EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS IN RESPONSE TO ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OUTCOME

Le Huu Tri

Can Tho University

*Email: lhtri13041996@gmail.com

Abstract: The constructive theory has been applied in classrooms over the last few decades to serve achieving the intended learning outcomes. The purpose of the present study was to examine the extent to which English majors were satisfied with the program's constructive alignment in response to achieving the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 in accordance with Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP) framework from the perspective of the students. The study was developed as a mixed-method study, employing a questionnaire and interviews as data collection instruments based on the Constructive Alignment approach of Biggs (2003). The survey was completed by 117 seniors majoring in English Studies at a university in the Mekong Delta. Subsequent to the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data, ten students were selected for the interviews based on their general perceptions of the topic. The findings revealed a high degree of student satisfaction with the program's constructive alignment, despite certain areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the program's constructive alignment. Based on the findings, the researcher proposed a number of recommendations to enhance the program's constructive alignment in response to achieving the intended learning outcome.

Key words: Students' perceptions, Constructive alignment, English proficiency outcome

1. Introduction

In the age of globalization, the demand for English proficiency is consistently at the forefront of concerns. In response to this, stakeholders have placed a great deal of emphasis on the creation of a constructive curriculum that satisfies learners' desired objectives of utilizing English at a high level of proficiency, and particularly on the practice of constructive alignment. The constructive alignment approach that is regarded as a means to assist students in achieving desired learning outcomes recognizes that knowledge is constructed through the activities of the students, as opposed to being transferred directly from instructor to student (Biggs, 2003). In light of the constructive alignment, students actively construct their own knowledge through meaning, reflection and context, while teachers play a fundamental role in establishing an active learning context that enhances students' learning towards the desirable learning outcomes (Biggs, 2003). According to Biggs (2003), intended learning outcomes are what the teacher wants students to learn so that by the end of a course, students will be able to make that knowledge into function. The key principle of designing a constructive alignment curriculum is that the learning and teaching activities and assessment tasks are aligned with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs). Implementing the constructive alignment theory has captured the interest of several

researchers (Fullan, 2007; Braun, 2005; Kozulin, 2004; Brown, 2007; Biggs and Tang, 2011; Berry, 2011; Gallagher, 2017; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004) over the past few decades. Fullan (2007) stated that the learning contents and materials must be authentic and relevant to the training program's intended learning outcomes to enable students to apply their acquired knowledge and competence from university to future employment. In a similar vein, Braun (2005) outlined a number of requirements for ideal language resources, including being realistic, instructive, illustrative, which is actual patterns of use rather than abstract explanations, and up to date. In the constructive alignment approach, students actively construct their knowledge in a meaningful way, rather than receive direct instruction from the teacher; therefore, deep learning is more likely to be appreciated when students are motivated to deal with challenging but manageable tasks designed (Kozulin, 2004). In addition, it is frequently easier for students to negotiate meaning with others, such as through group work and peer teaching, than through one-way lecturing (Brown, 2007). Additionally, prior knowledge and experience have a significant impact on students' learning; therefore, teaching-learning activities should be well-structured and connected with other known knowledge (Brown, 2007). Biggs and Tang (2011) stated that the intended learning outcomes should be aligned with the assessment methods, and that the assessment methods and grading criteria should be communicated to students prior to assessment occurrence so that students have ample time to prepare for what they may be assessed on. Berry (2011) and Gallagher (2017) also argued that the purpose of assessment is to understand how the learner learned, what the learner can and cannot do, and how to help learners learn more effectively; therefore, the assessment tasks should reflect the variety of learning outcomes. Moreover, teachers can use formative assessment which is designed to facilitate students' learning by testing them on a regular basis to understand more about the learning progress of the students and make a necessary intervention to help them gain intended learning outcomes (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004). Following each formative assessment, the teacher would prefer to provide regular feedback in order to present students with a steady stream of information so that they may identify their strengths and flaws in order to discover solutions. In this way, formative assessment and frequent feedback play a significant role in fostering self-regulated learning among students in pursuit of the intended learning outcomes (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004).

In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has implemented a law in educational reform that places a strong emphasis on the development of learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on learner-centered instruction. Thus, education stakeholders are expected to respect students' voices and offer them a high-quality curriculum that helps them achieve their intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, to evaluate a program in higher education, a framework for determining its quality is required. One of the most prevalent measuring methodologies used by educational administrators in ASEAN countries is the guide to Assessment at Program Level version 4.0 in 2020 issued by ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (known as AUN-QA). The AUN-QA model consists of eight criteria, including desired learning outcomes, program structure and content, teaching and learning approach, student assessment, academic staff, student support services, facilities and infrastructure, output and outcome (AUN-QA, 2020). According to the AUN-QA guide the first four criteria closely resemble the components of Biggs's (2003) constructive alignment theory, including intended learning outcomes, learning contents, teaching methods, and assessment methods. In view of evaluating the quality of a tertiary program, the Vietnamese MOET issued the Circular No.4 in

2016 establishing criteria for evaluating the quality of higher education training programs. In this document, eleven criteria for evaluating the quality of a program were clarified in detail with clear direction. The third criterion says that the program's structure and material must be logically created based on the program's targeted learning outcomes (MOET, 2016a). Pursuant to Circular No.4/2016, the MOET subsequently provided Document No. 1074/ 2016 with broad instructions on the use of standards for analyzing structures and contents of programs. The curriculum should be constructed in such a constructive manner that teaching and learning approaches and student assessment methods can contribute to the accomplishment of intended learning outcomes (MOET, 2016b). In this sense, the curriculum of the training program is considered to be consistent with Biggs's (2003) Constructive Alignment approach, which emphasizes the strong connection between intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment.

In another development, the English language has played an important role in the Vietnamese setting, particularly in the period of global integration. In their study, Nguyen and Burns (2017) found that in order to join international organizations such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), Vietnamese people are required to use English as an international language at least to a level of comprehensibility. Consequently, the demand for learning English remains at the forefront of concerns. As a result, a training program that can meet the learners' desire for proficient English usage has become more crucial than ever. In addition, it is believed that the English Studies program, whose expected learning outcomes include the ability to use English at the level 5 of proficiency (in accordance with Vietnamese framework), is one of the most advantageous for individuals who wish to achieve a good command of English.

It is the changes in the educational system that has urged a need for research into students' perceptions of the constructive alignment of the English Studies program in supporting the achievement of English proficiency outcome at the level 5. This is the rationale behind the current study. In particular, the study seeks the answer to the research question: "What are students' perceptions of the constructive alignment of the English Studies program which supports them to achieve English proficiency outcome at the level 5?"

Hopefully, the results of this study can be a useful reference for stakeholders to address the shortcomings of the English Studies program; specifically, for administrators to improve the curriculum, teachers to implement effective teaching strategies, students to self-regulate their learning, and researchers to conduct further research.

2. Theoretical backgrounds

2.1 Biggs's (2003) theory of constructive alignment approach

According to Biggs (2003), there are two components to constructive alignment: the "constructive" aspect and the "alignment" aspect. The former refers to the notion that learners construct meaning independently through relevant learning activities, rather than through the explicit transmission of knowledge by teachers, whereas the latter assumes what the teacher does to create a learning environment that supports the learning activities in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes (Biggs, 2003). The important premise is that the teaching methods and assessment tasks are aligned with the learning activities assumed in the intended outcomes in a way that learners can be directed towards what is intended for them to learn.

In his theory, Biggs (2003) depicted four sequential steps that specifies the levels of understanding that teachers want students to achieve, including defining the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), selecting teaching and learning activities that are likely to lead to the ILOs, assessing students' actual performance to determine how closely it matches the ILOs, and determining a final grade. Biggs (2003) further described those steps more elaborately that the learning outcomes should be initially formulated to decide which learning content and teaching practices are sensible. Then, the assessment tasks are expected to be designed based on intended outcomes and learning experiences occurred in the classroom. Through the valid assessment, the curriculum developer or the course designer can check what the learners are able to do and to what extent the learning outcomes are achieved so that he or she can make improvements if necessary.

2.2 Research into constructive alignment

Jaiswal (2019) investigated how the constructive alignment of three components, namely intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks of the course titled Language Development (Level two) of the Associate Diploma in Office Management Program, promotes students' accomplishment of intended learning outcomes at a university in Bahrain, Kingdom of Bahrain. The study utilized quantitative method to examine whether there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test. Bigg's SOLO taxonomy and Bloom's taxonomy were employed as a paradigm to increase the competence levels of learners in the study. Thirty students enrolled in the Language Development course of the Associate Diploma in Office Management program had their pre- and post-test scores gathered and statistically analyzed using SPSS software. Then, a Paired-Samples T-test was employed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' achievement before and after the intervention. The findings indicated that the alignment of intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks, using the objective model of Bloom's taxonomy and Biggs' SOLO taxonomy, had a statistically significant impact on the academic achievement of learners by increasing their proficiency levels. In addition, the researcher in this case study identified four factors that facilitate the teaching and learning process: establishing a positive learning environment, connecting academic content to real-world situations, choosing appropriate teaching and learning activities, and developing attainable learning outcomes.

Nguyen (2020) carried out a case study at Van Lang University in Ho Chi Minh City to investigate the implementation of constructive alignment in an AUN-designed Speaking course for English-majored students. This study used qualitative approach, with data being obtained from observations and interviews. Thirty students and their instructor participated in an EFL Speaking class. The findings revealed that constructive alignment was partially supported in the classroom; nevertheless, a number of the intended learning outcomes were not strongly supported by the teaching and learning activities. In addition, the evaluation assignments did not evaluate the achievement of all course objectives. Nonetheless, the participants acknowledged the positive effects of constructive alignment on motivating students to achieve learning outcomes and developing valid criteria for assessing students.

Jani, Latif, Talib and Is (2020) investigated the implementation of constructive alignment from students' perceptions at the Teacher Education Institute in Malaysia. This study was designed quantitatively, using questionnaires of 4 Likert scales to collect data on the constructive

alignment practices implemented by lecturers through students' evaluation. The respondents in the study were 142 students randomly selected in Teacher Education Institute campus. The collected data were statistically analyzed by using the Rasch Measurement Model software (WINSTEPS version 3.72.3). Findings of the study showed that most of the participants' approval of constructive alignment practices in teaching activities was at the "high practice". Moreover, the study suggested that intended learning outcomes should be delivered to students and showed that the administered assessment was applicable and objective with rubric for required assignments.

Hailikari, Virtanen, Vesalainen, and Postareff (2021) employed a qualitative method for data collection and analysis in their study examining how different aspects of constructive alignment influence the learning strategy adopted by students. Thirty-seven students from three different courses at a Finnish university participated voluntarily in the semi-structured interview. Several parts of constructive alignment had a key role in guiding students' learning, as evidenced by the findings. While active teaching and learning activities that provided sufficient challenges, required active participation, and encouraged peer support played a significant role in driving students to deep learning, traditional courses that consisted solely of lectures and final examinations without active student participation led students to adopt a non-reflective learning approach. As a result, the study concluded that arranging teaching and learning activities had a crucial role in directing students' learning strategies toward the intended learning outcomes.

Although these studies contributed to the literature about students' responses to constructive alignment, none examined EFL learners' perceptions of constructive alignment in relation to the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. Furthermore, little research of this topic was designed as mixed-approach research including quantitative and qualitative methods. Consequently, this study is carried out with an attempt to fill in these gaps with its findings. As a result of being inspired by the valuable findings of the aforementioned authors' studies, the researcher in this study adapted a 32-item questionnaire to investigate students' perceptions of the alignment of four components: The English proficiency outcome at the level 5, the learning contents, the teaching methods, and the assessment methods. The questionnaire investigates, for instance, whether the specific objectives of English courses are based on the English proficiency outcome at the level 5, whether the learning contents are always updated to meet the society's requirements of English proficiency, whether teaching activities are effective in helping students achieve the objectives of each lesson, whether scoring is done objectively based on established criteria, and whether the assessment promotes students' learning.

3. Methods

3.1 Research design

The current research was developed as a descriptive study employing a mixed method approach by mixing qualitative and quantitative data to address the research question. The quantitative questionnaire was designed to evaluate students' perceptions of the constructive alignment of the English Studies program that assists them in achieving the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. The qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews with ten students selected at random from the group in an effort to acquire more insightful information.

3.2 Participants

The senior English Studies students at a university in Can Tho were requested to complete the questionnaire to assess their satisfaction with constructive alignment in helping them reach the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. English Studies majors with at least three years of college experience, 21 men and 96 women, completed the questionnaire.

Table 1. Summary of the participants' demographic information (N= 117)

Participants' information	Variables	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	21	17.9%
	Female	96	82.1%
Years	Year 3	64	54.7%
	Year 4	53	45.3%

Based on their satisfaction with the program's constructive alignment, 10 questionnaire respondents—six men and four women—were invited to the interview.

3.3 Research instruments and procedure

The data collection process lasted eight weeks and consisted of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was separated into six clusters. Cluster 1 comprises 6 statements regarding students' perceptions of the constructive alignment between the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 and the learning contents in English Studies program. Cluster 2 consists of 6 statements investigating students' perceptions of the alignment between the English proficiency outcomes at the level 5 and teaching methods. Cluster 3 includes 5 statements examining students' perceptions of the constructive alignment between the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 and assessment methods. Cluster 4 comprises 6 statements regarding students' perceptions of the alignment regarding the learning contents and teaching methods towards the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. Cluster 5 encompasses 4 statements related to students' perceptions of the alignment between the learning contents and assessment methods in response to the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. Cluster 6 includes 5 statements investigating students' perceptions of the alignment between the teaching and assessment methods towards the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. In addition, semi-structured interviews with six questions were translated into Vietnamese so that participants could comprehend the questions and provide meaningful responses. Lastly, the SPSS software was utilized to evaluate the questionnaire results. The qualitative interview data were examined based on recurring themes and subjects.

3.4 Data analysis method

3.4.1 Data from the questionnaire

The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed by using the steps below. First, the reliability of the questionnaire was examined through Reliability Statistical Analysis. Second, descriptive statistics tests were computed to measure the mean scores. Lastly, the received data was entered into SPSS for quantitative data analysis.

3.4.2 Data from the interview

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses, the information gathered through interviews followed the same analysis procedures as the questionnaire data. First, upon the completion of the interviews, the data were transcribed. Also, the researcher read the transcripts multiple times to fully comprehend the interviewees' perspective. The interview transcripts were then returned to the interviewees for clarification and verification. Following this, interview data were examined for common themes and topics under analysis.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Quantitative findings

Table 2 presents the students' overall perceptions of the constructive alignment in the program, measured by a Descriptive Statistics Test. As shown in table 2, the mean score was high (M = 3.76). It could be inferred that the students highly satisfied with the constructive alignment of the program in helping them achieve the English proficiency outcome at the level 5.

Table 2. The students' overall perceptions of the constructive alignment (N=117)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Overall perceptions	3.03	4.53	3.76	0.34

(Note: M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation)

One-Way ANOVA tests were concurrently run to check whether the students with different demographic information had any difference in their overall perceptions of the constructive alignment in the program. Table 3 shows the results of these tests. Clearly, the p-values revealed that there was no significant difference in students' perceptions of the constructive alignment in the program based on their genders, and the number of learning experience years (the p-values are 0.77 and 0.83 respectively > 0.05).

Table 3. The differences in students' perceptions based on demographic information (N = 117)

Information	Variables	N	Mean	SD	p
Gender	Male	21	3.78	0.33	0.77
	Female	96	3.76	0.35	
Year	3	64	3.75	0.31	0.83
	4	53	3.77	0.38	

For English Studies students' overall perceptions of the constructive alignment, according to the quantitative analysis, the findings indicated that students were highly satisfied with the constructive alignment in the program considering its assistance in achieving the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. This result was consistent with that of Jaiswal (2019), which showed a high level of positive impact of the constructive alignment using the objective model of Biggs' taxonomy on learners' academic achievement in boosting their proficiency levels.

Next, a Descriptive Statistics Test was run to find out in which aspects of the constructive alignment of the program students felt satisfied most and in which ones they felt satisfied least. Table 4 displays the aspects of participants' satisfaction of the constructive alignment of the program towards the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. It can be seen that the mean score of the constructive alignment between the objective and learning contents was the highest

(M = 3.9), while the mean score of the constructive alignment between the objective and teaching methods was lowest (M = 3.5). Therefore, it could be argued that among six aspects examined in the constructive alignment of the program, the participants were satisfied most with the constructive alignment between the objectives and learning contents, whereas they felt less satisfied with the constructive alignment between the objective and teaching methods. The result was similar to the findings of Nguyen (2020) about the implementation of constructive alignment in English Speaking class, which reported that constructive alignment was partly founded in the classroom and intended learning outcomes were not very supported by teaching and learning activities.

Table 4. The aspects of students' satisfaction of the constructive alignment (N=117)

The aspects of students' satisfaction	Min	Max	Mean	Sd
The alignment between the objective and learning contents	2.67	5.00	3.9	0.45
The alignment between the objective and teaching methods	2.33	4.50	3.5	0.51
The alignment between the objective and assessment methods	2.60	4.80	3.8	0.47
The alignment between the learning contents and teaching methods	2.67	5.00	3.7	0.51
The alignment between the learning contents and assessment methods	2.00	5.00	3.8	0.54
The alignment between the teaching and assessment methods	2.80	5.00	3.7	0.46

4.2 Qualitative findings

In addition, a qualitative analysis of data was also used to gain a better understanding about why students were less satisfied with some aspects of constructive alignment in the program related to effective teaching methods. Ten students were recruited for semi-structured interviews to determine how satisfied they were with the alignment between the objective and learning contents and the alignment between the objective and teaching methods in the program. The results from thematic analysis were presented as follows.

4.2.1 The alignment between the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 and learning contents

The program structure was the main factor for theme satisfaction. Student 5 and 9 answered "To what extent are you satisfied with the alignment of the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 with learning contents?"

> *"I'm generally satisfied. This program was designed in accordance with English proficiency results at the level 5. The program's structure is acceptable and can enable students to achieve the proficiency outcome day by day..."* (student 5)

> *"I'm happy. The English Studies curriculum was also well-established for the English proficiency outcome at the level 5, as shown by IELTS 7.0+ or VSTEP 8.5+. Learning contents ranged from basic to advanced, helping us enhance our English skills to achieve the intended outcome."* (student 9)

Student 5 and Student 9 expressed similar satisfaction with the program format in relation to the English proficiency outcome at the level 5, which can be measured by IELTS or VSTEP tests. They added that the curriculum was structured from basic to advanced levels to help learners achieve their goals gradually. Student 8 also acknowledged the program's acceptable structure

for the English proficiency outcome at level 5 and emphasized the program's English course objectives' adequacy for the targeted outcome. Student 8 stated:

> *"...well I justified at the great level of satisfaction. The program's English courses' unique objectives are based on the English proficiency outcome at level 5, notably in skills-related courses. The arrangement of those English courses supports my improvement in English skills."*

Social knowledge integration in learning contents was another reason for satisfaction with the congruence between the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 and learning contents. Student 1, 7, 8, and 10 agreed that language study should include social culture. Student 10 explained:

> *"...Well, I see that English courses in the program both pay attention to the knowledge of English language and link socio-cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, and Singapore to Vietnamese culture that helps students have a sense of cultural triangulation."*

Student 10 recognized the importance of socio-cultural knowledge in giving EFL learners triangulated viewpoints of culture, which helped them perform well in the target language. He agreed with using socio-cultural knowledge to teach and learn a new language. He also emphasized the program's trendy English learning resources to help students achieve the English proficiency outcome at the level 5.

However, the interviewees also expressed dissatisfaction with the theme due to the lack of declaration of the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 at the beginning of the program. For instance, student 3 and 5 showed that:

> *"... well, in my opinion, I am not sure about the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 at the start of the program, but when I began studying some first courses, I was announced about that intended learning outcome by lecturers…"* (student 3)

Regarding the intended learning outcome, the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 in this study had been formulated clearly in the program curriculum which followed Biggs' (2003) constructive alignment approach in the step of defining intended learning outcomes; however, it was not declared on the large scale, which should have been taken at the beginning of the course to all students according to Biggs and Tang (2011).

In terms of the learning content, the findings showed that the learning contents and supplied materials in the program were not only relevant to the intended learning outcome, but were also frequently upgraded to keep up with the continuous development of the society. Those findings in terms of learning contents were consistent with those mentioned in the studies of Braun (2005) and Fullan (2007) in which characteristics of appropriate learning materials were described as authentic and up to date.

4.2.2 The alignment between the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 and teaching methods

Regarding the alignment of English proficiency outcome at the level 5 and teaching methods, the most common reason for students' satisfaction was the effective teaching methods. This can be found in the comments of students 4 and 8:

> *"The English proficiency outcome and teaching methods are satisfactory. I find that lecturers understand well their course objectives, contributing to the accomplishment of the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 of the program, thus they utilize many various relevant teaching strategies to help students to achieve the targeted learning outcomes..."* (student 8)

Student 4 felt happy with teachers' instructional approaches because he believed they maintain course focus and their instructional approaches varied:

> *"I think those active learning exercises truly engaged students and gave us more possibilities to develop our creativity. Among those different teaching methods, I am in favor of active activities most such as questioning, setting a problem for students to find out the solutions, debating about a trendy issue, presentation, conducting a mini-project, role-playing, and making short clips related to English communication. In my opinion, those active learning activities really appealed students to engage in and provide us more opportunities for developing our creativity."* (student 4)

Student 4 and student 8 expressed similar satisfaction with the teachers' successful teaching methods related to the English proficiency outcome. They said teachers understood how their courses' contribution to the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. Therefore, those lecturers tried to create active learning activities that demanded student participation so students could construct knowledge through meaningful activities.

In addition, student 9 found that most of the teachers supplied clear instruction on how to accomplish properly given tasks. They suggested several helpful learning resources. It could be seen that student 9 expressed his gratitude to teachers for offering a detailed guideline for completing assignments and ample practical learning resources. To this point, student 9 said that:

> *"...well, I find that most of the teachers gave clear instructions and guideline on how to do well the given homework. Besides, they also recommended many useful learning resources."* (student 9)

It could be seen in Student 9's remark that he highly appreciated the help of teachers in terms of giving an elaborate guideline for dealing well with required assignments and providing enough practical learning resources served for students' learning.

Nevertheless, some interviewed students were dissatisfied with certain aspects of the alignment between the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 and teaching methods. Students were dissatisfied with losing focus, inadequate teaching practices, and a lack of precise instructions and challenging English proficiency assessments.

Losing focus on the main points of a lesson was a common complaint. Participants 2 and 5 agreed that several lecturers went beyond the lesson.

> *"Some youthful lecturers, in spite of their upper-knowledge, they fairly failed in keeping on the major points of the lessons that did not contribute to the achievement of course's objectives."* (student 5)

In addition, the interview participant 2 and 6 also revealed some less-satisfied aspects of the theme in terms of the ineffective teaching methods of a very few teachers in the program. To this point of dissatisfaction, student 2 complained in detail that

> *"...moreover, some lecturers gave the lecturing most of the time that made students really boring."* (student 2)

It could be seen in student 2's comments that some of the teaching methods like one-way lecturing were not very effective in helping students construct knowledge by themselves.

Another matter of dissatisfaction was about English proficiency outcome-oriented instructions. Several lecturers delivered basic self-study advice for their course, but students anticipated particular guidance on how to achieve the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. Student 2 reported that some teachers were not likely to give precise guideline on how to obtain the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. Although they still gave instruction for self-study, but it was quite general. For instance, student 2 said that:

> *"...I find that some teachers weren't likely to give detail guideline on how to achieve the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. I mean they still gave instructions for self-study, but it was quite general..."* (student 2)

Turning to teaching and learning activities, this study revealed that although in some courses, cooperative and interactive activities like group discussion, brainstorming, peer-teaching were often created to serve self-construction of knowledge and foster deep learning, in several courses one-way lecturing happened very often that made students passive and boring. This finding was consistent with Biggs (2003) constructive alignment approach in which learners construct their knowledge meaningfully through active learning activities rather than explicitly direct instruction from teachers. Similar to this study, Hailikari *et al.* (2021) proved in their research that active teaching learning activities which encouraged peer support could drive students to deep learning, whereas only lecturing without much student's engagement would lead to unreflective learning.

In terms of lecturers' teaching practice, the result presented that while many teachers not only broadened available knowledge in course books to some further relevant extent but also stayed focus on the lesson' main points, some other teachers were likely to go beyond the lesson outcomes that made students confusing. The participants' satisfaction of constructive alignment in teaching practice in this study was quite lower than the case of Jani *et al.* (2020), which showed that students were satisfied with the teaching practice at the high level.

As a result, it may be inferred that teachers are expected to adjust their teaching practices by maintaining a focus on lesson outcomes and implementing more cooperative teaching and learning activities that demand student participation. In addition, teachers should state the targeted

learning outcome of the course at the beginning and provide students with clear strategies for achieving it.

5. Conclusion and implications

In conclusion, in this study, the researcher employed questionnaire and semi-structured interview to investigate the extent to which English Studies-majored students satisfied with the components in the program in response to the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. The findings of this research showed that the students' overall perceptions of the constructive alignment of the program's components were high. Second, while the alignment between the objective and learning contents was perceived as the most satisfied aspect, the alignment between the objective and teaching methods was less satisfied compared with other aspects of the theme.

In terms of the learning contents oriented to the English proficiency outcome at the level 5, English courses in the program both focused on the knowledge of English language and integrated socio-cultural factors. Moreover, students were provided adequate upgraded learning materials served for their learning. However, some students complained that the English proficiency outcome at the level 5 in the English Studies program was not declared at the beginning.

Regarding the lecturers being in charge of English courses, most of them gave instruction with clear main points for each unit dominated in the course objectives. In addition, they broadened the available knowledge in course books to some further relevant extent. However, some teachers were likely to teach in a confusing way that went out the lesson's main points. In addition, the teaching practice was not perceived as very effective because of the lack of elaborate guideline or strategies for leading students to the English proficiency outcome at the level 5. Moreover, in some courses, there was a shortage of interactive activities to get students' involvement. Therefore, teachers are supposed to modify their teaching practice by staying focus on the lesson outcomes, organizing more cooperative teaching and learning activities that require students' involvement in particular. Moreover, lecturers ought to assert the intended learning outcome of the course at the beginning and share some useful strategies on how to achieve that target to all students.

References

Biggs, B. J. (2003). *Teaching for quality learning at university (2nd edition)*. Buckingham: Open University Press/Society for Research into Higher Education.

Guide to AUN-QA Assessment at Programme Level version 4.0 (2020), Bangkok: Thailand.

Berry, R. (2011). Assessment reforms around the world *Assessment reform in education* (pp. 89–102): Springer.

Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university*: McGraw-hill education (UK).

Braun, S. (2005). From pedagogically relevant corpora to authentic language learning contents. *ReCALL, 17*(1), 47–64.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (5th ed.). New York: PEARSON Longman.

Fullan, M. (2007). *The New Meaning of Educational Change 4th*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gallagher, G. (2017). Aligning for learning: Including feedback in the Constructive Alignment model. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education, 9*(1).

Hailikari, T., Virtanen, V., Vesalainen, M., & Postareff, L. (2021). Student perspectives on how different elements of constructive alignment support active learning. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *doi: 1469787421989160*.

Jaiswal, P. (2019). Using Constructive Alignment to Foster Teaching Learning Processes. *English Language Teaching, 12*(6), 10–23.

Jani, M. D. B. M., Latif, A. B. A., Talib, R. B., & Is, N. B. M. (2020). The implementation of constructive alignment at the teachers education institute using rasch analysis. *Journal of Critical Reviews, 7*(11), 659–665.

Kozulin, A. (2004). Vygotsky's theory in the classroom: Introduction. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 3–7.

Minister, T. P. (2016). *Decision on Approval for Vietnamese Qualifications Framework*. Decision No.1982/The Prime Minister.

MOET. (2016a). The Circular promulgates regulations on standards for assessing the quality of training programs at higher education levels. *04/2016/TT-BGDĐT*.

MOET. (2016b). General guidance on the use of standards for assessing the quality of training programs at higher education levels. *Documentary No. 1074/KTKĐCLGD-KĐĐH/ BGDĐT*.

MOET. (2018). General Education Program - Master Program. *Circulars No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT*.

Nguyen, T. M. (2020). *Constructive alignment in teaching english at tertiary level: an insight into an aundesigned course*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 8th OpenTESOL International Conference 2020, Ho Chi Minh City Open University.

Nicol, D., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2004). Rethinking formative assessment in HE: a theoretical model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *C. Juwah, D. Macfarlane-Dick, B. Matthew, D. Nicol, D. & Smith, B.(2004) Enhancing student learning though effective formative feedback, York, The Higher Education Academy*.

NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ ANH VỀ TÍNH TƯƠNG QUAN CỦA CÁC THÀNH TỐ TRONG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH ĐÀO TẠO HƯỚNG TỚI CHUẨN ĐẦU RA

Tóm tắt: Thuyết tương quan giữa các thành tố đã được áp dụng trong lớp học trong vài thập kỷ qua để phục vụ cho việc đạt được chuẩn đầu ra. Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là khảo sát nhận thức của sinh viên ngành Ngôn Ngữ anh về mức độ hài lòng của họ đối với tính tương quan giữa các thành tố trong chương trình đạo tạo hướng tới chuẩn đầu ra bậc 5 theo khung năng lực ngoại ngữ 6 bậc của Việt Nam (VSTEP). Nghiên cứu được xây dựng dựa trên phương pháp kết hợp, sử dụng bảng câu hỏi và phỏng vấn như công cụ thu thập dữ liệu dựa trên thuyết tương quan giữa các thành tố của Biggs (2003). Nghiên cứu được hoàn thành bởi 117 sinh viên năm cuối ngành Ngôn ngữ anh ở một trường đại học thuộc đồng bằng Sông Cửu Long. Sau khi phân tích dữ liệu định lượng từ bảng hỏi, 10 sinh viên được mời tham gia phỏng vấn dựa trên nhận thức chung của họ về chủ đề này. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy mức độ hài lòng cao của sinh viên đối với tính tương quan giữa các thành tố trong chương trình đào tạo mặc dù vẫn còn tồn tại một số khía cạnh chưa hài lòng. Dựa trên kết quả nghiên cứu, nhà nghiên cứu đề xuất một số khuyến nghị để nâng cao tính tương quan của các thành tố trong chương trình đào tạo nhằm giúp các em đạt được chuẩn đầu ra.

Từ khóa: Sự nhận thức của sinh viên, Tính tương quan của các thành tố trong chương trình đào tạo, Chuẩn đầu ra tiếng Anh bậc 5