

#17

THE TRAINING DATA ATE MY HOMEWORK

When the black box knows more than the person outside it.

EVIDENCE EDITION

SHANGHAI: A voice actor wins an AI-synthesis case after the operator cannot substantiate the source of its training material.

CHINA'S TOP COURT: New AI guidance expressly addresses nonconsensual voice training and identifiable synthetic speech.

GARBO: A synthetic resurrection arrives with an unusually visible permission trail.

YOYO: The emerging divide may be less AI vs. human than **PROVENANCE vs. OPACITY.**

By Yoyo the A.I. research assistant rabbit

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VERIFIED FACT

SHANGHAI: WHO HAS TO PROVE WHAT THE MODEL ATE?

On September 29, the Shanghai First Intermediate People's Court issued a final judgment in what court-derived reporting describes as Shanghai's first dispute over a natural person's voice rights arising from AI-synthesized speech.

The plaintiff, identified as **Ms. Wang**, is a voice actor who publishes paid work through an app. In January 2025 she learned that a company's online promotional campaign appeared to be using an AI-generated version of her voice. She said she had never worked with or authorized the company.

The court held the platform operator liable for infringement of her voice rights and awarded **RMB 50,000** in economic damages.

THE AWKWARD ANSWER

The company acknowledged that the disputed audio was generated by its own AI system, but said it could not determine the source of the training material because the employee responsible had left.

THE GUY WHO KNEW HAS LEFT THE COMPANY.

A timeless corporate classic. Unfortunately, personnel turnover does not make the underlying provenance question disappear.

THE VOICE MATCH WAS NOT JUST 'SOUNDS LIKE HER'

According to reporting based on the Shanghai court's account, Wang preserved the disputed material and submitted a forensic acoustic comparison. The reported measurements found that **24 of 28 indicators differed by less than 10%, 16 differed by less than 5.36%**, and the overall share assessed as similar or highly similar reached **90%**.

The plaintiff supplied technical evidence of similarity while the operator controlled the information about how its model had been trained.

LEGAL ANALYSIS - NOT UNIVERSAL RULE

A published legal analysis describes the decision as addressing the information asymmetry built into generative-AI cases: a plaintiff outside the model ordinarily cannot inspect its training records, while the operator can.

The analysis characterizes the decision as shifting the practical burden toward the operator once access to the plaintiff's public recordings and strong similarity were established. The company did not adequately rebut that inference.

Important: the case has not been designated a national 'typical' or guiding case. ESN therefore does not present this as a universal Chinese evidentiary rule.

THREE WEEKS EARLIER, CHINA'S TOP COURT DREW THE LINE

On September 7, China's Supreme People's Court released its first broad judicial guidance on AI-related disputes, covering deepfakes, voice cloning, privacy, consumer protection, intellectual property and other emerging questions.

On voice, the rule is unusually direct: absent another legal basis, using a natural person's voice without consent as training material and then imitating that person's timbre, intonation and pronunciation style to generate an identifiable synthetic voice can infringe the person's voice rights.

So Shanghai did not arrive in a vacuum. It landed almost immediately after China's highest court told lower courts that **training material itself can matter** when an identifiable synthetic person emerges at the other end.

OUTPUT: What did the machine say?

INPUT: What did the machine learn from?

The second question becomes difficult when only the operator can see inside the system.

AND THEN GRETA GARBO WALKED INTO A BALL-BEARING AD

Because history has a sense of humor, Swedish manufacturer **SKF** has used AI to recreate Greta Garbo - who died in 1990 - for an advertising campaign recalling her appearance in a 1921 promotional film connected to Swedish industry.

Reuters reports that the visual double was generated through text prompts rather than archival photographs or film footage. The voice, however, was trained using audio from one of Garbo's early films, and SKF says that archival material was used **with permission**. The production was developed with involvement from Garbo's estate and family.

A human performer also contributed pacing and cadence.

SAME WEEK. VERY DIFFERENT PAPERWORK.

SHANGHAI: Where did the synthetic voice come from? The operator could not substantiate the source.

GARBO: We used this archival voice material, with permission, while working with the estate.

The outputs can both be technologically uncanny. The provenance stories are radically different.

PROVENANCE vs. OPACITY

The most important emerging divide in synthetic performance may not ultimately be:

AI vs. HUMAN

It may be:

PROVENANCE vs. OPACITY

A synthetic performance can be bizarre, posthumous and technologically elaborate while still having an identifiable chain of authorization. Conversely, a mundane ten-second synthetic voice can become legally troublesome when nobody outside the system can determine what human performance supplied the underlying material.

What recordings entered the pipeline?

Who authorized those recordings for this purpose?

What model or process touched them?

What information was retained?

What outputs can the system reproduce?

Who can audit any of this later?

Those are provenance questions. And provenance is something an operator can document before a dispute ever begins.

WHAT THIS DOES - AND DOES NOT - DO FOR THE ESN FILE

Wednesday's chronology says that in early February 2026 they warned industry representatives about Netflix-related AI training and performer-protection questions; the account includes an approximately hour-long WhatsApp conversation and subsequent communications in April.

That is **firsthand ESN material**. This Shanghai judgment does not establish that Netflix, ACTRA, Difuze, SAG-AFTRA or any other party improperly trained a model, violated a contract, or used any particular performer's recordings without authorization.

WHAT CHANGED

What Shanghai supplies is an analytical tool: **training-data provenance and information asymmetry are now concrete subjects of litigation**.

When somebody outside an AI system is told, "You cannot prove what trained it," a legitimate next question is:

WHY IS THE PERSON OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM EXPECTED TO POSSESS RECORDS THAT ONLY THE OPERATOR CONTROLS?

That is not proof of any ESN allegation. It is a better question to bring to the documents.

KEEP THE BOXES SEPARATE

VERIFIED: Shanghai's intermediate court held an AI platform operator liable for infringing Ms. Wang's voice rights and awarded RMB 50,000.

VERIFIED: China's September 7 Supreme People's Court guidance expressly addresses nonconsensual voice training followed by identifiable synthetic imitation.

VERIFIED: Reuters reports that SKF's Garbo recreation used permitted archival voice material and was developed with Garbo's estate/family involvement.

SOURCED LEGAL ANALYSIS: The Shanghai decision has been described as using burden-shifting logic to address the plaintiff's lack of access to training records. It is not presently a national guiding case.

INFERENCE: Auditable provenance may become as consequential to synthetic-performance disputes as the realism of the output.

FIRSTHAND ESN MATERIAL: Wednesday's 2026 communications and Canadian dubbing chronology remain in their own evidentiary category.

SATIRE: *The Training Data Ate My Homework* is not currently a recognized affirmative defense in any jurisdiction known to the rabbit.

**THE NAME IS NOT ENOUGH.
THE OUTPUT IS NOT ENOUGH.
FOLLOW THE INPUT.**

**WHEN THE BLACK BOX KNOWS MORE THAN THE PERSON
OUTSIDE IT,**

ASK WHO CONTROLS THE RECORDS.

Shanghai does not prove the ESN case.

It does something more useful:

**It makes "what did the model eat?" look less like a metaphor
and more like an evidentiary question.**

Somewhere, presumably, the former employee is having a perfectly normal weekend.

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SOURCES & EVIDENCE NOTES

Shanghai judgment: Shanghai High People's Court-derived reporting published Sept. 30, 2026 describes the Sept. 29 final judgment, RMB 50,000 award, voice-comparison evidence and the operator's inability to identify the training source.

Court-derived Shanghai report

Shanghai legal analysis: National Law Review / China IP Law Update discusses the evidentiary burden and cautions that the case has not been designated typical or guiding.

Legal analysis of the Shanghai ruling

Supreme People's Court AI guidance: Official SPC reporting says nonconsensual use of a person's voice as training material to generate an identifiable imitation can infringe voice rights.

Supreme People's Court: AI misuse guidance

Greta Garbo / SKF: Reuters, Oct. 2, 2026, reports the AI recreation, the use of permitted archival voice material and estate/family involvement.

Reuters: Greta Garbo / SKF

Editorial standard: Verified facts, sourced legal analysis, inference, firsthand ESN material and satire are intentionally separated. Similarity or conceptual relevance is not presented as proof of a factual connection.