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Voicing as an Essential Problem of Communication: Language and Education of Chinese Immigrant Children in Globalization

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This article explores voicing processes of identity construction among labor immigrants both inside China and in the Dutch Chinese Diaspora. We provide ethnographically grounded data oriented toward a theoretical point: voicing is an essential problem in communication. Whether one is able to achieve his voice—an outcome of a communicative process—is often conditioned by pretextual factors that exist before and beyond communication, and has to be negotiated in the communicative process. [voice, enregisterment, migration, discursive identity, China]

Introduction

Originally referring to sound produced through the mouth, "voice" has acquired various meanings and modes of application along its development, especially in the field of language studies. The Bakhtinian notion of voice, for instance, conceptualizes the ways in which speech forms are related to typifiable personae (Agha 2005). Dell Hymes, however, emphasized form–function relationships—whether one's speech forms were able to achieve their intended functions (Hymes 1996). We deploy the notion of voice in the present research, in order to understand language use and education situations of Chinese immigrant children in two types of migration contexts: internal rural–urban migration in China and transnational immigration in the West, more specifically, in the Netherlands. China has been one of the major emigrant countries and her people can be found almost everywhere in the world; inside China, mass rural–urban migration, as a result of developmental differences between city and countryside, has formed a labor migrant population of over one hundred and fifty million, some ten percent of the country's total population (Dong 2011). In urban China, Putonghua—the standard Chinese similar to Beijing Mandarin—is the legitimate language of communication in public spaces such as schools, pushing migrants' home dialects to the periphery of urban life. Similar process accounts for the gradual change of the language profile of the Chinese Diaspora, away from Cantonese and toward Mandarin Chinese (Blommaert and Huang 2010). Both internal and international migration are part of a bigger and more profound process—globalization—in which people relocate to a different place with a baggage of linguistic and cultural belongings, entering into everyday encounters with local communities. In such encounters, some voices are heard or achieve their desired functions, whereas others are silenced, lost, or ascribed with new meanings.

In this article we report on ethnographically grounded data collected between 2006 and 2010 among internal labor migrants in China as well as Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands. A body of research literature addresses language shifts and identity construction of Chinese immigrants in the United States, the UK, and the European continent (e.g., Li 2002; Zhu 2008; Scollon and Scollon 2003; Li and Juffermans 2011). An increase of research attention has turned to the discursive process of identity establishment among internal migrants in urban China (e.g. Dong 2011). However, studies that bring together

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research insights from the two worlds—internal as well as international migration—are rare, and our ambition therefore is to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese immigrants' voicing processes in the host societies. Such a joint study combining both types of migration is urgently needed, particularly when new telecommunication technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet make national borders vague in an era of globalization (Blommaert 2010; Collins 2012; Mallan et al. 2010).

However, we do not attempt to provide a comparative study; rather, we intend to present ethnographically grounded data, and in interpreting these data, we subscribe to basic but fundamental rules and assumptions of ethnography. We believe that ethnography is not a method of collecting particular kinds of data nor a synonym for description of context. Rather, ethnography involves a perspective on language and communication, which includes an ontological aspect and an epistemological aspect, and both are crucial for the study of language in society or, more precisely, of language *as well as* of society (Blommaert and Dong 2010:4). Because of our ethnographic perspective, we refuse to "discriminate" one data type against another. In other words, we consider field notes as useful as audio–video recordings and documents such as student written work and school leaflets no less important than interviews, because every piece of data we collect in the field gives us insights into our research informants, and by putting them together we begin to see the whole picture of their life and to make sense of the logic of their social practice. It is important, however, to make "distinctions" between them because these different modes of entextualization—the process of decontextualization and recontextualization of discourse—each carry distinct expressive potentialities and limitations, and each enable different forms of enregisterment and hence of voice itself. Enregisterment, in language studies, refers to processes through which a language form becomes differentiable within a language and is recognized as a register within a society or a subgroup of a society (Agha 2003:231). The subsequent analysis reveals such entextualization and enregisterment, but we emphasize them here and believe it is a strength to bring these disparate kinds of materials together into a coherent account of voice.

Of the three examples reported in this article, two are from China and one from the Netherlands, two are interviews and one is a newspaper clipping. The immediate contexts of our study are educational institutions. In the China part of the research, the fieldwork sites are schools populated with both local and migrant children. The Dutch fieldwork sites are more diverse, including home education and informal socialization of immigrant children to the local society. However, the research focus is always placed on education-related issues—formal as well as informal education—of second-generation Chinese immigrants.

In the next section we trace the notion of voice back to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory and discuss the more recent conceptualization of enregistered voices and voice as a social construct. We argue that voice defines an essential problem of communication: how people make themselves heard and understood. Our data show that migrants deploy languages and other semiotic resources at various levels to voice their identities, to discover emerging voices of their new identities, and to navigate obstacles on the way of having their identities ratified. We further argue that such voices and voicing processes are always deeply ideological.

Voice as a Semiotic Resource for Mobility

Semiotic resources are resources that are related to signs and symbols. We often hear utterances such as "I did not manage to have my voice heard," "I hear his voice in your talk," or "This is a voice of an expert." Indeed, all kinds of voices are circulated in our everyday encounters, in the texts we read, or in the media we depend on so much to obtain

information about the world. The concept of voice has a complex history of development. One main theoretical source is Bakhtin's work (1981, 1984), which distinguishes social voice from individual voice and emphasizes the social dimension of this notion. In Bakhtin's terms, social voice refers to socially recognized and socially typifiable speech distinctions such as class, gender, and profession, whereas individual voice is concerned with person specific, unique, situated figures. Bakhtin's work uses the terms "dialogic" and "voice," and yet the conceptualization is not restricted to phonation, oral speech, or dyadic conversation. Bakhtin (1981), for instance, is primarily concerned with literary texts. Influential and important as Bakhtin's work is, however, questions such as where the boundaries lie between the social and the individual remain unresolved.

Recent developments of this notion have moved beyond the Bakhtinian dichotomy of social versus individual voice. Asif Agha's approach of theorizing voice, for instance, gives more attention to the enregisterment progress through which social voices are related to particular perceivable registers or, more precisely, to perceivable linguistic pools associated with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices (Agha 2000, 2005). The macro processes of enregisterment at the societal level are cumulative effects of micro communicative practices in which people encounter voices, recognize the characterological figures associated with the voices, and moreover produce metapragmatic discourses, and take footing and role alignment toward the characterological figures in question (Agha 2005; Goffman 1981). Along this line of argument, metapragmatic activities at the societal level are particularly critical because any single speech event is inadequate in having a voice enregistered, and the social meanings of a voice have to be continuously recognizable and confirmed by a society or a subgroup of a society.

A rather different line of conceptualizing voice can be found in the work of Jan Blommaert (2005, 2008) on voice and mobility. Following Hymes's (1996) stance on inequality, Blommaert argues that voice is primarily the capacity to make oneself understood by others. It is, in other words, the capacity to realize intended functions by mobilizing available semiotic resources. Voice fundamentally is a social issue; the mapping of a linguistic form onto its function has to do with space and mobility. People speak *in* and *from* a space (Blommaert 2005:223; Blommaert et al. 2005). Space is never neutral but always projects a particular value, social order, authority, and affective attributes, in which people take different positions and orient toward the topics as well as the interlocutors by systematically organizing various patterns of speech. People maintain their language competence or expand their linguistic repertoires and improve their communicative skills, but because they are "out of place" and travel across spaces, they lose voice and experience the changes of value attached to certain linguistic resources and patterns.

Some linguistic resources, such as standard accents, are highly mobile and suggest prestige, whereas others are stigmatizing and strictly locked in private domains. Elsewhere, we have described a fieldwork observation where a migrant worker, a cleaner who works in an urban recreation center in a middle-class residential neighborhood in Beijing, is effectively silenced by her urban interlocutors (see Dong and Blommaert 2009). The migrant worker's silenced voice is an immediate result of the unsuccessful communication but also an instance of the social distance between the middle-class local residents and the migrant worker, and the social distance is a pretextual factor that exists long before the speech event. In this article we take our theoretical point one step further and argue that voicing is an essential problem of inequality in communication; that whether one is able to achieve his or her voice is often conditioned by pretextual factors that exist before and beyond communication, and is negotiated in the communicative process. Questions of voice are therefore always questions of power and inequality, whether it is about being

understood in a particular space, or about giving voice to the voiceless, or about empowering the powerless (e.g., Copp Mökkönen, this issue; Hornberger 2000; May 2012). And that is why voice is deeply ideological.

Before embracing data analysis, let us first sketch the various layers of ethnographic contexts in order to prepare the reader for a fuller engagement with the empirical part of the article. We start with a discussion of macro social, educational, and linguistic issues of internal migration in China and international immigration in the Netherlands. In the empirical section we move to the immediate contexts of each example.

Migration Within and Beyond the Chinese Borders

Migration is usually seen as a phenomenon where people emigrate and immigrate, leaving their place of origin and settling elsewhere for an extended period of time. In Western Europe, migration has traditionally been concerned with transnational population movements, such as Turks and Moroccans to the Netherlands, or South Asian and Caribbean people to Britain (Bezemer and Kroon 2006; Extra et al. 2009; Rampton 1995). China's internal migration is a similar process in the sense that people "gravitate" to affluent places that offer them better life opportunities. The differences are that Chinese internal migration has no colonial background and that it happens within the country's national borders. The internal migration is an immediate result of China's rapid economic increase and its deeper involvement in the world economy. Internal labor migrants typically take low-skill and low-income jobs such as factory worker, cleaner, recycler, street vendor, domestic worker, etc., jobs that local urban citizens tend to avoid. Some have found better opportunities; most, however, are still struggling to feed their families. Migrant workers thus become effectively a new urban proletariat, a social fraction lower than the local resident working class. Over thirty years of mass labor migration, a sizeable group of second-generation migrants has been formed and their education opportunities have attracted much public attention.

The common concerns of migrant children's education are related to the capacity of urban public schools, which may not be able to accommodate the massive influx of migrant children, and therefore migrant parents either have to pay higher fees for their children to be admitted at public schools or to send them to private-run migrant schools, which often are poorly equipped and underachieving. Some parents have to leave their children with their relatives or boarding schools back in their hometown because they find the living and schooling costs of their children in cities unaffordable. The unequal and usually higher admission fees of urban public schools are often impossible for migrant workers, who as a whole live on a lower income than that of their urban working-class counterparts. In contrast, private-run migrant schools require lower fees for basic education. To operate on a limited budget and still make a profit, however, migrant schools have to compromise school conditions and teaching quality (Han 2001; Lu and Zhang 2001; Woronov 2004; Zhang et al. 2003; Zou et al. 2005; cf. Dong 2011 for a fuller account of educational inequality that hinders migrant children's development).

Over the years, cities such as Beijing vow to include most migrant children within the publicly funded education system and to close down underachieving migrant schools. This ambition, however, is not easy to achieve. One of the reasons that discourages migrant children from joining public schools is the fear of being discriminated against by their urban peer students and teachers. Many migrant children in the schools of our fieldwork reported that they believed their regional accents did differentiate them from local Beijing pupils, and they often felt they were being "silenced" and becoming "voiceless" because of their accents. The Chinese fieldwork site of this article was a Beijing public school, which admitted both local and migrant children. It offered us a rare opportunity to observe daily encounters between migrant and local children in an educational context.

We study Chinese mass internal migration as part of the world labor flows, a phenomenon of contemporary globalization and global labor flows (Block 2011). That is why we turn our attention to external migration as well. Chinese immigrants in Europe often find themselves in a lower socioeconomic layer of the given host society, similar to that of our internal migrant informants, and their children often face similar social and education difficulties, although their basic education rights are usually satisfied. Part of our data were collected from transnational Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands. Their migrations have occurred in several historical phases and involved port workers, small business owners, and, most recently, highly educated professionals from Mainland China. The Chinese Diaspora in the Netherlands counts for a population of no less than seventy-five thousand (CBS 2010). Rather than a homogeneous group, the Chinese community is highly diversified and stratified. Early Chinese immigrants, mainly from the coastal provinces of Guangdong and Zheijiang, arrived in the Netherlands as sailors and typically settled in and around Amsterdam and Rotterdam between the late 19th and early 20th century. A second wave of early Chinese immigrants happened in the 1950s. These Chinese immigrants often had complicated migration trajectories—typically migrated via Java, Sumatra, Suriname, Hong Kong, and other countries or regions—and brought diverse linguistic repertoires. They mostly entered the catering business, introducing Chinese-Indonesian cuisine across the Netherlands (cf. Li and Juffermans 2011).

A recent layer of Chinese immigration has been characterized by an increase of Mainland Chinese who relocate to the Netherlands for education and professional development since the early 1980s and more remarkably in the past two decades. These new immigrants, many of whom are non-Cantonese speakers, typically succeed in upward social mobility and enter the middle layer of the host society, a remarkable difference from the early Chinese immigrants. The Dutch fieldwork sites of our study consist of Chinese restaurants, Chinese community schools, Chinese churches, and Chinese grocery shops in Tilburg, the sixth biggest city of the Netherlands.

To explain our fieldwork data, a brief description of linguistic backgrounds and migrant linguistic ecologies is in order. China is a complex multilingual society where more than one hundred languages are in everyday usage. "Chinese language," or "Zhongwen (中文)," is an umbrella term for the language spoken by Han Chinese, which comprises many mutually unintelligible varieties. Commonly known in the West are Mandarin Chinese spoken in the North, Cantonese in Guangdong and Hong Kong, Hakka (or Kejia dialects), and Fujian (or Min) dialects (Hu 1995; Ramsey 1987).

Moreover, Putonghua or "common speech," is the linguistic standard in mainland China since the 1950s (see Dong 2010 for a fuller account of the standardization of Mandarin Chinese). Putonghua is the language of instruction in the education system of China, as well as the official language in the state's other institutions, and it is phonetically similar to the Mandarin Chinese spoken in Beijing and its nearby regions. In addition to this complexity, English is a language of globalization, which gives its speakers greater potential for social and geographical mobility (Lo Bianco et al. 2009; Pan and Block 2011). For our migrant informants inside China, the relationships between Putonghua and regional dialects are crucial to understand their social positions; as for our Dutch Chinese informants, Dutch plays an important role in their socialization, along with the multiple relations among Putonghua as a rising linguistic standard, Cantonese as an established lingua franca, and their regional languages such as Fujian and Wenzhou dialects.

Voice, Identities, and Educational Institutions

Migrant children enter into everyday linguistic exchanges with urban citizens, and in such exchanges their use of language is constantly measured and evaluated against local

norms. A migrant child in the city of Ningbao, Wang Haiyan, describes her initial encounters with urban children in a letter to the editor of *Ningbo Ribao* (Ningbo Daily), a local official newspaper. Ningbo is an emerging industrial center in the Zhejiang province of China's eastern coastal region. Its booming manufacturing industry attracts millions of migrant workers from all over the country. The young writer of the newspaper text is one of the many children who leave their home villages for a city life with their parents. "A letter to the editor" is a letter sent to a newspaper or other types of publication, on a current issue of concern, which fits the newspaper's recent range of topics. The writer is required to give authentic identification information such as telephone number and address in his or her submission. A newspaper typically receives more than a thousand of such letters each week, and the editor has to select relevant ones for publication. Letters are edited, but the opinions and arguments are usually the writer's own. The information about how a newspaper selects letters for publication is given in an interview of a newspaper editor who is in charge of the Reader's Page section of an official newspaper in Beijing [Field Recording JD_2012-06-21-V031].

In the letter the migrant child writes about her initial experiences of the city and her first day as a primary school student at a local Ningbo public school. It is published in the section of readers' stories of their own life in Ningbo (Page 6, Ningbo Daily 31/10/2006, Issue 11407). In our analysis of the text, we draw on Blommaert's (2008:12) "ethnography of text" and argue that texts do not exist in isolation; rather, they are "firmly locked into a wider complex of human contextualized activities." In order to analyze this text, we need to attend to the practice of its "production, circulation, uptake, re-use." Below we present the original text in Chinese characters on the left and our English translation on the right, along with Pinyin transcripts of some key elements of voice enregistering moments. Pinyin is Roman alphabet representation of Chinese characters devised in the 1950s in Mainland China.

Example 1 "Putonghua makes me a member of this city"

题目 普通话让我融入这个城市
作者：王海燕
去年夏天，我随父母从家乡四川来到了这个陌生的城市－宁波。这儿的–切让我感到新奇：鳞次栉比的高楼大厦，宽阔平坦的柏油马路，五彩缤纷的霓虹灯。然而，这一切对我来说既遥远又陌生，因为我是一名外地人，一个民工的子女。爸爸千辛万苦为我联系了一所学校。开学第一天，爸爸陪我来到了新学校。"哇！"学校好大好美！我的班主任是一位既年轻又漂亮的女教师。她讲一口标准的普通话，字正腔圆，真好听！她让我在同学面前作一番自我介绍。我嚅嚅地说："俺不会说普通话，俺怎么介绍自己来？"张老师亲切地说："就用家乡话把心里想说的告诉大家就行了。"我吞吞吐吐地说："大家好，俺是来自四川的娃子，以后请……."话未说完，大家就哄堂大笑，我的脸"噌"地就红到耳根，站在那里手足无措，要知道在老家的学校我也是个优等生，何曾受到过这样的嘲笑！最后还是张老师帮我解了围："这有什么好笑的？她说的可是标准的四川话哩。课后，张老师找我谈话："你得学习普通话，否则的话会给你今后的学习、生活带来很大的困难，你明白吗？""嗯！"我暗下决心，一定要把普通话学好。. . . 我终于消除了语言的隔阂，融入了这座城市。

Putonghua makes me a member of this city
Author: Wang Haiyan
Last summer I arrived in this city with my parents from Sichuan. I was curious about and excited by everything I saw in the streets: skyscrapers, broad streets, and flashing colorful lights in the night {*lincizhibi de gaoloudasha*, *kuankuopingtan de baiyoumalu*, *wucaibinfen de nihongdeng*}. But I felt that all of these were strange and far away from my life because I was an outsider of this city {*waidiren*}, a person from elsewhere, a child of migrant workers.
After many twists and turns, my dad found a local school for me. On the first day of the semester, my dad and I came to my new school. "Wow!" the school was spacious and beautiful in my eyes. My teacher, Miss Zhang, was a pretty young lady who spoke perfect Putonghua. Her Putonghua sounded very nice {*yikou biaozhende putonghua, zizhengqiangyuan, zhenhaoting*}! She asked me to introduce myself in front of the class, but I couldn't—I couldn't speak Putonghua, how could I introduce myself? Miss Zhang was very kind and asked me to do so in my own dialect. I said "good morning, I am a child from Sichuan . . ." {*an shi laizi Sichuan de wazi*} then was interrupted by a loud laughter from the class. I was so embarrassed that I just wanted to run away from the class. You know, I used to be a top student in the school of my hometown; how could I be laughed at like this! Miss Zhang helped me again "what she used is the standard Sichuan dialect {*biaozhen de Sichuanhua*}."
After the class, Miss Zhang found me and told me that I should learn Putonghua otherwise I would encounter many difficulties in my life . . . Having her kind words in mind I was determined to study hard so that one day I would speak good Putonghua {*ba Putonghua xue hao*} . . . Now I have finally got rid of my language barrier {*yuyande gehe*} and become part of the city.
(*Ningbo Daily*, 31/10/2006, Issue 11407, p. 6)

Let us look at the production, circulation, and uptake of the text in order to posit it in the multilayered ethnographic contexts. It is no longer possible for us to find the writer Wang Haiyan, but we know that she is one of the migrant children we described earlier and her case instantiates a large number of interactional moments we observed and recorded during our fieldwork among migrant children in Beijing schools. Our fieldwork data show that migrant children struggle with their accents, which often trigger unwanted reactions from their peer students as well as from teachers. A case reported in Dong (2011:76–80) showed that a migrant child was described as "very silly" by her urban counterpart because her "accented" talk was not understood and thus was disqualified as "language-less"—it was gibberish rather than language. The migrant child of the current research was one of these migrant children whose linguistic features were evaluated against the "standard" and who faced pressure of adopting Putonghua in school environments.

We are not able to reconstruct the trigger of the text, what in the first place gave the migrant child an idea of producing a letter about her earlier experience to a local newspaper. But the text showed that the child was rather delighted with her progress in terms of successful language learning and of becoming a real "part of the city." She might have decided to write this piece of text in order to share her joy with others and to encourage those who just arrived in the city and were as dismayed as she was. Moreover, having one's written work published in a newspaper was something to be proud of for a child, and it therefore might have been encouraged by her parents or teachers, and the latter ones might have been involved in revising and editing the text.

The text was published in a regional official newspaper and circulated among local citizens. Its electronic version was available online to a wider readership. The newspaper editor would have an important role in the selection and revision of the text for publication. There were various selection criteria, but a bottom line for an official newspaper in China was that the theme of the text had to be in line with those of the newspaper; and official newspapers, as a traditional form of mass media in China, are an important tool of communication for the government. The theme of this text echoed the local government's efforts of providing formal schooling to migrant children, and it fitted well in the bigger political discourse of "building a harmonious society" in urban China, which called for people of different social and cultural backgrounds to live in peace in the transitional period so as to avoid social turbulence (Renminwang 2005). Nevertheless, we had no reason to believe that this text was solely the voice of the editor. The editor, as well as the bigger political contexts, must play a big role in the production of the text. So, the text presents the voice of the migrant child, but was subject to various layers of entextualization and hegemonic approval, and thus presents individual and social voice at the same time (cf. Bakhtin 1981, 1984).

The text can be analyzed in three parts, and each part demonstrates different identities and voices. The first part describes the migrant child's initial experience of the city. On the one hand, she is attracted by the city; on the other hand, she feels alien to it and labels herself as a "child of migrant workers," an identity category that is not very appealing and that is pre-inscribed into the speech event. The second part of the text is marked by an episode in which the migrant child has to introduce herself in front of the class. She notices that her teacher speaks "perfect" Putonghua, which sounds "very nice." Such qualifications of speech are deeply ideological and their indexical values go much beyond the linguistic forms and point to the social meanings and personality attributes. The quoted utterance "good morning, I am a child from Sichuan" is worth noticing in several ways. First, the markedness of Sichuan accents here is lexical as well as phonological: the use of dialect lexicon *an* (俺) rather than the Putonghua *wo* (我) for the first person pronoun "I," and of typical Sichuan lexicon *wazi* (娃子) for "child" instead of the Putonghua *haizi* (孩子) (see Table 1 for a summary).

Table 1.
The Differences in Lexicon Usage between Putonghua and Sichuan Dialects

	In writing	In Pinyin	In writing	In Pinyin
Sichuan dialect	俺	*an*	娃子	*wazi*
Putonghua	我	*wo*	孩子	*haizi*
English	I		child	

It is therefore possible to deploy these recognizable emblems to represent her Sichuan accent in the newspaper account. Second, the phonological part of the utterance is inevitably lost due to the fact that it is a written and printed text artifact. However, the Sichuan accent is widely perceived as one of the "funny accents" by lay persons in China and is often used in comedy or other genres of entertainment in order to amuse the audience. This pretextual perception of the Sichuan accent triggers laughter from the class, although it is not the migrant child's intention. The evaluation of an accent as "amusing" or "funny" is ideological and highlights the "defects" of the accent as measured against the standard form of the language. The migrant child's linguistic form fails to map onto its intended function, and her voice is lost in her classmates' laughter.

In the third part, the teacher first helps the migrant child and says "what she used is the standard Sichuan dialect!"; and then she talks to the migrant child about her Putonghua. By doing so, Miss Zhang defends the migrant child, on the one hand; but on the other hand, she asks her to make a real effort in learning Putonghua so that she would have a better future. Here the teacher is functioning on an institutional level, and she performs her duty by teaching the migrant child the linguistic and behavioral norms of the mainstream society. The institutional voice that Miss Zhang articulates is received and reported by the migrant child as a piece of advice, neutral and friendly, and what is disguised is the ideology of the normative behavior, i.e., speaking Putonghua, expected and inscribed by the local mainstream society. Through the diligent work of educational practitioners, institutional mechanisms reproduce the symbolic dominance of Putonghua in a taken-for-granted manner (Dong 2010; cf. Bourdieu 1991).

Later in this part, the migrant child describes the improvement of her Putonghua proficiency and the change of her attitudes toward the city. "Now I have finally got rid of my language barrier and become part of the city." Here, the migrant child no longer perceives herself as being excluded from the city; rather, she professes an alignment to the local community, and this alignment shift is based on the capability of having Putonghua at her disposal. In this part we hear a confident voice articulated by an empowered person who is able to use Putonghua as a means of communication.

In this text we see that multiple voices are blended and constrained by pretextual factors and that voice is a voicing process in which the migrant child's voice is first lost in her classmates' laughter and later she gains a confident voice and believes that she is becoming part of the city. At an institutional level, the teacher's friendly and encouraging voice bespeaks and reinforces the dominant linguistic ideology. At a public level, a letter to the editor of a newspaper is a traditional way of turning private voice public, and in China newspapers are under stringent scrutiny to make sure that their contents are in line with the official policies. Finally the editor's involvement in the voice-making process is hard to miss. The highly selective process of a publishable letter itself is a self-policing process through which a majority of letters are rejected. This is not to claim, however, that the voice of the text is that of the newspaper editor's. The migrant child achieves voice because she manages to express herself in a way that is interesting enough for publication but not challenging enough to be censored. The institutional power is played out in the migrant child's discourse through self-policing and/or being policed by the newspaper editors.

Our second example is an interview of a local Beijing child on his perception of regional dialects. The data were collected in a public primary school populated with both local and migrant children. The school was located in an old lane of central Beijing. Its surrounding area used to be inhabited by local people; gradually many of them have moved to newly built complexes on the outskirts of the city because the property prices of the central Beijing kept rising and the old single-story houses became uncomfortable and inconvenient (usually without private bathroom, running water, etc.). The area was now largely occupied by urban low-income households and migrant families. Migrant families rented flats in the area often because they had low-skilled jobs or offered service to the neighborhood, working as cleaners hired by the neighborhood committee *(juweihui)* or fruit and vegetable sellers in the nearby markets. There were approximately two hundred pupils in the school, of which about half were migrant children. They were mostly born and raised in Beijing, although without Beijing *hukou. Hukou*, or household registration, groups people into agricultural/rural or nonagricultural/urban *hukou*-holders at birth, and transgenerationally, as children depend on their parents' *hukou* status. Possessing a local *hukou* means one is entitled to local resources and social services.

The interview, conducted in Putonghua, was triggered by an episode in which the interviewer (JD) happened to hear Bingbing mimicking a dialect during a class break. Bingbing was a nine-year-old boy who was born to a local working-class family. He grew up in the very lane where the school was located, and his family had been there for several decades. He had a marked Beijing accent, characterized with excessive use of rhotacization, which was commonly known as "r-colored vowels." Bingbing was a friendly child, and he was known in the class for his "performing" talent. During the break, he was joking with his classmates and occasionally also "performed" some dialect talk *(fangyan)*. Dialect is rarely used in the school, even though half of the students came from outside Beijing, and many of them were exposed to dialects at home. During the year-long fieldwork, we observed that the migrant pupils almost always spoke Putonghua in and out of class. All teachers were local; and the interviewer was a native Beijing speaker.

Example 2 ". . . some dialect of other place is very funny!"

Interview with Bingbing, a local pupil, during class break on June 8, 2007 [Field Recording JD_2007-06-08-V040]

((Class break noise, unintelligible talk, Bingbing imitating a dialect talk, laughter from his peer students))

1 JD: （（笑声））你说的什么呀？（（类似方言，听不清说的是什么，其他同学的说话声，桌椅的噪音，笑声 . . .））	1 JD: ((Laughter)) What dialect are you imitating? ((unintelligible dialect-like talk continues, noise, laughter . . .))
2 兵兵: 别地儿的话	2 Bingbing: Some dialect of other places {*biedier*}.
3 JD: 别地儿？哪儿呀？你老家话呀？	3 JD: Other place? Where? Your hometown?
4 兵兵: 不是。	4 Bingbing: No.
5 JD: 那是哪儿的呀？	5 JD: Then where?
6 兵兵: 就是别地儿的话，我也不知道哪儿的。	6 Bingbing: Just a place elsewhere, I don't know where.
7 JD: 别地儿的？你爸妈这么说话？（（噪音，不清楚的对话 . . .））	7 JD: Other places? Your parents' language? ((noise, unintelligible talk . . .))
8 JD: 你老家哪儿呀？	8 JD: Where do you come from?
9 兵兵: 我北京的。我北京的。我学的（方言）。	9 Bingbing: I am from Beijing. I am from Beijing. {*wo Beijing de. wo Beijing de*} I imitate (the dialect).
10 JD: 跟谁学的呀？	10 JD: Who were you imitating?
11 兵兵: 嗯，嗯，就是学的，跟别人学的	11 Bingbing: hmm, hmm, I mimicked, I mimicked another person . . .
12 JD: 你觉得（这方言）好玩儿吗？	12 JD: Do you find (the dialect) funny?
13 兵兵: 就是特好玩！	13 Bingbing: Yes very funny {*tehaowanr*}!

Transcription conventions:

_ (underline) stress;

= interruption or next utterance following immediately;

(( )) transcriber's comment;

( ) omitted part in the utterance.

Bingbing imitated a "dialect" when he was chatting and joking with a few classmates. It was apparent from his tone in the voice recording that he did not intend to ridicule a particular person but was playfully "performing" a dialect. He claimed that the mimicked dialect was his invention. It is unclear whether that was indeed the case or whether the researcher questioning him played a role in his answer. The utterance "a place elsewhere" *(biedier)* was, however, loaded with a Beijing accent, noticeably with an [r] attached to "places" (儿 *er* in the Chinese transcript), and this emblem of Beijing accent enacted a marked Beijing local identity. Note that the child put emphasis both on turn 2 and turn 6, signaling that he felt strongly that the dialect he produced was not the language "here"—standard Chinese in a Beijing school. This local identity performed in linguistic and communicative practice was echoed by his later metapragmatic remarks "I (am) from Beijing. I (am) from Beijing {*wo (shi) Beijing de. wo (shi) Beijing de*}," and he repeated the remarks with a shift in emphasis—in the first sentence he put stress on "Beijing," whereas in the second sentence the emphasis moved to "I." In addition, the transcript of Chinese characters and Pinyin revealed another lexical emblem of Beijing speech—the omission of copula "am"—and this again confirmed his identity claim. In contrast to the Sichuan child in Example 1, Bingbing was clearly proud of his accent, as well as the identity indexed by the accent. The linguistic cues—particularly the marked Beijing accent with an "r" and the omission of a link verb—indexed a local identity; and his metapragmatic remarks made the child's self-perceived identity explicit. Both the linguistic and the metapragmatic activities convey the meaning that the Beijing speech defines the institutional as well as the geographic space of the school, where people have to possess this dominant language in order to have their voice heard.

This was an utterance of a local Beijing child; in his voice we differentiated another voice—the voice of a dialect speaker. The "dialect" might be his total invention or a creative imitation of a familiar figure. One thing is clear: as soon as Bingbing performed, both he and his audience (JD and the other pupils who were present) immediately recognized that he was producing a "dialect"—a voice remarkably different from the rest of his utterance. This perceived differentiability led to the typifiability of this dialect voice, or voicing contrasts between the standard and the nonstandard, the local and the nonlocal. Whether it was an actual dialect or an imagined one was no longer an issue as it became an "enregistered voice," a social voice connected to a register of "nonstandard accents" and indexing a particular stereotypical social personae. Hence the switch between a dialect-like talk and an everyday speech pointed to a switch between an imagined identity and a real one. The role alignment that Bingbing displayed was similar to what Agha (2005) defined as "patterns of congruence/non-congruence across interactional turns among semiotic behaviors expressing voicing effects" (Agha 2005:53). Bingbing's alignment to the imagined stereotypical voice of dialect was not motivated by positive social personae related to dialect such as prestige or politeness but by an idea that the dialect was "very funny" (turn 13). Similar to what Example 1 shows, presenting an accent in an amusing way in fact disqualifies it; rarely anyone would suggest Putonghua "funny" or "terrible"—Putonghua is just "normal" (Dong 2010; cf. Silverstein 1996 for a discussion of a similar phenomenon in American English).

So far we have looked at the use of "nonstandard" varieties in contrast to Putonghua by local as well as migrant children in China. Both examples demonstrate a strong language ideology of speaking Putonghua that pretextually exists in the schools, and children with high Putonghua proficiency have a better chance of making their voice heard. A similar phenomenon is observed in the Chinese Diaspora, where Mandarin Chinese is gradually replacing Cantonese as a lingua franca among overseas Chinese communities. In the third example, we turn to our Dutch data and explore how language choice affects a Chinese immigrant family.

Example 3 "If he speaks the dialect, we ignore him . . ."

The ideological dominance of Putonghua inside China is felt in Europe. On the one hand, remarkably more Putonghua speakers emigrate from Mainland China to Europe than that of previous decades when a majority of Chinese immigrants were Cantonese or Hakka speakers from Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc. On the other hand, the increasing economic strength of Mainland China makes Putonghua a useful language, if not a global language yet. More and more language learners, both local Europeans and children of Chinese immigrants, tend to choose Putonghua rather than Cantonese because Putonghua appears to be a language of greater purchase in the international world. Example 3 shows us how a Chinese immigrant child would lose his voice if he spoke Fujian dialect—the language of their hometown—in the home.

Fujian (Min) dialect, as we have explained earlier in this article, is a variety of Chinese language (Zhongwen), and it is mutually unintelligible with other varieties such as Cantonese and Mandarin. Unlike Cantonese, which has been a lingua franca among Chinese Diaspora, Fujian dialects are the home language of immigrants who are originally from Min speaking areas. At school, immigrant children have to use the official language of the host society, in our case the Dutch language, to learn and to communicate with teachers as well as their peer students.

Mr. W, our interviewee, is a kitchen worker in his early forties. He immigrated to the Netherlands more than twenty years ago and quickly entered the Dutch Chinese catering business. In order to establish himself in the working place, he had to give priority to Cantonese over Dutch because then restaurant owners were early immigrants from Hong Kong and other southeast Asian regions who had Cantonese as their first language. His Dutch therefore remains minimal, and his wife has to function as a translator for him. His wife, who works as a waitress in the same restaurant, speaks Cantonese, Fujian dialects, Putonghua, and Dutch. They have two sons. The older one is nine years old and attends a local Dutch school during week days and goes to a nearby Chinese heritage school to learn Putonghua on Saturdays. The younger son is almost three years old. He has been brought up by their relatives in China until very recently and therefore has been exposed to Fujian dialects most of the time.

We have visited the restaurant where Mr. W works on a regular basis for half a year by the time of interview, observing the interactions between the restaurant workers and customers as well as among the restaurant workers. Mr. W and his wife had invited YD to help with their older son's Pinyin spelling. The interview took place in the home. It followed a chat between Mr. W and YD in which Mr. W said that their children were not allowed to speak languages other than Putonghua in the home. This was a "methodological rich point" (Agar 1994; Hornberger 2010), which made YD curious and she decided to learn more about the role of Putonghua in Mr. W's home. The interview was conducted in Putonghua and recorded in fieldwork diaries. In the excerpt below, YD stands for the interviewer and W stands for the kitchen worker.

Interview with Mr. W [Field notes 2010-03-20-16:00-17:00].

1 YD：你儿子是在哪里长大的?	1 YD: Where did your son grow up?
2 W：他在福建长大，我的家乡，他的姑姑照顾他。	2 W: He grew up in Fujian, my hometown, taken care of by his aunt.
3 YD：你为什么把他带回荷兰?	3 YD: Why did you bring him back to the Netherlands?
4 W：他快三岁了，很快要上学了。所以我们把他带回来。	4 W: He is almost three years old and should go to school soon. So we brought him back.
5 YD：你觉得他在这里上学比在中国好么?	5 YD: Do you think it is better that he goes to school here than in China?
6 W：是的。他现在应该开始学荷兰语了。他会在荷兰学校学习荷兰语	6 W: Yes, he should begin to learn Dutch now. He will learn Dutch in Dutch school.
7 YD：他现在会说荷兰语么?	7 YD: Can he speak any Dutch now?
8 W：不会，基本不会。	8 W: No, almost none.
9 YD：你在家教他荷兰语么?	9 YD: Do you teach him Dutch at home?
10 W：不。他去荷兰学校，很快就学会了。	10 W: No. when he goes to the Dutch school, he will pick it up soon.
11 YD：你们在家和他讲什么语言?	11 YD: What languages do you speak to him at home?
12 W：我们在家和他讲中文 。	12 W: We speak Zhongwen to him at home.
13 YD：你们不和他讲福建方言么?	13 YD: Don't you speak the Fujian dialect to him?
14 W：不。他在中国时，讲福建方言。我家里没人讲普通话。我妈妈只会讲方言。她不识字。我儿子在国内去过半年的幼儿园，学 了普通话。但是他只能听（普通话），他不会讲（普通话）。	14 W: No. When he was in China, he spoke Fujian dialect. Nobody in my home speaks Putonghua. My mom can speak the dialect only. She is illiterate. My son has been to the kindergarten in China for half a year where he learned Putonghua. But he can only listen (to Putonghua), he cannot speak (Putonghua).
15 YD：现在怎么样了?	15 YD: How about now?
16 W：现在他好多了。我们只和他讲普通话。	16 W: Now, he is better. We speak only Putonghua to him.
17 YD：他有什么进步么?	17 YD: Does he make any improvement now?
18 W：是的。他必须讲（普通话）。如果他讲方言，我们就不理他，装作没听见。所以他必须和我们讲普通话。	18 W: Yes. He has to speak (Putonghua). If he speaks the dialect, we ignore him, pretending not to hear him. So he has to speak Putonghua to us.
19 YD：你不教他讲粤语么?	19 YD: Don't you teach him Cantonese?
20 W：不。现在普通话最重要。连香港人也开始学（普通话）。粤语已经不重要了，这几年在荷兰也是这样。 你看，这两个孩子 （（老板的儿子））。他们的普通话非常好。	20 W: No. Putonghua is most important now. Even Hong Kong people have begun to learn (Putonghua). Cantonese is no longer that important, even in the Netherlands, in recent years. Look at the two boys ((referring to the sons of the restaurant owner)), they can speak very good Putonghua. They learn it from their parents.

This example is a metapragmatic talk—talks about talk—of an immigrant father about his children's language education. In the father's utterance we distinguish interesting voice-making moments of the child in negotiation of the "legitimate" language in the home. From turn 1 to 10, Mr. W indicated that going to school was a main reason for bringing the child to the Netherlands, and learning Dutch within formal education was an important factor in this decision. The father himself, however, did not speak much Dutch. This was typical among first-generation immigrants who entered the Netherlands (as observed elsewhere, cf. Blommaert and Huang 2010; Li and Juffermans 2011), joined the catering industry straightaway, and managed to make a living without much direct exposure to the Dutch society. This linguistic incapability, however, limited their geographical as well as social mobility. They were more or less confined within the catering business and the Dutch Chinese communities. Instead of focusing on their own development, they put hope in their children, who acquired Dutch from formal education, in order to become a more "proper" Dutch Chinese and to have better opportunities in life. For the immigrant family, Dutch was a language for public life, and with this language at their disposal, they could start making their voice heard in the host society.

Mr. W believed that Dutch was important for his children; however, he did not attempt to help them by speaking Dutch at home (of course Mr. W himself spoke minimal Dutch). He had another priority in the home: everyone had to speak Putonghua (turn 11–18). Both Mr. W and his wife came from the Fujian province and were native speakers of the Fujian dialects. In Fujian, the home language of local people usually was their specific variety of the Fujian dialects, and Putonghua was learned at school and was related to literacy (turn

14). The family immigrated to the Netherlands where Putonghua was no longer a dominant public language, and the father could have continued to use the Fujian dialect as their home language, or he could have opted to use Dutch in the home. However Mr. W chose Putonghua as the family language; note that he equaled Putonghua to Zhongwen (turn 12), the umbrella term for all varieties of Chinese language. This very act pointed to the pretextual ideology that Putonghua was another name for Zhongwen whereas in actual fact it merely was another variety of Zhongwen (cf. Bokhorst-Heng 2002 for her discussion of the imagination of the nation).

The parents were so determined to speak Putonghua at home that they would "ignore him, pretending not to hear him" if their child used the Fujian dialect, so that "he has to speak Putonghua" (turn 18). The child would become voiceless if he insisted on speaking the Fujian dialect. In order for his voice to be heard, he had to learn Putonghua, and Putonghua turned out to be the only valid language in the home. Only Putonghua gives voice to the child. The immigrant parents' decision was rather dramatic but not unreasonable. It points to a strong language ideology held also in China: that Putonghua is a better, more useful language, the "real" Zhongwen. When people emigrated from China to the Netherlands, they emigrated with their linguistic resources as well as linguistic ideologies.

Moreover, the parents' decision on family language indexed the reshuffling of linguistic orders on a global level. In the final part (turn 19 and 20), Putonghua no longer competed with the Min dialect as a family speech but with Cantonese as a community language in public and semi-public spheres. Earlier the father pointed out that Putonghua was more important than the Fujian dialects, and he further claimed that Cantonese had lost its dominance and Putonghua was replacing Cantonese as the main communicative tool among Dutch Chinese. He gave an example that the restaurant owner, who was a Hong Kong immigrant, required his children to learn Putonghua. The restaurant owner belonged to an earlier generation of immigrants who had been established in the host society and who were able to offer jobs to new immigrants. He was an example of success in the host society and was therefore to be followed and imitated by new immigrants.

One reason for the changing relationship between Cantonese and Mandarin was the changes in the demographic composition of new immigrants—increasingly more Chinese immigrants came from Mainland China instead of Hong Kong, and they spoke Putonghua rather than Cantonese. A deeper reason, however, was that the new generation of Chinese immigrants were no longer labor migrants. Increasingly, Chinese migrants moved to the Netherlands as students or highly skilled professionals who were more affluent and who functioned within better socioeconomic situations than their earlier counterparts. In addition, the increasing use of new communication technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet enabled immigrants to remain in close contact with relatives and friends back home. This new current of migration was part of globalization, in which changes in power relations at a macro level collapsed into microscopic language use. The child, if he wanted his voice to be heard by his parents in the home, had to speak Putonghua. We see that the Chinese Diaspora no longer orient toward Hong Kong as the only center but also toward Beijing (and Shanghai, Guangdong, Shenzhen, etc.) for social, cultural, and linguistic authenticity and authority.

Conclusions

We have argued that voice is an essential problem of inequality in communication. People enter a communicative activity with pretextual resources and capacities, with value attributes that are pre-inscribed into the language instance, or within politico-economic

contexts that influence the speech event long before it is produced. Voice therefore is a single word definition of an essential problem of communication—the problem of how one makes oneself understood.

We demonstrate our theoretical point through presentation and analysis of three examples. In Example 1 the migrant child was silenced because of her regional accent, and the communicative problem was not specific to this moment but was determined in the bigger social and institutional contexts. The second example showed us how an invented dialect was performed by a local Beijing boy in order to entertain his peers. Again the laughableness of a regional dialect lies not in the dialect itself but in the pretextual language ideologies. Example 3 demonstrated that a Dutch Chinese immigrant child would lose his voice if he did not speak Putonghua in the home. The communicative problem he faced was not preconditioned by the language ideology of the host society, but by that of China and China's increasing global influence. In all three examples we see that the children have to have Putonghua at their disposal in order to make their voice heard both in the Chinese context and in the Dutch Chinese Diaspora.

The examples reflect a range of data types: a letter to the editor published in a Chinese newspaper, an audiotaped interview with a school child in Beijing, and an interview with a Chinese immigrant living and working in the Netherlands. The analysis brings together the macro language ideologies with the microscopic language use in everyday life, in two different modalities of migration—rural–urban migration within a modern state and transnational migration—and both of which are characteristic of contemporary globalization. The combination of data from China and Europe gives us a broader perspective to understand the voicing processes of labor migrants and their children in the host societies.

We conclude this article with three points seen from this broader and combined perspective. First, voice is continuously made and remade in the communicative process, and question of voice is always question of power and inequality. Second, the linguistic reality of globalized Chinese migration moves away from Cantonese or other varieties toward Putonghua in China as well as globally. And third, the dialogical relationship between language and education grows increasingly important as student (and teacher) populations become more linguistically and culturally diverse in globalized migration.

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Note

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