Literature, Language and Cultural Studies
ISSN Print: 3079-5095
ISSN Online: 3079-5109
https://doi.org/10.63313/LLCS.9124

An Analysis of the English Translation of Chinese Cultural Symbols in Huawei's System Naming

Zhijun Wu
School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, Jingzhou 434000, China
Email: wzj2205144528@163.com

How to cite this paper: Wu, Z. J. (2026). An Analysis of the English Translation of Chinese Cultural Symbols in Huawei's System Naming. *Literature, Language and Cultural Studies*, 4(1), 35-43. ISSN Print: 3079-5095; ISSN Online: 3079-5109.
https://doi.org/10.63313/LLCS.9124
Published: 2026-01-13

Abstract

In the context of globalization, Chinese enterprises' cross-border communication involves both technological-product export and cross-context cultural symbol transmission. As a representative Chinese tech enterprise, Huawei integrates traditional Chinese cultural symbols such as myths, philosophical thoughts and natural imagery into its system naming, forming a unique brand cultural system. This study takes Huawei's system names as the research object to explore effective international translation and communication of such cultural symbols. Based on cultural translation theory, it analyzes four English translation strategies adopted by Huawei: transliteration, free translation, phonetic-semantic translation and cultural image reconstruction. The results indicate that these diversified strategies balance cultural authenticity and overseas acceptability to some extent but face dilemmas like diluted cultural connotation transmission and cognitive barriers for overseas audiences. This study aims to provide theoretical references and practical guidelines for the international communication of Chinese cultural symbols, and facilitate the efficient external translation and global dissemination of Chinese culture.

Keywords

Huawei; system naming; Chinese cultural symbols; English translation strate-gies; cross-cultural communication

1. Introduction

China's cultural "going global" is a key national initiative, which aims to promote cultural globalization. In recent years, the digital wave has driven relevant developments. Technology enterprises have become important carriers for cultural communication. Huawei is a model of Chinese technology enterprises' "going global". Its system naming is a core carrier for bearing national culture and brand values. Examples include HarmonyOS, Pangu AI large language model, Kunpeng server chips and Hetu map system. Huawei's series of naming practices all focus on traditional Chinese cultural symbols. These naming choices and their English translation practices are typical cases of cross-cultural communication in

the digital age. They also highlight the core issues in the process of cultural globalization of Chinese enterprises.

Traditional Chinese cultural symbols such as Pangu, Kunpeng and Hetu are embedded in Huawei's system naming. These symbols carry profound cultural connotations. They also have the unique spiritual meanings of the Chinese nation. They are not only a reflection of Huawei's technological confidence. They are also an important window for the world to understand Chinese culture. Huawei's global business layout is expanding day by day. Its system products have entered the markets of more than 170 countries and regions. This makes the English translation of these culture-loaded system names directly related to the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. It is also related to the construction of international brand image.

However, there are obvious differences between Chinese and Western cultural contexts, values and cognitive habits. These differences make the translation of Chinese cultural symbols often face a dilemma. The dilemma is to balance "retaining cultural connotations" and "facilitating the understanding of target audiences". Accurately conveying the cultural connotations contained in Huawei's system naming, ensuring that overseas users can understand and accept them smoothly, and further achieving the dual goals of promoting technological products and spreading culture have become urgent problems to be solved in cross-cultural communication practice. Therefore, this paper takes the cultural symbols in Huawei's system naming as the research object. It focuses on their English translation practices and explores applicable translation strategies. The purpose is to provide reference for Chinese technology enterprises to carry out cultural communication and brand globalization through naming translation.

2. Core Connotations and Characteristics of Chinese Cultural Symbols

Cultural symbols are a symbolic system with connotative significance as well as tangible carriers of culture, embodying the spiritual traits and cultural genes of a specific nation or country and acting as key entry points for cognition and understanding in cross-cultural communication. As crucial carriers of cultural communication, a large number of such symbols are indispensable to the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture; in fact, the process of cultural communication is precisely the act of materializing and visualizing cultural symbols, which enables the profound implications embodied in them to be transmitted and accessed among members of different cultural groups. Meanwhile, the academic circle has developed many in-depth interpretations of the connotations and characteristics of Chinese cultural symbols, thereby laying a solid theoretical foundation for this paper's research.

Meng Xiangfei (2014) pointed out that during the long historical accumulation,

Chinese culture has nurtured a set of cultural symbol systems with profound connotations. As the concrete representations of culture, such symbols are the condensed identifiers of cultural resources of a specific nation or region. They can comprehensively reflect the traits of the affiliated group in spiritual, material and other aspects, highlighting the core attributes of cultural symbols that are both comprehensive and representative.

Li Xiang (2021) defined cultural symbols from the perspective of group identity, holding that their core feature is that they can only be understood and endowed with complex meanings by specific cultural groups, and their forms of existence cover various carriers such as linguistic symbols and traditional patterns. He emphasized that China's 5,000-year-plus civilization has nurtured unique cultural symbols such as Chinese characters and the Great Wall. These symbols have formed a strong culturally binding connection with China and become important signs for the outside world to identify China, thus clarifying the regional exclusive attributes and cultural differentiation value of cultural symbols.

Ruan Jing (2023) focused on the internal relationship between cultural symbols and national image, proposing that cultural symbols are the external embodiment of national spirit and the distinctive identifier of national image. The outside world's initial cognition of a country often starts with the interpretation of its unique cultural symbols. This view highlights the fundamental role of cultural symbols in cross-cultural cognition and national image construction.

Based on the comprehensive views of the academic circle, Chinese cultural symbols have such core characteristics as diversity, uniqueness, profound connotation and group identity. Their scope includes both spiritual cultural symbols such as myths and legends, classical documents, and material cultural symbols such as natural landscapes and humanistic architecture. The application of such cultural symbols in the naming of Huawei's systems is not only an inheritance and tribute to Chinese culture, but also injects unique cultural genes into the cross-cultural communication of the brand. Combined with the above theoretical definition of Chinese cultural symbols, the following part will specifically analyze various Chinese cultural symbols integrated into the naming of Huawei's systems, interpret their internal cultural connotations and their inherent connection with technical attributes.

3. Types and Connotations of Chinese Cultural Symbols in Huawei's System Naming

The Chinese cultural symbols integrated into Huawei's system naming originate from diverse sources, covering core cultural fields such as myths and legends, classical documents, philosophical thoughts, and natural and humanistic images. These symbols not only carry the profound spiritual heritage and cultural

connotations of the Chinese nation, but also form an accurate correspondence with the technical attributes and functional positioning of the systems. They realize the two-way empowerment and in-depth symbiosis of cultural spirit and technical concepts, demonstrating Huawei's brand development logic of "technology empowering culture and culture infiltrating technology".

3.1. Myth and Legend Symbols

Rooted in the ancient Chinese mythological system, such symbols embody cultural meanings such as creation, auspiciousness, and power, which are highly consistent with Huawei's philosophy of pursuing technological breakthroughs and vision of building an ecological system. Typical cases are as follows: The naming of the Hongmeng operating system is derived from records in classical documents such as the Zhuangzi and Shanhaijing, referring to the primeval chaotic qi of the universe before the creation of heaven and earth. It not only symbolizes the technological ambition of the system to start from scratch and reconstruct a new order of the Internet of Everything, but also deeply echoes the core of Pangu's creation myth of separating heaven and earth, implying the technological exploration spirit of "breaking chaos and establishing new rules". The Qilin chip is named after "Kirin", one of the five great auspicious beasts in ancient China. It borrows the cultural image of Kirin as "the arrival of auspiciousness, nobility and extraordinaryness", not only conveying the high-end positioning of the product, but also metaphorically representing the powerful performance and stable performance of the chip. The Pangu AI large model directly invokes the cultural image of Pangu, the creator god, and with the mythological implication of "separating heaven and earth", it demonstrates the determination and technological confidence in making breakthrough explorations in the field of artificial intelligence. In addition, the Balong 5G commercial chip is derived from the legend of the giant snake in the Shanhaijing, and the Xuanwu mobile phone framework is taken from the Four Great Mythical Beasts. Both endow the products with metaphorical connotations related to mythical-level performance.

3.2. Symbols from Classical Documents and Philosophical Thoughts

Huawei draws inspiration from Chinese classical documents and the essence of traditional philosophical thoughts, integrating Eastern wisdom into the naming of technological products, and realizing the in-depth integration of technical rationality and cultural sensitivity. In terms of the application of symbols from classical documents, the Kunpeng server chip is taken from the classic allusion in the "Free and Easy Wandering" of the *Zhuangzi*: "The fish metamorphoses into a kind of bird by the name of peng." The majestic image of the Peng spreading its wings for ninety thousand li not only metaphorically represents the powerful

data throughput and parallel processing capabilities of the server chip, but also conveys the technical ecological concept of "openness, inclusiveness and free collaboration". The self-developed Hetu map system is derived from the record in the *I Ching*: "Heaven sent forth the Ho-t'u, and the Lo river brought forth the writing." As a mysterious pattern imparted by heaven to the world in ancient times, Hetu not only symbolizes the precise positioning and intelligent decision-making capabilities of the map system, but also implies the traditional Chinese worldview of "harmony between man and nature". The Cangjie programming language is named after "Cangjie", the official historian of the Yellow Emperor who created Chinese characters. It implies the pioneering value of building a basic language system for the technological world, demonstrating both the fundamental exploration of technological innovation and the respect and tribute to the roots of Chinese culture.

3.3. Natural and Humanistic Image Symbols

With unique Chinese natural landscapes and humanistic symbols as the core carriers, such symbols embody spiritual connotations such as stability, perseverance, lofty ideals and responsibility, which are accurately matched with the functional attributes and reliability requirements of the systems. The Kunlun glass panel is named after the Kunlun Mountains, known as "the ancestor of all mountains" recorded in the Shanhaijing. It draws on the cultural image of the Kunlun Mountains as "majestic, towering and indestructible" to metaphorically represent the super anti-fall durability and structural stability of the glass panel. The Taishan server platform is named after Mount Tai, the "leader of the Five Great Mountains". It not only uses the image of Mount Tai as "steady as a rock" to convey the stable and reliable characteristics of the server, but also relies on the cultural connotation of "weightier than Mount Tai" to demonstrate Huawei's sense of responsibility in the field of digital infrastructure. The Lingxiao Wi-Fi chip is taken from the semantic meaning of "climbing Lingxiao and ascending" in the Suizhifu or Ode to Fulfilling Aspirations. Through the poetic image of "surpassing the clouds and reaching the sky directly", it metaphorically represents the wide coverage and high-speed transmission performance of Wi-Fi signals, realizing the ingenious integration of technological functions and cultural poetry. The Dayu intelligent data lake platform is named after Dayu, the hero who controlled floods. It draws on Dayu's historical image of "dredging hundreds of rivers and conducting comprehensive governance" to metaphorically represent the platform's capabilities in dredging, governing, integrating and value mining of massive heterogeneous data, demonstrating Huawei's technological strength and humanistic feelings in solving complex data problems.

4. Analysis of English Translation Strategies for Chinese Cultural Symbols in Huawei's System Naming

Based on the cultural translation theory, the essence of translation lies in cultural transference. This process demands a balance between preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring acceptability to target language audiences. For the English translation of Chinese cultural symbols in Huawei's system names, the company has adopted diverse strategies tailored to differences in symbol types, cultural connotations, and communication goals. These strategies fall into four main categories: transliteration, free translation, phonetic-semantic translation, and cultural image reconstruction.

4.1. Transliteration: Preserving Cultural Authenticity and Strengthening Brand Identity

The transliteration strategy retains the original pronunciation of cultural symbols through Pinyin transcription. It maximizes the delivery of cultural authenticity and strengthens the brand's Chinese identity. Huawei adopts transliteration for some cultural symbols, which is mainly applicable to those with unique cultural recognition and relatively concise pronunciation.

A typical example is the English translation of Huawei's self-developed mobile terminal chip "Qilin" as "Kirin". This translation preserves the original pronunciation while forming a distinctive brand identity. Thanks to the global familiarity with the "kirin" logo linked to Japanese beverages, this naming choice aligns with Huawei's overseas expansion and international cooperation goals. When overseas audiences come across "Kirin chip", they can perceive Chinese culture through its pronunciation and understand the implied meaning of the symbol through the product's performance. However, the transliteration strategy has certain limitations. If the Pinyin pronunciation is difficult to be accurately perceived in the English context, it will affect the communication effect. Huawei initially considered translating "Hongmeng" as "Hongmeng", but eventually abandoned this pure transliteration. English audiences are unfamiliar with Chinese Pinyin, making it hard for them to pronounce and understand the term accurately. Thus, Huawei's transliteration strategy mostly applies to cultural symbols with concise, easy-to-imitate pronunciations for English speakers. Additionally, it is often paired with brand promotion materials to explain cultural connotations, lowering the barrier to understanding.

4.2. Free Translation: Conveying Core Connotations and Enhancing Acceptability

Breaking free from the constraints of literal meaning, the free translation strategy focuses on the core connotations of cultural symbols and uses words with similar functions in the target language for translation, so as to enhance the understanding and acceptability of overseas audiences. This strategy is suitable for symbols with rich cultural connotations whose literal meanings are difficult for English audiences

to comprehend, with a particular focus on achieving cultural functional equivalence. For instance, while the Huawei Cloud Pangu Large Model retains the transliteration "Pangu", its core connotation of "creation and initiation" is highlighted via the brand promotion system, achieving equivalent transmission of this cultural essence. The name echoes the ancient legend of Pangu, who transformed his body into the earth to sustain all living things and serves as a metaphor for the model's core value of providing a robust underlying framework for diverse industries and sectors. The Dayu Intelligent Data Lake Platform also uses the transliteration "Dayu", with its core functional attribute of "governance and integration" emphasized in product specification documents. This is a practice that integrates cultural connotations with technical functions through annotated free translation. This approach mirrors the annotated free translation paradigm used for "wolf culture" from the Huawei Basic Law, which is rendered as "wolf culture, representing a competitive and aggressive spirit within the company". This approach has been extended to the English translation of system names, enabling precise transmission of the deep cultural connotations embedded in these symbols.

4.3. Phonetic-Semantic Translation: Balancing Cultural Identity and Communication Effect

The phonetic-semantic translation strategy is the most representative one in Huawei's system nomenclature translation. It not only retains the phonetic features of cultural symbols but also endows the translated text with clear semantics, achieving a dual balance between cultural identity and communication effect. Through ingenious word selection, this strategy makes the translated text phonetically close to the source language symbol, semantically consistent with the product attributes, and at the same time conveys Chinese cultural concepts.

The most typical case is the English translation of Hongmeng Operating System as "HarmonyOS". The core connotation of "Hongmeng" refers to "the initial state of chaos and the origin of all things", and the closest English word is Genesis. However, the direct transliteration "Hongmeng" is difficult for English audiences to understand. Huawei ultimately chose "Harmony" as the English translation. On the one hand, the pronunciation of "Harmony" is similar to that of "Hongmeng", forming a phonetic association and evoking cultural resonance among Chinese audiences. On the other hand, "Harmony" means "a state of peaceful existence and agreement", which accurately conveys HarmonyOS' technical concept of "interconnection of all things and collaborative coexistence", while also conforming to the Chinese philosophical thought of "harmony without uniformity". This translation not only avoids the communication barriers of pure transliteration but also prevents the loss of cultural roots caused by pure free translation, realizing the organic unity of pronunciation, meaning and culture. In addition, the translation of the Lingxiao Wi-Fi chip as "Lingxiao", along with the promotional slogan "Beyond the Clouds" to

convey its connotation of "loftiness and elevation", also embodies the idea of phonetic-semantic translation.

4.4. Cultural Image Reconstruction: Adapting to the Target Language Cultural Context

The cultural image reconstruction strategy refers to reconstructing a cultural image that is both in line with product attributes and understandable to target language audiences when the source language cultural symbol lacks a corresponding image in the target language culture, so as to realize the creative transformation of cultural connotations. This strategy focuses on the communication effect of translation, takes the cognitive habits of target language audiences as the core, and makes adaptive adjustments to the image on the basis of retaining the spiritual core of the source language culture.

Huawei once registered the trademark "Ark" (Noah's Ark) for the Hongmeng System in Europe, and this translation is a typical example of cultural image reconstruction. In Western culture, "Noah's Ark" is a symbol of "salvation and rebirth", which is similar to the connotation of the Hongmeng System of "creating a new ecosystem and breaking through technical difficulties". Although Huawei eventually changed it to "Harmony", this attempt fully reflects the idea of cultural image reconstruction. In addition, the Hetu Map System is translated as "Hetu", and at the same time explained in combination with the Western concept of "map", reconstructing the traditional Chinese image of a "mysterious pattern" into that of a "precision navigation tool". This not only preserves the cultural roots but also adapts to the cognitive context of English audiences towards map systems.

5. Conclusion

Huawei's system naming incorporates various types of Chinese cultural symbols, such as mythological legends, philosophical concepts and natural images. These symbols carry profound Chinese cultural connotations and are organically integrated with Huawei's technological concepts. By adopting diversified English translation strategies including transliteration, free translation, combination of pronunciation and meaning, and cultural image reconstruction, Huawei has not only retained part of the cultural authenticity but also improved the effectiveness of overseas communication, achieving favorable brand communication effects and promoting the international communication of Chinese culture.

However, its English translation practice still faces dilemmas such as "discount" in cultural connotation transmission, cognitive barriers, and comprehension deviations caused by cultural differences. To this end, it is necessary to optimize through paths such as strengthening the refinement and standardization of translation, constructing a hierarchical communication framework, realizing the synergy between translation and communication, and balancing cultural

authenticity and market adaptability.

Huawei's practice shows that the English translation of cultural symbols in brand naming by Chinese enterprises should be based on cultural translation theories, with cross-cultural communication effects as the core, and flexibly use diversified translation strategies to achieve the organic unity of cultural connotations and market acceptance. In the future, with the acceleration of the overseas expansion process of Chinese enterprises, the English translation of cultural symbols will become an important part of brand competition. Only by continuously exploring suitable translation and communication strategies can we truly realize the coordinated globalization of culture and technology and enhance the global influence of Chinese culture.

References

[1] Cheng, T. (2018). Chinese Cultural Symbols and Their Presentation Characteristics in International Communication: A Content Analysis Based on Front Pages and Cover Images of Four Overseas Newspapers and Periodicals. M.A. Dissertation, Southwest University, Chongqing.

[2] Fan, L. and Wu, X. (2023). The "Ensemble" of Local and National Levels: The Breakthrough Path for Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Cultural Symbols. Editorial Friend, 324(8), 43-49+55.

[3] Meng, X. (2014). Effective Application of Cultural Symbols in the Construction of China's National Image. Tribune of Social Sciences, 06, 226-230.

[4] Li, X. (2021). Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Cultural Symbols and Its Enlightenment: Taking the Dissemination of Han Dynasty Cultural Symbols in Rome as a Reference. Cultural Journal, 10, 42-45.

[5] Ruan, J. (2023). Cultural Symbols of China and the Dissemination of Chinese Culture. Journal of South-Central Minzu University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 01, 82-90+184.

[6] Jiang, T., and Yang, Y. (2023). A study on corporate publicity translation strategies from the perspective of eco-translatology: A case study of Huawei's company profile. Journal of Shenyang Jianzhu University (Social Science Edition), 25(1), 87-92.

[7] Wang, H., and Dong, Y. (2025). English Translation Strategies of Cultural Symbols in Black Myth: Wukong from the Perspective of Chinese Culture Going Global. Cultural Journal, (11), 211-214.