

Mobility, Language and Identity Construction: A Study of Contemporary Chinese Muslims in Metropolitan Tokyo from the Perspective of Migration Linguistics

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Keywords: Chinese Muslim migrants, migration linguistics, language planning and policy

Background and Issue Consciousness

The Muslim minority in Japan presents differentiation based on elements such as national and ethnic origin, linguistic diversity, sectarian affiliations, socio-economic disparities, and geographical distribution. Muslims in Japan confront difficulties in establishing substantial communities or a cohesive organization or mosque to represent them because to their limited commonalities, and therefore often have to work individually or in small groups to address these challenges (Sakurai, 2008). Even Chinese Muslims exhibit significant internal variation, with Muslims present in a total of 10 ethnic groups among the 56 ethnic minorities in the Chinese region, which include the Hui and Uyghur. (See Table 1 below.)

It is critical to examine the language challenges faced by this marginalized migratory community, characterized by its decentralized nature and lack of exposure, particularly in the post-phase of migration progress. Based on the degree of difficulty in gathering information on them, it is necessary to consider individual case study based on one's linguistic repertoire resulting from their unique trajectories. These variations could subsequently impact their everyday language usage, educational opportunities, language loss, social integration challenges, or identity-related concerns (Abudurexiti, 2016; Ichishima, 2013). However, there is little literature that provides a holistic overview of the geographic distribution, language usage patterns, and identity manifestation of Chinese Muslims in Japan, or even metropolitan Tokyo.

Table 1 Details of the Muslim population of various ethnic groups in China and their languages

Name of the ethnic group	Population/Geographic distribution in China	Language system/Language(s) Ability
Hui	9,816,805 (48.3% of the Chinese Muslim population); Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu Province, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Qinghai Province, Yunnan Province, and other provinces.	Naxi, Sino-Tibetan / Chinese is spoken by the Contemporary Hui, with different dialects held in different regions, and some Arabic and Persian

		vocabulary retained.
Ugur, Uihur, Uyghur	8,399,393 (44.33% of Chinese Muslim population); the southern part of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.	Altaic Turkey (Turkic) Southeast Group/ Uyghur/ Some can speak Chinese

Research Questions

- 1) What is the ethnic geographic situation of Chinese Muslims in metropolitan Tokyo? Have they formed their own ethnic communities already?
- 2) What kind of linguistic-repertoire patterns exist among them based on their trajectories, and what communication sites or situations do these patterns apply to?
- 3) How do Chinese Muslims realize their ethnic integration, role shift and identity construction in the host country through their language use (linguistic landscapes and linguistic-repertoire patterns)?
- 4) What are the potential problems foreseen in terms of language communication and language preservation among Chinese Muslims? What are the new implications of such problems for the development of existing language planning and policies?

Methodology

In this study, I will start the data gathering by contacting Halal restaurants (or Chinese Muslim associations) in the metropolitan Tokyo as the main entry point for information sources, and look forward to addressing the research questions through an empirical study of data collection and data analysis, mainly through 4-5 Chinese Muslim key informants:

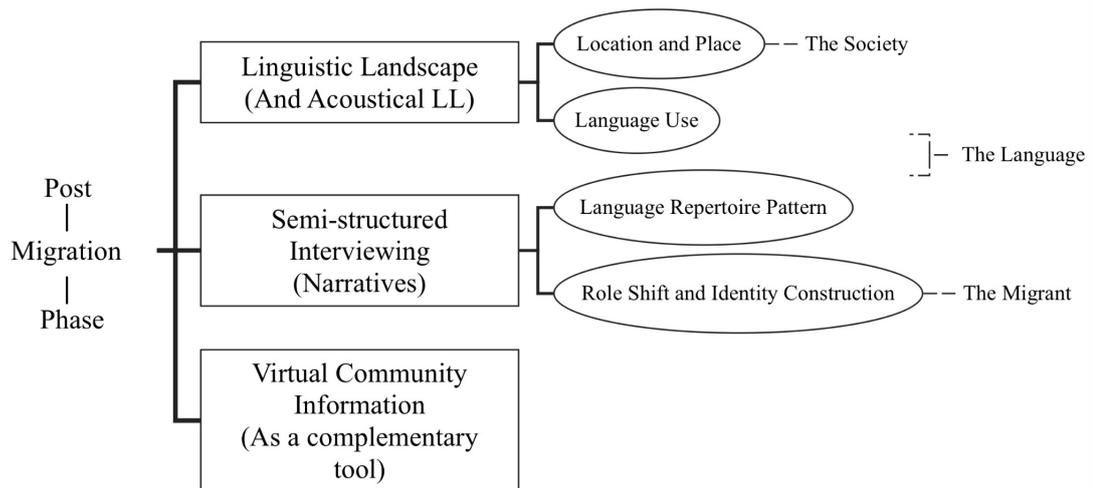
Data Gathering

- 1) Linguistic landscape (LL);
- 2) Semi-structured interviews (statement);
- 3) Electronic information gathering in Chinese virtual communities in Japan (through Chinese local applications such as, WeChat, Xiaohongshu and Guigui).

Data Analysis

Based on the framework model of linguistic aspects of the migration process in migration linguistics theory (ML theory), I will present and explain the mobility, language, and identity construction of Chinese Muslims in Japan from three aspects: linguistic landscapes, interviews (narratives), and virtual community information. (Refer to Figure 1.)

Figure 2 An anticipated mind map of methodological tools and analytical approaches based on ML theory (made by the author himself in Sep 19,2023)



Main References

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