

FROM P3

The retired professor of communications is particularly heartened to see the increased use of loong in English texts.

“This is a long time coming,” he said. “When I first proposed the idea to use loong as the English translation, many people, especially Chinese scholars, were opposed because they said the dragon image had been used for so long that it would be too hard to replace.”

Well, apparently today’s Chinese, especially the younger generation, don’t find it hard.

“From the perspective of communications, the use of loong has passed a turning point,” he said. “At first, I collected every tiny little bit of loong usage, like on a coin or a belt that nobody would notice. Now, there are so many examples that I have to choose the most significant ones.”

Huang added: “The more the term is used, who says it won’t become more popular with English speakers?”

To understand how the confusion between dragon and loong began, you have to go back in history.

The Oxford English Dictionary lists

the earliest English citation of “Chinese dragon” as a 1769 translation of an epic novel “The Bronze, or Chinese Anchorite.”

Some experts traced the “mis-translation” of loong to dragon to much earlier times in other European languages.

“Dragon” appeared in the 13th century book “The Travels of Marco Polo” in a description of decorations in the royal court. In the 16th century, Italian missionaries Michael Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci co-authored a Portuguese-Chinese dictionary that translated loong as *bicha-serpens*, or bug-like serpent, and *jiao*, a type of loong, as dragon.

“Well, it doesn’t matter anymore how it got wrong in the first place,” Huang concluded. “The fact is that loong is now used widely and will become even more widely used.”



Well, it doesn’t matter anymore how it got wrong in the first place. The fact is that loong is now used widely and will become even more widely used.

Five types of Chinese dragons



Wood

Birth year: 1964, 2024



Fire

1916, 1976



Earth

1928, 1988



Metal

1940, 2000



Water

1952, 2012



Installations featuring Chinese dragons have been unveiled across Shanghai to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

— Dong Jun