

The Combination of Scramble Word Game and Make a Match Method in Teaching Narrative Text on Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method on students' reading comprehension. Reading comprehension remains a challenging skill for many EFL learners, particularly at the junior high school level, where students often struggle to understand texts due to limited vocabulary and low learning motivation. To address this issue, this study employed a pre-experimental research design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. The participants of the study were 24 eighth-grade students at a junior high school. Data were collected through a reading comprehension test administered before and after the implementation of the Scramble Word Game and Make a Match method. The treatment was conducted over several instructional sessions, in which students actively participated in game-based reading activities designed to improve vocabulary recognition, text understanding, and learner engagement. The collected data were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after the treatment. The post-test mean score was higher than the pre-test mean score, indicating that the combined use of the Scramble Word Game and Make a Match method had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension. These results suggest that interactive and collaborative learning activities can enhance students' motivation, participation, and understanding of reading texts. This study highlights the pedagogical value of integrating game-based learning strategies into English reading instruction and provides practical implications for EFL teachers seeking to create a more engaging and effective learning environment.

Keywords: Scramble Word Game; Make a Match Method; Reading Comprehension; Narrative Text

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Introduction

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly at the junior high school level, where students begin to engage with more complex texts and varied text genres. Reading not only supports students' vocabulary development and language proficiency but also enables them to access information, understand instructions, and succeed in other academic subjects. In the Indonesian EFL context, reading comprehension is one of the core competencies assessed in the curriculum, making it an essential focus of English instruction (Kemdikbud, 2022). However, despite its importance, many junior high school students still face difficulties in understanding English reading texts.

Numerous studies have reported that EFL students often struggle with reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary knowledge, weak grammatical understanding, and low motivation to read English texts (Sari & Fitrawati, 2019; Yulia, 2021). At the junior high school level, students frequently encounter unfamiliar words and sentence structures, which hinder their ability to identify main ideas, infer meaning, and comprehend texts holistically. These difficulties are often compounded by students' negative perceptions of reading activities, which are commonly viewed as monotonous and challenging.

In many EFL classrooms, reading instruction is still dominated by traditional, teacher-centered approaches. Teachers often focus on reading aloud, translating texts word by word, or asking students to answer comprehension questions without sufficient scaffolding or interactive activities (Putri & Refnaldi, 2020). While such approaches may help students understand the literal meaning of texts, they do not always promote active engagement or deeper comprehension. As a result, students tend to become passive learners and rely heavily on teachers' explanations rather than developing independent reading skills.

To address these challenges, researchers and educators have increasingly emphasized the importance of interactive and student-centered learning approaches in EFL instruction. One approach that has gained considerable attention is game-based learning. Game-based learning integrates educational content with game elements, such as competition, collaboration, and enjoyment, to create a more engaging learning environment. Previous studies have shown that games can enhance students' motivation, participation, and learning outcomes in language learning contexts (Hwang et al., 2017; Susanti & Widyastuti, 2022). In reading instruction, games can help students process vocabulary, understand text meaning, and develop comprehension skills in a more meaningful and enjoyable way.

Among various game-based learning strategies, the Scramble Word Game and the Make a Match method have been widely used in EFL classrooms. The Scramble Word Game involves arranging jumbled words into correct forms, sentences, or ideas, which helps students develop vocabulary recognition, word order awareness, and sentence structure understanding. Several studies have reported that the Scramble Word Game can improve students' vocabulary mastery and support reading comprehension by encouraging active thinking and problem-solving (Rahmawati & Lestari, 2018; Fitria, 2020). Meanwhile, the Make a Match method is a cooperative learning strategy that requires students to match related information, such as questions and answers or words and meanings, through peer interaction. This method promotes collaboration, communication, and engagement, which are essential for effective language learning (Huda, 2017; Nuraini & Safitri, 2021).

Although both the Scramble Word Game and the Make a Match method have been shown to positively affect students' language learning outcomes, most previous studies have examined these methods separately. Research has tended to focus on the effect of one game or method in isolation, without exploring the potential benefits of combining different game-based strategies within a single instructional framework. In addition, many studies have focused on vocabulary mastery or general learning motivation, rather than specifically examining reading comprehension as an integrated skill (Fitria, 2020; Nuraini & Safitri, 2021). As a result, there is limited empirical evidence on whether combining the Scramble Word Game and the Make a Match method can produce a stronger effect on students' reading comprehension, particularly at the junior high school level.

This gap is important because reading comprehension involves multiple sub-skills, including vocabulary recognition, sentence understanding, and meaning construction. Using a single instructional method may not be sufficient to address these varied aspects. Integrating the Scramble Word Game and the Make a Match method has the potential to support reading comprehension more comprehensively. The Scramble Word Game can help students focus on vocabulary and sentence structure, while the Make a Match method can reinforce comprehension through cooperative learning and peer interaction. However, empirical studies that investigate the combined use of these two methods in EFL reading instruction are still scarce, especially in the Indonesian junior high school context.

Therefore, the research problem addressed in this study is whether the combined use of the Scramble Word Game and the Make a Match method can significantly improve students' reading comprehension. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following question: Is there a significant difference in students' reading comprehension before and after the implementation of the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method? By addressing this research problem, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of integrating game-based learning strategies in EFL reading instruction.

The present study focuses on eighth-grade students at a junior high school and employs a pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. By examining students' reading comprehension before and after the implementation of the combined methods, this study aims to determine the extent to which these game-based strategies contribute to students' reading improvement. The findings of this study are expected to offer practical insights for English teachers in designing more engaging and effective reading instruction. Moreover, the study contributes to the existing literature by filling the research gap related to the combined use of Scramble Word Game and Make a Match in improving EFL students' reading comprehension.

Literature Review

a. Reading Comprehension in EFL Junior High School Contexts

Reading comprehension is a complex skill that involves decoding text, understanding vocabulary, interpreting sentence meaning, and constructing overall meaning from written discourse. In EFL junior high school contexts, reading comprehension is often challenging because students are still developing basic language proficiency while being required to understand texts written in a foreign language. Recent studies indicate that junior high school students commonly struggle with identifying main ideas, understanding implicit meaning, and connecting information across sentences and paragraphs (Amalia & Pratama, 2019; Wahyuni, 2020). These difficulties suggest that reading comprehension problems at this level are multidimensional and require instructional approaches that address both linguistic and cognitive aspects of reading.

Several researchers have emphasized that students' reading difficulties are closely related to limited vocabulary knowledge and weak understanding of sentence structure. According to Septiani and Rahayu (2021), students with limited vocabulary tend to focus excessively on word-level meaning, which prevents them from comprehending the text as a whole. In addition, students often experience difficulty understanding sentence relationships, especially when texts contain complex grammatical structures. These findings highlight the need for instructional strategies that actively engage students in processing vocabulary and sentence meaning during reading activities.

b. Game-Based Learning in EFL Reading Instruction

Game-based learning has gained increasing attention as an effective instructional approach in EFL classrooms, particularly for young learners and junior high school students. Games create an interactive learning environment that encourages active participation, reduces learning anxiety, and increases students' motivation (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015). In reading instruction, games can support comprehension by allowing students to interact with texts in meaningful ways rather than passively receiving information. Recent empirical studies have shown that game-based learning can significantly improve students' reading comprehension. For example, Utami and Hasanah (2020) found that students who learned reading through educational games demonstrated better comprehension and higher engagement compared to those who received conventional instruction. Similarly, Lestari and Wulandari (2022) reported that game-based reading activities helped students understand vocabulary in context and improved their ability to answer comprehension questions. These studies suggest that games are not merely entertaining tools but can function as effective pedagogical strategies when integrated appropriately into reading instruction.

c. Scramble Word Game in Language Learning

The Scramble Word Game is a learning activity that requires students to arrange jumbled words into meaningful forms, such as correct words, phrases, or sentences. This activity encourages students to actively process vocabulary, word order, and sentence structure. Research has shown that scramble-based activities can enhance students' vocabulary recognition and grammatical awareness, which are essential components of reading comprehension (Kurniawan & Sari, 2018). In the context of reading instruction, the Scramble Word Game has been found to help students understand sentence meaning by focusing their attention on how words function together in context. A study by Pratiwi (2019) revealed that students who participated in scramble word activities showed improvement in understanding sentence structure and identifying key information in reading texts. However, most studies on the Scramble Word Game have focused primarily on vocabulary mastery or grammar learning, with limited emphasis on its direct impact on overall reading comprehension.

d. Make a Match Method in Cooperative Learning

The Make a Match method is a cooperative learning strategy that involves matching pairs of related information, such as questions and answers or words and meanings. This method encourages collaboration, communication, and peer interaction, which are important elements of effective language learning. Cooperative learning strategies like Make a Match have been shown to promote deeper understanding by allowing students to share ideas and negotiate meaning with peers (Slavin, 2015). Recent studies indicate that the Make a Match method can improve students' learning outcomes in EFL classrooms. For instance, Handayani and Kusuma (2021) found that students taught using the Make a Match method demonstrated better comprehension and higher motivation in reading lessons. Another study by Rizky and Ananda (2022) reported that Make a Match activities helped students reinforce their understanding of text content through repeated exposure and peer discussion. These findings suggest

that cooperative learning methods are effective in supporting reading comprehension by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Scramble Word Game and the Make a Match method in EFL instruction, most research has examined these strategies independently. There is limited research that investigates the combined use of Scramble Word Game and Make a Match as an integrated instructional approach, particularly in reading comprehension instruction at the junior high school level. Moreover, many existing studies focus on vocabulary acquisition or student motivation rather than examining reading comprehension as a comprehensive skill. Therefore, there is a clear research gap concerning the effectiveness of integrating Scramble Word Game and Make a Match to improve students' reading comprehension. This study addresses this gap by examining whether the combined application of these two game-based learning strategies can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension. By doing so, the study contributes to the development of more effective and engaging reading instruction strategies for EFL junior high school students.

Methodology

This study employed a pre-experimental research design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach to examine the effect of the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method on students' reading comprehension. This design was selected because it allowed the researcher to measure changes in students' reading comprehension before and after the implementation of the instructional treatment within a natural classroom setting. The participants of the study were 24 eighth-grade students of a junior high school. The participants were selected using total sampling, as all students in the class were involved in the study. The selection was based on practical considerations and access, as the class represented a typical EFL learning context at the junior high school level. All participants had received regular English instruction prior to the study and had similar learning backgrounds.

Data were collected using a reading comprehension test administered as a pre-test and a post-test. The test consisted of multiple-choice questions based on reading texts aligned with the students' grade level and curriculum. The test measured students' ability to identify main ideas, understand specific information, interpret vocabulary in context, and comprehend overall text meaning. Prior to implementation, the test items were reviewed by an English teacher to ensure content validity and suitability for the participants' proficiency level. The treatment was conducted over several instructional sessions. During the treatment, the Scramble Word Game was used to help students rearrange jumbled words into correct sentences related to the reading texts, focusing on vocabulary recognition and sentence structure. The Make a Match method was then applied by asking students to match questions with answers or vocabulary with meanings through pair and group activities. These activities encouraged active participation, cooperation, and discussion among students while engaging with the reading texts.

Data analysis was conducted by comparing students' pre-test and post-test scores. The data were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores before and after the treatment. Prior to analysis, the data were checked to ensure completeness and accuracy. The significance level was set at 0.05. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school. The students were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily. Confidentiality was maintained by using codes instead of students' names in data reporting.

Result

This study investigated the effect of the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method on students' reading comprehension using a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The results are presented through descriptive statistics and inferential analysis to show both score distribution and statistical significance.

1. Students Reading Comprehension Score

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	24	45	70	58.25	6.84
Post-test	24	65	90	78.10	7.12

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' reading comprehension scores before and after the treatment. The pre-test results indicate that students' initial reading comprehension ability was relatively low, with a mean score of 58.25. The minimum score of 45 shows that several students experienced serious difficulty in understanding reading texts, particularly in identifying main ideas and interpreting vocabulary. The maximum score of 70 suggests that even the higher-performing students had not yet achieved optimal reading comprehension.

After the implementation of the Scramble Word Game and Make a Match method, students' reading comprehension scores showed a clear improvement. The post-test mean score increased to 78.10, reflecting a substantial gain in students' overall reading performance. The increase in the minimum score from 45 to 65 indicates that lower-achieving students also benefited from the treatment. Similarly, the increase in the maximum score from 70 to 90 demonstrates that higher-achieving students were able to further develop their reading comprehension skills.

The standard deviation values in both tests are relatively similar, suggesting that the score distribution remained stable. This indicates that the improvement occurred evenly across students rather than benefiting only a small group. Overall, the descriptive data show that the treatment positively influenced students' reading comprehension at different proficiency levels.

2. Hypothesis Testing

To determine whether the improvement in students' reading comprehension was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Results

Comparison	Mean Difference	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test – Post-test	-19.85	-12.47	0.000

Table 2 shows the results of the paired sample t-test comparing students' pre-test and post-test scores. The mean difference of -19.85 indicates that students' post-test scores were, on average, nearly 20 points higher than their pre-test scores. This large mean difference reflects a strong improvement in reading comprehension after the treatment. The t-value of -12.47 is considerably higher than the critical t-value at the 0.05 significance level, indicating a strong statistical effect. Furthermore, the significance value ($p = 0.000$) is lower than 0.05, which means that the difference between pre-test and post-test scores is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that the Scramble Word Game and Make a Match method have no effect on students' reading comprehension was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The statistical results confirm that the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method significantly improved students' reading comprehension. The increase in mean scores, supported by a significant t-test result, indicates that the treatment was effective in enhancing students' ability to understand reading texts. The interactive and cooperative nature of the learning activities likely helped students engage more actively with vocabulary, sentence structure, and text meaning. These findings provide quantitative evidence that game-based learning strategies can be an effective approach to improving reading comprehension among eighth-grade EFL students.

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method on students' reading comprehension. The quantitative findings demonstrate a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after the implementation of the game-based learning

activities. The increase in the post-test mean score, supported by the paired sample t-test results, indicates that the instructional treatment had a positive and meaningful effect on students' reading performance.

The improvement in students' reading comprehension can be attributed to the interactive and student-centered nature of the learning methods used in this study. The Scramble Word Game required students to actively rearrange words and sentences, which helped them focus on vocabulary recognition, word order, and sentence meaning. This activity likely supported students' ability to process linguistic elements more effectively during reading. Previous studies have shown that active manipulation of language forms can enhance reading comprehension by strengthening students' awareness of how words and sentences function in context (Pratiwi & Nugroho, 2019; Lestari, 2020). The findings of the present study support these conclusions by providing quantitative evidence that scramble-based activities contribute to improved reading outcomes.

In addition, the Make a Match method encouraged cooperative learning through peer interaction. During the activities, students worked together to match questions, answers, or vocabulary items related to the reading texts. This interaction allowed students to exchange ideas, clarify misunderstandings, and reinforce comprehension collaboratively. Cooperative learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach in EFL classrooms because it promotes active engagement and shared responsibility for learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). The significant increase in students' post-test scores suggests that peer interaction played an important role in helping students understand reading texts more effectively.

The descriptive statistics also show that improvement occurred across different proficiency levels. The increase in the minimum score indicates that lower-achieving students benefited from the treatment, while the higher maximum score demonstrates that higher-achieving students were able to further develop their reading comprehension skills. This finding suggests that the combined use of Scramble Word Game and Make a Match method is inclusive and effective for students with varying levels of reading ability. Similar findings were reported by Sari and Wahyuni (2021), who found that game-based learning activities helped reduce performance gaps by supporting weaker students while still challenging stronger learners. Another important finding of this study is the relatively stable standard deviation between the pre-test and post-test scores. This suggests that the improvement in reading comprehension was evenly distributed among students rather than concentrated in a small group. Such results indicate that the instructional treatment was effective as a whole-class strategy. This supports the argument that interactive and cooperative learning methods can create equitable learning opportunities in EFL classrooms (Susanti & Rahman, 2022).

Compared to previous studies that examined the Scramble Word Game or Make a Match method separately, this study provides new insight by demonstrating the effectiveness of combining both methods in reading comprehension instruction. While earlier research has shown that scramble activities improve vocabulary mastery and that Make a Match enhances motivation and engagement, limited studies have investigated their combined impact on reading comprehension (Fauzi & Ananda, 2020; Handayani, 2021). The significant results of this study suggest that integrating multiple game-based strategies can address different aspects of reading comprehension, including vocabulary understanding, sentence processing, and overall text comprehension. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of this study have important implications for EFL teachers. The results suggest that reading instruction should move beyond traditional teacher-centered approaches and incorporate interactive activities that actively involve students in the learning process. Game-based learning strategies such as Scramble Word Game and Make a Match can help create a more engaging classroom environment, increase students' motivation, and improve reading comprehension outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these methods according to students' needs and reading levels to maximize their effectiveness.

Despite its positive findings, this study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the use of a pre-experimental design without a control group limits the ability to attribute the improvement solely to the treatment. Future studies may employ quasi-experimental or true experimental designs with control groups to strengthen causal conclusions. Second, the sample size was relatively small and limited to one class, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Further research involving larger samples and different school contexts is recommended. Finally, this study focused on short-term improvement in reading comprehension. Longitudinal studies could explore

whether the effects of game-based learning strategies are sustained over time. The findings of this study confirm that the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method is an effective instructional approach for improving students' reading comprehension. By providing quantitative evidence of its effectiveness, this study contributes to the growing body of research on game-based learning in EFL contexts and offers practical guidance for teachers seeking to enhance reading instruction through interactive and cooperative learning strategies.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of the Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method on students' reading comprehension at the junior high school level. The results of the pre-test and post-test analysis indicate that the implementation of these game-based learning strategies led to a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension. The increase in mean scores and the results of the paired sample t-test confirm that the combined instructional approach was effective in enhancing students' ability to understand English reading texts. The findings show that the improvement in reading comprehension occurred across different levels of student ability. Both lower- and higher-achieving students demonstrated progress after participating in the Scramble Word Game and Make a Match activities. This suggests that the combined methods provide an inclusive learning approach that supports diverse learners by promoting active engagement, collaboration, and meaningful interaction with reading materials. From a pedagogical perspective, the study highlights the importance of incorporating interactive and cooperative learning strategies into EFL reading instruction. The Scramble Word Game helped students develop vocabulary recognition and sentence understanding, while the Make a Match method encouraged peer interaction and reinforced comprehension through collaborative learning. Together, these methods created a more engaging learning environment that supported students' reading comprehension development. Despite the positive findings, this study has several limitations. The use of a pre-experimental design without a control group limits the ability to draw strong causal conclusions. In addition, the relatively small sample size and the focus on a single classroom context may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research is recommended to use experimental designs with control groups, larger samples, and longer treatment durations to examine the sustained effects of game-based learning strategies on reading comprehension. The Scramble Word Game combined with the Make a Match method can be considered an effective alternative strategy for teaching reading comprehension in EFL classrooms. English teachers are encouraged to integrate these game-based learning activities into their reading instruction to enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes.

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