

Origin and destination attachment: study of cultural integration on Twitter

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Extended Abstract

Integration of migrants touches upon multidimensional aspects of the host country. A successful integration of a migrant could bring new opportunities, and hence an overall improvement of their living conditions and well-being. A failure to integrate migrants in the host country's society may result in social conflict, creation of ghetto or/and possible economic losses. The studies of cultural integration have been mainly done by sociologists, by employing survey data such as World Values Survey, Eurobarometer, and European Social Survey. The main elements used in the studies are often inter-marriage, religion and language on cultural aspects [5, 3, 4, 1].

At the same time, several integration theories have been introduced. While a complete agreement of what integration means and how it should be measured does not exist, there have been efforts to identify different types of integration patterns. The patterns can be described using two dimensions: the preservation of links to the origin country and culture, i.e. origin attachment, and creation of new links and adoption of cultural traits from the new residence country, i.e. destination attachment. In this paper we introduce a means to quantify these two aspects based on Twitter data. We first identify international migrants using a methodology developed by [2]. Our new indicators reflect well the behaviours of migrants across different countries. For instance, the figure 1 deploys the origin and destination attachment indexes at a country level for Italian emigrants across different countries of residence. In general, we observe that Italians are more attached (on average 0.21) to origin than attached to their destination country (on average 0.073). However, Italians tend to integrate well in English speaking countries as the destination attachment levels are at highest in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Although the destination attachment level is not as high as in English speaking countries, they also tend to do relatively well in neighbouring countries like Spain, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom. Spain for instance has also a highest destination attachment level due to the language similarity between two countries. In contrast, Italian emigrants residing in countries such as China, Hungary, and Thailand that are culturally far from Italy have the lowest destination attachment index levels.

To understand the effect of language proficiency, we computed box plots for two groups in the figure 2; a group that often speaks the language of the host country and a group that very rarely speaks the language of the host country. Here, we are looking at all the migrants we have in the dataset regardless of the country of origin or the country of residence. We observe that the group that speaks the language has higher destination attachment level. For this group, the destination attachment level on average is 0.1 and 0.09 for the origin attachment level. On the other hand, the group that does not speak the language show higher origin attachment level. For this group, the origin attachment level on average is 0.14 and 0.04 for the destination attachment level. Our indexes confirm the significance of the language for the destination attachment of immigrants in the host country. In addition, it shows the relationship between the language and attachment to origin country which is not evident in the literature.

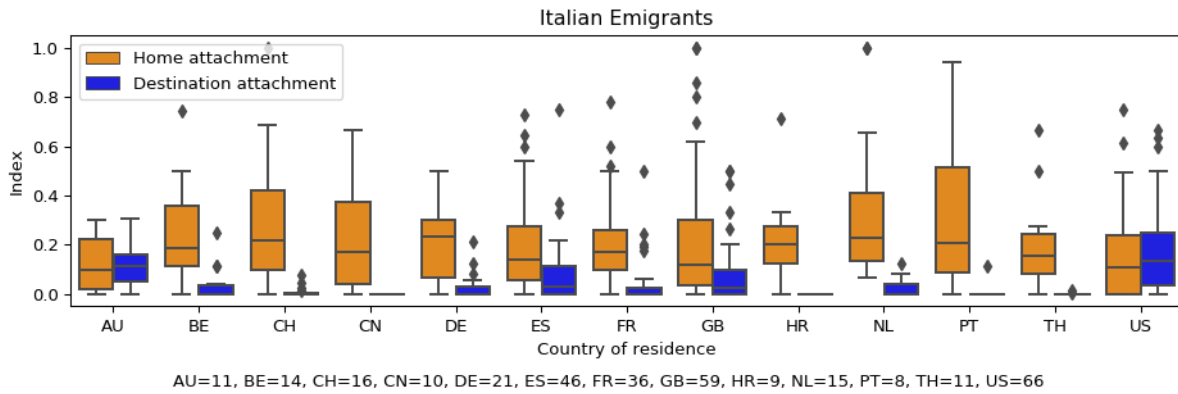


Figure 1: Box plots for origin and destination attachment indexes grouped by countries for Italian nationalities living abroad. Countries on x-axis are countries of residence of Italians.

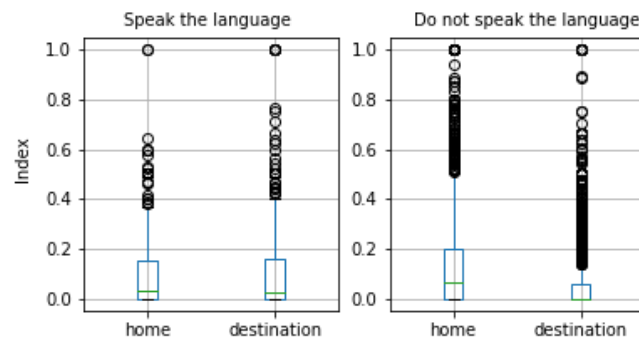


Figure 2: Box plots for a group of migrants who speak the language of the host country on the left and a group of migrants who do not speak the language of the host country on the right.

We also compared the origin and destination attachment indexes with Hofstede’s cultural dimension scores. We observed that destination attachment levels correlate to cultural aspects of the destination country, while origin attachment levels seem to be more related to the country of origin.

References

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