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The constructive alignment of objectives, tasks, and assessment in hybrid language training

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Abstract

This study explores the application of constructive alignment in the design and implementation of a hybrid language training program for university students. Grounded in constructivist learning theory, the concept of constructive alignment emphasizes coherence between intended learning outcomes (ILOs), teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and assessment tasks (ATs). Using a qualitative case study approach, the research investigates how this pedagogical model can enhance the effectiveness of hybrid instruction, particularly in the development of language skills. Data were collected from instructional documents, learner productions, teacher reflections, student feedback, and Moodle analytics over a six-week training period. The findings reveal that aligned hybrid design promotes learner engagement, autonomy, and clarity of expectations, leading to improved language performance and metacognitive awareness. Despite challenges related to digital fatigue, design consistency, and learner variability, the study demonstrates that constructive alignment offers a robust framework for creating coherent, goal-oriented hybrid learning experiences. A transferable model of aligned hybrid training is proposed, with implications for instructional design and future research in language education and digital pedagogy.

Keywords: Constructive alignment; Hybrid learning; Language education; Instructional design; Learner engagement; Assessment; University students; Blended pedagogy

1. Introduction

In recent years, hybrid learning has become an essential component of pedagogical innovation in higher education, particularly in the field of language education. By combining face-to-face instruction with digital learning environments, hybrid training offers increased flexibility, diversified learning pathways, and the potential to adapt to learners' evolving needs. In language learning contexts, where the development of receptive and productive skills requires continuous engagement and varied input, hybrid modalities provide rich opportunities for interaction, autonomy, and personalized progression. However, the effectiveness of such training depends not only on the integration of digital tools, but more fundamentally on the pedagogical coherence that structures the entire learning experience.

A recurrent challenge in the design and implementation of hybrid language courses lies in the fragmentation of learning experiences due to a lack of alignment between intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment methods. When these components are not coherently integrated, learners may struggle to understand the purpose of each activity, disengage from the process, or fail to achieve the desired competencies. To address this issue, the concept of *constructive alignment*, developed by Biggs (1996, 2003), offers a solid theoretical and practical framework. Based on constructivist principles, this model posits that learners construct meaning when instructional elements—objectives, tasks, and assessments—are meaningfully and consistently aligned. While this model has been

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widely applied in traditional classroom settings, its application in hybrid learning environments, particularly in language training, remains underexplored and under-documented.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the principles of constructive alignment can be applied to the design and evaluation of hybrid language training. Specifically, it aims to analyze how alignment between pedagogical objectives, learning tasks, and assessment methods contributes to the development of language skills in university students. It also seeks to identify the challenges encountered in implementing such alignment in hybrid environments, as well as the facilitating factors and good practices that may guide instructional design. To this end, the study explores how constructively aligned hybrid training influences learner engagement, supports autonomy, and enhances the perceived relevance of learning activities.

In order to respond to these aims, the study addresses the following guiding questions: How does the application of constructive alignment influence the effectiveness of hybrid language training? In what ways do learners engage with aligned objectives, activities, and assessments in hybrid settings? What challenges and affordances arise in aligning pedagogical components in a hybrid language course? The answers to these questions are expected to offer insights not only for the refinement of hybrid language programs, but also for the broader integration of pedagogical coherence into digitally supported education. The paper begins with a theoretical exploration of constructive alignment in language learning, followed by a methodological overview and a presentation of key findings. A discussion of the implications and recommendations for practice concludes the study.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Concept of Constructive Alignment (Biggs and Tang)

The concept of *constructive alignment*, introduced by Biggs (1996) and further developed with Tang (2007), is one of the most influential frameworks in contemporary instructional design. Rooted in constructivist theories of learning, constructive alignment is based on the idea that learning occurs most effectively when students actively construct meaning, and when all elements of the instructional environment—intended learning outcomes (ILOs), teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and assessment tasks (ATs)—are aligned to support this process.

From a theoretical standpoint, the "constructive" aspect of the model stems from the constructivist paradigm, which posits that learners do not passively absorb information but instead build knowledge through active cognitive engagement (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978; Fosnot, 2013). Biggs (1999, 2003) argued that the role of the educator is to create an environment that enables and encourages learners to engage in activities that will likely lead to the achievement of the specified learning outcomes. This requires careful design: learning objectives must be clearly articulated in terms of what learners are expected to do (observable behaviors), activities must provide opportunities to perform those behaviors, and assessments must measure them accordingly.

The "alignment" component, on the other hand, involves ensuring internal coherence among the three core components of curriculum design: ILOs, TLAs, and ATs. When these components are misaligned—for example, when tasks emphasize surface learning while assessments target deeper conceptual understanding—the learner experiences a disconnect that can hinder progress and motivation (Biggs and Tang, 2011). Constructive alignment thus serves as a quality assurance mechanism, fostering transparency, relevance, and fairness in the learning process (Adams, 2004; Harden, 2001).

In more recent literature, the relevance of constructive alignment has been reaffirmed and extended. For instance, Kouwenhoven (2009) emphasized its importance for competence-based education, while Trigwell and Prosser (2014) found empirical links between aligned instruction and deeper learning approaches in university settings. Moreover, Lo and Pang (2020) explored the impact of constructive alignment on student perceptions of learning efficacy, highlighting that learners felt more empowered and confident when they understood the link between objectives, activities, and evaluation.

As higher education shifts increasingly toward hybrid and online modalities, several scholars have adapted the principles of constructive alignment to these emerging contexts. Boud and Molloy (2013) introduced the idea of *sustainable assessment*, arguing that alignment should not only support current learning outcomes but also future learning autonomy. Similarly, Nicol (2021) emphasized that in digital environments, alignment must extend beyond content delivery to include feedback systems, learner agency, and reflective opportunities. Goodyear (2015) added that alignment in blended or hybrid environments must consider the orchestration of learning across modalities, taking into account not just synchronous versus asynchronous activities, but also the learner's emotional and cognitive load.

Furthermore, recent studies in language education contexts (Baneres et al., 2021; Ortega, 2022) underline that in hybrid language learning, alignment becomes a key factor in ensuring that communicative tasks remain authentic and assessment remains valid across both in-person and digital spaces. These studies suggest that when alignment is successfully implemented in hybrid language learning environments, students report increased engagement, improved metacognitive awareness, and greater perceived relevance of tasks to real-world language use.

Ultimately, constructive alignment offers a robust and adaptable framework for designing coherent, learner-centered hybrid training programs. Its emphasis on clarity, coherence, and active learning makes it particularly valuable in language education, where skill acquisition is tightly linked to engagement, authenticity, and progression. The challenge, however, lies in applying these principles consistently across both digital and physical learning spaces—a challenge that this paper aims to explore in depth.

2.2. Application to Language Learning

The application of *constructive alignment* to language learning represents a powerful pedagogical strategy, particularly when the aim is to foster the integrated development of the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—along with linguistic and intercultural competence. In language education, alignment is not merely a matter of consistency between instructional components, but a way to ensure that learners engage meaningfully with tasks that mirror authentic communicative situations and that allow them to progressively build, apply, and reflect upon their language abilities.

In second language acquisition (SLA), research has long emphasized the importance of authentic, purpose-driven tasks that encourage learners to use the language as a tool for real communication (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). This aligns directly with the *constructive* component of Biggs' model, in which learners are active agents in constructing knowledge through meaningful activity. When instructional goals clearly specify language outcomes—such as being able to write a persuasive argument or engage in spontaneous conversation—learning tasks should be designed to scaffold these goals through progressive practice, and assessment should measure performance in tasks that resemble those encountered during instruction.

The alignment of tasks and objectives is particularly vital in communicative language teaching (CLT), where tasks should reflect real-world language use and move beyond mechanical grammar drills. As Littlewood (2004) notes, the integration of meaning-focused tasks with form-focused instruction allows learners to develop fluency and accuracy in tandem. Constructively aligned language courses thus require a careful design of teaching activities that activate prior knowledge, encourage language production, and promote strategic language use in context. For instance, a learning outcome related to developing oral fluency in academic settings might be supported by online debate forums, in-class role plays, and peer feedback activities, culminating in an oral presentation as an assessment task.

In addition, the role of feedback—an essential element in language learning—is reinforced by the principles of constructive alignment. Feedback, when aligned with learning objectives and embedded within the learning process, supports learners in regulating their performance and closing the gap between current and expected outcomes (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). In hybrid settings, where both synchronous and asynchronous feedback mechanisms can be employed (e.g., recorded audio comments, real-time chat discussions, automated formative quizzes), the alignment of feedback with ILOs enhances transparency and learner agency.

Recent empirical studies also demonstrate the value of alignment in hybrid language learning environments. For example, Carrió-Pastor and Muñiz-Calderón (2020) found that when learning outcomes, digital tasks, and assessment rubrics were explicitly aligned in university-level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, students not only showed improved language performance but also expressed a stronger sense of purpose and motivation. Similarly, Hafner and Miller (2019) highlight that digital multimodal tasks aligned with communicative objectives in blended language classrooms foster learner autonomy and creativity, while maintaining a focus on language accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness.

Furthermore, aligned instruction facilitates formative assessment and self-assessment, which are particularly important in language education for promoting reflective learning and metacognitive growth (Oscarson, 2009; Andrade and Brookhart, 2016). In hybrid training programs, digital platforms like Moodle or Google Classroom allow for the integration of self-evaluation checklists, peer review tools, and iterative task submissions—all of which must be aligned with clear learning objectives to maintain their pedagogical value.

In sum, applying constructive alignment to language learning in hybrid contexts allows educators to design meaningful, coherent, and goal-oriented learning pathways. It ensures that learners understand what they are expected to achieve, how they will achieve it, and how their progress will be evaluated. By anchoring language learning tasks within a coherent instructional framework, constructive alignment not only promotes linguistic competence but also supports learner autonomy, engagement, and transfer of knowledge to real-world communication contexts.

2.3. Relevance in Hybrid/Blended Contexts

The integration of constructive alignment within hybrid and blended learning environments has become increasingly relevant as educational institutions worldwide shift toward more flexible, multimodal teaching formats. While hybrid learning offers distinct advantages, such as increased accessibility, learner autonomy, and multimodal content delivery, it also introduces new complexities in maintaining coherence and pedagogical integrity across digital and face-to-face components. In this context, constructive alignment provides a foundational strategy to ensure that the learning experience remains cohesive, purposeful, and learner-centered, regardless of modality.

One of the central challenges in hybrid education lies in the risk of fragmentation. Learners may struggle to see the connections between in-person and online activities, especially when the digital component is treated as supplementary rather than integrated into the overall instructional plan (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008; Boelens et al., 2017). Constructive alignment mitigates this risk by explicitly mapping each component—objectives, tasks, and assessments, across both learning spaces, ensuring that students encounter a unified learning trajectory.

In hybrid language education, this is particularly significant. Language learning depends on continuity, regular practice, and authentic interaction—features that can be disrupted if hybrid environments are poorly designed or misaligned. According to Neumeier (2005), the effectiveness of blended language learning depends not only on the choice of technological tools but on the pedagogical design that connects them meaningfully with communicative goals. Constructive alignment thus supports the intentional design of hybrid language programs where each learning activity, whether digital or in-person, contributes directly to the development of targeted linguistic competencies.

Moreover, the asynchronous dimension of hybrid learning, while valuable for flexibility, requires a greater degree of learner autonomy and self-regulation. In such contexts, alignment becomes essential for maintaining clarity and purpose. When intended learning outcomes are explicitly linked to digital tasks and assessment criteria, learners are more likely to engage with online materials and complete them meaningfully (Sun and Rueda, 2012; Rasheed et al., 2020). Well-aligned instructional design provides scaffolding for independent work, making objectives visible and guiding learners through structured progression.

In addition, the blended format allows for richer opportunities to diversify teaching and assessment practices. Formative assessment tools, such as interactive quizzes, discussion forums, and digital portfolios, can be aligned with performance-based assessments conducted in person, creating a holistic evaluation system. Constructive alignment ensures that these multimodal assessments are not disjointed but systematically linked to the competencies they aim to measure (Dixon and Worrell, 2016; Bower et al., 2015).

Recent studies underscore the benefits of constructive alignment in hybrid education. For instance, Alammary (2019) observed that hybrid course designs grounded in alignment principles led to improved student satisfaction, clearer learning paths, and higher achievement levels in language courses. Similarly, Nordmann et al. (2022) found that alignment between synchronous and asynchronous elements in hybrid learning environments enhanced learner motivation and reduced cognitive overload by clarifying the relevance and expectations of each task.

From an instructional perspective, applying constructive alignment in hybrid settings encourages instructors to adopt a *backward design* approach (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005), beginning with the articulation of clear learning outcomes and working backward to design tasks and assessments that support their achievement. This process fosters transparency and coherence across both modalities, helping educators navigate the complexities of hybrid course development.

In summary, the relevance of constructive alignment in hybrid and blended contexts lies in its ability to create pedagogically consistent, cognitively engaging, and strategically integrated learning environments. For language education in particular, it ensures that the unique affordances of both digital and in-person instruction contribute synergistically to the learner's linguistic development, rather than functioning as isolated or parallel tracks.

2.4. Insights from Recent Research

Recent research has provided growing empirical support for the application of constructive alignment in hybrid and blended learning contexts, particularly within language education. These studies emphasize the role of alignment in improving learning outcomes, enhancing engagement, and promoting more meaningful assessment practices—key concerns in the evolving landscape of digitally supported education.

A number of studies have shown that when hybrid or blended language programs are designed with alignment in mind, students exhibit greater clarity regarding expectations and more sustained engagement with learning tasks. For example, Lim and Wang (2016) examined the implementation of aligned hybrid instruction in university-level English language courses and found that students were more autonomous, showed higher levels of task completion, and performed better on aligned assessments. The researchers attributed these gains to the explicit linkage between learning outcomes, activity design, and evaluation rubrics, which provided learners with a coherent framework to guide their learning efforts.

In a similar vein, Nguyen, Cannata, and Miller (2020) conducted a meta-analysis on hybrid and online course design in higher education, concluding that alignment of instructional components was a consistent predictor of both academic success and learner satisfaction. The study emphasized that without alignment, even well-resourced digital platforms or sophisticated online tools fail to yield positive learning outcomes.

The use of learning analytics has also begun to reveal how alignment influences learner behavior in hybrid environments. Bannert et al. (2018) demonstrated that students in courses with well-aligned digital tasks and assessment criteria spent more time on-task, used deeper learning strategies, and engaged more frequently in self-regulated learning behaviors. These findings suggest that alignment not only benefits performance but also contributes to the development of essential metacognitive skills.

From a language education perspective, research by Pérez-Paredes et al. (2021) has highlighted the importance of aligning hybrid instructional tasks with communicative objectives in the target language. Their study, focusing on EFL learners in a blended setting, showed that when tasks were explicitly aligned with speaking or writing outcomes, students demonstrated significant gains in fluency and accuracy, as well as greater confidence in real-world communication tasks. The alignment of formative feedback and final assessments further enhanced learners' sense of progression and coherence throughout the course.

Furthermore, recent work by He, Gunter, and Bland (2023) explored how constructive alignment influences digital task design in hybrid language teacher education. Their findings point to the need for alignment not only in content and assessment, but also in the **modalities** through which instruction is delivered, such as ensuring that asynchronous video lectures, discussion forums, and synchronous webinars all contribute meaningfully to the same learning goals. This multi-layered alignment was found to be particularly beneficial in maintaining learner engagement across modalities and supporting the transfer of pedagogical strategies to future teaching practice.

There is also increasing emphasis on the role of aligned feedback in hybrid contexts. According to Nicol (2021), aligned feedback—i.e., feedback that is directly tied to stated learning outcomes and assessment criteria—reinforces the learning trajectory and helps learners self-correct with purpose. In hybrid environments, where feedback may be delivered both online and in-person, maintaining alignment across modalities is critical to ensure instructional consistency and learner trust.

Collectively, these studies affirm that constructive alignment is not only applicable but increasingly necessary in the design of hybrid language training. Its application supports the shift from content-centered to learner-centered instruction, fosters deeper learning, and addresses common issues of fragmentation and disengagement in blended environments. The insights from this growing body of research provide a robust foundation for the present study, which explores how constructive alignment can be intentionally and effectively implemented in hybrid language education to enhance both teaching quality and learner outcomes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

To investigate how constructive alignment operates within hybrid language training, this study adopts a qualitative research approach, grounded in a descriptive and interpretative paradigm. Qualitative methods are particularly well

suited for exploring educational phenomena in depth, capturing the complexity of pedagogical interactions, learner perceptions, and instructional design processes that may not be fully measurable through quantitative means (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

The study is positioned within the framework of a design-based research (DBR) methodology, which is commonly employed in educational contexts to analyze, design, and iteratively refine pedagogical interventions in authentic settings (Anderson and Shattuck, 2012; Wang and Hannafin, 2005). DBR allows for the examination of both process and product: not only how the hybrid training program was constructed in alignment with learning outcomes and assessments, but also how learners interacted with these aligned components in practice. This approach also facilitates the identification of challenges and opportunities for future instructional design, making it particularly appropriate for a study that seeks to bridge theory and practice.

Specifically, the research focuses on a single, bounded case of a hybrid language training program implemented in a university context, which involved both synchronous in-person sessions and asynchronous online tasks over a defined instructional period. As such, the study qualifies as a qualitative case study (Yin, 2018), aiming to generate an in-depth understanding of how constructive alignment was operationalized within this training and how it impacted learners' engagement, perceived coherence, and language development. Case study methodology enables the exploration of context-dependent variables and accommodates multiple sources of data, an essential feature when investigating alignment across modalities.

Throughout the research process, the principles of transparency, reflexivity, and ethical responsibility have been upheld. The aim is not to produce generalizable claims, but rather to derive insights that can inform future implementations of aligned hybrid learning models in language education. The case selected for this study exemplifies a structured hybrid design, where intentional efforts were made to align learning objectives, pedagogical activities, and assessment methods, making it an appropriate context for investigating the core research questions of this paper.

3.2. Context and Participants

The present study was conducted within the context of a structured hybrid language training program implemented at a Moroccan public university. The training targeted undergraduate students enrolled in a pre-service teacher education program with a specialization in foreign languages. The selected cohort consisted of students in their second year of study, with an overall language proficiency level corresponding approximately to CEFR level A2-B1, as determined by initial placement activities and prior coursework. The training focused on the development of communicative competence, with particular emphasis on oral expression, written production, and receptive skills in French as a foreign language.

The hybrid training model combined asynchronous online learning activities with weekly synchronous face-to-face sessions, following a structured schedule over a six-week period. The design of the program was guided by the principles of constructive alignment, with clearly defined intended learning outcomes (ILOs), learning activities (TLAs), and assessment tasks (ATs) embedded across both modalities. Online components were hosted on the university's Moodle platform and included video lectures, comprehension tasks, reflective forums, and scaffolded writing assignments. The face-to-face sessions, facilitated by a language instructor, provided opportunities for clarification, feedback, collaborative tasks, and oral production in guided communicative situations.

A total of 154 students participated in the training, all of whom were enrolled in the same institutional program and shared similar educational trajectories. The participants were distributed across several tutorial groups and had varying degrees of prior experience with online learning platforms. Participation in the hybrid training program was compulsory and fully integrated into the curriculum of the language education module, ensuring consistent engagement across the student cohort. Although no control group was used, the consistency of the training model and the richness of collected data allowed for in-depth exploration of the alignment processes and learner experiences within the hybrid setting.

Ethical procedures were strictly followed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the research objectives and consented to the analysis of anonymized data derived from their learning activities, feedback, and performance. The research received institutional approval, and no identifying information was disclosed in the analysis or reporting. The choice of this context was driven by its relevance to real-world teacher education and its intentional pedagogical design based on constructive alignment principles, making it an appropriate case for exploring the research questions at hand.

3.3. Instructional Design of the Hybrid Training

The instructional design of the hybrid language training program was structured according to the principles of *constructive alignment*, ensuring a consistent and meaningful relationship between the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), the teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and the assessment tasks (ATs). The training model was developed to foster the development of language skills, primarily oral interaction, written production, listening comprehension, and reading skills, in a context that combines the affordances of both face-to-face and online modalities.

3.3.1. Alignment of Objectives, Activities, and Assessments

At the core of the instructional model were explicitly defined learning outcomes, which were formulated in observable and measurable terms using action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). For example, learning outcomes included: *"Present opinions on a familiar topic using appropriate connectors," "Write a coherent argumentative paragraph using appropriate lexical fields,"* and *"Understand the main ideas in short authentic video documents."* These outcomes served as the backbone of the course design, guiding both the content selection and pedagogical choices.

The teaching and learning activities (TLAs) were carefully selected and sequenced to support the achievement of these outcomes. The hybrid model followed a weekly structure, with an average of:

- 1 hour of face-to-face instruction per week, focusing on oral interaction, clarification of expectations, vocabulary activation, and collaborative problem-solving.
- 3 hours of asynchronous activities per week on the Moodle platform, including video-based comprehension tasks, guided writing exercises, online forums, and interactive grammar or vocabulary quizzes.

Each TLA was purposefully aligned with one or more learning outcomes. For instance, in preparation for the outcome *"Defend an opinion in a structured oral discourse,"* students first completed a video analysis task online, followed by a forum discussion, and later engaged in role-playing debates during the in-person session. This **task sequencing** supported progressive internalization and application of target structures and communicative strategies.

3.3.2. Assessment Integration

Assessment tasks (ATs) were also tightly aligned with the stated objectives and mirrored the learning activities. Rather than relying on isolated language tests, the program adopted a formative and task-based assessment strategy. Students were required to:

- Submit weekly written productions through Moodle, which were evaluated based on rubrics reflecting the targeted skills and competencies.
- Participate in oral exchanges during face-to-face sessions, with informal feedback provided by the instructor and peers.
- Complete an integrated final task, such as a written reflection or oral presentation, which served as a cumulative performance-based assessment aligned with the main objectives of the course.

Formative feedback played a central role in the learning process, both online (via comments on Moodle submissions) and in-person (through guided peer review and teacher scaffolding). The assessment criteria were made transparent to learners in advance and were consistently applied across tasks to reinforce the alignment and foster metacognitive awareness.

3.3.3. Scaffolding and Progression

The instructional design adopted a scaffolded progression model, gradually increasing the complexity of tasks. Early weeks focused on knowledge activation and controlled practice, while later stages encouraged synthesis, autonomy, and creativity in task execution. This ensured that students were not only exposed to language but also engaged in meaningful language use that supported the acquisition of communicative competence in authentic contexts.

By maintaining alignment across all components of the training, objectives, tasks, and assessments, the program aimed to provide students with a coherent and transparent learning pathway. The hybrid format was not treated as a logistical constraint but as a pedagogical opportunity to diversify instruction, deepen engagement, and promote learner-centered development.

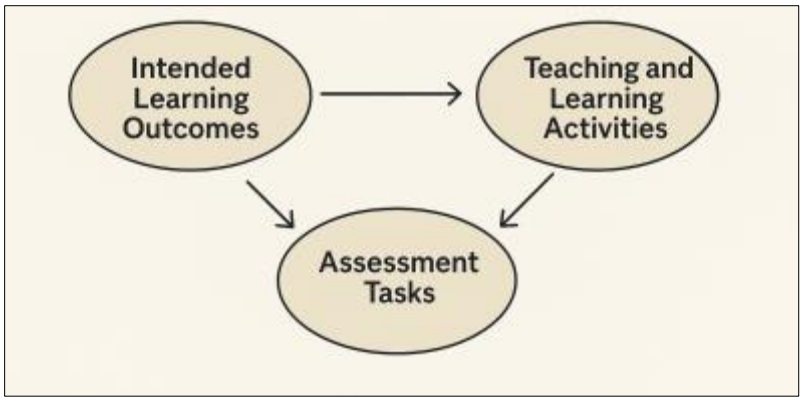

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Figure 1 Constructive Alignment in Hybrid Training

3.4. Data Collection Methods

To explore how constructive alignment was implemented and experienced within the hybrid language training program, a multi-source data collection strategy was employed. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the alignment processes and their pedagogical impact, while allowing for triangulation to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2020).

3.4.1. Document Analysis

A key source of data was the instructional documentation used during the course design and implementation phases. This included:

- Course syllabi with explicitly formulated learning outcomes,
- Lesson plans outlining weekly objectives and activities,
- Moodle task descriptions and rubrics,
- Assessment criteria and grading grids.

Analyzing these documents allowed for the identification of alignment patterns between ILOs, TLAs, and ATs. Attention was paid to the wording of objectives, the sequencing of activities, and the degree to which assessments reflected the outcomes and learning tasks.

3.4.2. Learner Productions and Performance Tasks

Student submissions collected throughout the training served as a second source of data. These included:

- Weekly written tasks posted on Moodle,
- Final integrated writing assignments,
- Oral presentations and in-class recorded discussions (for selected groups).

These artifacts were analyzed to determine whether and how students had internalized and responded to the aligned instructional design. Patterns in learner performance were examined in relation to the stated learning objectives, and attention was given to how task design may have influenced linguistic output.

3.4.3. Instructor Observational Notes and Reflective Logs

The instructor maintained weekly reflective logs documenting classroom dynamics, student engagement, difficulties encountered, and observations regarding the delivery and effectiveness of hybrid activities. These qualitative notes helped capture the pedagogical intentions behind the course design as well as emergent adaptations during implementation. They also provided insight into the coherence between what was planned and what occurred in practice, particularly in terms of alignment fidelity.

3.4.4. Student Feedback and Perceptions

At the end of the training, open-ended feedback forms were collected from students. These prompts invited learners to reflect on:

- The clarity and usefulness of the learning objectives,
- The relevance and challenge level of activities,
- The alignment between what they practiced and what they were assessed on.

Though not framed as a formal questionnaire, these reflective responses offered valuable data on learner perceptions of the coherence, engagement, and effectiveness of the training design.

3.4.5. Learning Analytics from the Moodle Platform

Finally, basic learning analytics (e.g., task completion rates, time spent on Moodle resources, participation in discussion forums) were extracted from the platform. While not used for statistical analysis, these data were helpful in corroborating trends identified in other sources, especially regarding student engagement with aligned tasks in the online component.

Together, these diverse data sources provided a robust and nuanced basis for examining how constructive alignment was operationalized in the hybrid language training program and how it shaped the learning process.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of the data collected in this study followed a qualitative content analysis approach, aiming to identify patterns of alignment, learner engagement, and perceived coherence within the hybrid training context. The goal was to understand *how* the principles of constructive alignment were manifested in practice and *how* they were experienced and interpreted by learners and the instructor.

3.5.1. Thematic Coding of Qualitative Data

All qualitative data—including instructional documents, student feedback, and instructor logs—were subjected to inductive thematic coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This process began with a close reading of the data to identify recurring categories and meaningful units of information. Initial codes were then grouped into larger themes reflecting key aspects of constructive alignment, such as:

- Clarity and specificity of learning outcomes,
- Alignment between tasks and objectives,
- Assessment coherence and transparency,
- Student engagement and perceptions of relevance,
- Challenges in maintaining alignment across modalities.

Coding was conducted manually using a matrix framework, and excerpts were continuously reviewed to ensure interpretive consistency and saturation of key themes.

3.5.2. Comparative Analysis of Learner Productions

To assess the pedagogical impact of the aligned design, a comparative qualitative analysis was carried out on learner artifacts (written and oral tasks). Student work was evaluated using rubrics based on the intended learning outcomes. This allowed the researcher to:

- Identify how learners engaged with specific outcomes,
- Detect recurring strengths and difficulties,
- Observe linguistic progress or stagnation over time.

The comparison between learner outputs and targeted outcomes provided insight into how well the designed tasks elicited the intended language skills, and where misalignments or unintended gaps may have occurred.

3.5.3. Triangulation and Cross-Validation

Findings from the different data sources were triangulated to enhance the robustness and trustworthiness of the analysis (Patton, 2015). For instance, themes emerging from student feedback were compared with patterns observed in teacher reflections and task performance. This process helped to confirm consistent findings (e.g., recognition of task relevance) and identify discrepancies (e.g., differences in perceived clarity between online and in-person components).

3.5.4. Reflexivity and Researcher Positioning

Given the interpretive nature of qualitative research, reflexivity was actively maintained throughout the analysis process. The researcher, who was also involved in the instructional design and delivery of the training, maintained an analytical journal to document insights, assumptions, and evolving interpretations. This practice helped to minimize bias and enhance the transparency of the analytical process (Berger, 2015).

In summary, the data analysis combined thematic coding, rubric-based interpretation of learner outputs, and cross-source triangulation to generate a rich, multi-dimensional understanding of how constructive alignment functioned within the hybrid language training context. These procedures laid the foundation for the presentation and interpretation of the results in the following section.

4. Results

4.1. Examples of Constructive Alignment in Practice

The analysis of the instructional design, course materials, and learner outputs revealed clear and intentional efforts to implement constructive alignment throughout the hybrid language training. The alignment between the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), the teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and the assessment tasks (ATs) was consistently observed across multiple skill areas, confirming the pedagogical coherence of the training program.

4.1.1. Listening and Oral Interaction Modules

In the modules targeting listening comprehension and oral interaction, the ILOs aimed to develop learners' ability to understand spoken discourse and respond appropriately in structured oral exchanges. For example, one learning outcome stated: *"Understand the main ideas and key details in short authentic audio documents and respond using appropriate language strategies."*

To achieve this, students first engaged with Moodle-based listening tasks (TLAs), which included short videos and podcasts on everyday and academic topics. These were followed by comprehension questions, vocabulary activities, and forum-based discussions designed to activate the targeted language.

In the face-to-face sessions, learners were asked to re-use and apply the input from the asynchronous tasks in structured oral activities, such as role-plays and opinion-sharing tasks. The corresponding assessment tasks included real-time oral performances, where students were evaluated using rubrics that matched the ILO criteria, such as clarity of expression, fluency, lexical appropriateness, and interactional competence. The coherence between objectives, activities, and assessments facilitated the internalization of oral strategies and increased learner confidence.

4.1.2. Written Expression and Argumentative Skills

Another illustrative example of constructive alignment was observed in the modules focusing on written production, particularly argumentative paragraph writing. One of the central ILOs in this area was: *"Produce a coherent and structured argumentative paragraph using logical connectors and relevant lexical fields."*

Students first completed guided pre-writing activities online, including lexical field expansions, argument construction exercises, and peer-discussion prompts. These TLAs were directly tied to the skills targeted in the ILO, and they scaffolded the writing process by helping students organize their thoughts and develop content progressively.

Throughout the training, learners submitted weekly writing tasks via Moodle, which served as both practice and formative assessment. They received individualized written feedback from the instructor aligned with the rubric criteria (e.g., argument clarity, coherence, lexical precision). These productions culminated in a final integrated writing assessment, where students were asked to develop a complete argumentative piece, demonstrating the cumulative application of previously aligned tasks.

4.1.3. Reading and Vocabulary Development

In the receptive skills component, a recurring ILO required students to *"Extract key information from written texts and infer meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary using contextual clues."* The learning activities included interactive Moodle-based reading tasks with embedded glossaries, comprehension questions, and vocabulary guessing activities.

The follow-up classroom sessions focused on applying new vocabulary in short summaries, paraphrasing activities, or guided debates, bridging the receptive work with productive use. The assessment tasks required students to synthesize short texts, answer inferential questions, and apply new vocabulary in written or oral contexts, demonstrating an effective alignment between reading objectives, learning activities, and evaluations.

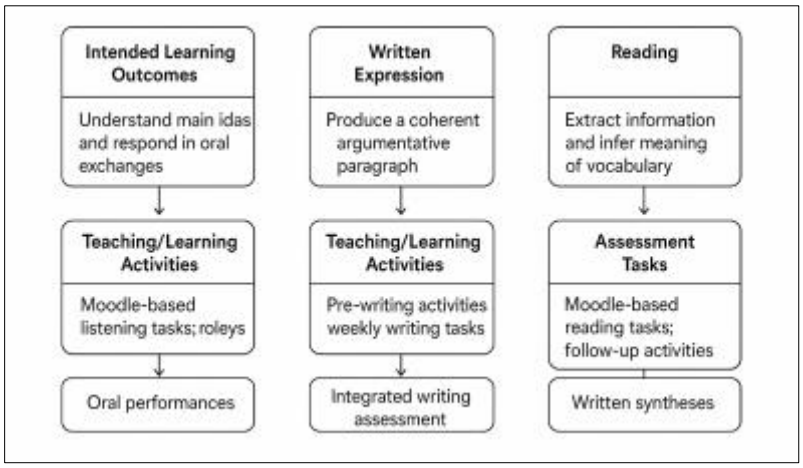

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Figure 2 Examples of Constructive Alignment in Practice

4.2. Learner Responses and Engagement

The analysis of student feedback, learning behavior, and performance data revealed a generally positive response to the aligned hybrid training model. Learners consistently reported greater clarity of expectations, increased motivation, and enhanced engagement, attributing these outcomes to the coherence between learning objectives, activities, and assessments.

4.2.1. Perceived Clarity and Coherence

A recurring theme in learner reflections was the clarity of the course structure and its contribution to a more organized and goal-oriented learning experience. Students expressed appreciation for the transparency of objectives, noting that they could easily identify what was expected of them each week. This clarity was frequently linked to their ability to plan their work more effectively and engage with tasks more purposefully.

Many students reported that the alignment between online and in-person components helped them make sense of how each activity contributed to their progress, stating that “everything felt connected” and “we knew why we were doing each task.” Learners who had previously experienced fragmented or poorly scaffolded instruction described this training as "more structured and logical", which supported their learning confidence.

4.2.2. Increased Motivation and Autonomy

The coherent alignment of the hybrid design appeared to enhance learners’ intrinsic motivation, particularly in completing online activities that were often perceived in other courses as peripheral or disconnected. In this case, students reported engaging more actively with Moodle-based tasks because they understood their relevance and how they contributed to in-class performance and final assessment.

This transparency and perceived relevance fostered greater learner autonomy, with several students noting that they were able to track their own progress and identify areas for improvement more independently. This was especially evident in the writing modules, where the scaffolded weekly tasks, aligned with the final assessment, encouraged learners to view feedback as a tool for personal development rather than judgment.

4.2.3. Engagement Across Modalities

Engagement data from the Moodle platform—such as consistent task completion rates, timely submissions, and forum interactions—supported students’ self-reports. Learners demonstrated sustained online participation, with minimal drop-off across the six-week period. This pattern was mirrored in face-to-face sessions, where the structured oral tasks

and reflective discussions drew upon online inputs and encouraged learners to transfer and apply knowledge across contexts.

Importantly, students expressed a strong sense of continuity between modalities, describing the hybrid model as "fluid" or "seamless." They did not perceive the online and in-person components as separate, but rather as complementary parts of a unified learning process. This engagement was particularly high during integrative tasks (e.g., debates, oral presentations), which clearly connected prior online work with classroom application.

4.2.4. Feedback on Assessment and Learning Outcomes

Learners also reported greater satisfaction with the fairness and relevance of assessments, which they perceived as being directly connected to what they had practiced. Assessment rubrics, which reflected the intended learning outcomes, were cited as helpful tools that clarified expectations and enabled learners to self-evaluate and target specific skills.

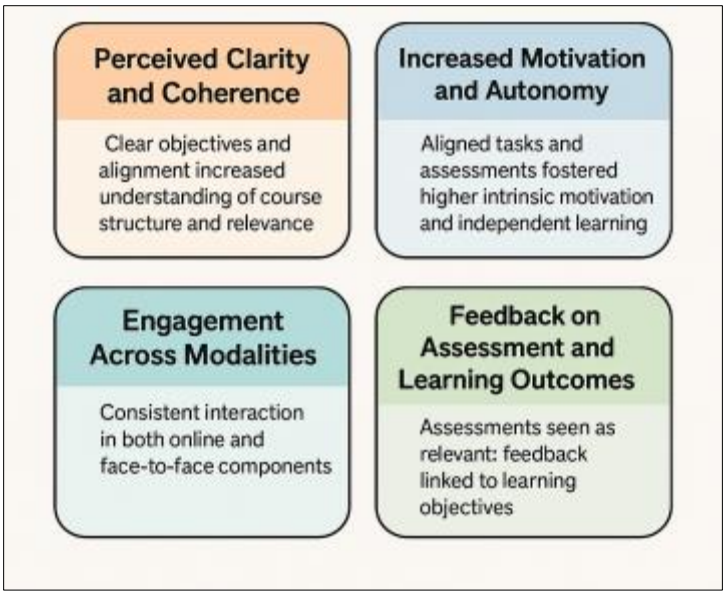

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Figure 3 Learner Responses and Engagement

Some students highlighted the role of formative feedback in shaping their learning strategies. In particular, written comments on Moodle and verbal guidance during in-person sessions were valued for their alignment with task objectives. As one learner noted: "The feedback helped me improve because it was always linked to what we were trying to learn, not just grammar."

These findings suggest that the constructively aligned hybrid training model not only supported language skill development, but also fostered a deeper sense of engagement, ownership, and purpose among learners. The next subsection will address the challenges encountered in maintaining alignment throughout the training, as well as tensions or limitations experienced by both learners and the instructor.

4.3. Challenges in Achieving Alignment

While the training program demonstrated a strong application of constructive alignment principles, several challenges emerged during implementation, particularly related to maintaining consistency across modalities, addressing diverse learner profiles, and managing logistical and cognitive constraints. These challenges offer important insights into the limits and tensions inherent in aligning hybrid instructional components.

4.3.1. Design Inconsistencies and Time Constraints

Despite the deliberate alignment of learning outcomes, tasks, and assessments, some inconsistencies in task complexity and workload distribution were noted. In certain weeks, the volume and cognitive demand of online activities exceeded what was planned, leading some students to report feelings of overload or disorientation. These design imbalances were

sometimes due to time constraints in instructional planning, which made it difficult to iteratively test or refine activities before implementation.

Moreover, transitioning between modalities—particularly from asynchronous exploration to synchronous oral practice—proved more demanding than anticipated. Although the content was theoretically aligned, students occasionally found the *shift in task type* abrupt, especially when digital input required deep individual reflection while classroom activities focused on fast-paced interaction.

4.3.2. Assessment Misalignment and Perceived Redundancy

While most assessments reflected the stated learning objectives, a few misalignments emerged, particularly in intermediate tasks that were initially intended as formative but became perceived by learners as summative. This confusion blurred the distinction between low-stakes practice and high-stakes evaluation. Some students reported that they were unsure whether certain assignments were "really part of the final grade," leading to fluctuating levels of engagement and effort.

Additionally, some learners felt that certain written tasks became repetitive over time, not because they lacked value, but because the progression in task design was not always perceptible to them. This suggests a need to more explicitly communicate the developmental rationale behind recurring task formats and their alignment with longer-term objectives.

4.3.3. Digital Fatigue and Technological Limitations

The online component, though pedagogically structured, was not immune to the effects of digital fatigue, especially when students had other hybrid or fully online modules in parallel. Several learners reported difficulties concentrating during extended periods of autonomous screen-based work. This impacted their motivation to complete certain tasks, particularly in weeks where feedback was delayed or where the online activities felt disconnected from the in-person follow-up.

In some cases, technical limitations such as unstable internet connections, limited device access, or platform navigation issues further disrupted engagement. Although these challenges were not directly caused by pedagogical misalignment, they undermined the effectiveness of some well-aligned digital tasks by reducing access and learner continuity.

4.3.4. Diverse Learner Needs and Autonomy Gaps

The diversity of learner profiles—particularly in terms of language proficiency, self-regulation skills, and digital literacy—posed a significant challenge to maintaining a uniformly aligned experience. While alignment assumes that all learners can follow a clear instructional pathway, some students struggled to interpret objectives or apply feedback independently, especially in the early stages of training.

This gap was most visible in the written production modules, where students with weaker writing foundations required additional scaffolding and individualized support, which was difficult to provide consistently in a hybrid format. In such cases, even when alignment was present in the instructional design, its impact was uneven across learners due to differences in autonomy and preparedness.

These challenges underscore the complexity of applying constructive alignment in hybrid contexts, where the interplay of modality, learner diversity, and contextual constraints can affect the fidelity and effectiveness of the design. They also highlight the importance of ongoing monitoring, flexibility, and learner-centered adaptation in order to sustain alignment throughout the learning process. The next subsection will focus on the pedagogical benefits observed, which provide further evidence of the potential of aligned hybrid training models.

4.4. Pedagogical Benefits Observed

Despite the challenges identified, the analysis of learner engagement, instructional effectiveness, and task performance revealed several notable pedagogical benefits resulting from the implementation of constructive alignment in the hybrid training program. These benefits reflect improvements in the quality of learning, the coherence of instruction, and the development of transversal academic competencies, supporting the broader value of aligned course design in language education.

4.4.1. Improved Language Performance and Task Relevance

Students demonstrated measurable improvement in both written and oral language production, particularly in areas that were directly targeted through aligned instructional sequences. Learner outputs—such as argumentative paragraphs and oral presentations—showed increased coherence, lexical range, and task fulfillment over time. These improvements were consistently aligned with the objectives stated at the outset of each module, confirming the pedagogical validity of the training structure.

Learners frequently highlighted the relevance of tasks, noting that assignments were "useful," "realistic," and "directly linked to the skills we needed to develop." The connection between objectives, practice activities, and assessments enabled students to transfer language skills from one context to another, strengthening not only linguistic performance but also their sense of competence and progression.

4.4.2. Greater Learner Autonomy and Metacognitive Awareness

Constructive alignment promoted learner autonomy by making expectations transparent and allowing students to self-monitor their progress. The consistent use of outcome-based rubrics, scaffolded learning tasks, and iterative feedback loops helped learners understand *why* they were doing each activity and *how* it contributed to the final goals.

This clarity fostered metacognitive reflection, particularly in written production, where students were able to revise and improve their work based on targeted feedback. Some students reported that they began to apply assessment criteria independently when planning or reviewing their own output, a sign that alignment supported the development of transferable learning strategies.

4.4.3. Increased Engagement and Motivation

The alignment between online and in-person components enhanced overall learner engagement. Students felt that their efforts in the asynchronous phase were acknowledged and valued in the synchronous phase, creating a sense of pedagogical continuity. This continuity reduced feelings of isolation in online learning and increased learners' willingness to participate in classroom interactions.

Motivation was further strengthened by the perceived fairness and coherence of the assessment system, which students described as "logical," "transparent," and "encouraging improvement." Unlike assessment models where expectations are unclear or disconnected from tasks, the aligned structure gave learners confidence that their work would be judged on relevant, previously practiced criteria.

4.4.4. Instructor Reflection and Course Improvement

From the instructor's perspective, the implementation of constructive alignment facilitated systematic course design, supported instructional planning, and enabled more objective and criterion-based assessment. It also encouraged ongoing reflection on task validity, learner outcomes, and the real-time effectiveness of instructional strategies.

The structured nature of aligned design made it easier to identify misalignments, adjust activities, and refine feedback practices. As a result, the course evolved organically over the six-week period, with iterative improvements based on learner input and instructor observation. This adaptive dynamic is a core benefit of alignment-based pedagogies, which promote not only student learning but also instructor development and design awareness.

In sum, the application of constructive alignment within the hybrid language training program resulted in clear pedagogical benefits, including improved learner performance, enhanced motivation, increased autonomy, and deeper engagement with the learning process. These outcomes suggest that alignment, when thoughtfully implemented, offers a powerful framework for designing effective hybrid language instruction. The following section will interpret these findings in relation to the theoretical literature and discuss their implications for future instructional design.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study offer strong support for the relevance and pedagogical value of constructive alignment in hybrid language training. The observed improvements in learner performance, engagement, and autonomy affirm the central claim of Biggs and Tang (2007): that when learning outcomes, tasks, and assessments are coherently aligned,

learners are more likely to adopt deep learning approaches and achieve higher levels of competence. This study extends that claim into the hybrid learning context, demonstrating that alignment remains a powerful instructional design principle, even when applied across multiple modalities.

One of the most salient findings was the perceived clarity and coherence of the course structure, which learners attributed to the alignment between activities and goals. This supports earlier research indicating that transparency in pedagogical design enhances motivation and reduces cognitive load (Nicol, 2021; Lim and Wang, 2016). In hybrid environments, where learners must navigate between asynchronous and synchronous tasks, such clarity becomes even more critical. The hybrid training model in this study achieved this by ensuring that every task—whether online or in-person—was directly linked to one or more intended learning outcomes, with rubrics and feedback loops reinforcing this connection.

Additionally, the results confirmed that alignment contributes to learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness. As learners recognized the rationale behind each activity, they were better able to plan, execute, and reflect on their learning. This echoes the findings of Carless and Boud (2018), who argue that aligned assessment practices foster self-regulated learning by making success criteria explicit and actionable. In this study, students' ability to apply assessment rubrics to their own work demonstrates how alignment not only supports task completion but also develops critical academic skills applicable beyond the classroom.

The pedagogical benefits observed also relate closely to the constructivist foundations of the alignment model. Learners were not passive recipients of content but active participants in constructing meaning through sequenced, goal-driven interaction with language. In line with constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Fosnot, 2013), the hybrid design scaffolded progressively complex tasks, enabling students to build competence through authentic practice and socially mediated feedback. This was particularly evident in the oral interaction and writing modules, where students demonstrated greater fluency, lexical variety, and structural control over time.

At the same time, the study revealed specific tensions and limitations in the application of alignment, particularly in hybrid contexts. The challenges of digital fatigue, perceived redundancy, and varying levels of learner autonomy illustrate that alignment alone is not a guarantee of success; rather, it must be continuously monitored and adapted. As noted by Goodyear (2015), effective hybrid pedagogy requires flexible orchestration that considers emotional, cognitive, and logistical dimensions of learning. In this study, instances of misalignment often occurred when the pacing of tasks or transitions between modalities was not adequately calibrated to learners' needs.

Moreover, the diversity of the learner population highlighted the importance of differentiated scaffolding. While alignment offers a structured pathway, not all students benefit equally from the same design. The gap between instructional intent and learner experience—especially among students with weaker foundations or low digital literacy—points to the need for more adaptive and inclusive alignment strategies, as emphasized in recent inclusive pedagogy literature (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

In sum, the findings of this study validate the theoretical underpinnings of constructive alignment while contributing to its contextual adaptation in hybrid language learning environments. They underscore the importance of coherent course design, but also highlight the dynamic, learner-centered perspective needed to make alignment responsive, accessible, and pedagogically impactful in diverse and evolving contexts.

5.2. Key Lessons for Instructional Design

The implementation and analysis of constructive alignment within the hybrid language training program offer a number of important lessons for instructional designers, language educators, and curriculum developers aiming to design effective and coherent hybrid learning environments. These lessons extend beyond theoretical principles to provide practical, experience-based insights into how alignment can be operationalized and sustained in pedagogical practice.

5.2.1. Start with Clear, Action-Oriented Learning Outcomes

One of the foundational lessons reinforced by this study is the importance of articulating clear, specific, and action-oriented learning outcomes. These outcomes serve as the cornerstone of alignment, guiding both the selection of learning activities and the design of assessment tools. When objectives are too broad, vague, or cognitive rather than behavioral (e.g., "understand grammar" instead of "use the past tense in personal narratives"), it becomes difficult to align activities and measure progress meaningfully (Biggs and Tang, 2011; Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001).

Effective alignment requires that these outcomes be communicated not only to instructors but also to learners. In this study, student engagement increased significantly when they understood what they were expected to achieve and how tasks would help them reach those goals.

5.2.2. Use Backward Design and Scaffolded Progression

Constructive alignment works best when instructional design follows a backward design logic (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005), beginning with the intended outcomes and then planning tasks and assessments that lead students progressively toward those targets. The training program adopted this logic by building task sequences that moved from input and practice to production and application.

Scaffolded progression emerged as essential, especially for language learners who require multiple exposures and increasingly complex opportunities to internalize and use new language. Designers should therefore build linked learning sequences that reflect a gradual deepening of skill and knowledge, with ongoing formative feedback at key junctures.

5.2.3. Design for Modality Coherence

In hybrid settings, modality integration is a critical factor in sustaining alignment. Tasks and assessments must be not only aligned in content but also intentionally distributed across online and in-person modalities to ensure pedagogical continuity. When learners perceive online tasks as "standalone" or "less serious," the alignment is disrupted—even if outcomes are clear.

This study confirms that learners engage more deeply when they perceive hybrid activities as interdependent and logically sequenced, with online work feeding into face-to-face sessions and vice versa. Instructional designers should therefore treat the hybrid format as a coherent ecosystem, not a split environment.

5.2.4. Align Feedback and Assessment with Learning Goals

One of the most powerful ways to reinforce alignment is through assessment rubrics and feedback that explicitly reflect the learning outcomes. When students receive feedback that directly targets the criteria outlined in the objectives, they can revise more purposefully and regulate their learning more effectively (Boud and Molloy, 2013; Nicol, 2021).

Moreover, assessment itself should be formative as well as summative, offering learners multiple opportunities to apply feedback, revise their work, and gradually demonstrate mastery. The inclusion of scaffolded writing assignments and iterative oral presentations in the training program helped operationalize this principle and was positively received by learners.

5.2.5. Plan for Flexibility and Responsiveness

Finally, the study highlights that constructive alignment is not a fixed state but a dynamic and evolving process. Misalignments may emerge due to contextual changes, learner variability, or unforeseen challenges. Instructional designers and educators must remain responsive—monitoring engagement, collecting feedback, and adjusting components as needed.

For example, when digital fatigue or task overload emerged, adjustments to pacing and task weight were necessary. This responsiveness is not a weakness but a key strength of alignment-based design, which invites ongoing reflection and adaptation in service of meaningful learning.

In conclusion, effective instructional design in hybrid language education requires intentional, transparent, and responsive alignment between learning outcomes, activities, and assessments. When carefully applied, these principles create coherent learning experiences that empower students, support autonomy, and foster deep engagement—both online and in person.

5.3. Toward a Model of Constructively Aligned Hybrid Language Training

Building on the findings and lessons of this study, it is possible to outline a pedagogical model for implementing constructive alignment in hybrid language training. This model offers a structured yet adaptable framework that can be applied across a range of university-level language learning contexts. It synthesizes theoretical principles, practical strategies, and observed outcomes to support coherent instructional design and sustainable learner engagement.

5.3.1. Core Components of the Model

The proposed model is structured around three interdependent pillars, each corresponding to one element of constructive alignment:

- Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs): Clearly defined, actionable, and learner-centered objectives, articulated in terms of observable language behaviors (e.g., producing coherent arguments, participating in structured oral exchanges).
- Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs): A sequence of scaffolded, purposeful tasks that are explicitly mapped to the ILOs and delivered across both online and face-to-face modalities. Activities are designed to activate prior knowledge, support skill acquisition, and progressively move learners toward mastery.
- Assessment Tasks (ATs): Formative and summative assessments that mirror the ILOs and learning tasks in format, content, and performance criteria. These include both process-oriented (e.g., drafts, participation) and product-oriented (e.g., final writings, oral presentations) assessments, evaluated using transparent rubrics.

5.3.2. Modal Interdependence and Pedagogical Flow

A defining feature of the model is the intentional integration of modalities, ensuring that online and in-person components work in tandem rather than in isolation. Each week or unit is built around a flow such as:

- **Asynchronous input (Moodle-based):** video analysis, guided reading, writing prompts;
- **Reflection and practice:** forum interaction, vocabulary tasks, quizzes;
- **Synchronous activation:** oral practice, collaborative problem-solving, feedback integration;
- **Assessment/production:** submission of a written or oral task directly tied to the week's ILO.

This circular and recursive structure encourages learners to perceive all phases of the training as meaningful steps within a unified learning cycle. The transitions between modalities are not incidental—they are instructionally significant points of reinforcement, consolidation, and real-time application.

5.3.3. Feedback as a Pedagogical Anchor

Feedback in this model plays a central role in sustaining alignment. It is not merely evaluative but developmental, helping learners track their progress relative to the objectives and understand how to close the gap between current and expected performance. Both instructor and peer feedback are embedded throughout the course, delivered via multiple channels (written comments, oral coaching, digital annotations).

Feedback is consistently framed in reference to explicit rubrics derived from the ILOs, reinforcing transparency and learner autonomy. In this way, the feedback loop becomes a driver of self-regulation, metacognitive development, and continuous learning.

5.3.4. Flexibility and Adaptation

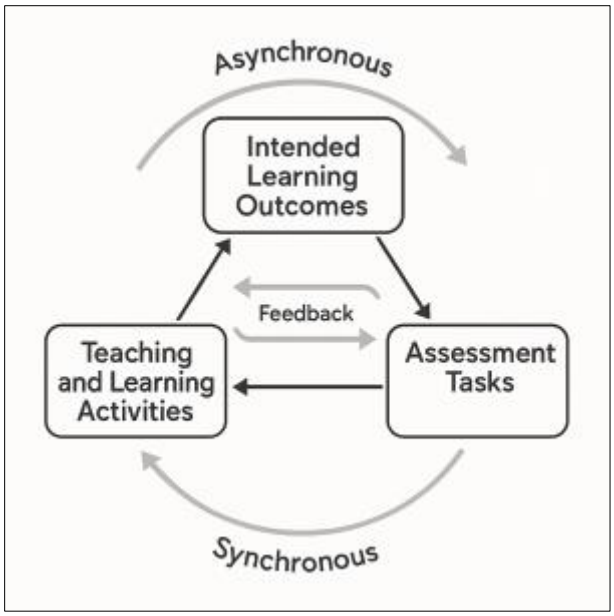
Although the model offers a structured framework, it is also designed for flexibility. Instructors can adapt the pacing, modality balance, and task types based on learner needs, institutional constraints, or emerging feedback. For example:

- In a digitally saturated week, online tasks may be lighter and focus on review and reflection.
- In a face-to-face intensive session, online work may shift toward asynchronous peer feedback or vocabulary expansion.

This adaptability ensures that alignment does not become rigid or mechanistic, but rather responsive to the lived realities of learners and instructors.

5.3.5. Visualization of the Model

To support implementation and communication, the model can be visualized as a triadic cycle, with arrows connecting ILOs ↔ TLAs ↔ ATs across two overlapping layers: asynchronous (online) and synchronous (in-person). Feedback loops intersect all stages, reinforcing connections and facilitating forward movement across the cycle. This dynamic visual representation underscores the interdependence of design components in hybrid education.



Source: Author

Figure 4 Constructively Aligned Hybrid Language Training Model

By translating the principles of constructive alignment into an actionable model tailored to hybrid language instruction, this study provides a scalable and transferable framework for course designers, language educators, and institutions seeking to enhance pedagogical coherence. In the following subsection, the limitations of this study and potential directions for future research are discussed.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

While the present study offers valuable insights into the implementation of constructive alignment within a hybrid language training context, it also presents a number of limitations that must be acknowledged. These limitations suggest important avenues for future research and refinement of hybrid instructional design in language education.

5.4.1. Context-Specific Scope and Transferability

This study was conducted within a single institutional and cultural context, focusing on a specific cohort of undergraduate pre-service language learners in Morocco. Although the findings are meaningful within this framework, their transferability to other institutional settings, disciplines, or educational systems may be limited. Institutional infrastructure, digital literacy levels, and pedagogical traditions can vary significantly and affect the way alignment functions in practice.

Future studies could explore how constructive alignment operates in other disciplines, levels of education, or socio-cultural contexts, to determine whether similar patterns of engagement, learning gains, and challenges emerge. Comparative studies across universities or national systems could also shed light on how alignment principles adapt to different policy and pedagogical ecosystems.

5.4.2. Absence of a Control Group and Quantitative Measures

As a qualitative case study grounded in an authentic teaching environment, the study did not include a control group or experimental design, nor did it rely on quantitative pre- and post-testing to measure language development. As such, it is not possible to claim direct causality between alignment and performance improvement. Although qualitative data suggest positive learner outcomes and perceptions, these are contextual and interpretive rather than statistically generalizable.

Further research could adopt mixed-methods approaches, incorporating standardized language assessments, learner analytics, and larger sample sizes to assess the measurable impact of alignment on skill acquisition, retention, and long-term language proficiency.

5.4.3. Researcher Positionality and Subjectivity

The dual role of the researcher as both instructor and evaluator introduced a potential bias in the interpretation of data. While efforts were made to ensure reflexivity and transparency—such as maintaining analytical memos and triangulating data sources—the subjective nature of qualitative analysis means that some interpretive decisions were inevitably shaped by the researcher's perspective and familiarity with the training design.

Future research may benefit from multi-researcher collaborations or external audits to validate findings and reduce the influence of single-author interpretation. Additionally, integrating learner voice more systematically, through focus groups or longitudinal interviews, could deepen the understanding of how alignment is experienced from the student perspective.

5.4.4. Evolving Nature of Hybrid Learning Environments

Another limitation lies in the evolving nature of hybrid learning technologies and practices. The tools used in this study (e.g., Moodle, basic audio/video content, forums) reflect current institutional affordances, but hybrid learning is a rapidly changing field. New tools for AI-assisted feedback, adaptive learning platforms, and immersive environments (e.g., VR or gamified simulations) may significantly affect how alignment is implemented and perceived in the near future.

Thus, future research must remain forward-looking, examining how constructive alignment interacts with technological innovation, learner agency, and new models of online and hybrid pedagogy. Investigating alignment in AI-enhanced learning environments, for example, may yield new understandings of personalized learning and dynamic feedback systems.

In conclusion, while this study confirms the pedagogical value of constructive alignment in hybrid language training, it also highlights the need for ongoing inquiry, critical reflection, and methodological diversification. Future research must continue to explore how alignment can be adapted, expanded, and sustained across evolving educational landscapes and diverse learner populations.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how the principles of constructive alignment can be implemented in hybrid language training to enhance pedagogical coherence, learner engagement, and language skill development. Through a qualitative case study approach grounded in authentic instructional practice, the findings demonstrate that when intended learning outcomes (ILOs), teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and assessment tasks (ATs) are intentionally aligned—across both online and in-person modalities—language learners benefit from greater clarity, motivation, and autonomy.

The results affirm the relevance of Biggs and Tang's (2007) model of constructive alignment in hybrid settings, extending its applicability to the domain of university-level language education. Learners responded positively to the aligned structure, reporting improved understanding of learning goals, deeper engagement with tasks, and increased confidence in their ability to track their own progress. The pedagogical design supported a cycle of input, practice, application, and feedback that facilitated both linguistic development and metacognitive growth.

At the same time, the study highlighted several challenges, including the risk of digital fatigue, inconsistencies in workload distribution, and variations in learner autonomy and digital competence. These findings point to the importance of flexibility, responsiveness, and differentiated support in sustaining alignment over time. Constructive alignment is not a static formula but a dynamic process that must adapt to contextual realities and learner diversity.

From a design perspective, the study proposes a model of constructively aligned hybrid language training, in which pedagogical coherence is maintained through modality integration, scaffolded progression, and feedback-driven learning. This model has the potential to inform future course development and curriculum reform in institutions seeking to combine technological innovation with sound pedagogical principles.

In conclusion, constructive alignment offers a robust foundation for designing meaningful, learner-centered hybrid training programs in language education. As hybrid learning continues to evolve, alignment will remain a critical lever for ensuring that educational innovation translates into deep, transferable, and equitable learning experiences. Further research is needed to explore how this model can be scaled, diversified, and adapted to emerging technologies and global educational contexts.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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