

# A comparative study of "Economic Migrant" in three lingua-cultures: English, German, and Italian

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## INTRODUCTION - Aims of the project

The political and geo-political events of the last few years have led to an increase in migration typically from the African and Asian continents to Europe, North America and Australian continents. 2015-2016 has seen the emergence of the Syrian conflict and an unprecedented number of refugees from here. Tensions have exploded in a number of EU countries, those with geographically vulnerable borders, and those with traditionally conservative immigration policies. The burden on the infrastructures in countries like Italy and the real or imagined burden on the labour market has fed into an already tense political discourse.

This discourse has become increasingly polarized as "pro-refugee" (especially with the intensification of the Syrian crisis) and 'anti-immigrant' with the continuing increase in numbers and perceived threat to people's daily lives in terms of work and security. This joint project explores migrant-related discourse as it emerges in the media. The aim of the project – still work in progress – is to analyze the occurrence of the expression "economic migrant" (EM) in a selected corpus of three languages, each representing a different socio-economic and ideological reality.

The **framework** for the analysis draws on the post-structuralistic Discourse Theory of Laclau/Mouffe (1985) of partial and temporary "fixing of meaning" within the discourse.

**Methodology:** The study is set in the tradition that combines *Corpus Linguistics* and *Discourse Analysis* (Koller and Mautner 2004) and starts with an essentially empirical approach to survey the corpus to gain a sense of the flavour of the data, showing how ideological discursive positions are construed globally across texts. The corpus has been investigated by means of frequency analysis, co-occurrence analysis and concordance-analysis (AntConc) as well as the newspaper's own research engines.

The uncertain or ambiguous status of the syntagm embodies three different functions:

- (1) EM used as a "scientific"/"legal"/"official"/neutral term, based on the distinction of the push/pull factors of migration (Lee 1966, Kunz 1973)
  - (2) EM as an axiologically and/or ideologically connotated phrase with a dysphemic function suggesting that the status of EM is intrinsically non-authentic and exploitative of the host country's welfare system and labour market;
  - (3) EM as being part of a reported quotation, namely it is attributed to "others" and thus distance is put between addresser (i.e. journalists) and what has been uttered (i.e. quotation) through the use of metalinguistic elements ("so called", quotation marks, verba dicendi e declarandi).
- Examples from the data have showed cases of overlapping among the three functions, so clear-cut categorization was not possible.



## CORPUS

Given the intense political and ideological bias in migration-related discourse, in order to achieve a balanced corpus we have chosen online newspapers from similarly ideologically-oriented print newspapers (centre-left and centre-right/populist) and more 'technical' moderate newspaper focussing primarily on political and economic issues.

COUNTRY	NEWSPAPERS	TIME SPAN
UK	<i>The Guardian, The Daily Mail, The Financial Times</i>	June 2015-October 2016
GERMANY	<i>Spiegel-Online, Bild, Handelsblatt</i>	June 2015-October 2016
ITALY	<i>La Repubblica, Il Giornale, Il Sole 24 Ore</i>	June 2015-October 2016

## Preliminary findings

### AUTHENTICITY

language structures based on an either/or **polarization** between the positively connotated Refugee and the negatively connotated EM.

Message: those migrants who are not fleeing war or intense conflict to save their lives are to be distinguished from "authentic", "genuine" refugees and have less/no right to access the hospitality, welfare system or labour market of the host country.

AUTHENTICITY :

is often connected to the notion of **legality**, suggesting that refugees have a genuine motivation for moving to a new country whilst the very status of being an EM is in itself illegal.

## Two main broad semantic categories

especially in centre-right/populist newspapers and in quoted statements, primarily representing function (2)

### QUANTITY

language structures stressing a high, increasing or alarming number of EM.

This category is realised partially by the metaphor of 'invasion as a threat'. Negative evocation of 'mass' is common in much migrant-related discourse, conveying the notion of invasion/threat, but also visually evoking physical danger of an incoming uncontrollable mass flow.

It is particularly insidious at a basic psychological level in that it triggers feeling of defensiveness.

## ENGLISH DATA

... think that refugees are **actually** economic migrants **instead**, while 37 per cent disagree that we must **admit** economic migrants from the EU, whether or not they said they believe he was actually **an** economic migrant from Pakistan. Khan claimed to be as to the way it handles refugees **and** economic migrants at its borders. When you see who economic migrants **hoping** to build better lives in drawn between conflict fugitives **and** economic migrants. She is right, of course. But we is drawn between genuine refugees **and** economic migrants. The influx into Europe has been refugees fleeing persecution or war **and** economic migrants. The third rule is a declaration economic migrants **welcomed** into the country last y ung Muslim, mostly male, refugees **and** economic migrants attracted by jobs, state benefit nitarian disasters but often they **are** economic migrants attracted by jobs, generous bene nitarian disasters but often they **are** economic migrants attracted by jobs, lavish benefi chts and speedboats. The majority **are** economic migrants from Albania, Vietnam and Ukrain minal, these Albanians admit they **are** economic migrants hoping to sneak into Britain. Al leeing war. But the vast majority **are** economic migrants, hungry for the employment oppor ing at the Dieppe camp admit they **are** economic migrants looking to earn more money, rath economic migrants, **pure** and simple. Often, the sto economic migrants, **pure** and simple. Often, the sto economic migrants, **rather** than genuine refugees. Du economic migrants from North Africa located headin ear distinction must be drawn **between** economic migrants (including those in the Calais )

...ing "a better distinction between refugees **and** economic migrants" she is talking about the lim ing list? Differentiation between refugees **and** economic migrants. Taken at face value, this sug likening some of them to burglars. \* They **are** economic migrants and they want to enter Britain find the English Channel becoming a mortuary **as** economic migrants take to its unpredictable wat economic migrants, **unqualified** for refugee stati economic migrants." A longstanding GMB staffer economic migrants." A longstanding GMB staffer economic migrants." A longstanding GMB staffer economic migrants, **or** when people's parents are when people's children are being taught **by** economic migrants, **or** when people's parents are when people's children are being taught **by** economic migrants, **or** when people's parents are when people's children are being taught **by** economic migrants **and** she also knows that concei such matters: she is the daughter of **European** economic migrants **and** she also knows that concei net influx of hundreds of thousands of **European** economic migrants **annually**, migrants whose case my home country. I am a second-generation economic migrant. My dad was a bus driver, we my home country. \* I am a second-generation economic migrant. My dad was a bus driver, we my home country. \* I am a second-generation economic migrant. My dad was a bus driver, we . America includes potential refugees, not **just** economic migrants. The Obama administration on t successive governments have allowed too **many** economic migrants into Britain (refugees are a : economic migrants, **refugees** and internally disp economic migrants **fuels** the UK economy and help: economic migrants. Those in the remain camp argi needs to stop to limit the numbers of **economic** economic migrants who head to the United States

## LANGUAGE DEVICES

**EVALUATIVE QUALIFIERS:** *illegal vs. genuine/pure/simple asylum seekers/refugees*

**EVALUATIVE NOUNS:** *chancers*

**VERBS:** *pose, pretend, attracted by benefits*

**QUANTIFIERS:** *thousands, many, flow*

**PATTERNS:** identifying processes with 0-Mitigation (they are X /they are not X but rather X)

## GERMAN DATA

Der Sozialdemokrat [der tschechische Ministerpräsident Bohuslav Sobotka] rief dazu auf, "illegale Wirtschaftsmigranten" an der griechisch-mazedonischen Grenze aufzuhalten. (Spiegel-Online, 15.02.16)

Valls sprach sich gegen einen permanenten EU-Verteilmechanismus für Flüchtlinge aus. (...)

Die EU-Außengrenzen müssten gesichert und die Erstaufnahmезentren in Griechenland und Italien ausgebaut werden, von denen aus "Wirtschaftsmigranten" sofort wieder abgeschoben werden sollten. (Spiegel, 13.02.16)

Mit deutlichen Worten hat EU-Ratspräsident Donald Tusk sogenannte Wirtschaftsfüchtlinge vor der Einreise in die EU gewarnt. (Spiegel 3.3.16)

## ITALIAN DATA

Basta migranti economici - C'è di più. I Paesi dei Balcani filtrano i migranti per nazionalità, vietando a quanti non arrivano da Paesi in conflitto di proseguire il loro viaggio verso l'Europa occidentale.

(...) A Zagabria un portavoce della polizia, Marina Mandic, ha detto che «la Croazia accetta solo migranti provenienti da zone di conflitto» e rifiuta il passaggio ai «migranti economici». (Il Sole 24 ore, 20.11.15)

Bisogna rifarsi all'Onu, aiutare i veri profughi e rifugiati, non i migranti economici che poi diventa un modo elegante per definire clandestini. (Il Giornale, 23.8.16, )

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