TESOL ESP Project Leader Profiles for Professional Development of ESP Practitioners Worldwide

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Abstract

The *ESP Project Leader Profiles* for the professional development of ESP practitioners worldwide are published on the blog for TESOL International Association. Each profile focuses on one ESP project leader. In a profile, the featured ESP project leader provides bio data and responds to the following two items, which are based on the research of Knight (2015a) in his exploration of the leadership conceptualization process: 1) *Define leadership in your own words* and 2) *Tell me an ESP project success story. Focus on your communication as a leader in the project. How did you communicate with stakeholders to make that project successful?* The published profiles are a listed reference in the TESOL *ELT Leadership Management Certificate Program Online*. In this paper, the results of the analyses of 20 profiles are discussed with a focus on leadership conceptualizations of project leaders and how communication is strategically used in the profiles.

Key words: ESP, professional development, leadership research, TESOL, discourse analysis

I. Introduction/Background[1]

TESOL International Association (or TESOL) based in the USA has over 11,000 members worldwide, and over 950 of those members belong to the English for Specific Purposes Interest Section (ESPIS) online community.[2] A former chair of the ESPIS (i.e., Knight) became an official blogger on the subject of ESP in the TESOL Blog, which is the blog for TESOL International Association. The TESOL Blog had an average of more than 25,000 pageviews per month, in 215 countries in 2015.[3] In April of 2015, the ESP blogger launched the *ESP Project Leader Profiles* for the professional development of ESP practitioners worldwide (Knight, 2015b). The profiles are published on the TESOL Blog.

Each profile focuses on one ESP project leader. In a profile, the featured ESP project leader provides bio data and responds to the following two items: 1) *Define leadership in your own words* and 2) *Tell me an ESP project success story. Focus on your communication as a leader in the project. How did you communicate with stakeholders to make that project successful*? The two items are based on the research of Knight (2015a) who conducted semi-structured interviews (Talmy, 2011; Grindsted, 2001, 2005) with 20 leaders in the public, private, and academic sectors in an exploration of the leadership conceptualization process.

The ESP project leaders in the profiles include ESP practitioners in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), including Professor Jigang Cai and Professor Yilin Sun. The profiles have been described by one ESP project leader (Schwelle) as "a nice way to communicate what we do and offer practical, experience-based advice for fellow ESPers around the world." (Knight, 2015c). The profiles are also a listed reference in the TESOL *ELT Leadership Management Certificate Program*

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[1] This paper draws on content in Knight (2016a) and Knight (In press).

[2] TESOL membership brochure (http://www.tesol.org/docs/membership/tesol-brochure.pdf?sfvrsn=2); TESOL Community Network (http://community.tesol.org/welcome.htm)

[3] TESOL International Association Annual Report, p. 8 (http://www.tesol.org/docs/default-source/annual-reports/4-4-tesol-ar-fnl_web.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

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Online.

In this paper, the results of the analyses of 20 profiles are discussed with a focus on leadership conceptualizations of ESP project leaders and how communication is strategically used in the profiles.

II. Exploration of the Profiles

Following Scollon (2001), the creation of the *ESP Project Leader Profiles* can be viewed in terms of Scollon's (historical and mediated discourse analysis (MDA) based) "nexus of practice" and subjected to a "nexus analysis." A nexus analysis can be used to investigate social action (such as the creation of the *ESP Project Leader Profiles*) with different approaches and from multiple perspectives; e.g., critical discourse analysis (CDA), interactional sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). From such perspectives, the research focus is on social power interests, discourses, and mediated actions.

In view of the above, the following guiding questions related to the creation of the *ESP Project Leader Profiles* were addressed with various discourse analytical approaches:

1. What are the profiles?
2. Why were the profiles created?
3. Who are the project leaders?
4. How were the leaders recruited?
5. What are the parts of a profile?
6. Why are the two items in a profile?
7. Who writes a profile?
8. What can we learn about the profiles from content, word frequency, narrative, and genre analyses?
9. How are the profiles being used?

The nine questions are considered in the next three sections of this paper which focus on the following: construction of the profiles (section III), contents of the profiles (section IV), and what we can conclude from the analyses (section V).

III. Construction of the Profiles

In view of how research interviews are co-constructed (Talmy, 2011; Grindsted, 2001, 2005), I argue in this paper that the *ESP Project Leader Profiles* are similarly co-constructed. Further, the co-construction of the profiles is directly related to the actions and interactions of the various stakeholders as described below:

● Participants at the ESPIS Open Meeting at the 2015 TESOL convention in Toronto wanted "regular profiles of ESP practitioners to share what people are up to and compare projects" (Knight, 2015c).
● The creator of the profiles, Knight, is the ESP blogger for the TESOL Blog, a former ESPIS chair, and a member of the ESPIS steering board.
● Knight (2015a) had conducted research on the conceptualization of leadership using discourse analytical approaches prior to proposing and creating the profiles. The two items to which the project leaders in the profiles responded were adapted from Knight (2015a).
● The four parts of a profile (introduction of the project leader, photo and contact information, two items and responses, comments on the responses) were provided/written by one or more of the following individuals: the project leader, the blogger, and the TESOL editor. (It is also possible that others may have been involved in the process.)
● The TESOL ESPIS network facilitated the recruitment of the 20 project leaders; i.e., 17 project leaders (former or current ESPIS steering board members, including 11 former or current ESPIS chairs), 1 project leader (former TESOL president), and 2 project leaders (introduced by a former ESPIS chair). In his role as an ESPIS leader, Knight knew of 19 of the 20 leaders.
● In addition to providing for the professional community to which the majority of the project leaders belonged, TESOL International Association provided the means and support for creating the profiles; i.e., the TESOL Blog and editorial staff.

- The TESOL editorial staff set constraints on the length of a profile after a relatively long 6th profile had been published; i.e., the length was limited to 1,200 words in view of the genre.
- The leaders selected the projects to include in a profile. With the exception of the first leader, the other leaders were encouraged to view profiles that had already been published before constructing their own profiles.

As indicated in the points above, the stakeholders (TESOL International Association, the editor, the blogger, and the featured leaders in the profiles) contributed in different ways to the creation of the 20 profiles explored in this paper. (See Table I.)

Table I

ESP Project Leader Profiles

Publication Dates and Project Leaders
1. May 5, 2015: Kristin Ekkens
2. June 2, 2015: Charles Hall
3. July 14, 2015: Ronna Timpa
4. August 11, 2015: Evan Frendo
5. September 8, 2015: Jaclyn Gishbaugher
6. October 6, 2015: Anne Lomperis
7. October 20, 2015: Ethel Swartley
8. November 3, 2015: David Kertzner
9. December 1, 2015: Margaret van Naerssen
10. December 15, 2015: Marvin Hoffland
11. January 12, 2016: John Butcher
12. January 26, 2016: Karen Schwelle
13. February 23, 2016: Esther Perez Apple
14. March 8, 2016: Kevin Knight
15. April 5, 2016: Shahid Abrar-ul-Hassan
16. May 3, 2016: Robert Connor
17. May 17, 2016: Jigang Cai
18. June 14, 2016: Ismaeil Fazel
19. June 28, 2016: Yilin Sun
20. July 26, 2016: Tarana Patel

The profiles in Table I may be retrieved from the TESOL Blog (http://blog.tesol.org/author/kknight/). The objectives that the project leaders in Table I had for creating the profiles may be partially revealed in the ESP projects that they selected to highlight in the profiles. These projects are considered in the next section of this paper.

IV. Content of the Profiles

The profiles may be brought into the light by different approaches to content, word frequency, narrative, and genre analyses. For example, Table II shows that the projects in the profiles were conducted in five continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. In addition, the projects include those focused on English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

Table II

Projects in the ESP Project Leader Profiles

Country	Project
USA	Healthcare; Academic, social work; Hotels; Professional development; Book publication; Journal article publication; Automotive; Online collaboration; Academic, business; Frozen food; Aviation maintenance technology teacher training; Integration of technology and language learning; Rubber conversion
Rwanda	Online collaboration
China	ESP policy making
Canada	English for medicine
India	App for engineers
Italy	Tourism
Austria	Academic, medical engineering

The 21st profile (Knight, 2016b), which was published on 23 August 2016 (after this study was conducted), focuses on the training of 80,000 instructors in Bangladesh in a project that serves as model for other projects in Pakistan and India. In addition, ESP research is the focus of profiles of Australian project leaders scheduled for future publication. The addition of Australia will mean that six continents are included in the profiles.

The project leaders' responses to the two items in a profile are illuminated with word frequency analyses. Word clouds generated by NVivo Pro 11 qualitative research software may be used to identify general themes in the data. Figure 1 shows how the project leaders conceptualized leadership. Figure 2 is connected with the projects described by the project leaders.

Figure 1. Responses of the 20 project leaders to item 1 in a profile (i.e., definitions of leadership)

Figure 2. Responses of the 20 project leaders to item 2 in a profile (i.e., project success stories).

The word clouds in Figures 1 and 2 are based on word groups of similar words including generalizations. Figure 1 seems to indicate that the project leaders described *leadership* in terms of *communication*. In regard to the conceptualization of leadership as communication, Knight (2013) describes leadership as "a communication process consisting of two parts:1) communicating to create a vision and 2) communicating to achieve a vision." In Knight and Candlin (2015, p. 36), however, Knight's conceptualization of leadership is described as "making real a vision in collaboration with others." In both cases, communication is involved in making real a vision.

Figure 2 may show that the narrative responses of the project leaders emphasized ESP-related needs and activities. In this connection, Abrar-ul-Hassan (2012, p. 6) draws on ESP scholars to make the point that "Needs analysis (also known as needs assessment)…is essential for an ESP course (Gimenez, 2009; Long, 2005; Yogman & Kalayni, 1996)" and also that"NA provides the basis (the what and how) for an ESP course, and the curricular procedures draw upon the analysis (Belcher, 2006; Johns & Price-Machado, 2001)." Accordingly, it might be expected that the narratives of the project leaders would emphasize needs analysis and the related activities in the ESP curriculum.

An investigation of the narrative responses to item 2 in the profiles clarifies that the accounts of communication for ESP project success provided by the leaders include the following three parts:

1. The vision to be created; e.g., an ESP program, book, research article, government policy
2. Communication to create the vision; e.g., obtaining stakeholder input in creating an ESP program, needs analysis
3. Communication to achieve the vision; e.g., persuading stakeholders to support an ESP program that has been created, conducting activities in the ESP program, ongoing communication with stakeholders, student feedback and progress reports

Examples of the vision to be created, communication to achieve the vision, and communication to create the vision are contained in extracts from the profiles in Table III and Table IV.

Table III

Communication to Create the Vision

Project Leader	Vision	Communication
1	EOP program	● "Listened to perspectives of all stakeholders using a variety of methods (focus groups, surveys, 1:1 meetings)." ● "Clearly articulated the vision, process, and framework to key stakeholders using visuals as well as written and oral communication methods."
7	EAP Program	● "The stakeholders did not know that ESP was what they wanted, but because I had ESP analysis skills, I was able to help them define and envision a program that prepared the learners specifically for the communication tasks they would have to do." ● "Having opened Pandora's box of dreams, I then had to help the stakeholders focus in on what their most important goals were for the program and to define what was achievable in the time available."

Table IV

Communication to Achieve the Vision

Project Leader	Vision	Communication
12	EAP Program	"…we have maintained lines of communication with stakeholders… ● **Students:** Students complete several short written reflections…which…help instructors know in what respects the ESP course is meeting students' needs…. ● **MSW Program Faculty and Administrators:**…I sat in on the core course for two semesters to better understand the communication demands it places on students.…For the last several years, one or both ESP course instructors have attended meetings twice per year with all faculty teaching the core course in order to better understand their perspective on international students' challenges and successes…. ● **Within the English Language Programs:** …some important discussions about the course happen at the copy machine or on the walk from our offices to class. We also use a Dropbox-like service for instructors to share materials."

Bhatia (in press) provides guidance in an exploration of why the project leaders responded to the two items in the way that they did (e.g., Tables III and IV for item 2). In a promotional description of Bhatia's forthcoming book, John Swales is quoted as stating that "Vijay Bhatia writes something very profound and very important…that genre theory often gives 'the impression as if producing genres is an end in itself, rather than a means to an end'" (Knight, 2016c). In view of Swales' comments, the next section of this paper discusses how the TESOL Blog is a *means* to an end for all of the stakeholders in the *ESP Project Leader*

Profiles.

V.   Discussion and Conclusions

Following Bhatia (In press), the relevance of the blog (as a genre) to the creation of the *ESP Project Leader Profiles* can be pursued. The blog provides the *means* for the project leaders to communicate their professional expertise. Accordingly, and in view of the previous sections of this paper, the following conclusions can be made about the creation of the profiles:

1. The ESP Project Leader Profiles could not have been created without TESOL International Association.
2. Each profile has been co-constructed.
3. The profiles create a body of knowledge that can be shared for professional development purposes.
4. Each profile may have been written in order to influence different stakeholders for different purposes.
5. The profiles provide examples of how to effectively share professional accomplishments.
6. The profiles provide public access to the project leaders and facilitate professional networking on a global scale.

The first two points have been discussed in the previous sections of this paper. In connection with point 3 about creating a body of knowledge, the profiles are a listed reference in TESOL's *ELT Leadership Management Certificate Program Online* (Knight, 2016d).

The next two points (4 and 5) are related to how the leaders communicate their professional expertise in their profiles. The profiles promote a leader's expertise, organization, vision, etc. In view of Gee (1996, 1999), the d/Discourse in a leader's responses to the two items may indicate the stakeholders for which a project leader is writing. For example, an EOP project leader may be writing for prospective corporate/government clients, supervisors, and/or colleagues. An EAP project leader may be writing for an audience of academic administrators, colleagues, and/or government officials.

In connection with the sharing of professional accomplishments in point 5, the profiles may be considered to be similar to a job interview, a university admissions essay, or a presentation. From such a perspective, the project leaders would be motivated to align a definition of leadership with a narrative that focuses on communication for project success.

As stated in point 6, the profiles provide public access to the project leaders and facilitate professional networking on a global scale. In a profile, a project leader provides contact information which allows blog readers direct access to the project leader. In addition, the TESOL Blog has a section for readers to submit comments (viewed by the public) about a profile. Further, the publication of a profile is announced to the members of the ESPIS community e-mail list. The profiles are also shared worldwide through social networking channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

As I have argued in this paper, the profiles are co-constructed. As such, they are contextually bound and should be considered individually in the light of the motivational relevancies and actions of the various stakeholders.

Finally, from the multiple views of the profiles presented in this paper, the profiles may be considered to be useful research and training materials. According to TESOL International Association, the profiles may be used in the classroom if the source and the authors are given credit.[4]

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[4] Knight (2015c). See responses to blog post.

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