Visual translation: a new way to design a Chinese typeface based on an existing Latin typeface

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VISUAL TRANSLATION: A NEW WAY TO DESIGN A CHINESE TYPEFACE BASED ON AN EXISTING LATIN TYPEFACE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Art

in

The School of Art

by

Yifang Cao
B.A., Hunan Normal University, 2009
May 2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee: Courtney Barr, Lynne Baggett, Paul Dean, Malcolm McClay, Gerald Bower, and Yu Jiang as well as all of the other faculty and students who have enhanced my experience at LSU, thank you for your motivation, encouragement and guidance. You helped push me to my potential and reach my goals.

I am grateful to my parents and friends in China for their advice, understanding, patience and those long distance phone calls to support me.

I also would like to extend a very special thanks to my friends Darren and his parents Shuqing Li and Guangjun Deng, who have taken care of me and supported me over these last three years.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...........................................................................................................ii
ABSTRACT................................................................................................................................iv
INTRODUCTION.....................................................................................................................1
RESEARCH..........................................................................................................................10
CONCEPT AND PROCESS.................................................................................................16
CONTENT OF VISUAL TRANSLATION...............................................................19
EVALUATION AND FUTURE..........................................................................................43
BIBLIOGRAPHY.................................................................................................................45
VITA.................................................................................................................................46
ABSTRACT

The visual consistency of branding makes a significant difference when successfully introduced to another culture. My study focuses on how to facilitate a smooth visual transition in western branding from Latin letters to Chinese characters. To move beyond traditional Chinese type design, Visual Translation introduces a new method for designing Chinese typefaces using existing Latin typefaces. This web-based educational tool seeks to help Chinese graphic design students and type enthusiasts, with emphasis on designers who are working in a cross-cultural environment to maintain visual consistency for branding.
INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural Branding

Corporations and organizations are increasingly doing business internationally. A large number of western corporate brands are aiming at the Chinese market since China has become the fastest growing major economy in the world. Therefore, branding needs to be approached with a certain level of cross-cultural sensitivity. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a “name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.” It is often believed that “branding” carries the personality of a business, which has a certain character, appearance, tone and way of behaving. Branding is composed of two major elements: verbal identity and visual identity.

Identity Consistency

In a cross-cultural environment, consistent brand identity makes a significant difference in the effective introduction of new brands abroad. Chinese Brand Name Translation Services was founded to help western brands with name development and to ensure that the brand name translation has no negative connotations while delivering the selected message to the target audience. “The Chinese attach a lot of importance to the translation of company names or brand names. A company name or brand name in Chinese will sound phonetically like the original western name. But

apart from sound and pronunciation, one should try to have a translation with a lucky, prosperous meaning and a favorable connotation. ”

Coca-Cola serves as a great example of a cross-cultural brand. The Chinese name for Coca-Cola is the nearest pronunciation of the English name. In the Chinese translation, Coca stands for ke kou; ke meaning “to suit”, and kou for “mouth.” Thus ke kou means “to suit mouth”; that is, to be delicious. At the same time, the Chinese characters for cola are ke le. Here ke again means “to suit”, and le means “happiness.” Cola thus stands for “to enjoy.” The brand Coca-Cola in Chinese not only resembles the pronunciation of its English name, but also immediately connotes something that is tasty and enjoyable. It is no wonder that Coca-Cola has been immensely successful in China. A recent article demonstrates the company’s success in Chinese reading, “Nowadays, Coca-Cola has become one of the most renowned international brands in China. According to data from the Central Viewer Survey and Consulting Center, 90% of Chinese consumers now know Coca-Cola.” It is this name that is recognized as one of the most successful translations and brings good luck and popularity to Coca-Cola.

Fig. 1 –Coca-Cola Logo

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Visual Consistency

Visual consistency is another important key in strengthening brand identity when it is introduced to another language. Let us look at the example of Coca-Cola again. The Chinese Coca-Cola logo design (Fig. 2) adopts a white and red color scheme, which is the most prominent feature of the original logo. It also coincides with the traditional Chinese festival color: red. In China, red is traditionally considered an auspicious color and symbolizes prosperity and good luck. When compared to the old Chinese Coca-Cola logo (Fig. 2) which uses a serif typeface, the typeface in the
new Chinese logo has wavy ribbon patterns that make the logo vital and dynamic, emphasizing the idea of cheerfulness. The visual translation makes a perfect counterpart to the English version, conveying a contemporary look. Although the Chinese characters appear completely different from the English letters, both versions of the logo today share similarity and consistency and enable people to see a clear integration of both western and Chinese cultures. With enough visual repetition, people tend to encode visuals to a brand. However, if the western brand fails to visually connect to the new translation, these linkages and associations are likely to break down.

**Chinese Brandmess**

Chinese brandmess indicates a phenomenon that in many cross-cultural designs in China, designers mistakenly assumed cultural elements or simply overlooked the cultural values, when designing for brands coming in to China or for Chinese brands going abroad. “...When designing across cultures...the goal is to achieve a harmonious juxtaposition; more of an interaction than a synthesis. The individual character of the elements should be retained, each maintaining its own identity while also commenting on and enriching the other... Combination, mixture, blending — these are useless concepts as they will result in a kind of mud. Street stalls in Hong Kong serve an understandably unique beverage called Yin-yang, a combination of tea and coffee. It tastes, as you would imagine: the worst characteristics of both are enhanced.”

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This quote suggests the current phenomenon for modern graphic design in China. In recent years, China has begun to realize the value of graphic design to its economy, and Chinese designers have been trying to catch up in the world of quality graphic design. However, Chinese designers indiscriminately mix Chinese and western design elements, and expect it to be good design. When it comes to branding cross culturally, Chinese designers tend to use western and Chinese typography inconsistently. But “blending” — as Steiner calls it — does not make effective design.

In summer 2011, I went to China and traveled to some of the major cities: Beijing, Chongqin, Changsha, Guangzhou. I photographed typography on the street and discovered many cases of “blending” in design for cross-cultural branding.

Fig. 4 –MFC Chinese restaurant front door

This is the front door of a Chinese restaurant that serves chicken. Their English name “MFC” has no relevance to its Chinese name. The designer created the logo in a similar style to KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) in the U.S., but used inconsistent typefaces for both English and Chinese. This is a deliberate effort to confuse potential
customers into thinking that they are either entering a KFC fast food restaurant or one that has a similar quality as the KFC.

Fig. 5 –Latin and Chinese versions of Garfield logo

Another example above is the *jia fei mao* case. The photograph illustrates the ‘blending’ design for the famous American cartoon “Garfield”. The original version used a bold sans-serif typeface, while designers used a script typeface for the Chinese version, which appears inconsistent and irrelevant when viewed with the original. Both examples have shown the *brandmess* that is in China today. Both photographs have shown how designers from China have mis-appropriated western branding.

**Chinese Type Design Frustration**

The two examples analyzed above show that there is enormous confusion in branding in China, and this confusion or inadequacy is fueled by copyright infringement in China and irresponsible design. Even if there is no shortage of laws, or of high-level promises behind copyright, designers would see local protectionism get
in the way and they occasionally borrow successful branding examples and incorporate them in their own design. On the other hand, this lack of transformative effective branding is also a result of the lack of access to typeface design in China.

Unlike the wide variety of western typefaces, there are not as many typefaces available in Chinese as there are in English. One of the major problems is that “the English alphabet only has twenty-six letters. The Chinese language has over 8,000 individual characters, of which about 3,500 are most commonly used.” 5 So as a Chinese typographer, one not only needs to design twenty-six alphabet characters, but also needs to craft at least 2,000 Chinese characters and their traditional/simplified equivalent. There are some very elegant Chinese typefaces available; and designers are grateful for the few at their disposal, but it is still frustrating.

The current situation is that designers or typographers do not have easy access to a technology that helps them design new typefaces for such a large number of characters. Another particularly annoying situation is that some of the type foundries offer only partial simplified selections with the most commonly used 1000-2000 characters. Designers usually find themselves out of luck if they choose a typeface and then realize that it is missing some of the characters. They may have enough characters for labels or logos, but not enough for a longer subtitle, slogan, or text. Until designers have access to a larger quantity and better quality typefaces, and challenge the existing technology for type design, Chinese typography design is stagnant.

Contemporary Chinese Type Education

The predicament of Chinese type design has left the traditional graphic design student helpless in developing and inspiring creativity in new type design, which renders the whole type industry trapped in a vicious cycle. In most conventional typography classes, students are often asked to only copy the letterforms of those classic typefaces designed a long time ago. In more interesting projects, they can design a new typeface with only a few characters from a poem. There is obviously no way for them to make all existing Chinese characters, which would take one person many years to design a typeface with thousands of characters. Furthermore, these newly generated typefaces are not utilized for practical use but are set-aside after critiques. After graduation, instead of designing new typefaces, the new generation of designers relies on the limited choices of the existing Chinese typefaces.

Visual Translation

Visual Translation is a thesis that introduces a new procedure of designing Chinese typefaces based on existing Latin type. The project stemmed from my interest in typography and cross-cultural visual communication. It was inspired by my own experience in Latin typography classes while attending school in the United States. As a student who has grown up in Chinese culture and is now studying in the U.S., Visual Translation reflects my duality in cultural and educational experiences. Visual Translation is intended as an educational tool for Chinese students and designers to learn and understand basic typography in both languages, and its aim is to introduce a new procedure of designing contemporary Chinese typefaces based on existing Latin
typefaces. It also provides a discussion platform for inviting the audience to contribute feedback, discussion and new ideas.

The body of the thesis work contains four major components:

1. Basic Latin Typography: functions as a primer for Chinese students learning about the western typography system.
2. Chinese Typography: serves as a reference for Chinese and western students and designers.
4. Journal Blog: includes photos and articles in areas of branding, art and education.
RESEARCH

Chinese Typography

While traveling in China, I have visited some art institutes and departments in major universities. My research is based on personal knowledge and interviews with some art professors and students. The basic structure of typography class in the foundation level on Chinese characters requires students to sit in lectures and learn about the history and evolution of Chinese characters for a long time before they can work in studios. When it comes to studio projects, students are assigned to repeatedly draw the letterforms of several historical Chinese typefaces. To do this, they trace the outline of the letterforms using tracing paper and pen, and then fill them with a brush and black ink. The purpose of going through this manual process is to help students to understand and appreciate the artistically subtle design of typefaces.

In advanced typography classes, students start to sketch out ideas and designs for new typefaces. They are usually encouraged to associate shapes, color, contrast, texture and dimensions with their design; however, they only design a single character, a phrase or a poem, because it is nearly impossible for them to craft all existing characters.

Latin Typography

Merriam-Webster defines Latin as “the italic language of ancient Latium and of Rome and until modern times the dominant language of school, church, and state in Western Europe”. The English alphabet is rooted from the Latin alphabet and it is used for writing the language. Since the system of learning English as a second
language has been established for decades in China, English has grown into a second language and China has become the biggest English speaking country in the world. Even with such wide daily use, there is still insufficient knowledge of Latin typefaces emphasized in graphic design education.

One of the most important texts that I researched while studying in China was Typography by Zhang Aimin and Zhou Zan. It is one of the most widely used books (Fig. 6) in design schools. Most of Chinese typography textbooks show Chinese students a thorough knowledge of Chinese typography; yet little information is provided on Latin typography. Through my research of these typography books, I discovered that a large number of Latin type posters are used as examples in these books, but few pages touch on Latin type knowledge. Within the few pages of Latin typography, authors barely mention any names of designers or introduce the history of any Latin typefaces. Moreover, terminology is not translated completely throughout. For example, for breaking down the letter parts, there are translations for ‘ascender’,

Fig. 6 – Chinese typography textbooks
‘serif’ and ‘stem’; however, no translation can be found for ‘crossbar’, ‘link’, ‘beak’, ‘swash’, etc. Sufficient knowledge of Latin typefaces is not introduced in graphic design classes and therefore, students and designers tend to be less sensitive when it comes to Latin type. Since English is used almost everywhere in branding and advertising, Chinese designers are exposed to cross-cultural design challenges without adequate knowledge of letter parts.

**Chinese Type Design**

“Although China invented movable type printing over a thousand years ago, mechanical typography stayed simple due to the sophistication of the Chinese writing system and the large number of commonly used Chinese characters. Chinese has over 2,000 distinctively different characters for daily use, and each one demands individual attention to design. This is perhaps the reason why the number of Chinese fonts available in computers is far less than the number of available English fonts.”

Founder Type, one of the biggest type foundries in China has overall less than 200 different typefaces available and creates around 10 typefaces each year. It has been fighting against copyright infringement and struggling to survive. The progress on Chinese type design is extremely slow and it is insufficient for graphic design today.

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Cross-Cultural Design

AIGA XCD, Center for Cross-cultural Design established in August 2008, provided a platform for designers to learn and accept traditions, history, politics, new technology, education and viewpoints from other cultures. Greater consciousness of cross-cultural design has arisen among the design professions. “The Center for Cross-Cultural Design (XCD) was established to foster greater communication between designers across cultures, as well as a better understanding of the interwoven experience of design and culture in our lives.”

Education

In The Education of a Graphic Designer, Audrey Bennett addressed that “Today, teaching graphic design students how to communicate visually requires teaching them how culture affects the audience’s interpretation of visual language.” In recent times, educators have recognized a global audience for the new generation of graphic designers; an increasing number cross-cultural design projects have been added to the curricula of design schools.

According to Stanford Design School News on “January 31, 2010, around 20 students from China’s Beijing University (PKU) and CAFA (Central Academic of Fine Arts) are working with Stanford students at the design school as part of a joint

project in cross-cultural design.”¹⁰ This photograph shows students from China and the US working together to tackle real-world design projects in a Stanford studio. Nowadays, an increasing number of design schools are providing study abroad programs and sending their students overseas to experience other cultures.

Fig. 7– A cross-cultural design class in Stanford

Branding

*Designing Across Cultures* written by Ronnie Lipton offers countless insights on reaching specific cultural groups, and warns of pitfalls to avoid. When it comes to real design works for branding the book asks, “how do you communicate with your ethnic audiences?”¹¹ The book leans toward assisting American designers to effectively design for different cultures. The author provides a wealth of information including guidelines such as, color, icon, and typography for different ethnic groups. It

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provides many examples of real design projects, why they work or why they fail to communicate.
CONCEPT AND PROCESS

Concept

The above discussions illustrate that current efforts in translating Latin typefaces to Chinese branding are insufficient because of inadequate typeface development. To address this issue in the Visual Translation project, I took consideration of the following questions: How can one provide an easier way to design Chinese typefaces and create a tool to introduce Latin and Chinese typography? How can one contribute to a better cross-cultural branding in China?

With these questions in mind, I considered possible audiences and the content that should be included in the thesis work. Since my project Visual Translation focuses on introducing a new method of designing Chinese typefaces, Chinese students who are studying typography in design school are the primary audience. However, designers or typographers who are working in a cross-cultural environment would also benefit by having easy access to the project. Consequently, the secondary audience is defined as designers and typography specialists or enthusiasts.

Media

When thinking about the students, I considered which media the project could use that would best suit their needs? In order to reach out for the largest possible audience and promote Visual Translation as a new method, I decided the Internet would be a suitable platform.

The rapid development of new and emerging technologies has changed the dynamic of the modern classroom. An increased percentage of the student population
in China is starting to use laptop computers in and after school. The Internet has grown into a major scholarly research source; students can easily access websites and learn about information on any specific subjects.

Having *Visual Translation* accessible online will allow students to learn about typographic terminology, the history of typefaces and the new method of type design, and eventually acquire a deeper understanding of the typography, a virtue of any competitive designer. Moreover, a website serves as an effective media to gather feedback or comments, which are valuable for further development of my project.

**Process**

A sitemap is an effective and crucial planning tool in website design. It is a centralized planning tool that can help to organize and clarify the content that needs to be on the website, as well as help to eliminate unnecessary pages. To present the idea, the site will have five parts: Latin typography, Chinese typography, Translation from Latin to Chinese, Journal Blog and Contact.

![Fig. 8– Site Map](image-url)
This site map shows that the site is composed of the above-mentioned five parts. Once the site map is defined, it helps to clarify perceptions of layout and functionality.

**Interface**

While brainstorming the site interface, one important key was kept in mind: *less is more*, accordingly the goal was to design a site that is succinct and accurate. The site would function as an educational reference with a large amount of information. Generally, too many navigation buttons, while leading into more sections, may leave a user with too many choices. Simple designs often result in smaller file sizes, which load faster. In order to create a simple interface, experimentation with various plain texture backgrounds and different ways of planning the navigation was necessary, leading to the development of different digital mock-ups.

![Finalized interface design](image_url)
CONTENT OF VISUAL TRANSLATION

Latin Typography

The purpose of teaching Latin typography is to familiarize Chinese students with formal attributes including vocabulary and conventions of type. This section of Visual Translation seeks to avoid possible errors when designing with Latin typefaces. In the Latin typography component on the site as well as in the Chinese Typography component, the content is divided into two major branches: letter and text. Each branch has several sections that discuss specific typographic terminologies and usage.

Letter

This branch focuses on individual Latin letters; it observes the details of each letter and seeks to develop a visual sensitivity in Chinese students and designers when using the typographic form to design logos. This branch provides definitions on Anatomy, Size, Kerning, Family, Punctuation and Numerals.

- Anatomy

  The section of Anatomy introduces the five important guidelines that determine the form of letters. They are Ascender height, Cap height, X-height, Baseline and Decender height. For each line, descriptions are provided for how the lines were used to guide the letters. For example, x-height is the height of the main body of a lowercase letter, excluding its ascender or descender.
Typography is a Visual Language.

Fig. 10–Anatomy of Latin letters
This figure illustrates the twenty-nine letter parts within one sentence:

*Typography is a visual language.* The orange color highlights the specific portion of
the letterforms to give a clearer view of the parts and provide the students with
terminology for future reference that they would need to design a new Chinese
typeface.

- **Size**

  This section defines the term “point size” used in typography, which is usually
unfamiliar to Chinese students. Abbreviation for the size or units of measurement
examples is included to enhance the practicability. Furthermore, an example is
presented to visualize type from point 9 to point 48. In the end of this section,
competitive examples are utilized to prove that different typefaces of the same size
might have a different x-height.

- **Letter spacing**

  In typography, kerning is the process of adjusting the spacing between
characters, usually to achieve a visually pleasing result. As Chinese characters are
mostly square, kerning is not an issue; the letterforms have a balanced visual
appearance by nature. It is likely for Chinese students to overlook this process when
using Roman letters. In Latin typography, kerning plays an important role in
typesetting. This section organized information on kerning, tracking, optical kerning
and metric kerning and shows different effects of the word ‘water’ without kerning,
with kerning applied and with tracking applied.
• Families

“Type family” is a term that rarely appears in Chinese typography. This section gives information on type families by showing the numerous weights and styles of Frutiger family (a series of typefaces named after its designer, Adrian Frutiger.) demonstrating the diversity of Latin typefaces.

• Punctuation

The Latin punctuations examples partially differ from Chinese; some of them have different shapes and functions. This section provides definitions of different Latin punctuation and discusses the correct way to use them, in order to help avoid typographic errors that Chinese students and designers often make when using the Roman alphabet.

• Numerals

This section explains lining numerals and non-lining numeral styles in Latin numeral, and describes the historic reasons and how they should be used today.

Text

The branch of text aims to help Chinese students and designers to see a bigger picture of Latin typography and learn how to manipulate type in body text in editorial design. It is divided into four sections; they are Classification, Spacing, Text alignment and Paragraph.
• Classification

This section lists eleven styles of typeface classifications along with a general historic timeline from the fifteenth century to the current time. In the case of Old Style Serif, for instance, a brief history is provided on the typeface style based on research. The typeface Sabon is used as a sample to show students and designers how Old Style Serif typefaces typically look, and a short paragraph of history on the specific typeface Sabon is provided.

• Spacing

When designing body text, appropriate spacing between text lines makes significant differences in improving legibility. For this reason this section defines line spacing or leading in Latin typography.

• Text Alignment

This section describes of the most common text alignments, which are left, right, centered, and justified.

• Paragraph

Unlike Chinese typography in Latin typography, there are many ways to break text into paragraphs. This section briefly discusses the four commonly used ways to indicate paragraphs: indent, line break, hanging indent, paragraph pilcrow.
Chinese Typography

The second component of *Visual Translation* deals with Chinese typography. I researched existing Chinese typography resources and organized the information based on a structure of how Latin typography was commonly instructed in United States. Beyond research, the content was enriched by comparing Latin and Chinese typography and providing historic origins to give Chinese students and designers a better understanding.

Character

Chinese language is composed with characters; each character represents a word rather than a letter. In this section, focus is placed on individual characters and it provides a detailed reference for Chinese students who are studying Chinese typography.

- Anatomy

In a similar method used in the Latin typography section, breaking down the parts deconstructs Chinese characters. The rule of how Chinese parts are composed is based on ‘The Eight Principle strokes of Yong’, the Praise to the Eight Principles of "Yong" by Liǔ Zōngyuán of the Tang Dynasty, which demonstrates eight common strokes in regular Chinese script, all in the one character.
The figure above shows the character ‘永’ yong in a commonly used grid, the eight strokes are tagged in this figure and a brief description for each stroke is provided.

- Size

In China, type size is generally not referred to using the point system; instead the Chinese size names are used. This section lists the Chinese size names and their translations in English; comparison of the equivalent point size used in Latin typography is illustrated to serve as a quick reference for students and designers to match and compare sizes between the two languages.
• Style

Unlike Latin typefaces, Chinese typefaces are not classified into families. Instead type designers focus on particular styles. Each type foundry specializes in a particular style, or weight, of a pre-existing typeface. For example, the Han Ding foundry created both Han Ding Kai and Han Ding Song. Han Ding is the style named after the Type Design Foundry; Kai and Song are existing typefaces.

• Punctuation

Chinese punctuation uses a different set of punctuation marks from Latin languages. This section described the most frequently used punctuation and the way to use them.

• Numerals

While modern China has adopted the Arabic numeral system, it also still uses its native Chinese characters. This section shows the specific Chinese characters for numbers and how they were arranged to represent large numbers.

Text

This branch of Chinese typography focuses more on the body text in layouts, rather than the individual characters.

• Classification
This section discusses historic progression of Chinese typefaces. It contains ten categories of typefaces from as early as 14th century BCE to the present; a typical example or style is chosen for each category to help Chinese students visualize different styles. Those examples are accompanied with their history and characteristic features.

- **Spacing**

  This section describes line spacing and compares Chinese paragraphs in three different spacing options that are commonly used in Microsoft Word, being single-spacing, 1.5-spacing, and double-spacing.

- **Alignment**

  Similar to Latin typography, the most common alignments in Chinese typography are left, right, center, and justified. Four examples of a Chinese poem in these alignments are expounded to suggest more text layout possibilities.

- **Vertical Text**

  Many East Asian scripts can be written horizontally or vertically. The Chinese scripts can be oriented in either direction. In East Asian calligraphy, vertical writing remains the dominant direction. An example of a poem is written in both horizontal and vertical directions, revealing the modern and traditional ways of reading and writing in China.
In the 21st century, Chinese newspapers switched to left-to-right horizontal writing, either entirely or in combination of vertical text with horizontal left-to-right headings. In the illustrations of the example, arrows are designed to lead students and designers to see how the text is oriented in dual directions.

Translation

Translation is the key component of this project, as it introduces new methods of designing original Chinese typefaces based on Latin examples. It is built on the knowledge of the previous two components, Latin and Chinese typography, and developed as a comprehensive structure to walk the students and designers through a problem’s solution. This component is divided into four sections: Similar Parts, Similar Typefaces, Principles and Deconstruction; each section is more complex than the previous one. On the website, links in italic are designed to allow users to go back to the previous term and information.

Similar Parts

Cursive Latin letters and square Chinese characters are inherently different; however, closer inspection of the letter parts reveals similarities. Learning these similar parts will effectively help the process of designing new typefaces, in most cases, Latin letter parts can replace Chinese strokes directly. This section served as a comparison list to help designers easily find similar parts. It is divided into eight sections according to the Eight Principle Strokes of Yong. Knowing the goal stroke that needs to be designed, designers can go through this list and find out similar parts
in Latin letters. In each comparison, a real existing example of visual translation is provided.

**Similar Typeface**

Every typeface has its distinguishing features; in order to create a successful typographic layout, designers need to know when to use and when not to use a particular style of type. It is therefore important for visual translators to understand Latin and Chinese type classification. Using a Chinese typeface that shares stylistic characteristics with its Latin counterpart would efficiently maintain visual consistency in branding layout. In this section, five pairs of identical typefaces are analyzed as below:

**Fig. 12– Bodoni and Song**

1. Bodoni and Song

At first glance, Bodoni looks clunky and condensed when compared to Song. Overall, with its serif-like detail and contrast in its strokes, Song could be used to replace most serif typefaces, especially Bodoni. Both typefaces flow gracefully on the page, and each stroke ends with simple yet beautiful serifs.
2. Helvetica and Hei

Similar to Helvetica, Hei is a type style characterized by strokes of even thickness, reduced curves, and a lack of decorations. Hei was designed for printing and legibility. It is commonly used in headlines, signs, and video applications. Hei could be used to replace Helvetica most sans-serif typefaces.

3. Gotham Rounded and Rounded Sans

Gotham Rounded is close in appearance to Rounded Sans in Chinese; they share a consistent, even stroke width. The finials of both typefaces are rounded and the curved corners of Chinese characters make reading easy and comfortable.
4. Androgyne and Wei

Androgyne is more angled than Wei; however, they are both script fonts. The similarity between the starting and ending point of each stroke is quite pronounced. Wei stays fairly true to the stroke, while Androgyne has a more varied its stroke, but the contrast is minimal. Although Wei is heavier than Androgyne script, the faces are very similar in design.

5. Cooper Black and Li

Cooper Black and Li
As text type Cooper Black and Li are too bulky to read, however, they are beautiful display typefaces. Cooper Black and Li are both heavy in weight and have swells at the ends of their strokes.

**Principles**

This section introduced principles for improving the design quality of visual translations. The principles and examples in this section are one step closer to achieving visual consistency for branding during the type and logo design process. For each principle, one or two examples are provided to visually demonstrate its use in practical design.

1. **Stroke**

A typeface has two major directions: The horizontal, which the eye moves along, and the vertical strokes which are defined predominantly by the stems. The stems carry the rhythm of a typeface, while the curves determine its character. After studying the horizontal, vertical, diagonal and cursive strokes, we can create a detailed visual consistency between the two typefaces.

2. **Diacritics**

A diacritic is an ancillary glyph added to a letter. In most cases, it is the *dot/tittle* in letter i and j. In typographic logo designs, designers often manipulate with the dots or other parts of the letter to add some additional interest to the design. In
most cases, diacritics and decorative parts can replace some parts of the new Chinese character directly when mimicking the style of a Latin typeface.

3. Contrast

Contrast here refers to the difference between thickness and thinness of the strokes. It is often the contrast between the horizontal strokes and vertical strokes. After studying the contrast of a Latin typeface, we could greatly improve the quality of our new design.

4. Letter Spacing

In typography, kerning is the process of adjusting the spacing between two characters to achieve a visually pleasing result. The Chinese translation of an English word can sometimes be a different length than the original. Designers should ensure that the new design is well-kerned and, when possible, consistent with the original.

5. Stress

An important design feature of most typeface and lettering styles, stress is derived from a related feature in writing created with a broad-edged writing instrument. Stress is also described as diagonal. Both examples that are analyzed for this principle shows the case of how effectively it works to help maintain the appearance from the original Latin designs.

6. Color
Color offers an instantaneous method for conveying meaning and message in logo designs; the two examples explain why color is a powerful non-verbal form of communication.

7. Dimension

Three-dimensional rendering is quickly emerging as a new logo design trend in graphic design. Since we are moving into the world of 3D and animation, the acceptance of 3D logos is increasing. Many companies have opted for this type of logo design for their business. To keep up with the heated design trend, it is an essential principle that Chinese students and designers pay attention to the principle of dimension.

Deconstruction

This section presents my step-by-step procedure to help designers make decisions throughout the process of creating a Chinese typography logo based on an existing Latin type logo. Learning visual translation is truly like learning a new language.

Step 1. Get started

When looking at a logo that requires visual translation, designers need to ask themselves what the new logo they are creating will be? Is it a serif, sans-serif or script typeface? With a general idea of the final visual goal, it is easier to make decisions throughout the process of creating the new typographic logo. An example shows a
detailed procedure of how one would design a new typeface inspired by the typeface from the Pizza hut logo.

![Pizza Hut logo](image1)

**Fig. 17– Pizza hut original logo and Chinese logo**

Step 2.

For the sake of efficiency and simplicity, instead of starting to sketch right away, a similar typeface is chosen for designers to look at how the points are arranged and the forms are constructed in Chinese characters. The original ‘Pizza Hut’ uses a casual script typeface, so a Chinese casual script ‘Dai yu’ is used as a ‘guide’.

![Chinese typeface](image2)

**Fig. 18– Similar Chinese typeface to original logo**
Step 3. Break down letterform

Letters are composed of individual strokes, in this step one should look closely at the pieces and deconstruct the strokes in the English letters from the original logo and the character need for the translation.

Fig. 19– Breaking down letter and character parts

Step 4. Find similar parts

To keep things organized, the illustration in this step shows how similar pieces can then be used in developing the new Chinese characters.
Step 5. Replace similar parts

This step demonstrates the way to replace the Latin parts for the Chinese equivalents. These parts from the original letterforms are arranged over the Chinese guide logo, using different colors to show the sources of the new character parts. It is a great leap toward a clearer outline of what the new character form looks like.
Step 6. Imitating strokes

Not every stroke can be replaced with a Latin equivalent. The rest of these marks can be created by experiments with hybrids of the Latin letter parts. In this step, the two strokes highlighted are designed based on the original.
Step 7. Finalize type

At this point, all the fundamental strokes of the Chinese Characters are in place, but the new typeface treatment is still unfinished. Here we have completely eliminated the ‘guide’ typeface ‘Dai yu’, and have created a unique typographic style for the new logo.

Fig. 23– Finalizing similar parts

Step 8. Adjusting Spacing and Orientation

This step involved making a new font into a branding logo. Spacing between characters and the orientation of the type here has been adjusted to create a better appearance of the logo.

Fig. 24– Adjusting spacing and orientation
Step 9 Match the color

Finally, the final step is to match the colors of the new Chinese Pizza Hut to the original design to complete the procedure for a real-case study.

Fig. 25– Matching color

Journal Blog

The Journal blog section of the website, serves as a crucial linkage of the project Visual Translation to the real world. It is a reflection of reality and visual problems and a showcase of pleasing development that is in China today. It documents my personal the typographic tours in China and accumulates some interesting reading that is relevant to the subject of visual translation.

It touches on three major areas: Branding, Art, and Education. The articles that have the tag of “branding” are mostly from good or bad real typographic examples found while traveling in China, for example, the Harry Potter book cover and Beijing Olympics logo. The articles in the “art” category are reviews of the art works that are related to typography, such as Xubing’s ‘Found in Translation’. Articles with the “education” tag discuss current typography education in China and the consciousness of cross-cultural design.

By clicking on the title of the articles, the students and designers are led to another page to read the entire article and a comment box is designed below the
article. It serves as an important communication tool, to help gather feedback and comments and allow interaction with the audience.

Promotional Posters

In order to promote the *Visual Translation* website, I created a series of posters to advertise my thesis work. For the background texture, I chose a light grey color rice paper texture to give the posters an oriental feeling; rice paper has been an important cultural element that connotes the traditional writing and calligraphy. The content of each poster is a representation of a section of the *Visual Translation* site, the first poster illustrates the similar parts section which Latin letter parts and Chinese Character Strokes are compared. The second poster highlights the red characters that can be read as Latin alphabet as well as Chinese Characters. The third poster indicates the difference reading and writing orientation of English and Chinese. The fourth poster is for similar typeface section where identical Latin typefaces and Chinese typefaces are analyzed; I used two similar sans-serif typefaces to create a harmonious visual translation of the text. The goal of designing these posters is to create a merging style of western and eastern cultures with an emphasis on the type elements.
Typography is a visual language.
EVALUATION AND FUTURE

Evaluation and Next Step

The research process began with my personal experiences in typography classes and expanded to a bigger picture of typography education. Visual Translation includes many basic resources for the beginner audience; however, the intention is to focus on a new method for designing Chinese typeface. Visual Translation keeps the basic content concise and only inserts the fundamental typography terms that are needed to translate the Latin typeface.

Further exploration in motion graphics and interactive website technology are necessary to enable a better experience for the audience. In the case of the ‘Translation’ component, motion graphics would offer the viewer a more exciting visual experience to see how the Latin letter components are broken in pieces and how they can be reformed into Chinese characters. In this way, students and designers would gain a richer understanding of how exactly the design of a new Chinese typeface is accomplished.

Additionally, interactive content created with Flash and JQuery would not only provide users with a new method by reading or watching, it would also allow users to drag and drop letter parts, design new characters and produce their own typeface. Another of the possible next steps is designing Visual Translation as an App for mobile devices such as phones and tablets. These next steps will open up other possibilities for teaching and learning typography and create convenient ways to present ideas for brand designers.
The Future of Visual Translation

With further development, I would travel back to China and attend conferences and typography discussions to spread the new ideas. In order to gather more advice and suggestions, connections with scholars, educators and typographers would be required. Visual Translation as an educational tool would potentially become an important resource for future Chinese type classes and facilitate greater awareness and sensitivity of cross-cultural design among the new generation of Chinese graphic designers.

With regard to branding, Visual Translation would be presented to graphic design companies, which produce corporate branding. Visual Translation would help to establish new services to help western corporate brands coming to China or Chinese brands going abroad to maintain visual consistency in their identity designs.

Furthermore, because Visual Translation offers a new procedure for designing new Chinese typefaces based on Latin typefaces, it would possibly inspire computer scientists to develop new applications or programs to help solve the problem of Chinese type design, and these technologies would eventually lead to a blooming era of Chinese type design.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


VITA

Yifang Cao was born in 1987, in Xiangtan, Hunan, China. She received a Bachelor of Arts, with a concentration in journalism and mass communication from Hunan Normal University, Changsha, Hunan, in 2009. During her undergraduate studies, she was chosen to be the honor exchange student of the year to come to Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where she studied media design for one year. She will receive her Master of Fine Arts degree from Louisiana State University in May 2012.