INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND APPLICATION OF A PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH COURSE

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Abstract. *In this paper, the author explores Merrill's First Principles of Instruction (2002) and describes her efforts in designing a professional English course with the principles as the main criteria. Merrill's First Principles of Instruction show a structured task-centered approach that combines subject knowledge and skills in accomplishing tasks. The rationale and approach to designing the course based on Merrill's First Principles of Instruction are also discussed to demonstrate the application of the Principles. These were tested with students of a Hong Kong tertiary institute. User testing indicates a positive evaluation of the course and teaching effectiveness. Based on these findings, implications of use of Merrill's First Principles of Instruction for course design are elaborated.*

Key words: *Course design, professional English, materials development, Merrill's First Principles of Instruction*

1. INTRODUCTION

With an increasing competition in the business world, teaching university students to acquire professional writing skills is essential and has been important as employers' demand for better English is greater these days. The quest for good English skills for job and education applications is especially higher than in the past as there is keener competition in career and university admissions. Even though courses for teaching written English applications have been common in Hong Kong universities, the design of the curricula is often limited to the provision of specialized document formats, grammatical and language items for learners to follow, an instructional approach which often disregards the fact that the interest of learners is insufficient to motivate them to take lead in their learning. This kind of instruction may result in the poor writing performance of learners as they will only be able to follow what is given. As Ismail et al. (2008) point out, the difficulties that most learners have in their writing process is that they can only provide superficial and similar content. In the context of teaching English written applications, it is imperative that the course can stimulate their thinking ability (Cotterall 2004), so that they can be more self-directed and, at the same time, their writing abilities and interests can be enhanced.

The outline of the paper is as follows: literature review relating to current English teaching situation of Hong Kong and Merrill's Principles of Instruction are firstly provided. Design principles derived from the Principles are then given. The conceptual design is tested on a tertiary institute of Hong Kong. The results of the findings are analyzed to provide implications for future course design and research in the same area.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Teaching professional English skills in Hong Kong

Professional English is a subdivision of English for Special Purposes (ESP) (Brunton 2009). ESP emerged in 1960's as there was a demand for English skills that could meet learner and employers' needs. It has been a prominent development in English teaching and learning since it has been increasingly important to respond to market and users' needs. As Belcher (2004) mentions, "ESP assumes that the problems are unique to specific learners in specific context and thus must be carefully delineated and addressed with tailored to fit instruction" (135). It could be said that ESP has become a major part of language teaching as general English courses cannot meet the needs of the globalized world.

Course design is an important aspect of ESP. As Edwards (2000) states, if an ESP course has to be successful, it has to provide skills and knowledge that can meet the immediate needs of learners. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggest the use of a learner-centered approach which can provide learners with more opportunities to interact with tasks so as to grow or improve in the process.

Teaching professional English skills has become significantly popular in Hong Kong. However, in most ESP writing classrooms of Hong Kong, the course design adopted is focused on the production of final written products. The process taken is mainly about teachers giving models for learners to learn about the characteristics of the writing format. Then practices on related grammatical and language items will be given. Finally, learners will compose their work according to the model given and teachers will comment on their work. This approach is merely concerned about the correctness of the use of format, grammar and language of the final product of the learner (Nunan, 1989). It neglects the importance of getting learners involved with real world problems, finding and applying the information they need to complete the tasks. In fact, several researchers (Evans 2013; Kumaravadivelu 2006; Yasuda 2011) acknowledge the importance of the process of learning with the involvement of authentic experiences which can contribute to the learner's increased language knowledge. Learners must be able to learn from various kinds of authentic business tasks in order to have a better understanding of the different rules of English in the business world. For these reasons, allowing learners to learn through authentic discourses, with their active participation in the learning process with peers and the instructor, can be a more effective learning approach.

2.2. Theoretical framework

The adoption of the Merrill's First Principles of instruction (Merrill 2002, 2007, 2008) was initially made with the aim of enhancing learning. Research has suggested that these principles, if applied effectively to specific contexts, can encourage learner participation in their learning process and thus help them in the acquisition of knowledge or skills (Ormrod 2004). As Merrill (2008) claims, "there are known instructional strategies. If an instructional experience or environment does not include the instructional strategies required for the acquisition of the desired knowledge and skill, then effective, efficient, and engaging learning of desired outcome will not occur" (267). At the same time, "learning is totally determined by the learner… Learning is seen as a process in which the learners use what knowledge or skills they have in order to make sense of the flow of new information" (Hutchinson & Waters 1987, 72).

The First Principles of Instruction were proposed by David Merrill in 1999. They are believed to be the instructional design theories that can be applied to all situations to create the most effective learning environment though there may be various changes to the implementation methods according to the specific requirements of each individual situation (Reigeluth & Carr-Chellman 2009). Those principles are: task/problem-centeredness, activation, demonstration, application, and integration and Merrill (2002, 2006) explained briefly as follows:

Activation – learning can be enhanced if learners can make use of their prior knowledge or experience to help learn what they will learn

Demonstration – learning can be enhanced if learners can be given a demonstration of relevant skills required for handling a similar task

Application – learning can be enhanced if learners can apply what they have learned to solve real-world problems

Integration – learning can be enhanced if learners can be engaged in peer discussion, critique or reflection on what they have learned

Task/Problem-Centered – learning can be enhanced if a real-world problem instructional strategy with progression
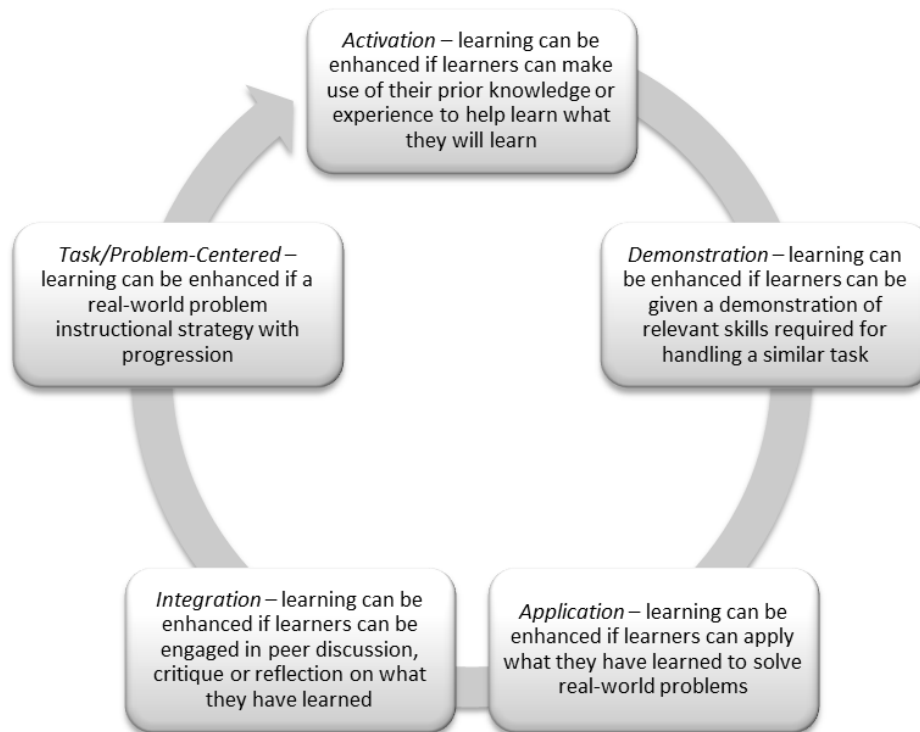
Fig. 1

A cyclical use of these principles in the learning process can bring out effective instruction and can also demonstrate a deeper level of the learning structure, which includes guidance, coaching and reflection. Merrill states that these principles can be implemented by using different practices, which will then determine course effectiveness and learner engagement. Nevertheless, the principles of instruction should be based on a task-centered instructional approach. A number of studies (Copper, Bentley, & Schroder 2009; Frick et al. 2009; Gardner 2011) has been conducted to explore the relationships of the principles with the quality of instruction. The research results generally show that Merrill's First Principles of Instruction can help to produce effective course design and engaging learning environment that can help improve student learning. Hence, theoretical discussion of these principles suggests that it is conducive to second language learning. Building on existing literature on First Principles of Instruction, the present study employs

First Principles of Instruction as a framework for designing a Professional English Course which attempts to extend people's understanding of the principles and provide insight into how they can be implemented.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH COURSE

3.1. Design principles

The pedagogical design of the professional writing course of this study was inspired by Merrill's First Principles of Instruction as discussed in the previous section. In Table 1, the guiding questions derived from each of these principles are provided in the following to effectively inform the design of the professional writing course.

Table 1 Guiding questions for course design

Principle of Instruction	Guiding questions
Activation	Can the instruction help learners to apply their prior knowledge to the new one?
	If learners have limited prior experience, can the instruction provide experience that can be used as a foundation for acquiring the new knowledge?
Demonstration	Can the instruction provide a demonstration for the knowledge and skills to be acquired?
Application	Can learners have an opportunity to apply the newly acquired knowledge or skill?
	Can learners receive guidance or help when they are having difficulty in doing the task?
	Is guidance gradually reduced to train learners to perform their tasks on their own?
Integration	Does the instruction help learners to transfer the newly acquired knowledge or skill to their everyday life?
	Does the instruction provide an opportunity for learners to reflect or discuss the new knowledge or skill?
	Does the instruction provide an opportunity for learners to create, or explore new ways to use the new knowledge or skill?
Task/problem centered	Does the instruction make use of authentic tasks/problems?
	Does the instruction demonstrate problems in a progression manner?

3.2. Course timeline

The course was designed to last for one semester. For both the academic autumn (lasting from September to December) and spring (lasting from January to April) semesters, the course was given for 12 weeks (2 hours per week). The first and last lessons of the course were also used for introduction and evaluation respectively.

3.3. Use of the First Principles in practice

The intent of the course was to engage learners actively to understand and apply education and job application writing skills. The course was developed using Merrill's First Principles of Instruction, in which a learner can engage in a cycle of learning: doing, reflecting, understanding, and applying. After completing an activity, the learner reflects on that experience calling upon prior knowledge and experiences, develops understanding of the knowledge and skill of the course by involving themselves in the activities that demonstrate the conceptual and theoretical information, and finally applies the new knowledge and skills to the assigned activities and most important of all, integrate them into their lives. This learning cycle supported the goal of actively engaging learners in a process of drawing instructional principles from Merrill and was thus adopted for this course.

A decision was made to include the writing of a personal statement as the first module of the course in order to attend learners' need on writing university admissions, owing to the requirements of most of the universities in the beginning of the semester. Writing resumes and job applications were given as the second and third modules as they were closely linked to each other. The last module was about job interview skills which were considered crucial for the success of the application process and should come after the resume and job application letter sessions. Based on the First Principles of Instruction, each module required learners to (a) call upon prior knowledge and experience on the taught matters, (b) complete tasks demonstrating the conceptual and theoretical information of the module content, (c) apply the learnt content into required tasks to show understanding, and (d) integrate the learnt knowledge and skill with their own needs. Learners submitted their work to the instructor for feedback and grading from time to time. All modules included information on the theory, skill, grammar and language use and some form of social interaction with peers on the module content. Both individual and group activities were incorporated in all modules. Evaluation data were collected during and after the implementation of the course to assess learning and impacts.

3.4. Targets

The learners were second-year education students in a university-level education institute in Hong Kong. Each cohort included students who had little, if any, background in university or job applications writing. A majority of the members of the cohorts had previously taken the academic writing course offered by the Language Centre of the Institute.

3.5. Integrating Principles of Instruction into course activities

In keeping with the Principles of Instruction developed by Merrill, each module of the course included activities in support of them. A complete description of the activities associated with the principles is given in the following paragraphs with reference to the guiding questions presented in 3.1.

3.5.1. Activation

This principle is represented by the first task of each module, Checking your understanding, which refers to a phase to recall relevant knowledge or skills or provide relevant experience to be used as a foundation for new knowledge. A number of questions relating to the topic were asked at the beginning of each module to actively

motivate students in the learning process. "Questions are effective learning tools even when asked before a learning experience" (Marzano et al. 2001, 112-114). The activation tasks were purposely designed to be short and in a yes/no format (Refer to Table 2 for content detail) so that learners could quickly check if they could establish connections between their previous knowledge with the new one or develop a motivation to learn the module content. The questions dealt with very basic information and gradually moved into the content of the course. This strategy would allow learners to understand the relationship between the fundamental principles and the complex content being taught for the topic. Another focus of the activation tasks was to engage learners strategically in interactions with peers and with the instructor as they were asked to discuss their answers to the questions in a class discussion after the tasks. Social learning was purposely used to help enhance the impact of this phase to learners as they could help one another to prepare for background information reviews so that they would be given the important concepts.

Table 2 Content of activation task

Module	Topic	Content
1	Writing a personal statement	What is a personal statement for?
		What would a personal statement include?
2	Writing a resume	Dos and don'ts of writing a resume
3	Writing a job application letter	Dos and don'ts of writing a job application letter
4	Attending a job interview	Dos and don'ts of attending a job interview

3.5.2. Demonstration

This principle, which is represented by activities or tasks done after the activation stage of the learning cycle, pertains to the demonstration of the new knowledge and skill to be learned in the module. In the professional writing course, representations of cases and examples that illustrated how the information or skill could be used were shown to learners at this stage. The cases or examples presented were in a progression manner according to the level of importance. It was hoped that learners could finally put all individual components together to do real world tasks. Unlike the traditional approach, which gives learners directly all information, learners had to examine the cases or examples in detail and to resolve the challenges involved. Such practice allows learners to gain not only the conceptual knowledge and understanding of skills (refer to Table 3 for detail), but also the habit of using those skills and knowledge.

Learners were directed to the relevant skill and knowledge of the topic. The content being demonstrated was ensured to be consistent with the learning goals or intended learning outcomes of the course. It was expected that learning could be more effective when the information being demonstrated was taken from real life and the techniques of stimulating a sense of inquiry, such as for unresolved problems or error detection, were utilized throughout the learning process.

Table 3 Content of demonstration task

Module	Topic	Content (knowledge and skill)
1	Writing a personal statement	Components and structure of a personal statement (knowledge)
		Differences and similarities between job applications, resume and personal statement (knowledge)
		Differences and similarities between a personal statement for application for a scholarship, a postgraduate program and an exchange program (knowledge)
		Writing a catchy opening (skill)
2	Writing a resume	Resume components and formats (knowledge)
		Using action verbs (skill)
		Using note form (skill)
3	Writing a job application letter	Components and format of a job application letter (knowledge)
		Common errors on writing application letters (knowledge)
		Using "You" and "I" approach (skill)
		Using formal tone and style (skill)
		Using a variety of sentence structure (skill)
4	Attending a job interview	Starting a self-introduction (knowledge)
		Forming and responding to questions (skill)

3.5.3. Application

This principle refers to the application of the new knowledge and skill to different activities. The application principle was used in all four modules. For example, in Module 1, learners were required to respond to the requests of real-world university programs by preparing personal statements for the relevant applications themselves. They also needed to respond to job advertisements by writing resumes and job application letters in Modules 2 and 3 respectively. In the last module, learners had to collaborate with one another to conduct mock job interviews for the jobs they had applied in the previous modules. Guidance of the instructor could still be found in the application process though it would be reduced gradually to develop the ability of learners in dealing with their problems on their own. The application principle supported the goal of actively engaging learners in a process of utilizing the learning concepts and skill learnt from this course. It can be regarded as a cognitive training process that utilizes nearly all of the knowledge and skills learnt to real-life problems. Peer interaction was also encouraged at this stage as learners were required to work in groups and to collaborate with one another to find out the solutions of the assigned problems. This peer collaboration would allow learners to have an opportunity to utilize the learnt component knowledge and skill and to engage in the solution of real-life problems.

3.5.4. Integration

The Integration principle was also adopted for this course. Each module of the course was designed with the features that were thought to best bring out the learning outcomes associated with developing a deep understanding of the knowledge and skill. A similar activity in each module, although using different formats (Table 4 shows details) as applicable to that taught content, was given in the final section of each module to help learners reflect on peer work and module content. Different formats of integration tasks were used in the course to arouse learners' interest as routine stimuli of a technique or strategy will lose its attractiveness over time. In the process, learners were required to participate in review or discussion sections to consolidate their learning and experiences in each module and the course as a whole. Thus, the integration principle was purposefully chosen and strategically integrated into the course modules to support and enhance learning. In addition, the principle was included based on the philosophy that learners would construct their knowledge by experiencing more critique and reflection activities themselves. As a result of being engaged in these learning experiences, learners were encouraged to share insights with one another. At the same time, the effective peer interaction resulting from the constructive suggestions or comments given by peers for improving work could motivate learners to extend this peer-collaboration relationship to their everyday situations.

Table 4 Formats of integration task

Module	Topic	Review question format
1	Writing a personal statement	Scale questions
2	Writing a resume	Mainly Yes or no questions, supplemented by short questions
3	Writing a job application letter	Short questions
4	Attending a job interview	A checklist

3.5.5.Task/Problem centered

This principle is relevant to learning using authentic or real-world tasks. The merit of using these tasks in the professional writing course is that learners' learning can be activated by connecting what is newly learnt and what they will be doing in future. Solving authentic problems or performing authentic learning tasks is crucial for a professional writing course as real-world or authentic tasks are central to their future work environment. In each module, a variation of these tasks was provided. The assistance and feedback of the instructor was given in the process but was gradually withdrawn until learners could successfully perform the tasks on their own. When students engage in authentic tasks, it is believed that they can have more interest in what they are doing. In this course, all modules consisted of some form of real-world problems or tasks relating to the topics. For example, in Module 1, excerpts of personal statements were utilized to give learners an idea about what needed to be included in a personal statement and the differences between a personal statement and a job application letter. In particular, they were shown on how to write up a good opening paragraph. In the second module, learners could understand the format and components of a resume by examining the samples of abridged resumes. The third module shared real-world, personal examples of job advertisements

and application letters. In the final module, learners had a job interview practice that provided a reality setting and experience with which learners can improve their job interview skills and increase their confidence about going on job interviews.

4. COURSE EVALUATION

4.1. Purposes and hypotheses

The main purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a course design utilizing Merrill's Principles of Instruction in teaching professional English. The use of Merrill's Principles of Instruction has proven its potential in teaching courses. Hypotheses were defined regarding the goal of the research presented in this paper: H1- "The Professional English course with its design framework based on Merrill's Principles of Instruction is positively evaluated by the students who have taken the course"; H2- "The teaching quality of the Professional English course with its design framework based on Merrill's Principles of Instruction is positively evaluated by the students who have taken the course".

4.2. Participants

In the second semester of 2013-2014, 43 students enrolled in the Professional Writing Course were asked to participate in the study. The subjects were all year-2 students (N: 43) from 2 classes at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. All of them were education major students, with one class specializing in the Chinese Language (N: 22), and other in Science, Early Childhood Education, Visual Arts and Music (N: 21). The subjects had diverse levels of English language proficiency and had taken academic English in year 1. Both classes were led by the same teacher (who was the researcher of this study) in the second semester of 2013-14. The selected data collected in both classes are analyzed together in this paper. The same evaluation surveys were used to collect data on the course, and more specifically regarding the course usefulness, interestingness and teaching effectiveness. At the end of the semester, the students evaluated the above aspects of the course using a questionnaire.

4.3. Results

The questionnaire survey was conducted on the subjects of the two classes (N=22 and N=21) to investigate the perception of students on the Professional English Course with its design framework based on Merrill's Principles of Instruction. Specifically the course usefulness, interestingness and teaching effectiveness were examined.

Initial analyses indicated that students from the two classes who had taken the course produced similar results regarding the overall evaluation on the course and teaching effectiveness. The average evaluation in Class 1 and Class 2 was in the range 3.0–3.38 for the usefulness and interestingness of the course as a whole (see Table 5), which shows that students generally agreed with all the useful and motivation aspects listed in the questions. In relation to the evaluation of the teaching quality of the course, a comparable higher rating was received (in the range of 3.05 to 3.52), which indicates that students largely found that the teaching quality was "good". (see Table 6). The Likert-type response scale that was used for collecting data presented in Tables 5 and 6 was in the range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

In Table 5, the evaluative statements for Classes 1and 2 are given along with the results of their evaluation regarding the usefulness and interestingness of the course. The Likert-type response scale was in the range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). It can be concluded from the data presented in Table 5 that the course was evaluated rather favorably since the average ratings were in the range 3.0 – 3.38.

In Table 6, the evaluative statements for Classes 1 and 2 are provided along with the results of their evaluation regarding the teaching quality of the course. The Likert-type response scale was in the range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). It can be noted from the data presented in Table 6 that the teaching quality of the course was evaluated very favorably since the average ratings were in the range 3.05-3.52.

Table 5 Student perceptions on course, Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses)

Usefulness	Means (Standard Deviation)	
	Class 1	Class2
Q1. The course was valuable to my development.	3.27 (0.55)	3.38 (0.50)
Q2. The course is useful for my studies.	3.16 (0.79)	3.10 (0.66)
Q3. I learn to present my ideas logically.	3.11 (0.76)	3.16 (0.76)
Q4. The course shows me how to communicate in an orderly and clear manner.	3.33 (0.77)	3.10 (0.66)
Q5. I use language more accurately.	3.05 (0.73)	3.16 (0.50)
Q6. I learn to be selective in how I use language.	3.11 (0.58)	3.00 (0.67)
Interestingness		
Q7. The learning activities of the course stimulated my interest in the subject.	3.14 (0.35)	3.00 (0.63)

Note: 3=agree; 4=strongly agree

Table 6 Student perceptions on teaching quality, Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses)

Teaching quality	Means (Standard Deviation)	
	Class 1	Class2
Q1. Inspiring students to think and learn.	3.32 (0.48)	3.14 (0.48)
Q2. Addressing students' needs in learning.	3.27 (0.55)	3.29 (0.46)
Q3. Enhnacing students' course-related knowledge or skills.	3.41 (0.50)	3.48 (0.51)
Q4. Providing appropriate feedback to enhance student learning.	3.36 (0.49)	3.43 (0.68)
Q6. Providing opportunities for students to learn from a variety of sources or ways.	3.27 (0.55)	3.14 (0.73)
Q7. Guiding students to think from different perspectives.	3.09 (0.29)	3.05 (0.74)
Q8. Encouraging students to proactively engage in their own learning.	3.27 (0.46)	3.29 (0.64)
Q9. Being enthusiastic in teaching.	3.36 (0.58)	3.52 (0.51)
Q10. Delivering the course in an organized way.	3.41 (0.50)	3.24 (0.44)
Q 11. The overall teaching was of high quality.	3.50 (0.51)	3.33 (0.58)

Note: 3=agree; 4=strongly agree

4.4. Discussion of results

The Professional English course with its design framework based on Merrill's Principles of Instruction was evaluated by two classes of students who had taken the course. The data analyses of the results of students' surveys confirm the first hypothesis (H1) since most of the students who took the classes positively evaluated the course usefulness and interestingness. The second hypothesis (H2) was also confirmed since most of the students gave rather favorable ratings (see Table 6).

It can be concluded that Merrill's Principles of Instruction are useful and effective for designing professional English courses. Besides contributing to learning the English skills and to the motivation of students, the principles can help to effect a positive perception of students on the teaching quality of the course. However, the use of the Merrill's Principles of Instruction should be used with careful planning, preparation and monitoring by course designers.

5. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

If the above procedural applications demonstrate the ways in which Merrill's principles of instruction can be incorporated effectively into the design of a language course, the list of recommendations offered in the following could indicate some possible guidelines for further thoughts:

- Ensuring that instructors know well the design concepts and content of the course.

To allow instructors to be able to use course content effectively in their classes, the course developer or administrator has to ensure that instructors can understand course design concepts and content. Understanding course concepts and content is crucial to being inventive in creating effective learning experiences for learners. A fragmentation of theory and practice will leave instructors on their own with the challenge of integrating content knowledge into their teaching contexts. Finding ways to help instructors acquire course concepts and content knowledge is essential if we are to teach all students well.

- Providing support for instructors in course administration, so that they know how to best lead students to learn and work.

One of the possible factors affecting course quality is the availability of support services for instructors in the course administration process. Support services may include adjustment of course materials, creation of relevant tasks and quizzes, and utilization of additional teaching resources. Lacking support may curtail instructors' abilities to teach well. Yet, a well-planned support program will help instructors to be more confident and successful in their teaching.

- Encouraging continued participation of the developer in the implementation process for evaluating the overall impact of the course.

To attain the best learning outcomes, the course developer needs to know about student experience along the way-about the subject content, teaching, and the assessments. Continued participation of the developer in the implementation process for evaluating the overall impact of the course can help to understand if the course is useful for students. Traditional end-of-term assessment certainly contributes to the improvement of the course; however, such practice will limit the role that the developer can play in improving the way the course can have in students' learning, thinking, and development.

- Having regular design maintenance to ensure the consistency in course quality over time.

To ensure that there is a close fit between the course material and the needs of students it is clearly of critical importance that the course developer should be able to evaluate whether the course is in fact meeting the needs of the students and also be able to alter the course with the changes that will more closely fit the students' needs. In this way the course developer needs to be able to assess the course quality regularly and, equally important, be able to ensure the consistency in course quality over time if the course is to be implemented continually.

6. FUTURE WORK

The objective of this study was to develop a professional English course based on the First Principles of Instruction advocated by Merrill and investigate if students had positive perceptions on its course usefulness, interestingness and teaching effectiveness. There are a number of implications for practice from the application of Merrill's First Principles of Instruction into the design of the professional writing course of this study.

First, the principles can serve as an evaluation framework for quality control and improvement of the implementation of a course. It seems that the existing evaluation frameworks of most university courses tend to disregard instructional design of the learning, which in fact is an important element in the overall impact of a course. The Merrill's principles can be adopted to enhance the impact of learning. To this end, further research into the impact of the Merrill's principles is needed.

Further, there is a need to collect more research findings for enhancing the actual impact of Merrill's First Principles as there is still an inconclusive nature of the findings on the effectiveness of the principles for course design. Although the principles were tested positively in this study, further research is needed to answer the question on how the courses using Merrill's principles as a framework can lead to greater integration of new knowledge and skills and what the advantages and barriers different kinds of courses will have for such integration.

Finally, to effectively use Merrill's First Principles of Instruction, we should observe how they can be used in real situations. This study provides some insight into how these principles can function in a language course. To make further advancement, we should find out how the principles function in different courses and discover methods for better utilizing the First Principles of Instruction so that they can be used by course designers in different settings.

7. CONCLUSION

In closing, designing a course is a time-consuming endeavor that involves various kinds of challenges; hence it is critical for the knowledge creation process. The current study has taken into consideration of the design framework developed by Merrill. It is still uncertain that the use of Merrill's principles of instruction is linked to high quality instruction, but they could be included as the guiding criteria for course design. This study has demonstrated the effectiveness of the applications of Merrill's principles of instruction into the creation of a language program, with a focus on developing professional

writing skills. However, most of all, it must be continually evaluated to identify the problems arising from different situations. Obviously, the present study provides an example for the application of Merrill's principles of instruction in the context of a professional writing course.

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