

# Spatial Thinking in Frame-Based Learning of Plant Anatomy and Its Relation to Logical Thinking

*by* Ermayanti Ermayanti

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Ade Gafar Abdullah  
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# Ideas for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education

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# Ideas for 21st Century Education

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## Table of contents

Preface	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
Organizing committees	xv
<i>Adult Education (ADE)</i>	
Practicing critical thinking through extensive reading activities <i>N. Husna</i>	3
Teaching–learning sequence: Designing ionic bonding concept through model of educational reconstruction <i>E. Nursa'adah, L. Liliyasi &amp; A. Mudzakir</i>	9
<i>Art Education (AED)</i>	
Design-based research to explore Luk Keroncong as vocal technique exercise <i>R. Milyartini</i>	17
<i>Business Education (BED)</i>	
The effect of psychological contract in improving university effectiveness <i>A.L. Kadiyono, R.A. Sulistiobudi &amp; M. Batubara</i>	25
Event as a means to educate youth through the volunteers program <i>D.R. Erlandia &amp; I. Gemiharto</i>	31
Stress at work and well-being: Study of stress level at work to improve employee well-being on Pertamina's operators with standard 'Pertamina Way' in Bandung <i>M. Batubara</i>	37
<i>Course Management (CMT)</i>	
Preceptors' perceptions of preceptorship at Surgical Care Room General Hospital Haji Adam Malik Medan <i>R.E. Nurhidayah, Y. Aryani &amp; C.T. Siregar</i>	45
<i>Curriculum, Research and Development (CRD)</i>	
Improving the competences of vocational teachers: Graduate profile and learning outcomes of the agro-industry technology education program <i>M.N. Handayani</i>	51
Authentic assessment analysis based on the KKNi curriculum in applied statistics learning <i>V. Yustitia &amp; I.S. Wardani</i>	55
The career competence profile of public elementary school students in Jakarta, Indonesia <i>A. Tjalla &amp; H. Herdi</i>	61

	<b>1</b>	<i>Educational Foundation (EDF)</i>	
	<b>1</b>	Promoting undergraduate students' critical thinking skills in zoology vertebrate courses <i>S. Sa'adah, F. Sudargo &amp; T. Hidayat</i>	67
	<b>1</b>	Information processing capability in the concept of biodiversity <i>S. Rini, A. Rahmat, T. Hidayat, M. Gemilawati &amp; D. Firgiawan</i>	71
		The contribution of creative thinking skills to students' creativity on enzyme kinetics practical projects using local materials <i>D.K. Sari, A. Permanasari &amp; F.M.T. Supriyanti</i>	75
		The effect of 'Everyone is a teacher here' strategy on students' results in geography <i>M. Meilia, G.N. Nindya &amp; Z.K. Habibah</i>	79
		Students' misconceptions on titration <i>H.R. Widarti, A. Permanasari &amp; S. Mulyani</i>	83
		Parent-adolescent conflict: Is there a difference of main sources between intergeneration? <i>T.H. Dahlan, I.H. Misbach &amp; D.Z. Wyandini</i>	89
		Students' mental model profile of microorganism after the implementation of mental model-based microbiology course <i>Y. Hamdiyati, F. Sudargo, S. Redjeki &amp; A. Fitriani</i>	93
		Building meaningful learning through coherence learning among mathematics, language and science lessons <i>A. Permanasari, T. Turmudi, V. Vismaia &amp; B. Rubini</i>	97
		The analysis of junior high schools' educational facilities, infrastructure needs and location determination based on a social demand approach and geographical information system <i>T.C. Kurniatun, E. Rosalin, L. Somantri &amp; A. Setiyoko</i>	101
		Debriefing teachers' competence based on reflective teaching to facilitate creative thinking skills of elementary school students <i>R. Witarasa, A. Permanasari &amp; U.S. Saud</i>	105
		<i>Global Issues in Education and Research (GER)</i>	
	<b>1</b>	The awareness of risk prevention level among urban elementary school students <i>R. Effendi</i>	113
	<b>8</b>	The role of academic self-management in improving students' academic achievement <i>A.L. Kadiyono &amp; H. Hafjar</i>	117
	<b>1</b>	Identifying research supporting factors: What should institutions provide? <i>M.C. Sondari, C. Rejito &amp; L. Layyinaturobanayah</i>	121
	<b>10</b>	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics literacy skills: Profiles and comparison amongst prospective science teachers <i>C. Rochman, D. Nasrudin &amp; H.Y. Suhendi</i>	127
		Developing community-based media on environmental education to conserve mangrove and coral ecosystem in Kepulauan Seribu <i>D. Vivanti, M. Miarsyah, R. Komala &amp; A. Suryanda</i>	131
		Social class and access to higher education in the secondary schools: Supporting the preparation of lessons and access for national exam <i>A. Konaah, A.L. Sugiarti, A.A. Lukman, S. Nurbayani &amp; A.G. Abdullah</i>	135
		The gap of the economic background of the parents towards student achievement <i>L. Sirait, M.I. Triawan, T. Sulastri, B. Maftuh &amp; A.G. Abdullah</i>	139
		Perception of students towards campus internationalization <i>P.E. Arinda, R. Apriliandi, R. Pranacita &amp; A.G. Abdullah</i>	143
		The influence of gender differences in mathematics achievement of high school students <i>A. Riyanti, R. Anggraini, S. Nurohim, S. Komariah &amp; A.G. Abdullah</i>	147
	<b>1</b>		
	<b>1</b>		

1	Student participation in the tutoring program (comparative study between socio-economic schools high and low)	153
	<i>L. Utami, M. Azis, H.M. Yusuf, R. Kartika, W. Wilodati &amp; A.G. Abdullah</i>	
	Factors affecting the study completion time of Bogor Agricultural University's graduate students and its managerial implications	157
	<i>F. Siregar, D. Syah &amp; N. Nahrowi</i>	
	The location analysis of junior high schools in West Java Coastal Zone	161
	<i>T.C. Kurniatun, E. Rosalin, L. Somantri &amp; A. Setiyoko</i>	
	The inclusion of gender issues in global education in contemporary Indonesia	165
	<i>E. Haryanti</i>	
	<i>Learning Teaching Methodologies and Assessment (TMA)</i>	
	The relationship between metacognitive skills and students' achievement analyzed using problem based learning	173
	<i>B. Milama, N.A. Damayanti &amp; D. Murniati</i>	
	Perception towards school physics learning model to improve students' critical thinking skills	177
	<i>N. Marpaung, L. Liliyasi &amp; A. Setiawan</i>	
10	The implementation of 5E learning cycle model-based inquiry to improve students' learning achievements	181
	<i>A. Malik, Y. Dirgantara &amp; A. Agung</i>	
1	Development and validation of creative thinking skills test in the project of laboratory apparatus modification	185
	<i>C. Diawati, L. Liliyasi, A. Setiabudi &amp; B. Buchari</i>	
1	The implementation of guided inquiry learning to improve students' understanding on kinetic theory of gases	189
	<i>D. Nanto, R.D. Iradat &amp; Y.A. Bolkiah</i>	
1	Creativity assessment in project based learning using fuzzy grading system	195
	<i>A. Ana, A.G. Abdullah, D.L. Hakim, M. Nurulloh, A.B.D. Nandiyanto, A.A. Danuwijaya &amp; S. Saripudin</i>	
	Students' attitude towards mobile-assisted language assessment: A case of speaking class	199
	<i>A.A. Danuwijaya, A.G. Abdullah &amp; A.B.D. Nandiyanto</i>	
	Student's understanding consistency of thermal conductivity concept	203
	<i>I.S. Budiarti, I. Suparmi, A. Cari, V. Viyanti, C. Winarti &amp; J. Handhika</i>	
	Students' science literacy skills in ecosystem learning	207
	<i>M. Arohman</i>	
	Developing historical thinking skills in learning history through teaching and learning methods	211
	<i>E.M. Karima, D. Supardan &amp; A. Zainul</i>	
	The effect of the outdoor learning model on biology learning motivation in SMAN 2 Bekasi on biodiversity matter	217
	<i>E. Suryani</i>	
5	Spatial thinking in frame-based learning of plant anatomy and its relation to logical thinking	223
	<i>E. Ermayanti, N.Y. Rustaman &amp; A. Rahmat</i>	
	Hypnoteaching and learning motivation enhancement	229
	<i>F. Fauzan &amp; L. Indriastuti</i>	
3	The development of an Augmented Reality (AR) technology-based learning media in metal structure concept	233
	<i>F.S. Irwansyah, I. Ramdani &amp; I. Farida</i>	
	The effectiveness of the local culture-based physics model in developing students' creative thinking skills and understanding of the Nature of Science (NOS)	239
	<i>I.W. Suastra</i>	



Developing creative thinking ability and science concept understanding through SCSS problem solving oriented performance assessment teaching at primary schools <i>I.N. Jampel &amp; I.W. Widiana</i>	243
Identification of consistency and conceptual understanding of the Black principle <i>C. Winarti, A. Cari, I. Suparmi, J. Budiarti, H. Handhika &amp; V. Viyanti</i>	249
Relationship between vocational/senior high school educational background and the generic medical ability of midwifery students on a microbiology course <i>Y. Saparudin, N. Rustaman &amp; A. Fitriani</i>	253
<i>Other Areas of Education (OAE)</i>	
Identification of scientific literacy aspects of a science textbook for class V of elementary school <i>S.S. Nurfaidah</i>	259
<i>Arung Masala Uli-e</i> : The idea of the leader in Buginese myth <i>A.B.T. Bandung</i>	263
The effectiveness of educational qualifications in organizational career development for education staff <i>A.Y. Rahyasih &amp; D.A. Kurniady</i>	267
Adventure-based counseling model to improve students' adversity intelligence <i>N. Rusmana &amp; K. Kusherdyana</i>	271
The effectiveness of implementing an experience-based counseling model in reducing the tendency of students towards bullying behavior <i>N. Rusmana, A. Hafina &amp; I. Saripah</i>	277
The enhancement of self-regulated learning and achievement of open distance learning students through online tutorials <i>U. Rahayu, A. Widodo &amp; S. Redjeki</i>	283
<i>Pedagogy (PDG)</i>	
Promoting individually-tailored teacher development program using the dynamic model of educational effectiveness research <i>S.N. Azkiyah</i>	289
Students' understanding, communication skills and anxiety of mathematics in an Islamic Junior High School using brain-based learning <i>T. Dahlan</i>	293
Realizing a good education in an Indonesian university context <i>A. Aunurrahman, F.A. Hamied &amp; E. Emilia</i>	297
Self-criticism on the teacher-training program from the faculty of education <i>A. Sofyan</i>	301
The implementation of asking and group competition learning strategies to improve students' creative thinking skills <i>D.F. Wulandari, N. Rustaman, A. Setiawan &amp; I. Hamidah</i>	305
Implementation of the government's law on the management of Islamic religious education in the community <i>D.F. Sjoraida, A. Asmawi, D. Mariana &amp; R.K. Anwar</i>	311
Education of cultural and national characteristics based on local wisdom through social studies at SMP Negeri 1 Singaraja school, Bali <i>I.W. Kertih</i>	317
The impact of a STEM project-based learning approach in vocational high school on students' mathematical communication ability <i>A. Ismayani &amp; Y.S. Kusumah</i>	321

Students' attitude to biodiversity in Ciptagelar indigenous village <i>H.W. Kelana, T. Hidayat &amp; A. Widodo</i>	327
Determinate factors of mathematics problem solving ability toward spatial, verbal and mathematical logic intelligence aspects <i>K. Kusaeri &amp; B. Sholeh</i>	333
Relationship between factors that improve student achievement in primary teacher education institutes <i>S. Ratnaningsih</i>	337
<i>Ubiquitous Learning (UBL)</i>	
Developing dynamic instructional media to promote explorative activities in geometry lessons <i>S. Sariyasa</i>	343
Internship information system availability on vocational high school websites <i>N. Amelia, A.G. Abdullah, M. Somantri &amp; A.A. Danuwijaya</i>	347
High school students' perceptions of the application of Edmodo to English language learning <i>P. Purnawarman, A.A. Danuwijaya &amp; A.R. Ningrum</i>	351
A web-based model to enhance competency in the interconnection of multiple levels of representation for pre-service teachers <i>I. Farida, L. Liliyasi, W. Sopandi &amp; D.H. Widyantoro</i>	359
Author index	363

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## Preface

Invited speakers, Distinguished Guests, Presenters, Participants, and Authors of Asian Education Symposium.

It is such an honor to have had you at the Asian Education Symposium (AES) 2016, organized by the School of Postgraduate Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The AES 2016 is an international refereed conference dedicated to the advancement of theories and practices in education. The AES 2016 promotes collaborative excellence between academicians and professionals in education. The conference aimed to develop a strong network of researchers and pioneers in education worldwide. The aim of AES 2016 was to provide an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various educational fields with cross-disciplinary interests to bridge the knowledge gap, promote research esteem and the evolution of pedagogy.

The AES 2016 main theme was Ideas for 21st Century Education. Education plays an important role in countries all over the globe. It will enable countries to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030. As for countries in the Asian region, education is a vehicle that can move people's mobility particularly in a time when we are welcoming the Asian Economic Community. It is without a doubt, there is a need to develop a strong collaboration and partnership among countries, both at regional and international levels. This symposium was one of our attempts to provide space for networking among academics and researchers in education. It is our hope that the symposium would contribute to the development of education as a distinct body of knowledge.

This symposium was a platform for us to disseminate and discuss our research findings. It is our expectation that the conversation from this symposium will inform policy and practices of education. It was also hoped that this symposium will open up future research on education, while at the same allowing all participants to expand their network. It is our hope that during this two-day symposium, all the participants had engaged in fruitful and meaningful discussions.

This AES 2016 proceedings contains papers that have been subjected to a double blind refereeing process. The process was conducted by academic peers with specific expertise in the key scopes and research orientation of the papers. It provides an opportunity for readers to engage with a selection of refereed papers that were presented during the symposium. The scopes of this symposium proceedings are: i) art education, ii) adult education, iii) business education, iv) course management, v) curriculum, research and development, vi) educational foundations, vii) learning/teaching methodologies and assessment, viii) global issues in education and research, ix) pedagogy, x) ubiquitous learning, and xi) other areas of education. We strongly believe that the selected papers published in the symposium proceedings will pay a significant contribution to the spread of knowledge.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the keynote speakers from overseas who have travelled to our country to deliver and exchange their ideas. Our appreciation also goes to all the committee members who have worked hard to make this event possible. Once again, deepest gratitude for everybody's participation to the symposium as well as the proceedings.

Ade Gafar Abdullah,  
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## Spatial thinking in frame-based learning of plant anatomy and its relation to logical thinking

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**ABSTRACT:** A study on the framing of spatial thinking in a plant anatomy course was conducted to investigate spatial thinking in frame-based learning of plant anatomy and its relation to logical thinking. This research used a pre-experimental research design. A number of biology education students ( $n = 42$ ) were involved as participants. Data were collected using instruments of observation, a spatial thinking test, and a Test of Logical Thinking (TOLT). The data were analyzed quantitatively. Research results show that the spatial thinking of students in the frame-based learning of plant anatomy involved: (i) generating a representation in 2D and 3D; (ii) maintaining the characteristics of tissue in working memory to construct 3D structures; (iii) scanning the 2D and 3D representations; and (iv) transforming the representations. These were factors that improved students' logical thinking on each indicator. The students' logical thinking before and after the frame-based learning instruction resulted in the following pretest and posttest scores: (1) proportional reasoning (42.9 and 64.3); (2) controlling variables (3.6 and 11.1); (3) probabilistic reasoning (9.5 and 15.5); (4) correlational reasoning (11.9 and 27.4); and (5) combinatorial reasoning (17.9 and 45.2). Analysis of the relationship between spatial thinking and logical thinking showed significant correlation. It is concluded that frame-based plant anatomy learning improves students' spatial thinking and logical thinking.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Spatial ability is an important skill in various activities in daily life and some carriers depend heavily on spatial ability. Therefore, it is a fundamental ability in the 21st century (Diezmann & Lowrie, 2012). The importance of spatial thinking was also shown in the work of the National Research Council (2006), which stated that "learning to think spatially" is a key skill in various educational curriculums. The importance of spatial ability in science learning is related to one's ability to solve spatial problems, particularly mental rotation, which comprises the ability to manipulate and transform 3D objects in the brain (Brownlow et al., 2003). Visual representation, in the form of 3D objects, is a very important part of understanding the phenomena in biology and mechanics and in solving spatial problems (Bolotin & Nashon, 2012).

Logical thinking is a skill, which is determined in the period of abstract process in Piaget's cognitive development phase. Logical thinking is a mental operation used by individuals when they solve

specific problems (Piaget, 1969). There are five different modes of formal logical thinking: proportional reasoning, controlling variables, probabilistic reasoning, correlational reasoning and combinatorial reasoning (Tobin & Capie, 1981). The students solve the problems by undertaking various mental practices or rules or by doing some abstraction and generalization. This activity is related to spatial thinking and logical thinking.

Spatial thinking is also very important in the plant anatomy course. The demands of the plant anatomy syllabus requires students to understand the structures and functions of the cells, tissues, or organs of plants, which are three-dimensional (3D) structures. Students need to recognize the characteristics of plant tissue (for example, the shape, size, positions, cell wall thickness, air cavity and another characteristics) and to relate it to its function. In order to understand the structure of plant anatomy, spatial thinking is much needed.

The results of the preliminary test in plant anatomy give the information that the plant anatomy course strongly requires spatial thinking ability in each student, because cell structure and plant

tissue are 3D structures and are abstract, whereas the pictures contained in the student's handbook and the results of microscopic observation are two-dimensional (2D) structures. So to know the characteristics of plant tissues, students should be able to observe carefully and make representations in 2D and 3D. But in reality, the students' spatial thinking in plant anatomy was less than satisfying, especially for the parts related to thinking about three-dimensional structures, positions and knowing every part of the cellular structure of a tissue or an organ. In general, students find difficulties in constructing representations from 2D into 3D and transforming representations (for example, creating a new perspective) to understand the structure of plant anatomy as a whole.

11 Students' difficulties in understanding structure and function at a cellular level was also found in earlier studies (Lazarowitz & Naim, 2013). Spatial visualizations of 2D or 3D models might help to resolve the spatial difficulties encountered when learning anatomy (Hoyek et al. 2014). It is much needed to be able to understand spatial concepts in a better way (Hoffler 2010). The previous research on spatial concepts did not focus on the types of spatial thinking in framing based plant anatomy and its relation to logical thinking. The previous research instead focused on content and students' spatial ability (Hoffler 2010, Lazarowitz & Naim 2013), and the role of visualizations of 2D or 3D models to resolve spatial difficulties (Hoyek et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2011). Research on how to frame the cognitive processes in spatial thinking for the plant anatomy course and its relation to logical thinking is not yet available.

5 Based on the analysis of the previous studies, it is clear that studies on how to understand the cognitive processes of spatial thinking on a framing based plant anatomy course and its relation to logical thinking have never been done. This paper focuses on the discussion of the four cognitive processes in spatial thinking that seem to describe a student's spatial thinking in plant anatomy and the relation of the student's spatial thinking to their logical thinking ability.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we described two points from the research literature that were related to this research. The first point describes the concept of spatial thinking and the second point describes the framing concept.

Spatial thinking can be developed based on: (1) the concept of space; (2) the representation; and (3) the process of reasoning (National Research Council, 2006). Spatial thinking involves several

cognitive processes, such as visualizing relations; imagining between one scale transformation and another scale; remembering locations of objects, their shapes, and moves; rotating the objects to see other sides; creating a new perspective; transforming object orientations, and others (National Research Council, 2006). Visualizations of 2D or 3D models might help to resolve the spatial difficulties encountered when learning anatomy (Hoyek et al., 2014). Moreover, involving students in constructing the 3D structure models of the cell will improve the students' understanding of the cellular structure and function (Lazarowitz & Naim, 2013).

Framing is a dynamic and ongoing process, where people continue to constantly frame and reframe how to understand "what is happening" in a small adjustment of the scheme (Berland & Hammer, 2012). Frame is an individual feeling about "what is it that's going on here?" (Goffman, 1974). Framing in the biology lesson and class and the social reality, particularly in the biology learning process, influences the ability of scientific argumentation of the students. (Berland & Hammer, 2012; Boerwinkel et al., 2014), resolves the cognition pressure (Autin & Croizet, 2012), recalls and transfers information stored in the memory (Engle et al., 2011) and builds the ability to explain (Boerwinkel et al., 2014).

## 3 RESEARCH METHODS

This research was pre-experimental research with one group of pretest-posttest designs. The instruction of the plant anatomy course was generally consistent with framing.

### 3.1 Participants

This research was conducted at the Biology Education Study Program at a state university in South Sumatra, Indonesia. This research involved 42 students (41 females and 1 male), who were enrolled in the third semester and taking the plant anatomy course.

### 3.2 Instruments and procedures

The instruments used in this research were a spatial thinking test and a Test of Logical Thinking (TOLT) instrument. The spatial thinking test was self-developed based on the spatial thinking cognitive process (Kosslyn, 1978). The spatial thinking test was specifically designed for the research and it was validated by experts through field testing. The test instrument employed four indicators, namely: (1) generate a representation; (2) manage and maintain the representation in working memory;

(3) scanning the maintained representation in working memory; (4) transform a representation with rotation or view the object from a different perspective (Kosslyn, 1978). Whereas, the logical thinking test instrument consisted of 10 test items, in the form of multiple choice questions with four options with reasons (Tobin & Capie, 1981).

The dynamic of framing was adopted and modified from framing terms in earlier studies (Engle et al., 2011; Autin & Croizet, 2012, Goffman, 1974). Framing was especially designed into: concepts questions, spatial-related concepts questions, directing sentences, and also examples of 2D and 3D plant anatomy pictures that had been constructed well (worked examples). Framing directed the students to think spatially about plant anatomy concepts.

The instruction at each stage of learning is consistent with framing that directs students to think spatially. Students work in a group to solve spatial problems and concepts of plant anatomy. After solving the problems related to the concepts of plant anatomy, the participants worked on the posttest.

### 3.3 Data analysis

A test was administered at the beginning and at the end of the frame-based plant anatomy learning. Quantitative data were obtained by calculating the average or percentage in each spatial thinking and logical thinking indicator. The criteria of the test scores were classified by the referencing and modifying of Bao et al. (2009), namely:  $\leq 34$  (very low); 35–50 (low); 51–65 (moderate); 66–80 (high);  $\geq 81$  (very high). The improvement in students' spatial thinking and logical thinking was measured with an average N-Gain (Meltzer, 2002). Statistical analysis was performed with SPSS version 22 for windows. The descriptive analyses were used to explain the students' cognitive processes in spatial thinking during the frame-based plant anatomy learning process.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that there was an improvement in the students' spatial thinking activities. The spatial thinking activities were observed by focusing on the spatial activities that were expected to emerge at every step of the frame-based plant anatomy course. The analysis of the students' spatial thinking activities in learning with frame-based instruction involved several cognitive processes that supported the students' spatial thinking, such as recognizing the shape, size, positions, cell wall, cellular air space and other characteristics of plant tissue. Students

identified and scanned the characteristics of each tissue from a microscopic slide and created a 2D representation to help them to keep the concepts in their working memory. Students scanned a 2D representation and maintained in their working memory the relative shape, size, positions, cell wall, cellular air space and other characteristics of plant tissues. They focused their attention on some parts to construct these into 3D. By scanning the picture from the examples, students can construct the 2D pictures into 3D or vice versa.

The visualization of the tissue structures in 2D and 3D representations gave students complex information about the shapes and locations of one of the tissues or one of the various tissues. In addition, the students created the representation with multiple anatomical views (for example, an analysis of a microscopic slide from a cross section, longitudinal section or radial section) from different perspectives. These cognitive processes support students' spatial thinking.

This result was supported by research findings that show an improvement in the spatial thinking and logical thinking of students after having experienced framing based learning with an average N-Gain of 53.7 and 17.3 respectively (Table 1). The posttest score was significantly different when compared to the pretest score, with  $\alpha < 0.05$ . The percentage of spatial thinking in each indicator can be seen in Table 2.

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that there was an improvement of spatial thinking in each indicator.

Table 1. The mean score pretest-posttest spatial thinking and logical thinking.

	Score			
	Spatial thinking		Logical thinking	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Average	28.11	67.27	17.14	31.67
Normality	0.20	0.16	0.07	0.08
N-Gain	53.7		17.3	

Table 2. Percentage of spatial thinking in each indicator.

Spatial thinking	Pretest	Posttest	Criteria
Generating a representation	30.00	73.95	High
Maintaining a representation	22.21	69.79	High
Scanning representation	20.00	71.94	High
Transforming representation	15.00	64.46	Moderate

It gives the information that frame-based plant anatomy learning can facilitate students in spatial thinking. Framing resolves the students' difficulties in thinking spatially. This result was also supported by the previous result, which showed that framing can resolve cognitive pressure in solving task difficulties, so it enhances working memory capacity (Autin & Croizet, 2012). Besides, framing in a learning context can enhance the ability to recall what is stored in the memory and sharing the knowledge with the students (Engle et al., 2011).

The framing of spatial thinking in plant anatomy also improved logical thinking ability (Tables 1 and 3). The posttest score was significantly different when compared to the pretest score, with  $\alpha < 0.05$ . The percentage of logical reasoning can be seen in Table 3.

Based on the posttest scores shown in Table 3, it can be seen that the highest score of the logical reasoning was proportional reasoning, with 64.29 (moderate), and the lowest was controlling variable, with 11.09 (very low). Framing based plant anatomy learning had more trained proportional, combinatorial and correlation reasoning compared to other reasoning. This is due to framing using trained cognitive spatial processes to create spatial visualization (for example, 2D representation and constructing 3D representation). It is directly related to students' ability to combine and analyze the proportion of 2D representations. Students had analyzed a 2D representation to its component parts and then combined these parts to construct a new 3D representation. These are strongly related to logical reasoning (for example, proportional reasoning, correlation reasoning and combinatorial reasoning).

The analysis of the relationship between spatial thinking and logical reasoning showed  $r(42) = 0.69$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) (significant correlation). Students with high spatial thinking have high logical reasoning. Improvements in spatial thinking will improve logical reasoning. This result is also supported by previous studies, which showed that visualizing the structure of 2D into 3D requires spatial perception, which is related to logical reasoning of cognitive aspects in formal situations (Lazarowitz & Naim, 2013). Students with a concrete operational cogni-

tive stage were not masters in formal operational skills (Shemesh & Lazarowitz, 1988), because they could not conceive concepts at an abstract level (for example, constructing a 2D microscopic structure into 3D) (Yenilmez et al., 2005).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the pretest-posttest scores and N-Gain, there was improvement in spatial thinking and logical thinking after having experienced framing based learning. This research also indicated that students have spatial thinking activities during the frame-based learning of plant anatomy: (i) creating a representation in 2D and 3D; (ii) maintaining a representation in working memory; (iii) scanning the representation; and (iv) transforming the representation. These were factors that improved students' logical thinking on each indicator. These results showed that framing based plant anatomy learning led to more trained proportional, combinatorial, and correlation reasoning compared with other reasoning. Analysis of the relationship between spatial thinking and logical thinking showed significant correlation.

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Table 3. Percentage of logical reasoning.

Logical reasoning	Pretest	Posttest	Criteria
Proportional reasoning	42.86	64.29	Moderate
Controlling variable	3.57	11.09	Very low
Probability reasoning	9.52	15.48	Very low
Correlation reasoning	11.90	27.38	Very low
Combinatorial reasoning	17.86	45.24	Low

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