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EXPLORING SPATIAL REPRESENTATION-BASED LEARNING IN EFL DESCRIPTIVE WRITING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Writing descriptive texts remains a persistent challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in generating ideas and developing detailed written content. This study aimed to investigate the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) in enhancing the descriptive writing skills of second-semester Hospitality students at Institut Citra Buana Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research explored how SRBL facilitated students' writing development through authentic environmental observation and structured descriptive activities. Data were collected through classroom observations, students' writing products, and semi-structured interviews. Following the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), the data were analysed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while methodological triangulation was applied to ensure trustworthiness. The findings revealed that SRBL effectively supported idea generation by connecting writing tasks with real-world experiences. The use of structured guiding questions provided instructional scaffolding that enabled students to produce more detailed, coherent, and well-organized descriptive texts. Students also reported positive perceptions of the approach, describing it as engaging, practical, and less intimidating than conventional writing instruction. The study concludes that SRBL represents an effective contextualized pedagogical approach for improving EFL descriptive writing. The findings imply that integrating spatial observation and guided descriptive frameworks can enhance writing instruction, particularly in vocational higher education contexts where experiential learning is highly valued.

Keywords: Descriptive Writing, EFL Writing, Hospitality Education, Qualitative Case Study, Spatial Representation-Based Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners because it requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, critical thinking, idea organization, and the ability to communicate meaning effectively to an audience (Hyland, 2019; Richards, 2022). In the Indonesian higher education context, many university students continue to experience difficulties in generating ideas, organizing information coherently, and developing sufficient details in descriptive and narrative writing tasks. Although students often possess basic grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, they frequently struggle to transform their ideas into well-structured written texts (Klimova, 2014; Rao, 2019). These challenges are particularly evident in vocational higher education, where students are expected to demonstrate not only language proficiency but also the ability to communicate professional and contextual information through writing. Consequently, there is a growing need for innovative instructional approaches that can support students in

generating ideas, organizing content, and developing meaningful written texts through authentic learning experiences.

The challenge of idea generation has become one of the primary concerns in EFL writing instruction. Traditional writing classrooms often emphasize linguistic accuracy rather than the cognitive processes involved in constructing meaning from authentic experiences. Consequently, students tend to produce superficial descriptions, repetitive vocabulary, and disconnected sentences that do not reflect genuine communicative competence. Several studies have suggested that meaningful contexts and authentic experiences can significantly improve students' writing performance by helping them connect language learning with real-world situations (Nunan, 2015; Richards, 2017).

Recent developments in language pedagogy have highlighted the importance of multimodal and experiential approaches to writing instruction. One promising approach is the present study draws on the concept of spatial representation, defined as the cognitive process through which individuals perceive, organize, and mentally represent objects and their locations within a physical environment (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956; Newcombe & Huttenlocher, 2000). Spatial representation allows learners to interpret environmental information and construct meaningful descriptions based on direct observation. In educational settings, this ability can facilitate idea generation and support descriptive writing by providing learners with concrete referents that bridge perception and language production.

Drawing on the theory of spatial representation proposed by Piaget and Inhelder (1956) and further elaborated by Newcombe and Huttenlocher (2000), learners construct mental representations of their surroundings that help them organize and interpret environmental information. These mental maps can then be translated into linguistic expressions, providing a meaningful foundation for descriptive writing. According to cognitive learning theories, observation and spatial awareness facilitate the encoding and retrieval of information, thereby supporting idea development during the writing process (Paivio, 2006; Mayer, 2021).

The present study introduces a Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) model in which students are guided to observe and describe objects they encounter during their travel to a designated location. The instructional activity is structured through a series of guiding questions, such as: *What did you see on the way? Mention ten objects. Can you describe each object? How big is it? What color is it? Where is it located exactly? What is its function?* Through these guided prompts, students systematically identify and describe at least ten objects from their surroundings. The information gathered is then transformed into a descriptive written text.

The use of guiding questions is grounded in the concept of scaffolding proposed by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the role of instructional support in helping learners perform tasks beyond their current level of independent ability (Vygotsky, 1978). By providing structured prompts, students receive cognitive support that assists them in organizing observations, expanding vocabulary, and constructing coherent paragraphs. Furthermore, this learning strategy aligns with experiential learning theory, students were guided to observe objects in their surroundings through a series of structured questions, such as: *What color is it? Where is it located? What is its function?*

These guiding prompts encouraged students to systematically observe their environment, generate ideas, and develop detailed descriptions based on direct experience. This instructional approach aligns with Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). By connecting real-world observation with language production, Spatial Representation-Based Learning provides learners with meaningful contexts for constructing descriptive texts. Therefore, this qualitative study seeks to explore how Spatial Representation-Based Learning is implemented and how it contributes to the development of English descriptive writing skills among second-semester Hospitality students at Institut Citra Buana Indonesia.

. The findings are expected to enrich the body of knowledge on contextualized EFL writing pedagogy and provide practical implications for English lecturers seeking innovative and authentic instructional strategies.

Based on the background and identified research gap, this study addresses the following research questions: How is Spatial Representation-Based Learning implemented in teaching English descriptive writing to second-semester Hospitality students at Institut Citra Buana Indonesia?, How do students construct descriptive texts through the use of guided spatial representation activities?, What aspects of students' English writing development emerge through the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning?, How do students perceive the use of Spatial Representation-Based Learning as a strategy for improving their English writing skills?

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. According to Yin (2018), a case study is an appropriate research strategy when the researcher intends to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.

In this study employed a qualitative case study design because the phenomenon under investigation the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) in improving English writing skills among EFL students required an in-depth exploration within its real-life educational context. According to Yin (2018), a case study is an appropriate research design when the researcher seeks to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident.

In the present study, SRBL was implemented in an authentic classroom environment where teaching practices, student interactions, and learning experiences were closely interconnected. Therefore, a case study design was selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how SRBL was enacted in the classroom, how students responded to the learning activities, and how the approach contributed to the development of their descriptive writing skills. This design enabled the researcher to capture the complexity of the instructional process and the participants' experiences through multiple sources of evidence, including classroom observations, students' writing products, and semi-structured interviews.

A qualitative case study design was employed in this research because the study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary educational practice within its natural setting. According to Yin (2018), a case study is appropriate when researchers aim to investigate a phenomenon in its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. In this study, the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) was closely embedded within the classroom environment, where instructional practices, student interactions, learning experiences, and writing development occurred simultaneously. The purpose of the research was not to measure the effectiveness of SRBL statistically, but rather to explore how the approach was implemented, how students experienced the learning process, and how it contributed to the development of their descriptive writing skills. Therefore, a case study design was considered the most suitable method because it enabled a holistic and contextualized examination of the instructional process through multiple sources of evidence, including classroom observations, students' writing products, and semi-structured interviews.

Research Setting and Participants

The participants consisted of 35 second-semester students enrolled in the Hospitality Study Program at Institut Citra Buana Indonesia during the 2025/2026 academic year. The group comprised 25 female students and 10 male students. They were selected through purposive sampling because they were taking an English writing course that emphasized descriptive text production. As vocational students, they frequently engage with authentic environmental contexts, making them suitable participants for investigating the effectiveness of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL).

The Implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning

The learning activities were designed around authentic environmental observation. Students were instructed to travel from their residence or campus to a predetermined destination while carefully observing the surrounding environment. During the journey, they were asked to identify at least ten objects they encountered and document their observations using a set of guiding questions.

Data Collection Techniques

To obtain comprehensive and trustworthy data, this study employed three data collection techniques: 1) Classroom observation, 2) Students' Writing Documents, 3) Semi-Structured Interviews. The details are explained in the following discussion.

Classroom Observation

The researcher conducted non-participant observations during the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) activities. Observation was selected as a primary data collection method because it enabled the researcher to examine the implementation of SRBL in its natural classroom setting and to capture students' actual behaviors, interactions, engagement, and responses during the learning process. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), observation allows researchers to obtain firsthand information about participants' actions and the context in which a phenomenon occurs. In this study, non-participant observation was particularly appropriate because it allowed

the researcher to systematically document how SRBL was enacted by the instructor, how students interacted with the learning activities, and how they generated and developed ideas for descriptive writing without disrupting the instructional process. The observational data provided valuable contextual evidence that complemented the findings obtained from students' writing products and semi-structured interviews.

A total of four nonparticipant observations were conducted throughout the implementation of the Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) activities. The observations focused on students' engagement, participation, interactions, and strategies for collecting and organizing information from their surrounding environment. Particular attention was given to how students observed objects, responded to the guiding questions, and transformed their observations into descriptive writing. Field notes were systematically recorded during each observation session to document classroom activities, student behaviors, and the overall learning process.

Students' Writing Documents

Students' descriptive writing products were selected as a primary source of documentary data because they provided direct evidence of how learners applied their observations and transformed environmental experiences into written texts. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), documents are valuable qualitative data sources because they enable researchers to examine participants' perspectives, learning processes, and outcomes in a natural form. In the present study, the students' written texts were particularly important for assessing how Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) contributed to the development of descriptive writing skills. The writing products allowed the researcher to examine students' vocabulary use, descriptive elaboration, sentence organization, coherence, and ability to represent observed objects in written form. Furthermore, these documents served as tangible evidence that complemented the observational and interview data, thereby supporting data triangulation and enhancing the credibility of the findings.

Semi-Structured Interviews

To complement the classroom observations and analysis of students' writing products, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants following the completion of the Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) activities. Interviews were chosen because they enabled the researcher to gain deeper insights into students' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding the implementation of SRBL, which could not be fully captured through observations and written documents alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews were conducted face-to-face in an offline setting and lasted approximately 20–30 minutes per participant. A semi-structured interview protocol consisting of ten guiding questions was used to ensure consistency while allowing participants to elaborate on their responses. Six students were purposively selected based on their post-test writing scores to represent different levels of achievement, including high-, medium-, and low-performing learners. This sampling strategy enabled the researcher to explore diverse perspectives on how SRBL influenced students' descriptive writing development. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

To analyze the writing products systematically, a writing assessment rubric was developed based on key components of descriptive writing. The rubric focused on four dimensions: vocabulary choice, descriptive details, sentence organization, and coherence. These criteria were selected because they reflected the primary objectives of SRBL and provided indicators of students' ability to represent observed objects through written language. Each dimension was scored on a scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), resulting in a maximum score of 20 points.

Table 1. Writing Assessment Rubric

No	Criteria	Description	Score Range
1.	Vocabulary Choice	Appropriate and varied use of vocabulary to describe observed objects	1–5
2.	Descriptive Details	Ability to provide specific, accurate, and detailed descriptions	1–5
3.	Sentence Organization	Logical arrangement of sentences and ideas within the text	1–5
4.	Coherence	Clarity and connectedness of ideas throughout the text	1–5

Following the assessment process, representative samples of students' descriptive writing products were selected for document analysis. These samples illustrate how students described objects observed during the SRBL activities and demonstrate their ability to transform environmental observations into written texts.

Table 2. Students' Writing Product

No	Observed Object	Excerpt
1.	Tree	"The tree that I saw on the street is large and beautiful. It has a thick brown trunk and many green leaves that make it look fresh and healthy…."
2.	Fruit Seller	"….The stall is colourful because of the red apples, yellow bananas, green oranges, and purple grapes. It is small, but it has many kinds of fresh fruit.
3.	Campus	"….I saw Nusa Putra University. Its buildings are mostly white and blue. It is large and has many classrooms and facilities..."
4.	BTN Bank	"….Its function is to provide banking services, such as saving money, withdrawing cash, and paying bills…."
5.	Kimia Farma	"…It also provides pharmacy services, where customers can buy prescription and non-prescription drugs. Some Kimia Farma stores also have a clinic or a laboratory for basic health check-ups."

Data Analysis Techniques

Data Analysis Techniques were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Saldaña (2020), which consists of three interconnected processes: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This model was selected because it provides a systematic framework for managing, organizing, and interpreting qualitative data collected from multiple sources, including classroom observations, students' writing products, and semi-structured interviews.

Data Condensation

Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, coding, and transforming raw data into meaningful units for analysis (Miles et al., 2020). This technique was employed to reduce the large volume of qualitative data and focus on information relevant to the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) and students' descriptive writing development. In this study, observation notes, interview transcripts, and students' writing products were reviewed repeatedly, coded, and categorized according to emerging themes related to idea generation, descriptive elaboration, vocabulary use, sentence organization, and coherence.

Data Display

Data display involves organizing and presenting condensed data in a structured form that facilitates interpretation and pattern identification (Miles et al., 2020). This stage was chosen to enable the researcher to compare findings across different data sources and identify recurring themes. The data were displayed through thematic matrices, summary tables, excerpts from interviews, observation records, and samples of students' writing products.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Conclusion drawing and verification refer to the process of interpreting patterns, relationships, and meanings emerging from the data while continuously checking their validity (Miles et al., 2020). In this study, conclusions were generated by comparing evidence from observations, interviews, and students' writing products. The findings were then verified through methodological triangulation to ensure consistency and credibility. This process enabled the researcher to identify how SRBL supported students' idea generation, descriptive writing development, and engagement in the writing process. which consists of three concurrent activities:

Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance the rigor and credibility of the findings, this study employed the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through data triangulation, combining classroom observations, students' written documents, and interview data. Methodological triangulation enabled the researcher to validate findings from different perspectives.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, this study addressed the criteria of transferability and dependability, which are widely recognized as essential components of qualitative rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transferability was selected because the purpose of this study was not to generalize findings statistically but to provide sufficient contextual information that would enable readers to determine whether the findings could be applicable to other educational settings with similar characteristics. To achieve transferability, the researcher provided a rich and detailed description of the research context, participants, instructional procedures, and the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL). Such thick description allows readers to make informed judgments regarding the relevance of the findings to their own contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2024).

Dependability was addressed to ensure the consistency, transparency, and traceability of the research process over time. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), dependability requires researchers to document the methodological procedures in a systematic manner so that the research process can be reviewed and understood by others. In this study, dependability was maintained through the development of a comprehensive audit trail that documented all stages of the research, including data collection procedures, observation records, interview protocols, coding processes, category development, and analytical decisions. Maintaining this documentation enhanced the transparency of the study and strengthened the credibility of the findings (Nowell et al., 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2024).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study. Their participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in reporting interview excerpts and writing samples. The collected data were used solely for academic purposes and stored securely throughout the research process.

The comparison reveals notable qualitative improvements across all writing dimensions. Students produced richer content, employed more varied vocabulary, organized their ideas more coherently, and provided more elaborate descriptions after participating in SRBL activities

FINDINGS

Analysis of The Student's Written Product

The student's writing demonstrates the ability to produce richer descriptive details by incorporating observable physical characteristics and functional attributes. Compared to initial classroom observations, students generated more elaborated descriptions with greater lexical variety.

In the Fruit Seller text, the student effectively employs color-related vocabulary ("red apples," "yellow bananas," "green oranges," and "purple grapes"), demonstrating enhanced lexical variety and the ability to create vivid imagery. The inclusion of the stall's size and the freshness of the fruit further strengthens the descriptive quality.

The Campus description reflects the student's capacity to identify physical attributes and facilities, mentioning the building colors and the presence of classrooms and other amenities. This suggests an increased awareness of organizing details from general appearance to specific features.

In the BTN Bank and Kimia Farma descriptions, students expand their writing by incorporating functional aspects of the objects. Rather than focusing solely on physical appearance, they explain the services provided, such as banking transactions and pharmacy or health services. This indicates the development of both descriptive and informational writing skills.

Overall, these writing samples demonstrate that students have developed the ability to generate richer descriptive details through direct observation of real-world objects. Compared with their initial performance, they exhibit greater lexical diversity, improved organization of ideas, and a stronger integration of physical characteristics and functional attributes, suggesting that the Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) approach effectively supports the development of descriptive writing skills in EFL contexts.

Tabel 3. Analysis Writing Products

No	Writing Aspect	Before SRBL	After SRBL
1.	Idea Generation	Limited; students struggled to develop ideas	Rich; students generated multiple observable details
2.	Vocabulary Use	Repetitive and basic	More varied and context-specific
3.	Description Quality	Simple and surface-level	More elaborated and detailed
4.	Organization	Fragmented sentences	More coherent paragraph structure

The comparison reveals notable qualitative improvements across all writing dimensions. Students produced richer content, employed more varied vocabulary, organized their ideas more coherently, and provided more elaborate descriptions after participating in SRBL activities.

Analysis of Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns across participants' responses. The analysis revealed four major themes: (1) idea generation and organization, (2) vocabulary development through authentic observation, (3) increased confidence and motivation, and (4) challenges encountered during the learning process.

Spatial Representation Facilitated Idea Generation and Organization

The majority of participants reported that the mapping activity helped them generate and sequence ideas before writing. Rather than starting from a blank page,

students used their route maps as visual guides that provided a clear structure for their paragraphs. One participant explained:

> "*Usually, I spend a lot of time thinking about what I should write first. With the map, I already had the sequence of places, so I could write more easily." (Participant 1)*

These responses indicate that spatial representation functioned as a form of cognitive scaffolding, enabling students to externalize their thoughts and organize information systematically before transforming it into written text.

Authentic Environmental Observation Enriched Vocabulary

Another prominent theme was vocabulary development. Participants indicated that directly observing objects in their environment exposed them to meaningful lexical items that could immediately be incorporated into their writing. Instead of relying solely on textbook examples, students learned vocabulary from authentic contexts. One student commented:

> *"I learned some new words like intersection, housing complex, pharmacy, and motorcycle taxi station." (Participant 2)*

Increased Confidence and Learning Motivation

The interviews also revealed that the Spatial Representation-Based Learning activities positively influenced students' confidence and motivation. Several participants explained that writing became less intimidating because they were describing familiar places rather than creating entirely new ideas. As one participant expressed:

> *"I felt more confident because I was writing about my own experience. I knew the objects very well." (Participant 5)*

These responses suggest that connecting writing tasks to students' real-life experiences can reduce writing anxiety and increase engagement in the learning process.

Challenges Encountered During the Activity

Although participants generally viewed the learning activities positively, several challenges emerged. The most common difficulty involved limited English vocabulary for certain local objects and places. Some students admitted that they often knew the object but not its English equivalent. One participant explained:

> *"Sometimes I knew the place but I did not know the English word. I asked my friends and the lecturer for help." (Participant 3)*

This finding indicates that while spatial representation effectively supports idea generation, teacher guidance and peer collaboration remain essential for expanding students' lexical resources.

DISCUSSION

Spatial Representation-Based Learning in Descriptive Writing

The implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SPBL) was conducted through a series of structured instructional stages designed to support students in generating and organizing ideas before writing descriptive texts. Classroom observations revealed that the learning process consisted of four major phases: (1) introduction and topic exploration, (2) guided spatial representation construction, (3) text development, and (4) reflection and revision.

During the initial stage, students were introduced to descriptive writing concepts and were encouraged to identify key characteristics of places, objects, and hospitality-related environments. In the second stage, students created spatial representations in the form of visual maps, diagrams, and spatial sketches to organize ideas. These representations functioned as cognitive scaffolds that enabled students to identify relationships among descriptive elements.

The third stage involved transforming visual representations into written texts. Students used their diagrams as references to develop descriptive paragraphs with clearer organization and richer content. Finally, reflective discussions and peer feedback sessions allowed students to revise and improve their writing products. Classroom observation data indicated that students actively participated in each learning stage. The use of visual-spatial activities appeared to facilitate idea generation and reduce difficulties commonly associated with the pre-writing process.

This approach supports learners throughout the writing process. The implementation reflects the principles of sociocultural learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of mediated learning tools in knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978). Spatial representations served as mediational artifacts that enabled students to externalize and organize their thoughts before transforming them into written language.

The findings are also consistent with constructivist perspectives suggesting that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with visual and contextual resources (Piaget, 1972). In the present study, visual mapping activities encouraged learners to engage in active meaning-making rather than merely reproducing linguistic forms.

Furthermore, the structured stages observed in SPBL align with process-based writing approaches that emphasize planning, drafting, revising, and editing as interconnected phases of writing development (Hyland, 2019). Therefore, SPBL can be viewed as an effective pedagogical framework for facilitating descriptive writing instruction in vocational higher education contexts.

Students Construct Descriptive Texts Through The Use of Guided Spatial

Analysis of students' written products revealed that guided spatial representation activities significantly influenced the way students constructed descriptive texts. Students generally followed a systematic process consisting of idea identification, categorization of descriptive features, organization of spatial information, and textual development.

The spatial representations enabled students to identify major and supporting details before writing. Most students began by placing the main object or location at the center of the representation and subsequently added descriptive attributes related to appearance, facilities, functions, and surrounding characteristics. These visual structures provided a clear framework for paragraph development.

Document analysis further showed that students were able to produce more coherent descriptions because the spatial maps guided the sequencing of information. Rather than presenting ideas randomly, students organized descriptions according to spatial relationships, resulting in texts with clearer logical progression.

The findings suggest that spatial representation activities facilitated the cognitive processes involved in writing. Writing is not only a linguistic activity but also a complex process of organizing and transforming knowledge (Flower & Hayes, 1981). The visual mapping process appeared to reduce students' cognitive load by allowing them to organize information externally before composing text.

The findings also support previous studies indicating that visual organizers enhance learners' ability to generate ideas and establish coherence in written discourse (Novak & Cañas, 2008; Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022). Through guided spatial representations, students developed a clearer understanding of relationships among concepts, which subsequently contributed to more organized descriptive texts.

From a vocational education perspective, the use of spatial representations may be particularly relevant because hospitality students frequently engage with physical environments such as hotels, restaurants, and tourism destinations. Consequently, visual-spatial thinking naturally complements the descriptive demands of hospitality-related communication.

Aspects of Students' English Writing through Spatial Representation-Based Learning

Several aspects of writing development emerged from the implementation of SPBL. Analysis of students' texts, classroom observations, and interview data identified four major areas of improvement: 1) Content Development, 2) Text Organization, 3) Vocabulary Use, and 4) Language Accuracy.

Content development focused on students generated more detailed descriptions and included richer supporting information. In text organization, students demonstrated improved paragraph structure and logical sequencing of ideas. However, students employed a wider range of descriptive vocabulary related to hospitality settings, physical characteristics, and spatial attributes. For the language accuracy, students showed gradual improvement in grammatical accuracy, particularly in the use of simple present tense and descriptive sentence structures. These improvements were consistently observed across multiple writing tasks conducted during the implementation period.

The observed improvements indicate that SPBL contributes to both cognitive and linguistic dimensions of writing development. The enhancement of content quality and organization suggests that students benefited from visual planning strategies that facilitated idea generation and text structuring.

The findings are consistent with cognitive writing theory, which emphasizes planning as a critical component of effective writing performance (Flower & Hayes, 1981). By providing a visual framework for organizing ideas, SPBL enabled learners to allocate greater attention to language production during the drafting process.

Vocabulary development may also be explained through the multimodal nature of SPBL. Visual representations helped students connect lexical items with concrete images and spatial relationships, facilitating vocabulary retention and retrieval (Paivio, 2006). Additionally, improvements in grammatical accuracy can be attributed to repeated writing practice and reflective revision activities integrated into the SPBL process. These findings support previous research demonstrating that visual and multimodal learning environments positively influence EFL writing achievement (Kress, 2010; Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022).

Spatial Representation-Based Learning as A Strategy for Improving English Writing Skills

Interview data revealed predominantly positive student perceptions toward SPBL. Three major themes emerged: 1) Increased Ease of Writing, 2) Enhanced Confidence, and 3) Higher Engagement and Motivation.

Students reported that spatial representations helped them generate ideas more easily and reduced difficulties during the pre-writing stage. In addition, they expressed greater confidence in writing as they had a clear visual guide before composing texts. Accordingly, the students described the learning activities as interesting, interactive, and less stressful compared with conventional writing instruction. Although most students reported positive experiences, several participants indicated that creating detailed spatial representations initially required additional time and practice. Students' positive perceptions suggest that SPBL contributes not only to writing performance but also to affective dimensions of learning. The visual and interactive nature of the activities appeared to reduce writing anxiety and increase learner engagement.

These findings align with self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes that confidence in performing a task influences learning outcome (Bandura, 1997). The availability of visual planning tools may have enhanced students' sense of control during writing activities, thereby strengthening their confidence.

Furthermore, the findings support contemporary perspectives on multimodal learning, which argue that integrating visual and textual modes can create more meaningful and engaging learning experiences (Kress, 2010). For hospitality students, whose future professional communication often involves describing physical spaces and services, SPBL provides authentic and contextually relevant learning opportunities.

Overall, students perceived SPBL as an effective strategy for improving writing skills because it facilitated idea organization, enhanced confidence, and promoted active participation in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study investigated the implementation of Spatial Representation-Based Learning (SRBL) in teaching English descriptive writing to

second-semester Hospitality students at Institut Citra Buana Indonesia. The findings revealed that SRBL was implemented through a systematic sequence of learning activities involving topic exploration, guided spatial representation construction, text development, and reflective revision. These stages provided students with structured support throughout the writing process and facilitated active engagement in learning.

The study further found that students constructed descriptive texts by transforming visual-spatial representations into written discourse. The use of guided spatial mapping enabled learners to generate ideas, organize information logically, and develop more coherent descriptions. Through this process, students were able to establish clearer relationships among concepts and produce texts with improved organization and content quality.

In terms of writing development, the implementation of SRBL contributed to improvements in several key aspects of writing, including content elaboration, text organization, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy. The visual and interactive nature of spatial representations functioned as cognitive scaffolds that supported students in planning and expressing ideas more effectively. These findings support previous studies emphasizing the role of visual and multimodal learning strategies in enhancing second-language writing development (Hyland, 2019; Kress, 2010; Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022).

The study also revealed overwhelmingly positive student perceptions of SRBL. Participants reported that the approach helped them generate ideas more easily, increased their confidence in writing, and created a more engaging and less stressful learning environment. These findings suggest that SRBL contributes not only to linguistic development but also to important affective dimensions of language learning, such as motivation, confidence, and learner engagement.

Despite these contributions, the study is limited by its small sample size, single-institution setting, and qualitative design, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore recommended to involve larger and more diverse participant populations, employ mixed-method or experimental research designs, and investigate the effectiveness of SRBL across different English writing genres and educational contexts. Such studies would provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the broader applicability of SRBL in English language education.

In conclusion, Spatial Representation-Based Learning emerges as a promising pedagogical approach that bridges visual thinking and written expression, enabling learners to organize ideas more effectively, improve writing performance, and engage more meaningfully in the writing process. As English language education increasingly emphasizes learner-centered and multimodal instruction, SRBL offers a valuable and innovative strategy for supporting writing development in vocational higher education and beyond.

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