

Rethinking Identity and Linguistic Diversity in an Age of Immigration



In what ways does the process of immigration enable or constrain the transformation and preservation of language and identity? This question is at the heart of an interdisciplinary Matrix Prospecting Team focused on investigating the dynamic interaction between language, identity, and immigration.

“Today we’re witnessing an increased movement of people, their languages, values, ideas, and cultural ways of being around the world,” the researchers explained in their proposal. “This ever-changing flow brings forth many concerns in regard to the integration of immigrants into their host country and at the same time the preservation of their native heritage. These concerns are closely tied to notions of identity and language.”

Led by Maryam Moeini Meybodi, a third year Ph.D. student in the Graduate School of Education, this one-semester initiative focused primarily on scholarship in applied linguistics, sociology, and education examining the multi-di-

mensional interaction between language and identity embedded in the process of immigration. Such issues include (but are not limited to): global citizenship, the interplay between race and language, language maintenance and language shift, translation, and the role of multimedia in this intricate process. The team includes representatives from an array of disciplines, including sociology, educational psychology, immigration studies, international relations, linguistic anthropology, human development, cognitive psychology, and other domains.

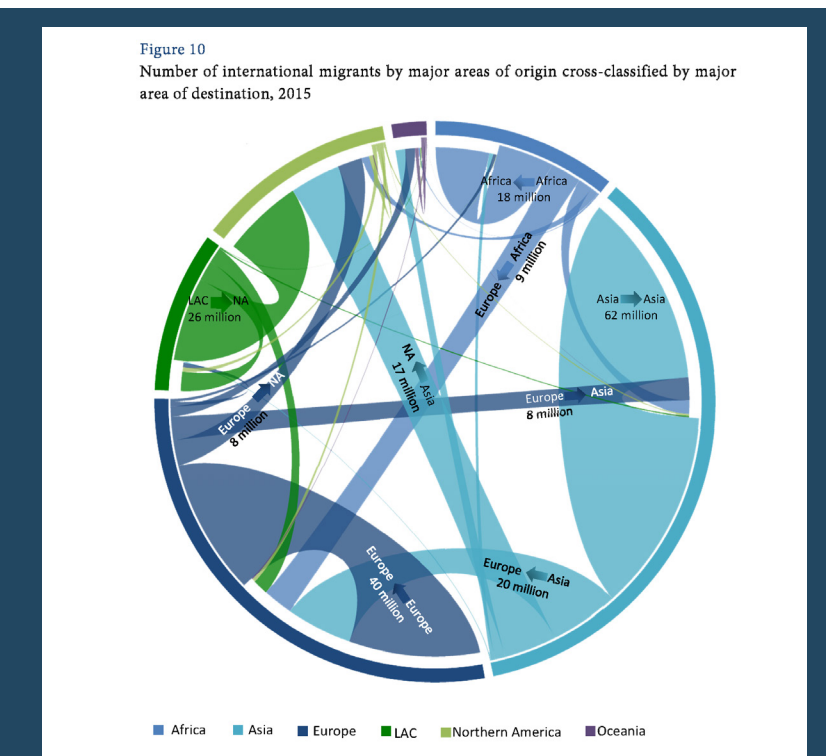
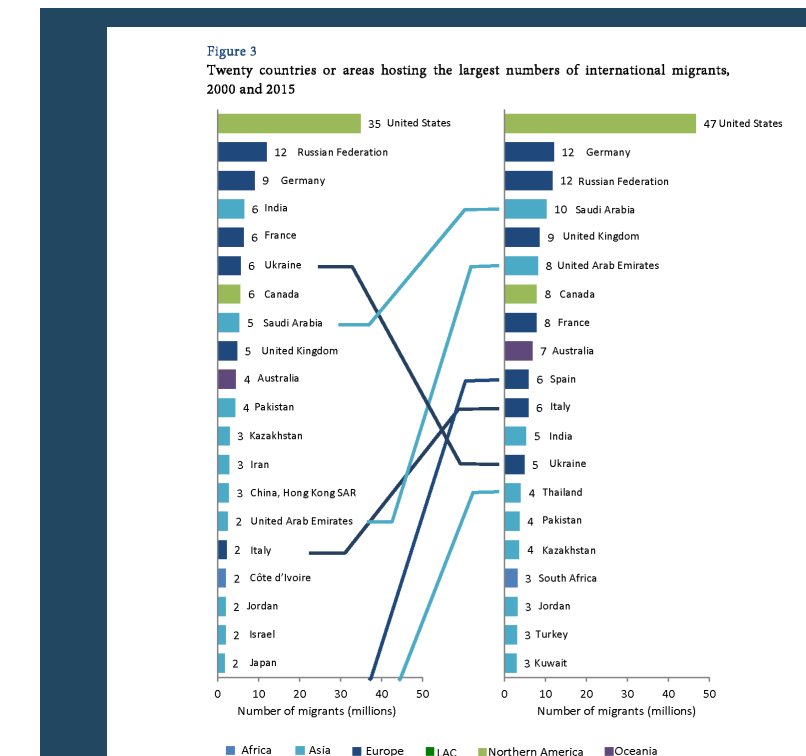
More broadly, the team is exploring the processes of how identity is re-shaped through migration, particularly as people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds interact. The group aims to generate insights that are relevant not only for academics studying immigration, language, and identity, but also for educators and policymakers.

“We’re witnessing not only a rise in numbers, but also a rise in the diversity of the immigrant population,” the researchers wrote in their proposal. “What would this rise in diversity mean for host countries? What would immigration entail for the immigrants? In this process, there exists a tension between integration and preservation. But we beg to ask, assimilation to what? Preservation of what? Culture? Identity? What is language’s role in all these?”

Ultimately the team’s work has potential to influence the

RESEARCH GOALS

- Engage a cross-disciplinary team of researchers to explore the connections between immigration, language, and identity.
- Generate practical insights that may be useful to academics as well as policy-makers, educators, and other stakeholders.
- Organize a conference, as well as publish papers and coordinate workshops on language, immigration, and identity to promote future dialogue.



The multi-directional flow of migration around the world leads to a continual process of identity re-formation. Figures from *United Nations 2015 International Migration Report Highlights*.

processes by which immigrants around the world adapt to and expand new cultures—and how they are perceived and accepted (or not) by those around them. The issue is particularly well suited for Social Science Matrix given the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. “An examination of the interplay between language, identity, and immigration would certainly necessitate an interdisciplinary approach, as each notion is in itself grounded in different disciplines and theoretical fields,” the researchers wrote. “Bringing forth such discussions will foster greater cross-cultural understanding between the immigrant population and their host countries.”



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