

## MASTER'S THESIS

### The use of Chinese abbreviations in Hong Kong: analysis with an optimality theory

Wong, Man Wai

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**The Use of Chinese Abbreviations in Hong Kong:  
Analysis with an Optimality Theory**

**WONG MAN WAI, ISSAC  
STUDENT NO. 09425268**

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## Abstract

Chinese abbreviation is a common language phenomenon in Hong Kong. Various patterns of Chinese abbreviations and different methods to truncate words have well been categorized by some scholars and Chinese linguists. Nevertheless, what criteria people consider when accepting, creating or using Chinese abbreviations has not been highlighted. This dissertation focuses on what underlying rules guiding us to form an abbreviation in a semantically and structurally correct form.

Optimality Theory (OT) will be applied to the analysis in this dissertation. In OT, the process of evaluating options with a series of restrictions or requirements is similar to people making choices in real life.

The characteristic of Chinese Language is significant to be studied first because it helps understand the structure of Chinese abbreviations better. Then, certain constraints will be introduced for the analysis in OT. Afterwards, the ranking of those constraints is arranged. Some underlying principles that people have in their mind for making abbreviations can be reflected by virtue of the ranking.

## 摘要

漢語縮略是香港常見之語言現象。歷來許多語言研究學者均對不同的縮略模式和方法詳細分類及分析。然而，人們在創造、接受及使用一些縮略語時會考慮什麼條件，還沒有得到重視。本論文將聚焦於人們受到什麼樣的法則去創造一個意義上及結構上完善的縮略語。

優選論(Optimality Theory)的機制，從多個候選項目當中，通過一系列的制約條件，從而篩選出最理想的項目。這種機制與人們在眾多縮略方法中決擇十分接近。因此，本文將應用優選論作出分析。

本論文首先透過了解漢語在香港的特徵，然後再逐一介紹優選論中的一些制約條件。這些制約條件之優先次序將會再作分析及排序。而這個排序，正正能反映人們創造、接受、使用縮略語的意識。

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