

Constructive alignment

(Video at: www.trinitycollege.com/TESOL-AL)

This video looks at constructive alignment and the role it plays in teaching, assessment and general learning goals.

0:09 – 2:39	Constructive alignment overview	8:16 – 10:07	Constructive alignment in assessment
2:40 – 5:50	Constructive alignment in stage aims	10:08 – 12:50	Constructive alignment in giving students skills they need
5:51 – 8:15	Constructive alignment in planning		

1. Before watching the video

What do you understand by the term `constructive alignment'? Don't worry if you have never heard of it before – all will be explained. The next few questions might give you a clue.

Thinking about your classes generally	
a. How do you know what learning outcomes your students are expected to achieve? (for example, are they implicit from the materials you are required to use or are you explicitly told what your learners need to be able to do?)	
b. Are you provided with prescribed lesson plans to follow or do you write your own plans?	
c. Who determines the summative assessments in your institution?	
d. Is it the same person responsible for deciding the learning outcomes, the classroom activities and the summative assessment? If not, how closely do the people involved in these work together?	

Now think about a specific class that you teach	
e. Think about the lesson plan for the last lesson you had with that class. What were you learning outcomes for	

While watching the Constructive Alignment in lesson / stage aims section 3.1 (02:40), answer the following.

3. What are '*action verbs*' and what examples are mentioned?

While watching the Constructive Alignment in lesson planning section 3.2 (05:51), answer the following.

4. What problem could arise if there is inconsistency in the three stages?

While watching the Constructive Alignment in assessment 3.3 (08:16), answer the following.

5. How can a teacher use constructive alignment when they have to prepare students for a particular test at the end of the course?

While watching the Constructive Alignment to give the students the skills they need section 3.4 (10:08), answer the following.

6. Why is it important to share the ILOs with your students?

7. Summary question: What is the key message in the video?

- a) ILOs, CAs and ATs should be determined by the same person.
- b) ILOs, CAs and ATs should be explained to the learners
- c) ILOs, CAs and ATs should be consistent

3. Discussion points

1. In what different ways can you share with your learner the ILOs for your lessons?

2. What can you do to ensure better constructive alignment in your teaching?

4. Further learning

Books

Biggs, J. B, (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Buckingham: Open University Press/Society for Research into Higher Education.

Ramsden, P. (1984) 'The context of learning'. In F. Marton, D. Hounsell and N. Entwistle (eds), *The Experience of Learning*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Websites

www.johnbiggs.com.au/academic/constructive-alignment/

A very interesting, short downloadable PDF article by John Biggs is available at:

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/id477_aligning_teaching_for_constructing_learning.pdf

Journal articles

Biggs, J. (1996). 'Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment'. *Higher Education*, 32 (3), pp347-364.

Walsh, A. (2007). 'An exploration of Biggs' constructive alignment in the context of work-based learning'. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32 (1), pp79-87.

Section 2, question 7 answer:

- a) WRONG. They do not necessarily need to be written by the same person
- b) WRONG. This is discussed in the video though it is not the main point. Alex suggests sharing the ILOs and ATs with your learners as it provides them with a clear focus.
- c) CORRECT. The message being repeated throughout the video is the need for consistency.