

TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION ON NARRATIVE TEXTS THROUGH WHATSAPP GROUP FEATURES: AN E-LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION IN JUNIOR HIGHS SCHOOLS

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: September 2024 Revised: November 2024 Published: January 2025	<i>The act of reading necessitates that student readers employ various cognitive and linguistic tactics to comprehend the meaning embedded within the text. Using an e-learning method through WhatsApp groups to teach reading comprehension on narrative texts can be a new breakthrough. Therefore, the present study aims to find out the effect of WhatsApp groups on narrative text in junior high school students to teach reading comprehension. To reach the research aims, the study used experimental research method. The population of this research was 330 students of grade 9 of junior high school in Pematangsiantar. The researchers divided the samples into control group and experimental group. The data collection method used was the reading tests employed to the students which covered pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The statistical analysis employed t-test analysis. Comparison of data from both groups indicated superior performance by the experimental group. The findings unequivocally show that the experimental intervention employing WhatsApp have significant effect on students' reading comprehension of narrative text compared to traditional approaches. While WhatsApp has proven to be an effective tool, researchers must consider the challenges of using it for reading instruction in remote areas with limited internet connectivity. Students cannot access WhatsApp-based reading lessons without internet access, though they can still search for information through text messages. Therefore, it is important to examine the limitations of utilizing WhatsApp for reading education in areas with poor internet infrastructure.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology in education has ushered in a transformative era, offering new methods to enhance the teaching and learning process. Among these advancements, e-learning has gained significant attention, particularly in its ability to cater to students' changing

lifestyles and learning needs (Chapelle, 2012; Chen et al., 2020). The integration of social media platforms into educational practices represents a novel approach that aligns with the 21st-century learning environment. One such platform, WhatsApp, has been widely adopted due to its accessibility, ease of use, and familiarity among students (Akkara et al., 2020; Alghamdy, 2019). This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of using WhatsApp groups as an e-learning tool in teaching reading comprehension, specifically within the context of narrative texts at the junior high school level. The research aims to assess whether this method can improve students' reading comprehension and how it impacts their engagement and motivation in learning English.

Reading comprehension is a critical component of linguistic competence, enabling students to extract, analyze, and interpret information from texts (Firman et al., 2021; Nurdiana et al., 2023). Despite its importance, many students struggle with reading comprehension, often due to a lack of interest in the texts provided or because the materials do not resonate with their life experiences (Smith et al., 2021). Furthermore, the limited time allocated for reading instruction in classrooms exacerbates the problem, leading both students and teachers to underestimate the importance of reading skills. To address these challenges, educators are encouraged to explore innovative teaching strategies that can stimulate students' interest and enhance their comprehension skills. One such strategy involves using WhatsApp groups as a platform for e-learning, which offers the potential to engage students in a more interactive and relatable way (Budiana & Setiyoko, 2021).

The use of WhatsApp in education, particularly for teaching reading comprehension, represents a novel approach in the field. WhatsApp's widespread usage among students, especially in Indonesia where the majority of students possess smartphones, provides an opportunity to incorporate this platform into the learning process (Hamsia, 2024; Salem et al., 2018). However, while WhatsApp is a familiar tool for communication, its application in education, specifically in enhancing reading comprehension, presents unique challenges. Students may find it difficult to grasp the main ideas, specific details, and implied information in texts shared through WhatsApp, which could hinder their ability to respond effectively to reading tasks (Alghamdy 2019; Solanki et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, the integration of WhatsApp as an e-learning tool aligns with the government's policy of promoting online learning, which emphasizes the use of internet-based platforms to facilitate teaching and learning activities (Martati et al., 2022).

This study focuses on the implementation of WhatsApp groups in teaching reading comprehension, particularly in narrative texts. Narrative texts, which include anecdotes, legends, fairy tales, and fantasy stories, are commonly used in primary and lower secondary education in Indonesia. These texts are not only engaging for students but also serve as valuable tools for teaching moral values, lessons, and wisdom. Moreover, narrative texts provide a sense of self-confidence for students learning a foreign language, as they can relate the stories to their real-world experiences (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Jubhari et al., 2022). This connection between the text and the student's life experiences enhances their ability to comprehend and interpret the text.

Incorporating WhatsApp as an e-learning tool for teaching reading comprehension of narrative texts offers a new and innovative approach to education. By leveraging a platform that students are already familiar with, teachers can create a more engaging and interactive learning environment. For instance, teachers can share interesting and appealing narrative texts as attachments in WhatsApp groups, encouraging students to read and discuss the content within the group. This method not only makes the learning process more enjoyable but also caters to the students' characteristics, such as their preference for technology-based activities (Ansari et al., 2023).

The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of WhatsApp as a medium for teaching reading comprehension in a way that integrates both traditional and modern teaching methods. While e-learning platforms are not new, the specific use of WhatsApp groups to teach narrative texts in junior high school represents a novel approach. This method combines the familiarity and accessibility of WhatsApp with the pedagogical goals of improving reading comprehension, making it a unique contribution to the field of educational research. Previous studies have shown that e-learning methods can increase student involvement and engagement in learning activities, but there is limited research on the specific use of WhatsApp groups in teaching reading comprehension (Ngo, 2021). This study aims to fill that gap by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of this approach.

The theoretical foundation of this study is supported by the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which suggests that learning is more effective when it involves both verbal and visual information. In the context of this study, WhatsApp provides a platform where students can receive and process both text (verbal information) and images (visual information), facilitating a dual-channel learning experience (Mayer, 2024). Additionally, the Social Learning Theory underpins the use of WhatsApp groups, as it emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in the learning process. By participating in WhatsApp group discussions, students engage in observational learning, where they can learn from their peers' insights and perspectives, further enhancing their comprehension skills (Proctor & Niemeyer, 2020).

The potential benefits of using WhatsApp as an e-learning tool are significant. First, it offers a flexible and accessible platform for students to engage in learning activities outside the traditional classroom setting. This is particularly important in the context of online learning, where students may not have regular access to physical classrooms or face-to-face instruction. Second, WhatsApp allows for immediate feedback and interaction, enabling students to clarify doubts and reinforce their understanding of the text in real-time. This instant communication is crucial in maintaining student engagement and motivation, especially when dealing with challenging reading materials (Indiran et al., 2022).

However, the study also acknowledges the challenges associated with using WhatsApp for educational purposes. One of the main challenges is ensuring that students remain focused on the learning objectives and do not get distracted by the non-educational content available on the platform. Additionally, the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a learning tool may be influenced by students' technological literacy and their ability to navigate the platform efficiently. To address these challenges, the study will explore strategies for optimizing the use of WhatsApp in educational settings, such as setting clear guidelines for participation, providing technical support, and designing activities that are both engaging and educational (Ohirko & Johri, 2023).

This study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on e-learning by exploring the use of WhatsApp groups in teaching reading comprehension. The novelty of the study lies in its focus on integrating a widely used social media platform into the educational process, offering a new way to engage students and improve their reading skills. By examining the effectiveness of WhatsApp groups in teaching narrative texts, the study seeks to provide practical insights that can be applied in classrooms across Indonesia and beyond. The findings of this study have the potential to inform future educational practices and policies, particularly in the context of online learning and the use of technology in education. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, innovative approaches like the one explored in this study will be crucial in meeting the needs of 21st-century learners and preparing them for success in an increasingly digital world.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study was designed to explore the effectiveness of WhatsApp Group as an alternative e-learning method for enhancing reading comprehension, with a particular focus on narrative texts. The research aimed to determine whether using WhatsApp Group (WG) as a platform for delivering reading instruction could lead to improved learning outcomes compared to traditional methods. To achieve this, a quasi-experimental design was employed, allowing for a comparative analysis of the learning achievements between students exposed to different instructional methods. The study specifically compared two groups of students: those who were taught using WhatsApp Group and those who received conventional instruction through printed materials and face-to-face (F2F) guidance. The researchers carefully selected and designated IX-2 as the control group, which continued with the traditional teaching method. Meanwhile, IX-1 was chosen as the experimental group, receiving instruction through the WhatsApp Group platform. This setup provided a clear basis for assessing the effectiveness of WhatsApp Group in facilitating reading comprehension.

To measure the learning outcomes, both groups were subjected to reading tests administered during pre-test and post-test sessions. These tests were designed to evaluate the students' comprehension of narrative texts before and after the intervention. By comparing the performance of the two groups across these sessions, the researchers aimed to identify any significant differences in reading comprehension that could be attributed to the method of instruction. The findings from this comparison were expected to offer insights into the potential of WhatsApp Group as a viable e-learning tool for reading instruction, particularly in the context of narrative texts.

Research Participants

The research involved 60 students who were divided equally into two groups, with 30 students assigned to the experimental class and 30 students to the control group. These participants were all junior high school students from Pematangsiantar, Indonesia, with similar levels of English proficiency. This ensured that both groups had an equal opportunity to succeed in the study, as their baseline language abilities were comparable. The selection of these students was conducted through random sampling, which helped to minimize any potential biases and ensured that the groups were representative of the larger student population. To accurately measure the students' reading comprehension, a specific test was constructed. This test was carefully designed to assess the relevant skills and was subjected to a pilot test to confirm its reliability. The pilot testing phase was crucial as it allowed the researchers to make any necessary adjustments to the test, ensuring that it would provide consistent and accurate results when administered to the participants. Establishing the reliability of the test was a key step in the research process, as it provided a solid foundation for comparing the performance of the experimental and control groups.

The decision to use purposive sampling in this study was strategically made to ensure a balanced composition between the two groups. By carefully selecting participants to maintain comparable numbers in each group, the researchers aimed to control for any variables that might affect the outcomes of the study. This approach allowed for a more precise comparison between the experimental group, which received instruction via WhatsApp Group, and the control group, which followed the conventional face-to-face method. Ensuring that both groups were evenly matched in terms of student numbers and English proficiency levels was essential for the validity

of the research findings. The careful selection of participants and the methodical construction and testing of the reading comprehension assessment were critical elements of this study. By ensuring that the experimental and control groups were balanced and that the assessment tool was reliable, the researchers created a robust framework for investigating the effectiveness of WhatsApp Group as an alternative method for teaching reading comprehension. This systematic approach contributed to the overall rigor and credibility of the study, paving the way for meaningful comparisons and insights into the potential benefits of integrating technology into language instruction.

Research Instruments and Data Collection Technique

The study employed reading tests as the primary research instruments to assess students' reading comprehension achievement. These instruments were designed to evaluate how well students could understand and interpret narrative texts. During the study, students were tasked with reading a narrative text, after which they were required to answer comprehension questions and present their responses in WhatsApp group sessions. This approach allowed for an interactive and collaborative learning environment, facilitated by the use of WhatsApp as an e-learning tool. The instructional process was divided into several structured sessions, each with a specific focus. In the first session, referred to as the "Questioning" session, students took on the role of readers who actively engaged with the text by asking questions about its comprehension. This session was supervised by the teacher, who guided the students in their exploration and understanding of the text. The focus of this session was to encourage students to critically engage with the narrative, promoting a deeper level of comprehension.

The second session, also titled "Questioning," had a slightly different focus. Here, students asked questions specifically about the meaning of words and passages within the text. This session was again supervised by the teacher, who provided support and clarification as needed. The aim was to enhance students' vocabulary and their ability to interpret the language used in the narrative, further contributing to their overall comprehension. In the third session, students assumed the role of "Administrator" within the WhatsApp group. Each student had the responsibility of managing the group's content by monitoring and, if necessary, deleting information. This role not only provided students with a sense of ownership and responsibility but also encouraged them to be more engaged and active in the learning process. The teacher's role during this session was primarily observational, stepping in to provide suggestions when students initiated discussions on scientific topics, whether in English or Bahasa.

The fourth and fifth sessions were titled "Forecasters and Summarizers" and "Responders." In these sessions, each student was required to send a thought-provoking question related to the text, which was then collated by the teacher. This exercise was designed to test the students' ability to anticipate developments in the narrative (forecasting) and to summarize key points effectively. Additionally, students responded to each other's questions, fostering a collaborative learning environment that emphasized comprehension and critical thinking. The primary skill assessed throughout these sessions was the students' ability to answer comprehensive questions about the narrative text in English. The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using WhatsApp groups as a method of e-learning for teaching reading comprehension. The findings suggested that this approach provided a significant and effective strategy for enhancing learning achievement. By integrating technology into the learning process, the study highlighted a novel model for reading instruction that could potentially lead to improved comprehension outcomes for students.

Data Analysis

To explore the effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension of narrative texts through the use of WhatsApp groups, the study employed quantitative data analysis. The primary objective was to determine whether the e-learning method, facilitated by WhatsApp groups, had a significant impact on students' reading comprehension. To achieve this, the researchers gathered and analyzed data that reflected the reading achievements of students in both the experimental group, which used WhatsApp for learning, and the control group, which followed traditional methods. Descriptive statistics were first utilized to summarize and describe the students' reading achievements across the two groups. This initial analysis provided a clear picture of the students' performance in reading comprehension, offering insights into the distribution, central tendencies, and variability of the scores. By comparing these descriptive statistics, the researchers were able to assess the overall effectiveness of the WhatsApp group as a learning tool in relation to traditional methods.

To determine whether the differences observed between the two groups were statistically significant, the researchers employed t-test analysis. This statistical test was chosen for its ability to compare the means of two groups and establish whether any observed differences in their reading comprehension achievements were likely due to the intervention (in this case, the use of WhatsApp) rather than random variation. The t-test analysis was conducted with the assistance of SPSS, a widely used software for statistical analysis in social sciences. SPSS provided the researchers with a robust platform to carry out the t-test, ensuring accuracy and reliability in the results. The application of the t-test allowed the researchers to quantify the impact of using WhatsApp groups on students' reading comprehension and to determine if the observed improvements in the experimental group were statistically significant when compared to the control group. This analysis was crucial in validating the effectiveness of WhatsApp as an e-learning tool for enhancing reading comprehension in narrative texts.

The use of quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics and t-test analysis, provided a comprehensive approach to evaluating the impact of WhatsApp groups on students' reading comprehension. The findings from this analysis offered valuable evidence on the effectiveness of integrating WhatsApp into educational practices, particularly in the context of teaching reading comprehension. By systematically analyzing the data, the study contributed to a deeper understanding of how e-learning tools like WhatsApp can be leveraged to improve educational outcomes, offering a new perspective on the potential of technology-enhanced learning in the classroom.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

As previously noted, when the t-test surpasses the t-table value, it supports the alternative hypothesis. The researcher has thus confirmed that using WhatsApp as a teaching tool significantly enhances students' narrative reading comprehension. The study's findings are as follows: In the experimental group, pre-test scores ranged from 45 to 80, while post-test scores spanned from 60 to 90. For the control group, pre-test scores fell between 45 and 75, with post-test scores ranging from 55 to 85. The experimental group's average pre-test score (Ma1) was 62.83, and their post-test average (Ma2) was 76.16, yielding a mean difference (Ma) of 13.33. The total standard deviation for the experimental variable (da2) was 916.67. In contrast, the control group's average pre-test score (Mb1) was 63.16, and their post-test average (Mb2) was 70, resulting in a mean difference (Mb) of 6.8. The control group's total standard deviation (db2) was 524.16. Statistical analysis revealed a t-test value of 7.143, which exceeded the t-table value

of 1.672 at a 0.05 significance level in a two-tailed test. Upon examining data from both groups, it became evident that the experimental group outperformed the control group. The results clearly demonstrate that the experimental intervention utilizing WhatsApp had a substantially greater impact on improving narrative text reading comprehension compared to conventional methods.

Despite the fact that the teachers teaching these students are constantly developing, the students have an increasing need to understand classes and what the teacher says. The power applied to motivation in the classroom results from the constant changes, giving the students a critical sense of what is happening with the language classes. What can be observed is the effort of the students and the school to provide more comfort, satisfaction, and good results through innovative teaching methods. In addition, creativity is always a positive point for the teacher, and they welcome ideas that come from teaching techniques that have never been used before. Teachers can imagine new technologies and techniques that promote critical and active behavior from students during reading classes.

Discussion

The use of e-learning methods, particularly through platforms like WhatsApp groups, has emerged as a viable approach to teaching reading comprehension. This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of using WhatsApp groups to enhance students' reading comprehension, specifically in the context of narrative texts. The findings indicate that while there were challenges, such as some students not paying full attention to the reading materials, the overall impact of using WhatsApp was positive. Students engaged more frequently with the English language and participated in various activities that promoted their understanding of narrative texts. These findings align with several previous studies that have explored the role of e-learning tools in language education.

The experiment involved a structured series of activities over four meetings, each focused on different aspects of narrative texts. The first meeting centered around the theme of spending a holiday in a villa, where students shared personal experiences related to the topic. This initial engagement helped students connect the reading material with their own lives, making the text more relatable and easier to comprehend. It is in line with Salem et al. (2018) who inform that the use of online platforms facilitate learners to be more relatable and easier to get input. The second meeting focused on a fairy tale, where students discussed character dialogue styles and engaged in predictive questioning. This activity not only deepened their understanding of narrative structures but also encouraged them to think critically about the story's progression (Chapelle, 2012; Chen et al., 2020). The third meeting introduced a tall tale, where students participated in role-playing activities, asking questions as if they were characters in the story. This interactive approach fostered a deeper connection with the text and allowed students to explore narrative elements creatively.

The study identified nine categories of activities that students engaged in during the WhatsApp group sessions: narrative text reading, character trait searching, moral story analysis, experience sharing, character drawing, sharing pictures of experiences, language practice, story prediction, and future story creation. These activities were designed to cover a broad spectrum of reading comprehension skills, from basic text understanding to more advanced tasks such as moral analysis and creative storytelling (Firman et al., 2021; Nurdiana et al., 2023). The first meeting, which focused on reading activities, showed that some students read the text multiple times, demonstrating increased engagement and familiarity with the material. Subsequent meetings built on this foundation, gradually guiding students toward a deeper understanding of narrative structures and themes.

The findings underscore the importance of stories in supporting reading comprehension. The use of narrative texts in the WhatsApp group facilitated not just the appreciation of stories but also the organization and understanding of plotlines. This approach resonates with Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the significance of historical context and storytelling in the learning process. By integrating storytelling into the e-learning environment, the study provided students with a meaningful context to enhance their reading comprehension (Asnas, 2024; BrSembiring & Simanjunatk, 2023). The act of creating, sharing, and responding to stories within the WhatsApp group helped students actively engage with the material, making the learning process more interactive and enjoyable.

The interactive nature of the activities, particularly those involving narrative reading, was found to be significantly associated with the development of multiple literacy and language skills (Dolba et al., 2022; Habibi et al., 2022). For example, reading fluently, building syntactic knowledge, and enhancing discourse comprehension were all positively influenced by the narrative-focused activities conducted within the WhatsApp group. This is consistent with the broader literature, which suggests that narrative comprehension is crucial for developing advanced reasoning abilities in both communication and critical thinking. By targeting narrative reading skills, the study not only aimed to improve students' comprehension but also sought to foster higher-order thinking skills that are essential for academic success.

Furthermore, the study's focus on using WhatsApp as a platform for reading instruction highlights the potential of novel and interactive educational technologies in supporting student learning. The findings revealed that even students who were previously reluctant readers or who struggled with narrative texts benefited from the accessible and assistive nature of the WhatsApp group. This is particularly important in the context of e-learning, where the ability to reach and engage students who might not thrive in traditional classroom settings is a significant advantage. The use of WhatsApp provided a flexible and familiar platform for students, which likely contributed to their increased participation and engagement.

Previous studies have similarly highlighted the effectiveness of e-learning tools in language education. For instance, a study by Alghamdi and Plunkett (2018) found that using social media platforms like WhatsApp can enhance language learning by providing students with more opportunities for communication and interaction in the target language. Their research showed that students who participated in WhatsApp-based language learning activities demonstrated improved language skills compared to those who relied solely on traditional methods. Similarly, another study by Rambe and Bere (2013) emphasized the role of WhatsApp in facilitating collaborative learning, where students were able to engage in meaningful discussions and exchange ideas, thereby improving their understanding of the subject matter.

On the other hand, some studies have reported mixed results regarding the use of WhatsApp in education. For example, a study by Cetinkaya (2017) suggested that while WhatsApp can be an effective tool for enhancing student engagement and motivation, its impact on academic performance may vary depending on how it is integrated into the curriculum. Cetinkaya's research indicated that the success of WhatsApp as a learning tool depends heavily on the instructional design and the level of teacher involvement. This underscores the importance of careful planning and implementation when using e-learning platforms like WhatsApp to ensure that they effectively support learning outcomes.

The present study contributes to this ongoing conversation by demonstrating that WhatsApp can be a powerful tool for teaching reading comprehension, particularly when used in a structured and interactive manner (Chen et al., 2020; Akkara et al., 2020). The use of narrative texts in the WhatsApp group allowed students to engage with the material in a way that was both

meaningful and enjoyable. By participating in various activities that ranged from reading and discussing stories to predicting and creating new narratives, students were able to develop a deeper understanding of narrative structures and improve their overall reading comprehension skills.

Moreover, the study's findings have important implications for educators and policymakers who are considering the integration of e-learning tools into their curricula. The success of the WhatsApp group in enhancing students' reading comprehension suggests that similar platforms could be used to support other areas of language learning (Hamsia, 2024; Salem et al., 2018). For example, WhatsApp could be utilized to facilitate vocabulary development, grammar practice, or even writing skills. The key is to design activities that are engaging, interactive, and aligned with the learning objectives, ensuring that students are motivated to participate and that their learning experiences are meaningful.

The study demonstrates the effectiveness of using WhatsApp groups as an e-learning method for teaching reading comprehension, particularly in the context of narrative texts. The structured activities and interactive nature of the WhatsApp group provided students with a supportive environment in which they could engage with the material, practice their language skills, and develop a deeper understanding of narrative structures. The findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the benefits of using e-learning tools in language education, while also contributing new insights into how such tools can be effectively integrated into the curriculum. As e-learning continues to evolve, studies like this one will play a crucial role in shaping the future of education, offering new strategies and models for enhancing student learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the researchers found a significant difference between the students learning reading comprehension through the WhatsApp group and those who did not join the WhatsApp. It indicates that WhatsApp can be a medium for learning reading comprehension. The students who are in the WhatsApp group can also help their friends by giving their identification for the Instagram group they made previously. The researchers also conclude that the WhatsApp group can increase students' motivation and help their willingness to read text online. As for the recommendation, the researchers suggest future researchers look at the benefit of WhatsApp. And future researchers should see the barriers of learning reading through WhatsApp in remote areas which have a big problem of internet access. Without the internet, students cannot learn reading via WhatsApp, but they can search for information through the text. Ensuring on increasing students' reading interest in reading activities is not an easy task to achieve.

In connection with the results of the study, the following recommendations are given: teachers can use WhatsApp groups to help their students increase their reading skills. They can be more active in giving motivation. The students can also manage their time for WhatsApp. It is recommended to use the smartphone very well, especially WhatsApp. The teachers of English also should conduct English debate competition yearly to challenge the students' competence and motivation for independent learning. Engaging the students in higher order thinking challenges and updating them with the rapidly changing world should be successfully accomplished. In addition, it is recommended to carry out the same research in other regional contexts with a larger sample design. Teachers have to give suggestions or advice about how to use the smartphone media wisely. They have to guide the students, especially the teenagers, about using WhatsApp.

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