

# **Psychology Research Statement Sample**

***Debopriyo Roy***

My research has a strong interdisciplinary focus that combines theory and practice in areas of technical writing, computer science, and behavioral and cognitive psychology. The objective of my research is aimed at improving the content design for online instructional manuals, tutorials and other help systems demonstrating mechanical procedures such that it help readers to mentally animate a dynamic procedure in the prescribed order of operation. My future research will develop newer writing techniques and design guidelines in an effort to study users' information access pattern.

I am currently working on designing a major research project on strategic incorporation of Japanese cultural icons (costumes, Japanese individuals, traditional and modern Japanese backgrounds in images and other culture-specific artifacts) when designing procedural sequential instructions relating to online tutorials and user manuals. Further, Japanese texts can be written in two ways: In Western style, i.e. in horizontal rows from the top to the bottom of the page, or in traditional Japanese style, i.e. in vertical columns from the right to the left side of the page. Both writing styles exist side by side today. This raises the question as to whether wordless instructions when designed using Japanese icons and demonstrated from left to right or top down, helps the process of online comprehension with Japanese individuals. Further, when English text is added to graphics showing Japanese icons, would a left to right or top down oriented configuration in sequential presentation facilitate the comprehension process with similar efficiency? This is an entirely new application context towards internationalization and contextualization of procedural instructions. The purpose of this project would be to explore if and how use of cultural icons and Japanese style configuration in presentation, facilitates comprehension of the English-based instruction and/or creates a positive environment any better than generalized versions. As I specialize in technical writing design for mechanical and software documentation procedures, my application context would mostly center on designing instructional guides for computer assembly processes and other mechanical procedures. Computer engineering students at Univ. of Aizu might be the sample for data collection.

For a related project, I would like to work specifically with Japan and other US-based airlines to identify and design documentation features in the employee training modules that might facilitate learning, retention and application for Japanese employees working in airport locations and with other travel agencies. I would be planning experimental studies with the employee training manuals to explore how users prefer to switch attention within and between procedural text and graphics when culture specific icons are used and when Japanese is used instead of English and vice versa. Students in advanced writing and design classes might be responsible for aiding me in the design of test materials, pilot testing, inter-coder reliability analysis, supervised data collection and subsequent data analysis. I have already conducted an initial pilot testing with Japanese and Chinese students and results proved encouraging.

Major reasons behind situating my research project on Japan stems from the fact that there is substantial research arguing that English will be the agent of globalization, and Japanese companies must accept this reality and deal with it. So far, they have not yet developed a satisfactory way of doing so. Two factors influenced my decision to base my research project on Japan. First, my extensive conversations with employees of *Sabre Airlines Solutions* suggested that training in English for Japanese airport employees often drag them out of their comfort zone, not only in terms of their language acquisition skills but also in terms of the familiarity with the document environment. Second, I was greatly influenced by a famous study conducted by Shriver who talked about how the Japanese consumer electronic companies received numerous complaints about their product and managers suspected that it has a lot to do with the manual and not the product itself. Shriver's

findings suggested that users often tend to blame themselves. I would like to explore this topic in details by localizing the training environment. Finally, most of the current research in intercultural technical communication is with respect to website design in Japan and its comparison with websites in the west. I would like to test the efficacy of these proven design principles for instructional websites and training manuals.