

South Asians in Japan: Demographic and Sociolinguistic Implications

YAMASHITA, Rika
Kanto Gakuin University

The number of South Asian residents in Japan is increasing: they constitute 6% of the foreign population in Japan today. Their backgrounds are diverse in terms of religion, language, social class, occupation, and residential status. The first three sections of this paper analyze the demographic trends of different South Asian national and occupational groups in Japan, by using the official statistics and studies in social sciences. These reveal a larger and more accurate picture of the demography of South Asians in Japan than what the media has formed as a general knowledge. Meanwhile, despite linguistic and cultural diversity among themselves, many South Asians (1) share the preference of English as a medium of education and (2) lead highly multilingual lives in Japan, sometimes using languages other than Japanese and their heritage languages. These are explained in the fourth section through the demonstration of diverse and multiple communities (religious, business, school, ethnolinguistic, and transnational family) that South Asians in Japan engage in. As the findings of this paper likely extend to residents in Japan from other parts of the world, especially Southeast Asia and Africa, this paper calls for collaborative sociolinguistic research across different ethnolinguistic communities.

Keywords: multilingualism, migration, South Asia, India, superdiversity

1. Introduction
2. Demographic trends by nationality
3. Geographical distribution
4. South Asian communities in Japan
5. Conclusion



1. Introduction

1.1. Increasing population and ethnolinguistic diversity from multilingual Asia

Due to recent changes in Japanese immigration policies and various push factors, South Asians¹ and Southeast Asians² have been the most rapidly increasing foreign populations in Japan over the past decade. Between 2007 and 2017, the populations of South Asians and Southeast Asians more than doubled in size. Southeast Asians now represent a quarter of Japan's total foreign population. Although South Asians only represent 6% of the foreign population, this is roughly equivalent to the combined population of Europeans and North Americans (see Figures 1 and 2).

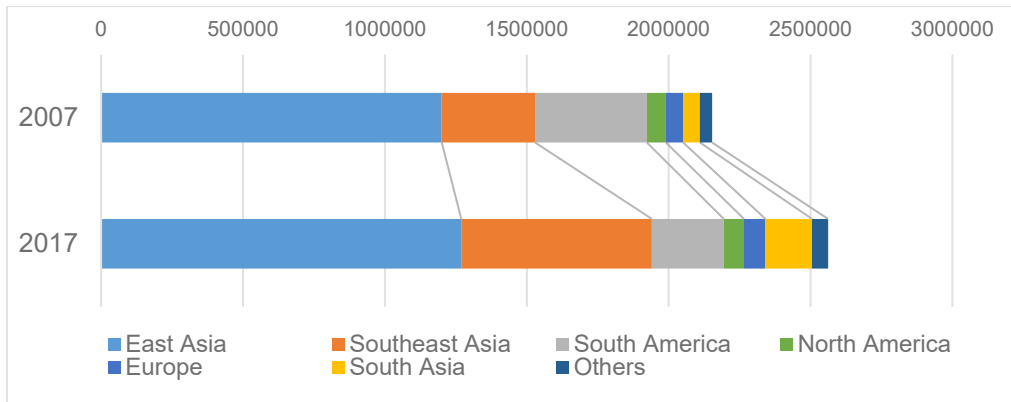


Fig. 1 Origins of foreign residents in Japan in 2017 (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

¹ In this paper, South Asia is used to refer to countries which belong to South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

² Here, Southeast Asia refers to the 11 countries that belong to ASEAN, namely Brunei, Cambodia, East-Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

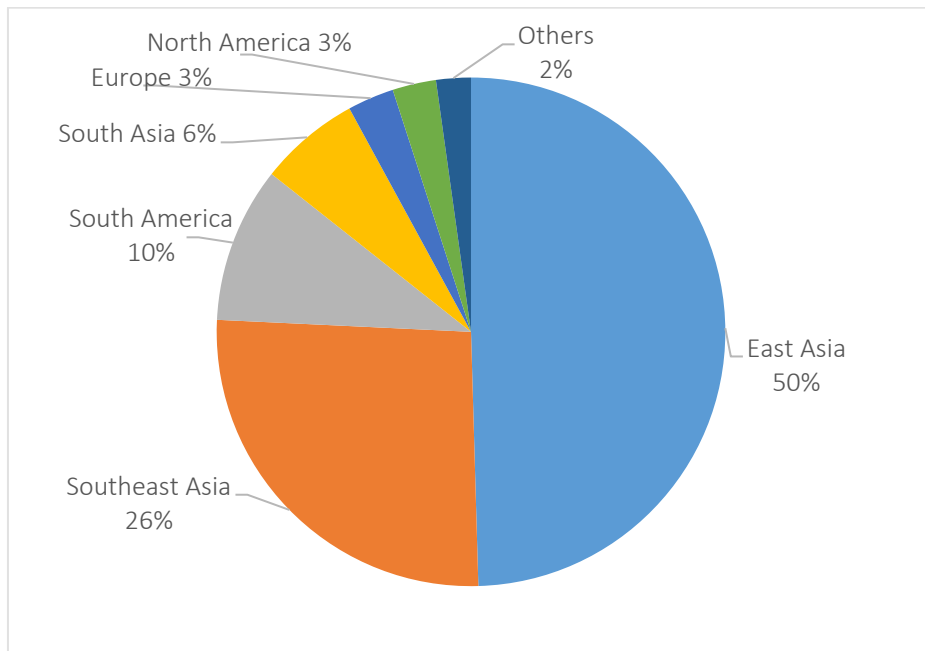


Fig. 2 Origins of foreign residents in Japan in 2017 (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

The increase of Southeast Asians and South Asians in Japan challenges some of the common patterns of thinking about language use and language policy. This is because Southeast Asian and South Asian countries are ethnolinguistically diverse, often with different languages spoken at the local, regional, and national levels. On the issue of assisting children with assimilating into the Japanese school system, Southeast Asians and South Asians are viewed as mother-tongue speakers of their major Asian national language (Vietnamese, Tagalog, Thai, Indonesian, Hindi, Urdu, etc.). However, their actual mother tongue or ethnic/heritage language used in their homes or hometowns, as well as in their religious communities, may be different from the national language. In addition, English is often highly regarded as a medium of instruction in these countries.

Never have South Asians in Japan been as recognized as residents than today. Indian restaurants managed by South Asians are in all prefectures of the country. An increase in ‘Indian IT workers’ in Tokyo has been known through media. South Asian (mainly Nepalese and Sri Lankan) part-time workers support various industries in all prefectures where there is shortage of labor, including service industries (e.g., convenience store cashiers). Although close analysis may reveal unintentional stereotyping, most of these media reports portray South Asians in the world of work or a local community in a positive light. In this sense, this seems unproblematic. However, those in media reports are naturally a tip of an iceberg: there are many more South Asians and in a different lifestyle than what the media reports.

1.2. South Asian population in Japan between 1997 and 2017

The population of South Asian nationals from all five countries increased between 1997 and 2017 (see Table 1 and Figure 3). The Nepalese population increased the most rapidly: they were the smallest group of the five in 1997 but the largest in 2017. With over 80,000 residents, they have grown into a group approximately 40 times larger than in 1997. As of December 2017, the Nepalese population represents the 6th largest foreign population in Japan—almost the size of the other four South Asian national populations together.

Table 1 Population of South Asians in Japan by nationality 1997–2017

	1997	2007	2017 ³
Bangladesh	6,095	11,255	14,144
India	7,478	20,589	31,689
Nepal	2,173	9,384	80,038
Pakistan	5,593	9,332	15,069
Sri Lanka	3,907	8,691	23,348

Indians, who are the second largest group of South Asians and the 12th largest foreign population with 31,689, are less than half the size of the Nepalese population. Among all foreign nationals, Sri Lankans, and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis come at 14th, 17th, and 18th, respectively. Over the two decades, the Indian and Sri Lankan populations increased by 5–6 times; while Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations respectively tripled and doubled. These differences directly reflect the migration patterns and the types of visas held by these populations, which will be discussed in Section 2.

³ The 2017 data count Taiwan separately from the People's Republic of China, and North Korea separately from the Democratic Republic of South Korea, while the data in 1997 and 2007 count those pairs together.

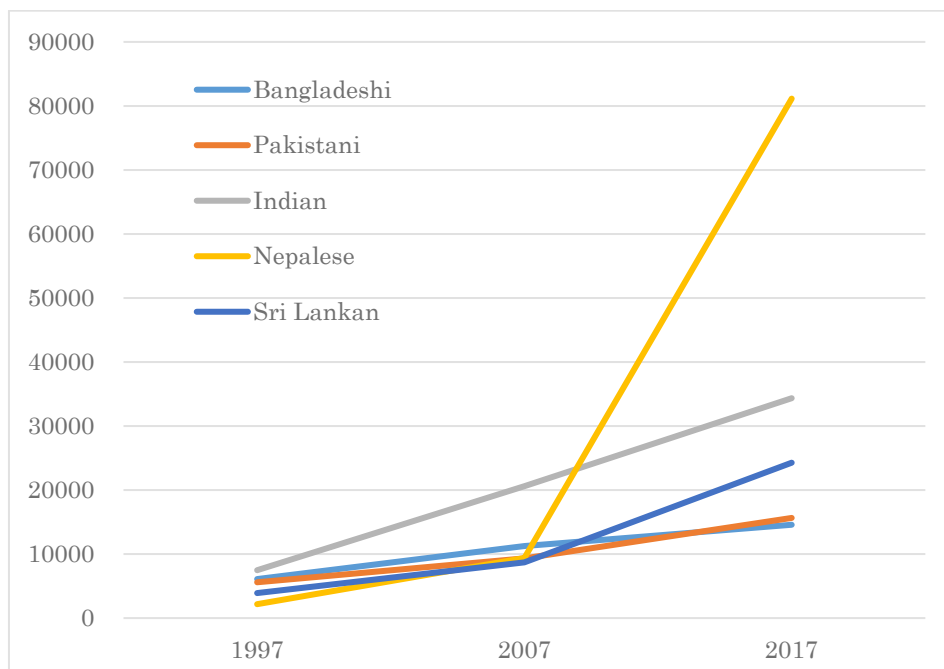


Fig. 3 Population of South Asians in Japan by nationality 1997–2017

There are numerous studies from social sciences on South Asians in Japan, at different points of time, which will be referred to in explaining and discussing issues in this paper. Research has been done on various Indian communities (Minamino and Sawa 2005; Sawa 2009; Tominaga 1994, 1999; Wadhwa 2016, etc.), Pakistani communities (Kudo 2008; Fukuda 2012, etc.), and Nepalese communities (Yamanaka 1999; Sano and Tanaka 2016; Minamino and Sawa 2017; Tanaka 2017, etc.). There have also been studies on some aspects of Bangladeshi communities in Japan (Takada 2009; Yamamoto 2010; Kitahara and Otsuki 2014), but none on Sri Lankans. The historical and demographic patterns of South Asian migration at the global level and in Japan have also been discussed (Koga et al. 2000; Koga 2006; Minamino and Sawa 2005). These studies inform us of the world of work and life style choices of South Asians in Japan, and therefore will be referred to in discussions in this paper.

1.3. About this paper

The increasing population of migrants from highly ethnolinguistic diverse nations, such as South Asian countries, poses a challenge for sociolinguistic studies of migrant languages in Japan. Studies have documented and addressed trends by one ethnolinguistic ‘community’ at a time (e.g., Koreans, Brazilians). The term ‘community’ often referred to speakers of one particular non-Japanese language in notable geographical areas, or ‘ethnic towns’. The main focus had been the contact between two languages: the heritage language

and the Japanese language. However, over the course of my own study of Pakistanis at a Kanto mosque, I have found that this framework misses out important aspects of language use and attitudes of migrants. Also, this framework limits studies of emerging ethnolinguistic groups in Japan. Many of these emerging communities are highly mobile and are multi-layered. The complexity of migrants' lives who belong to several different communities (which will be described in detail in section 4) and several languages or repertoires do not fit such a framework.

Migrants from some South Asian and Southeast Asian countries regularly communicate with a variety of people using various repertoires, not restricted to speakers of Japanese or their national language (or mother tongue). For example, Muslim migrants such as Indonesians and Pakistanis participate in a strong interethnic community network based on religion. As they share mosques, along with Muslims of other nationality, interethnic communication is common. At the same time, because they come from a multiethnic and multilingual country, they may speak a language other than their mother tongues, such as English, Japanese, and other lingua franca (Urdu, Arabic, etc.), even when they speak among people from the same country.

In addition, I noticed that some trends are not unique to a particular ethnolinguistic or national group, such as Muslim migrants of this case. Few studies have considered the language attitudes and usage patterns of cross-ethnic trends, even when there are similar trends across different linguistic or national groups. This is why I ambitiously consider, in this paper, the situation of migrants in Japan from five South Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. I have excluded Bhutan and the Maldives, as there were too few of these nationals in Japan to account for.

The overlooked complexity should be adequately addressed and discussed in language planning. As I have mentioned above, South Asians, in particular Indians and Nepalis, are now generally recognized to engage in particular industry—IT industry, Indian food restaurants and catering, and service industries (such as language school students as convenience store workers). Such generalization of particular ethnolinguistic (or national) group to a particular occupation or life-style that have been reported on media may intended to be more positive, compared with reports of illegal workers or 'problematic foreign tourists/residents'. However, one concern I have is that sociolinguists and activists in language rights may also be taking in and reproducing such generalization when referring to migrants in promoting their agenda in language issues.

Using demographic data provided by the Ministry of Justice, Sections 1, 2, and 3 provide an overview of the demographic patterns of five South Asian national groups. These will be compared with the mediatized generalizations in occupation and nationality. Their population size in comparison with migrants of other parts of the world, the demographic change in the past twenty years, their visa statuses, and their geographical distribution are

discussed. From my own fieldwork and other sources, Section 4 illustrates the different types of communities (religious, business, school, ethnolinguistic, transnational family) that South Asians in Japan engage in.

To discuss the situation of South Asians in Japan, I will refer to previous social sciences studies (mentioned in Section 1.2.) on different South Asian migrant communities in Japan, and the extensive fieldwork I have conducted. I have been conducting ethnographic fieldwork since 2007, mainly on the Pakistanis and the mosque community in Kanto area, including recording conversations for sociolinguistic studies and interviewing research participants (Yamashita 2016, 2018, etc.). In addition to visiting mosques, Pakistani community events, international schools and Pakistani households in Kanto, I have also occasionally attended public Bangladeshi and Indian festivals, and have also gathered information from the websites of particular communities.

This paper overviews the South Asian communities only, but its scope is not limited to these communities. I propose that sociolinguistic studies of migrants in Japan should move beyond the language-bound or ethnicity-bound framework. It is likely that migrants from other countries, especially some Southeast Asian countries which are also multilingual and ethnically diverse, may share similar attitudes or practices regarding languages.

1.4. Sociolinguistic background information of South Asian nations in brief

South Asians are highly diverse in their heritage cultures, religions, and languages, even inside each national or regional entity. The indigenous language families spoken in South Asia include Indo-European, Dravidian, Austroasiatic, and Sino-Tibetan. Domain-based multilingualism is seen in each country, including English and the national/official language (or the lingua franca). For example, in Pakistan, many people in the urban areas speak Urdu, the national language, in addition to their ethnic languages or languages of the region they reside in. English may also be additionally used, especially in bureaucratic contexts and higher education, but also beyond. In India, English and Hindi are the official languages of the country, along with 22 scheduled languages.⁴ Each state also has several official languages, which may or may not be from the 22 scheduled languages.

The percentage of people who use the national or official language as their L1 (mother tongue, or first language) varies by country. In India, Hindi L1 speakers have represented around 40% of the population for decades (India Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2018), while Urdu L1 speakers in Pakistan comprise 7.6% of the population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, n.d.). In Nepal, Nepali is the official language and the L1 for 44.6% of the population. Sri Lanka has two official languages—Sinhalese and Tamil. The

⁴ ‘Scheduled languages’ refer to the 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India. These languages are an official language at one or more of the 29 states of India, while not all official languages of these states are listed as ‘scheduled languages’. These are not always represented at all times: for example, only 17 of the scheduled languages are on the rupee bank notes.

two languages are each associated with an ethnic group, which has been a source of social tension. Although three quarters of the population in Sri Lanka is Sinhalese speakers, Tamil speakers constitute the majority in some diaspora communities. For Bangladesh, the proportion of L1 Bengali speakers is over 98% (Eberhard et al. 2019); much higher compared to those of the other countries mentioned. These facts suggest that one cannot identify the mother tongue of South Asians by looking simply at their nationality.

In addition to a variety of indigenous languages, English is also an important language in South Asia. English is one of the official languages in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It is also sometimes a lingua franca. For example, English is widely used in India, where there are major linguistic differences across ethnic groups. English is also often a medium of instruction at various levels of education in all five countries. Although these countries may offer education in the regional language or other official or national languages, English-medium education is seen as a more elite choice that opens up opportunities for upper mobility in terms of socioeconomic status.

Each nation has a different modern history and socio-economic or political push factors that brought migrants to Japan. South Asians have migrated in groups starting in the 19th century, notably as indentured workers of British India. They have worked across the world—in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. In addition to indentured workers, South Asian migrants were also officials, soldiers, and merchants. In the latter half of the 20th century, they have mainly migrated to the Middle East and the United Kingdom. Since the 1980s, they have also migrated to countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan. More recently, there have also been refugees, manual workers, skilled workers, academics, entrepreneurs, etc. who have come to Japan.

Many South Asian migrants send a substantial amount of money to their relatives in their home country. In some of their home countries, the amount of remittances from their expatriates form a significant proportion of the GDP. For instance, remittances from migrants represented over 30% of the GDP in Nepal, and almost 9% for Sri Lanka at the end of 2018 (World Bank 2019). Some more successful migrants invest in businesses and properties back home, promoting the economic development of the country.

2. Demographic trends by nationality

Referring to a wide range of studies on South Asians in Japan and statistics on the foreigners registered in Japan (Ministry of Justice 2018), this section analyzes the demographic data of South Asian nationals in 2017, according to their visa status. Contrary to some stereotypes of South Asian nationals as workers in particular domains (such as Indian restaurants and IT engineers), there are proportionally more students and dependents. Compared with all foreign nationals in general, fewer South Asians are on spouse visas.

Also, the popular visa status of each nationality group varies greatly, despite the relatively similar cultural, linguistic, and geographic distance between Japan and each of these countries. This is of course due to the different socioeconomic and political backgrounds of migration from each country. In terms of sociolinguistics, the difference in visa statuses within and across different South Asian nations implies that the language use of South Asian nationals in Japan cannot be explained in terms of ‘language use of X nationals’.

2.1. Visa status categories

The residential status of South Asians in Japan may help us speculate about the number of people involved in different kinds of occupations. This also helps us speculate in what domains and roughly how many South Asians may use each of their linguistic repertoires (heritage languages, Japanese, English, other lingua franca) in Japan. I have categorized the numerous residential visas of Japan into 9 groups (Table 2), according to the type of network that each individual would be most engaged in. The work visas are categorized into three groups: (1) MAN, (2) ENG/HUM/INT, and (3) SKIL. This categorization is roughly based on its population size and what we currently know about the specific jobs and types of companies that South Asians engage in. The six other categories vary in terms of engagement in the world of work. The fourth category, STU (students), is the largest group among South Asians, who can be at any age. It is highly likely that the majority are enrolled in Japanese language schools, where the students’ maximum length of stay is usually 2 years—relatively shorter than other visa categories. The fifth and sixth categories are DEP (dependents of foreign nationals) and SPO (spouses of Japanese nationals and permanent residents), which are issued to family members of those live in Japan. Both have restrictions in amount of time they can engage in paid work. Both visa statuses are based on familial ties. While DEP group does not likely have Japanese national as a family member, most of the SPO group would have a Japanese speaker in the family. Permanent resident visa holders are counted as PERM, the seventh category. They likely have lived in Japan for years by the time they become eligible for such visa, thus likely have some knowledge of Japanese. Other visas include DA (designated activities) and RES (long term residents), which will be further described in section 2.3.

Table 2 Categories of residential visa and abbreviations

Category	English term	Japanese term
MAN	Business Manager	経営・管理
ENG/HUM/INT	Professor	教授
	Artist	芸術
	Religious Activities	宗教
	Journalist	報道
	Highly Skilled Professional	高度専門職
	Legal / Accounting Services	法務・会計業務
	Medical Services	医療
	Researcher	研究
	Instructor	教育
	Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / International Services	技術・人文知識・国際業務
	Intra-company Transferee	企業内転勤
	Cultural Activities	文化活動
SKIL	Skilled Labor	技能
	Entertainer	興行
	Care Worker	介護
	Technical Intern Training	技能実習
DEP	Dependent	家族滞在
DA	Designated Activities	特定活動
STU	Student	留学
	Trainee	研修
SPO	Spouse or Child of Japanese Nationals	日本人の配偶者等
	Spouse of Child of Permanent Resident	永住者の配偶者等
RES	Long-term Resident	定住者
PERM	Permanent Resident	永住者

2.2. Population by visa status

Figure 4 shows the percentage of each visa category group among all foreign nationals, and Figure 5 shows that among the five South Asian nationals (abbreviations are listed in Table 2). At a first glance, we see that the largest group in all foreign nationals is the PERM—permanent residents (42%). Meanwhile, for South Asians, the largest group is the STU—students (25%), closely followed by DEP—dependents (23%). The high percentage of permanent residents (PERM) in all foreign nationals is partially due to the special permanent residents from East Asia in Japan. However, even if we take this into account, we can still find some patterns by looking at the ratio and the rankings of other visa category groups. For example, it is clear that proportionally more South Asians are on dependent visas (23%, in contrast to 6% for all foreign nationals), and fewer South Asians are on spousal visas of Japanese nationals (5%, in contrast to 14% for all foreign nationals). At the same time, there is no visa category group that dominates among all South Asians.

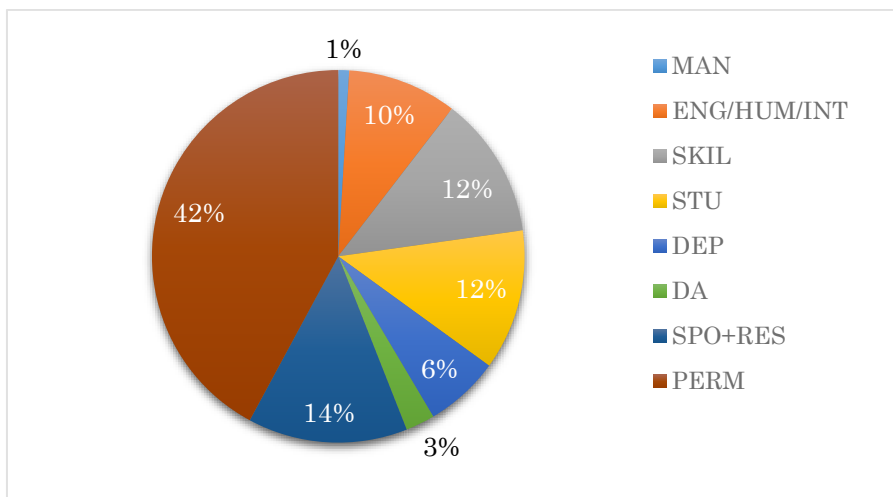


Fig. 4 All foreign nationals by visa category (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

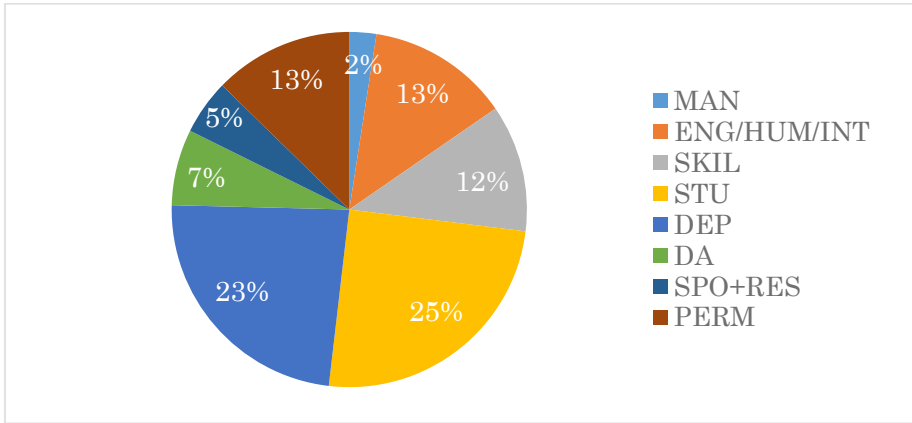


Fig. 5 South Asian nationals by visa category (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

In terms of number, we see that Nepalese students and dependents are the largest groups of all South Asians, then followed by Nepalese on SKIL, Indians on ENG/HUM/INT, and Sri Lankan students (Figures 6 and 7).

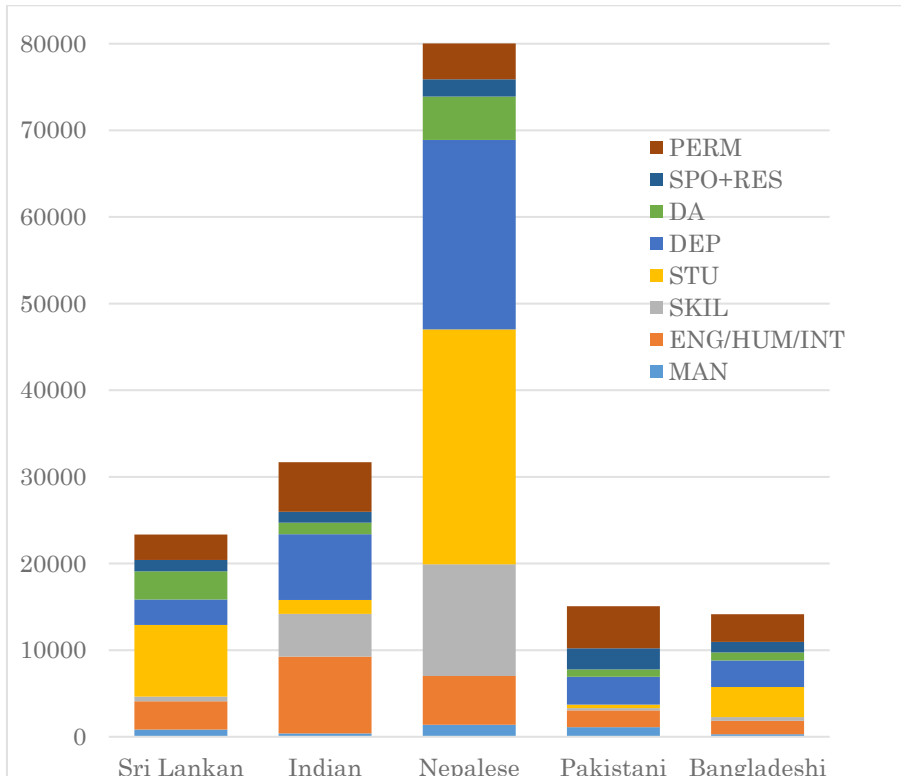


Fig. 6 Populations of South Asian nationals in Japan by visa status (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

2.3. Interpreting visa statuses, nationality and language use

The 9 categories and the proportion of each South Asian national in each category, will be further explained in this sub-section, in the descending order in size. We see that there is a gap between stereotyped occupation of each South Asian national group and demographic data. Also, patterns in everyday language use could vary even within each category.

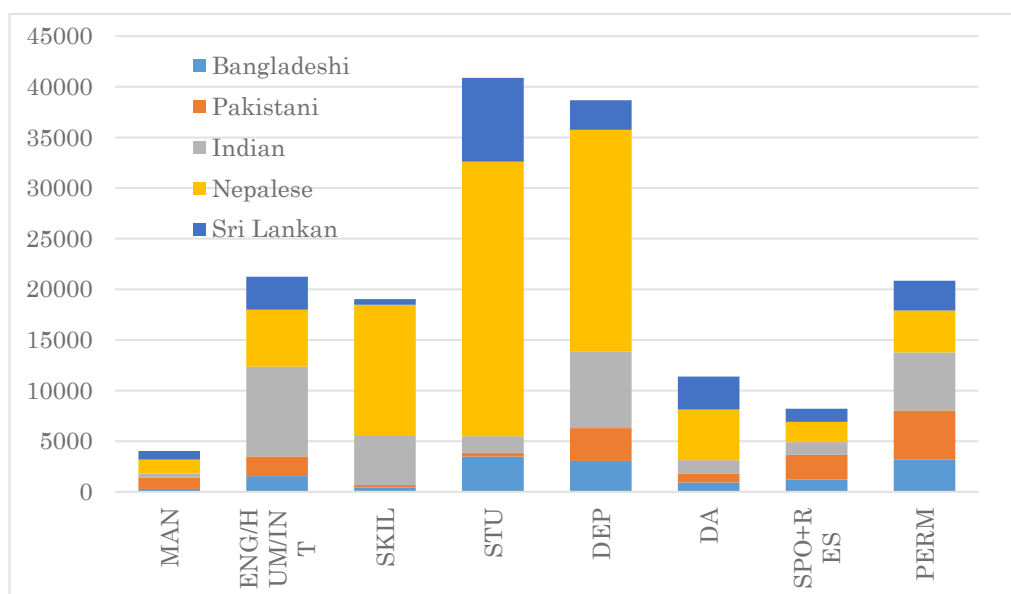


Fig. 7 Population of South Asian nationals by visa category (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

STU (Students and Trainees)—Those with student visas include Japanese language school students, students of primary, secondary, tertiary education, and those of both academic and vocational education. Trainee visas are granted to people who are sent from organizations in their countries of residence with the intention of returning with new skills or knowledge acquired in Japan. Almost a quarter of all South Asian nationals are students, and less than 0.1% are trainees.

The proportion of students among South Asian nationals vary according to nationality. Out of all South Asians with student visas, Nepalese represent 66.3%, and Sri Lankans 20.2% (Figure 8). For Indians and Pakistanis, student visa holders are less than 6% of their respective population in Japan, whereas student visa holders represent more than a third of Nepalese and Sri Lankan population in Japan (Figure 9). The increase in the number of student visas being issued is one of the major factors behind the growth of the South Asian population in Japan.

Students' stay in Japan can range from just a few months to several years. Students may also stay in Japan after the completion of their education: they may continue studying at a higher level, get a job in Japan, or switch to a 'DA' visa to seek jobs in Japan. Whether those in this group stay for longer or not would likely highly depend on changes and practices in accepting foreign workers in Japanese companies.

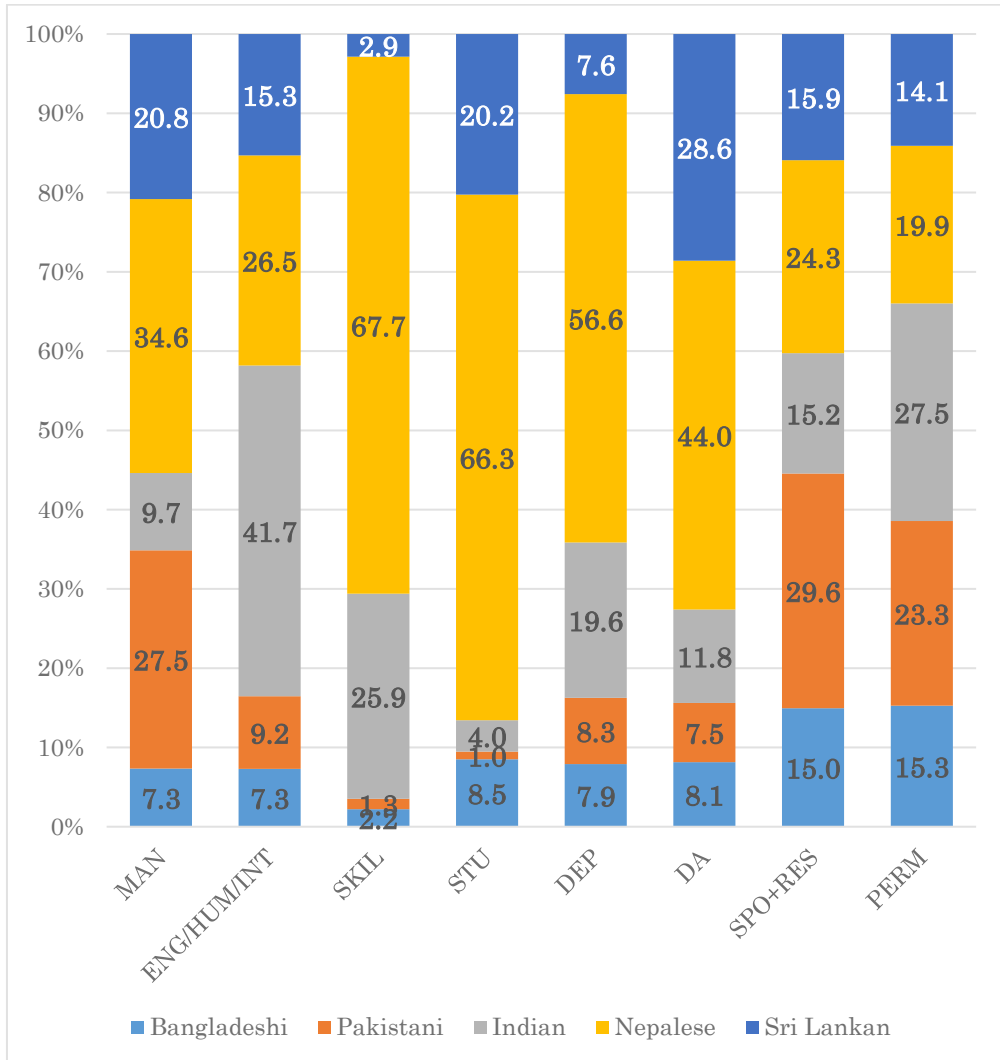


Fig. 8 Proportions of South Asian nationals by visa category (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

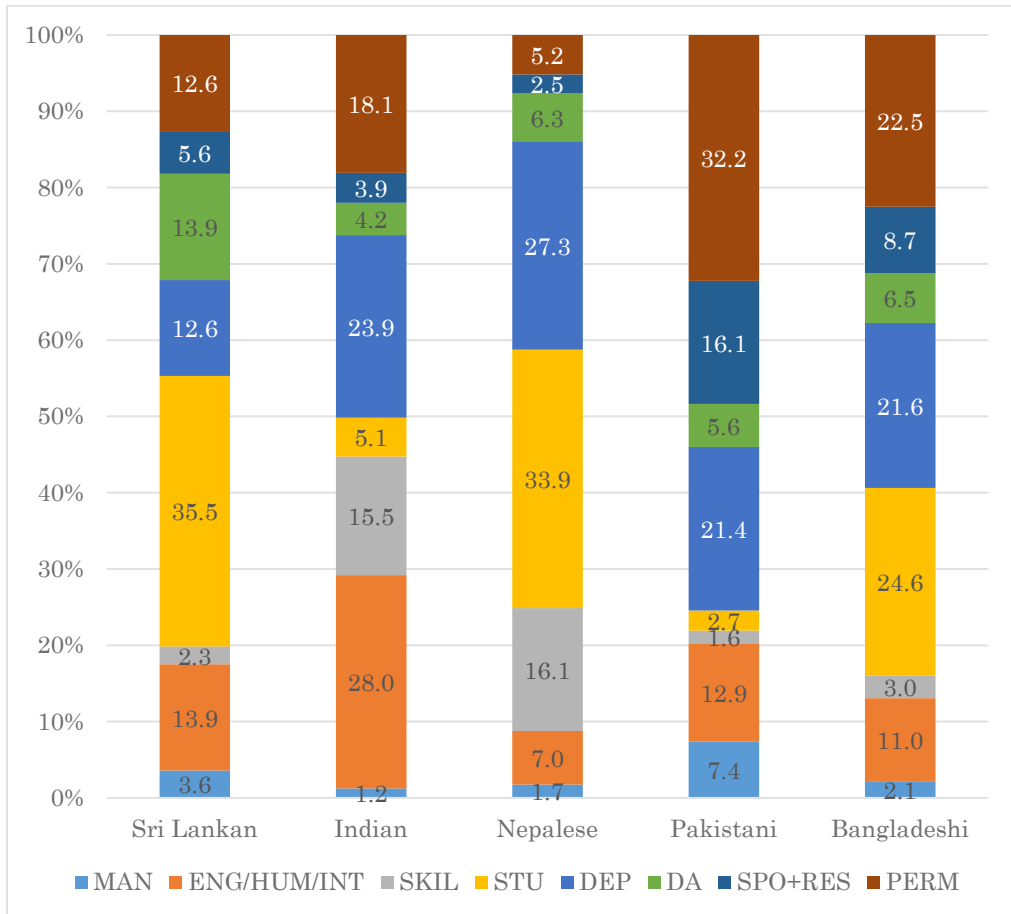


Fig. 9 Proportions of South Asians in Japan by visa status in 2017

DEP (Dependent)—Dependent visa holders are family members of foreign nationals without a permanent resident visa, as there are separate categories for foreign national dependents of Japanese or permanent residents. Visa holders in this category are not participating in full-time employment or education. Nearly 40,000 people—23% of all South Asian nationals—fall under this visa category (Figure 5), which constitutes a significantly larger proportion than that of the Dependent visa holders among all foreign nationals as a whole (6%). Out of this group, more than half are Nepalese (57%), followed by Indians (20%). Reflecting this figure, many pamphlets for night school programs for secondary education are available in Nepali.

It is likely that many adults in this category have less contact with Japanese speakers compared with other visa status holders. The contact with the Japanese language at home will be less than the ‘SPO’ group (described below), and that at work will be less than those with work visas (because they are only allowed to work part-time). However, as long as

they are in a Japanese-medium educational system, many children in this category may have far more contact with Japanese speakers than the adults of any other category. These children may translate or interpret to and from Japanese for their family members or others. Being a ‘dependent’ in terms of visa status would not always mean all are ‘dependent’ in terms of Japanese language use in daily interactions.

ENG/HUM/INT (‘Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / International Services’, etc.)—This second group includes different types of professionals and company employees, and represents 13% of the whole South Asian population in Japan (Figure 5). In terms of sub-categories, ‘Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / International Services’ is by far the largest. Together with ‘Inter-company transfers’, these two sub-categories comprise all kinds of white-collar company employees, and represent almost 94% of this whole group. The remaining 6% include those in the other sub-categories related to education (Professors and Instructors), academic research (Researchers), other professionals (Legal/Accounting Services, Medical Services, Journalists), professions related to culture (Artists, Religious Services, and Cultural Activities), and ‘Highly Skilled Professionals’. The new point-based category, ‘Highly Skilled Professional’, aims to attract workers in ‘advanced academic research activities’, ‘advanced specialized/technical activities’, and ‘advanced business management activities’ (Ministry of Justice 2018).

It is widely known that there are many Indian nationals who work in the IT industry (Sawa 2009). We can see that many Indian nationals do represent this visa category in terms of numbers (Figure 7) and of proportion (Figure 8). We also see that more than a quarter of South Asians of this visa group are Nepalese. Together with Indians, they represent 68.2% of all South Asians in this group. Nowadays, some major Japanese companies directly recruit graduates to work in Japan, from top elite educational institutions in India (Kuribayashi 2018). Since most jobs do not require communication with their home countries, and are globally oriented (i.e., work with non-South Asians, including Japanese), it is highly likely that many use far more English than the other languages of their home country. The frequency and proficiency of their Japanese usage may depend on their work requirements.

PERM (Permanent Resident and Special Permanent Resident)—Theoretically, one can apply for permanent residency after consecutively residing in Japan for 10 years. However, at the time of writing, one can apply earlier under certain criteria. For example, children of Japanese nationals and permanent residents can apply for it after one year, and for spouses, after three years of marriage and more than one year of living together in Japan. This means that a wide range of people are in this category, including those with only one year of

residence up to over 10 years of residence, those with or without Japanese nationals as family members, those who are the breadwinners, and those who are dependents.

Although the proportion of permanent residents vary according to nationality (see Figure 9), the actual number of permanent residents do not seem to vary widely across the five nationals (see Figures 7 and 8). The Pakistanis, which had the least proportion of student visa holders, come at the top among the five nationals with 32.2%, while only a little more than 5% of the Nepalese population hold this visa. Meanwhile, within the all South Asian permanent residents, the Nepalese constitute 19.9%, which is almost a fifth, and also more numerous than Bangladeshis or Sri Lankans of this category (Figures 7 and 8).

Permanent residents can stay outside of Japan for five years at the longest, which means that they may not necessarily reside in Japan all of the time. Therefore, there are potentially more holders of this visa than those who are currently living in Japan—others who have not been included in these statistics may be temporarily residing outside of Japan. This has been the case with some Pakistani youth who study or get married abroad, but later come back to Japan (Yamashita 2018). More than one in ten of all South Asians in the statistics have permanent residency (See Figure 5), but it is highly likely that there are even more of this category who are temporarily outside Japan. Depending on their circumstances, they may return to reside in Japan in the future.

SKIL (Skilled Labor, etc.)—The third group includes blue-collar professions: Skilled Labor, Entertainers, Care Workers, and Technical Intern Training. 12% of all South Asian residents are in this group. 96% of this SKIL group are in the sub-category of Skilled Labor. The Immigration Bureau lists under the Skilled Labor category professions such as cook, architectural engineer, repair technician, processing engineer, animal trainer, mining engineer, aircraft pilot, sports trainer, and wine sommelier. The amount of Japanese they use may differ according to the profession they are in.

The most popular profession among South Asian nationals under this category is widely believed to be cooking South Asian food. Figure 8 shows that most of the South Asians who hold visas in this category are the Nepalese and the Indians. Journalism reports that restaurants with a tandoor oven are able to provide a visa for foreign cooks who can use it, and that some migration brokers exploit this system, especially from Nepal. The kitchen staff in South Asian restaurants may use Hindi-Urdu or the national language of their home country (Nepali, Bengali, Sinhalese, Tamil), English, or other regional languages. Meanwhile, there are signs that the range of occupations held by South Asians in Japan will widen. Under the Skilled Labor category, a town in Hokkaido has accepted over a hundred horse trainers from India (The Hokkaido Shimbun Press 2018). These groups will probably exhibit their own patterns in their language use and repertoires.

DA (Designated Activities)—This category includes many ‘other’ categories that fall outside of those of other visas. One possible type that South Asian nationals may have are visas for housekeepers and personal assistants of those with ‘MAN’ or Highly Skilled Professional visas. The other include those who are in transition—such as interns and students who are looking for jobs after graduating from schools in Japan.

SPO (Spouse or Child of Japanese Nationals and Permanent Residents)—Residents of this category are likely to have a family member with some competency in the Japanese language. In contrast to the large ‘DEP’ group among South Asians as a whole, this group is proportionally smaller compared to the proportion of ‘SPO’ visa holders among other foreign nationals in Japan. Pakistanis constitute the largest group of South Asian visa holders in this category (See Figure 6).

RES (Long Term Resident)—In general, long term resident visas are for *Nikkei*⁵ people and their spouses, descendants of ex-Japanese nationals, refugees, widows of Japanese spouses, those who have gotten divorced from Japanese spouses, and the children (of minor age) of Japanese nationals. Among South Asians, there are only 3,250 long term residents, which is less than 2% of the South Asians in Japan. Pakistanis constitute over a third of South Asians with ‘RES’ visas. Because South Asian nationals are generally not *Nikkei* people, it is likely that many South Asian long term residents have been widowed by or divorced from Japanese spouses. Therefore, I have combined this with the ‘SPO’ category in the graphs.

MAN (Business Manager)—These are people who own their own business or who hold a managerial position at a company. Many Pakistanis have been found to be self-employed businessmen in trades such as exports of used cars and machines (Fukuda 2012), catering, or halal food shops. Indians have also been found to own businesses in exports of pearls and jewelry (Minamino and Sawa 2005; Tominaga 1994), as well as in catering. However, at least today, more than a third of South Asians with this type of visa are Nepalese (34.6%), followed by Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans (Figure 8), which come at 27.5% and 20.8% respectively. Despite their longer residential history and stronger representation compared with other groups, Indians represent merely 9.7% of South Asian Business Manager visa holders. This figure may reflect the increase in Nepali owners of ‘Indian-Nepalese restaurants’ and food shops across the country.

In terms of language use, it is known that Pakistanis in the used car business or who work as managers often have some knowledge of the Japanese language, but tend to have their

⁵ *Nikkei* refers to permanent migrants and their descendants of Japanese origin. It is estimated that more than half of *Nikkei* people around the world reside in South America (The Association of *Nikkei* and Japanese Abroad, 2018).

Japanese staff (or their Japanese spouses) do the paperwork (Fukuda 2012; Kudo 2008). As managers, they are able to invite people from their home country or other South Asian countries to work under them.

3. Geographical distribution

This section explores population distribution of South Asians by region and by nationality. Two-thirds of South Asians live in Kanto, followed by 12% in Tokai. Although most South Asian national groups prefer to reside in Tokyo, Pakistanis prefer other Kanto prefectures than Tokyo, and they generally live more spread out than others. Interestingly, Kyushu and Okinawa region has more South Asian nationals than in Kinki region, due to the recruiting of Japanese language students. Some areas in Kanto are known as ‘ethnic towns’ of particular South Asian national groups, which often become the venues for community events, but may not necessarily be their areas of residence, contrary to the impression that media reports have created.

3.1. Overview of population distribution

Just under two thirds of all South Asians live in Kanto region (see Figure 10). Tokai region (Shizuoka, Aichi, Gifu, and Mie prefectures) has the second largest population with 12%, followed by Kyushu and Okinawa with 8%. Almost every prefecture has South Asians from each of the 5 countries.

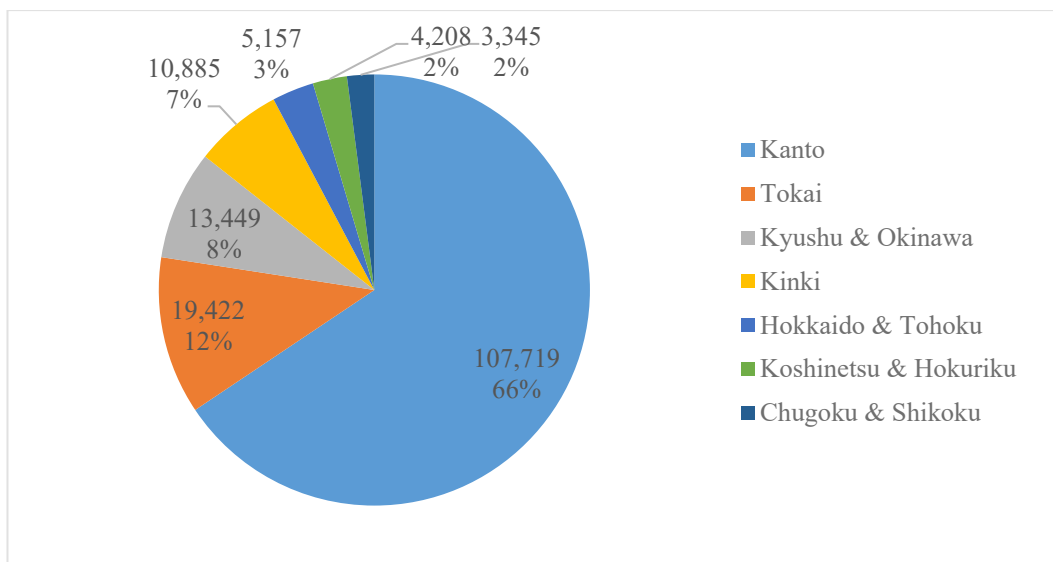


Fig. 10 Areas of residence of South Asians in Japan

3.2. Population distribution by nationality

Do particular national groups concentrate in particular area? Figures 11–15 show the prefectural distribution of the locations of residence of each of the five groups of South Asian nationals in Japan.

The population distribution by region differs by nationality. Although a high percentage of all South Asian nationals reside in Kanto, the figure range by nationality from approximately 72% (Indians and Bangladeshis) to 61% (Pakistanis). Tokyo is the most popular place of residence for Indians, Bangladeshis, and Nepalese, while it is the second most popular for Sri Lankans: Chiba is the most popular location for them. Saitama is the most popular for Pakistanis, whereas Tokyo is only their fifth most popular location, after Aichi, Ibaraki, and Kanagawa.

We see that all South Asian national groups have certain proportion of people in prefectures such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, Chiba, Shizuoka, Aichi, Fukuoka, and Saitama. All of these prefectures (except Tokyo) have designated cities⁶, but not all the prefectures with designated cities are popular among all South Asian nationals, nor do they reflect the population size of the designated cities. Other prefectures with designated cities include Hokkaido, Hyogo, Hiroshima, Kyoto, Miyagi, Nigata, and Okayama; some of these prefectures are preferred by some South Asian nationals.

Pakistanis are more spread out (Figure 14) than other nationals. Some Pakistanis and Sri Lankans (Figure 15) live in Tokai and Koshin'etsu regions, including Mie, Nagano, and Gifu prefectures—which have less businesses in the tertiary industry than the more urban prefectures such as Aichi and Shizuoka. Indians tend to concentrate more in urban prefectures (Figure 12), and Nepalese also, to some extent (Figure 13).

⁶ Designated cities refer to *seirei shitei toshi*—cities in Japan that have a population of over 500,000, and have been designated as such by order of the Cabinet of Japan under Article 252, Section 19 of the Local Autonomy Law.

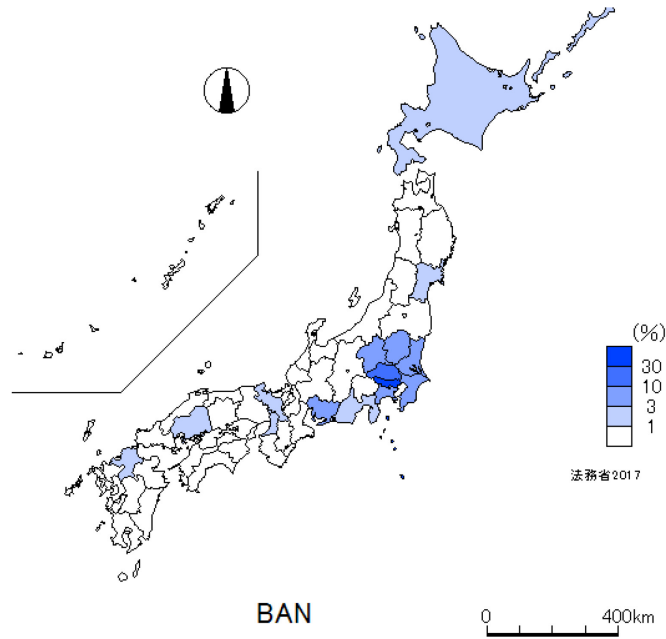


Fig. 11 Bangladeshi population in Japan by prefecture 2017 (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

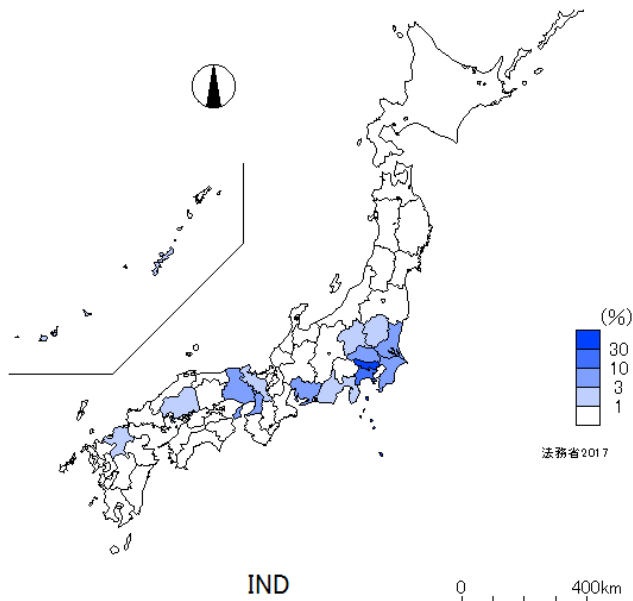


Fig. 12 Indian population in Japan by prefecture 2017 (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

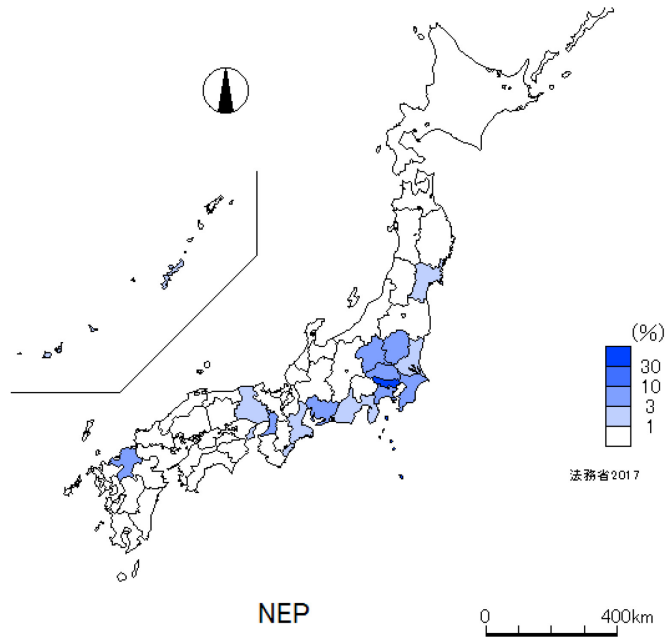


Fig. 13 Nepalese population in Japan by prefecture 2017 (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

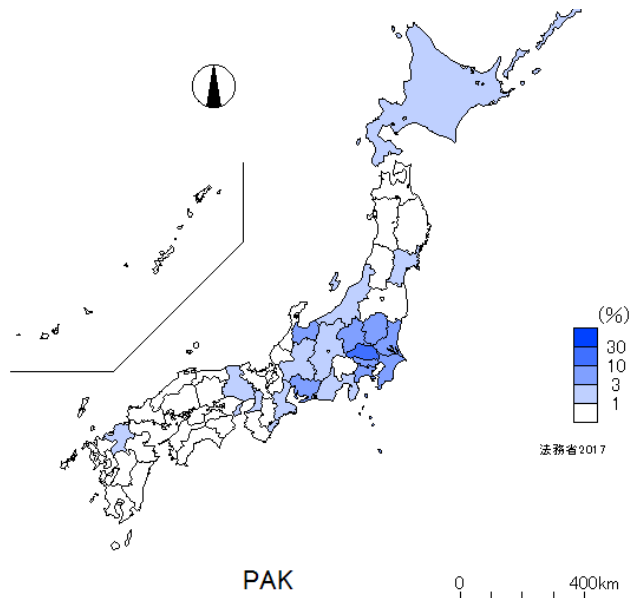


Fig. 14 Pakistani population in Japan by prefecture 2017 (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

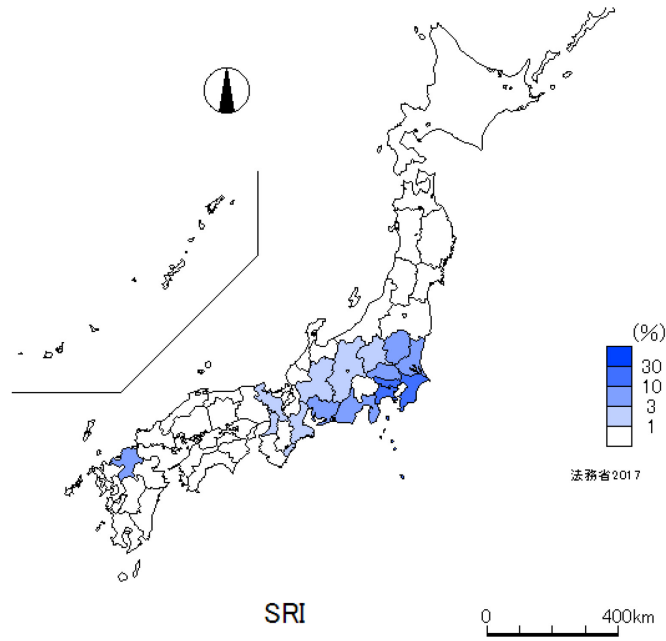


Fig. 15 Sri Lankan population in Japan by prefecture 2017 (Source: Ministry of Justice 2018)

Figure 16 illustrates the locations of mosques in Japan as of 2019. Many mosques have been established and are organized by South Asians, especially Pakistanis. Outside cities, mosques tend to be located near major toll-free roads (because of the high percentage of Pakistanis in used-car business) or near national universities, where there are foreign graduate students. We see that many locations reflect the prefectures which predominantly Muslim South Asians, namely Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, prefer to reside in (Figures 11 and 14). For example, Hokkaido, where more than 1% of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis reside in, has three mosques.



Fig. 16 Map of the mosques in Japan, 2019

3.3 Population distribution of South Asians outside Kanto

The Tokai area (Shizuoka, Aichi, Gifu, and Mie) is famous for its heavy manufacturing industry, which is partially supported by foreign workers, such as Nikkei South Americans. The presence of other national groups, such as the Filipinos, is also strong. In the past, this area has also been a destination of clandestine Nepalese migrant workers (Yamanaka 1999).

Although South Asians do not generally hold visas that allow them to work in factories, Tokai is the second most popular area among them. Over twelve percent of Nepalese, Sri Lankans, and Pakistanis live in the four prefectures of Tokai area (Shizuoka, Aichi, Gifu, and Mie), while less than 8% of Indians and Bangladeshis live in this area. It is likely that many Pakistanis who live in Tokai are associated with the car industry. There are several mosques and Islamic organizations in Aichi prefecture alone, and there are mosques in each of the four prefectures of Tokai.

Kyushu (Fukuoka, Saga, Oita, Miyazaki, Kumamoto, Nagasaki, and Kagoshima) and Okinawa are the third most popular areas among South Asian nationals. This is surprising, considering the population in urban Kinki region and the century-old history of Indians in Kobe, Hyogo prefecture (also in Kinki). More than 1% of each South Asian group live in Fukuoka prefecture, although the population is dominated by the Nepalese and Sri Lankans. The Nepalese population in Fukuoka has increased by 20 times in the last decade. Many are likely Japanese language school or vocational school students, who were admitted through Japanese language schools in Nepal (Nishinohon Shimbunsha 2017). Japanese schools with over 50% Nepalese students include five schools in Fukuoka, three in Okinawa, and one each in Miyazaki, Chiba, Miyagi, and Tokyo (Minamino and Sawa 2017: 41), indicating a chain migration—they are recruited through agencies back home. It is likely that Sri Lankans in Kyushu and Okinawa are similarly language school students. While the two groups alone merely represent 2.5% of the total foreign population nationally, they represent 12.4% of the total foreign population in Kagoshima prefecture, 9.6% of that in Fukuoka, and 9.1% of that in Saga. The only other prefecture with around a similar percentage is Ibaraki (9.7%) in Kanto.

Okinawa alone has more than 1% of all South Asians. Okinawa, which still has a Hindu temple, was home to a small community of 45 households of Indians in 1990 (Tominaga 1999). However, there are only 48 Indian nationals in Okinawa today. Meanwhile, more than 1,800 Nepalese nationals reside there, and they represent over 80% of the students at three Japanese language schools there (Minamino and Sawa 2017: 41).

There are fewer South Asians residing in the Kinki area (Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, Nara, Shiga, and Wakayama). Currently, around 10% of Indians live in the Keihanshin area (Osaka, Kyoto, and Hyogo), but this is far less than the population there of other South Asian nationals. There is an Indian community of traders established in Kobe, Hyogo prefecture, in the first half of the twentieth century. However, this has shrunk over the last three decades (Minamino and Sawa 2005). Kobe is also home to the oldest mosque remaining in Japan.

3.4. Famous ‘ethnic towns’ in Kanto region

Some neighborhoods in Tokyo have come to be identified with particular ethnic groups (Figure 17). Nishikasai in Edogawa-ku, Tokyo, is now widely known as the Indian neighborhood (Sawa 2009), although the area around Nishikasai station does not look particularly ‘Indian’. Nishikasai has been the place where alternative Indian restaurants (i.e., those that serve menu items other than North-Indian based cuisine, like the nation-wide Indian restaurants) have been initially successful. Edogawa-ku and the neighboring Koto-ku are home to two Indian international schools and some Indian organizations. Edogawa-ku has also become the first ward to have an elected Indian-born city-counselor in 2019. Other places known for Indian communities include Ojima, Koto-ku, Funabori Edogawa-ku, and Okachimachi, Taito-ku. These places often have Indian restaurants (such as pure vegetarian ones), temples and mosques, as well as school bus services for the Indian international schools.

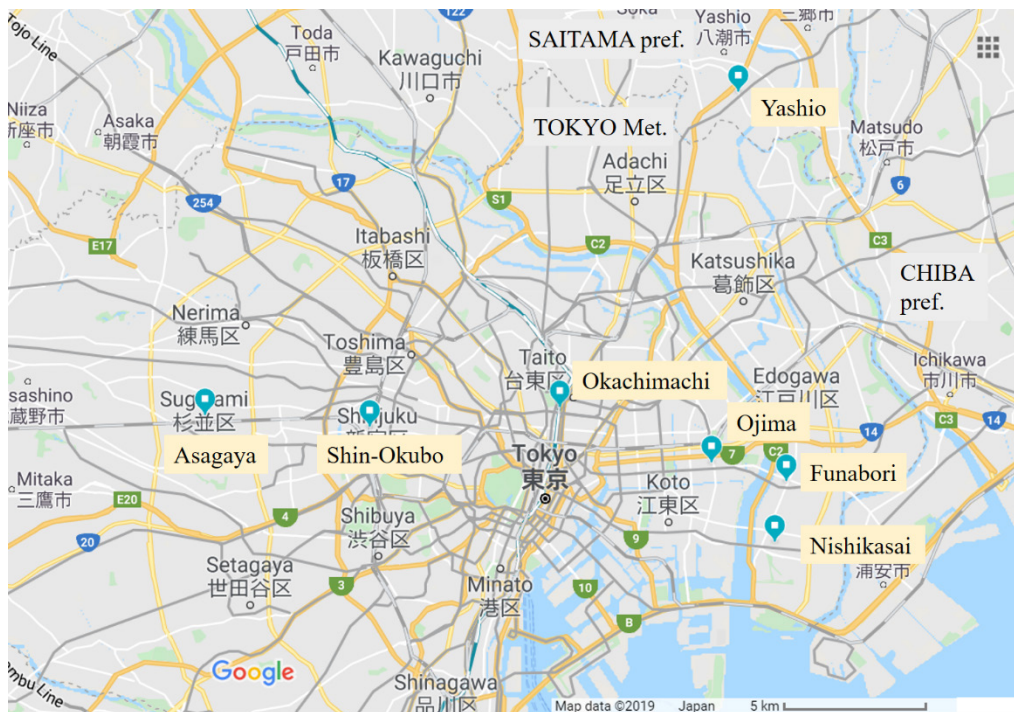


Fig. 17 Map of some notable Tokyo/Saitama neighborhoods for Indians, Nepalese, and Pakistanis

Nepalese communities are associated with two Tokyo neighborhoods: Asagaya in Suginami-ku, and Shin-Okubo in Shinjuku-ku (Minamino and Sawa 2017). The former is because of the presence of the Everest International School established in 2013, the only Nepalese school in Japan. The latter has been called ‘Little Kathmandu’ by the media,

spurred by the increase of Nepalese visitors and Nepalese ethnic restaurants in the area. However, the Japanese media have referred to Shin-Okubo as a kind of home to a wide range of ethnic or national groups. A halal food shop at one corner has been referred to as the “*Isuramu yokocho* (Islam Alley)” for several years. Moreover, some media have reported an increase of Vietnamese people in this area. Meanwhile, Shin-Okubo in general has largely been flooded by young Japanese visitors, mostly women, seeking Korean pop culture, food, and Korean products. As of spring 2019, there were fewer Nepalese visitors on streets compared to a few years back. While there are still several Nepalese restaurants and shops, a Nepalese food shop on the main street had just closed down, and had been transformed into an Indonesian restaurant.

A part of Yashio city in Saitama is affectionately called ‘Yashiostan’ today, initially by Japanese people who sought ‘authentic Pakistani food’. There are several Pakistani restaurants and a mosque within the city, and it has been the location for some Pakistani community events (Yamashita 2018). However, the mosque and the restaurants are located some distance from the station, as well as from each other. This reflects the fact that many Pakistanis who use these services get there using cars. Despite the name ‘Yashiostan’, Pakistanis actually live in a more spread out area, in Saitama and the neighboring Northern Kanto prefectures. In fact, the organizers of the community events were not residents of Yashio.

Although the congregation may be pan-ethnic, many mosques in Kanto are organized by Pakistanis, and located along main roads (see Figure 18), not near railway stations. A substantial number of Pakistanis are involved in used car exports (Fukuda 2012); therefore, Saitama and the Northern Kanto prefectures are a good place to keep and drive cars, in addition to their proximity to used car auction sites. Since Pakistani social networks are often segregated by gender, many mosques and Pakistani restaurants in Saitama and Northern Kanto are attended mostly by men; women visit only when accompanied by their male family member.

The places described above may have become famous for its association with specific national groups, but this does not ensure everyday face-to-face communication within the same ethnolinguistic group as shown in canonical studies of migrant communities. The neighborhoods have been referred to as such because of their relatively higher visibility of a particular national group, as well as the presence of a few shops and religious institutions that seem to cater to these groups. People may come from nearby areas for specific events—this is not only true of the attendees, but even extends to the organizers.

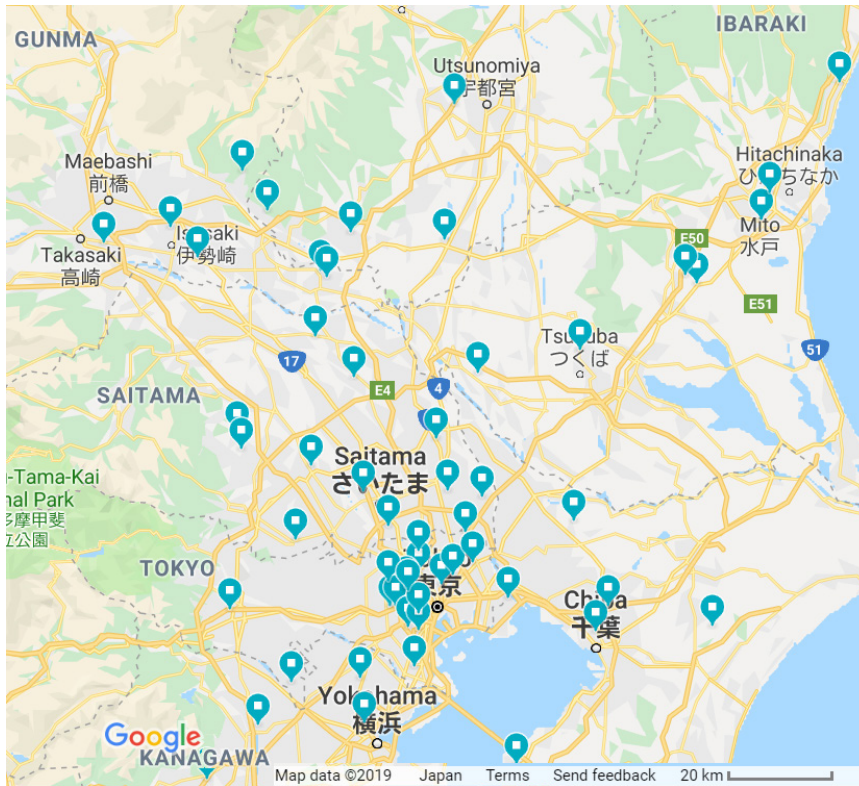


Fig. 18 Map of the mosques in Kanto, 2019

4. South Asian communities in Japan

Occupation and geographical concentration of population are not enough to conceptualize a community that engages in social interaction. In order to understand the kind of activities South Asian nationals engage, I will describe in this section different types of communities and the social networks that South Asians in Japan participate, along with the types of language use that may occur in them. They are; religious, school, business, ethnolinguistic communities, and transnational family. South Asians do not belong to just one of them; they engage in several of these communities in different depths in their everyday lives in Japan.

4.1. Religious communities

For many south Asians, religion is an important part of one's individual and group identity, which are formed through the everyday practice. Major religions include Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism—each has one or more communities in Japan. There are Hindu temples, Jain temples, Sikh gurdwaras, and Islamic mosques in Japan today. The everyday practice is not limited to prayers, offerings to the temple or to

the religious community, community service, and festivals, but also extends to what is considered matters of individual preference in Japan, such as dietary restrictions. Jains and Hindus practice diverse forms of vegetarianism, and Muslims have their own dietary restrictions. The negotiations of and the discussions of what to eat and how to eat in accordance with each religion, plays an important part in reinterpreting and reframing one's understanding of their religion, and to reconstruct their identity.

Religion is not only a psychological or a spiritual aspect of a South Asian individual's private life. It also has close connections to different social stances with respect to political and social issues in their hometowns, home countries, and the world, where Muslims are concerned. For example, many South Asian Muslims in Japan express a great deal of concern about the wars in the Syrian and the Palestinian situation and the situation of Uyghurs in China, in addition to the Kashmiri situation. Some have even organized and participated in peaceful protests in front of embassies and other public spaces in Tokyo related to this issue. Many others also share news related to Muslims around the world on social media.

Many religious communities organized by South Asians in Japan today are ethnolinguistically more diverse than those in their countries of origin. They are not necessarily exclusive to South Asians or particular ethnolinguistic groups, and they offer services beyond replicating and reviving the practices brought from home. This includes communicating with the Japanese people or non-South Asians who share the same faith, and promoting the faith to the public. It is necessary for them to communicate both with those without Japanese proficiency as well as with Japanese speakers who are not proficient in speaking a foreign language. Both English and Japanese, in addition to other languages, are used within these communities.

Even when the majority of attendants are not Japanese, most religious communities make themselves available to Japanese converts. Some of these Japanese converts often play a great role in stabilizing the communities. Some have actually studied and practiced the religion, and sometimes have in-depth training and education in it abroad, before the communities were formed. Many Japanese spouses are introduced to the religion through marriage, and classes for this new group as well as their children form a regular community activity.

Even though Pakistanis have taken part in organizing many of the mosques across Japan, Japanese people and Muslims from other South Asian countries, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia are often part of the mosque communities. This makes English and Japanese used interethnically, while Arabic is used as a religious register for particular religious phrases. Some Japanese Muslims have studied for years in the Middle East, which qualifies them to be referred to as *shaikh* or scholars, a source of Islamic knowledge. Other religious communities are also highly diverse, and have English and

Japanese as part of their working languages along with some non-South Asians who are involved in community events, such as the Ahmadiya community (Minesaki 2013), the Sikh community (Wadhwa 2016), and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, one denomination of the Hindu religion (Wadhwa 2016).

In the UK, heritage languages are used and taught through some religious communities such as Hindus and Sikhs (Creese et al. 2006). However, heritage language education is not as commonly provided through the religious communities in Japan. Instead, English has sometimes been taught at mosque complementary schools in Japan, along with the Qur'an and other Islamic knowledge. Urdu is less prioritized in contrast to Arabic (the language of the Qur'an).

4.2. School-based communities

South Asians manage several private schools in Japan that provide education alternatives, all English medium, to the Japanese system. There are three Indian international schools and one Nepali international school in Tokyo and Yokohama. Pakistanis or Bangladeshis as yet do not have their own ethnic/national schools. However, Pakistanis run two out of three of the Islamic international schools in Kanto.

The English medium of these schools reflects the expectations of the South Asian parents, who are already—or are aspiring to become—middle class and above in their home countries. Many parents prefer English-medium schools, which is the common choice in relation to their levels of education in their home country. This preference has been documented among Indians (Yamamoto 2017), Nepalese (Tanaka 2017), and Pakistanis (Kudo 2008; Fukuda 2012; Yamashita 2016) in Japan. Enrollment in an English-medium school also helps their children continue with their studies when returning to their home country for education, or if they are transferred to another country.

In these schools, the national or the ethnic language of their home countries, as well as the Japanese language, are only taught as subjects themselves, with English as the primary language of instruction. Because the schools are English medium, some students without South Asian backgrounds, including Japanese students, are also enrolled. They are not discouraged from attending. Moreover, because of the lack of staff, some schools also have non-South Asian teachers.

Although these schools may differ in their curricula, many have the appearance of a 'global international school'. Their webpage design resembles that of private schools in their home countries or of the non-South Asian international schools in Japan. They use light and bright colors, provide pictures of happy children (see Figure 19), and have most pages written in English. Other than the religious festivals, the activities and events they hold look similar to those of other international schools as well. The pictures of classrooms often include colorful displays in English on the wall (e.g., see Figures 20–21).



Fig. 19 A poster outside an Islamic international school (Photograph by the author, 2016)



Fig. 20 Inside an Islamic international school (Photograph by the author, 2016)

Grade: 4		Time Table 2016-17						
TIME	09:00 - 09:15	09:20 - 10:00	10:00 - 10:45	10:45 - 11:30	11:30 - 12:00	12:00 - 12:30	12:30 - 01:15	01:15 - 02:00
Day/PERIOD	1			2		3		
Monday	ASSEMBLY	Urdu	TPI	Maths	BREAK	Science	Japanese	English
Tuesday		Urdu	TPI	Maths		Science	Japanese	English
Wednesday		Urdu	TPI	Maths		Science	Japanese	English
Thursday		Islamiat	TPI	Maths		S.St	Creative Art	English
Friday		Islamiat	TPI	Maths		S.St	Creative Art	English

Fig. 21 Inside an Islamic international school (Photograph by the author, 2016)

One Islamic international school is based on a curriculum provided by a Pakistani organization of international Islamic schools. This organization has campuses in China and South Africa, which use the same textbooks as in Japan. At the time of the research, the school in Japan was managed by the principal (a Japanese Muslim), a Pakistani caretaker of the mosque, two Pakistani imams, and a Pakistani teacher. The principal of the other Islamic international school was a Southeast Asian, but its board also included members from other parts of the world, such as Africa. In all of these Islamic international schools, the students and staff were ethnically and linguistically diverse. South Asians were not necessarily the majority in these schools. The managers of the school were happy to include non-Muslims of any nationality, insisting that their schools were based on the ‘universal values’ that Islam bases itself on, which are ‘not particular to a specific creed or culture’.

4.3. Business associations, companies, and services

There are business associations for members of each national group, often listed on the websites of their national embassies in Japan. Some are more oriented towards a particular industry, such as the Indian Jewelers association. Others have more cross-business associations, which often play an organizational role in festivals such as ‘Boishakhi Mela’ by Bangladeshis, ‘Namaste India Festival’ by Indians, and ‘Pakistan & Japan Friendship Festival’ by Pakistanis. Held in major public parks for visitors both South Asian and non-South Asian visitors, caterers and other ethnic businesses gather in such events.

Some businesses have close ties with certain ethnolinguistic groups, such as the Gujarati Jains and the pearl trade (Minamino and Sawa 2005). Trade industries, such as jewelers and used-car dealers, need both English and Japanese for their business. The used-car and used-machine industries in Japan are not solely the domain of Japanese and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis; there are Africans and Russians who also participate in the trade (Asazuma et al 2017).

In some South Asian restaurants, the owners and managers are from a different social class (or caste) or even home region/country from the cooks, while restaurants may be family-owned. For example, a Pashto-Pakistani owner of a restaurant in Tokyo hired several cooks who had worked at five-star hotels in Kolkata, India. One very popular South Indian restaurant in Tokyo had Nepali cooks and a Japanese waiter. This indicates that even seemingly “very South Asian” businesses may be ethnolinguistically diverse, and Hindi-Urdu and English/Japanese may be some of the languages used.

Although ethnic food shops owned by South Asians have an extensive variety of goods from their own countries as well as from the rest of South Asia; they often sell products of African and Southeast Asian countries as well, such as Vietnamese *nuoc mam* sauce or Burmese dried fruits, to cater to their customers. A variety of languages are used in their communication with customers. In a shop in Shin-Okubo, a Bangladeshi shop owner used

Bengali, Urdu, English, Japanese, and Arabic-origin phrases in the same conversation (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015).

4.4. Ethnolinguistic (and state-based) communities

The larger languages of India, especially those that are official languages of Indian states, have online communities for those who live in Japan as well as across the world. The Indian Embassy in Japan lists a number of regional and ethnolinguistic organizations. Those under the states' names, which loosely connect to ethnolinguistic communities, include Uttarakhand, Bihar and Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan, while those under the language names (which sometimes loosely aligns with ethnicity) include Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, Kairali (Kerala), Odisha, Malayalee (Malayalam), and Assamese associations. All of their websites use a lot of English. For example, the *World Malayalee* website uses very little Malayalam, though the embedded media news updates are in Malayalam. The type and amount of information updated, as well as the extent of non-English language use, depends on each association. Some organizations, such as the two Bengali (Indian) associations, publish their own online magazines with members' essays and poetry in PDF form, which includes the use of English, Bengali, Hindi, and Japanese. These communities may also have a page on a social media network, such as Facebook, which are often more frequently updated, and allow for more interactional exchanges with members. Some organizations, such as the *Kannada Balaga*, organize the showing of certain films in their language in Japan, where Japanese fans of Indian films are also welcome.

4.5. Transnational family relations, space, and courses of life

There is a strong endogamic tendency for many South Asians back home, across class (caste), ethnicity, region, and religion. Although some young people today have more autonomy in choosing their marriage partner, many marry partners whom their parents recommend or approve. Language is not a primary factor in arranging these marriages: factors such as education matter more than how well they can converse in their mother tongue. Endogamic marriage could become a push factor in increasing the use of heritage languages in the long run.

Studies of Indians and Pakistanis in Japan have shown that many have extensive families in a third country. Not only have many South Asians already been educated in English in their home or a third country, but there are also many marriages among transnational South Asian migrants. Therefore, even though a marriage, e.g., of Pakistani Urdu speakers, may be endogamic, the marriage partner may not be a monolingual speaker of Urdu. Often, the young people who grow up in Japan later study abroad, and/or marry such relatives or those

of the same ethnolinguistic or religious group, who were brought up in their home country or a third country (Tominaga 1994, 1999; Yamamoto 2017; Kudo 2008; Yamashita 2018).

Some young Pakistani women brought up in Japan spent their university years in Pakistan or elsewhere—often in the country where their extensive families live. Many then returned to Japan after graduation. After further studies or some years of working, they got married in Pakistan, and brought their husbands to Japan. This encourages the Pakistani women to use more Urdu (or to continue to use as much Urdu as before marriage), and the Pakistani husbands who were brought up in Pakistan or elsewhere, to learn some Japanese (because men are considered the primary breadwinners in Islamic teaching). Some couples may move to their home country or another country. In this case, the women will primarily use Urdu, English, or a third language, and use far less Japanese. How their language use evolves through their course of life is therefore open; the changes in their language use may not be in one direction, nor are they the same for all Pakistani Urdu speakers. At such an individual level, the repertoires they mainly use can change any time, and therefore what may seem a ‘loss of heritage language’ or ‘generational language shift’ may be temporary at best.

4.6. Attitudes towards English and heritage language

The ethnolinguistic diversity and the status of English in migrants’ countries of origin should be considered in future language policy and studies of multilingualism concerning foreign residents in Japan. Current policies and folk ideas in Japan idealize their language situation as a much simpler one, assuming the migrants have one national language which is their mother tongue and is also a medium of education back home, and therefore that educators should be concerned about the migrant children’s bilingualism with Japanese and the ‘one’ heritage language. However, I have demonstrated in this paper that this is not the case, even in diaspora situations.

The preference of English-medium education instead of education in the heritage language is a strong reminder that we cannot always assume the use of a pair of languages—one host language and one home language—in migrants’ daily lives. In both Nepalese international school and Islamic international school (as well as the Indian international schools), English is the main medium of instruction, and the most used language in their websites. The complex relationship of South Asians to their national language, regional language, mother tongue, religious register, and English (which is pervasive in all forms, from the medium of education to the global popularity of consumable pop cultures), is already a challenge encountered by Anglo-European-centered views of multilingualism. We must explore theoretical and methodological ways that will break our existing notions of multilingualism and language use, yet contribute to our understanding of the workings of the relationship between language and community/society.

There are likely some differences in language attitudes towards the heritage languages across ethnic groups. Many consider heritage languages to be a key to one's ethnic or national identity. For example, some Nepalese parents seem concerned with their children's ability to speak Nepali (Tanaka 2017; NHK 2017). Tanaka (2017) finds that some Nepalese communities in Canada hold Nepali classes during school holidays with parents as some of the teachers, and Nepali parents in Japan could do possibly the same. Not all communities may be as enthusiastic or fortunate enough to logistically manage such classes. For example, in a mosque complementary school in Japan which had initially listed Urdu in their regular and summer-school timetable, the Urdu classes did not happen; classes on English and the Qur'an, among others, were held instead. According to the teachers, the cancellation of Urdu classes was due to lack of popularity against English and other subjects related to Islamic teachings.

My fieldwork beyond the mosque has revealed that Pakistanis in Japan may not be enthusiastic about teaching Urdu because their national or ethnic identity is constructed through other practices in Japan, such as their independence day celebrations and religious holidays (Yamashita 2018). Everyday practices, such as social media references to Islam and Pakistani issues online, and strong transnational ties with their relatives, also play a part in forming their communities and a strong sense of identity. Therefore, we should not come to a rash conclusion that the loss of a heritage language is the loss of a national/ethnic identity, and thus there is a need for careful studies into how the construction of social identity and language maintenance and/or transmission relate to each other.

5. Conclusion

This paper has addressed the South Asian population in Japan, who come from multilingual nations with high ethnolinguistic diversity. Section 1 provided an overview of South Asians in Japan and their sociolinguistic background of their home countries, explaining that South Asians come from a highly ethnolinguistically diverse nation, where English medium education widely takes place. Sections 2 provided information on the trends in visa statuses of those from the five South Asian countries. The largest groups were Nepalese students and Nepalese dependents, and in terms of population size, a half of all South Asians in Japan today are either students or dependents. Section 3 provided an overview of the South Asian demographic distribution across Japan. Although almost two thirds of all South Asian nationals reside in Kanto, there were many Nepalese and Sri Lankans in Kyushu who may be short-term residents. While introducing the well-known 'ethnic towns' in Kanto area, it is noted that these areas are not necessarily where face-to-face language use occurs with regular frequency. These three sections provided a more

detailed information on the diversity of migrants, which would need attention in thinking about multilingualism and language policy in Japan.

Section 4 gave some examples of activities or communities that South Asians in Japan engage in, which is the more likely multilayered and complex, involving different social networks. Instead of communities of particular ‘ethnic town’ or a national group, I have given examples of communities based on religion, business, school, ethnolinguistic, and transnational family. It also addressed the different attitude towards heritage language among communities. Most importantly, I highlighted how many of them engage in not only but several of these communities, as well the heterogeneity in each ‘community’ where the extensive use of English and sometimes Japanese, along with their heritage languages can be observed.

Multilingual practices and language attitudes of migrants in Japan should be analyzed in relation to their involvements in these communities. All four sections demonstrated that the assumption that migrants’ language use involves two languages—their home language and Japanese— would be misleading. They also showed how ethnography and studies across communities should be considered when thinking of issues in multilingualism. Sociolinguists must study works from social sciences in depth to grasp better the migrants’ socially and linguistically complex and dynamic lives.

Lastly, there is also a linguistic point on why we should conduct a collaborative cross-ethnic sociolinguistic study. Some word items or sentence/discourse structures may be shared across migrants or a community of people with both migrants and Japanese residents. The Japanese numerical *man* (ten thousand) is a loan word in the Urdu spoken by Pakistanis in Japan (Yamashita 2015), and is also common among the Sri Lankan community in Japan⁷. The term *namaaz* (Urdu word with Persian etymology, meaning ‘daily prayer’) is commonly used among Japanese Muslims with Pakistani family members, while *salaat* (Arabic word for ‘daily prayer’) or *reihai* (Japanese word for ‘worship’) are the terms used by other Japanese Muslims in Japan (Yamashita 2015). These examples indicate the need for a cross-ethnolinguistic investigation of linguistic items.

On a concluding note, I suggest that the issues addressed here regarding South Asians and languages in Japan may also possibly be applicable to that of Southeast Asians and Africans in Japan. In fostering the understanding of the communities’ attitudes towards languages, and in thinking about language policies and future multilingualism, sociolinguists need to rebuild the models, viewpoints, and methods on migrants’ patterns of language usage and language attitudes to something that captures such complexity.

⁷ This information was obtained in January 2019. I thank a Sri Lankan undergraduate student from TUFS, for this information.

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