ABSTRACT

Abbreviations, initialisms, acronyms and other abbreviated forms are ubiquitous in this present day but in-depth studies in this field, especially of the comparative nature, are regrettably lacking. This thesis attempts a detailed comparison of English and Chinese abbreviated forms through the analysis of a large corpus of 3747 English and 3216 Chinese abbreviated forms sampled mainly from two dictionaries on abbreviated forms.

While there are different definitions of abbreviated forms in English and Chinese, the study defines all abbreviations, initialisms and any other shortened forms as abbreviated forms so long as they are shortened from some original longer expressions. Similarities and differences between the systems of abbreviated forms of the two languages are identified in the etymological and linguistic aspects of the languages. For both languages, some abbreviated forms are more often used than others. An initial survey suggests that on the surface the abbreviated forms of the two languages are very much in common. However, an in-depth analysis reveals more differences than expected. In most cases, the differences are the direct consequence of the inherent differences in the etymology aspects of the two languages.

It is a common belief that the English abbreviated forms are better developed and better received than their Chinese counterparts. However in a three-part analytical comparison of creation, usage and recognition of the respective abbreviated forms, we have observed that English abbreviated forms stand over Chinese abbreviated forms only in terms of the ease of creation. In usage, both languages have their own good points. Last but not least in recognition, the Chinese abbreviated forms possess advantages over the English ones.