

What Do Voters in Ukraine Want?: A Survey Experiment on Candidate Ethnicity, Language, and Policy Orientation

Timothy Frye

To cite this article: Timothy Frye (2015) What Do Voters in Ukraine Want?: A Survey Experiment on Candidate Ethnicity, Language, and Policy Orientation, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 62:5, 247-257, DOI: [10.1080/10758216.2015.1026200](https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2015.1026200)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2015.1026200>



Published online: 30 Jul 2015.



Submit your article to this journal



Article views: 105



View related articles



CrossMark

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
<http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=mppc20>

What Do Voters in Ukraine Want?

A Survey Experiment on Candidate Ethnicity, Language, and Policy Orientation

Timothy Frye

Department of Political Science, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
International Center for the Study of Institutions and Development, Higher School of Economics,
Moscow, RF

Language, ethnicity, and policy orientation toward Europe are key cleavages in Ukrainian society, but there is much debate about their relative importance. Based on a survey experiment of 1000 residents of Ukraine that manipulated three features of a fictional candidate running for parliament, I find that a candidate's ethnicity and language had little impact on reported vote choice, whereas economic policy orientation toward Europe was strongly associated with vote preference. Despite the intense politicization of both ethnicity and language and the violence in eastern Ukraine vote choice has not been reduced to an ethnic or linguistic census.

INTRODUCTION

Political maps of electoral results in Ukraine tell the story. Over the past 25 years, with few exceptions, election after election has produced stunningly clear blocs of voters preferring one candidate in the east and south and another in the center and west of Ukraine. With this visual in mind, it is easy to conclude that these sharp divisions are driven by ethnic, linguistic, and policy cleavages that, to some degree, map onto voting patterns.¹ Based solely on these maps one envisions a deeply divided society in which voters rarely cross ethnic or linguistic lines. These divisions should only be more pronounced in the wake of extensive military conflict in eastern Ukraine. Based solely on these maps and the level of conflict in the east of the country, it is easy to imagine elections in Ukraine as an ethnic or linguistic census in which voters seek candidates of their own ethnicity or language (Horowitz 1985; Ferree 2006).

Yet these maps also hide as much as they reveal. The vote results in national elections emerge only after the political process has limited the choice of voters to a

handful of candidates and we do not know whether different candidates might have yielded different vote results.² Despite the clear divisions revealed in voting results, Ukraine has elected presidents from five different regions and President Leonid Kuchma was elected with a large majority in eastern Ukraine in 1994 and a large majority in western Ukraine in 1999. More generally, while voting patterns appear to be clearly defined at the regional level, it is difficult to identify the impact of candidate ethnicity, language, and policy orientation on political attitudes and behavior at the individual level without survey data (cf. Arell 1995; 2014; Laitin 1998; Barrington, 2002; Barrington and Herron 2004; Fournier 2002; Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2007). Complicating the task is the considerable overlap in language, ethnicity, and policy orientation among individuals and candidates, which makes it difficult to discover the independent impact of each of these three factors on voting. Identifying the relative importance of candidate ethnicity, native language, and policy orientation on political behavior and attitudes is not so easy.³

Unraveling the distinctive impact of these features is important for many reasons, not the least of which is the prospect for building democracy and state capacity. Research from a variety of contexts demonstrates that ethnic and linguistic divisions have diminished the provision of public goods and exacerbated civil conflict (cf. Alesina and Glaeser 2004, but see Laitin and Fearon 2003). Moreover,

Address correspondence to Timothy Frye, Department of Political Science, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA. E-mail: tmf2@columbia.edu.

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/mppc.

each of these issues has been invoked as a factor shaping the current conflict in eastern Ukraine.

To isolate the impact of candidate ethnicity, candidate native language, and candidate policy orientation on a hypothetical vote choice, I conducted a survey experiment of 1,000 residents of Ukraine in June 2014 that manipulated three features of a fictional candidate running for a seat in the Ukrainian parliament: (1) ethnicity as revealed by either a Russian or Ukrainian name; (2) native language of Russian or Ukrainian; and (3) support for closer economic ties with Russia or with Europe.

As expected, the results indicate that the native language of the respondent provides a good guide to reported vote choice, but perhaps the most striking finding from this survey was how little importance voters attached to candidate ethnicity and candidate language (Kulyk 2011). Among both native speakers of Russian and native speakers of Ukrainian, a candidate's ethnicity or language had little impact on their hypothetical vote choice. In contrast, a candidate's economic policy orientation toward Europe or Russia was far more important. Certainly, economic policy orientation toward Russia or Europe calls to mind more than economics and should not be interpreted in narrow economic terms, but its power in shaping vote choice in this study is clear. That policy orientation toward Europe or Russia retains its importance for both groups of voters suggests that, at least at the time of the survey, vote choice in Ukraine had not been reduced to an ethnic or linguistic census, despite the intense politicization of ethnicity and language and the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine. In sum, while respondent language and ethnicity shaped vote preference in this study, candidate language and ethnicity did not. This is not to say that these cleavages are not present in society; it is only to say that they need not influence vote choice.

Having identified the importance of a candidate's economic policy orientation toward Europe or Moscow for a hypothetical vote choice, I then explore the determinants of support for economic ties with Russia. Simple regression analysis indicates that the respondent's native language is a strong predictor of support for economic ties with Russia as is the respondent's region of residence. A more surprising result also emerges. Controlling for a range of factors, native Russian speakers who self-identify as ethnic Ukrainian support closer economic ties with Russia at significantly lower levels than do Russian speakers who self-identify as ethnic Russians. In this case, ethnic Ukrainians whose native tongue is Russian have preferences more similar to ethnic Ukrainians who speak Ukrainian.

As I note in more detail below, caution is warranted in interpreting these results for a number of reasons. For example, the treatments of ethnicity, language, and policy orientation invoked in the survey experiment cannot capture many of the subtleties and nuances of these complex concepts. Moreover, economic policy orientation is freighted

with deep cultural, political, and historical connotations and should not be reduced solely to material economic interests. Nonetheless, it is striking how small changes in question wording can produce fairly substantial changes in a hypothetical vote choice. In addition, using a survey experiment to control for other factors potentially shaping vote choice makes it far easier to identify the independent impacts of candidate ethnicity, language, and policy orientation on vote choice than is typically possible using traditional regression methods.

DISCUSSION

Few dispute that language is a central cleavage in Ukrainian politics.⁴ Arel (2014, 2) observes that: "Ukraine is a bilingual state. But on the ground in Southeastern Ukraine it verges on monolingual. Anyone who has spent time in cities there can attest to the fact that Ukrainian is rarely heard in public and that Ukrainian speakers who wish to converse with civil servants in Ukrainian will hardly ever succeed. (The reverse is true in western Ukraine.) That divide is why the language question has been so central to Ukrainian politics since the country's independence in 1991." Similarly, Fournier (2002, 415) notes that in Ukraine, "Russians can ... be said to protest not against an ethnic exclusion by the Ukrainian state but against a perceived linguistic/cultural exclusion." Laitin (1998) documented an emerging identity of "Russian-speaking population" as an important identity marker in Ukraine with considerable relevance for politics, while Kulyk (2011) finds that language usage and language identity are powerful predictors of political attitudes. That one of the first acts of the interim government following then-President Viktor Yanukovych's departure in 2014 was to seek to change the 2012 language law—an effort that failed—is indicative of the importance of language in Ukrainian politics. That these linguistic divisions exist in Ukraine is without question, but it is less clear whether voters take candidate language into account in the polling booth.

Few also question the relevance of ethnicity as a central cleavage in Ukraine. This divide has deep roots. In the tsarist period the state sought to repress expressions of a distinctive Ukrainian identity and encouraged the settlement of Russian speakers in Ukraine, while in the Soviet period the state came to reify ethnicity through the creation of a titular Ukrainian republic, the use of ethnicity as a marker in passports, and support for cultural (but not political) expressions of Ukrainian identity (Szporluk 1997; Suny 1998). Barrington (2002, 465) notes that both primordial and constructivist theories would suggest the importance of ethnicity for Ukraine.⁵

A third oft-cited division in the popular literature on contemporary Ukraine is policy orientation toward Europe or Russia. On this view, it is the choice between aligning the

future of Ukraine with Brussels or Moscow that dominates political divisions. This topic has received less scholarly attention than language, ethnicity, or region in Ukraine, but the importance of this policy orientation has emerged with particular force in recent years in Ukrainian politics (but see Barrington and Faranda 2009). Indeed, it was the reaction to the decision to put off signing an association agreement with the European Union that motivated the early rounds of protest on the Maidan in 2013 and ultimately led to the collapse of the Yanukovych government in 2014. Darden and Way (2014) note that “if 20 years of scholarship and surveys teach us one thing, it is that Ukraine is a country that is deeply divided on virtually every issue pertaining to relations with Russia or the West, with very deep historic divisions that continue to bear on contemporary politics.”⁶

The policy choice of creating closer ties with Europe or Russia is freighted with deep economic, political, and cultural significance that in some ways is a reflection of linguistic and ethnic identities, but this mapping is far from perfect, which, as I argue below, allows us to explore its impact controlling for a candidate’s ethnicity and language.⁷ For example, Barrington and Faranda (2009) use these basic demographic and geographic covariates to predict a respondent’s level of “attachment toward Russia,” suggesting that a respondent’s orientation toward Russia or Europe should not be reduced to language or ethnicity.

Language, ethnicity, and policy orientation are broadly recognized as key elements of politics in Ukraine, but the relative importance of the factors, their impact under different conditions, and the precise meaning of these nuanced and complex concepts remains the subject of debate. For example, while many scholars document the existence of Ukraine’s linguistic, ethnic, and policy divisions, fewer studies examine whether and how these cleavages influence vote choice. One difficulty that all researchers of Ukraine face is that ethnicity, language and policy orientation overlap to a considerable degree, which makes it hard to identify the independent impact of these features. Scholars have used a variety of methods to explore this issue. Existing empirical research tends to use observational data and to estimate the impact of individual level surveys on political attitudes and vote choice (cf. Barrington 2002). Other works use a more aggregated approach and examine how district- or regional-level factors shape election results (cf. Clem and Craumer 1999; Darden 2014). Still others use focus groups, content analysis, and case studies (cf. Laitin 1998; Fournier 2002). These works have made valuable contributions.

This work takes a somewhat different approach by embedding an experiment in a survey of the mass public that creates eight fictitious candidates, randomly assigns one of these eight candidates to a respondent, and then records the respondent’s preference over vote choice. This approach has shortcomings in that the setting (and the candidate) is artificial, but it has the advantage of offering greater hope of

unraveling the distinctive impact of candidate ethnicity, language, and policy orientation, when in many cases these factors are highly correlated. Because the eight hypothetical candidates are randomly assigned to respondents, the only factors that should influence the average responses across each of the eight candidates are the small changes in question wording. That is, characteristics of the respondent, such as age, gender, and employment status, or contextual factors, such as region or town size, cannot account for the differences in the average responses between questions because the questions have been randomly assigned to respondents. In this way, we can more cleanly identify the independent impact of candidate ethnicity, language, and policy orientation on reported vote choice.

SURVEY

Interviewers surveyed 1,000 residents of Ukraine from June 13 to July 1, 2014, in a national sample that included respondents from 46 cities and villages including 3 cities in Donetsk and 3 in Crimea.⁸ Fifty-nine percent of the sample identified Ukrainian as their native language, and 40 percent identified Russian as their native tongue, while 81 percent of respondents identified as ethnic Ukrainian, and 16 percent identified as ethnic Russian. Twenty-three percent of respondents reported their ethnicity as Ukrainian and their native language as Russian. Looking at the responses across four regions within Ukraine, we find that 34 percent of respondents were from four oblasts of eastern Ukraine, (Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Donetsk); 23 percent were from central Ukraine, (Kyiv, Khmelnytsky, Cherkasyi, Vinnytsia, Poltava, Zhytomir, Chernihiv), 26 percent were from western Ukraine (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Volyn, Ternopil, Chernivtsi), and 16 percent were from southern Ukraine (Odessa, Crimea, Sevastopol, Kherson, and Mykolaiv).⁹ With eight treatments, each question was asked to roughly 125 respondents.

To begin to explore the impact of candidate language, candidate ethnicity, and policy orientation, we embedded a survey experiment that created eight fictional candidates. One version of the eight candidates was randomly assigned to respondents who were then asked how likely they were to vote for the candidate. More specifically, interviewers asked:

Let’s say that there were elections to the Supreme Rada. A candidate with the following features took part in the race. About how willing would you be to vote for this candidate? [Ivan Egorovich Filinov/Borys Bohdanovich Tkachenko] is a 40 year-old businessman who speaks [Russian/Ukrainian] as his native language. He is promising to reduce corruption, increase spending on education, and build tighter economic ties with [Russia/Europe].

1. Not at all likely
2. More likely no than yes
3. More likely yes than no
4. Very likely
5. It is hard to answer
6. Refuse to answer

While many names are common in both Russia and Ukraine, Ivan Egorovich Filinov is a distinctly Russian name, while Borys Bogdanovich Tkachenko is a distinctly Ukrainian one.¹⁰ Twenty one percent of respondents answered “it is hard to say” and 6 percent of respondents refused to answer. Given the hypothetical nature of the question, the high rate of “hard to say” responses is not surprising. Fortunately, the “hard to say” and the “refused to answer” responses are distributed almost equally across all eight treatments, as I demonstrate in Appendix 1. I create a four-point scale by excluding the “hard to say” and “refused to answer” respondents.¹¹ The most common response to the question (27 percent of respondents) was “not at all likely,” which suggests a high degree of disillusion among voters.

The results are interesting in several respects. First, despite their distinctive features, there is little difference in the average level support for each of these candidates as

depicted in Figure 1. The differences in the average support for seven of the eight candidates are statistically indistinguishable from zero. There is greater average support for the ethnic Ukrainian candidate Borys Bohdanovich Tkachenko, who speaks Russian and supports closer economic ties with Europe, than for other candidates (2.51 versus 2.72, $p = .02$), but support for all other candidates is roughly the same. However, as we see in the next paragraph, these average levels of support mask vast differences in the preferences of voters whose native language is Russian or Ukrainian.

Second, as revealed in Figure 2, while the different features of the hypothetical candidate have little impact on the average respondent in Ukraine, there are large differences in the preferences of native speakers of Ukrainian and Russian.¹² Across six of the eight candidates, native Russian speakers and native Ukrainian speakers express significantly different levels of support. Consider Candidate 1, an ethnic Russian with Russian as a native language who favors closer economic ties with Russia. Russian speakers support him at 2.94, while Ukrainian speakers do so at 1.65 ($p = .00$).

Three candidates (4, 6, and 8) with more mixed profiles, however, draw roughly equal levels of support from Russian-speaking and Ukrainian speaking respondents. It

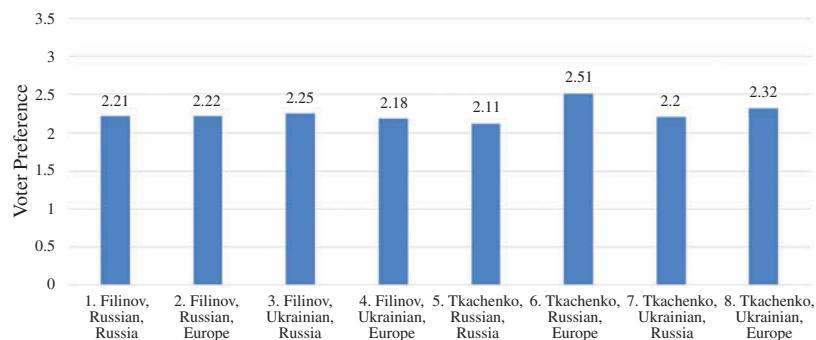


FIGURE 1 Voter choice over candidates.

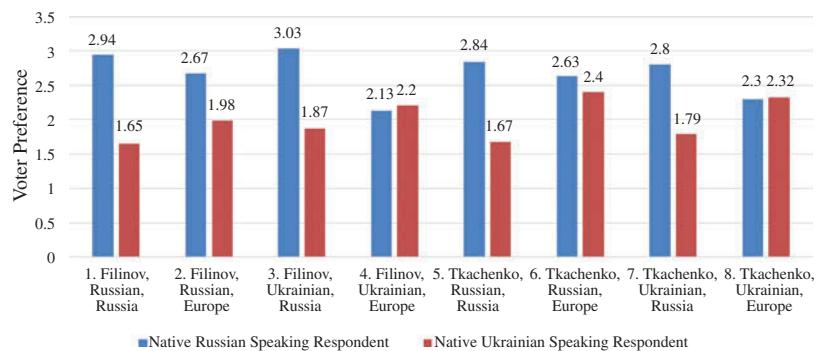


FIGURE 2 Vote choice by respondent language.

is interesting that each of the candidates who receive roughly equal levels of support favored closer economic ties with Europe rather than with Russia. In addition, Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking respondents support the candidate who most closely resembles current Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, (candidate 8), in essentially equal percentages (2.30 versus 2.32).¹³

The third result is perhaps most surprising. Among all respondents, policy orientation is a powerful mover of vote choice, even more so than are differences in the language and ethnicity of the candidate. In Figure 3, I limit the sample to respondents who are native Ukrainian speakers, but the results are qualitatively similar when analyzing only the responses of native Russian speakers, who are fewer in number in the sample. To begin, I focus on candidate ethnicity. The results reported in Figure 3 feature four paired comparisons that hold constant the candidate's native language and economic policy orientation, but vary the candidate's ethnicity. For example, in the first and second columns of the first paired comparison, the candidate is a Russian speaker who favors economic ties with Russia, but in the first column the candidate is an ethnic Russian and in the second column he is an ethnic Ukrainian. Most striking here is the weak impact of changing the hypothetical candidate's ethnicity on reported vote choice. Only in the second paired comparison, where the candidate is Russian-speaking and favors economic ties with Europe, does changing his ethnicity have a statistically significant impact on the responses at the .10 level (1.98 versus 2.40, $p = .07$). In three of the four cases changing the candidate's ethnicity had little impact on the reported vote choice of the respondents.

Among Russian-speaking respondents, changing the ethnicity of the hypothetical candidate produces no statistically

significant changes in any of these four paired comparisons.¹⁴ It is possible that the names of these candidates were "insufficiently" ethnic to influence voters, but the names were chosen to be distinctly Russian and Ukrainian.¹⁵ Moreover, that each of the names has several distinctly ethnic components suggests it would be hard to miss the ethnic cue. A more likely explanation is that candidate ethnicity is not a prime mover of vote choice in this case.

The next section focuses on the impact of candidate language on vote choice. In Figure 4, I use a similar procedure as in the preceding analysis and report the impact of changing the language of the candidate using paired comparisons of the hypothetical candidates that hold constant the candidate's ethnicity and economic policy, but vary their native language. The respondent pool here is limited to respondents whose native language is Ukrainian.

Here again, changing the candidate's native language has no appreciable impact on voter preferences in any of the four paired comparisons. For example, in the first paired comparison that features an ethnic Russian candidate who favors economic ties with Russia, changing the candidate's language from native Russian to native Ukrainian increases the vote preference scale from 1.65 to 1.87, a difference that is not statistically significant. Similarly, the third and fourth paired comparisons involving an ethnic Ukrainian candidate show little appreciable difference in the responses (1.67 versus 1.79 and 2.40 and 2.32, respectively). Limiting the sample to only Russian speakers produces similarly weak results. In results not shown here, I find that among native Russian speakers in only one of the four paired comparisons does changing the native language of the candidate produce a statistically significant impact at $p < .10$. In sum, holding other features constant while changing the native language

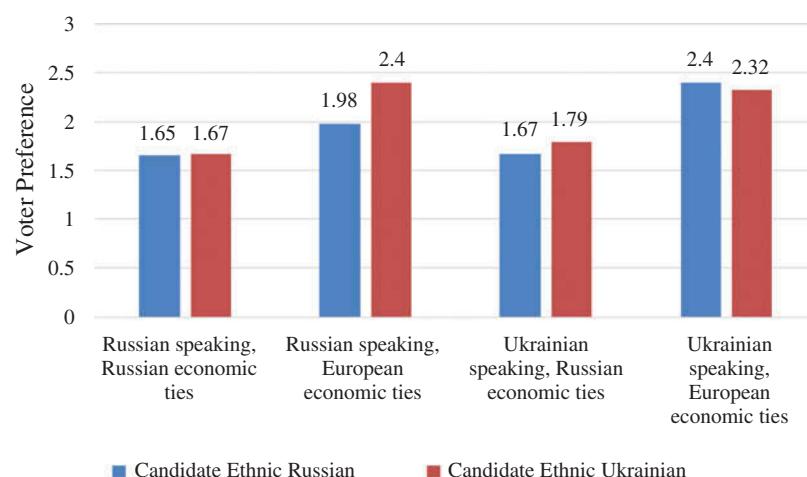


FIGURE 3 Candidate ethnicity and vote choice (results only from native Ukrainian-speaking respondents).

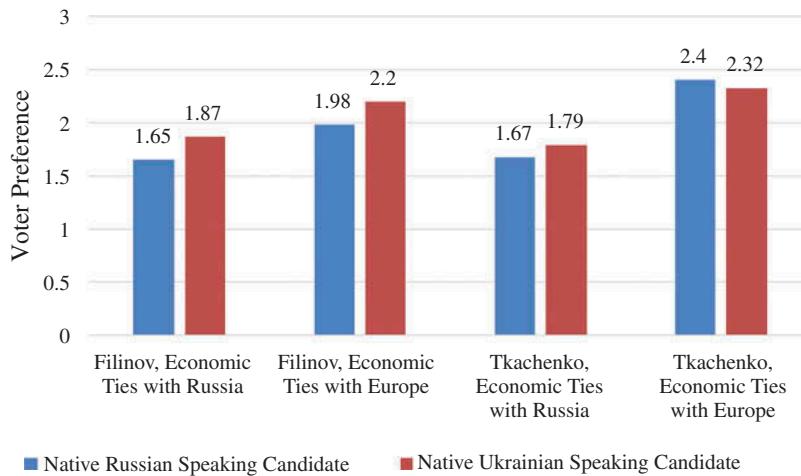


FIGURE 4 Candidate language and vote choice (results only from native Ukrainian-speaking respondents).

of the candidate appears to have little effect on reported vote choice for a hypothetical candidate.

Finally, the last set of paired comparisons holds constant the candidate's ethnicity and native language, but varies their economic policy orientation. Again, this dimension encapsulates more than just economic policies, as "economic ties to Russia" or "economic ties to Europe" are freighted with a host of connotations about culture and politics. Here we see far more striking results (Figure 5). Among native speakers of Ukrainian, we see statistically significant increases in the vote preference scale in three of the four paired comparisons. For example, in the first set of paired comparisons, changing the policy orientation of an ethnic Russian candidate whose native language is Russian from pro-Russian to pro-European yields a statistically significant increase (1.65 versus 1.98. $p = .09$). Next, consider the second paired comparison from the left, which

features an ethnic Russian who speaks Ukrainian. Changing his economic policy orientation from Russia to Europe increases support among voters from 1.87 to 2.20 ($p = .10$). Finally, the two other paired comparisons involving candidate Borys Bohdanovich Tkachenko produced large and statistically significant effects (1.67 versus 2.4, and 1.79 versus 2.32). Thus, there is broad support for the view that economic policy orientation, broadly conceived, influences vote choices in these experiments.

In results not shown here, I also find that limiting the sample to Russian speakers produces similar results, but the change in responses occurs in the opposition direction. In this much smaller sample of respondents, changing the candidate's economic policy orientation from Russia to Europe is associated with sharp decreases in support for the candidate of at least .23 points in each of the four paired comparisons. These declines are statistically significant in

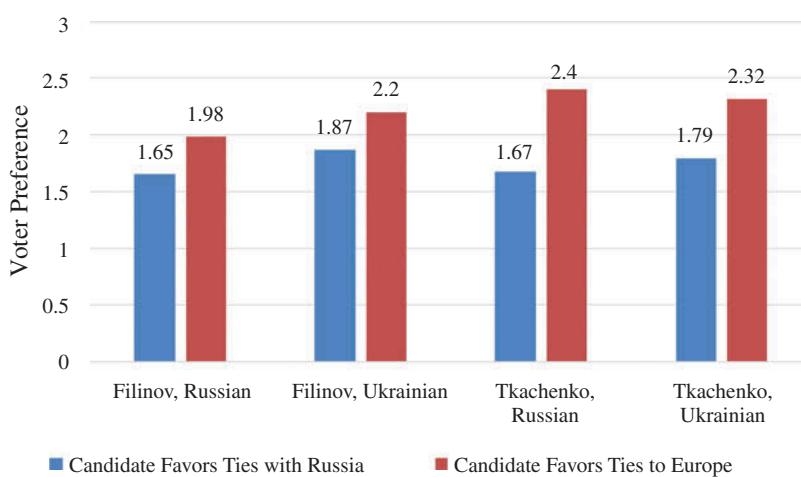


FIGURE 5 Policy orientation and vote choice (results only from native Ukrainian-speaking respondents).

two of the four paired comparisons, despite the far smaller sample size. For example, in the second paired comparison of an ethnic Russian candidate who speaks Ukrainian, moving from a policy orientation toward Russia to a policy orientation toward Europe reduces support from 3.03 to 2.13 ($p = .00$). Again, these results underscore the importance of a candidate's economic policy orientation for reported vote choice.¹⁶

UNPACKING ECONOMIC POLICY ORIENTATION

A candidate's economic policy orientation is a powerful mover of a hypothetical vote choice, but this result begs the question: Why do some respondents support closer economic ties with Moscow, while others do not? To explore this issue, I asked respondents to what extent they agreed with the following statement on a four-point scale where 1 equals fully disagree and 4 equals fully agree: "Ukraine's economic future lies with Russia, not with Europe." The average response across the sample was 2.19, but these responses differed sharply among Ukrainian and Russian speakers. The latter supported closer economic ties with Russia at a significantly higher level than the former (2.93 versus 1.64).

The next analysis takes into account a number of other factors that may be correlated with closer support for closer economic ties with Russia. In this analysis, the dependent variable is the response to the question on support for economic ties with Russia, not Europe. I introduce an independent variable for the native language of the respondent which takes a value of 1 for native Ukrainian speakers and includes a dummy variable for the 23 percent of the sample who self-identify as ethnic Ukrainians while also reporting that Russian is their native language. This latter group is interesting because their self-reported Ukrainian ethnic identity may lead them to support closer economic ties with Europe, while their native language of Russian may lead them to support closer economic ties with Moscow.

It may be that economic ties with Russia are a proxy for political views. That is, those who oppose closer economic ties with Russia may do so because they put a higher value on democracy than do others and oppose Russia's more autocratic government. I addressed this possibility by including a variable that measures the extent to which respondents agree with the statement: "It is usually better for the country's leaders to be chosen in free elections." If this view were true, we might expect those who hold more democratic values as measured by this question to be less likely to support close economic ties with Russia. I add controls for the respondent's age and gender, and for the region of the respondent's residence as well as the size of the town of residence of the respondent.

The results indicate that native Ukrainian speakers support closer economic ties with Russia at significantly lower rates than do native Russian speakers. Even after controlling for the other factors included in Table 1, moving from a native Russian to Ukrainian speaker decreases support for closer economic ties with Russia by almost a full point on the four-point scale (.97). This is a large coefficient. Perhaps more surprising, ethnic Ukrainians who report that Russian is their native language also oppose closer economic ties with Russia at significantly lower levels than do ethnic Russians whose native language is Russian. The size of the effect is still quite large (-.43 on a scale of 1–4). This result suggests the importance of a self-reported ethnic Ukrainian identity for attitudes toward closer economic ties with Russia. In this case, ethnicity appears to trump native language for this particular subgroup of the population.

Age is positively correlated with support for closer economic ties with Russia, but this result is largely driven by respondents over 70. Age is no longer significantly correlated with support for closer economic ties with Russia when the sample includes only respondents

TABLE 1
Who Supports Closer Economic Ties with Russia?

Variables	Model 1 Coefficient (Standard error)	Model 2 Marginal effect (Standard error)
Native Ukrainian speaker	-.97*** (.11)	.17*** (.04)
Ethnic Ukrainian Russian speaker	-.43*** (.12)	.13** (.05)
Age	.003* (.002)	.00 (.00)
Male	.08 (.06)	-.06 (.03)
Support for democracy	-.06 (.06)	.06* (.03)
South	1.23*** (.13)	.08 (.05)
Central	.15* (.08)	.21* (.05)
East	.91*** (.11)	.17** (.04)
Constant	2.44*** (.28)	— —
Rsq	.45	.06
Prob > f	.0000	.0000
Number of observations	765	1000
Dependent variable	"Closer ties with Russia" (1–4)	"Hard to say" response (0–1)

Note: In model 1 the dependent variable is "support for closer economic ties with Russia, not Europe." It ranges from 1 to 4. Controls for the size of the respondent's town of residence not reported. *, **, *** = significance at .10, .05, and .01 respectively. OLS regression. The results are unchanged using ordered probit. Model 2 reports marginal effects from a probit model using "hard to say" responses to the question "support for closer economic ties with Russia, not Europe" as the dependent variable.

under the age of 70. Neither gender nor support for democracy is associated with closer economic ties with Russia. Thus, support for democracy, at least as measured here, is not serving as a proxy for attitudes about closer economic ties with Russia. Variables related to regional cleavages perform about as expected. Compared to residents of western Ukraine, respondents in other regions of Ukraine support closer economic ties with Russia at a far higher rate. For example, residents of eastern Ukraine register almost a full point higher (.91) on the four-point scale of supporting closer economic ties with Russia. As in the survey experiments offering voters a choice of candidates, I find that a respondent's native language is closely associated with attitudes toward political and economic outcomes.

However, these results should be interpreted with some caution due to the political sensitivity of the question. Twenty-two percent of respondents answered that it was "hard to say" whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "Ukraine's economic future lies with Russia, not Europe." The level of non-responses to this rather straightforward question may reveal the respondent's uncertainty. Alternatively, it may reveal their unwillingness to give a more precise answer. To probe which factors make respondents more likely to answer "hard to say," I turn to Model 2 in [Table 1](#), which uses the same variables as in Model 1 to explore the determinants of these non-responses. Here the dependent variable equals 1 if the respondents gave the answer "hard to say" to the question about Ukraine's economic future. The results indicate that respondents in central and eastern regions are far more likely to give a "hard to say" response to this question than were respondents in western regions. Indeed, respondents in the four eastern regions in the survey are, on average, about 17 percentage points more likely to answer "hard to say" than are respondents in the western regions of the country.

Moreover, native Ukrainian speakers and ethnic Ukrainians whose native language is Russian are significantly more likely to respond "hard to say" than are native Russian speakers who identify as ethnic Russians. One can only speculate about the direction of the bias of these non-responses. It may be that the Ukrainian-speaking respondents are less willing to reveal support for closer economic ties with Russia, which would weaken the relationship between being a native speaker of Ukrainian and opposing closer economic ties with Russia reported in Model 1. Fortunately, as the appendix demonstrates, the problem of non-response does not undermine the validity of the survey experiments reported above, as the non-response rate in the survey experiments was equally distributed across all eight versions of the question. That is, because the "hard to say" responses in the survey experiments were equally distributed across questions, they cannot account for the differences in the responses between the questions.

CONCLUSION

Of course, the caveats are many. The results are from a single survey at a single point in time and attitudes may have changed since the survey was conducted. The candidates and vote decisions are hypothetical. There is no campaign, no alternative candidate, and no vote buying or electoral coercion ([Alina-Pisano 2010](#)). This analysis has only focused on three features of a candidate, but other features might be more important. Finally, an analysis of how respondent language or ethnicity interacts with other factors, such as region, class, and religion, might be informative, but are not analyzed here. Changing policy orientation toward Russia or Europe is an important mover of vote choice within regions of Ukraine, but further subgroup analysis is limited by the relatively small numbers of particular types of respondents in each of the eight treatments. And, as noted, above, language, ethnicity, and policy orientation are far more subtle concepts than can be easily captured in a single survey question. Nonetheless, it is informative to see how small changes in question wording can produce striking differences and similarities in responses.

More generally, the results remind us that native Ukrainian and native Russian speakers have very different preferences over their candidates.^{[17](#)} In this hypothetical campaign, knowing a respondent's native language is quite helpful in predicting their reported vote choice. What is perhaps more interesting is that, even after taking into account the respondent's native language, these vote preferences are motivated more by concerns about a candidate's policy orientation toward Russia or Europe than about a candidate's ethnicity or language. That candidate ethnicity and language are not prime movers of voter preference is surprising given the importance attached to these issues in the much of the writing on contemporary Ukraine. This is also surprising as one might have expected the conflict in the eastern regions of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea to have hardened these ethnic and linguistic divides. This is not to say that language and ethnicity are not central features in Ukrainian politics and daily life. The analysis only shows that in this particular context, a candidate's ethnicity and language are not especially strong motivators of vote choice. That is, social cleavages may exist and be widely recognized without necessarily predicting how individuals behave in the voting booth. It also suggests that elections in Ukraine need not be reduced to an ethnic or linguistic census in which Russian speakers only vote for Russian speakers and Ukrainian speakers only vote for Ukrainian speakers.

These results have echoes beyond the survey. Native Russian-speaking President Leonid Kuchma learned Ukrainian only in 1994 and managed to win the presidency in 1999 with huge support from the mostly Ukrainian-speaking central and western regions of the country. Indeed, on occasion he gave his state of the union address

in Ukrainian while also answering questions after the speech in Russian, his more comfortable language. Ardent supporter of European integration and current mayor of Kiev Vitaly Klitschko is also a native Russian speaker who is learning Ukrainian.¹⁸ Despite occupying opposite ends of the political spectrum, Yulia Tymoshenko, former prime minister from the Fatherland party, and her former arch rival ex-president Viktor Yanukovych are both native Russian speakers.¹⁹ While the official status of the Russian language has been a source of contention for years in post-Soviet Ukraine, voters appear willing to cast ballots for those who do not share their native language. Given the extent of bilingualism in Ukraine this is perhaps less surprising than it seems.

As a final check, I estimated whether a respondent's policy orientation toward Russia influenced their vote choice in the May 25, 2014 presidential election in Ukraine. This is an imperfect example as the choices available to the voter were far more limited than in the survey experiment, particularly as Petro Poroshenko was a clear favorite who won by a large margin. Moreover, the campaign season was compressed and voting was held in the midst of conflict in eastern Ukraine. However, controlling for the respondent's age, gender, support for democracy, region, and town size, respondents who opposed economic ties with Russia were far more likely to vote for Poroshenko. Indeed, each one point increase on the four-point scale of support for closer economic ties with Moscow is associated with a 9 percentage point drop in the likelihood that a respondent voted for Poroshenko. Thus, the results from the survey experiment do seem to have some implications outside of the context of the survey experiment.

At a minimum, the results suggest that more research is needed to understand how policy orientations influence political attitudes and behavior in Ukraine independent of ethnic, linguistic, and regional identities. Here I mention "economic" policy orientation in the experimental vignette, but it surely invokes associations with cultural and political ties as well. The initial exploration here of respondents' policy orientation emphasized the importance of respondent's native language. Native Ukrainian speakers support closer economic ties with Russia at far lower rates than do Russian speakers. In addition, ethnic Ukrainians whose native language is Russian oppose closer economic ties far more than do ethnic Russians whose native language is Russian. In the future, it would be helpful to identify more precisely the independent impacts of political, cultural, and economic ties with Russia and Europe on political attitudes and behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Yuri Shevchuk, Valery Kuchynsky, and Marko Andryczyk for linguistic advice, Oxana Shevel, Mark

Beissinger, Graeme Robertson, Joshua Tucker, and members of a Harriman Institute/ICSID workshop held September 18–19, 2014 for comments.

FUNDING

The author thanks the Harriman Institute and a grant from Stephan and Tamara Tymkiw for supporting this research.

NOTES

1. See Clem (2014) for a rebuttal of this view.
2. This problem should be familiar to voters in U.S. Presidential elections who often complain of having limited choices.
3. Wanner (2014:427) notes: "After 23 years of independence, Ukraine retains significant regional diversity and strong local identities. At the same time, social differences understood in terms of ethnicity, language choice, and religious affiliation have become less defined, as Ukrainians have embraced fluid linguistic and religious practices that defy easy characterization."
4. Here I focus on candidate ethnicity, language, and policy orientation. Other potential sources of cleavage are beyond the scope of this article. On the impact of religion as a source of division, see Snegovaya (2010); on the influence of education on identity, see Darden and Grzymala-Busse (2007); and Darden (2014); on the relationship between ethnic and political identity, see Shevel (2002).
5. Barrington (2002) finds that both language and ethnicity are less important than one might expect once region is controlled for.
6. See Darden, Keith and Lucan Way, 2014. "Who are the Protesters in Ukraine?" Monkey Cage February 12, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/12/who-are-the-protesters-in-ukraine/>
7. One often-studied cleavage in Ukrainian politics is region (cf. O'Loughlin 2001; Barrington and Herron 2001). Here I do not manipulate the region of the candidate for a number of reasons. First, adding a fourth candidate dimension would make hinder the analysis by reducing degrees of freedom. In addition, capturing region as a concept in a single manipulation is very difficult given debate over the number of "regions," the political salience of regions, and the precise nature of the region effect. On this last point it is unclear whether regional effect is primarily a compositional effect in that in merely proxies for other factors that are geographically concentrated or exerts an independent effect. See also Birch (2000).
8. Interviewers did not travel at all to Luhansk region and avoided areas of fighting in Donetsk region.
9. See Barrington and Herron (2004) for a discussion of how different definitions of region can shape results.
10. This vignette is unlikely to capture the nuances of language use, ethnicity, or policy orientation. Economic policy orientation toward Russia and Europe has deep cultural and political connotations; ethnicity is more subtle than an individual's name; and native language does not include the possibility of being bi-lingual. In addition, the question holds constant and does not manipulate region, class, or other potentially relevant dimensions of candidates. Yet, the hope here is that comparing how small changes in information about a candidate shapes vote preferences can help identify the independent impact of these factors that are often highly correlated.
11. Recoding the "hard to say" responses as a middle category produces essentially the same results.

12. These results are similar if we limit the sample to the 81 percent of respondents who identified themselves as ethnic Ukrainian rather than those who self-identify as native Ukrainian speakers. On the problem of relying on self-reports of native language in Ukraine, see Bremmer (1994).
13. Breaking the population into three groups—native Ukrainophone Ukrainians, native Russophone Ukrainians, and native Russophone Russians—produces similar results but the sample size for each treatment is smaller, which makes it more difficult to draw firm conclusions.
14. These results are not shown but are available from the author.
15. It should be noted that Boris is a common Russian name as well, and perhaps Taras would have been a better choice, but the patronymic and last name are clearly Ukrainian and among Ukrainian speakers the Ukrainian spelling, Borys, was used.
16. The results from Figures 1–5 are also borne out using regression analysis.
17. The subgroup results are similar with samples limited to self-identified ethnic Ukrainians as well, but because ethnic Russians make up only about 16 percent of the sample it is hard to analyze their responses to different candidates with a great deal of confidence.
18. Vitali Klitschko. “Pugilist politician aiming to lead Ukraine.” December 6, 2013. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/24824ff-5d16-11e3-a558-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3FUU2GkMQ>
19. Viktor Yanukovych. “Can the great survivor of Ukraine politics hang on?” December 2, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/02/viktor-yanukovych-ukraine-protests-orange>

REFERENCES

- Alesina, Alberto, and Edward Glaeser. 2004. *Fighting Poverty in the United States and Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Alina-Pisano, Jessica. 2010. “Social Contracts and Authoritarian Project in the Post-Soviet Space: The Use of Administrative Resources.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43 (November): 373–82.
- Arel, Dominique. 1995. “Language Politics in Independent Ukraine: Towards One of Two State Languages,” *Nationalities Papers* 23 (3): 597–622.
- . 2014. “Double-Talk: Why Ukrainians Fight Over Language,” <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141042/dominique-arel/double-talk>
- Barrington, Lowell. 2001. “Region, Language, and Nationality: Rethinking Support in Ukraine for Maintaining ‘Distance’ from Russia.” In *Nationalism, Nation Building and Identity in Ukraine*, eds. Taras Kuzio and Paul D’Anieri.
- . 2002. “Examining Rival Theories of Demographic Influences on Political Support: The Power of Regional, Ethnic, and Linguistic Divisions in Ukraine.” *European Journal of Political Research* 41 (4): 455–91.
- , and Erik Herron. 2002. “Understanding Public Opinion in Post-Communist States: The Effects of Statistical Assumptions on Substantive Results.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53 (4): 573–94.
- , and Erik Herron. 2004. “One Ukraine or Many: Regionalism in Ukraine and its Political Consequences.” *Nationalities Papers* 32 (1): 53–86.
- , and Regina Faranda. 2009. “Re-Examining Region, Ethnicity, and Language in Ukraine.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 25 (3): 232–56.
- Birch, Sarah. 2000. “Interpreting the Regional Effect in Ukrainian Politics.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 52 (6): 1017–41.
- Bremmer, Ian. 1994. “The Politics of Ethnicity: Russians in the New Ukraine.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 46 (2): 261–84.
- Craumer, Peter R., and James I. Clem. 1999. “Ukraine’s Emerging Electoral Geography: A Regional Analysis of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections.” *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 40 (1): 1–26.
- Darden, Keith. 2014. *Resisting Occupation: Mass Literacy and the Creation of Durable National Loyalties*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- , and Anna Grzymala-Busse. 2007. “Great Divide: Literacy, Nationalism, and Communist Collapse,” *World Politics* 59 (1).
- , and Lucan Way. 2014. “Who are the Protesters in Ukraine?” Monkey Cage February 12, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/12/who-are-the-protesters-in-ukraine/>
- Ferree, Karen E. 2006. “Explaining South Africa’s Racial Census,” *Journal of Politics* 68 (4): 803–15.
- Fournier, Anna 2002. “Mapping Identities: Russian Resistance to Linguistic Ukrainisation in Central and Eastern Ukraine,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54 (3): 415–33.
- Horowitz, Donald, L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kulyk, Volodymyr. 2011. “Language Identity, Linguistic Diversity, and Political Cleavages,” *Nations and Nationalism* 17 (3): 627–48.
- Laitin, David. 1998. *Identity in Formation: The Russian Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- , and James Fearon. 2003. “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.
- O’Laughlin, John O. 2001. “The Regional Factor in Contemporary Ukrainian Politics: Scale, Place, or Bogus Effect.” *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 42 (1): 1–33.
- Shevel, Oksana. 2002. “Nationality in Ukraine: Some Rules of Engagement,” *East European Politics and Society* 16 (2): 386–413.
- Snegovaya, Maria. 2010. “Economic and Political Preferences of Different Religions: Catholic Versus Orthodox Groups of Population in Ukraine,” <http://papers.isnie.org/paper/468.html>
- Suny, Ronald Grigor 1998. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Szporluk, Roman. 1997. “Ukraine: From Imperial Periphery to a Sovereign State.” *Daedalus* 126 (3): 85–119.
- Wanner, Catherine. 2014. “Fraternal Nations and Challenges to Sovereignty in Ukraine: The Politics of Linguistic and Religious Ties.” *American Ethnologist* 41 (3): 427–39.

APPENDIX 1

This appendix presents the results of a probit estimation to determine whether the “hard to say” responses and the “don’t know”/“refused to answer” responses in the survey were influenced by the eight different treatments. Here I estimate a probit model that predicts the likelihood that a subject responded “hard to say” in model 1 in column 2 or “don’t know”/“refused to answer” in model 2 in column 4. As independent variables, I include the eight different types of fictitious candidates. The results indicate that the impact of the treatment effects on the likelihood of a “hard to say” response in model 1 or “don’t know”/“refused to answer” in model 2 are not statistically significant at standard levels. Thus we should not be concerned that the results cited above are driven by differences in non-response rates across versions of the question.

TABLE A1
The Non-Problem of Non-Response

<i>Candidate number</i>	<i>"Hard to say"</i> <i>Probit model 1</i>	<i>Mean percent</i> "hard to say" <i>responses</i>	<i>"Don't know"/</i> "refused" <i>Probit model 2</i>	<i>Mean percent</i> "don't know"/"refused" <i>responses</i>
1	2	3	4	5
1	.28 (.19)	.29	.09 (.26)	.07
2	.23 (.19)	.27	.09 (.26)	.07
3	-.12 (.19)	.17	.08 (.25)	.07
4	—	.20	—	.06
5	.17 (.19)	.25	.08 (.25)	.07
6	.03 (.19)	.21	.14 (.25)	.08
7	.05 (.19)	.22	-.14 (.28)	.04
8	.10 (.19)	.23	—	.03
Constant	-.84 (.13)		-1.57 (.18)	
Observations	884		942	
LR chi2'	6.72		3.54	
Pseudo R2	.007		.008	

Note: The reference category is candidate 4. Columns 3 and 5 report the mean number of "hard to say" and "refused to answer" responses in each treatment.