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An ethnographic study of multilingual language policy localization with a focus on the resolution of communication problems in international Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs)

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Taking the China Office of an international Non-governmental Organization (INGO) as its site of study, this article analyzed how an international multilingual language policy was localized by focusing on the solving of communication problems. It was found that overt and covert language policies work together to form a talent pool of potential language broker and language node, who functioned in solving communication problems in planned and unplanned scenarios. The emergence of language broker and language node in INGOs demonstrates on one hand, the exercise of individual and institutional agency in solving communication problems; on the other hand, the interaction of language policy at different layers (international-national-institutional) in shaping individual's language practice. The article contributes to the study of language policy in post-modern era by providing a conceptualization of language policy localization process that centers around solving communication problems in INGO work places.

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Introduction

In the new era of globalization which brings with it great mobility of people, multilingualism becomes a fact of life (Blommaert & Spotti, 2017). The inherent complexity of language policy is then foregrounded (Spotti et al., 2019): institutions have to make language policy to meet communication needs, and individual agents also play different roles in facilitating message flows in different multilingual scenarios. It was found that the language practice of those individual agents challenged the boundaries of existing language policy theory in which the onion model, with the state as the outermost layer, has proven to be useful in exploring language policy processes (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007).

The different multilingual scenarios that were explored in regard to how institution and individuals deal with communication problems include: immigrant communities (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Morales & Hanson, 2005), multilingual work places (Gonçalves and Schluter, 2017; Kraft, 2019, 2020), multinational corporations (MNCs) (Pudelko et al., 2015; Harzing & Pudelko, 2013; Lønsmann, 2017), international governmental organizations (IGOs) like the UN (United Nations) (McEntee-Atalianis, 2016; 2017; McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey, 2020), and international Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) like the International committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (Garrido, 2020). Among those, INGOs are regarded as a unique yet understudied domain (Garrido, 2020).

The uniqueness of INGOs lies in the fact that their language policy shows a deeper degree of "decentralization" (Tollefson, 1981; Siiner, 2014). To be specific, in comparison with MNCs that have clear national belongings and profit-focused agenda, and IGOs, which usually have political constraints over their own language practices and occasionally over their member states, the responsibility for and authority over a particular decision in INGOs are often split between different staff and organizational levels. Decision-making in INGOs is often diffused (Fowler, 1992; Spolsky, 2009): The regional offices or branches have some autonomy in their daily work to deal with the specific situations, especially those with localized characteristics.

The aim of this study is to explore how an INGO office localized the multilingual language policy of its headquarters to meet internal and external communication needs according to the sociolinguistic reality of its context. The INGO office, International Council of Museum (ICOM), is located in Beijing, China. This paper is an ethnographic study of how communication problems get solved on the ground in the office, and it is organized in the following way: First, a literature review of individual agents functioning in solving communication problems and the impact of their language practice on language policy is presented. After that, reasons for choosing ethnography of language policy are explained in the methodology section, as well as what data have been collected and how the data were analyzed. In the analysis section, the focus will be on (1) the roles played by different individual agents in internal and external communications; (2) the institutionalized language policy formulated; (3) the localization of international multilingual language policy. Then, the following section will discuss the research findings from the perspective of how the language practice of individual agents is structured by the interaction of language policy from different layers and at the same time localized the multilingual language policy of INGOs.

Literature review

In exploring how individual agents function in facilitating message flow in multilingual work places, many terms are employed to address them, and "language broker" and "language node" are the two established theoretical constructs.

Language brokers are those who "facilitate communication between two linguistically and/or culturally different parties. Unlike formal interpreters and translators, brokers mediate, rather than merely transmit, information" (Tse, 1996, p. 485). Studies of "language broker" was first conducted in immigrant families and from the perspective of Family Systems theory and contextual theories of cognitive development to discuss the effect of translation behavior on children's language acquisition and also on their relationship with their families. Gonçalves and Schluter (2017) then expanded the term "language broker" from family domain to multilingual work places. Their study showcased a female entrepreneur Magda's covert language policy (make Portuguese the lingua franca within the company) and micro-language planning practices (employ specific interpretive strategies in conveying the message based on knowledge of different socio-cultural positionings of the parties involved) within her multilingual cleaning company located in America, and found that her authoritative power was enhanced through her language brokering, and the need to look into language practices and micro-language planning within local contexts was also addressed in this study. Kraft (2019, 2020) focused on Norwegian construction industry, a de facto multilingual work place where there were permanent local employees and temporarily Polish migrant workers. In this situation, the worker who could speak the common language in the work place, Norwegian, or English, could achieve a highly mobility in the work place because of their bigger linguistic repertoire. These two studies indicated that, even in a world where multilingualism is normal, the preferences of the use of the dominant nation-state population's language and the use of English as the only alternative to the nation-state language are visible.

Then in MNCs, the term "language node" was applied. It was used to refer to those expatriates acting as middlemen between the language used in headquarters and the language used in subsidiary (Nurmi, 1995; Marschan et al., 1997). Studies of language node in MNCs scenario were mainly conducted from the perspective of human resource management, and language nodes were treated as one of the communication strategies to deal with the language diversity problem faced by MNCs (Swift & Wallace, 2011; Brannen et al., 2017), an important and costless solution (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Similar to studies in language broker, it is also found that those individuals who are able to become language nodes tend to occupy a powerful position (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; Welch et al., 2005), yet they seldom become decision-makers in policy making. However, it was also found that company's over reliance on language nodes, while cause extra work to them, could create a kind of information barrier because a lot of information was controlled by them (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2012).

It seems that language broker is both message mediator and decision maker who has the power to influence language policy in a specific institution, while language node merely mediates message, which is not his/her main task, though gaining power, he/she might be over-consumed by the message mediating work and bringing negative effect to the company's management. When functioning in facilitating message flow in those institutions, their language practice brings merits and demerits to themselves and also has as impact on the institution's language policy.

How do communication problems get solved in IGOs and INGOs? The very few studies indicate that much of the communication work within those organizations was shouldered by internal employees. In the United Nations, a network of agents including employees who did the translation and interpretation services was found to be responsible for language policy and

planning development, influence and implementation within the organization (McEntee-Atalianis, 2016); in the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Life Skills Education (LSE) curriculum in HIV/AIDS educational sessions in Tanzania, the volunteers and the "peer educators" who were able to use the local language acted as language nodes between the WHO and the target group of the curriculum term (Higgins, 2010). In INGOs, take International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for instance, it was found that there are some staff who took initiative to expand their linguistic repertoires to respond to unplanned linguistic needs, which then reinforced the power relations vis-à-vis national staff and (expat) interpreters (Garrido, 2020); when an INGO's language management concerned its host country's image, take the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games as a focal point, it was found that top-down governmental planning dominated the language services where professional translators, interpreters and university students with foreign language ability shouldered the majority of communication tasks (Zhang, 2021).

The above studies analyzed how communication problems were solved in different multilingual scenarios. They mainly explored how institutionalized language policy shaped individuals' language practices with an order to facilitate communication flow, however, only few studies explored how individuals' language practice in solving communication problems appropriate language policy (McEntee-Atalianis, 2016; Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017). In addition, the research contexts were mainly multilingual work places in Anglophone countries; this made language policy appropriation resulting from individual agents' language practice in international organizations, especially INGOs in traditionally monolingual context, a blind spot in current literature. Exploring in detail how individual agents in INGOs solve communication problems to ensure the coordination of activities both in the office's daily work and coordinated global events will shed light on a fuller understanding of language policy in post-modern society. To quote Spotti, Kroon & Li (2019), studying individual language users in conditions of globalization led mobility, "while offering grassroots solutions for local challenges, also plays a role as local evidence for informing future top-down language policy development" (p. 535). Accordingly, we conducted this ethnographic study and try to answer the following questions:

(1) What roles were played by different individuals in ICOM China office in its internal and external communication?
(2) What institutionalized language policy was formulated with the purpose to meet communication needs?
(3) How was the language policy of ICOM International Headquarters localized in China context?

Research methodology

The study applied an Ethnography of Language Policy approach (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; McCarty, 2015) to make a thick description (Geertz, 2008) of how communication problems are solved in the ICOM National Committee of China (ICOM China for short). Ethnographic investigation is holistic and deeply contextualized, it entails a view of language policy as a situated socio-cultural process, and enables researchers to examine not only the explicit language policy texts, but also the implicit policy processes—'the way in which people accommodate, resist, and "make" policy in everyday social practice' (McCarty, 2015, p. 82). Given the inherent complexity of language policy in INGOs, ethnographic approach, through leading to those materials that can only be obtained by going deeper into the field, enables us to have a deep understanding of how communication problems were solved in ICOM China, and also the power relations through

which its language policy was formulated and implemented in solving the communication problems.

Research setting. The research setting was the office of ICOM China located in Beijing. ICOM is the largest and most influential organization in the museum field for museums and museum professionals established in the year 1946. Its main purpose is to promote the establishment, development and professional management of museums, to organize various forms of cooperation in the museum field, to advise on museum activities through a global network, and to advance intellectual progress. As mentioned in its Statutes, ICOM is "a non-profit organization subject to French law (the 1901 Associations Act) and a non-governmental organization that maintains formal relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and has a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council". The ICOM International Headquarters is located in Paris, with National Committees in 124 countries, each of which is responsible for organizing ICOM-related activities in that country (ICOM, 2022). According to the ICOM Statutes, National Committee is "a separate legal entity composed of a minimum of eight ICOM Members and may be authorized by the Executive Board to represent the interests of museums and the museum profession and to organize the activities of ICOM in that State".

The Membership of ICOM is open to Museums, Institutions recognized by ICOM and Museum Professionals (ICOM, 2021). Moreover, according to the ICOM Statutes, "Each Individual, Institutional, Student, and Supporting Member of ICOM shall pay an annual membership fee at a rate stipulated by the Executive Board and approved by the General Assembly." It shows that membership fees are the primary source of income for ICOM.

ICOM makes English, French and Spanish its official and working languages. Though three official languages are set by ICOM, the statement of such a language policy is rather brief:

Article22 Language

Section 1 - Official Languages

English, French, and Spanish shall be deemed the official languages of ICOM, and each may be used at ICOM meetings.

Section 2 - Other Languages

The General Assembly may adopt other languages, provided the costs thereof are borne by the Members. (ICOM, 2021)

However, there is no explicit articles on the implementation of such a language policy in its national committees, which on one hand makes the language policy of ICOM fragmented and unsystematic (Condon, 2012; McEntee-Atalianis, 2016; Kraft, 2019), and on the other hand leaves space for agents (in this study, the ICOM China and language brokers) to appropriate language policy according to their real sociolinguistic situations. Moreover, different from European and American societies, which feature multilingualism, the Chinese society is mainly monolingual for its advocating of Mandarin as the common language since the year 1956, and advocating Mandarin both domestically and internationally is embedded in the language planning of almost all international organizations hosted in China for legal and ideological consideration (Zhang, 2021). It is in such a sociolinguistic situation that ICOM China runs its daily work and hosts global events.

The ICOM China is composed of eight permanent staff and a few volunteers. When this study began, it had just started to prepare for one of its highlight events: the biennial MPT-EXPO (Museum and Relevant Product and Technologies Exposition), in which staff of ICOM International, representatives from National Committees of other countries and professionals and staff of museums, totally 98 persons from 39 countries participated. In the ICOM China, the majority of daily work is done in Chinese with some key documents and emails in English. During the event, the working language was still mainly Chinese while only English was used at formal conferences and occasions where foreign guests were involved.

The author 1 officially began the ethnographic field-work onsite in August, 2018. The following field note excerpt on her first day indicates her enter into the field:

"*Time: 13-AUG-2018, Monday*

Location: ICOM China Office

Today is my first day at ICOM China, Eyre, the Vice-Secretary showed me around upon my arrival. The office locates in Beijing Lu Xun[1] Museum, it has six offices, one meeting room and a lovely yard with two cats resting in the corner, a very typical Beijing style courtyard house. There were 8 permanent staff and 2 volunteers on that day. In the morning, I worked with the 2 volunteers on stamping and mailing certificates for the member museums of ICOM China. I had my lunch at the office canteen of with staff and volunteers, then in the afternoon, Clara, who was in charge of foreign affairs asked about my English proficiency, and after my confirming that I passed the CET (College English Test) 6, she gave me some piecemeal files, and asked me to arrange them systematically, those files include introduction of various conferences, conference plans, conference participants, etc."

The above field note shows that author 1 quickly became familiar with the staff and her responsibilities, and the office was very open to volunteers in its daily running. When having lunch with the office members, author 1 stated the purpose of her study and was given permission to collect data in her daily work, including collecting relevant working files, using her cellphone to make video and audio recordings of the staff at work, and also scheduling interviews. During the three and a half months in the ICOM China, her role was mostly that of an observer studying language practices while working as a volunteer dealing with general office work. Then during the preparation of the 8th MPT-EXPO, she was asked by the Eyre, the Vice-Secretary, to take part in the news reports. "I agreed and worked together with staff in the whole process of the 8th MPT-EXPO. Since I was in the group reporting the news, I was well placed to have conversations and interviews with relevant people." Thus, as an ethnographer, her role was an 'official' one (McCarty, 2015, p. 84), which enabled her to have access to more materials, including the working files that were used before her entering the research site.

Data collection. The total duration of the field-work was three and half months before the event and then the 2 weeks duration of the event itself. During the event, representatives of national ICOM Committees from all over the world participated in a series of activities, including keynote speeches, forums, panels, and an exhibition tour. Totally 14 staff were in the event organization group, including seven permanent staff of ICOM China, two volunteers (including author 1), and five expatriates sent by Chinese museums that hold membership of ICOM China (Table 1).

Table 1 Personnel of MPT-EXPO Organization Group.		
Position		**Persons**
ICOM China	Permanent staff	7
	Volunteer	2
Expatriates from Other Local Museums		5

These five expatriates were all Chinese museum professionals but they only owned limited English ability and were mainly responsible for dealing with issues connected with Chinese museums attending the event. Among the 14 staff, six were interviewed, including three permanent staff (anonymized as Clara, Eyre and Martin), two expatriates (anonymized as Heng and Chen), one volunteer (anonymized as Misha), and the Chair of ICOM (at service from 2016–2020). The information of interviewees is shown in the following Table 2.

Our data set includes policy documents collected from the office, official website and event site including the ICOM Charter, working documents (like attendees' language background survey, membership application forms, office notifications, etc.), manuals such as *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*, event brochures; audio and video-recordings of preparatory meetings and some activities during the event where language brokering took place; interviews conducted in the office work and during the events; and field-notes resulting from daily observations. The ethnographic data set is shown in Table 3.

Data collection was mainly conducted by the first and the third authors, their tasks were arranged in the following manner:

Author 1 did the field-work on site (both the offices and event site), including the collection of policy documents, working documents, manuals, and event brochures; making audio and video-recordings and conducting interviews, and the writing of field-notes. Author 3 collected information online of the website of ICOM International and ICOM China, wrote summary for the video-recordings, did interview transcription, and sorted out all the data collected into different types as presented in Table 3. Author 2, who is a professional translator, did the translation of some key documents, interviews and field-notes, which were only presented in Chinese. Because of the considerable size of data, only those that were summarized and selected to present in the article were transcribed and translated in English. The translation was also verified by Author 1 and Author 3 to ensure the accuracy.

Some strategies were taken to ensure the credibility of data triangulation. A careful debriefing was made by the three authors together with a debriefer every 2 weeks. The debriefer is an American researcher working in a Chinese university. To this research project, he has expertize in museum education but remained an independent person. Every other Friday evening in the 4 months of data collection, we got together online and did the following:

(1) Compared different sources of data to find the gap (if there is any) between the language policy of ICOM International and its implementation in China, and also to discuss the possible reasons behind;

(2) Made a judgment of the adequacy of data in quantity and types according to the research questions, and made further plans in data collection if necessary;

(3) Detected vague descriptions, overemphasized or underemphasized points in field-notes through comparison of different types of data.

We did the above recursively through the whole process of data collection.

Table 2 Information of interviewees.

Interviewee	Position	Mother tongue	Other languages acquired	Responsibilities in the event	Roles played
Eyre	Vice-Secretary	Chinese	English	Conference organization; Meeting host	Language broker
Clara	Foreign Affairs Specialist		English	Interfacing with ICOM Headquarters	Language broker
Martin	Staff		English	Domestic affairs	neither
Heng	Expatriate		English	Conference coordination	neither
Chen	Expatriate		English	Conference coordination	neither
Misha	Volunteer		English	News report	Language node
Chair	Chair of ICOM	Turkish	English, French	Keynote speaker, Guest	neither

Table 3 Ethnographic data set.

Data type	Data setting	Data quantity	
Policy documents	ICOM China offices	ICOM Charter, working documents, manuals, event brochures, 578 pages in total	
	MPT-EXPO Site	Working documents, manuals, event brochures, 121 pages in total	
	Website of ICOM International	Download files Screen shots	107 pages 12
	Website of ICOM China	Download files Screen shots	21 pages 5
Video & audio recordings	Meetings at ICOM China offices	Around 240 min	
	MPT-EXPO Events	Around 200 min	
Interviews	ICOM China offices	3 persons	30–40 min per person
	MPT-EXPO Site	4 persons	
Field-notes	ICOM China offices	8843 Chinese characters	
	MPT-EXPO Site	4158 Chinese characters	

Data analysis. We conducted thematic analysis to deduce the findings. After the completion of data collection, the three authors sat together to read and reread the sorted data carefully and mutually discuss and consider potential themes in relation to the research questions. Initially, we did open coding (Saldaña, 2021) on the roles played by the seven interviewees in solving communication problems. Then a more focused coding on the language policy of ICOM China and the mechanism of its formulation and implementation was conducted. In the meantime, we considered the sociolinguistic factors both within and beyond China that might contribute to the formation and implementation of ICOM China's language policy, since ethnographic investigation is deeply contextualized and views language policy as a situated socio-cultural process (McCarty, 2015). In the final stage, we mutually discussed the most influential and emergent themes to identify the mechanism and factors behind the formulation and localization of ICOM China's language policy.

Findings
Roles played: language broker or language node. Our 4 months field-work indicates that two staff members emerged as language brokers, Eyre and Clara. Both of them were long-term staff at the ICOM China and occupied high positions. As the Vice-Secretary of the office, Eyre owned more administrative power than Clara, she made general administration work including make recruitment policy of staff and volunteers. During the 8th MPT-EXPO, while monitoring the progress of the event, she also hosted four panels where National Committee representatives from other countries attended. Her role of broker is supported by the fact that, while mediating communication in the office's daily work

and during the event, she also played an automotive role in solving unexpected problems during the event. Clara was the foreign affairs specialist of the office, her main job was to mediate external communication of the office including interface with ICOM International. She also assisted Eyre in controlling the daily office work and the arrangement of the event. During the 8th MPT-EXPO, Clara also worked as the interpreter of the Chair of ICOM in moments where the official interpreter was absent, and coordinated with Eyre in solving problems where decisions concerning communication were made. Eyre and Clara's language brokering mainly happened in planned communication scenarios, such as keynote speeches and panels during the event. We use the following two focal points to illustrate their roles as language brokers.

Eyre: Representing Chinese official in attending panel and changing the communication manner:

A panel titled "The Best in Heritage and International Cooperation" was arranged on the second day of the conference starting from 14:00, the attendees included two Chinese governmental officers (one was the vice-director from the Chinese State Bureau of Cultural Relics), director of a European heritage organization, director of the Southeastern Asia division of a cultural resources company and other staff from the same company. Eyre was there to host and the vice-director from the Chinese State Bureau of Cultural Relics was to introduce the "best" experience of China in protecting heritage and initiating international cooperation. However, the Chinese vice-director, as a key figure of the panel, was occupied in another important meeting. When Eyre was informed of this, she panicked. Author 1 wrote the following field note:

"Time: 24 Nov 2018, Saturday

Location: MPT-EXPO, Fuzhou City

I saw Eyre so panicked that she might cry. After 2 to 3 minutes, she calmed down a little and made a phone call to the secretary of the Chinese officer. I heard that she was given the permission to represent him in giving the speech, and the secretary would send the speech text to her. After receiving the speech text, Eyre first made an apology for the absence of the Chinese officer, explained the reason and then stated that she would represent the Chinese officer in giving the speech which would be in English instead of Chinese. Meanwhile, Clara arranged the two interpreters of this panel to leave and gave them other work. The panel ran smoothly. To me, Eyre's expertize in museum and heritage protection and her good English enabled her to solve this mini-crisis."

Clara: Changing the food mark language:

In arranging meals for participants of the MPT-EXPO, the ICOM China used commercial service by cooperating with a restaurant with good local reputation. However, the restaurant marked all the dishes' names only in Chinese, this caused difficulty for diners with special needs and dining customs. Misha

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Table 4 Two language brokers' responsibilities.

Name	Eyre	Clara
Position responsibilities in the event	Vice-secretary of ICOM China Monitoring the progress of the whole event; hosting four panels; Representing the Chinese officer to attend panel; made decision to solve unexpected problems in official settings.	Foreign Affairs Specialist of ICOM China Interfacing with ICOM International; The interpreter of the Chair in moments where the official interpreter was absent; Assisted Eyre in solving unexpected problems in official settings; Made decision to solve problem in less official settings.

noticed this and informed Clara. Clara came very soon, bringing with her three interpreters who were supposed to have their dinner in a separate room, together they explained the dishes to those guests in need. After the dinner, Clara asked the restaurant manager to change the food mark language from monolingual Chinese into bilingual (Chinese and English), "Please make sure the dishes' names and their ingredients are accurate. This is important, our guests come from all over the world, they have special dining customs and needs, we cannot offend their customs nor cause any health problems".

These above two focal points demonstrate that Eyre and Clara, while mediating work in "facilitating communication between linguistically and culturally different parties" (Chinese people involved in the event and foreign participants) (Tse, 1996), also did micro-language planning decisions within their power domain (Gonçalves and Schluter, 2017). Their practice and power made language policy for a group of people in their social interaction in specific moments and situations. We found that Eyre, with higher position, owned more authority in her language brokering, and her brokering happened in more official settings like the panel, while Clara's brokering was in less official settings like the dining hall. They coordinated to control and ensure the progress of the event. We use the following Table 4 to illustrate their different responsibilities and coordination during the event as language brokers.

In unplanned communication scenarios, for example, tea break time and idle sessions between meetings, Misha worked as a language node in facilitating the communication flow. She either took the initiative or was trusted by her coworkers to solve language problems in dispersed activities, for example, helping foreign guests to find the tea break location, or to different meeting rooms, or explaining the meals to Muslim guests when the dishes were all marked in Chinese. Informing Clara the food mark language problem and helping in explaining the meals to Muslim guests showed her agency in taking initiatives to solve communication problems.

By comparison, the Chair, Martin, Chen and Heng did not work as language broker nor language node. The Chair was a distinguished guest during the event, though she is trilingual in Turkish, French and English, she was equipped with an interpreter during the whole event. Martin's daily work was to deal with domestic matters, such as domestic membership management, where there was little opportunity to communicate in English. Chen and Heng were expatriates sent to ICOM China by other local museums to assist the event but neither of them worked on foreign affairs.

In next section, we make a detailed comparative analysis among our seven interviewees to identify the language policy behind their different roles played, which reveals how the office made institutionalized language policy to meet communication needs.

The institutionalized language policy of ICOM China. Our analysis of the office documents, the interviews with staff, and field-notes together revealed that both the overt recruitment

language policy of the office and the covert language policy in allocating positions in the office, worked together in forming a mechanism that shaped the different roles played by individuals: who could work as language brokers in making decisions while mediating communication, who just acted as language node, i.e., mediating the message, and who was left to dealing with domestic office chores. In such a manner, the office formed institutionalized language policy with an aim to meet internal and external communication needs.

The overt recruitment language policy was reveled in our analysis of the office documents and observation of the office's daily work. The office was very aware of its being an international organization, and the language requirements in its recruitment forms (Table 5) indicate that the ICOM China conducted a language audit (Reeves & Wright, 1996) requiring staff to have adequate English proficiency.

Such a recruitment requirement shows that in ICOM China, English is made the common language, and the capacity of the common language is made an entry point to job opportunities (Witteborn, 2011; Kraft, 2019; Garrido, 2020). Author 1's interview with Eyre also confirmed this. When asked about the recruitment policy, she explained that theirs was an international office: "our candidates must be fluent in English, if not, they won't be able to work here." However, when asked about other language abilities, for example, French and Spanish, which are the official languages stated in the Charter of ICOM, she replied that "English is sufficient for everyday tasks and we rarely encounter situations that require to communicate in French or Spanish. Of course, it is better if the staff can use French or Spanish, but in China, you know, almost all students learn English." This shows that ICOM China did not accord French and Spanish positions of equal importance to English, and the office was "symbolically linked with English as the international 'default' language that promises the widest reach" (Zhang, 2021, p. 186). In addition, China's foreign language education policy also plays a role in the institution's recruitment language policy, through favoring English, the foreign language education policy determines the foreign language resources of China, and the office's recruitment policy was made based on such a sociolinguistic reality.

We also found a covert language policy that greatly influenced the different roles played by individuals in ICOM China. International life experience was converted into symbolic capital indexing individuals' professional knowledge in international communication, which then lead to position allocation. This can be proved by interviews with Eyre and Clara on the reasons why they were trusted with the leading positions. Eyre responded that it must have something to do with her study abroad experience in England for 2 years as an exchange student, and Clara believed that it was because she had a professional background in English studies and got her Master's degree in Australia. The international life experience equipped them with knowledge of "adapting the message to suit the other party's socio-cultural positioning" (Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017, p. 243), and a

Table 5 Excerpt from job offer on ICOM China website (ICOM China, 2018).

Position 1 Foreign affairs director
Requirements
1. have strong organizational and coordination skills and learning ability;
2. have good written skills in Chinese and English and be able to handle and write all kinds of official documents skillfully;
3. have a positive outlook on life, correct values, strong sense of service, steady, solid style and obedience to work arrangements;
4. with graduate degree or above, majoring in English or related majors;
5. have experience in foreign affairs work is preferred;
6. in principle, not more than 40 years old.
Position 2 Information supervisor
Requirements
1. have solid professional skills and writing skills, familiar with the publicity methods of the cultural and museum industry;
2. excellent computer and IT skills and experience in using office software packages and able to skillfully use various multimedia technologies;
3. with full-time undergraduate degree or above, CET 4 or above.

"legitimate domination" (Grillo, 1989) was thus constructed in the office. Our analysis of the two focal points in the meeting also illustrates this. Eyre's ability to communicate in English with international experts in cultural heritage protection, and Clara's emphasizing on the different dining customs show that they were trusted in their knowledge of mediating messages to suit the foreign participants' socio-cultural positionings.

Misha, though also had international learning experience, was just a volunteer and had no fixed position in the office. She was not trusted with work involving making decisions to assist the communication, but only worked as language node through exercising her own agency: when there is a need of language mediator, she initiated to help.

In contrast, Martin, Chen and Heng did not work as language broker nor language node. Interview and observational data indicated that this was mainly a result of their positions in the office, which was partially determined by their English ability. In interviews with Martin, Chen and Heng, they all mentioned that though they participated in training held by ICOM-ITC (ICOM International Training Center) in which English was used as the language of instruction, they were fully aware that their English ability was not good enough to communicate freely. They were all in positions dealing with domestic matters where there was little opportunity to communicate in English.

The localization of language policy of ICOM International. The above analysis shows that the multilingual language policy of ICOM International was localized in such a way that Chinese becomes the language for inter-staff communication while English for external communication. To be specific, in the China context, Chinese was used as the inter-employee communication in all preparations and daily work before the event; and during the event, Chinese was still the major working language among employees, while the conference manual, brochures, posters and other materials were bilingual (Chinese and English)—French or Spanish were not used at all. Such a localization is very similar to that of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, where Chinese and English dominated the communication while other languages, even French, the first official language set by the Olympics Charter, remained nearly invisible (Zhang, 2021). The 2008 Beijing Olympics' managing communication problems, which was regarded as a part of "intangible legacies" and "valuable experience" for holding large-scale international events (Zhang, 2021, p. 199), was influenced by two factors: the language ideology of individual and institutional agents involved, and the economic consideration of language resources. Our analysis also revealed that these two factors underpin ICOM China's language policy localization in solving communication problems.

The analysis of the websites of ICOM, the interview with the Chair and also a video recording of the closing meeting of the MPT-EXPO demonstrate that language ideology of people in international organizations. To hold the event, the ICOM China collected participants' information to prepare for different activities, and ICOM homepage designed websites to call for applications to attend those activities. In those applications, "language background" was included as a key information. Instead of making a survey on the language background of participants, the applications made "fluent in both written and spoken English"as a criterion, and "all applications must be accompanied by the following documents in English (ICOM-ITC, 2022)." This shows that "legitimization and naturalization of English" (Garrido, 2020, p. 64) took place in the preparation of the MPT-EXPO, which demonstrates the de facto of language policy in international organizations, and diminishes the de jure of multilingual language policy.

Then we interviewed the Chair on her view in regard to the use of English only in ICOM China's external communication, she said the following. We use A1 for Author 1:

A1: I noticed that you and other guests only use English during this event, why so?

Chair: "Err……for convenience. English is THE[2] language, you know, it is not A language anymore. It is like…a system, like word or excel, it is ubiquitous."

A1: Then what about French? Do you use French in your daily work?

Chair: In France, we use French a lot, only in meetings we use English. We use English everywhere, in Brazil, in Poland, in Africa.

The Chair's response indicates that English was a "common sense assumption" for internationalization (Kelly-Holmes, 2006), and the following dialog from our video recording illustrates that such an assumption prevailed, while voice for multilingualism was lack of support in ICOM China.

During the closing meeting of the MPT-EXPO, a foreign representative asked if there were news reports in languages other than English so that the international public could know more about it. As the representative of the organizer, the official from the State Administration of Cultural Heritage of China replied that only part of the materials was translated into English and later they would pay more attention to the issue of outreach to the international public. However, he did not reply directly why languages other than English were not employed; it seems that to him, the problem was that not all materials were translated into

English, not that only English was employed rather than other languages, even though the participants were from 39 countries and three official languages are set by the ICOM.

To understand the reasons of why ICOM China did not take efforts to support multilingualism, we interviewed Eyre, since she was responsible for the conference organization.

A1: Why was there only English translation but no French, Spanish or Arabic? I noticed that there were many non-English speaking participants presented, such as some from African countries.

Eyre: It would cost a lot.

A1: What if there is a real need? For example, if the participants don't speak English?

Eyre: They can request a translation service and we can help connect them with translation company, but the cost is entirely at the requestor's expense.

It seems that the decision of using English as the only foreign language for external link was made for cost reduction and convenience. Considering that ICOM China is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, which depends mainly on the membership fee, and also that China's favoring English in its foreign language education policy, which makes English talents more readily available than any other foreign languages, using English for external communication thus became an economical choice. Also, the fragmented and unsystematic nature of ICOM headquarters' language policy in dealing with possible communication problems (Condon, 2012; McEntee-Atalianis, 2016; Kraft, 2019) leaves enough space for ICOM China to make institutional transformation of its language policy.

Discussion

By focusing on the solving of communication problems, this ethnographic study demonstrates ICOM China as the "meeting place of formal policies and norms from above and informal practices and emergent norms from below" in international organizations (Spotti, et al., 2019, p. 549). We categorized the staff at ICOM China into "language broker" and "language node" to show the different roles played by individual agents in solving communication problems. It is found that the knowledge of understanding the socio-cultural positioning of parties involved to facilitate communication, together with his/her language repertoire, compose the symbolic capital that forms language broker's "legitimate domination" in the work place (Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017, p. 245), which then empowers him/her in making relevant decisions that translate language policy according to the language resources in the context. A careful analysis of the factors contributing to the role played by language broker and language node led us to conclude that in ICOM China, the emergence of language broker and language node is actually a manifestation of institutional agency in solving communication problems. The ICOM China made "strategic institutional decision" (Duchêne, 2009) in formulating its own language policy to meet internal and external communication needs, and in such a process, the language policy of the ICOM International is also contextualized and localized.

What differentiates this study from others is that through focusing on how communication problems were solved in an INGO, it is revealed that the emergence of language brokers and language nodes could be a planned result of the organization's institutional language policy. Previous studies on language brokers and language nodes were mainly conducted in socio-culturally multilingual context; focused either on the language policy that shaped those individuals' language practice, or vice

versa; how those individuals solved communication problems, while the possible institutional factors behind the emergence of language brokers and language nodes in solving communication problems remained understudied. This study filled such a gap by indicating that the emergence of language brokers and language nodes could be a manifestation of the organization's institutional agency in solving communication problems from the perspective of linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011). Language broker and language node function as effective solutions to cope with the inherent linguistic complexity, which is a feature of language policy in late-modern era (Spotti et al., 2019). Such a finding contributes to studies on language policy focusing on individual language users in conditions of globalization led mobility.

Another contribution of this study is that we identified an emergence mechanism of language brokers and language nodes that is formed by the coordination of overt and covert language policies in a traditionally monolingual context. The overt language policy refers to ICOM China's making English proficiency an entry point to work opportunities (Witteborn, 2011; Kraft, 2019; Garrido, 2020), in so doing, a talent pool of potential language broker and language node was formed, which enabled the office to solve language problems in its daily work and also during important international events. The choice of English as language for outreach seems to be common practice, but a close examination indicates that this is the result of interaction between the status of English as the world lingua franca, China's foreign language education policy, as well as language ideology of individuals in international organizations. The covert language policy refers to the conversion of international experience into symbolic capital, which indexes individuals' professional ability in solving communication problems. Such a conversion led to power allocation in the office, which formed a "legitimate domination" (Grillo, 1989) and those who were at the center of the structural power relationship (Eyre and Clara) had access to opportunities to work as language brokers.

Based on the above discussion, we present in Fig. 1 a conceptualization of language policy localization processes in an INGO office where language brokers play a key role in solving communication problems.

In this conceptualization, "the agentive and resistant dimensions" (Spotti & Blommaert, 2017, p. 11) of multilingual language policy localization processes are illustrated. In the top-down process, the multilingual language policy is translated into bilingual policy by the institution according to its own sociolinguistic reality. English penetrates successfully into the national and institutional layers, where the national language of the office staff is added, while other working languages are screened out. The
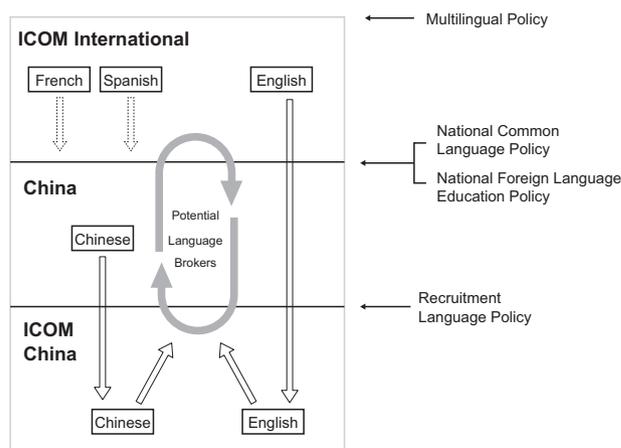

Fig. 1 Language policy layers and the emergence of language broker.

penetrating power of English in international organizations points to "Englishization" (Neeley, 2011) in today's language ecology, specially in non-Anglophone countries. It shows that though the model of three concentric circles of English (Kachru, 1985) has been suspected (Pennycook, 2003), it is undeniable that the influence of English on the Expanding Circle countries, in this study, China, still exists. English competence is a key factor for those countries to join the global community as it is the world's de facto lingua franca. In those countries, even if the international organizations list languages other than English, alongside English as their official languages, there are actually few foreign language resources to support such a language policy. Echoing the finding that, even in a context where multilingualism is normal, the preferences of the use of the dominant nation-state population's language and also the use of English as the only alternative to the nation-state language are visible (Kraft, 2019; 2020). Thus, in this post-modern era, the rationale of linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011) in solving communication problems is still at work. Moreover, this study also confirms that the trend of "Englishisation" (Neeley, 2011) is ongoing in international work places, at least in non-Anglophone countries, and this may cause language hegemony in those work places eventually.

In the bottom-up process, individual and institution exercise agency to formulate language policy on the institutional layer, a talent pool of potential language brokers is created by making explicit language proficiency requirements. However, only individuals with English capacity, international life experience, and favorable positions in the institution are able to work as language brokers and then penetrate through the institutional and national layers to get involved in international activities. The emergence of language brokers shows the integrated influence of language policies from supranational, national and institutional layers on the language practice of individuals, and also the exercise of institutional agency in solving communication problems based on local sociolinguistic reality.

Conclusion

This ethnographic study first identified the different roles played by individual agents in solving communication problems in ICOM China, then analyzed the language policy behind and how the multilingual language policy of ICOM was translated into bilingual language policy. This ethnographic study into language policy revealed that "there is no such thing as a straightforward and unproblematic implementation of top-down language policies" (Spotti et al., 2019, p. 538), this is especially so in INGOs in regard to their solving communication problems.

Today's global mobility brings about globalized spaces in more local contexts, the language policy localization presented by this study may present a reality of language policy development in the post-modern era, at least in traditionally monolingual context. Such a development deviates from the second phase in language policy making described by Spotti et al. (2019) where multilingualism is "to be nurtured and preserved" (p. 538). However, we must be aware that such an understanding of "multilingualism" was brought about in response to migration to Europe and presented language as a fundamental human right for immigrants in Europe (Spotti et al., 2019). The findings presented in this study is the result of "an explorative and programmatic ethnographic work" (Spotti & Blommaert, 2017, p. 11) where language policy was investigated in a multiscalar view of context (p. 14). We do not deny that there are losses of such kind of strategic localization of multilingual language policy, for instance, participants' not being able to engage in activities by using languages other than English, and the diminishing of political and economic motivations in advocating language diversity. However, it does remind us of "the top-down-bottom-up divide in language policy making" in globalization led mobility (Spotti et al., 2019, p. 539). As a case of many other ethnographic studies in various empirical fields, the ultimate contribution of this study might be that, when it comes together with others, it "will bring to bear a new awareness of where the study of language in society has been steadily moving toward" (Spotti & Blommaert, 2017, p. 11).

Notes

1 Lu Xun was the pen name of Zhou Shuren (25 September 1881 -19 October 1936), a famous Chinese writer, essayist, poet, and literary critic.
2 The capital letters were used to indicate the interviewee's tone was aggravated here.

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