Multilingualism and cosmopolitanism in the construction of a humanitarian elite
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Abstract
Departing from a critical sociolinguistic perspective, I investigate the role of multilingualism in the discursive construction of mobile humanitarians' privilege at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In particular, I examine the value accorded to different workplace languages in the discourses of neutrality and internationality by/in this institution. The data analysed include interviews with different generations of ICRC delegates and with a current recruiter, complemented by ethnographic data. Inspired by the concept of *cosmopolitan capital* (Igarashi and Saito 2014), the ICRC expat is constructed through an elitist definition of multilingualism, with a predominance of English-French bilingualism, and international experience defined by mobility, preferably for humanitarian work. This capital is unevenly distributed and stratifies the ICRC workforce into a minority of mobile staff (14% in 2016) and a majority of resident staff. Mobile staff are institutionally *iconised* (Irvine and Gal 2000) as international and neutral partly by virtue of *anonymous languages* (Woolard 2008), especially English. Meanwhile, resident staff mediate these anonymous languages into *authentic languages* like Pashto, which are used to categorise them as locals.

Introduction
During ethnographic fieldwork in an event for retired humanitarians, I met Paul Rodin[1], a Swiss Francophone who had had a long career as a humanitarian worker at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC henceforth). Between 1979 and 2010, he worked in 13 missions around Africa, the Middle East and Asia with a final mission in Bosnia-Hercegovina and only 2 short postings at the Geneva headquarters. As his first mission, Paul was sent as a rookie delegate to the on-going war in Bayreuth (Lebanon) and the delegation received a request to rescue 5 wounded people from across town. As an institutional spokesperson, he had to speak to different authorities on the phone and at checkpoints to negotiate access to the victims of war. Paul did not (and does not) speak Arabic because he was only requested to speak English in addition to his native French for employment. In his story, he acknowledges the central role played by the local staff as "often it was the local employees who were, who had already done that for a long time, who told me you [singular] could eventually ask" (interview, 03-02-2016, my translation from French) to access spaces and wounded people.
Paul's narrative presents the ICRC delegate's task as mainly complex communication with high stakes and points to the advice on communication strategies and implicitly linguistic mediation from the "local" employees in the delegation. The ICRC rests on the centrality of communication and translation for its international mandate including protection (e.g. confidential prison visits), assistance (like healthcare) and prevention (diffusion of International Humanitarian Law) in armed conflicts. The goal of this article is to examine the role of multilingualism in the discursive construction of an elite

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[1] All the names in this article have been anonymised in order to protect informants' confidentiality.

of mobile humanitarians at the ICRC. I will analyse the discourses of neutrality and internationality that construct and justify the privilege of expatriate ("expat") humanitarian workers who move from one mission to another in relation to the local staff who stay put in one ICRC delegation and who provide the necessary linguistic, cultural and political expertise for the expats' institutional tasks. The analysis below is based on interviews with different generations of ICRC delegates and with a recruiter in the Department of Communication, complemented by institutional documents.

Today, the ICRC employs 15,000 workers across the globe and around 14% are "mobile staff" or "delegates" (ICRC 2016) coordinated from its Geneva headquarters. Most humanitarian agencies such as *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF) still deploy a commitment to direct institutional representation by expats who are generally required to speak English and/or French as "international" languages. Meanwhile, local or "resident" staff in non-European countries are often conceived as technical employees and cultural/linguistic mediators. An ICRC delegate has a starting salary of 70,000-86,000 CHF a year (as of 2009)[2] and is defined by geographical mobility, humanitarian motivation and diplomatic immunity. In the field, expats are seen as "outsiders who exert control" over the majority of national employees (Redfield 2012). Their everyday (linguistic) interactions with local staff and authorities are consequential for the success of operations. However, this article addresses the concern that some agencies and practitioners have regarding the material and symbolic (including linguistic) inequalities between expatriate and local workers in many humanitarian organisations. In fact, the maps of these agencies and their mobility patterns sometimes uncomfortably resemble those of empires. Still today, Western White men like Paul are constructed as the visible faces and voices of humanitarian motivation and sacrifice (Fassin 2012).

The article is organised into four sections. Following this introduction, the second section will present my conceptual framework on language ideologies, the politics of mobility and cosmopolitan capitals. The third section of analysis will be divided into the discourse of neutrality and the discourse of internationality with a focus on communication and multilingualism for ICRC delegates. The last section will take up the role of multilingualism and cosmopolitanism on the discursive construction of a division of labour among humanitarians.

Conceptual framework

I adopt a critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach with the objective of "describing, understanding and explaining the role of language in constructing the relations of social difference and social inequality that shape our world" (Heller 2011: 34). We thus need to look at language and communication as a terrain for struggles about power relations and access to other resources. This study looks into multilingualism in processes of worker selection and categorisation in an international organisation working under exceptional situations of insecurity and conflict. It is an institutional ethnography looking into the role of multilingualism in the construction of elite workers at the ICRC. In this article, I will mainly draw on *language ideologies* as cultural representations of language varieties and their speakers linked to moral and socio-political interests (Irvine 1989). They mediate between discourses about language(s) and categories of people associated with them.

In order to understand the construction of language hierarchies, the linguistic ideologies of authenticity and anonymity (Woolard 2008) are especially relevant. Authenticity construes language as an ethnic marker "from somewhere", grounded in a territory,

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[2] Their salary is twice or three times higher than that of senior local staff, whose salary and benefits are aligned with the local labour market.

whereas the ideology of anonymity constructs a public, standard and universal voice "from nowhere". Within the former ideology, we find "smaller" or "local" languages such as Pashto or Kurdish, which are not required from expats and only used – if needed– through the mediation of an interpreter into English or French. Authenticity is based upon the logics of (national) identity and native speaker models. Anonymity justifies "working languages" for long-distance and international communication, including English and French as administrative languages and regional languages for operations, mainly Arabic, Spanish, Russian and also Portuguese and Chinese. These languages are tested against standardised benchmarks, decoupling language and identity for the management of an international organisation (Duchêne and Heller 2012).

The social values attached to different languages construct legitimate speakers (Bourdieu, 1991) and invisibilise those who are not associated with them. The widespread iconisation of the international status of English, to a lesser extent French, is central in the construction of ICRC delegates' privilege. As we shall see, it indexes not only geographical mobility but also internationality among possessors of other valuable cultural capitals. In spite of the differences in nationality, language and professional status, expat workers in different locations form a community through their distinction from the majority (i.e. local) population, often through the use of English in international delegations (Adly 2013, Yeung 2009). Simultaneously, resident staff are mainly associated to "smaller" or national languages rather than English, even though they must be fluent in the ICRC administrative languages.

Apart from multilingualism, mobility has historically sustained an international organisation such as the ICRC. Given the centrality of mobility to define ICRC "delegates" (called "*mobile* staff" since 2012), I will also draw on the *politics of mobility*, understood here as the unequal access to, routes and forms of (im)mobility, which shapes social relations and is shaped by them. There are different "constellations of mobility" (Cresswell 2010) that are historically inscribed patterns of mobility, representations of movement (or lack thereof) and ways of practising movement in a given mobile politics and regulation. Crucially, mobility is inscribed in micro-politics of national origins and regulation technologies, with "fast and slow lanes" (Sheller and Urry 2006: 207). An elite of "delegates" are on the move between different nodes, ICRC delegations and offices, which act as moorings where relatively immobile workers make their mobile missions possible. The construction of community among expats is the product of "mobilité-bulle" (bubble mobility, Veltz 2004 in Adly 2013) which consists in moving from and to familiar institutional and linguistic environments where English is the main language of interaction.

The intersection between language ideologies and mobility politics construct the privilege of expatriate humanitarians as cosmopolitanism (see Hannerz 1990). It is a term that has been sometimes used for the celebratory ideal of global openness and solidarity or as a label for cultural and economic elites who engage in frictionless mobility. Here, I understand *cosmopolitan capital* as a particular form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) that saturates the fields of humanitarianism and international politics. It is defined as a form of sociability that entails communication skills (Glick-Schiller et al. 2011) and linguistic competences (Jansson 2016) for an "orientation to openness to foreign others and cultures which emerges in practices and institutions in a global world" (Igarashi and Saito 2014: 224). As any form of cultural capital that is unevenly distributed, it forms the basis for exclusion from jobs and resources for some actors, as well as the basis for conversion into symbolic (institutional position) and economic (higher salaries) capitals for others.

Analysis

This section will analyse the specific rhetorical and discursive patterns by which elite status is realised and maintained. It will specifically look into the ICRC discourses of neutrality and internationality, both linked to mobility, which construct expat privilege through linguistic ideologies. The institutional discourse of neutrality constructs expat humanitarians as spokespeople who lack competence in local languages, which can be constructed as an index of remoteness. In the discourse of internationality, English is a must-have competence that signals (past) geographical mobility and international experience abroad. Multilingual repertoires are unequally valued between the two tiers of ICRC workers. Mobile staff's repertoires are institutionally *iconised* as international and neutral by virtue of pivotal languages like English, through which resident staff mediate languages in the field such as Pashto that are *erased* for expat positions but instrumental to humanitarian operations (Irvine and Gal 2000).

Discourse of neutrality

The ICRC delegate is a neutral intermediary by virtue of his or her institutional and expatriate status. Neutrality is one of the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and is defined as "In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature" (Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 1986). This formulation of neutral humanitarianism is closely linked to Swiss perpetual neutrality (1815) and both co-construct each other especially in their legitimacy is questioned (as in times of war). It is noteworthy that the original committee adopted the Swiss flag in reversed colours as the organisation's emblem. Swiss national identity as a humanitarian, neutral and pluralistic society (Del Percio 2014) has actually legitimised Geneva as a center for international cooperation since the 19th century.

"Neutrality" is closely linked to a continued legitimisation of nationality, since some nationalities are deemed to be more "neutral" than others. Nationality institutionally divides employees into "delegates" or "mobile staff" and national employees or "resident staff". In the "Working for the ICRC" webpage, all positions "in the field" are explicitly earmarked for non-nationals [3] since "owing to the ICRC's working procedures and principles, in particular the principle of neutrality, we cannot assign personnel to a country of which they are a national" (2016). Until 1992, the military and political neutrality of Switzerland justified the mono-nationality of *Swiss* delegates as neutral representatives. Still today, the steering committee is all-Swiss by co-optation. The opening to an international labour market decoupled neutrality from a specific nationality and is now dependent on "expatriate" status in a given context, where they should be accepted as neutral by virtue of their nationality.

This discourse was taken up by all my informants without exception and constructs (expat) delegates as legitimate spokespersons (Bourdieu 1991) who are perceived more trustworthy and ideologically detached than national staff. This minority is institutionally valued thanks to its characterisation as "strangers" or foreigners who are remote vis-à-vis local populations and staff, who in turn might be seen as a security threat to the operation and to themselves because of their cultural, linguistic and social nearness. In our interview (12-02-2016), Carolyn – who worked at the ICRC throughout the 1990s– claimed that sometimes delegates developed personal sympathies for certain groups that had to be hidden in their professional activity. However, the political

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[3] These « non nationals » might sometimes speak the official and/or vernacular language(s) of the nation-state where they are working.

convictions of local staff seemed to pose more of an obstacle to institutional neutrality. According to her, the difference lay in the fact that expats were on temporary missions whereas local staff were permanent residents perceived as belonging to one of the sides in a conflict.

Neutrality justifies the exclusive access of ICRC delegates to certain communicative and institutional spaces as spokespersons. The ICRC negotiates headquarters agreements with the nation-states where they operate that grant diplomatic status to delegates. Additionally, ICRC delegates are the only ones who can work in confidential protection tasks such as visiting prison detainees without witnesses and the confidential briefing of local authorities on the state of detention facilities. The reason given for the expats' exclusive access is the protection of local staff in armed conflicts where they (and their families) might face risks from the belligerents for collaborating with a foreign humanitarian agency. In the excerpt below, Dind (1998) -the delegate in charge of security for ICRC Operations - draws on this discourse to protect "national employees" from confidential information that could put them at risk and to use "expatriates" whose status as a foreigner grants them greater as they carry out their activities.

> In particular, a national employee is never entrusted with a mission regarded as too dangerous for a delegate unless his or her nationality, ethnic origin or language constitutes a security factor. Conversely, an expatriate rather than a national employee will be assigned to carry out a mission if his or her status as a foreigner is a security factor. Moreover, account will always be taken of the fact that delegation employees may be subject to political pressures to which expatriates are immune, that any confidential information they carry with them may put them at greater risk, and that, unlike expatriates, they cannot usually be evacuated.

Additionally, there is a link between the discourse of security through non-exposure to confidential information and the politics of mobility in humanitarian operations. The categorisation in terms of "national employees" and "expatriates"- who used to be Swiss nationals sent abroad- defines nationality as the main axis for differential access not only to symbolic and cultural capitals but also to material resources, such as evacuation and salaries.

In Example 1, Paul Rodin, the retired delegate whom we met in the introduction, articulates linguistic categorisations of speakers in his discussion of negotiations with authorities with the aid of an ICRC interpreter.

Example 1. Interview with Paul Rodin, 03-02-2016.

1	*ROD:	connaître une langue, on a l'impression que c'est exc- c'est
2		très bien c'est- c'est beaucoup, c'est beaucoup mieux que ne
3		pas connaître une langue c'est vrai, de façon générale, maiiis
4		dans le contexte d'un travail du CICR…
	%tra:	knowing a language, we have the impression that it is exc- that it is very good it's- it's a lot it's a lot better than not knowing a language, it's true, in general, buuut in the work context of the ICRC…
5	*MRG :	°qui est très délicat°
	%tra :	°which is very delicate°

6	*ROD:	dans un contexte de travail de CICR où, comme lors que vous
7		avez les entretiens, vous discutez, vous discutez de la de la il
8		y avait souvent un ou deux interlocuteurs en face de vous,
9		d'une attitude politique d'un gouvernement des décisions
10		politiques d'un gouvernement.
	%tra:	in an ICRC work context where, like when you have the interviews, you talk, you talk about about there were often one or two interlocutors opposite you, about a political attitude of a government the political decisions of a government.

11	*MRG :	aham.

12	*ROD:	**j'ai toujuours eu l'impression, que les gens étaient**
13		**beaucoup plus à l'aise, en sachant que vous parce que vous**
14		**ne parliez pas leur langue.**
	%tra:	I have always had the impression, that people were much more at ease, knowing that you because you did not speak their language.

15	*MRG :	a:hh d'accord !
	%tra :	a :hh alright !

16	*ROD:	et il y avait quand même, un espace de respiration.
	%tra:	and there was even, a breathing space.

17	*MRG :	oui: une bar-
	%tra :	yes: a bar-

18	*ROD:	une certaine de de de, d'intimité que vous m- vouliez pas euh-
19		violer.
	%tra:	a certain type of of of, privacy that you m- did not want to violate.

20	*MRG :	d'accord.
	%tra :	alright.

21	*ROD:	et que et pour eux c'était une façon, c'était quelque part ça
22		donn- donnait une une possibilité de re- de réagir de se de de,
23		de consulter leuur euh leur point de vue et tout ça, je posais
24		certaines questions etcetera, euh- donc et et parce que, euhh,
25		je pense que euh je pense qu'ils pouvaient faire ils faisaient
26		cela, **même en face de avec un un de mes de mes employés**
27		**qui était interprète, ils n'avaient pas beaucoup difficulté à**
28		**le faire en face de lui parce que, je pense qu'ils savaient ils**
29		**savaient [emphasis] que l'interprète qui était de de la**
30		**même, qui était qui était de leur pays et tout ça, euhh, il y**
31		**a avait une s- une limite qu'il allait pas dépasser non plus**
32		**n'est pas ?** donc euh…
	%tra :	and that and that for them it was a way, it as in some way it gav- gave a possibility of re-reacting to to to, to consult theiir

point of view and all that, I asked certain questions etcetera, uh- so and and becau:se, uh:: I think that uh I think that they could do they did that, even in front of one one of my: my employees who was an interpreter, they didn't have much difficulty to do it in front of him because, I think that they knew they knew [emphasis] that the interpreter who was from the same, who was from their country and all that, ehh, there was a limit that he would not cross either wasn't there? so uh:…

Ideologies of authenticity and anonymity mark the boundaries between the representative of an international agency and the national governmental authorities involved in the conflict. Knowing a language is generally "very good", but *not* for a delegate in the context of ICRC work (lines 1-4). Paul links the expatriate as a spokesperson to a lack of competence in his/her interlocutors' "own" language, noting that this lack of competence allows interlocutors to privately communicate in "their language" (line 14) and the delegate to maintain a distance as an intermediary during negotiations. The discourse of neutrality is closely linked to the mobility of expatriate staff whose rotation system does not allow them to develop local ties with the same depth and to master the local languages.

Authenticity based on linguistic and national belonging is, however, a double-edged weapon for the interpreter. What is striking here is that the delegate's detached and neutral role, epitomised by English and French as anonymous language(s), contrasts with the interpreter's positioning, who might be aligned with one of the belligerent sides by virtue of his/her *local* linguistic competences or nationality thereby partly erasing his/her repertoire. According to Woolard (2008), "the significance of the authentic voice is taken to be what it signals about who you are, more than what you say" (p. 2). Paul implies that the interpreter can have obligations towards those "from the same, who was from their country and all that" (lines 30-31), which therefore make him/her at least less neutral than delegates. As a local MSF employee put it, it is a "mixed blessing" to be familiar with local languages and regional culture and "it's much easier of you are from somewhere else and they don't know you" (Redfield 2012: 364-5).

Discourse of internationality
In May 2016, new "delegate" positions to work in the field were advertised. The requirement of "international and/or humanitarian voluntary background" - necessarily outside one's home country - was connected to the job condition "available to leave (sic) without family members for at least 24 months". Internationality connects to cosmopolitan stances constructed by humanitarian (expatriate) workers. International experience is iconised by certain widely spoken languages and especially to the ideology of English as a hyper-central language in a hierarchy of workplace languages (De Swaan 2010). Contrary to the previous requirements of English-French bilingualism for all the delegates that I interviewed, the 2016 job advertisement requires candidates to be "fluent in English and French, with a knowledge of a 3rd language", with "Arabic, Spanish and Russian- speaking delegates" of particular interest as working languages in many regions. The two administrative and pivotal languages, French and English, both appear in the accompanying video. They are spoken by non-native speakers and subtitles are provided, which constructs the anonymous character

of these languages, which can "be used equally by everyone precisely because they belong to no-one-in-particular" (Woolard 2008: 4).

International experience is a coveted quality in the ideal ICRC delegate. In response to my interview question about the distinction between "mobile" and "resident" staff, an ICRC Communications recruiter justified the need for expat employees with their international experience linked to their frequent mobility from one mission to another in different geopolitical areas. He regards their experience as an asset that contributes to the local operations in order to move beyond the national staff's contextualised ways of conceptualising and doing things.

Example 2. Interview with Xavier, Communications recruiter, 18-03-2016.

1	*XAV:	we are often wanting to have an e- foreign coordinator
2		because these people they have travelled a lot they
3		have an international experience.
4	*MRG :	ah aha.
5	*XAV:	and they can relate and compare and they can say ah
6		what I see now in Sudan, in in a former mission when
7		I was in Yemen we had this idea we tried this
8		programme and we found solutions so I mean, they
9		are profiting from this international experience.
10		
11	*MRG :	aham.
12	*XAV:	we cannot always rely only on national because they
13		are too in their context, they don't see…
14	*MRG :	yeah?
15	*XAV:	because they don't have this international exposure
16		they sometimes have problems to see outside the box.
17		

The ICRC delegate embodies "international experience" linked to having "travelled a lot" (lines 1-3) and this is iconised in the English language as the "hyper-central language", which connects all the working languages and mediates translation into less-widely spoken languages in the field (De Swaan 2010, see Example 1). According to Xavier, any ICRC expat must have "good" English written and oral skills because English is the lingua franca. This view is fully supported by all the job offers published on their site. However, this restrictive construction of multilingualism partially erases the multilingual repertoires of both expats and locals, as it only valorises "working languages", particularly English and French. The practical erasure of other linguistic resources such as Pashto or Tigrinya, which are actually crucial for the success of operations, may exclude many national employees from the higher tier of ICRC employees, mobile staff. In our interview, the same recruiter is aware of the reduction of wide linguistic repertoires to English, as in the case of South Asian multilinguals, and the exclusion from the mobile staff recruitment pool that this entails.

Among expatriates, there exists a division of (linguistic) labour (Duchêne 2016) between coordinators and generalist delegates, since upward professional mobility requires English to manage a delegation whereas field positions such as generalist delegate require, as we have seen, 3 working languages including English and French

(as of 2016). Thus, insufficient/lack of knowledge of an ICRC language or language(s) used by interlocutors and victims – e.g. Arabic in the Middle East– is not a deal breaker for mobile staff in positions of responsibility since "it's OK because you have national staff who do the interpretation, so working language is English" (interview with Xavier). Example 3 below shows how this lack of local linguistic competences relates to recruitment considerations and the use of English as lingua franca.

Example 3. Interview with Xavier, 18-03-2016.

1	*XAV:	but for the Arabic-speaking normally if like in, again, like
2		in Baghdad also the Baghdad colleague does not speak
3		Arabic.
4	*MRG :	oh ok.
5	*XAV:	buut it's OK we- we have to accept that I mean if we
6		would restrict the the, I mean if we would say only Arabic
7		speakers can become coordinator.
8	*MRG :	aha.
9	*XAV:	we would not have enough people.
10	*MRG :	oh OK, so it's a question of shortage of candidates, then?
11	*XAV:	yeah but also because the head of delegation himself or
12		herself they often don't speak Arabic.
13	*MRG :	ahh OK, I didn't know that.
14	*XAV:	so e- so even in the group of of expatriates when you have
15		to talk to each other I mean they could not, like in
16		Colombia they speak Spanish, or French sometimes or
17		English but normally Spanish, among the expats eh?
18	*MRG :	ahahahaham.
19	*XAV:	but in- in Baghdad I mean the working language is really
20		English so…
21	*MRG :	alright.
22	*XAV:	so I mean we cannot expect everybody to have the Arabic
23		skill otherwise we would be too restricted in our
24		recruitment.

Above the recruiter gives different values to the ICRC working languages, which according to De Swaan's world language system all belong to the "supercentral" category for international communication (2010) but which are actually not equal in this context. Apart from English as the linguistic *sine qua non*, Spanish and French are presented here (and by other informants) as in-house languages in delegations, in Latin America (e.g. Colombia, lines 16-17) for the former and in Africa for the latter. By way of contrast, Arabic is *not* the lingua franca in the Baghdad delegation, but English is (lines 19-20). As a non-European language, it might be more perceived as an authentic language linked to a territory (i.e. the Middle East) and (non-European) peoples that serves as a lingua franca with local interlocutors *outside* the delegation.

The challenging recruitment of Arabic-speaking delegates (lines 22-24) is linked to the Swiss and European predominance in the ICRC workforce, where Arabic might be perceived as an authentic language linked to speakers "from somewhere". Unlike Spanish, French and English, Arabic may not be associated with international workers

as an anonymous language to the same extent. Delegates were only Swiss before 1992 and they are still around 30% of the Communications Pool that Xavier manages (personal communication). Besides, European nationals have historically been the majority in the humanitarian sector and among expats in the Communications Pool. Since Arabic is not a widely-studied foreign language in Europe, it has been difficult to recruit expatriate workers who master it, while the institutional requirements for delegate positions (e.g. standard English test, international experience, nationality) have perhaps hindered the recruitment of skilled Arabs to these positions.

Discussion

The ICRC requirements for mobile staff draw on a restricted construction of multilingualism, with a predominance of English-French bilingualism, and international experience defined by mobility, especially for humanitarian work. This cosmopolitan capital is a malleable set of soft skills whose acquisition requires economic, legal, educational and social capital that is unevenly distributed in the world, favouring Western(-ised) elites. For example, "international experience" is indispensable for ICRC delegates whereby the already-mobile become more mobile. Thus, delegates form an elite of ICRC workers who enjoy linguistic mediation and greater ease of mobility than the majority of national employees, but who are equally exposed to security risks, often unaccompanied, in armed conflicts.

Delegates are *languaged* workers whose expat status is indexed by the use of English for employment and socialising with colleagues in international organisations (Adly 2013, Yeung 2009). We have seen that discourses of neutrality and internationality justify the requirement for English and French as anonymous, institutional languages. Expats' cosmopolitan outlook based on "openness to otherness" co-occurs with a legitimation of nationality and (linguistic) authenticity in their everyday work and categorisations, as we saw with Paul Rodin and his interpreter. Reaching out to the beneficiaries and interlocutors demands the use and mediation into "authentic" languages by resident staff whose voices are "from somewhere". Despite the fact that it is a working language, Arabic is halfway to becoming an anonymous language fully considered as cosmopolitan capital because it indexes a voice/persona from the Middle East at the ICRC.

At the ICRC, the institutionally-sanctioned cultural capitals stratify workers in a dual-tier labour system which is fractally recursive. Like in Duchêne's study at Zurich airport (2011, 2016), the division of labour between expats and locals at the ICRC seems to be based on post-colonial relations of power between a Westernised elite and their workers from other continents. In this case, it is the "non-nationals" who are in charge of delegations as spokespersons and who have the privilege not to learn local languages, even a working language like Arabic. Among expat workers, there is also a (linguistic) labour division between coordinators and delegation heads whose international experience transcends multilingual requisites (e.g. Arabic in Example 3), on the one hand, and generalist delegates in contact with local populations who need to speak 3 working languages (including English and French) to be more mobile, on the other.

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