

Editors' Preface

On February 26, 2024, the 5th International Colloquium, *Asian Paths of Civilization and Development: Promoting Post-COVID International Collaboration*, opened with the session *Cross-Cultural Communication and Cohabitation among Multilingualistic Societies in Asia and the Pacific*, chaired by Professor Toshiyuki Takeda (Ritsumeikan Asia-Japan Research Organization). Researchers from six countries—Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Pakistan, and Australia—joined the session, bringing diverse specializations and backgrounds. In his opening remarks, Professor Yasushi Kosugi, Director of the Ritsumeikan Asia-Japan Research Institute, warmly welcomed participants and emphasized the importance of seeking forms of communication and cohabitation suited to a globalized world—one defined not by homogenization but by the deepening of religious and cultural diversity. The session brought together scholars from across the region to explore the challenges and possibilities of cross-cultural communication in multilingual societies.

This volume, *Building a Shared Future: Education for Cross-Cultural Communication in a Multilingual Asia*, grows out of that session. The volume comprises five chapters: three developed from presentations at the colloquium and two newly commissioned contributions. To enrich the discussion beyond the original event, we invited additional contributors to offer broader linguistic and regional perspectives. In particular, we sought to include chapters on community-based minority-language education in India and Japanese-language education in Taiwan. We are deeply grateful to the two specialists who generously agreed to contribute their expertise.

Chapter 1, “Understanding Cultural Disparities in Communication: Lessons Learned from Teaching Malay as a Foreign Language” by

Junaini Kasdan and Anis Shahira Shamsuri, examines classroom practices for teaching Malay to non-native speakers in Malaysia. Drawing on classroom observations and insights gained from mosque visits, this chapter explores how intercultural understanding is fostered through language instruction.

Chapter 2, “Ethnic Language Education in Multilingual India: Community-driven Santhali Language Education in Jharkhand” by Emiko Nozawa, focuses on minority-language education in India. Based on multiple rounds of fieldwork, it highlights how grassroots Santhali-language initiatives sustain indigenous linguistic rights and empower young learners.

Chapter 3, “Urdu: A Cultural Bridge in Asia’s Multilingual Tapestry” by Hina Jamshed, explores the cultural and literary dimensions of Urdu in South Asia. Through poetry, prose, and storytelling traditions, this chapter illustrates Urdu’s historical role as a bridge across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Chapter 4, “Between Prestige and Pragmatism: The Role of English in Shaping Educational Aspirations in Pakistan” by Emiko Sunaga, examines how English functions as both a symbol of privilege and a tool for empowerment. This chapter analyzes the complex tensions surrounding English education, including its potential to deepen social and linguistic inequalities.

Chapter 5, “Japanese Language Education in Taiwan” by Tatsuo Araki, examines the historical development and present landscape of Japanese-language education in Taiwan. Combining institutional data with personal teaching experiences, this chapter offers insights into how Taiwan’s multilingual environment shapes learners’ motivations and classroom dynamics.

Having outlined the chapters, we may turn to the broader context that informs them. The linguistic scope of this volume reflects the

remarkable diversity of Asia's language landscape. Japan, long viewed as a predominantly monolingual society, has witnessed a visible increase in the number of foreign residents and in linguistic diversity in recent years.

One example raised in Chapter 4 concerns the expansion of language access within public services in Japan. Since the colloquium in early 2024, a new system allowing taxi and bus driver certification exams to be conducted in multiple languages has come into operation, and several candidates have already been certified. Several colloquium participants noted that this development reflects Japan's ongoing transformation into a more visible multilingual society (The Japan News by The Yomiuri Shimbun, 2024).

Over the past two decades, international schools in Japan have rapidly diversified. Once limited to a few English-medium institutions, they now serve a range of linguistic communities—including Indian and Nepali communities—particularly in major urban centers. This mirrors broader trends across Asia, where multilingual and multicultural education is increasingly considered vital for fostering global citizenship.

These shifts in both policy and daily life reflect a broader transformation toward linguistic inclusion and intercultural engagement. From institutional reforms to changes in public services and education, multilingualism is increasingly recognized not only as a practical necessity but also as a foundation for building more equitable and culturally responsive societies.

By engaging with these diverse themes, the chapters in this volume demonstrate that questions of language are never merely technical, but social, political, and deeply lived. Written by specialists in language and sociocultural studies, each contribution examines multilingualism, education, intercultural communication, and multicultural coexistence across Asia. We hope this book contributes to ongoing discussions on how multilingual communication can support a more shared future in the region.

In this broader spirit and by situating these contributions within the AJI Books Series, this volume highlights a wider programmatic aim: to document how multilingual coexistence is already being practiced in concrete, situated ways—through classroom instruction, certification schemes, and community-based initiatives across Asia. By bringing together work from diverse linguistic and institutional contexts, we aim to offer comparative insights that may help researchers and educators understand how such practices can be sustained and adapted over time. The issues addressed—multilingual inclusion in public services, community-based language education, and the evolving social roles of individual languages—are shaped by demographic change and increased mobility. This volume should therefore be read not as a conclusion, but as an invitation to continued observation and collaboration.

We would like to close by expressing our heartfelt thanks to Professor Yasushi Kosugi, whose support made both the colloquium and this volume possible; Professor Toshiyuki Takeda, who generously served as Publication Committee Chair; Dr. Khashan Ammar, Mr. Tahei Okamoto, and Ms. Momoko Ito for their invaluable assistance in bringing this book to publication; and all participants in the colloquium for the thoughtful and generous discussions that shaped this work.

Editors
Emiko Sunaga
Hina Jamshed

Reference

The Japan News by The Yomiuri Shimbun. (2024, October 6). Japan Expands Multilingual Support for Taxi and Bus Driver Exams to Address Labor Shortage. <<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/business/companies/20241006-215108/>> (Accessed October 26, 2025)

4. Dr. Emiko SUNAGA



Chapter 4. Between Prestige and Pragmatism: The Role of English in Shaping Educational Aspirations in Pakistan

Dr. Emiko Sunaga is Associate Professor in the Department of Intercultural Studies, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Kyoto Sangyo University. Her research focuses on language, education, and publishing cultures in contemporary Pakistan, with particular attention to Urdu and English as mediums of instruction, social mobility, and identity. She also works on sociolinguistic and area-studies approaches to South Asia, including textbook analysis and the politics of language in everyday educational settings. In addition, she is engaged in the digital humanities, exploring how digital methods can be used to document and analyze cultural and linguistic practices across the Islamic world and South Asia. She is also one of the editors of this volume.

3. Dr. Hina Jamshed



Chapter 3. Urdu: A Cultural Bridge in Asia's Multilingual Tapestry

Dr. Hina Jamshed is a literary scholar and critic whose work focuses on Urdu fiction, modern South Asian literature, and the relationship between literature, history, and identity. A published author, literary critic, and columnist, she examines themes such as partition, memory, and trauma through historically grounded readings of Urdu texts. She currently serves as Assistant Professor of Urdu at Government Graduate College Sahiwal, Pakistan, and is also active in public literary engagement through teaching, writing, and digital media. She is also one of the editors of this volume.