural and creative products, youth-oriented branding, and public service campaigns, where emotional expression and cultural participation are emphasized. Its advantage lies in enhancing brand memorability and

fostering a sense of cultural belonging, transforming the typeface from a “tool of transmission” into a “symbol of culture.”

3.4. Combinatory Strategies and Systemic Applications

In practical design projects, designers rarely rely on a single strategy; instead, they tend to combine the aforementioned methods. For example, structural correspondence may be used to establish the visual framework, followed by stroke style integration to ensure stylistic consistency, and finally semantic linkage to deepen cultural resonance. This combinatory approach is especially suitable for the development of brand type systems, allowing for the integration of linguistic logic, visual logic, and cultural logic.

Moreover, fusion typeface construction strategies are increasingly exhibiting trends toward modularization and procedural design. Some design teams have begun developing “fusion typeface construction systems,” incorporating template-based workflows, style libraries, and structural databases to enable rapid and scalable production. This shift indicates a transformation of fusion typefaces from experimental expressions to systematic visual languages.

4. Case Studies

4.1. Liao Tianmin’s “Bilingual Lettering” Project

This project, initiated by designer Liao Tianmin, explores the visual integration of Chinese characters and Latin letters. It aims to create fusion typefaces that are both recognizable and expressive within a unified structural framework. The project employs various design methods, including symmetrical composition, stroke-style alignment, and semantic association.

Formally, Bilingual Lettering emphasizes the coordination of stroke direction and spatial outlines to ensure that the fusion characters retain their linguistic legibility. The resulting glyphs embody both typographic discipline and visual creativity.

The project has garnered attention in multiple international design exhibitions and is considered a dual practice in “design experimentation” and “cultural mediation.” It not only provides an operational model for structural fusion but also offers a plausible path for cross-linguistic typographic expression. Furthermore, this project has been referenced in design pedagogy and experimental typography courses, expanding the boundaries of typographic research and education.

4.2. The “Baimo TypeLab” Urban Font Project

“Baimo TypeLab” is a fusion typeface development initiative centered on Chinese urban identity. The project aims to construct a visual identification system for city-based IP through the integration of Chinese characters and Latin initials. The design team visually merges Chinese characters representing city names with their corresponding Latin initials, allowing the glyphs to convey semantic meaning while providing phonetic cues. This dual function enhances both communication efficiency and cultural recognition.

In terms of visual language, the project adopts consistent stroke styles, symmetrical structural arrangements, and embedded cultural motifs to enhance the typographic system’s overall unity. The typefaces have been widely applied in cultural tourism

promotion, urban signage, and derivative product development, making them effective tools for the visual communication of local identity.

Moreover, the project is integrated with digital communication strategies. On social media platforms and mobile interfaces, the fusion typefaces demonstrate strong interactive capabilities and visual dynamism, further amplifying their communicative impact.

4.3. Comparative Analysis and Strategic Synthesis

An analysis of the above two cases reveals that the design strategies for Chinese–English fused typefaces are largely shaped by project objectives, communication contexts, and audience expectations. Bilingual Lettering tends to operate within a globalized framework, prioritizing visual style integration and form-based experimentation, with a focus on exploring structural mapping and formal innovation between cross-linguistic scripts. Its design process reflects the “decentralized” thinking characteristic of postmodern graphic design, where structural coexistence of two writing systems is achieved—without compromising linguistic functionality—through stroke translation, form substitution, and proportional adjustment. This approach not only enhances the visual tension of the characters but also offers a replicable experimental model for international branding, cross-cultural exhibitions, and typography education.

By contrast, the Baimo Typeface Research project emphasizes cultural symbol integration and regional identity in its design pathway, foregrounding the directional and narrative functions of visual signs within specific cultural contexts. In the glyph construction process, Chinese characters are organically combined with their pinyin initials, creating a dual-recognition system that both follows Chinese writing conventions and provides phonetic cues. This strategy not only improves efficiency in information delivery but also reinforces the symbolic expression of urban culture, positioning the typeface as a central medium for storytelling and place branding. Its deployment in tourism promotion, wayfinding systems, and derivative product development demonstrates the sustainability and adaptability of fused typefaces as cultural IP assets.

From a design methodology perspective, Bilingual Lettering adopts a predominantly form-driven strategy, focusing on the alignment of strokes and contours as well as the plasticity of form, resulting in a visual language with high cross-cultural applicability. Baimo Typeface Research, on the other hand, follows a content-driven approach, relying more on the embedding of cultural semiotics and semantic layering to meet the recognition needs of specific regions and audiences. The former is more experimental and artistic in its visual expression, while the latter is more targeted and pragmatic in its communicative outcomes.

The complementarity between the two approaches offers a diversified set of pathways for future Chinese–English fused typeface design. In global communication scenarios, Bilingual Lettering’s methods of structural mapping and stylistic coordination can enhance inclusivity and visual appeal across cultural boundaries; in localized cultural development, Baimo Typeface Research’s strategy of cultural embedding and composite information delivery can strengthen the situatedness and emotional resonance of brand narratives.

More importantly, the integration of these two strategies underscores the need for future design to strike a dynamic balance between functionality and expressiveness.

Designers must achieve visual harmony between the two scripts while simultaneously constructing a shared cross-linguistic cultural context, thus enabling efficient visual communication and lasting cultural identification. As global and local communication needs continue to intersect, fused typeface design is poised to play an increasingly vital role in cultural exchange, brand building, and information visualization across diverse domains.

5. Conclusions

This study examines the design logic and strategies of Chinese–English fusion typefaces in cross-cultural brand communication. Drawing on literature review, case analysis, and strategic classification, it identifies three core approaches: structural correspondence, stroke style integration, and semantic linkage. These strategies can be applied individually or in combination, enabling both structural integration of Chinese characters and Latin letters and the creation of diverse visual languages with cultural depth.

Case studies show that fusion typography offers strong visual appeal and communicative efficiency. Bilingual Lettering illustrates formal experimentation and stylistic synthesis, while Baimo TypeLab emphasizes cultural embedding and regional identity. Together, they demonstrate the dual potential of fusion typefaces as tools for global communication and mediums for localized cultural expression.

Overall, Chinese–English fusion typefaces are evolving from experimental designs into systematic visual language tools with practical applications. Future research should explore their adaptability across media platforms, user aesthetic preferences, and alignment with brand strategies, thereby advancing both the theoretical and practical development of fusion typography in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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