Critical Dialogue

The Language of Political Incorporation: Chinese Migrants in Europe. By Amy H. Liu. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2021. 228p. $110.50 cloth, $34.95 paper.
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— Nils Ringe, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*
ringe@wisc.edu

In *The Language of Political Incorporation*, Amy Liu examines the determinants of the political incorporation of immigrants into local communities. She argues and demonstrates that the diversity of migrants' linguistic networks explains varying levels of civic engagement and trust in institutions. In other words, it is language, rather than country of origin or national identity, that explains the political incorporation of immigrants.

This excellent book sets itself apart in several ways. It focuses on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), a region neglected by previous research on Chinese immigrants. It is not centered on one country but offers a comparative analysis of immigrant communities in five CEE capitals: Budapest, Sofia, Bucharest, Belgrade, and Zagreb. It creatively deals with several significant methodological challenges, including how to measure the political incorporation of migrants when existing indicators will not do. It carefully considers alternative explanations and establishes the potential for the book's core argument to travel to other cases. Last, but certainly not least, it examines the link between language and political incorporation by taking account of migrants' overall multilingual repertoires instead of looking only at their proficiency in the host country's language.

Liu argues that two types of linguistic networks crucially influence the political incorporation of immigrants in CEE, because they affect with whom migrants interact. Bonding networks are defined by linguistic homogeneity and high barriers to entry. Membership in them, therefore, provides mostly contact with co-ethnics. In contrast, bridging networks are characterized by linguistic diversity and the presence of a shared lingua franca that is widely spoken by many migrants (either Mandarin or the local language). These networks connect migrants to a more ethnically heterogeneous set of contacts, including locals who speak the lingua franca. Migrants' linguistic repertoires thus determine what kinds of networks they are situated in and what types of brokers they rely on for the provision of goods, services, and information. This, in turn, affects their political incorporation: those in bonding networks have lower levels of political incorporation because they remain insular, whereas those in bridging networks are connected more broadly and are therefore more politically incorporated.

Liu offers a coherent account of Chinese migrants' political incorporation in CEE based on a thoughtful and thorough research design. Following the introduction, her theory chapter conceptualizes bonding and bridging networks and links them to political incorporation. Next, Liu offers an overview of Chinese migrants in CEE, traces their paths to the region, compares their communities to counterparts in other parts of the world, and introduces the five primary research sites. Six empirical chapters follow. Chapter 4 introduces the survey data and presents the results of statistical analyses that establish the link between network type and political incorporation: migrants in bridging networks have higher levels of political incorporation than those in bonding networks. The next two chapters dive more deeply into two of the cases. Chapter 5 examines why Chinese migrants in Hungary—a country whose competitive authoritarian government espouses right-wing, anti-immigrant narratives and policies—display consistently high levels of political incorporation. It explains this anomaly by arguing that the Chinese community in Hungary has purposely been excluded from Victor Orbán's anti-immigrant rhetoric as part of his efforts to foster a strategic relationship with China. Chapter 6 takes advantage of a natural experiment that presented itself to Liu as she administered her survey in Romania, when the local Chinese community felt disproportionally targeted by a government initiative to curb tax fraud. Liu shows that a sense of betrayal was felt particularly strongly among migrants in bridging networks, whose incorporation levels suffered as a result, while the already lower incorporation levels of migrants in bonding networks remained unchanged. Chapters 7 and 8 provide evidence for the generalizability of Liu's argument by extending the analysis to Muslim migrants and to Western Europe, respectively. They present results consistent with the findings of previous chapters for Muslims in CEE and for the Chinese in Lisbon. Chapter 9 looks at the public attitudes toward Chinese migrants among locals in CEE and provides evidence that contact with migrants

has a positive effect on those attitudes. Chapter 10 concludes by offering a list of key policy recommendations for how governments can facilitate the incorporation of migrant communities, such as promoting lingua franca use, dispersing settlement, and maintaining regularized channels of communication.

A particular strength of the book is Liu's creativity in capturing concepts that are difficult to measure, starting with her main independent variable: migrants' language networks. Actually measuring such networks would be exceedingly difficult—indeed, likely futile—so Liu infers a latent network from migrants' language repertoires. Ultimately, her argument is sufficiently intuitive and plausible that her account is convincing despite not directly measuring the network members, ties, and effects she posits. Liu's creative measurement choices also show in her main dependent variable, the political incorporation of migrants. Measuring political incorporation poses a challenge when the migrant communities in question do not have citizenship and therefore cannot engage in those activities often used to gauge political engagement, such as voting or running for office. Liu therefore uses surveys to measure trust in and engagement with locals and local state institutions by asking, for example, whether migrants would report being robbed to the police, if they had experienced discrimination at the immigration office, or whether they would help a local who is looking lost.

Another important strength of Liu's book is her anticipation of and systematic engagement with potential challenges to her conclusions. Having demonstrated a general correlation between network type and political incorporation, she carefully analyzes Hungary as a potentially deviant case, leverages a natural experiment in Romania to suggest a causal relationship, extends the analysis to non-Chinese migrants and to another part of Europe, and factors in the attitudes of locals toward migrant communities. In other words, Liu carefully and thoughtfully builds her case and, in the process, strengthens the reader's confidence in her argument and conclusions.

Convinced by Liu's theoretical propositions and empirical results, I would only offer two critiques. First, the inference, as opposed to the measurement, of the social networks to which Liu ascribes principal explanatory power may leave some readers wanting more direct evidence of the network itself and of its effects. Providing that evidence would not necessarily have required measuring language networks or using full-fledged social network analysis methods to examine them. But some additional "proof of concept" (beyond a short section on validity) would have been useful, for example by offering additional qualitative evidence to support the assumption that the latent network and its effects are real.

Second, readers who are not steeped in previous research on the integration and political incorporation of immigrant communities would have benefited from a more deliberate and extensive elaboration of the implications of Liu's findings that went beyond a brief overview of the book's contributions early on and a short discussion of three key policy suggestions at the end. Not being an expert on the topic, I would have welcomed additional guidance on how to situate the book and its findings in relevant bodies of research, which previous assumptions and conclusions to question, and what primary insights to take away. It would have been similarly useful to offer further discussion of what the book leaves unanswered, which new questions it raises, and potential avenues for future research. In sum, Liu could have done more to situate her book in the existing body of knowledge on immigration, immigration policy, and the integration and incorporation of immigrants.

These, however, are minor quibbles relative to the book's strengths. Liu makes a genuinely novel contribution to our understanding of crucially important political and policy questions in a world in which enormous numbers of people are displaced by violence, pandemics, climate change, poverty, and other disasters. Her account teaches us a great deal about how and why newcomers become politically incorporated and how this incorporation can be facilitated. In the process, it highlights important benefits of heterogeneity, which more often than not tends to be associated with variety of negative outcomes. Finally, the book demonstrates that it is to our peril that language is far too often ignored or discounted by political scientists as either a key independent variable or as a factor that profoundly shapes the very nature of politics—despite the reality that language is not only inherently political but is also consequential for everything political.

Response to Nils Ringe's Review of *The Language of Political Incorporation: Chinese Migrants in Europe*

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— Amy H. Liu

This critical dialogue has provided a pleasant opportunity to consider the intersection of language and politics. Both Ringe's work and my book question the role of languages. We argue that languages are more than just markers of group identity. Instead, when individuals use some "standardized" vernacular (per Ringe)—that is, a lingua franca (per my book)—this has positive externalities, whether it is depoliticizing politics or facilitating exchanges across diverse populations. This focus on individual multilingualism is much needed in the political science literature ranging from institutions to immigration, from the Council of Europe to China.

Ringe's review raises two points that are helpful for identifying future avenues of research. The first is

methodological: *How do we measure migrant networks?* One option is to directly ask respondents to self-identify who is in their networks. The challenge here is that people conceptualize networks differently. For example, someone in a bridging network—that is, one characterized by use of a lingua franca—may only identify the few family members around them as being in the network. But if the mechanism is about contact with diversity, such self-reported measures could ignore the different people with whom migrants regularly interact but do not consciously recognize; for example, their brokers. Alternatively, we could use an other-identification strategy where the researcher asks a third party, such as a community leader or maybe a broker, to code the networks. Such other-reported strategies, however, require so much investment and resources and have possible community leader-specific biases. Perhaps one solution is to triangulate between the self- and other-reported measures and examine the gap.

The second point concerns avenues of future research and is conceptual in nature: *Where do migrants go?* When it comes to the Chinese in Europe, particularly Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), there is a bit of a neither-here-nor-there dynamic. On the one hand, the Chinese immigrants' journeys are different from those of Latinx in the United States or Muslims in Western Europe. In both latter cases, there is an assumption that the move is permanent. But this is not the case for the Chinese in CEE, many of whom see CEE as a temporary destination. On the other hand, their journeys are also different from those of the Chinese in Africa. The Chinese in Africa are often laborers employed by Chinese state-owned enterprises for fixed periods, at the end of which they return home. This is not the case for many of the Chinese immigrants in CEE, who see it as a place to be an entrepreneur and to raise a family. Although Chinese diaspora scholars may note that this pattern is similar to that of Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century or of Latin America today, the same attention is missing in the English-language literature and those focusing on the Global North.

And this is by no means a phenomenon exclusive to the Chinese, CEE, or both. Consider research on Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in the United States. There is a tendency to assume that the group is fixed in the United States. Yet, there is also a substantial subset of the AAPI population that returns to Asia—and then back to the United States. When considering how these migrants move about, it is not surprising that AAPI lack the same group consciousness as Blacks or Latinx. We need to find ways to relax the monodirectional, static conceptions of migration patterns.

Many thanks to Nils Ringe for the wonderful review and to Daniel O'Neill for the opportunity to participate in the critical dialogue.

The Language(s) of Politics: Multilingual Policy-Making in the European Union. By Nils Ringe. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. 280p. $80.00 cloth, $34.95 paper.
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— Amy H. Liu, *University of Texas at Austin*
amy.liu@austin.utexas.edu

The European Union (EU) recognizes all twenty-four languages of the twenty-seven member states as official languages. Although this power-sharing language regime promotes equality on paper, we would expect such multilingualism, per the literature, to be disruptive and divisive. Yet, in *The Language(s) of Politics,* Nils Ringe challenges this assertion. He argues it is this precise linguistic arrangement that tempers the conflict and contentiousness in politics and policy-making through three mechanisms. First, the use of multiple vernaculars by any one individual EU actor forces everyone to employ neutral language. Second, as the EU actors come to rely on a commonly used set of vocabulary and grammar—often borrowed from different languages— this standardizes the discourse across ideologies. And third, when EU actors rely on interpreters and translators, they must simplify their language into short sentence structures. This neutralization, standardization, and simplification strips language of its politicized character, and what is left is simply a pragmatic vehicle of communication. Thus, EU actors are better able to understand, take positions, and even tolerate (and gloss over) politically charged words when engaging with each other—all with positive externalities for politics and policy making. Ringe empirically tests and convincingly demonstrates his argument by drawing on a range of methods from qualitative interviews to statistical analyses to text scraping.

The book begins with an extensive discussion of the linguistic arrangements in the EU. Although the purpose of chapter 2 is "descriptive" (p. 22), it demonstrates how the concept of "multilingualism" is far from uniform; each EU institution employs a different subset of languages from the recognized twenty-four in its daily functions. It also highlights how language regimes, as political institutions, can embody both the de jure set of laws and the de facto set of behaviors that follow from said legal parameters. Chapter 3 examines the origin of the EU's multilingual arrangement, noting that the language regime aims to balance four competing constraints: symbolism, representation, legality, and functionality. The next three chapters examine how multilingualism has depoliticized EU politics from the use of non-native languages (chapter 4) to "EU English" (chapter 5) to interpreters and translators (chapter 6).

The *Language(s) of Politics* makes several important contributions. There is no doubt this book is about EU politics, but it is also about political institutions. It

highlights how an institution can be both stable in equilibrium and endogenously change from within. The book also draws on the political psychology literature by highlighting how the language we speak— whether it is neutral words in a non-native language, a standardized lingua franca, or a native language in simplified form—affects how we engage with others. And finally, the book speaks to the language politics literature; it contributes to an "agenda that looks at language as more than 'just' an identity marker" (p. 13). As such, *The Language(s) of Politics* advances the language politics scholarship in at least three distinct ways.

First, it shows that power-sharing multilingual language regimes can facilitate both equality and efficiency. We know at the individual level that people can have multiple languages in their repertoire: which language they use depends on the circumstances. For example, people code-switch to identify with or to signal to a certain group. But other works tend to focus on the rhetoric; that is, *what* people say when they code-switch. In contrast, Ringe looks at the sentence structures: *how* people talk when they alternate between languages. And as such, he demonstrates—contrary to what other language politics scholars argue—that there need not be a trade-off between equality and efficiency

Second, Ringe shows that just because a language is not designated as official does not mean it is not one. In fact, the absence of a title may itself be the product of a very political calculation. *The Language(s) of Politics* shows that EU English is the institution's (possibly) first-among-equals working language. The discussion of EU English and its distinction from standard English highlights the day-to-day dominance of the former vernacular. Additionally, the lack of a tacit acknowledgment of EU English as the institution's working language is further evidence of its status: recall, to avoid arousing suspicions and objections, that the veil of formal language equality has always been and must always remain intact. But just because something is not explicitly spoken does not mean it is not known. Consider the United States, for example. Although the country does not have an official language, English is *the* language from the courtrooms to the classrooms. Likewise, even if it is politically impossible to designate EU English as the EU's working language, it may turn out that the silence and continued use of the vernacular will further institutionalize the EU and possibly serve as another marker of the organization's identity.

Third, we know languages are dynamic; they evolve with the advent of technology, demographic shifts, and globalization. Ringe calls attention to one example of the fluidity of language: Creole is a vernacular that brings together different languages in a simplified manner. The attention to creole has been sorely absent in political science—from the language politics scholarship to immigration literature. And when there is attention to it, the narrative often renders creole as something less than a language and inferior to whatever is the official language. This attitude can have devastating political implications, as we saw with the 2010 Haiti earthquake relief efforts. Although the vast majority of the population (more than 90%) spoke Haitian Creole, international relief agencies showed up erroneously believing that standard French was sufficient. Creole, however, is by no means a phenomenon of the Global South. In fact, as Ringe demonstrates, EU English is "a simple, utilitarian, specialized, and standardized language" (p. 158). It short, it is an example of a creole language—an empirical phenomenon that warrants more attention.

Although the premise of the book is that the multilingual arrangement has depoliticized EU politics, the book raises several questions. The first is about the theoretical mechanisms. Ringe identifies three mechanisms for how this depoliticization manifests. Absent, however, is a discussion of how the three mechanisms relate to one another. Does one beget the other? The emergence and evolution of EU English seem to be the byproduct of regularized code-switching or the repeated use of interpreters and translators. Likewise, is one of the three mechanisms more important than the other two? Alternatively, what happens when one of the mechanisms fails to depoliticize politics? For example, the use of multiple languages can temper conflict because it forces two speakers to use neutral, *non-native* languages to communicate. However, the use of multiple languages means it increases the odds that someone's native language does appear in the repertoire. The ease with which that speaker can resort to their native language can undermine this language-is-neutral mechanism. Likewise, the use of EU English—a *lingua franca* (note that Ringe is careful to explain why he does not use this phrase)—decultures the discussion. However, languages and cultures evolve. As EU English becomes more standardized, certain terminologies can start carrying more cultured, non-neutral meaning. And finally, the use of interpreters and translators can force *native* speakers to simplify their sentence structures. However, this constraint—that is, thinking about the challenges of the multilingual specialists— is less likely to manifest when the individual is monolingual. The self-constraint can also be absent when the individual is very ideological and unwilling to water down their language.

The second question is about generalizability. Ringe calls for future comparisons to multilingual states and multilingual international organizations, although he notes that the EU case may be more likened to the former than the latter (p. 16). From a theoretical standpoint, Ringe is correct. Empirically, however, one is hard-pressed to find another instance of an [insert institution] [insert language] like EU English. What makes the EU unique from a linguistic standpoint is not just that it recognizes multiple languages but also that the many politicians

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themselves can speak multiple languages. This is not the case (or at least less likely to be the case) for other international organizations like ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). What also makes the EU unique is that the repeated interactions in these multiple languages result in a creole language against a backdrop of substantial interpretation and translation support. Again, this is likely to be an outlier for other international organizations.

The third question is about the intended recipient of the depoliticization. There is a normative assumption throughout the book that EU leaders see depoliticizing politics as something to be desired. But this raises the question of how the domestic constituents in each member state see these policies. It is possible that the general public will not care whether EU actors call refugees "illegal immigrants" (p. 11) or not. Their focus will not be on the process—that the debates in the EU Parliament were depoliticized—but strictly on the outcomes (i.e., a bad policy was forced on a country). And if the focus is on the nondeliberate, nonstrategic depoliticization, this means that the public can see and scrutinize even less of the process. This is of concern because we know that when people start caring more about the outcomes than the process, this undermines diffuse support and thereby institutional legitimacy.

The Language(s) of Politics is a must read—and a must assign for graduate courses on political institutions, political psychology, and European studies. The book demonstrates convincingly that, contrary to conventional wisdom in the political science literature, language regimes can be both equal and efficient.

Response to Amy H. Liu's Review of *The Language(s) of Politics: Multilingual Policy-Making in the European Union*

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— Nils Ringe

Amy Liu's review provides thoughtful and generous consideration of my book. Her commentary on whether and how the three mechanisms for depoliticization relate to each other is particularly cogent and, in retrospect, is something I wish I had elaborated on. That the two primary modes of communication inside EU institutions —non-native language use and reliance on translators and interpreters— "beget each other" is evident, for example, in that non-native users of already depoliticized "EU English" consciously simplify their language further to facilitate translation and interpretation, or in that non-native speakers of EU English learn much of the vernacular from language service providers. It would have been worth spelling this out more explicitly, however, and to specify if and how the EU's language rules provide a foundation for depoliticized communication between EU actors. For instance, I argue that "the political" is partially suppressed by the linguistic limitations of those involved in making political decisions and by their reliance on indirect communication via interpretation and translation. It is conceivable that the successful institutional resolution of "the language question" in the EU critically facilitates this reality because it is only when language *choice* is depoliticized that the practical, communicative aspect of language may be elevated over the political, national, or ideological.

I also appreciate Liu's questions concerning generalizability. This is always tricky territory for a comparativist studying the EU, because the characteristics that make the EU *sui generis* ought not preclude efforts at comparison. And so, I agree with Liu's observation that, empirically, the EU's language regime and linguistic practices appear unique. However, generalizability is a matter of degree and of specifying scope conditions, which I attempt in the final chapter of the book. It is, moreover, important that the EU can inform and serve as a useful reference point for understanding politics in multilingual states and international organizations precisely because it is neither but shares features with both.

Finally, the depoliticizing effects of multilingualism can be positive—for example, when it facilitates compromise in a polity characterized by remarkable levels of heterogeneity—or negative (e.g., when it unduly mutes the potential for political contestation). Unlike much previous research on the topic (mostly in disciplines other than political science), I try to avoid value judgments and focus instead on identifying and explaining the consequences of multilingualism on EU politics. But in the conclusion of the book, I completely agree with Liu that the disconnect between the depoliticization of language at the institutional level and the increasing politicization of the EU as a polity and political project is problematic for its quality of representation and popular legitimacy. It is possible that the EU's language(s) of politics will change such that this divide will diminish over time, as Liu suggests, if EU English evolves to carry more cultured, non-neutral meaning. Such processes are slow moving, however, while the EU's legitimacy problems are very much in the present.