

Today, I find myself at an enriching intersection of engineering, liberal arts, and communications. I graduated in top ten percentile of my class as an electronics engineer from India. During campus recruitment, owing to my outstanding candidature and excellent communication skills, a global scientific editing company—Cactus Communications—extended me an offer to work as an associate editor. I edited and enhanced the readability of domestic and international research papers, user manuals, and industrial reports. Gradually, I realized my passion for scientific and technical communication, and that I could aptly use my communication proficiency, attention to details, and desire to learn, in editing and delivering enhanced technical data. This was my driving force to pursue master's in technical and professional communication at Auburn University. The program introduced me to courses such as grant writing, instructional design and development, and technical editing; topics such as user experience design and usability tests allowed me to perform the roles of both an engineer and a technical communicator. Given my profound interest in this field, I wish to further expand my knowledge and quest by pursuing a PhD.

During undergrad, I was unaware of the importance of audience analysis in writing, as well as websites such as Creative Commons and Purdue Owl, the Google Scholar search engine, etc. In her work, Winsor (2013) propounds that engineers are still developing in the field of writing. She believes they simply focus on conveying data and lack skills of argumentation and audience persuasion. My editing job at Cactus was the eye opener where I distinctly observed that engineers were missing out in terms of effective communication. I noticed that the Indian education system where I hail from, lacks composition courses in undergraduate studies, unlike American universities. My research interest is to explore inadequacies pertaining to this training in undergrad education of ESL (English as a second language) engineering students in America. My current job as an editorial assistant for an International Journal encourages me to explore more in the field of documentation in engineering.

Further, in my present role as a first-year writing instructor, while teaching English composition to freshmen, I realized the importance of college-level writing courses. There is a definitive academic gap pertaining to technical communication training between an American and an ESL graduate student. An ESL student may not have similar effective communication skillset as their American counterpart who would have acquired it by taking relevant undergraduate courses. I feel that graduate international students miss out on such nuances, which urges me to work toward filling this void. I strongly believe it is imperative to have basic knowledge of critical aspects of technical writing for ESL graduates to ramp up to the level of professional communication needed in American industries.

Contemporary research in composition explores various pedagogical approaches, but not all approaches such as implementing multimodality style, developing culturally relevant curriculum, creating compatible environments and cooperative learning strategies, are always effective for ESL students. Shin and Cimasko (2008) explored the incorporation of multimodality in English composition for ESL students, explaining that multimodal composition distracted students from achieving their primary goal of learning to write. This implies that the currently adopted approaches are not adequate and there is certainly a need for researching more innovative approaches to teach composition to ESL students. The existing undergraduate composition syllabus may not be appropriate for ESL graduates, so it is vital to research and identify needs primarily based on students' educational, geographical, and cultural

backgrounds. My study to understand the missing links and requirements will facilitate me to determine the right approach and design appropriate syllabus for teaching college-level writing to ESL graduates. Eventually, this study would bridge the gap and help ESL students match up with their American peers, while preparing them to thrive in the competitive world of academia and industry in America.

At Texas Tech University, I intend to work under the guidance of Dr. Rich Rice. His research foci that include contemporary composition and rhetoric and intercultural communication, are in line with my research interest. Owing to my background, education, and work experience, I would initially focus the scope of my research on ESL graduate Indian students, while subsequently expanding to include Asians, and eventually include ESL students outside Asia. I desire to work for engineering-focused ESL education in future. My current mentors at Auburn University who are Texas Tech's distinguished alumni, Dr. Derek Ross (2008) and Dr. Susan Youngblood (2008), inspired me to apply at Texas Tech to further explore the realm of technical communication, and I look forward to being a part of the Texas Tech family.

I fervently believe that I am uniquely positioned for this program and research in-lieu of: my engineering background; cultural comprehension of ESL engineers; challenges I faced because of gaps in Indian versus American education systems while pursuing my masters and working as an instructor and editorial assistant; and my passion to help ESL students prepare exceptionally for higher education and professional career in America.

Works Cited

Shin, Dong-shin and Cimasko, Tony. "Multimodal Composition in a College ESL Class: New Tools, Traditional Norms." *Computers and Composition* 25.4 (2008): 376-395.

Winsor, Dorothy A. *Writing like an engineer: A rhetorical education*. Routledge, 2013.