

## WHY IS HOMOPHONIC DISCOURSE POSSIBLE?

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### ABSTRACT

Professor Yuen Ren Chao (赵元任), ex-president of the Linguistic Society of America, once wrote a homophonic discourse entitled “Shī shì shí shī shī 施氏食狮史” (Story of Stone Grotto Poet: Eating Lions) (Chao [1960]1980, 149). But so far, no one knows why such a discourse is possible. This paper makes an attempt to discuss this issue. It is argued that the possibility of homophonic discourse is principally attributed to the fact that unlike English, the Chinese language has a unique bipartite spelling system, i.e., one composed of Chinese character spellings and Chinese pinyin spellings, and that they correspond to each other in terms of over 400 Chinese Pinyin syllables with variations through tones which satisfy the phonological, graphological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic premises for the construal of a homophonic discourse.


### KEYWORDS

Homophonic discourse    Bipartite spelling system    Syllable    Chinese character    Chinese pinyin    Premise

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## 同音文何以可能？

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### 摘要

前美国语言协会主席赵元任教授曾经写了一篇题为《施氏食狮史》的同音文。但迄今为止，尚无人知道该类同音文何以可能。对此本文进行了探讨。认为同音文之所以可能，主要是因为汉语不像英语，它有一个独特的双重拼写系统，即一个由汉字拼写与汉语拼音拼写构成的系统，这两个拼写子系统通过超过 400 个音节加声调变化相对应，能满足同音文构建所需的语音、拼写、形态、句法、语义和语用等前提条件。

### 关键词

同音文 双重拼写系统 音节 汉字 汉语拼音 前提