



The effect of unscramble words feature in Educaplay on seventh grade students' understanding of sentence patterns at SMPN 13 Padang

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Abstract:

Understanding sentence patterns is an important aspect of learning English; however, many junior high school students face difficulties when learning relies mainly on traditional grammar exercises. This study aimed to investigate the extent to which the use of Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay improved seventh-grade students' understanding of sentence patterns at SMPN 13 Padang. A quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design was employed, involving 32 seventh-grade students from Class 7.9. The students completed a pre- test, received six treatment sessions using Unscramble Words feature, and then completed a post-test. The results showed an improvement in students' post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores after repeated and structured sentence-arrangement practice. The improvement reflects students' ability to apply sentence patterns to new sentences rather than simply memorizing previously learned items. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, indicating that the alternative hypothesis was accepted. These findings suggest that Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay can be implemented as an interactive learning medium to support students' understanding of sentence patterns in similar classroom contexts.

Keywords:

Sentence patterns, educaplay, unscramble words, gamified learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding sentence patterns is an essential part of grammar learning because it shows how sentence elements work together to create meaning (Fitri, 2017). In English, sentence patterns describe how key elements such as subjects, verbs, objects, complements, and adverbials are arranged in specific structures (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2009). Similarly, Eastwood (1994) states that English sentences follow a fixed word order, which helps learners understand how meaningful sentences are formed. Therefore, mastering sentence patterns is fundamental for students to form grammatically correct sentences.

However, despite its importance, many students still experience difficulties in understanding and applying sentence patterns. Din and Ghani (2018) found that students often

struggle to distinguish between grammatical elements such as adjectives and adverbs, as well as to recognize correct sentence patterns. Similarly, Qamariah and Aini (2021) reported that difficulties in identifying word types make it harder for students to form correct sentences. These findings indicate that students need more effective learning strategies that allow them to actively engage with sentence formation.

From a theoretical perspective, learning grammar is more effective when students actively construct their knowledge through meaningful activities. Cognitive constructivism explains that learners build their understanding through interaction with tasks and experiences rather than passively receiving information (Woolfolk, 2016; Schunk, 2012). In line with this, Harmer (2007) emphasizes that language learning becomes more effective when students are involved in using the language. Therefore, grammar instruction should provide opportunities for students to actively practice and apply sentence patterns.

In addition, digital learning media have been widely recognized as effective tools to support grammar learning. Previous studies have shown that digital environments provide active practice, increase students' engagement, and offer immediate feedback, which helps learners understand grammatical structures more effectively (Saeedi & Biri, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2018; Al-Essa, 2017). Immediate feedback, from a behavioral perspective, reinforces correct responses and helps students improve their learning through repetition (Woolfolk, 2016; Anderman et al., 2024). Therefore, integrating digital media into grammar instruction can create a more interactive and effective learning environment.

Furthermore, one approach that enhances digital learning is gamification. Gamification refers to the integration of game elements into learning activities to increase students' motivation and engagement (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017; Botra et al., 2014). Previous studies have reported that gamified grammar activities can improve students' participation, attention, and motivation (Asifayanti et al., 2021). In addition, affective factors such as enjoyment and interest play an important role in making learning more meaningful and engaging for students.

One example of a gamified digital learning platform is Educaplay. Educaplay provides various interactive activities that promote students' engagement in EFL learning (Castillo-Cuesta, 2020). It also allows teachers to design activities based on specific learning objectives, making it flexible and adaptable to classroom needs (Vargas-Saritama & Espinoza-Celi, 2024). Through its interactive features, Educaplay supports active learning, repeated practice, and immediate feedback.

One relevant feature in Educaplay is the Unscramble Words activity, which requires students to arrange jumbled words into correct sentences. This activity is closely related to sentence patterns learning because it directly trains students to recognize correct word order. According to Yuliana et al. (2014), jumbled-words activities help learners transform disorganized words into meaningful sentences. Thornbury (1999) also emphasizes that such activities encourage active engagement with grammar, while Meidiastuti and Safitri (2021) found that word arrangement activities improve students' understanding of grammar and sentence patterns.

Although previous studies have shown that jumbled-words activities are effective, most of them have been conducted using non-digital media (Riska, 2023; Wulandari, 2019; Sahathevan & Yamat, 2020; Afrizal, 2016; Juhansar et al., 2022). These traditional approaches often require extensive preparation and may lack interactivity, which can reduce students' engagement. On the other hand, studies on Educaplay have mainly focused on vocabulary learning, motivation, or students' perceptions rather than on sentence patterns (Vargas-Saritama & Espinoza-Celi, 2024; Dewi et al., 2025; Abigail & Janeth, 2025; Wangsawan et al., 2025; Saputri, 2025; Cuenca & Pila, 2025). Therefore, there is still limited research that

integrates jumbled-words activities with digital gamified platforms to specifically improve students' understanding of sentence patterns.

In the context of Kurikulum Merdeka (2025), seventh-grade students are expected to produce simple English sentences to express likes, dislikes, and preferences in both written and spoken forms. Although sentence patterns are not explicitly stated, these learning objectives require students to understand basic sentence patterns accurately. This is because students need to arrange words in the correct order to form meaningful sentences. Without a clear understanding of sentence patterns, students may face difficulties in expressing their ideas correctly.

In the classroom context of SMPN 13 Padang, based on an informal interview with a seventh-grade English teacher, students experienced difficulties in arranging jumbled words into meaningful sentences. Classroom instruction mainly relied on traditional methods, such as board-based explanations and textbook-based activities, with limited use of interactive digital media. This situation highlights the need for more engaging and effective learning tools.

Based on the theoretical framework and previous studies, jumbled-words activities and digital gamified learning both have strong potential to support grammar learning. However, there is still limited research that combines these approaches in teaching sentence patterns. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the extent to which the Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay improves seventh-grade students' understanding of sentence patterns at SMPN 13 Padang. This study focuses on Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) and Subject–Verb–Object–Adverbial (SVOA) patterns, which are appropriate for students' proficiency level and aligned with curriculum objectives. By integrating gamified digital learning practice with jumbled-word activities, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the contribution of a digital gamified tool to students' grammatical understanding in an interactive learning environment.

2. METHOD

Research design

The study was conducted using quantitative research and applied a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test. This design is used to measure students' improvement by comparing their scores before and after the treatment (Creswell, 2012; Phakiti, 2014). It allows the researcher to identify whether the instructional intervention has a significant effect on students' learning. This design was chosen because it is suitable for examining improvement in a single group without a control group.

Population and sample

The population of this study consisted of three seventh-grade classes at SMPN 13 Padang, namely Classes 7.7, 7.8, and 7.9, with a total of 96 students. These classes were selected as the target population because they were taught by the same English teacher and were identified as having similar difficulties in arranging jumbled words into correct English sentence patterns. This population was considered appropriate because it represents students with similar learning characteristics and challenges related to sentence pattern learning.

Cluster sampling was employed since the students were already organized into intact classroom groups with similar learning characteristics (Gay et al., 2012). From the three classes, one class was selected as the research sample using a simple random procedure. The class names (Class 7.7, 7.8, and 7.9) were written on separate slips of paper, mixed in a container, and randomly drawn. As a result, Class 7.9, consisted of 32 students, was selected as the sample.

Instrumentation

Data were gathered using a grammar achievement test administered before and after the treatment. Through this instrument, students were required to rearrange jumbled words into well-formed English sentences based on the Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) and Subject–Verb–Object–Adverbial (SVOA) patterns. This test was used to measure students' ability in forming correct sentence patterns and to identify their improvement after the treatment.

Each test consisted of 30 items related to expressing likes, dislikes, and preferences, developed in line with the syllabus for seventh-grade students. The items covered affirmative, negative, and interrogative sentence forms using familiar vocabulary related to hobbies, sports, food, and drinks. The test was designed to measure students' understanding of sentence patterns and the completeness of sentence elements, including subject, verb, object, and adverbial.

The pre-test and post-test used different sentence arrangements from those used in the treatment while maintaining the same vocabulary set to minimize memorization effects and assess students' ability to apply sentence patterns to new sentence forms. Both tests were paper-based and administered within 45 minutes, following the school's standard time allocation for English assessments.

Validity and reliability

The content validity of the instrument was confirmed through an expert review conducted by an English lecturer from Universitas Negeri Padang. The expert reviewed the test items to ensure alignment with indicators, sentence patterns (SVO and SVOA), sentence elements, and the topics of likes, dislikes, and preferences. Revisions were made based on the feedback prior to the implementation of the instrument.

Construct validity was examined through a pilot test administered to a non-sample class (Class 7.7). The pilot test consisted of 40 sentence-arrangement items. Students' responses were analyzed using Corrected Item–Total Correlation in SPSS, with correlation values compared to the *r*-table value at the 0.05 significance level ($r = 0.381$). Based on the analysis, 32 items met the validity criterion and were classified as valid, while 8 items were identified as invalid and removed. From the valid items, 30 items were selected and finalized for use in the pre-test and post-test to ensure alignment with the research indicators.

To evaluate the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was computed using the pilot test data. The coefficient obtained was 0.942, indicating that the instrument met the criteria for high internal consistency. According to De Vaus (2002), a reliability coefficient above 0.80 reflects a reliable instrument. Therefore, the test was considered reliable and appropriate for measuring students' understanding of sentence patterns.

Techniques of data collection

Data were collected through several steps. First, a pre-test was administered in the classroom to measure students' initial understanding of sentence patterns. The test was paper-based, and students were asked to arrange jumbled words into correct sentences within 45 minutes.

After that, six treatment sessions were conducted in the classroom using the Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay. The activities were carried out individually, and each student used their own smartphone to access Educaplay through a link provided by the teacher. During the sessions, students practiced arranging jumbled words into correct sentences through interactive exercises.

Finally, a post-test was administered in the classroom after the treatment to measure

students' improvement. The test was also paper-based and conducted for 45 minutes under the same conditions as the pre-test. The results of the pre-test and post-test were then compared to determine the effect of the treatment.

Techniques of data analysis

All quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 for Windows. An initial descriptive analysis was conducted to examine students' performance before and after the treatment. Prior to inferential analysis, the distribution of the data was assessed through the Shapiro–Wilk normality test. The findings indicated that the assumption of normal distribution was not fully satisfied. Consequently, a non-parametric statistical procedure was adopted. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was then employed to determine whether a significant difference existed between the pre-test and post-test scores.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the pre-test and post-test. It also provides the statistical analyses conducted to examine the data. These analyses were used to determine whether the Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay improved students' understanding of sentence patterns.

Research Finding

Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

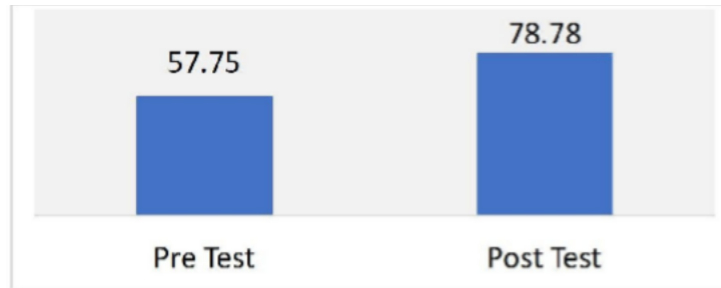
The participants of this study were 32 seventh-grade students from Class 7.9. Their understanding of English sentence patterns was evaluated through a pre-test conducted prior to the treatment and a post-test administered after the implementation of Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay. The descriptive statistics of both tests are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test scores

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Score	32	7	96	57.75	56.50	23.055
Post-Test Score	32	30	100	78.78	83.00	20.647

The results indicate that students' initial understanding of sentence patterns was relatively low, as reflected by a mean score of 57.75 and a median score of 56.50. After the treatment, both the mean and median scores increased to 78.78 and 83.00, respectively, while the minimum score increased from 7 to 30. The improvement in both the mean and median scores suggests that the gain was not limited to a small number of high-performing students but was generally reflected across most students.

To provide a clearer comparison, the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test are illustrated in Graphic 1.



Graphic 1. Comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores

As presented in the graph, the mean score obtained in the post-test was higher than that of the pre-test. This result indicates that there was an improvement in students' ability after the treatment. It also reflects the positive effect of the Unscramble Words feature on students' ability to form correct sentence patterns from jumbled words.

Normality Testing

Before selecting the appropriate inferential test, the distribution characteristics of the data were examined. Given that the number of participants was fewer than fifty, the Shapiro–Wilk test was chosen to assess normality, and the outcomes are presented in Table 2. This test was used to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The result of this analysis was then used as the basis for selecting the appropriate statistical test for further analysis.

Table 2. Normality test result (shapiro-wilk)

Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		Shapiro-		
	Wilk Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df Sig.
Pre-TestScore	.107	32	.200*	.962	32 .319
Post-TestScore	.161	32	.035	.888	32 .003

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The analysis showed that the pre-test scores met the criteria for normal distribution, with a significance value of 0.319, exceeding the 0.05 threshold. However, the post-test scores did not demonstrate normal distribution, as indicated by a p-value of 0.003, which fell below the accepted significance level. Because normality was not achieved across both sets of data, the use of a parametric test was not appropriate. Consequently, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was employed to evaluate whether a statistically significant difference occurred between the pre-test and post-test results.

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test are presented in Table 3. This test was used to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of the same group of students. It was chosen because the data were not normally distributed, so a non-parametric test was considered more appropriate.

Table 3. Wilcoxon signed rank test results

Test Statistics ^a	
	Post Test Score - Pre Test Score
Z	-4.545 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
c. Based on negative ranks.

The statistical results indicated that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, as shown by a Z value of -4.545 with a significance level below 0.000. This means that there was a meaningful difference between students' scores before and after the treatment. This result indicates that students achieved better performance after participating in the learning activities using the Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay. Therefore, the treatment had a positive effect on students' ability to form correct sentence patterns.

Ranks Output Interpretation

To examine the direction of the score changes, the Wilcoxon ranks output is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Ranks result of wilcoxon signed ranked test

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post Test Score - Pre Test Score	Negative Ranks	2 ^a	10.50	21.00
	Positive Ranks	30 ^b	16.90	507.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	32		

d. Post Test Score < Pre Test Score
e. Post Test Score > Pre Test Score
f. Post Test Score = Pre Test Score

The results show that 30 students experienced an increase in their scores, while only 2 students showed a decrease. Additionally, no student obtained identical scores on both tests, as indicated by the absence of ties. The large number of positive ranks indicates that the improvement occurred consistently among most students. This finding suggests that the treatment had a positive impact on students' performance. It also shows that the use of the Unscramble Words feature helped most students improve their ability in forming correct sentence patterns.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores, indicating that students' understanding of sentence patterns improved after the treatment. This improvement can be explained through the concept of active learning and practice in grammar instruction. Harmer (2007) states that learning becomes more effective when students are actively involved in using the language rather than only studying its rules. In this study, students were actively engaged in arranging jumbled words into meaningful sentences, which allowed them to practice sentence formation repeatedly.

From a cognitive constructivist perspective, learners build their understanding through active interaction with learning tasks. The Unscramble Words activities required students to think about word order and sentence pattern, which supported them in constructing their own understanding of sentence patterns. This is relevant to the nature of sentence patterns as explained by Greenbaum and Nelson (2009) and Eastwood (1994), who state that English sentences follow specific structural arrangements. Through repeated exposure to these patterns, students were able to internalize how sentence elements such as subject, verb, and object are organized.

In addition, jumbled-words activities are designed to help learners transform disorganized words into meaningful sentences (Yuliana et al., 2014). Thornbury (1999) also emphasizes that such activities encourage active engagement with grammar, which leads to better understanding. Therefore, the improvement found in this study can be interpreted as the result of students' active involvement and repeated practice in forming sentence patterns.

The findings of this study are also supported by previous research. Riska (2023) found that arranging jumbled words helped students form sentences more accurately and increased their motivation. Similarly, Wulandari (2019) reported that such activities supported students' understanding of sentence patterns without requiring memorization. Other studies also showed that arranging jumbled words helped students identify sentence elements such as subjects, verbs, and objects more clearly (Sahathevan & Yamat, 2020; Juhansar et al., 2022; Afrizal, 2016). These findings support the present study and strengthen the argument that word-arranging activities are effective in helping students understand sentence patterns because Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay applies the same principle of arranging words into correct sentences, but in a digital and gamified format.

Furthermore, the use of the Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay can also be explained through the concept of gamification in learning, which integrates game elements to increase students' engagement (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). The interactive and game-like nature of the activity made students more motivated and actively involved in the learning process. This supports the idea that affective factors such as enjoyment and interest contribute to more meaningful learning experiences.

In addition, from a behavioral perspective, learning occurs through stimulus and response. Educaplay provides immediate feedback, allowing students to recognize and correct their mistakes directly. This immediate feedback reinforces correct sentence patterns and helps students improve their grammatical accuracy through repeated practice. This is also in line with previous studies which reported that digital learning media support grammar learning by providing active practice, engagement, and immediate feedback (Saedi & Biri, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2018; Al-Essa, 2017).

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous research on the use of Educaplay in English learning. Previous studies have reported that Educaplay improves students' learning outcomes, motivation, and engagement through interactive activities

(Vargas-Saritama & Espinoza-Celi, 2024; Dewi et al., 2025). In this study, students also showed greater enthusiasm and participation during the Unscramble Words activities, which may have contributed to their improved understanding of sentence patterns.

Although two students obtained lower scores in the post-test, this condition did not affect the overall pattern of improvement demonstrated by most students. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test still indicated a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. This means that the overall results remained positive despite a small number of decreases. In this study, the decrease in these two students' scores was not examined further. Therefore, the specific reasons for this decline cannot be determined.

However, previous studies report that lower test performance can be influenced by test anxiety, which has been found to negatively affect students' English test results and is commonly associated with worry, tension, emotional reactions, and physical or bodily symptoms (Waluyo et al., 2025). Other research also reports a negative relationship between test performance and test anxiety, meaning that when anxiety increases, students' performance tends to decrease (Khoshhal, 2021). In addition, Aydin et al. (2020) explain that students' test performance may also be affected by factors such as fear of failure, previous negative testing experiences, limited study skills, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, poor language proficiency, and problems in test administration. These factors may influence students' concentration and performance during testing situations.

Apart from psychological aspects, several studies have noted that test performance may also be influenced by situational or environmental conditions during the testing process. Fulcher (2010) explains that environmental factors can affect test outcomes. Cohen and Wollack (2006, as cited in Fulcher, 2010) further state that students' performance may be lower than their actual ability when test administration conditions, such as room temperature or noise levels, are not optimal.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay supports the improvement of students' understanding of sentence patterns. This improvement can be explained by students' active involvement in learning, repeated practice, immediate feedback, and increased motivation through gamified activities. The combination of these elements makes the Unscramble Words feature a useful alternative tool for teaching sentence patterns in similar classroom contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the use of the Unscramble Words feature in Educaplay contributed to an improvement in seventh-grade students' understanding of sentence patterns within the context of the class involved in this research. The findings showed that students achieved higher scores after the implementation of the learning activity. This indicates that their understanding of sentence patterns improved after receiving the treatment. Therefore, the use of this feature can be considered an effective tool to support students' grammar learning, especially in forming correct sentence patterns.

Since the pre-test and post-test used different sentences from those in the treatment sessions, while maintaining the same vocabulary, the improvement in students' scores suggests that they were able to apply their understanding of sentence patterns to different sentence forms. This means that students did not rely only on memorization during the learning process. Through repeated practice using the Unscramble Words feature, students became more familiar with identifying and arranging sentence elements correctly. As a result, they were able to form sentences more accurately and confidently.

Overall, the positive results of this study indicate that interactive digital learning media such as Educaplay, especially the Unscramble Words feature, can be implemented as a supporting learning tool in teaching sentence patterns. This tool is particularly useful for junior high school students in similar classroom contexts. It helps students practice sentence patterns in an engaging and interactive way.

However, several limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. First, the pre-test and post-test employed the same test format, which may raise the possibility of a testing effect, where students' post-test performance could be influenced by their familiarity with the test. However, this potential bias was minimized by the time gap of approximately three weeks between the pre-test and post-test, and by the fact that the test items and answers were not discussed with the students after the pre-test.

Second, this study employed a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group. As a result, the improvement observed cannot be compared with students who did not receive the treatment. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of this class and research design, and further research is needed to examine its effectiveness across different learning conditions and instructional contexts.

Moreover, this study used the free version of Educaplay, which involved several technical limitations such as advertisements, loading delays, and unstable internet connections. These issues may have affected the learning process and students' overall experience during the activities. Therefore, future studies may consider using the premium version of Educaplay or alternative platforms to minimize technical disruptions. By reducing these limitations, the learning activities can be conducted more effectively.

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