



IMPLEMENTING JUMBLED STORY TO ENHANCE BOOKISH PLAY IN TEACHING READING TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the implementation of jumbled story as a form of bookish play in teaching reading to young learners and to explore its advantages for students' reading skills. The study employed a qualitative research approach involving 42 fourth-grade elementary school students in Cianjur, West Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that the use of jumbled story activities encouraged active student engagement, collaboration, and meaningful interaction with texts. Students demonstrated positive reading-related behaviors, such as rereading, sequencing events, predicting story development, and discussing ideas with peers. Interview results indicated that students responded positively to the activity, reporting increased motivation, enjoyment, and improved understanding of story structure and vocabulary. The discussion of the findings suggests that jumbled story supports constructivist learning, schema activation, and play-based learning principles, which contribute to effective reading instruction for young learners. Therefore, jumbled story can be considered an effective and engaging instructional technique for enhancing bookish play in teaching reading in EFL classrooms.

Key Words: jumbled story, bookish play, reading instruction, young learners

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill in learning English, particularly for young learners who are still developing basic literacy and language competence. Reading enables learners to acquire vocabulary, understand sentence structures, and construct meaning from written texts. According to Nation (2020), reading plays a crucial role in language development because it provides learners with meaningful input that supports vocabulary growth and comprehension skills. In EFL contexts, effective reading instruction is essential to help young learners build a strong foundation in English.

However, teaching reading to young learners remains challenging. Many reading lessons are still conducted using conventional approaches, such as reading aloud, translating texts, and answering comprehension questions. These activities often



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emphasize decoding rather than comprehension and engagement. Grabe and Stoller (2021) argue that reading instruction should focus on meaning-making processes instead of isolated word recognition. When reading activities are not engaging, young learners may lose interest and struggle to understand texts meaningfully.

Young learners have specific characteristics that require appropriate instructional approaches. They tend to learn better through activities that are interactive, meaningful, and enjoyable. Pinter (2021) emphasizes that young learners learn language more effectively when they are actively involved in the learning process and when learning activities are connected to play. Therefore, reading instruction for young learners should integrate play-based and interactive strategies that support engagement and comprehension.

One approach that integrates reading and play is bookish play. Bookish play refers to literacy-related play activities in which children interact with books and stories creatively through imagination, role-play, and manipulation of story elements. Nicolopoulou et al. (2020) state that bookish play helps children develop early literacy skills by allowing them to explore story meaning in playful and meaningful ways. Through bookish play, learners become active participants in the reading process rather than passive readers.

A technique that supports bookish play in reading instruction is the jumbled story activity. Jumbled story involves presenting a story with sentences or paragraphs arranged in a random order and asking learners to rearrange them into a coherent sequence. According to Shin and Crandall (2021), sequencing activities encourage learners to focus on meaning, logical order, and text structure. By engaging in jumbled story activities, young learners can develop reading comprehension skills while enjoying reading as a playful and problem-solving activity (Helmie 2022).

Although previous studies suggest that play-based and story-based activities are beneficial for young learners, the implementation of jumbled story as a form of bookish play in teaching reading has not been widely explored, particularly in EFL contexts. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how jumbled story is implemented to enhance bookish play in teaching reading to young learners and to identify the advantages of using jumbled story for learners' reading skills.

This study is grounded in several relevant theories related to reading comprehension, young learners, and play-based learning. First, Constructivist Learning Theory emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with learning materials and experiences. Recent studies confirm that constructivist principles remain relevant in young learner classrooms, particularly in literacy instruction that involves active engagement (Pinter, 2021). Jumbled story activities support constructivist learning by encouraging learners to analyze, organize, and interpret textual information.

Second, Schema Theory explains that reading comprehension occurs when learners connect new information with their prior knowledge. Grabe and Stoller (2021) state that activating learners' background knowledge is essential for understanding texts. In jumbled story activities, learners use their existing knowledge of story structure, such as beginning, middle, and end, to reconstruct the text meaningfully.

Third, Play-Based Learning Theory highlights the importance of play in children's cognitive and language development. According to Bodrova and Leong (2022), play-based learning enhances motivation, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Bookish play applies this theory to literacy learning by integrating reading with playful activities (Helmie, Giani, and Saepuloh 2024). Jumbled story aligns with play-based learning principles because it transforms reading tasks into interactive and enjoyable learning experiences.



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In addition, Reading Comprehension Theory emphasizes that comprehension involves understanding text organization, coherence, and relationships between ideas. Nation (2020) argues that effective reading instruction should develop learners' ability to understand meaning beyond individual words. Jumbled story activities directly engage learners in practicing these comprehension skills through sequencing and meaning construction.

Recent studies have shown that story-based and interactive reading activities positively influence young learners' reading development. Research indicates that meaningful stories and interactive tasks can improve learners' engagement and comprehension (Pinter, 2021). Studies on sequencing and text arrangement activities also suggest that these techniques help learners understand text structure and coherence, which are essential components of reading comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2021).

Furthermore, research on play-based learning reports that integrating play into language instruction increases learners' motivation and participation in the classroom (Bodrova & Leong, 2022). Nicolopoulou et al. (2020) also found that bookish play supports early literacy development by encouraging children to interact actively with story content. However, studies that specifically focus on the implementation of jumbled story as a form of bookish play in teaching reading to young learners remain limited, particularly in EFL contexts. This research gap highlights the need for a qualitative investigation into how jumbled story activities are implemented and what advantages they offer for young learners' reading skills.

METHODS

The methodology used in this research was a qualitative approach. Creswell (2013) defined that Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. This study employed a qualitative approach that focused on observing students' behavior while they were engaged in the learning process.

The research instruments used in this study consisted of an observation sheet and interviews. The observation sheet served as a guideline for the researcher in observing the teaching and learning process, in which the researcher marked a checklist on the indicators or aspects that were achieved during the classroom activities. Through this instrument, the researcher was able to identify students' engagement throughout the learning process.

In addition to observation, interviews were conducted at the end of the lesson with two students. The interviews aimed to explore the students' experiences and opinions regarding English learning through the use of the jumbled story technique. The data obtained from both observation and interviews were then used to describe and analyze the learning process as well as students' responses to the implementation of the technique.

Research Site & Time

This research was conducted at an elementary school located in Cianjur Regency. The school was selected as the research site because it aligned with the objectives and focus of the study, as well as the target students. The research was carried out on November 17, 2025, and was conducted in a single learning session. During the implementation of the research, the researcher was directly involved in the teaching and learning process to collect the required data in accordance with the predetermined research instruments. This research involved 42 fourth-grade



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elementary school students in Cianjur, West Java, Indonesia, in the academic year 2025/2026.

Data Collection

The research instruments in this study consisted of two stages: observation and interview. According to Chand (2025) Observations provide a unique opportunity to study behaviours, interactions, and environmental contexts in real-time. Observation was conducted using an observation sheet, in which the researcher checked off the indicators that were carried out during the learning activities. This allowed the researcher to directly identify students' engagement throughout the learning process.

In addition to observation, interviews were conducted at the end of the session with two selected students. According to Chand (2025) Interviews are one of the most widely used methods for data collection in qualitative research. This enables researchers to explore the perspectives, experiences, and meanings of participants in depth. The interviews aimed to explore the students' experiences and opinions regarding the learning activities. The questions were designed to obtain in-depth data in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Data Analysis

According to Suryani & Mulyani (2025) Data analysis is an effort to systematically search and organize records of observations, interviews, and others to improve our understanding of the case under study and present it as findings for others. The data in this study were analyzed through several stages. In the initial stage, the researcher prepared and organized the data using an observation sheet, in which the researcher checked off the indicators that were carried out during the learning activities. The observation was conducted in a single session to examine students' engagement throughout the learning process.

After completing the observation, the researcher conducted interviews with two selected students. The interviews aimed to explore the students' experiences and opinions regarding English learning using the jumbled story technique. The data obtained from both observation and interviews were then coded, categorized, and analyzed to generate descriptions and themes related to students' engagement and their experiences during the learning process.

RESULTS

The results of the study were obtained from classroom observations and interviews conducted after the implementation of jumbled story activities. Classroom observation showed that most students demonstrated high enthusiasm and active participation during the lesson. Students followed the teacher's instructions, discussed the sequence of the story with their peers, and asked questions related to vocabulary and meaning. Many students reread sentences, identified main ideas, and predicted story events, indicating active involvement in the reading comprehension process.

Although a small number of students showed decreased attention toward the end of the lesson, the overall classroom atmosphere remained positive. Most students worked collaboratively and showed confidence in completing the activity. Interview results indicated that students had positive responses toward the jumbled story activity. They reported enjoying the lesson because it was fun, interactive, and different from



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conventional reading activities. Students also stated that the activity helped them understand the story more easily, remember the sequence of events, and improve their vocabulary.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the implementation of jumbled story as a form of bookish play positively influenced students' engagement and reading comprehension. This finding aligns with Play-Based Learning Theory, which emphasizes that young learners learn more effectively through enjoyable and meaningful activities (Bodrova & Leong, 2022). The playful nature of jumbled story encouraged students to participate actively and maintain their attention during the lesson. From a constructivist perspective, students actively constructed meaning by analyzing sentences, organizing information, and collaborating with peers. This supports Constructivist Learning Theory, which suggests that learning occurs through active interaction with learning materials and social engagement (Pinter, 2021).

In addition, the findings support Schema Theory, which explains that reading comprehension improves when learners connect new information with prior knowledge. By rearranging story sequences, students activated their understanding of narrative structure, such as the beginning, middle, and end, to comprehend the text meaningfully (Grabe & Stoller, 2021).

Overall, the positive learning experiences reported by the students indicate that jumbled story activities created a supportive and motivating learning environment, consistent with previous studies on story-based and collaborative learning (Nicolopoulou et al., 2020).

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