

Hourensou Concept Implementation in Daily Operation Management in Japanese Company

Wenny Sundawa

Japanese Literature Department
Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University
Jakarta, Indonesia
wensundawa@gmail.com

Elisa Carolina Marion

Japanese Literature Department
Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University
Jakarta, Indonesia
emarion@binus.edu

Abstract

Hourensou is one of the Japanese corporate cultures which regulates the communication system in daily operation management. Ozora publishing is one of the Japanese companies that also implements hourensou in the execution of daily work. The research verified how Ozora publishing implements hourensou within the company activity. The research method is qualitative and quantitative by spreading the questionnaire about hourensou to be answered by Ozora employees in Japan. Hourensou implementation is analyzed in the descriptive analysis method. It can be concluded that the research has acknowledged the performance of hourensou in Ozora publishing. Implementing hourensou within work activity could make teamwork and the work's flow more efficient..

Keywords

Hourensou; communication; corporate; Japan; management.

1.Introduction

*Hourensou is a Japanese work culture that regulates the communication system in the organization. Hourensou is an abbreviation of *houkoku-renraku-soudan*, *houkoku* which means to report, *renraku* which means to inform, and *soudan* which means to discuss or consult. From previous research, the author can understand that the definition of *hourensou* is as follows, *houkoku* activity is to implement a reporting system for every progress of work that has been done. *Renraku* means confirming or informing related parties. Members of the team must always confirm the circumstances regarding the work being carried out, by always having confirmation of progress in the workplace can prevent misunderstandings in communication. *Soudan* is to consult all problems faced by employees to superiors and team members, and the goal of *Soudan* is to find solutions to existing problems. A Japanese company applies *hourensou* in the implementation of work. Ozora publishing is also one of the Japanese companies that also applies *hourensou* in the company. Implementing *hourensou* in a team and maintaining fluency in communication can also make team relationships more potent and integrated due to continuous communication.*

Studies found that online / web-based language learning or mobile based language learning has been an efficient method in reducing anxiety and increasing motivation (Cong-Lem, 2018), interactive and helpful (Saud, et.al., 2020), or even improving inclusiveness (Simanjuntak, et.al., 2018). With an attempt to develop an online language learning platform, a team of language experts and IT professionals at a private university in Jakarta worked together to assemble an online language learning platform. The platform, available in mobile and web, was built on the team's interpretation of Krashen's Second Language Acquisition theory that revolves around the five hypotheses, i.e., the acquisition-learning hypothesis, monitoring hypothesis, input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and the natural order hypothesis. (Krashen, 1982) and aspects of sociocultural theory in learning (Vygotsky, 1987). Thus, it was designed with the ultimate understanding that students need to have personalized,

structured, and gamified learning experiences, while simultaneously having the opportunities for social interaction with other users.

The development of the platform was finished in 2021. To test the usability i.e., the capacity of a system to provide a condition for its users to perform the tasks safely, effectively, and efficiently while enjoying the experience (Ju Yeon, et al., 2019), we conducted two rounds of surveys to measure the usability of the platform and the quality of the platform judging from the users' experiences. To improve our understanding of the usability data survey we gathered quantitatively, we conducted an FGD session to a group of 29 users to whom we explored the usability of the platforms in qualitatively.

Our research was aimed to answer the questions on how the users rate the usability and the quality of the newly built language learning platform and how users experience their online language learning through the newly built platform. The users' responses on the usability test and their experiences in using the platform were limited to the use of one single platform that the team of developers has just developed.

2.Literature Review

Nobe (2013) explains that there are various problems that arise due to lack of communication. Like the problem with the team that did not go well, from the results of his research, the answer to this problem was due to a lack of communication. To produce effective communication, it is not seen from the length of communication time but the quality of the conversation in the communication.

According to Yamaguchi (2008) *hourensou* is the basis for advancing work and for communication skills. However, there are still many who misinterpret that everything goes from lower management to upper management, but *hourensou* is a two-way communication that includes all parts, both lower management, upper management to fellow co-workers.

In the *hourensou* steps, to convey a message use the format 4W2H +Why. Houkoku is an activity to provide reports to superiors regarding work progress and results. Inform about the facts, submit problem solving and decisions to superiors. By reporting thoroughly, it can increase the trust between fellow members. In addition, it can respond immediately when a problem occurs. 3 important things in *houkoku* are discussing starting from the conclusion, explaining the report about the things to be discussed, telling the estimated time needed. If you do these three things, *houkoku* activities will be efficient. *Renraku* is to inform or inform related members of the facts, without adding opinions or ideas from yourself. Information to fellow members regarding existing facts, decisions and problem solving will differ from case to case. The delivery of good information to all members, the progress of information dissemination, can make organizational relations better. The important thing in *renraku* (delivering information) is not just "delivering", but clear information that can be conveyed. Both parties understand the same information. when it is difficult to make a decision, you should ask for advice or opinions on the matter to superiors, seniors or colleagues. Depending on the problem, decisions and troubleshooting can be submitted. Also consult the problem with a third party, by sharing the problem, then the best solution will be found. This stage is called *soudan*. Before doing *soudan* activities, you should prepare 4 things, first is to compose discussion content, then arrange the flow of the conversation, then make answers to questions, collect documents, and finally think about solutions from yourself. When *soudan*, when conveying there will be a problem, superiors expect that we can also think of a solution to the problem. (Nobe, 2013).

3.Methodology

This research begins with the author making direct observations on the field of work, namely in the Ozora publishing company. Then the author looks for a theoretical book about *hourensou* to understand more about the *hourensou* concept, then the author gets data to be analyzed by making questions in a questionnaire about *hourensou*, and the questionnaire is distributed to Ozora publishing employees in Japan. Furthermore, the authors analyzed the results of the questionnaire answers obtained as data. The writer analyzed the data and matched it with the existing theory, then concluded the analysis regarding the application of *hourensou* in Ozora publishing.

4. Results and Discussion

The author uses the results of the answers from the questionnaire, a number of 23 respondents, as data for analysis. Based on the analysis, Ozora's employees have carried out *hourensou* well according to the theory that the author has matched, but there are still several ways to do *renraku* whose implementation is not under the matched theory. Nobe (2013) argues that *hourensou* will work appropriately with good communication. Therefore, the author will first examine the communication within the team. In the questionnaire, the author has provided case examples

which can then be used as a reflection of the situation for respondents to be able to answer the questions more easily. An example of the first case is: "You have joined to form a new team. In that team, you still do not know the character of each other's team members. However, it would be best if you immediately started the work as a team. It would be best if you immediately got to know the team. You have to get to know the team right away and the character of each team member."

4.1 Communication in Team

First Question: "For you to know said team, you are going to?"

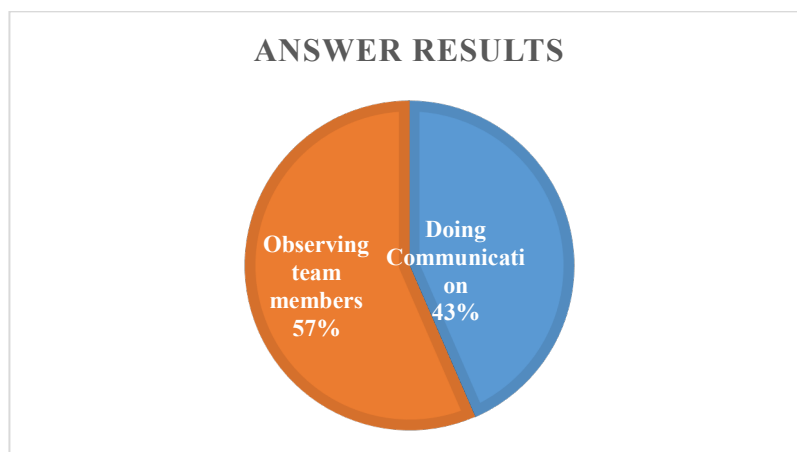


Figure 1. Result for first question

According to the answer results of things that are done to know the team as much as 57% of the answers (13 people) chose to observe the team members get to know the characteristics of the team and members, and 43% of the answers (10 people), chose to do interactions by communicating to get to know each other with the team and team members. In this case, what is meant by observing the team is by looking at how the team works. And communicating is by doing direct interaction with the team members. This is related to what has been explained by Nobe (2013), that communicating can make friendships stronger, and build relations with other people better. A large portion of the workers or Ozora knows the team by observing team members.

Second Question: "In doing communication, the most difficult thing for you is?"

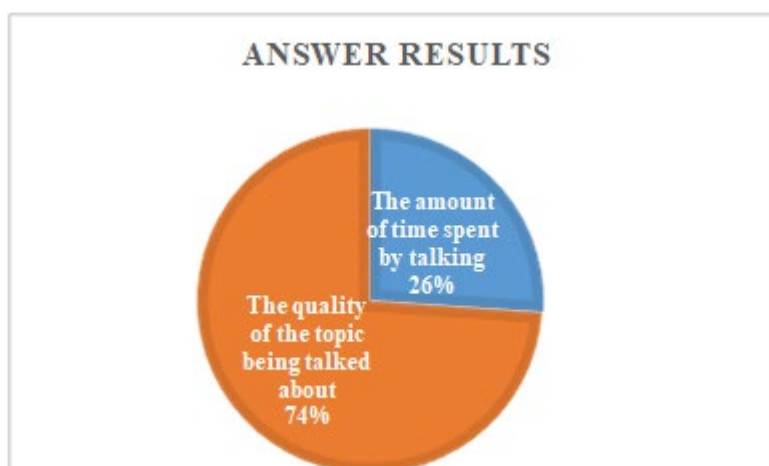


Figure 2 Second question

As much as 74% of respondents (17 people) answered that the quality of the topic being talked about is the most important thing in communicating, whereas 26% (6 people) answered that the amount of time spent by talking is the most important thing in communicating. This is related to the thing that is put forward by Nobe (2013), that to create effective communication, the most important is not the time spent, but the content and way of communicating, in other words, the "quality" of communication is the reason. According to questionnaire results,

there are respondents that still think the time spent communicating is the most important thing, but the amount is lesser than respondents that think the quality of the topic talked about is the most important. A big portion of Ozora's co-workers has understood that the most important thing about effective communication is about the content, or in other words "quality" in communicating.

4.2. *Hourensou* Implementation

As a communication system, *hourensou* suits the Japanese culture that is more oriented in proses compared to result. Because through *hourensou*, the progress in work tend to be communicated. This part will discuss each component of *hou-ren-sou* i.e *houkoku*, *renraku* and *soudan*.

4.2.1. *Houkoku*

The author has given an example to be related to the following questions. Here is an example of a case: "You are doing project B, which is making a web page. In the making, you must report the progress of the said project. The Project must be done in 1 month, but after 1 week in the making, you got contacted by the client that the design of the page wanted to be changed completely. However, you have to get it done by the deadline that has already been determined.

Question:

"When you decide to start the report, how do you start it?"



Figure 3 3rd Question

As much as 96% of the respondents (22 people) when they want to give the report, will start from the conclusion, whereas 4% of the respondents (1 person) will start from the reason. This is related from Nobe's (2013) explanation about 3 important points in doing *houkoku*, and the first thing in the 3 important points is talking about the report starting from the conclusion. In this case, giving a report by starting to talk about it from the conclusion is for the design example that has been remade can be said at once. However, if started from the reason, the conversation will be just why the client wanted to change the design, without reporting the new design.

4.2.2. *Renraku*

In examining about *renraku*, still related from the example case with the *houkoku* that has been explained in the last explanation.

First Question: "You have to inform about the change in design to team members that's also doing the project, what do you do?"

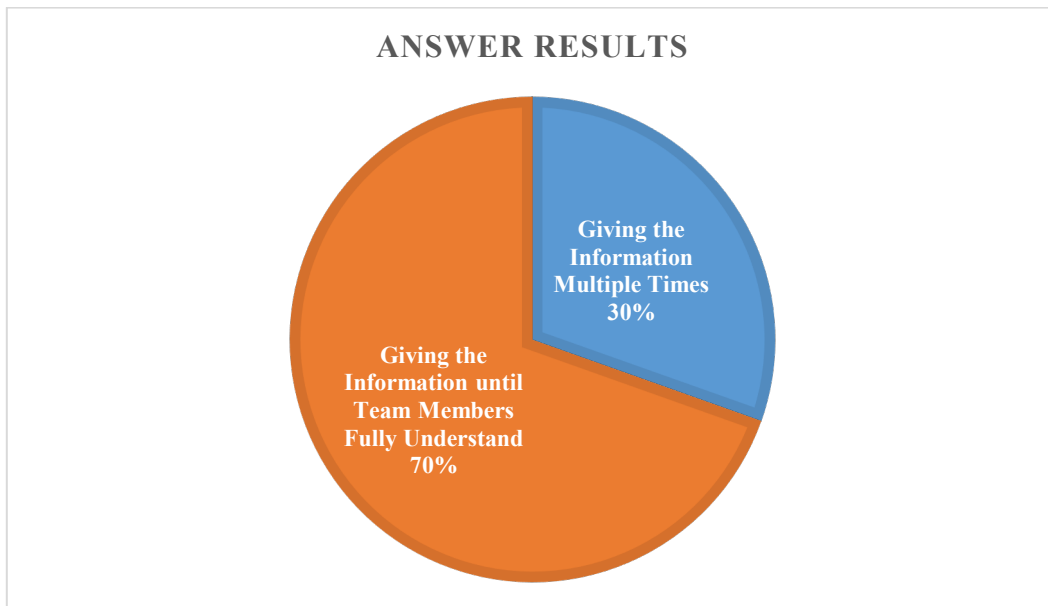


Figure 4 4th Question

As much as 70% of the respondents (16 people) answered that they will make the team members understand completely about the information given, whereas 30% of the respondents (7 people) answered that they will give the information multiple times. About that, according to Nobe (2013) important things in *renraku* (delivering information) are not just “delivering”, but clear information is given. Both parties will understand the same information.

Second Question: “Regarding the information from the client that you have to pass on to the team members, what do you convey?”

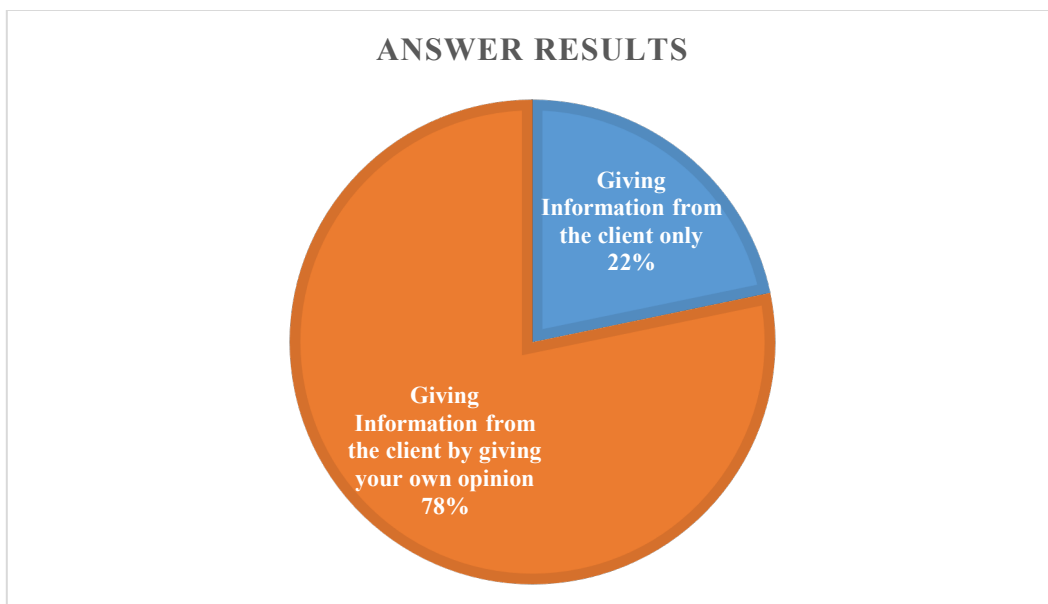


Figure 5 5th Question

As many as 78% of respondents (18 people) will convey information from clients by adding their own opinions about the information, and 22% of respondents (5 people) will convey information only information submitted by clients. This is related to Nobe's (2013) explanation regarding *renraku*, namely, informing or informing related members of the facts, without adding opinions or ideas from oneself. Information to fellow members about the facts. In this *renraku* process, most of the respondents in Ozora's company did not implement the *renraku* according to Nobe's opinion (2013).

4.2.3. Soudan

For the next question regarding *soudan*, the author gives an example of case 4, namely: “Every year-end, the office holds a *bounenkai* event, to hold the event, many things must be prepared, such as place, time, to the content of the event. The event was not only held for internal offices, but also for clients. You have the task of taking care of the place to be used, you must choose a strategic place so that it is easily accessible by all parties who will attend. There are about 70 people who will attend.”

First Question: “You have found a few locations that are easy to reach, but those places can only fit 60 people, in another place, you can fit 70 people but the location is further away. How do you respond to this?”

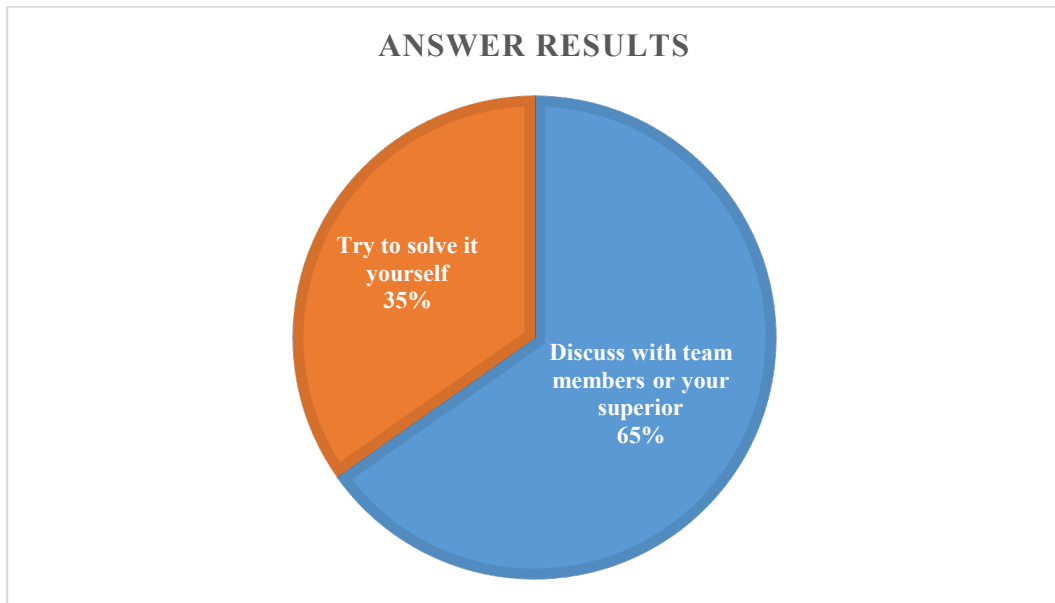


Figure 6 6th Question

In responding to this problem, as many as 65% of respondents (15 people) chose to immediately have a discussion with the team or superiors, while 35% of respondents (8 people) chose to try to solve the problem themselves. This is related to what Nobe (2013) explained regarding *soudan*, namely, when it is difficult to decide, it is better to ask for advice or opinions on the matter to superiors, seniors or colleagues. Depending on the problem, decisions and troubleshooting can be submitted. Also consult the problem with a third party, by sharing the problem, then the best solution will be found.

Second Question: “Before discussing, what do you prepare?”

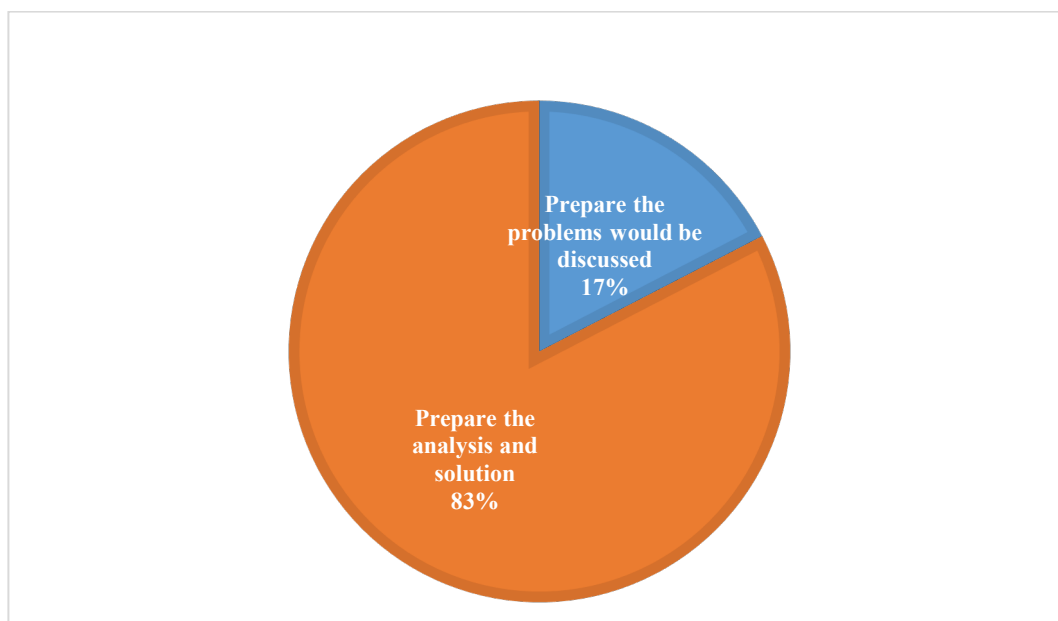


Figure 7

As many as 83% of respondents (19 people) will discuss problems that need to be consulted and also prepare solutions that have been thought of by themselves regarding the problems to be consulted, while 17% of respondents (4 people) will only prepare discussions of problems that need to be consulted.

Like explained by Nobe (2013), there are several things that must be prepared before doing *soudan*:

- 1) Arrange the discussion content
- 2) Arrange the flow of the conversation
- 3) Made answers to the questions, gather documents
- 4) Think of solutions from self

By preparing these 4 things, *soudan* activities will be maximized as mention by Nobe (2013).

Most of the Ozora publishing employees have been able to carry out *soudan* activities properly, according to Nobe (2013) that the things to be prepared before carrying out *soudan* activities are one of them making discussions and preparing solutions from yourself regarding the problems you want to discuss.

5. Conclusion

Ozora *publishing* employees apply *hourensou* by involving the entire internal company, not only doing *hourensou* activities for superiors, but fellow work team members and subordinates. In the case of implementing *renraku* regarding reporting information from clients that must be conveyed to team members, it is submitted with additional information. The application of *hourensou* emphasizes information about the development or progress of a job being done, this is in accordance with the *hourensou* culture. The effectiveness of implementing *Hourensou* in companies is problems can be detected quickly, accurately, and in a shorter time because issues are easily detected and resolved soon. *Hourensou* is also more cost-effective because problems are detected quickly to reduce losses. Besides that, the relationship between teams is getting stronger and more integrated. In this study the author realizes that further researchers possible to do research *hourensou* associated with different things, for example, the application of *hourensou* following the development of an increasingly sophisticated technological era.

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Biographies

Wenny Sundawa was born in the city of Jakarta on March 25, 1994. The author completed his undergraduate education at Bina Nusantara University in the field of Japanese Literature in 2017. Currently working as a translator at the company Ozora Publishing. The writer is active in the Taiko Club which is under the auspices of the Japanese Literature Bina Nusantara as a member.

Dr. Elisa Carolina Marion graduated from BINUS University's Japanese Department for her bachelor degree and University of Indonesia for master degree. In 2013, she joined Japanese Language Training at Japan Foundation Training Center Kansai Japan for 6 weeks, which was funded by Osaka Gas Foundation.

Dr. Elisa has been being a Japanese language lecturer for more than 10 years. She is often invited as a guest speaker and trainer for Japanese language, made speeches in International conferences in several universities such as Atmajaya, Diponegoro University Semarang, University of Indonesia, Maranatha Cristian University, University Muhammadiyah Prof. Hamka, and conferences held by *Asosiasi Studi Jepang Indonesia* (ASJI) and *Asosiasi Pengajar Bahasa Jepang Seluruh Indonesia* (ASPBJI). Elisa has had working experiences in several Japanese companies in Jakarta and West Java. With the experiences in Japanese companies and also in higher education, she now teaches Japanese Corporate culture courses.