



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Journal of Comparative Economics

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jce](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jce)

## Can state language policies distort students' demand for education? ☆

Alexander Muravyev<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Oleksandr Talavera<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg branch, Russia

<sup>b</sup> Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Germany

<sup>c</sup> Management School, University of Sheffield, Conduit Road, Sheffield S10 1FL, UK

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 12 August 2014

Revised 12 January 2015

Available online xxxx

#### JEL classifications:

I28

J15

#### Keywords:

Language policy

Linguistic minorities

Education

Ukraine

### ABSTRACT

**Muravyev, Alexander, and Talavera, Oleksandr**—Can state language policies distort students' demand for education?

We exploit a recent natural experiment in Ukraine's school system to study how stricter requirements for proficiency in the state language affect linguistic minority students' demand for education. The reform obligated linguistic minority students to take a standardized school exit test in Ukrainian, thus denying them access to translated versions of the test. We study the implications of this reform for students in schools with Hungarian and Romanian/Moldovan languages of instruction. Using school-level data and employing difference-in-difference estimation techniques, we find that the reform resulted in a decline in the number of subjects taken by minority students. They particularly withdrew from linguistically-demanding subjects such as History and Biology, taking more Math instead. Given the implications for minority students' fields of future study, the reform may have affected their educational outcomes in a distortive way. *Journal of Comparative Economics* xxx (xx) (2015) xxx–xxx. Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg branch, Russia; Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Germany; Management School, University of Sheffield, Conduit Road, Sheffield S10 1FL, UK.

© 2015 Association for Comparative Economic Studies. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Language policies, which promote or discourage the use of a particular language or set of languages, have been common in many countries throughout history (Spolsky, 2004). A prominent example is France, whose language policies date back to the early 16th century and have been “central to the history of state and nation-building” (Jacob and Gordon, 1985, p. 106). More recent examples of language policies include New Zealand's government support of the revival of Maori (Spolsky,

☆ We are grateful to Sascha Becker, Tom Coupé, Stefano DellaVigna, Victor Ginsburgh, Yuriy Gorodnichenko, Daniel Hamermesh, Mihails Hazans, Peter Kuhn, Hartmut Lehmann, and Hanna Vakhitova for valuable comments and suggestions. The paper has also benefited from discussions at the 12th International Academic Conference on Economic and Social Development (Moscow, April 2011), 2nd International Workshop on Applied Economics of Education (Catanzaro, June 2011), 26th Congress of the European Economic Association (Oslo, August 2011), Association of Comparative Economic Studies annual meeting (ASSA/ASEC, Chicago, January 2012), First KSE Alumni Congress (Kyiv, May 2012), UCL SSEES research seminar (October 2012), seminar at the Higher School of Economics (March 2014) as well as IZA internal brownbag seminars.

\* Corresponding author at: Higher School of Economics, Kantemirovskaya Street 3, Building 1A, St. Petersburg 194100, Russia.

E-mail addresses: [amuravyev@hse.ru](mailto:amuravyev@hse.ru) (A. Muravyev), [otalavera@shef.ac.uk](mailto:otalavera@shef.ac.uk) (O. Talavera).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2015.01.006>

0147-5967/© 2015 Association for Comparative Economic Studies. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

2003), the promotion of French in Quebec at the expense of English (MacMillan, 2003), the introduction of Basque and Catalan as school languages of instruction in the Basque country and Catalonia (Aspachs-Bracons et al. 2008), restrictions on the use of Russian in the public sphere in Estonia and Latvia (Hughes, 2005) and policies of multilingualism in the European Union (Gazzola, 2006).

Until recently, the economic consequences of language policies have received relatively little scholarly attention. This is despite numerous links between languages and economic outcomes established in the economics of language literature, which dates back to Marschak (1965). For example, there is extensive evidence that immigrants' proficiency in the dominant language strongly affects their labor market outcomes (McManus et al., 1983; Chiswick, 1991; Dustmann and Fabbri, 2003; Bleakley and Chin, 2004). A growing body of related literature analyzes the effects of language proficiency for native-born bilinguals (Fry and Lowell, 2003; Henley and Jones, 2005; Chiswick and Müller, 2007). Furthermore, a number of studies from the business literature also suggest that languages play an important role; for example, in advertising and corporate communication (e.g. Puntoni et al., 2009; Krishna and Ahluwalia 2008; Marschan-Piekkaria et al., 1999). On the macro-level, there is evidence that linguistic distances affect international trade (Hutchinson, 2005; Melitz, 2008; Isphording and Otten, 2013; Melitz and Toubal, 2014).

Similarly, the evaluation of language policies has rarely been conducted using the tools of modern economics that emphasize the issues of identification and measurement (Grin, 2003, 2006). Recent important contributions to this field include Angrist and Lavy (1997), Ginsburgh et al. (2005), Fidrmuc and Ginsburgh (2007) and Clots-Figueras and Masella (2013), among others. In particular, Angrist and Lavy (1997) study the effect of changing the language of instruction from French to Arabic in Moroccan schools, finding that the elimination of instruction in French led to a sizeable reduction in the returns to schooling for Moroccans. Ginsburgh et al. (2005) and Fidrmuc and Ginsburgh (2007) suggest that language policies should balance the benefits of linguistic "standardization" on the one hand and the costs of "disenfranchisement" of linguistic minorities on the other and propose a framework for choosing an optimal language policy for the European Union, which would balance the cost of translation into multiple official languages and the cost of disenfranchisement of some linguistic groups. Exploiting the 1983 reform of education in Catalonia, which strengthened the use of Catalan in schools, Clots-Figueras and Masella (2013) find a significant effect of the compulsory language policy on the development of schoolchildren's individual identity, as well as their political preferences.

In this paper, we take advantage of a recent natural experiment in Ukraine's secondary education system to study the potential side effects of language policies that impose stricter requirements for proficiency in the state language. The reform that we consider was planned for the 2009/2010 academic year and obligated all linguistic minority students, including those studying in public schools with a full cycle of education in minority languages, to take a standardized school exit test (which is also a university entry test) in Ukrainian, the state language, thus denying them access to translated versions of the test. Although the reform was retracted at the very last moment, just a few weeks before the test, it may have nevertheless affected minority students' decisions about future studies as such high-stake decisions are made well in advance. Therefore, we investigate the effect of this (canceled) reform on linguistic minority students' demand for and opportunities to pursue further studies at the university level, as measured by the results of the standardized school exit test.

Our empirical analysis uses school-level data from the 2009 and 2010 standardized tests and employs the difference-in-difference estimator, a common tool in program evaluation studies. Although a key issue in the language policy of modern Ukraine is the status of Russian (the most widely spoken minority language), for data availability reasons we focus on the performance of schools with Hungarian as well as Moldovan and Romanian languages of instruction relative to the performance of Ukrainian schools. On the positive side, the omission of Russian schools helps purify our experiment and improves identification as Russian is closely related to and easily mixed with Ukrainian, which is not the case with the other languages mentioned.

Our main findings are as follows. We do not find evidence of changes in intent to pursue post-secondary studies among minority students. In particular, the number of minority students taking part in the test did not fall as a result of the reform. However, we find fairly strong evidence that the change in the language policy resulted in a decline in the number of subjects taken by minority students at the school exit test. There is also a notable shift in the take-up of particular subjects, with fewer exams taken by minority students in more linguistically-demanding subjects such as History and Biology and more exams taken by them in Math. This has immediate consequences for minority students' opportunities in terms of choosing universities and fields of study, given that different universities and fields require tests in different subjects. For example, admission for the study of Psychology typically requires tests in History and Biology, while admission for the study of Management requires a test in Math (in Ukraine, students apply to specific departments of universities with very limited opportunities to change the department – and the field of study – once admitted). Therefore, the withdrawal of minority language students from the otherwise preferred fields of study may indicate distortions in human capital accumulation. In addition to this result, we also find some evidence that minority students improved their proficiency in Ukrainian between 2009 and 2010 (although this effect is not necessarily fully attributable to the specific policy change analyzed and may reflect other policies aimed at Ukrainization since the country's independence in 1991).

We believe that our paper is far more than a case study of a particular reform in a particular country. By documenting important side effects of strict language policies, it provides a general contribution to the economics of language literature. Further strengths of our paper are related to the identification strategy. In particular, the uniqueness of our setup allows us to analyze the effect of language policies in the non-immigrant environment and in the absence of large cultural differences

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5092291>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5092291>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)