Xie-Hou-Yu (歌后语), a kind of idiomatic expression in the Chinese language, consists of two parts. The first part is a vivid and witty metaphor that describes a matter, an action or a phenomenon, while the second part is the explanation of the first. In order to enhance its humorous effect, the users tend to obscure the explanatory part of a Xie-Hou-Yu, and only utter its first half, which plays the role similar to a riddle.

In the past, Xie-Hou-Yu had never been taken seriously. The intelligentsia thought that they were vulgar and coarse, hence, they were unpresentable, especially in literary language.

Thus, this Academic Exercise aims to clarify the misconception on Xie-Hou-Yu and attempts to prove that, Xie-Hou-Yu, though a kind of folk adage, plays an important role in the Chinese language.

To accomplish this purpose, the present study on Xie-Hou-Yu expressions is sub-divided into seven chapters. Chapter One is an introductory chapter that traces the origin of Xie-Hou-Yu and provides an outline to the whole study. Chapter Two looks into the nature of Xie-Hou-Yu by
examining its relationships with enigmatic language (隐语) and partially-hidden language (藏语). In addition, by distinguishing Xie-Hou-Yu from other idiomatic phrases such as idiom (成语), proverb (谚语) and conundrum (谜语), one will have a better insight of Xie-Hou-Yu expressions. The following chapter further explores the features of Xie-Hou-Yu by looking into its two-part structure.

To prove the usefulness of Xie-Hou-Yu, Chapters Four and Five delve into the grammatical and rhetorical functions of the Xie-Hou-Yu expressions. Grammatical functions such as acting as subjects, predicates or complements and being sentence constituents, and rhetorical functions such as intensifying ironical and ludicrous effects reveal the significant contribution of Xie-Hou-Yu to the Chinese language.

Chapter Six focuses on the practical uses of Xie-Hou-Yu in numerous influential literary works from the dynasty of Yuan (元), Ming (明), Ching (清) and the period after the May-Fourth Movement. At the same time, a survey of 20 samples has also been conducted in order to test the popularity of Xie-Hou-Yu among local students.

The final chapter is the concluding chapter that points out the danger of overusing Xie-Hou-Yu and the necessity of standardization of Xie-Hou-Yu expressions.