The Significance of Intercultural Communication Management (ICM) as Viewed by Japanese University Students

Yuko Takeshita
Toyo Eiwa University, Japan

Abstract: Despite social needs and people's enthusiasm for globalization and internationalization, opportunities are scarce for actual practice of international and intercultural communication in Japan, where most daily needs can be met in the mother tongue. In many attempts to improve Japanese citizens' international communication competence, English education has been the focus of attention. However, people have also acknowledged that good English skills do not necessarily and satisfactorily lead to intercultural communication competencies. Thus, an attempt to provide better learning and enlightening opportunities has recently been developed by a Tokyo-based non-profit organization; to issue certificates for the qualification of International Communication Management Professionals to those who have successfully finished a learning program that provides the learners with opportunities to study different aspects of international communication and with different kinds of knowledge and skills to solve problems in international and intercultural situations. The concern of this paper is to discuss the university version of this certificate, the process and advantages of students' learning toward this, and the significance of this qualification itself. The Japanese society needs these professionals, and university students, i.e., would-be business people and international communicators, have much to contribute to Japan's communicative competence with the qualification in question.

Keywords: International communication management professional, ICMP, international communication management associate professional, ICM-AP, international communication management, ICM, international and intercultural communication competence

1. Introduction

Japan is undoubtedly getting more internationalized in the sense that the number of non-Japanese people with different social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds is on the rise, whether they be transients, long-stay travelers, or spouses that have turned out to be permanent residents. The number is expected to further increase for various reasons such as the recent inscriptions of Mt. Fuji (2013) and Tomioka Silk Mill (2014) on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the addition of washoku, or traditional Japanese cuisine (2013), and washi, or the traditional Japanese handmade paper (2014), to the list of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and of course, the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Japanese people have never seemed so enthusiastic about globalization and internationalization as they are today. At the same time, in a country where the nationals can meet almost all the

needs of life in the Japanese language, opportunities are still scarce for actual practice of and experience in international and intercultural communication. Looking for ways to fill in the gap is a challenge for the society.

Figure 1 shows the number of foreign tourists in Japan for the last 10 years. Behind the steady increase is the government's effort to attract more foreign travelers in the form of a campaign named Visit Japan. The problem is how the society could prepare itself to meet the needs of these visitors during their stay in the country, and who should create an unprecedentedly international and intercultural environment.
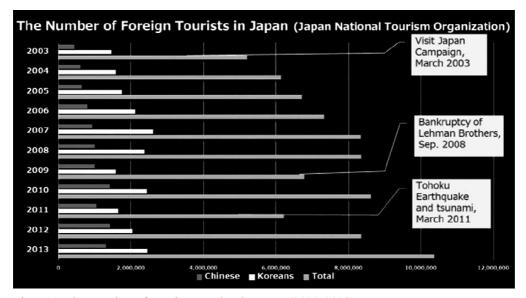

Figure 1. The Number of Foreign Tourists in Japan (2003-2013)

In many attempts to develop international communication competence for Japanese citizens, English education has been emphasized. English teaching was recently introduced in public primary school classrooms, involving pupils and their parents, teachers and educators, and even preschoolers and their conscious mothers to discuss formal and informal English teaching and learning. Online English conversation courses with teachers in the Philippines and various e-learning courses not only for conversation but for reading, writing, grammar and mock examinations for English proficiency tests have been attracting more learners. Traditional language schools for children as well as adult learners have also been flourishing throughout the country. Companies have been asking their employees and job-hunters to submit higher English proficiency test scores, and the like. However, people have also been aware of the fact that English skills do not necessarily guarantee intercultural communication competencies.

In such a situation, a Tokyo-based non-profit organization started in 2013 to issue certificates of International Communication Management Professionals (ICMPs) with linguistic auditing

at its base.[1] These certificates are given to those who have successfully finished an e-learning program[2] that provides the learners with opportunities to study different aspects of international communication issues and problems and with different kinds of knowledge and skills to solve problems in culturally diverse situations.

In this paper, the author will focus not on the original e-learning program intended for the general public, although extensive description of the content and the management of the programs is inevitable, but on the variation of the program for International Communication Management Associate Professionals (ICM-APs), a junior version of the ICMP program, offered to college students by accredited professors face to face on campus. The author will especially discuss the following: why the Japanese society needs these professionals, what their roles and contributions might be for Japanese institutions and organizations that have previously been solely domestic, what new opportunities they could create in various business fields by improving international competence of corporate enterprises, government bodies, and other organizations that are in dire need of multinational business dealings and intercultural activities, and how this program could be an educational contribution to university students.

2. International Languages, Culture and Communication as an Organic Whole

Linguistic auditing, or language auditing, focuses mainly on foreign language policies in order to improve employees' linguistic competence and organizations' foreign language strategies, which is absolutely important for any organization in Japan. The responsibility of a language auditor, generally speaking, is to appropriately acknowledge international language environment that surrounds individuals and organizations, contemplate on ways to deal with such a situation and implement them (Honna et al., 2011, translation mine). By assessing their own linguistic abilities for international communication and writing training plans, they could identify their strategic needs, and increase their business opportunities with clear foreign-language policies. As far as international communication with a focus on languages is concerned, linguistic auditing must be an inevitable key to improving Japanese people's communication competence.

However, because the general public's international experiences have been limited, it is evident that trying to overcome weaknesses of Japanese organizations and increase capabilities in international communication by training employees' language skills at different levels will not solve every problem. It is difficult for Japan with a tradition of high-context culture

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[1] According to Koster (2004), linguistic auditing, or language audit is "an investigation of the language needs of a particular organisation" (p. 5) whose findings will provide "the basis of a report outlining what action the organization needs to undertake in order to increase the language competence of its employees and thereby improving contacts with foreign clients" (p. 5). Koster (2004) clarifies two main purposes of a language audit: 1. to help an organisation develop and implement a foreign-language policy, and 2. to collect data which enables a language school or language trainer to develop a customized course for individual employees and/or for specified groups of employees (p. 5). Reeves and Wright (1996) explain the objective from another angle: "to help the management of a firm identify the strengths and weaknesses of their organisation in terms of communication in foreign languages" (p. 5) so that it may "map the current capability of departments, functions and people against the identified need and establish that need at the strategic level, at the process… level and at that of the individual postholders" (p. 5).

[2] The NPO is presently working toward a new way to offer the learning materials in DVDs rather than online in order to avoid any technical troubles that have prevented the learners from studying in a sound environment.

and a distinguished national language to provide people who are willing to increase their international communication competence with opportunities for truly lived-experience[3] in such communication situations. Many university students could hardly feel and experience in the classroom various cultures, not to mention communication styles which are deeply influenced by different languages. It is necessary to raise people's awareness of languages in general before they could successfully use linguistic skills they might have acquired with or without linguistic auditing.

Therefore, in addition to foreign language learning and training, or even prior to that, we need to take culture and communication into great consideration. Foreign language learning should be accompanied by learning about cultures and communication in order for the learners to acquire expertise in "linguistic-cultural-communication auditing." Thus, there has to be a program to give an insight into international languages, cultures and communication as a whole. As foreign language curricula at the university level tend to be constructed separately from other subject areas whatever the core curriculum of a university department might be, it is important to contrive a new way to enable students to see meaningful relations among these three important factors for international communication in the actual world outside the classroom.

Figure 2. Three Important Factors of Japanese People's Awareness of Internationalization: an Organic Whole

3. The International Communication Management Professionals

Upon entering a university, students have studied foreign languages, at least English in most cases, for several years, with some differences in rigor, enthusiasm and proficiency. However, opportunities for them to study about a variety of people and cultures are comparatively scarce, especially in classroom situations. This has led to producing citizens with "abilities" in languages who do not have much knowledge and experience in taking advantage of such skills in practical communication situations. As the amount of time and energy spent in language learning does not necessarily correspond with capabilities of managing international and intercultural situations in an appropriate way, training people to become competent managers and auditors in language, culture and communication has not successfully and meaningfully been done in school situations.

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[3] The author uses this word to indicate experiencing something in such a way that abstract knowledge might be internalized and become part of the learner, so that he/she could actually function based on the knowledge.

Of the two consecutive study courses developed in 2013, both featuring cultivating people with expertise in international communication, the first course for beginners aims at International Communication Management Associate Professionals, or ICM-APs, and the other at International Communication Management Professionals, or ICMPs. ICMPs are linguistic, cultural and communication auditors, and ICM-APs are so to speak trainee ICMPs. These study courses were originally intended for employees of public and private organizations in the form of e-learning that requires no schooling.

The definitions of the ICM-AP and the ICMP need to be clarified for the learners to set specific goals for their learning activities and envisage what business possibilities the learning might bring about (also see Figure 3). An ICM-AP is a person who: understands the basics of English as an international language, intercultural communication, and ICM; and is capable of putting the knowledge into practice.

An ICMP, on the other hand, is a person who: has a good command of international languages, cultures and communication required in global business situations; has a sufficient understanding of the theory of ICM; and knows how to cope with language use and develop international communication strategies within the company one works for.

The responsibilities of ICMPs, in short, is to identify the international linguistic, cultural and communication environment that surrounds an organization in the 21st-century globalized world and develop strategic plans. As far as business is concerned, the professional person could respond to various issues from crises management to creation of new business opportunities. ICM-APs could further deepen their understanding as ICMPs-to-be if they continue to study to become more specialized in managing international communication situations, draw up plans for their organizations, train their colleagues to enhance the overall communication competence of the organization, monitor the processes and make new suggestions if necessary.

The can-do list for ICM-APs and ICMPs might present the competencies and responsibilities expected of these professionals.

ICM-APs	ICMPs
• can acknowledge the importance of communication in daily business activities. • can know how to communicate without depending on "*sasshi*" or tacit understanding. • can understand ICM and devise ways of intercultural communication. • can understand what it means for English to be an international language. • can actively use English as an international language.	• can understand how to practically develop international cooperative communication. • can analyze needs for business skills and languages required in international business situations, and make a general plan for measures to correspond to various needs. • can understand how to develop international communication strategies and programs for developing global human resources. • can specifically understand the importance of intercultural communication and how to cope with it.

Figure 3. A Can-do List for ICM-APs and ICMPs[4]

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[4] The information has been retrieved from the following pages, processed and translated by the author: http://www.icmp.asia/moodle/mod/book/view.php?id=32&chapterid=7 and http://www.icmp.asia/moodle/mod/book/view.php?id=32&chapterid=8

It is desirable for each organization, whether governmental or private, to have at least one fully-employed ICMP. However, taking advantage of outsourced professionals could be effective, as training its own employees to acquire the expertise should be time-consuming. In hope of producing many ICMPs to contribute to creating better environments for people and organizations engaged in international businesses and other activities within and outside Japan, we prepared the following so that a meaningful learning process could be secured:[5]

1. A book, published by an educational publisher in Tokyo, on ICM, which is used as a textbook for the e-learners;
2. An e-learning program for ICMPs and ICM-APs. The e-learning contents are provided by a university-related private educational company, and the ICMP office is located in a private language school;
3. A non-profitable organization that issues certificates for qualification of ICMPs and ICM-APs.

The four sections, i.e., the provider of the e-learning courses, the ICMP office, the publisher and the non-profit organization (NPO), are all independent from each other, and yet these bodies cooperate at times with each other in helping course-takers to become fully capable of managing international communication situations.

3.1. The Book, *Kigyo Daigaku wa Gurobaru Jinzai wo do Sodateruka: Kokusai Komyunikeshion Manejimento no Susume*

The title of this book on ICM might be translated as "How Enterprises and Universities Can Cultivate People for Global Communities: A Recommendation of International Communication Management." It is intended for general readers as well as the learners in the ICM-AP and ICMP programs. The table of contents (translation mine) may suggest what knowledge we would like the learners to acquire in the learning programs both through the e-learning system and on university campuses.

Kigyo Daigaku wa Gurobaru Jinzai wo do Sodateruka: Kokusai Komyunikeshion Manejimento no Susume	
Part 1:	**Why We Need International Languages, Cultures and Comunication Today**
Chapter 1	International Cooperative Communication: Beyond the Culture of "*sasshi*," or Tacit Understanding
Chapter 2	What It Means That English is an International Language
Chapter 3	What is International Communication Management

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[5] The author has been involved in writing and compiling the book, planning and preparing for the e-learning programs, and establishing and managing the NPO.

Part 2:	**How Organizations Deal with Languages**
Chapter 4	In-house English Education and Cultivating Globally-minded Employees
Chapter 5	Enhancement of English for Specific Purposes
Chapter 6	Assessment of Employees' English Proficiency
Chapter 7	Japanese English and Its Assessment
Chapter 8	Enterprises and Languages Other Than English
Chapter 9	Enterprises and Communication in the Sign Language: In View of Language Rights for Minorities
Chapter 10	Japanese as a Foreign Language
Chapter 11	Plain Japanese: Enhancement of Communication with Consumers
Chapter 12	Plain English: For Sending Out Information Effectively from Japan
Chapter 13	Teaching English as an International Language: Possibilities for Cultivating Global Citizens in Universities
Chapter 14	Common Target Level for Language Learning: Significance and Application of CEFR
Part 3:	**Intercultural Communication and Multicultural Management**
Chapter 15	Communication and Cultural Understanding
Chapter 16	Multi-culturalization of English and Intercultural Literacy
Chapter 17	Communication and Humor
Chapter 18	Communication That Does Not Depend on Languages: The Bright and Dark Sides of Non-verbal Communication
Chapter 19	Presentation in English as an International Language and Its Training
Chapter 20	Global Business Mind and Communication
Part 4:	**Toward Practice of International Communication Management**
Chapter 21	Multi-cultural Management Organization and Business Management
Chapter 22	Linguistic Needs Analysis and Measures in Enterprises
Chapter 23	Planning, Monitoring and Assessing Training Programs

Figure 4. The Table of Contents

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are compulsory in the ICM-AP program because they are rather introductory and theoretical. Chapters 5, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17 and 20 are for the ICMP program because of their practicality and materiality. However, the learners at both levels may refer to any of these chapters in addition to those that are compulsory when they work on the tasks required in the programs.

3.2. The E-learning Programs and Qualifications for the ICMP and the ICM-AP

According to the program descriptions, the ICM-AP is a junior version of, or a prerequisite for, the ICMP and is intended for university and graduate school students who wish to work for global enterprises, company recruits and young employees, those in charge of communication strategies and human resources development, those who face various multi-cultural communication issues, etc. This course runs on-line for three months at the longest, during which the learners are also asked to work on three written assignments, each corresponding to the three chapters in the textbook. When these are submitted, a group of examiners will read and grade them.[6]

On the other hand, the ICMP is intended for those in charge of human resources development and overseas businesses, and of solving multi-cultural issues in enterprises and public administration, but university and graduate students who wish to work globally are not excluded. This course runs on-line for six months at the longest, and the learners are expected to submit seven written assignments and to pass them all in order to successfully complete the program. The only way for university students to study for becoming ICMPs at present is to enroll themselves in the e-learning program because this advanced course cannot be given on university campuses.

The e-learning proceeds in an educational environment although, unlike the courses offered on campus, the act of learning itself is self-supported. When the assignments are read and graded by the examiners, the learner receives feedback, and if the papers are not satisfactory, he/she is provided with a chance to resubmit them.

Generally speaking, one starts studying at the ICM-AP level and then proceeds to the ICMP. If one can declare in a formal way that he/she has had a satisfactory amount of experience in work or activities in ICM, he/she may be permitted to start at the ICMP level. Such an acceleration is not usually possible for university students who have not had enough experience in fully working in an international environment.

3.3. The ICM-AP Program on Campus

The process for university students to study for the ICM-AP certificate might be compared with that for general learners through the e-learning program as the following (also see Figure 5). While e-learners study by themselves, university students in the on-campus program study in the classroom by formally taking a one-semester-long university course that has been designated by the NPO as a partner course for the ICM-AP program. The professor in charge of the course needs to have seen the significance of providing his/her students with opportunities to become ICM-APs, submitted the syllabus and got acknowledged by the NPO to become a partner. Then, the course may be given on campus with the possibilities of giving the students a chance to apply for the certificate to be qualified as ICM-APs when they have successfully passed the course.

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[6] In university classrooms, the professors could spend one semester, or approximately four months, and the number of assignments and the degree of their grades reflected in students' overall evaluation of the course could vary.
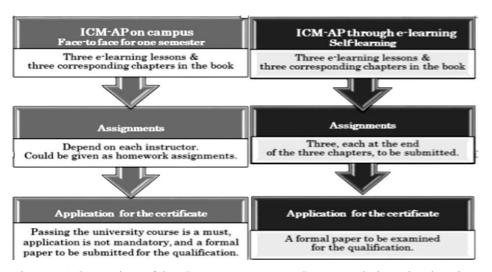
Figure 5. A Comparison of the ICM-AP Programs on Campus and Through E-learning

The certificate cannot automatically be issued to the students, and they are not required to get the certificate, either. Only those who wish to be qualified as ICM-APs may proceed and submit a formal paper on the topic set by the NPO just as the e-learners. Before the deadline for submission, the students have approximately six months after the grade for the specific course is given. At present, the assignment for the students is to discuss, in a global situation, the importance of languages, culture(s) and communication in view of a field or issue in which the student takes interest. They are required to write 2,800 characters at the minimum in Japanese, or between 1,400 and 2,000 words in English.

4. Some Observations on the Program for University Students: The Present Situation and Its Significance

This partnership between university professors and the NPO started in 2013. When they successfully passed the course in each university, the first group of students started submitting required papers to the NPO in August 2013, and their papers were evaluated by the examiners appointed by the NPO. As of February 2015, the third group is submitting their papers in the hope of getting qualified. The number of university professors who have been partnered between April 2013 and February 2015 (3 semesters) is yet as small as seven, and a total of 73 university students have successfully been qualified as ICM-APs.[7]

It is difficult for professors, even if they fully understand the importance of the ICM and hope to give a partnered course in their own universities, to actually introduce the course in the

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[7] The application deadline for students who took the course in the latter half of 2014 academic year is the last day of March 2015, so that the total number is expected to increase, especially because many students take action at the last minute just as they did in March 2014 (see Figure 6).

curriculum. If a language teacher finds it necessary and meaningful to provide his/her students with the idea of the ICM and consequent certificate of an ICM-AP, he/she may not be allowed to offer a lecture course because they are expected to focus on teaching skills rather than logic and ideas. A professor of intercultural communication, on the other hand, may not be familiar with the concept of English as an international language, linguistic auditing, etc., the concepts on which the ICM is based. Possibly at present, a collaboration between language teachers and professors in other fields could be a good solution to extend and expand the benefits of learning about the ICM to more university students.
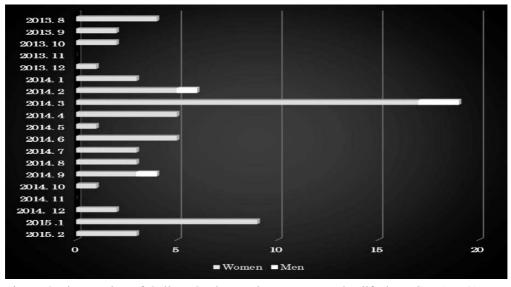

Figure 6. The Number of College Students Who Have Been Qualified as ICM-APs (August 2013-February 2015)

As Figure 7 clearly indicates, the number of ICM-APs by university vary from as many as 40 to as few as 1. This is partially because of the differences in the classroom size: one course at a university may be a big lecture-centered class, and another at a different university may be a small seminar class. What is more noticeable is the huge disparity between the numbers of male and female student ICM-APs (also see Figure 7). Sixty-nine out of 73 who have been qualified as ICM-APs as of February 2015 are female students. This is mainly because Universities A and D are women's universities. However, even in co-educational situations, more female students tend to show interest in languages, culture and communication. Therefore, a way might be contrived in the near future to motivate more male students to see the significance of the ICM in the society where they will be working after graduation.

There seems to be a correlation between the university students who proceed to apply for the ICM-AP certificate and the grades they have received for the partnered course on campus before the application. Of the 40 students from University A, only one student got a B while the others were graded either AA or A, the top 30% of the course takers.
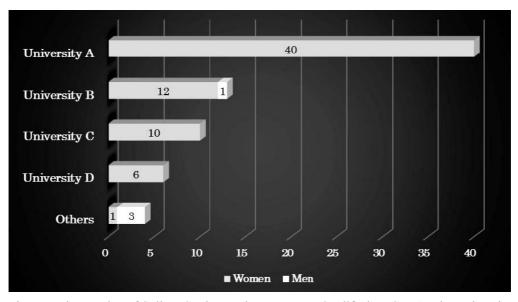
Figure 7. The Number of College Students Who Have Been Qualified as ICM-APs by University (August 2013-February 2015)

There is immense significance for university students to study about the ICM and get qualified as ICM-APs. This will be observed from different viewpoints that are closely related with each other. The first point focuses on English-related education at the university level. During the last several years, the Japanese government has been trying to cultivate young citizens with a competence to act globally, and they have required universities to promote and accelerate reforms in accordance with their policy. The government declared that "it is important to increase the number of people with higher linguistic abilities that enable them to negotiate (in foreign languages)."[8] They also called upon governmental bodies, high schools, universities, enterprises and parents to cooperate with each other in promoting more high school students to study abroad, reforming college entrance examinations, and improving enterprises' recruiting activities so that the country could cultivate globally-minded young Japanese citizens. In accordance with the government's statement, terms such as "globally-minded person" and "global human resources" have been said and heard widely and frequently.

However, it is not easy to connect on-campus and in-classroom languages studies with the more practical situations where people use foreign languages for "negotiation" as stated by the government. Students having studied English and other foreign languages on campus, their efforts and results are difficult to be confirmed, and whether the linguistic abilities could enable the students to successfully do business in an international situation can hardly be measured and presented scientifically.

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[8]   http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/tyoukanpress/201106/22_p.html Author's translation.

Although university students, whatever they major in, study English, the "reward" is as little as getting the credits they need for fulfilling the requirements for graduation. Those who aim at graduating with an English teaching certificate are the exceptions in the sense that these students are formally qualified for having studied English on campus. The others may resort to off-campus English proficiency tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC, the EIKEN test,[9] the UN Association's Test of English, etc. in order to show their proficiency in English. However, these are proficiency tests that give scores but do not give any qualifications.

By studying for the ICM, students with any majors and minors can manifest themselves to be qualified as a would-be professional in ICM with the basic knowledge about international languages, culture and communication. The certificate of the ICM-AP must provide students with motivation to continue studying English and other foreign languages because they clearly see the meaningful relationship among languages, cultures and communication. This should in turn give them further goal of study when they have finished earning a sufficient number of credits for graduation.

As for the second point, university students with the ICM-AP certificates could actively engage themselves off campus in their job-hunting endeavors. As the government strictly limits the period for senior students to job-hunt, officially allowing only 13 months prior to graduation, a high degree of competition in a concentrated period is inevitable, and for senior students who have not been so successful, the job-hunting process could linger and hinder on-campus studies such as working on a graduation thesis. In order for students to distinguish themselves from their competitors, they could emphasize the fact that they are ICM-Aps, who could contribute much to promoting the internationalization of an organization, and to facing its international issues and looking for the solutions. The certificate of the ICM-AP could serve as a determining factor for a short-term successful job-hunting for both male and female college students.

The last point may be discussed from the viewpoints of governmental and private organizations that need to be internationalized for better activities. Such organizations need to have their working environment reviewed from the aspects of languages, culture and communication before they can draw reform plans to make themselves more suitable for international and intercultural business settings. If government organizations, both central and local, as well as private companies and other organizations, need to train their workers and employees to acquire international and intercultural competence in order to promote their international contribution and global business dealings, it would be wise for them to hire university students who already have an insight into the ICM, and who already have been qualified as ICM-APs. These young ICM-APs could further study for the ICMP qualification and act helpfully for their colleagues. These ICM-APs will be part of the important human resources for the organizations they work for.

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[9] EIKEN is an abbreviation of its official Japanese term, Jitsuyo Eigo Gino Kentei, meaning Test in Practical English Proficiency, and the tests at seven levels are produced and administered by the Eiken Foundation of Japan (formerly the Society for Testing English Proficiency, Inc.), a public-interest incorporated foundation based in Tokyo.

5. Specific Situations Where International Communication Management Is in Need

In order to help both college students, or the would-be-employees, and organizations, or the would-be-employers, to fully understand and take advantage of the ICM-APs' expertise, specific situations inside and outside Japan may be presented. Both sides need to acknowledge that there are immediate as well as potential needs for ICMPs in the Japanese environment.

Despite the beautiful network of transportation in big cities, convenience stores and vending machines at every corner of the streets, numerous TV channels in the hotel room, several large-scale national newspapers, and many police officers on duty at koban (the neighborhood police station) who usually act as a guide for Japanese citizens, non-Japanese tourists in Japan would immediately find it not so easy to walk around in towns and cities for themselves unless he/she is capable of reading the Japanese language. Many of the street signs are written in Chinese characters. They can be accompanied by Roman letters that make the signs look as if they were written in English, but actually they merely indicate how to pronounce these characters in Japanese.

A recent move toward a more internationally-friendly environment manifests itself in rewriting street signs. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) designated, in September 2013, 18 locations, popular among foreign tourists, as the strategic cities to promote foreign-tourist-friendly street signs. Behind this is the Basic Act for Promoting a Tourism-Oriented Country, enacted in 2007. The purpose of the government's policy is "to promote street signs in English, in an effort to become a tourist-oriented country, so that they might be easier for foreign tourists to understand" (MLIT, 2013).

Two examples may be presented to show how street signs are being improved so that they can be significant and meaningful for foreign tourists without any literacy in the Japanese language.

Figure 8. The Renovation of Street Signs (Tokyo)

One example is from Tokyo. The sign at the traffic intersection nearest to the National Diet (i.e., parliament), or Kokkai (国会), used to read 国会前 in Japanese and Kokkai in Roman letters (see Figure 8, above), indicating how the Japanese word for the national diet is pronounced. However, today, it reads 国会前and The National Diet (see Figure 8, below). Non-Japanese readers may no longer know how the National Diet is pronounced in Japanese, but they do know where they are.

Another example is from Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, the fifth largest city in Japan. What were formerly Kobeshiyakushominami and Hanakumakoen now appear as Kobe City Hall South and Hanakuma Park (Figure 9). The new signs can clearly indicate where the tourists might be and they no longer have to compare the signs with place names in their English maps to locate themselves. Similar improvements have been underway elsewhere at tourist spots.

Figure 9. The Renovation of Street Signs (Kobe)

This is indeed part of the ICM activities for which an ICMP should be responsible: 1. The person in charge should know that the place names on the sign boards written in Roman letters do not convey any meaning to non-Japanese readers, and proclaim that this is not a desirable situation; 2. He/She needs to be multilingual so that he/she knows that the English equivalents of Kokkai and Shiyakusho are "diet" and "city hall" respectively; and 3. He/She finally encourages the authorities to make an improvement by suggesting that the English phrases had better replace the Japanese phrases in Roman letters.

This may appear to be quite simple, but the same ICM theory and activities could extend to more complicated tasks such as providing foreign residents and tourists with information for emergency, preparing an instructions manual of any sort, etc. ICMPs as well as ICM-APs are expected to be capable of acknowledging what others do know and do not know, and suggesting the best way to change the present situation for the better so that the information is shared more widely among those who need it. This is indeed a task for which a professional person should be responsible.

Honna et al. (2012b) present some other phenomena as examples to indicate that ICM is desperately needed in Japan. The country has long been notorious for being "invisible" for different reasons, and this in the present day may be attributed to a lack of information in languages other than Japanese. People overseas who try to learn online about the country "have often been largely disappointed at not finding what they wish to obtain" (p. 74) as information in English is scarce on websites run in Japan. Not only face-to-face and on-sight communication situations but also the environment in the Japanese cyber world should be innovated.

Honna et al. (2012b) also discuss the possibilities for Japanese companies with problems to have more and better business opportunities; many small-scale businesses have found it difficult to prosper or even to survive in the domestic market at economically hard times. The authors refer to local Japanese sake breweries, for example, that have lost their business in Japan but were able to find international customers, which contributed to the improvement in their own sales as well as introducing Japanese food culture to people overseas (p. 75).

Honna et al. (2012b) also introduce a case of small automobile parts makers that had been abandoned by big manufacturers but later succeeded in advertising their high-quality products with their enhanced technology and eventually in increasing the profit (pp. 74-75). The last example is about domestic Japanese-style inns in Tokyo that have lost domestic customers because Japanese business people prefer more modern and convenient western-style hotels; they are now flourishing with foreign tourists who have chosen to stay there to enjoy the Japanese atmosphere (p. 75).

Both inside and outside Japan, international business opportunities are abundant. It is the responsibility of the ICMP to help people become aware of such needs, locate where they are, and send out appropriate information in such a way that the recipients are able to receive it in their own cultural environments.

6. Conclusion

The author has clarified the fact that although Japanese universities give much emphasis and attention to English education, they have not successfully been able to integrate it in their curricula with cultural and communication studies. It seems quite difficult and challenging to establish a learning program in which students can acquire comprehensive knowledge about languages, cultures and communication, so that they could actually apply the knowledge to and cope with an international situation. However, the partnership between universities and the NPO to provide students with opportunities to study about the ICM and to qualify them as ICM-APs could be the breakthrough. This in turn can lead the student ICM-APs to continue studying to become full ICMPs.

The learning contents in the classroom, just as the on-line learning, might be more theoretical than practical. However, for young people like university students, the chances will follow when they start working for an organization and find that much ICM is called upon for better and more active international business dealings inside and outside the country, and on-site and on-line. The important part is to raise people's awareness toward issues and problems in international situations and the needs for managing international communication, which is possible and ideal in university classrooms.

The potential increase in the number of foreign tourists in Japan and the necessity to prepare a more international environment within the country was the catalyst for the author's discussion above. However, similarly important is the work environment for non-Japanese employees. There have always been workers other than Japanese nationals in many organizations in the country, but their linguistic and cultural efforts as minorities to harmonize might perhaps have helped to prevent numerous conspicuous conflicts and frictions from occurring. As the work environment in Japan becomes more varied with an increase in the number of non-Japanese fully-employed and part-time workers, international cooperative communication will greatly be called upon to avoid cultural conflicts within an office, an organization, and the Japanese society at large. University students will inevitably become colleagues of those non-Japanese workers in an unprecedentedly international and intercultural work environment. We need to have as many ICMPs as possible to enter a period of increased cultural and linguistic diversity.

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Author Note

Yuko Takeshita is Professor of English and Socio-linguistics at Toyo Eiwa University, Yokohama, Japan. In her 30 plus years of teaching at Japanese colleges and universities, she has published numerous books for Japanese teachers/learners of English and intercultural communication, both as (co-)editor and author. Her publications include *Ever-Expanding World of English* (Ask, 2015), *How Corporate Enterprises and Universities Could Cultivate People with a Global Mindset* (Ask, 2012), and *Understanding English across Cultures* (Kinseido, 2012). She is also Managing Editor of *Asian Englishes* (Taylor & Francis), and Director of a Tokyo-based non-profitable organization that focuses on international communication management.