

The effect of linguistic proximity on the occupational assimilation of immigrant men

Alicia Adsera
Princeton University

Ana Ferrer
University of Waterloo

October 2014

Abstract:

This paper contributes to the analysis of the integration of immigrants in the Canadian labour market by focusing in two relatively new dimensions. We combine the large samples of the restricted version of the Canadian Census (1991-2006) with both a novel measure of linguistic proximity of the immigrant's mother tongue to that of the destination country and with information of the occupational skills embodied in the jobs immigrants hold. This allows us to assess the role that language plays in the labour market performance of immigrants and to better study their career progression relative to the native born. Results show that linguistic proximity shapes the evolution of job-skill content of immigrant jobs over time and in some cases affects patterns of wage assimilation of immigrants.

Keywords: Linguistic ability, occupational assimilation, immigration

JEL Codes: J15, J24