Investigating the Use of WhatsAuto for Students' Consultation on Writing Narrative Project at X Grade SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus 2023

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the implementation process, benefits, and obstacles of using WhatsApp Automatic Reply (WhatsAuto) for students' consultation on writing narrative projects at X Grade SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus 2023. This descriptive qualitative research involved an English teacher and students from the X Grade as participants. Data collection methods included interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that using WhatsAuto was conducted through structured activities divided into three stages: classroom activity, crosscheck, and submission. These stages allowed continuous interaction between students and teachers, supporting online and offline learning environments. The use of WhatsAuto provided several benefits, such as instant accessibility, flexibility, efficient communication, personalized learning experiences, and the promotion of digital literacy. However, some obstacles were identified, including varied levels of student understanding, low motivation, and technical issues such as poor network connectivity.

Keywords: *Digital Literacy; Narrative Writing; Student's Consultation; Whatsapp; Whatsauto*

INTRODUCTION

Online media has emerged as a powerful tool in this digital era, serving as a significant medium of communication. It is widely utilized to disseminate and exchange information among people across the globe. Particularly in education, online media offers numerous possibilities for teachers to facilitate students in learning English. Several considerations underscore the use of online media in the teaching and learning process. Teachers often face challenges in involving learners in classroom communication and encouraging them to practice speaking or writing in the target language. For instance, teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in an Information Technology department revealed that many students lacked interest in learning English and confidence in practicing the language. This calls for innovative approaches, such as using online media, to create engaging learning experiences, foster student interest, and enhance language practice. Utilizing such media can engage students in learning English and improve their skills effectively.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and educational institutions were required to employ various media to ensure the continuity of education. Both online and offline platforms were adopted to minimize face-to-face interactions and reduce the risk of virus transmission. Among these, WhatsApp emerged as a popular and effective tool. WhatsApp is a cross-platform instant messaging application with over 250 million users, as noted by Trevor (2013). Rove (2013) highlights that users prefer WhatsApp for its low-cost communication, along with features that allow sharing text, images, videos, and audio messages, and even location sharing through integrated mapping. The versatility of WhatsApp also extends to educational settings. Mulyono and Suryoputro (2020) emphasize its accessibility for teacher-student communication and interaction. Similarly, Riyanto (2013) asserts that WhatsApp encourages active participation in EFL classrooms and fosters purposeful learning activities. Other researchers, including Çam & Can (2019), Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Esfahani (2018), and La Hanisi et al. (2018), have explored the application of WhatsApp in English language education.

At SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus, WhatsApp was used as the primary medium for teaching narrative texts in the first semester of X Grade through blended learning. Teachers utilized WhatsApp Business, which features automatic replies to facilitate student consultations on their narrative writing projects. Students were assigned to write stories about local legends and consulted online via WhatsApp, receiving instant automated feedback. This innovative approach, combining smart technology with traditional learning practices, offers a unique opportunity for exploration.

Several prior studies support the relevance of WhatsApp in language teaching. Kheryadi (2017) identifies WhatsApp as a modern tool for language instruction, while Maghfira (2021) demonstrates its use in structured teaching phases—opening, core, and closing activities. Furthermore, Rudianto (2019) highlights its benefits for communication, online classes, and material sharing, despite challenges such as poor network signals. Similarly, Ira (2023) found that while network issues and lack of teacher explanations were challenges, WhatsApp remained a simple yet effective medium for assignments and consultations.

Building on these findings, this study investigates the implementation of WhatsApp's automatic reply feature for student consultations on narrative writing projects. It aims to address gaps in prior research by focusing on this unique application of WhatsApp. This study seeks to examine the process, benefits, and challenges associated with using WhatsAuto in this context, under the title: "Investigating the Use of WhatsAuto for Students' Consultation on Writing Narrative Projects at X Grade SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus 2023."

METHOD

This research utilized a descriptive qualitative methodology to examine the integration of WhatsAuto in facilitating student consultations for narrative writing projects in X Grade at SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus in 2023. The primary instrument for data collection was the researcher, who employed a combination of observations,

interviews, and documentation to gather detailed insights into the tool's implementation and effectiveness.

Observations were carried out during both classroom activities and online consultations conducted via WhatsApp. This non-intrusive approach allowed the researcher to analyze natural interactions and processes, offering a real-time perspective on students' engagement with WhatsAuto and their narrative writing tasks. Interviews conducted on December 28 and 29, 2023, involved the English teacher and select students. These interviews were pivotal in capturing participants' experiences and perceptions, providing a nuanced understanding of the benefits and challenges of using WhatsAuto.

Documentation was also a vital component, including lesson plans, digital records, and institutional policies on technology use in education. These resources offered contextual information that enriched the analysis and supported the triangulation of findings.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's framework, comprising data reduction, organization, and conclusion drawing. This systematic process enabled the identification of patterns and themes, which were then used to address the research objectives effectively. By synthesizing observations, interviews, and documentation, the researcher developed a comprehensive understanding of how WhatsAuto was employed to support narrative writing consultations and addressed associated challenges.

Triangulation techniques ensured the validity of the findings by cross-referencing data from multiple sources. Conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus in Gunungkidul from November 2023 to March 2024, the study focused on the English teacher and X Grade students. This rigorous approach provided credible evidence of WhatsAuto's role in improving communication, enhancing student engagement, and promoting personalized learning, while also highlighting areas for improvement in digital tool integration within educational practices

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate the effective implementation of WhatsAuto in facilitating student consultations on narrative writing projects at X Grade SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus. The process was divided into three structured stages: classroom activity, crosscheck, and submission. Each stage contributed significantly to enhancing student learning outcomes, engagement, and project quality. Figure 1 outlines the three structured stages of implementing WhatsAuto: classroom activity, crosscheck, and submission. This diagram visually represents the sequential flow of activities, emphasizing the integration of WhatsAuto at each stage.
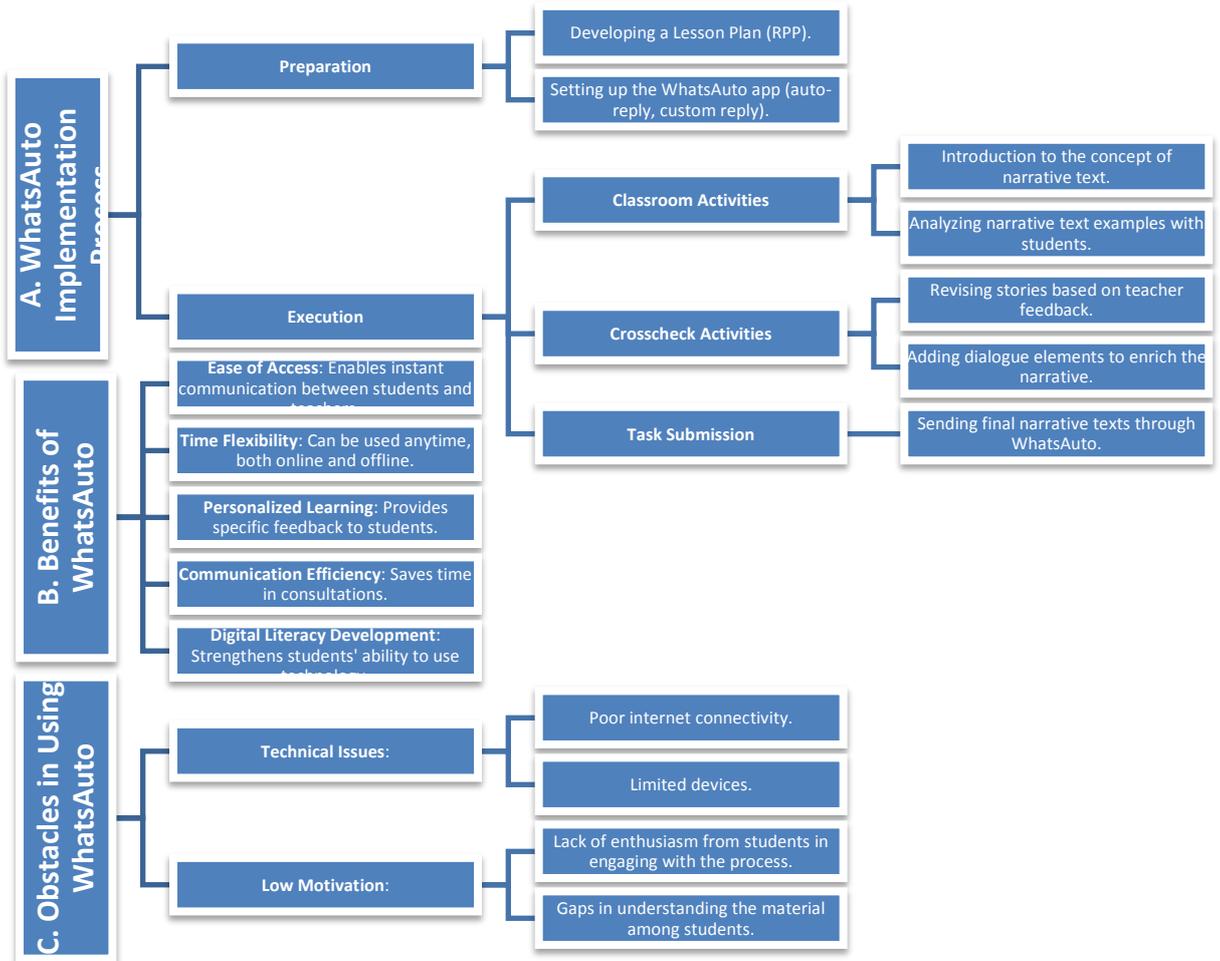
Figure 1. Findings of *WhatsAuto* Interface

Classroom Activity Stage

During the classroom activity stage, the teacher introduced the concept of narrative text, emphasizing its structure, purpose, and essential elements. These elements included characters, setting, plot, and theme, forming the foundation of narrative writing. The teacher began by explaining the theoretical aspects of narrative writing through interactive lectures and visual aids. This approach aimed to build a comprehensive understanding of narrative elements among students.

To encourage active participation, collaborative activities such as brainstorming sessions were conducted. These sessions allowed students to generate ideas and plan their narratives systematically. Brainstorming also fostered creativity, as students discussed and developed unique story ideas in groups. The teacher facilitated these sessions by providing prompts and examples to inspire students while ensuring that their ideas aligned with the narrative structure.

Once students had developed their ideas, they were guided in creating drafts. The teacher emphasized the importance of adhering to the narrative structure while encouraging creativity and coherence. This phase included individual and group writing exercises, where students practiced developing characters, crafting engaging plots, and establishing vivid settings. Peer feedback sessions were also integrated into

this stage, allowing students to exchange drafts and provide constructive input. These sessions cultivated a collaborative learning environment, enabling students to learn from their peers' perspectives and improve their work.

The use of WhatsAuto was introduced during this stage to address students' queries efficiently. The automated reply feature was customized to provide instant responses to common questions about narrative structure, writing tips, and assignment guidelines. This innovation allowed the teacher to focus on guiding students while ensuring that their concerns were promptly addressed. Many students appreciated this feature, as it reduced interruptions during class and encouraged independent problem-solving.

Crosscheck Stage

The crosscheck stage focused on refining students' drafts with detailed feedback from both the teacher and their peers. This stage was pivotal in enhancing the quality of students' narratives, as it involved iterative revisions to improve language use, descriptive elements, and overall coherence.

The teacher provided personalized feedback through individual consultations facilitated by WhatsAuto. The automated reply feature was leveraged to address repetitive queries efficiently, allowing the teacher to dedicate more time to providing in-depth feedback during consultations. For instance, students often sought clarification on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, which WhatsAuto handled effectively. The automated responses included examples, explanations, and links to additional resources, ensuring that students received comprehensive support.

Peer review sessions were also conducted during this stage, where students exchanged drafts and evaluated each other's work. The teacher guided these sessions by providing rubrics and checklists, enabling students to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their peers' narratives. This process not only enhanced students' analytical skills but also fostered a sense of accountability and collaboration.

Feedback collected during the crosscheck stage revealed that students found the iterative revision process beneficial for improving their writing skills. The immediate feedback provided through WhatsAuto motivated them to refine their work continuously. Many students acknowledged that the platform's accessibility and user-friendly interface made it easier for them to engage with their projects consistently. Additionally, the integration of WhatsAuto helped students develop digital literacy skills, as they became proficient in using technological tools for academic purposes.

Submission Stage

The submission stage marked the culmination of the process, where students submitted their finalized narrative projects. This phase focused on ensuring that students met the assignment criteria and adhered to submission guidelines. WhatsAuto played a crucial role in streamlining communication during this stage, providing clear instructions and reminders about deadlines. The tool's automated reply feature

minimized delays in addressing common concerns, such as submission formats, project criteria, and late submissions.

To facilitate efficient project management, the teacher used WhatsAuto to send automated notifications about upcoming deadlines and submission requirements. These notifications included detailed instructions on formatting, file naming conventions, and acceptable submission methods. The automated system also confirmed receipt of submissions, providing students with immediate acknowledgment and reducing anxiety about whether their work had been successfully submitted.

Students appreciated the clarity and organization provided by WhatsAuto during the submission stage. The tool's ability to address repetitive queries enabled them to resolve issues independently, ensuring a smooth submission process. Moreover, the integration of WhatsAuto encouraged students to develop time management skills, as they were consistently reminded of deadlines and expected to plan their work accordingly.

Table 1. Observations of Teaching and Learning Activities

The observations of teaching and learning activities are summarized in Table 1, which outlines the key aspects, activities, findings, and instruments used in this study.

Aspect	Activity	Findings	Instrument
Teaching Preparation	Lesson plan, WhatsAuto setup	Comprehensive plans approved by the headmaster, WhatsAuto prepared for use	Documentation, Interview
Classroom Activities	Introduction, brainstorming, peer feedback	Students learned narrative elements; drafts reviewed with feedback	Observation
Crosscheck and Submission	Revision strategies, final submission	Improved student drafts; automated replies supported learning	Documentation

Table 1 provides a concise overview of the teaching and learning activities, emphasizing the systematic implementation of WhatsAuto to enhance the narrative writing process. Each aspect reflects the integration of digital tools, collaborative activities, and iterative feedback in achieving the study's objectives

Benefits of WhatsAuto Integration

The integration of WhatsAuto into the teaching and learning process yielded several benefits, significantly improving communication efficiency between teachers and students. The automated reply feature provided flexible consultation options, enabling students to seek support at any time without waiting for the teacher's availability. This accessibility was particularly beneficial for addressing repetitive or common queries, allowing the teacher to focus on providing personalized guidance during consultations.

Students highlighted the ease of access and the immediate support provided by WhatsAuto as key advantages. The platform's user-friendly interface and automated responses empowered students to resolve issues independently, fostering a sense of autonomy in their learning process. Additionally, the use of WhatsAuto encouraged students to take initiative, manage their learning effectively, and engage more actively with their projects.

From the teacher's perspective, WhatsAuto streamlined communication and reduced the administrative burden associated with managing consultations and addressing repetitive queries. The tool's automated features allowed the teacher to allocate more time to providing meaningful feedback and facilitating collaborative learning activities. This efficiency contributed to a more productive and engaging classroom environment.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its numerous benefits, the implementation of WhatsAuto faced several challenges. One notable obstacle was the varying levels of student understanding and digital literacy. Some students struggled to navigate the platform or interpret automated responses, highlighting the need for additional training and support. To address this issue, the teacher conducted orientation sessions at the beginning of the project, ensuring that all students were familiar with the platform's features and functionality.

Another challenge was inconsistent student motivation, which affected their engagement with the consultation process. Some students were reluctant to seek help or revise their drafts, resulting in limited progress. To overcome this, the teacher incorporated motivational interventions, such as rewards for active participation and recognition for improved performance. These strategies encouraged students to engage more consistently with their projects and leverage the resources provided by WhatsAuto.

Technical difficulties, such as weak internet signals, also posed challenges during the implementation process. These issues disrupted communication and limited students' access to the platform, particularly in remote areas with unreliable internet connectivity. To mitigate this problem, the teacher explored alternative methods of communication, such as offline consultations and printed resources, ensuring that all students received the support they needed.

Implications and Future Directions

The findings of this study highlight the potential of WhatsAuto as a valuable tool for enhancing teaching and learning processes, particularly in blended learning environments. The tool's effectiveness in facilitating consultations and improving student engagement underscores its transformative potential in education. However, addressing the identified challenges is crucial for optimizing its use and ensuring equitable access to its benefits.

To enhance the implementation of WhatsAuto in future projects, several strategies should be considered. Providing technical support and training for students and teachers can help improve digital literacy and ensure that all users are confident in navigating the platform. Motivational interventions, such as goal-setting activities and progress tracking, can encourage students to engage more actively with their projects and take ownership of their learning.

Additionally, designing inclusive approaches to accommodate diverse learner needs is essential for promoting equity and accessibility. For instance, incorporating alternative methods of communication, such as offline consultations or hybrid platforms, can address connectivity issues and ensure that all students receive consistent support. Future research could explore the impact of these strategies on optimizing the use of digital tools like WhatsAuto in education, providing valuable insights for educators and policymakers.

The integration of WhatsAuto into the teaching and learning process at X Grade SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus demonstrated its effectiveness in facilitating consultations, enhancing communication efficiency, and promoting personalized learning. The structured stages of classroom activity, crosscheck, and submission provided a comprehensive framework for supporting students in their narrative writing projects. Despite challenges such as varying levels of student understanding, inconsistent motivation, and technical difficulties, the benefits of WhatsAuto outweighed its limitations, underscoring its potential as a transformative tool in education.

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the importance of leveraging technology to foster active learning and collaboration in blended learning environments. By addressing the identified challenges and exploring innovative strategies for implementation, educators can unlock the full potential of digital tools like WhatsAuto, creating more inclusive and engaging learning experiences for students.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of WhatsAuto for student consultations on writing narrative projects at X Grade SMK Muhammadiyah Tepus has significantly enhanced communication and learning processes in a blended learning environment. Through structured stages, including classroom activities, crosschecking, and submission, WhatsAuto provided an effective framework for integrating technology into the educational process. The platform's capacity to deliver instant automated responses facilitated continuous interaction between students and teachers, creating a more dynamic and responsive learning experience.

The findings of this study underscore WhatsAuto's role in improving the efficiency of consultations while fostering digital literacy and independent learning among students. By introducing automation into the consultation process, the tool bridged gaps inherent in traditional teaching methods, offering flexible and remote solutions to enhance student-teacher communication. Furthermore, the structured

approach allowed students to engage more deeply with their projects, improving their narrative writing skills and overall academic performance.

WhatsAuto's automated reply feature played a pivotal role in streamlining communication. By addressing repetitive queries, the feature allowed teachers to focus on providing personalized feedback and facilitating collaborative learning activities. This innovation not only improved the consultation process but also enabled students to receive timely guidance, which minimized delays and interruptions in their progress. The platform's accessibility outside regular class hours provided students with the flexibility to seek support at their convenience, fostering inclusivity and ensuring that all students could benefit from the consultation process.

In addition to its impact on communication, WhatsAuto promoted digital literacy by introducing students to the practical application of automated tools in academic contexts. By navigating the platform, students developed essential skills in digital communication, self-directed learning, and problem-solving. These skills are critical for success in modern educational and professional settings, highlighting the broader value of integrating such tools into the learning process. The automated responses also encouraged students to take initiative, empowering them to address their concerns independently and fostering a sense of responsibility for their learning outcomes.

The study also highlights the potential of WhatsAuto to bridge gaps in traditional teaching methods. The use of automation to support educational activities addressed common challenges such as limited time for individual consultations and the repetitive nature of certain student queries. This approach provided a scalable and adaptable model for education, particularly valuable in blended and remote learning environments. The platform ensured continuity in student-teacher interactions, maintaining engagement and motivation throughout the project's duration. This adaptability is particularly relevant in today's educational landscape, where digital tools are increasingly necessary to meet the demands of diverse learning environments.

Despite its benefits, the study acknowledges challenges in the implementation of WhatsAuto, including varying levels of student digital literacy and occasional technical difficulties, such as connectivity issues. These challenges underscore the importance of providing adequate training and support to ensure equitable access to the platform's benefits. The findings also reveal inconsistencies in student motivation, which influenced their engagement with the consultation process. Addressing these challenges through orientation sessions, motivational strategies, and alternative methods of communication, such as offline consultations, can further optimize the use of WhatsAuto.

The implications of this study extend beyond the immediate context, offering valuable insights for the broader adoption of digital tools in education. WhatsAuto's integration into the teaching and learning process demonstrates the transformative potential of automation in fostering active learning, collaboration, and technological proficiency. Future research should explore strategies to enhance the implementation

of such tools, including gamification elements, progress tracking, and hybrid approaches that combine online and offline resources.

Overall, the study provides compelling evidence of WhatsAuto's effectiveness in supporting narrative writing projects and improving educational outcomes. Its role in promoting personalized learning, enhancing communication, and addressing the challenges of traditional teaching methods highlights its value as a practical and innovative solution for modern education. By addressing the identified limitations and exploring new strategies for implementation, educators and policymakers can leverage digital tools like WhatsAuto to create more inclusive, efficient, and engaging learning experiences. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on educational technology and offer actionable recommendations for enhancing teaching and learning in the digital age.

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