The sociolinguistics of rhotacization in the Beijing speech community

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Chapter 2 General background

This chapter introduces the linguistic and social background for the present study. Section 2.1 offers a general description of rhotacization in Mandarin, including the two types of rhotacization, its position in a syllable, its phonetic and grammatical function, and previous studies about it. Section 2.2 introduces Beijing Mandarin and Standard Chinese, namely their relation, the promotion of Standard Chinese, and its impact on other varieties of Chinese and on rhotacization. Section 2.3 presents the social context of this study, including the Beijing speech community and urbanization, migration, and social and language contact in Beijing.

2.1 Rhotacization in general

The term "rhotacized vowel" can refer to the rhotacized vowel *er* in the vowel system of Standard Chinese and some other varieties of Mandarin or to the rhotacized rimes in rhotacized syllables. In the Pinyin romanization convention, the former is represented as *er*, while rhotacized syllables are generally marked by simply adding an *r* to the end of the syllable (e.g., *wánr* 'play') (Duanmu, 2007; Y.-H. Lin, 2007a). Though both instantiations are called rhotacized vowels, it should be noted that they are very different phonetically and grammatically. Below, the two different rhotacized vowels are introduced in detail.

Rhotacized vowel er[1]

Phonetically, the rhotacized vowel *er* is described as an unrounded rhotacized mid-central vowel, or it is said to be a central vowel [ə] carrying an *r*-coloring (Y. Hu, 2011; B. Huang & Liao, 2017; W.-S. Lee & Zee, 2003). In IPA, it can be transcribed in several different ways, such as [ɚ], [əɹ], [ər], [əˠ], [ɻ̩], [ɻ̍], [ɚɹ], [aɚ], and [əˠɹ]] (Duanmu, 2007; Y.-H. Lin, 2007a), depending on how broad or narrow the phonetic transcription is, as well as on the personal preference of the individual linguist. For simplicity and ease of presentation, we shall use [ɚ] as the phonetic transcription of the vowel *er*. In the Pinyin conventions, as mentioned above, it is written as *er*, while the letter *r* is not a consonant phoneme but is just a symbol used to indicate the retroflex motion of the tongue.

[1] Linguists have different opinions on the category of the rhotacized vowel *er* in the Mandarin vowel system. Lee & Zee (2003) think that when the plain mid-central schwa [ə] occurs in an open syllable, it is rhotacized, namely the rhotacized vowel *er*. Duanmu (2007) calls it a 'retroflex vowel' and believes that it only occurs in the syllable [ɚ]. Lin (2007) suggests that it occurs in the rime [ɚ]. B. Huang & Liao (2017) believe that it is one of the seven Mandarin monophthongs [a, o, e, ê, i, u, ü, er]. However, as this rhotacized vowel *er* is not our research object, we will not talk about it further.

The vowel *er* can by itself form monosyllabic word, but the number of such monosyllabic *er* words in Mandarin is limited. In spoken Mandarin, there is just one, *èr* 二 'two', while in formal written Mandarin or classical (or classically colored) texts, we may encounter a few more, such as *ér* 儿 'son' *ér* 而 'and, but', *ěr* 尔 'you', and ěr 耳 'ear'.

Table 2.1 Examples of er as monosyllabic words and their lexical meanings.

Word	Pinyin	IPA	Meaning
儿	*ér*	[ɚ^{35}]	son
耳	*ěr*	[ɚ^{214}]	ear
二	*èr*	[ɚ^{51}]	two

Rhotacization

The process of rhotacization of the rime in a syllable is the result of "suffixation of a sound *er* to a rime" (W.-S. Lee & Zee, 2003). Rhotacization is not a purely phonetic phenomenon; it also has morphological and lexical functions (M. Li, 1980).

Phonetically, rhotacization can be applied to all rimes in Standard Chinese. Articulatorily, rhotacization is realized by raising the tongue tip towards the post-alveolar region or by retracting the tongue body backwards when the rhotacized rime is pronounced (Y.-H. Lin, 2007a). We will go into this in more detail in Section 2.3.

From the perspective of suffixation, rhotacization has four different main functions. First, in some words suffixed with *r*, the suffix is a diminutive suffix (sometimes with the usual connotations of endearment or contempt). Second, it can function as a nominative suffix that can convert verbs or adjectives, for example, into a noun. Third, it can be lexically distinctive. Finally, rhotacized rimes can produce certain stylistic effects (B. Huang & Liao, 2017; C. T. J. Huang et al., 2014; Y.-H. Lin, 2007a). Consider the following examples.

Table 2.2 Examples of *r*-suffixed words.

	Unsuffixed			*Suffixed*		
a	*chē*	[tʂʻə^{55}]	'car'	*chēr*	[tʂʻəɹ^{55}]	'car' (dim.)
	lán	[lan^{35}]	'basket'	*lánr*	[laɹ^{35}]	'basket' (dim.)
b	gài	[kai^{51}]	'to cover' (verb)	gàir	[kaɹ^{51}]	'lid,cover' (noun)
	jiān	[tɕjan^{55}]	'sharp' (adjective)	jiānr	[tɕjaɹ^{55}]	'tip' (noun)
c	yǎn	[jan^{214}]	'eye'	yǎnr	[jaɹ ^{214}]	'small hole'
	tóu	[tʻou^{35}]	'head'	tóur	[tʻouɹ^{35}]	'leader'
d				shàngbānr	[ʂɑŋ^{51} pɑɹ^{55}]	'go to work'
				dàyuànr	[tɑ^{51} yɑɹ^{51}]	'courtyard'
e	hutong	[xu^{35} tʻuŋ^{0}]		hútongr	[xu^{35} tʻũɹ^{0}]	'narrow alleys in Beijing[2]'

In Table 2.2, (a) illustrates the fact that the *r*-suffix sometimes functions as a diminutive. The examples in (b) illustrate the working of *r*-suffixation as nominalization: *kài* [kai^{51}] is a verb and *qiān* [tɕjan^{55}] is an adjective, while their *r*-suffixed counterparts are nouns. The examples in (c) show that the *r*-suffixation can change the lexical meaning of a word, as in *tóu* [tʻou^{35}], which means 'head (body part)', while its *r*-suffixed form means 'leader'.

However, it must be noted that not all *r*-suffixed words fall into one of the categories above. As illustrated in (d), some words are usually used in their rhotacized form, without any special function or meaning (B. Huang & Liao, 2017; M. Li, 1980; Y.-H. Lin, 2007a). Furthermore, some words in Mandarin and in Beijing Mandarin can be used in both *r*-suffixed form and unsuffixed form with virtually no difference between the two forms. The forms hútong [xu^{35} tʻuŋ^{0}] and hútongr [xu^{35} tʻũɹ^{0}] in (e) illustrate this. However, this does not mean that these forms are in free variation. Which form is used is determined by sociolinguistic factors, and this is the topic of the current study.

2.2 Rhotacization in a syllable

As introduced above, rhotacization occurs on the syllable coda; the *r*-suffix merges with the syllable rime and becomes part of it. Thus, rhotacization leads to a series of segmental and suprasegmental changes on the syllable rime. In this section, the phonetics and phonology of rhotacization in a syllable will be briefly

[2] Same meaning unsuffixed and suffixed.

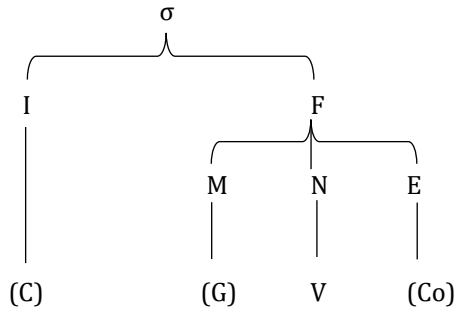
introduced, but before that, we will first introduce the Mandarin syllable structure and the glide affiliation and clarify different views towards them.

2.2.1 Syllable structure

In Chinese linguistics, it is generally agreed that the Chinese syllable consists of (C)(G)V(X). The maximal size of a Standard Chinese syllable is either four segments CGVV or CGVC and the minimal size is one segment V or C, where C refers to a consonant, G to a glide, single V to a vowel, and VV to either a long vowel or a diphthong (Duanmu, 2007; B. Huang & Liao, 2017; Y.-H. Lin, 2007a).

However, Chinese linguists hold different opinions towards how to structure those components within a syllable. In general, there are mainly two main different approaches, namely the traditional Chinese linguistic approach and the Western linguistic approach. According to the traditional Chinese view, a syllable consists of two main parts: the INITIAL and the FINAL. The syllable INITIAL is an initial non-glide consonant. The FINAL is the remaining portion of the syllable, which can in turn, in the relevant cases, be further divided into the medial and the rime. The medial is a glide before the main nuclear vowel, while the rime contains the nucleus and the ending. The syllable nucleus is the nuclear vowel, and the ending can be either a post-nuclear vowel or a consonant. This syllable structure is shown in (1).

(1) Standard Chinese syllable structure: traditional Chinese linguistic analysis

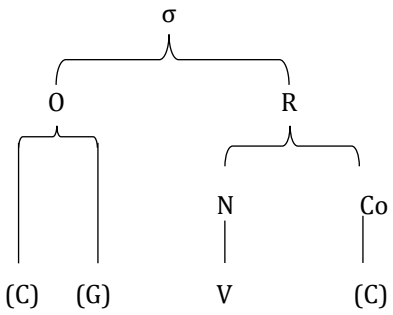


σ=syllable	I=initial	F=final
M=medial	N=nucleus	E=ending
C = onset consonant		G = glide
V =nuclear vowel		Co =coda

This traditional analysis of the Chinese syllabic structure has been adopted by linguists in Chinese phonetics and phonology for a long time (e.g., Hu 2011; Huang and Liao 2017), but in many recent studies, the Standard Chinese syllable structure is reanalyzed from a more contemporary perspective following the

Western linguistic tradition (e.g., Bao 1990, 1996; Duanmu 1990, 2007; Lin 2007). In this analysis, the Standard Chinese syllable contains an ONSET and a RIME. The onset consists of the onset consonant and the prenuclear glide. A rime can be further divided into the NUCLEUS and the CODA. The Western analysis of the syllabic structure is illustrated in (2).[3]

(2) Standard Chinese syllable structure: a common Western linguistic analysis



σ=syllable	O=onset	R=rime	N=nucleus
C = onset consonant	G = glide	V =nuclear vowel	Co =coda

It can be seen that regardless of the difference in component names, one of the biggest differences between the two analyses is the affiliation of prenuclear glide (PG) in the syllable, which is still under debate. According to Yang (2006), in the domain of Chinese phonology, there are about five different claims about the affiliation of prenuclear glides, which are: 1) PG belongs to the onset, 2) PG belongs to the rime, 3) the status of PG in a syllable is not clear, 4) its status is unknown and constitutes 'dissymmetry', and 5) PG is an independent segment. Each claim can presumably be supported with evidence. Since the status of the prenuclear glide is irrelevant to the current study, we will leave this controversial issue undecided. For convenience and simplicity, we will use the terms 'onset' and 'rime' in this study to address the onset consonant and the rest of a Standard Chinese syllable, respectively.

2.2.2 Rhotacization and segmental changes

The rhotic *r* is a suffix. It is appended to the syllable coda:

(3) (C)(G)V(Co) *r*

[3] But some linguists argue that the second vowel component of the diphthong is not part of the coda or the ending; rather the whole diphthong is the nucleus.

In articulation, when the *r* sound is merged with the syllable rime, the retroflex feature of the sound *r* must be realized, and thus the incompatible features of the original syllable rime have to be eliminated, while the quality of the onset consonant and that of prenuclear glide are usually not affected. In this process, segmental processes, such as segment deletion, schwa insertion, and/or nasalization of the syllable rime may occur, depending on the height, frontness, roundness, and nasality of the syllable rime/coda. Such segmental changes occurring in the rhotacization process can be summarized using the following categories. A complete list of the Standard Chinese rimes and their rhotacized form in IPA is provided in Appendix A.

(1) Adding [ɻ] to the vowel
(2) Adding [əɻ] to the vowel
(3) Changing the rime [-ɻ] and [ɨ] into [əɻ]
(4) Dropping the coda [-i] or [-n] and adding [ɻ] or [əɻ]
(5) Nasalizing the vowel and adding [ɻ] or [əɻ]

2.3 Beijing Mandarin, Standard Chinese, and rhotacization

2.3.1 Chinese languages in general

Officially, there are in total 56 ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China, and it is said that more than a hundred languages are being used in the country. The largest languages in terms of number of speakers are the Sinitic languages, a branch of the Sino-Tibetan super family. The Sinitic language family is commonly categorized into seven main groups, each with its own dialects and subdialects (P. Chen, 1999; Duanmu, 2007; B. Huang & Liao, 2017; Ramsey, 1987). These groups are the following: Mandarin (北方方言, Běifāng fāngyán , also known as Guānhuà; spoken in northern and western parts of China), Wu (吴语, Wúyǔ, spoken mainly in the city of Shanghai, Jiangsu province and Zhejiang province), Xiang (湘语, Xiāngyǔ, spoken in Hunan province), Min (闽语, Mǐnyǔ, also known as Hokkien, spoken mainly in Fujian province), Gan (赣语, Gànyǔ, spoken in Jiangxi province), Kejia (客家话, Kèjiāhuà, also known as Hakka, spoken mainly in Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, and Sichuan province) and Cantonese (粤语, Yuèyǔ, spoken mainly in the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi). In terms of geographical area and number of speakers, the Mandarin group is by far the largest of the seven dialect groups. It is estimated that over 70% of Chinese citizen speak (a variety of) Mandarin as their first language. As the varieties belonging to the other six groups are spoken in southern China (areas south of the Yangtze River), they are also called "southern dialects/languages."

In practice, the varieties belonging to the seven branches of the Sinitic language family introduced above are like different languages from the

perspective of mutual intelligibility (Norman, 2003). The varieties of the different branches are not mutually intelligible, and even speakers of different regional dialects from the same dialect groups can have great difficulties communicating with each other.

2.3.2 Standard Chinese and language standardization in China

Standard Chinese, also known as *Pǔtōnghuà* (普通话 'common language'), is the national lingua franca of mainland China. In the 1955 National Language Reform Conference and Symposium on the Standardization of Modern Chinese, the national spoken standard, *Putonghua*, was officially defined as follows (W. Chen, 1955; X. Zhang, 1955): "[It] is the common language of China, being based on the Northern (Mandarin) dialects, with the phonological system of Beijing Mandarin as its norm of pronunciation. Its written grammar is derived from works written in the contemporary vernacular literary language (Baihuawen) but exclude specific local expressions including those used in Beijing Mandarin." In this study, I use the term "Standard Chinese" to refer to *Putonghua*.

Legal basis for promoting Standard Chinese

The promotion of the standard language is determined to be the primary task in the language management on language and script in the 21st century. In 2000, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* was enacted by the State Council. This is the first national law on language use in China, which is "enacted in accordance with the Constitution for the purpose of promoting the normalization and standardization of the spoken and written Chinese language." It establishes the prominent status of Standard Chinese and standardized Chinese characters. According to this law, Standard Chinese must be used as the language in schools and other educational institutes, in broadcasting on radio and TV, in publications and in public places, except where otherwise specified by law. Local dialects as well as the original complex and other variant forms of Chinese characters can only be used under limited circumstances or if it is "approved by the relevant departments under the State Council."

Measures taken in Standard Chinese promotion campaign

Several measures were taken for the promotion of Standard Chinese nationwide. One key measure is the annual National Putonghua Promotion Publicity Week, which has been organized by the Ministry of Education of the PRC since 1998 and implemented by governments of various levels, including administrative, educational, and even military organizations. It usually takes place in the third

week in September, and each year there is a particular theme and slogan about the significance and advantages of speaking Standard Chinese. The publicity week is aimed at the masses, aiming to propagate the significance of Standard Chinese in social development and national unity and cohesion, raising the general awareness of standardized language and its use and to advocate the active participation by everyone in the promotion of Standard Chinese. There are many activities during the promotion week, such as making exhibition stands and hanging banners in public places, organizing Standard Chinese speech contests in schools and universities, and establishing more Standard Chinese proficiency test centers.

The Putonghua Proficiency Test (Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi) is believed to be another crucial measure to implement the national Standard Chinese promotion in the domains of government, education, and the mass media. It was proposed in 1994 by the State Language Council. In 2000, this test was included in the National Law of Standard Spoken and Written Language, which provided the legal force for its implementation. The law requires that all government departments, public institutions, schools, including individuals, primarily use Standard Chinese when engaging in public affairs. People in the mentioned domains must take the test to evaluate their level in Standard Chinese, and only with a proper level can they be admitted to a job. For example, college students are obliged to take the Putonghua Proficiency Test, and achieving a specific level is one of the graduation requirements. Those who study in a teachers college and intend to work as a teacher have to reach a higher level of Standard Chinese proficiency.

Disappearance and maintenance of dialects and minor languages

Significant progress on promoting Standard Chinese across the country has been made. According to the Survey of China's Language Use issued in 2015, 73% of the total population can communicate in (accented) Standard Chinese, and 95% of the literate population can use standardized characters. The promotion is believed to contribute to "promoting economic and cultural exchange among all the Chinese nationalities and regions."

However, the promotion of Standard Chinese leads to the marginalization and extinction of the non-standard Sinitic varieties and the minority languages. Since everyone is supposed to use Standard Chinese in public places and school, local varieties and minority languages have been restricted to use among family members and within local communities. As a result, local dialects and minority languages have lost their vitality among the young generation (H. Wang & Yuan, 2013).

The drive towards standardization also affects rhotacization. As we have seen, rhotics and rhotacization are not unique to Beijing Mandarin; they occur in other varieties of Mandarin as well (X. Sun, 1992; L. Wang, 2005). At the 1955 Symposium on the Standardization of Modern Chinese, it was proposed that a number of rhotacized words be adopted in the lexicon of Standard Chinese. In

1988, guidelines were drafted to limit the number of rhotacized words in Standard Chinese. In 2011, *The vocabulary of common rhotacized words in Standard Chinese* was approved by Ministry of Education of China (Department of Language Application and Administration of MOE, 2011). Only a small number of rhotacized words were incorporated into Standard Chinese.

2.3.3 Beijing Mandarin and rhotacization

Beijing Mandarin, the regional dialect spoken in the urban area of Beijing, is a subdialect of Mandarin. Since the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368 CE), Beijing, which is situated in the north, close to areas inhabited by non-Chinese peoples, gradually became the political, economic, and cultural center of the Middle Kingdom. By the time the Manchu-speaking Qing Dynasty took over Beijing as its capital city in the 1640s, the language spoken in Beijing had been influenced for many centuries by both non-Chinese languages and other Mandarin and non-Mandarin Sinitic dialects. Since that time, the Beijing dialect gradually developed into what is now called Modern Beijing Mandarin, and this is this dialect that is the focus of the current study.

Although Beijing Mandarin is the phonological and phonetic basis of Standard Chinese, there are two main differences between the two varieties. The first primary difference is that Standard Chinese, unlike Beijing Mandarin, is not a natural regional dialect: it is the product of language planning. The second is that Standard Chinese has integrated into its lexicon vocabulary from other northern and southern Sinitic varieties, while some local expressions from Beijing Mandarin were excluded. The words adopted are usually adapted to the Beijing pronunciation; thus, the adoption does not affect the pronunciation system of Standard Chinese. However, due to the exclusion of some words, Standard Chinese has a slightly smaller syllable inventory than Beijing Mandarin. Therefore, although the pronunciation of Standard Chinese is based on that of Beijing Mandarin, as mentioned, the two varieties do not have identical phonetic and phonological systems. Also, as we have seen, rhotacization, the *r*-suffix, is a typical feature of Beijing Mandarin. Local Beijingers use rhotacized words extensively in their speech. As just mentioned, in Standard Chinese, there are only limited number of rhotacized words. As we have already seen, other Mandarin dialects do not use rhotacization as much as Beijing Mandarin, and the southern dialects (such as Wu and Yue) do not use it at all.

2.4 Speech communities of Beijing

2.4.1 General introduction

Beijing is located in the north of China. Its area is about 16,410 km^2 and, as mentioned earlier on, government statistics shows that at the end of 2020, the

city's population amounted to 21.9 million people. Beijing is the center of politics, economy, culture, education, and technology in China. With only a few interruptions, it has had the status of capital city since at least the 10th century.

According to the latest administrative divisions, there are 16 county level districts, namely Dongcheng (东城区), Xicheng (西城区), Haidian (海淀区), Chaoyang (朝阳区), Fengtai (丰台区), Shijingshan (石景山区), Mentougou (门头沟区), Fangshan (房山区), Tongzhou (通州区), Shunyi (顺义区), Changping (昌平区), Daxing (大兴区), Huairou (怀柔区), Pinggu (平谷区), Yanqing (延庆区), and Miyun (密云区). Figure 2.1 shows a map of Beijing with these administrative districts. On the basis of urban and rural properties and topographical features, these districts are classified into four parts: (1) the core functional zone, that is, the downtown area of the city, comprising the Dongcheng and Xicheng Districts; (2) the extended urban function zone, consisting of the Haidian, Chaoyang, Fengtai, and Shijingshan Districts; (3) the new urban development zone, with the Changping, Shunyi, Fangshan, Tongzhou, and Daxing Districts; and (4) the ecological conservation zone, consisting of the Miyun, Yanqing, Huairou, Pinggu, and Mentougou Districts. The core functional zone is the traditional inner city, featuring the political and cultural functions of Beijing. The urban function zone, which is often identified as part of the city center, is home to high technology industries, universities, and other educational institutions. The new urban development zones are characterized by the modern manufacturing and agricultural industries, while the ecological conservation zone is Beijing's ecological barrier and water source, which plays a significant role in sustainable development.

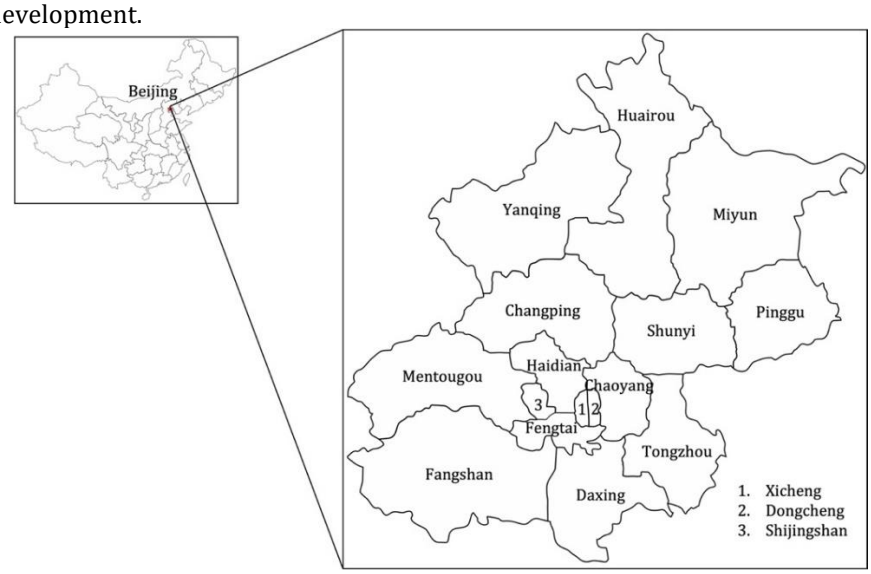


Figure 2.1 Administrative districts of Beijing city.[4]

[4] This map is modified based on the maps on https://d-maps.com/

As of 2019, the permanent population[5] living in the capital core functional area, the extended urban function zone, and the new area of urban development amounted to about 19.8 million people, accounting for 91.2% of the total population in Beijing. Among them, the permanent migrant population[6] in these three areas is about 7.9 million, comprising 96.2% of the total permanent migrant population in Beijing. Thus, the three areas are the place where intensive social and linguistic contacts occur among Beijing natives and non-natives/migrants. In this dissertation, we will focus on language use and language contact, focusing on rhotacization and how it changes in these three areas.

2.4.2 Urbanization and migration

Urbanization, rural–urban migration, and the hukou system

Urbanization is a pervasive and rapidly growing process in which population massively shifts to urban areas. It is a common phenomenon, particularly in many developing countries. China, one of the biggest developing countries in the world and a country in transmission, is undergoing significant economic and urban growth and massive migration. Rural–urban migration, or internal migration, in China has been going on since the reform and Open Door policies launched by the central government in 1978. The reform caused millions of people to migrate from rural to urban areas, transforming the Chinese urban manufacturing and services industries.

When it comes to migration and population mobility in China, as well as their effects on people's identity and language use, it is important to mention the household registration system (*hukou*). This system is believed to have a huge impact on the population mobility, social equality, and integration since it was implemented (Feng et al., 2002; Z. Liang, 2001; Shen, 2013). The *hukou* policy was formally introduced in 1958 and was used for the purposes of registering the population and restraining its movement. People are grouped by their household into one of the two *hukou* statuses—*rural* or *urban*[7]—and the *hukou* is tied to a specific location; one's *houku* designation takes place at birth and is trans-generational, as the children's *hukou* status always follows that of their parents (Dong & Blommaert, 2009). Thus, a person having a *hukou* at a certain

[5] Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics (2020) defines permanent population as "persons actually living at a place for more than half a year."

[6] Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics (2020) defines permanent migrant population as "persons who have no permanent residence registration in Beijing, come from other provinces, autonomous regions and direct-administered municipalities, and have stayed in Beijing for more than half a year."

[7] The official terms are *agricultural* and *non-agricultural houku*, respectively.

place can only access the local social services—such as health care, education, and subsidized housing—in the location specified in their *hukou*. Furthermore, changing the location of one's *hukou* or the status from *rural* to *urban* is strictly controlled by the state and is very difficult (W. Li, 2013; Shen, 2013). Before the reforms of the 1980s, population movement and registration in China was tightly controlled by the *hukou* policy. Since the early 1980s, following the thriving manufacturing industries and the increasing demand for laborers in cities, the enforcement of migration restrictions was gradually relaxed, which is believed to be a main driving factor behind urbanization (P. Zhao & Howden-Chapman, 2010). Migrants were enabled to "temporarily" seek jobs and be employed in a place other than their *hukou*-registered residence. Since the 1990s onwards, more *hukou* reforms were implemented, leading to further relaxation of the institutional control of the *hukou* system on population movement (Zhu, 2007; Zhu & Chen, 2010). However, those reforms did not change the *hukou*-related uneven distribution of social welfare and resources in cities. Migrants and their accompanying family members without a local urban *hukou* are still barred from equal access to essential local urban services, such as housing subsidized by local governments, health care services, and schools (Chan 1994, 1996; Fang 2018; Zhao & Howden-Chapman 2010).

It is believed that in the process of urbanization, many reasons, such as radical social changes, social inequality, and institutional constraints, can cause social unrest and conflicts among people. In the case of China, the *hukou* system is believed to be one of the most critical causes of these problems, as it further widens the urban–rural gap in China (W. Li, 2013; Shen, 2013; P. Zhao & Howden-Chapman, 2010), creates institutional barriers to migrants, results in unequal distribution of social resources between urban local residents (local *hukou* holders) and rural migrants (B. Hu & Zhang, 2018), and causes social conflicts between them (B. Hu & Zhang, 2018; W. Li, 2013; Shen, 2013; P. Zhao & Howden-Chapman, 2010).

Beijing and social and language contact

Beijing has experienced rapid urban growth and an increased flow of internal migrants since the reform and Open Door Policy of the 1980s. Like in other cities in China and in many other countries, urbanization has created numerous job opportunities in urban areas, where migrants seek better employment opportunities and higher income. Over the past three decades, Beijing has witnessed an increase of its permanent population of 10.86 million in 1990 to 21.9 million in 2020. In particular, the permanent migrant population increased dramatically from 0.54 million in 1990 to 8.42 million in 2020. Furthermore, over the same period, the proportion of the urbanized population in Beijing, increased from 55% to 87.5% (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2021). It should be noted that in 2020 the permanent migrant population accounted for 40% of the city's total population. The permanent migrant population in Beijing originally comes from all over China, but more than half of them come from five

provinces, namely, Hebei (24.6%), Henan (12.3%), Shandong (8.8%), Heilongjiang (6.3%), and Anhui (5.6%), as shown in a census study in 2015 (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Except for Anhui, all of these provinces are in northern China.

Massive migration usually leads to massive social and language contact between the locals and the migrants, as well as among the migrants themselves. It is widely believed that social changes and social contact lead to language contact and can also influence people's (language) identity, factors that have an impact on the language choices and change (Ball, 2010; Bayley, 2013; Meyerhoff, 2011). Migrants enter the city and come into daily contact with the locals and other migrants having different behavioral norms, sociocultural knowledge, and language practices, and they must somehow learn to accommodate themselves or to adhere to certain practices to adapt to the city. Moreover, social conflicts and social unrest also emerge, including income disparity, high prices for housing, educational inequality, and migrants' feeling of relative deprivation[8] (National Bureau of Statistics, 2004). These issues have attracted much attention from various fields of research. For example, there are studies in sociology, sociolinguistics, and sociopsychology devoting attention to issues such as the floating population's place affiliation and their identity formation and re-formation, as well as the second generation migrants' education and identity construction and social stratification in Beijing (Dong & Blommaert, 2009; Kwong, 2011; W. O. Lee & Qi, 2021; Y. Wang et al., 2019; M. Zhang, 2016), as well as the impact of institutional *hukou* restrictions and other factors on their identity and integration (Li W., 2013; W. Li, 2013).

This concludes this chapter, which has introduced the linguistic phenomenon we will investigate (rhotacization) as well as the environment in which we will study it, the lively capital city of Beijing , with its mix of people who have lived in the city for generations and others who have newly arrived from all over the country. How does this situation affect the phenomenon of rhotacization? Will new migrants use it in an effort to blend in? Will Beijingers use it more to emphasize their naiveness or will their speech be affected by the migrants and the government policies aiming to stimulate the use of Standard Chinese.

[8] According to Schulze & Krätschmer-Hahn (2014), "Someone is labeled as deprived if he/she is underprivileged in a material or immaterial way. A person will be relatively deprived if he/she feels anger or dissatisfaction because of his/her discrimination in relation to the better situated others. Relative deprivation is, in short, the perceived discrepancy between personal status and the status of some relevant other(s). Without using the concept of quality of life explicitly, the concept of relative deprivation is described from the beginning in terms of quality of life substantially."