

Non-Major Teachers' Stories of Teaching Reading Sub-Skills in ARAL Tutorial Sessions in SDO Las Piñas: A Narrative Inquiry

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Publication history:

Received: August 19, 2026

Revised: August 31, 2026

Accepted: September 5, 2026

Published: September 6, 2026

International Journal of Sustainable and Integrated Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 103–117, September 2026.

Abstract

The study examined how non-major teacher-tutors in SDO Las Piñas narrated their experiences of selecting and teaching reading sub-skills during ARAL tutorial sessions in School Year 2025–2026. It used a qualitative narrative inquiry design. Through criterion-based purposive sampling, eight non-major teacher-tutors who had handled ARAL reading tutorials in public secondary schools in SDO Las Piñas were selected as participants. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and examined through narrative analysis. Labov's structural elements of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda guided the organization of the accounts, followed by restorying, within-story analysis, cross-story comparison, and interpretation through temporality, sociality, and place. Borg's Teacher Cognition Framework, the Active View of Reading, and the High-Impact Tutoring Framework guided the interpretation. The findings showed that the participants entered ARAL with different levels of preparation and confidence and adjusted instruction when learners showed difficulty in decoding, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension. Their decisions commonly followed a process of observing learner signs, identifying an immediate reading need, selecting a sub-skill, applying a response, and deciding whether to continue, repeat, simplify, shift, consult, or refer. These choices were shaped by teacher preparation, learner readiness, attendance, time, workload, materials, group composition, language difficulty, and program support. The participants justified their actions through learner-responsive, practical, and role-based judgment, but they differed in confidence, reliance on manuals, use of translation, acceptance of the tutor role, and preference for specialist assistance. Based on the recurring patterns, the study proposed the Narrative-Informed ARAL Reading Tutorial Support Guide for Non-Major Teacher-Tutors. The guide included a reading-need check, focused instructional supports, learner-response records, mentoring procedures, and referral indicators for persistent difficulties. The study recommended practical reading training, suitable materials, manageable schedules and groups, continuing coaching, clear referral procedures, and further research using classroom observations, learner assessments, and pilot evaluation of the proposed guide. The study aligns with SDG 4 on quality education by supporting more responsive reading recovery practices and contributes to educational and institutional sustainability through improved tutorial decision-making and program support.

Keywords: ARAL Program; Narrative Inquiry; Non-Major Teachers; Reading Sub-Skills; Tutorial Support

1. Introduction

Reading recovery remained a major educational concern after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Betthäuser et al. (2023) found that learning deficits continued across countries more than two years after the pandemic began, while Donnelly and Patrinos (2022) reported that most early studies recorded learning loss after school closures. Weak reading skills can affect more than performance in language subjects. Learners may also struggle to follow written directions, understand content, and participate in classroom tasks across different learning areas. Reading recovery, therefore, remained a basic concern in restoring wider academic learning.

This concern was linked to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education, and to AmBisyon Natin 2040, which envisions a better quality of life for Filipinos (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2016). It was also related to national concerns about foundational learning and teacher quality raised by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II, 2025). These priorities placed pressure on schools to provide timely and focused support for learners with uneven reading development. However, the success of such support depended not only on the existence of a recovery program but also on the preparation of teachers, the suitability of materials, and the conditions under which instruction was delivered.

Tutoring received attention as a recovery strategy because it could provide struggling learners with focused time, closer feedback, and instruction suited to their immediate needs. Kraft and Falken (2021) explained that tutoring could serve as a strong school-based recovery support when it was connected with school routines and guided by clear program features. Al Otaiba et al. (2023) also reported that individual and small-group literacy interventions could support learners when instruction was explicit and directed toward specific reading difficulties. These findings suggest that effective tutoring requires more than extra instructional time. Tutors must also decide which reading need should receive attention, which response may be suitable, and how instruction should be adjusted when learners continue to struggle.

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 12028 (2024) established the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program, commonly known as ARAL, as a national response to learning recovery needs. Under this program, teachers and tutors were expected to provide focused support to learners who required academic assistance. In public secondary schools in SDO Las Piñas, some ARAL reading tutorial sessions were handled by non-major teacher-tutors. These teachers were not reading specialists, but they were assigned to teach reading sub-skills within limited tutorial time and under regular school conditions. Their work required them to respond to learner difficulties while managing differences in preparation, available materials, attendance, workload, and group composition.

Recent Philippine research showed that teachers working with struggling readers used timely intervention, individual support, and motivational strategies. However, much of this work was conducted in other settings and involved teaching roles that differed from those of non-major ARAL teacher-tutors in Las Piñas (Caballo, 2025). The central concern was therefore not whether reading intervention was useful. Rather, it was how teachers without formal specialization in reading recognized learner needs, chose an instructional priority, adjusted their methods, and understood their responsibilities during actual tutorial sessions.

The study focused on the teaching of reading sub-skills, including decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension-related abilities that support broader reading development (Al Otaiba et al., 2023). Selecting among these sub-skills was not always a simple technical choice. A tutor had to interpret learner responses, consider the demands of the material, work within the available time, and decide whether to continue, repeat, simplify, change direction, consult a mentor, or refer the learner for further support. These choices were likely shaped by the teacher's prior preparation, beliefs, experience, confidence, and understanding of the ARAL role.

Narrative inquiry was suitable for examining this problem because it treated teachers' stories as organized accounts of experience. Through these accounts, teachers could describe what occurred, how events developed, what prompted a change in instruction, and what their actions meant to them. Barkhuizen (2022) explained that narrative inquiry could reveal how teachers formed meaning from experience, while Xu et al. (2024) showed that educational narratives could be examined through time, place, and social relationships. This approach allowed the study to examine not only the strategies used by teacher-tutors but also the judgments, uncertainties, turning points, and professional meanings found in their stories.

Although previous studies discussed literacy intervention, tutoring, teacher preparation, and support for struggling readers, limited research had examined how non-major teacher-tutors narrated their instructional decision-making during ARAL reading sessions in public secondary schools in SDO Las Piñas. Prior work gave greater attention to intervention results, program structures, reading knowledge, or teaching practices in other settings. It gave less attention to how non-major tutors selected a reading sub-skill, responded to learner signs, justified changes in strategy, and managed uncertainty while a tutorial session was taking place. This represented a context gap involving ARAL implementation in SDO Las Piñas, a population gap involving non-major teacher-tutors, and a methodological gap involving the limited use of narrative inquiry to study their instructional decisions.

The study described and interpreted the stories of eight non-major teacher-tutors who had handled ARAL reading sessions in public secondary schools in SDO Las Piñas during School Year 2025–2026. Using qualitative narrative inquiry, it examined their tutorial experiences, recurring instructional decision points, contextual pressures, explanations for their choices, and common and contrasting narrative patterns. The findings provided the basis for the proposed Narrative-Informed ARAL Reading Tutorial Support Guide for Non-Major Teacher-Tutors,

which was designed to support more focused instructional decisions, mentoring, documentation, and referral during ARAL reading tutorials.

Scholarship on literacy intervention has increasingly examined who teaches struggling readers, what knowledge those adults bring, and how instructional choices are made in tutoring settings. The primary concept is the non-major teacher serving as a reading tutor, a teacher who carries out reading instruction or literacy support even though reading is not the teacher's main area of specialization or strongest field of preparation. This role is often treated as part of a wider discussion on teacher expertise, subject specialization, pedagogical content knowledge, and practical judgment in intervention settings (Kehoe & McGinty, 2024). Non-major reading tutoring is rarely described as a simple absence of expertise. Rather, prior work tends to frame it as a condition in which teachers act with a mix of limited formal preparation, developing practical knowledge, and context-based adaptation. Some studies emphasize the growth of tutoring competence through guided practice and reflection (Carter, 2021). Other work stresses that teachers' early beliefs about reading, their prior schooling, and their ideas about what counts as reading development may shape their choices before formal expertise is fully established (Fraser, 2024).

Teacher background includes formal preparation, literacy knowledge, prior tutoring exposure, self-perceived ability, mentoring experience, and the professional supports available in the school context. Out-of-field teaching refers to the condition in which teachers work outside their main specialization and must still make sound instructional decisions in unfamiliar or only partly familiar content areas (Anselmo & Anselmo, 2024). One position emphasizes the importance of strong content knowledge and explicit understanding of literacy sub-skills (Tortorelli et al., 2021). Another position accepts that knowledge matters, but it also argues that competence grows through coached practice, collaboration, reflection, and supported teaching experiences rather than coursework alone (Ries et al., 2023). The clearest position is an integrated one: teacher background is best understood as the combination of what teachers know, how they learned it, and how school contexts help or hinder the use of that knowledge in actual reading tutoring.

Instructional decision-making in reading tutoring refers to the moment-to-moment judgments teachers make about what to teach, how to teach it, when to shift strategies, how to respond to learner confusion, and how to balance sub-skill teaching with engagement, pacing, and immediate need (Parrila et al., 2024). These include choosing whether to prioritize code-related skills or meaning-related work, deciding how much support to provide, selecting materials or texts, adjusting to learner affect, and using available information to revise the next teaching step (Carter et al., 2023).

A first major pattern in the empirical literature is that stronger literacy knowledge and structured preparation tend to support better instructional decision-making in reading-related work. Reviews and empirical studies consistently show that teachers who receive explicit preparation in foundational literacy skills and opportunities for applied practice are better positioned to make sound instructional choices and support student reading performance (Hudson et al., 2021; Hudson, 2023). This trend appears again in work showing that teacher knowledge predicts instructional quality and that differentiation becomes more effective when teachers understand the reading demands involved (Parrila et al., 2024). Studies on one-to-one tutoring, structured literacy tutoring, virtual literacy field experiences, and collaborative preparation suggest that practice-based teaching opportunities help developing teachers connect literacy theory to real instructional choices (Carter, 2021; Esperat & Bollinger, 2023). Even short but focused preparation has been found to improve understanding of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and assessment (Milne & Topping, 2025).

Still, the evidence is not uniformly strong or simple. Some studies report a gap between what teachers believe, what they know, and what they do. Teachers may report confidence and positive attitudes toward reading instruction while showing limited reading knowledge, inconsistent use of evidence-based practices, or weak differentiation in actual lesson planning (Kehoe & McGinty, 2024). Large-scale evidence also suggests that beliefs and self-efficacy may shape how often teachers report using explicit or differentiated reading practices, but direct links to reading achievement are not always clear in every dataset (Bleukx et al., 2024).

A second major empirical line concerns the effects of out-of-field conditions, weak specialization, and uneven professional support on teacher practice. Research on novice teachers and out-of-field teachers shows that teachers often enter unfamiliar teaching roles with stress, insecurity, and pedagogical difficulty, yet they also build competence through preparation, colleague support, ongoing learning, and local adaptation (Ngcobo, 2023; Anselmo & Anselmo, 2024). Comparative studies also show that context matters. The literature includes preservice teachers, in-service teachers, rural novice teachers, virtual tutors, multilingual tutoring settings, and secondary EFL teachers, and these settings do not produce identical patterns (Relyea et al., 2024).

Research on reading intervention has paid close attention to the teaching of specific reading sub-skills because struggling readers rarely need one broad remedy. They usually need focused support in more than one part of reading, especially in decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Hudson et al. (2021) show that foundational literacy work commonly includes skills such as phonological awareness, phonics, and morphological awareness, while later work on reading instruction often extends the discussion to fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Tortorelli et al. (2021) stress the need for clear attention to code-related reading instruction, especially phonics and decoding. At the same time, Marek and Godfrey (2024) argue that strong literacy teaching also joins written-code instruction with meaning-making and responsive teaching to children's lived contexts. The more defensible view is an integrated model in which decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are taught as connected instructional concerns.

Intervention contexts include structured tutoring, one-to-one support, small-group literacy instruction, workshop-supported reading teaching, and other forms of targeted help. Carter (2021) shows that tutoring settings can sharpen attention to reading processes because teachers must work closely with learner need. Relyea et al. (2024) add that tutoring contexts also shape text choice, vocabulary emphasis, and comprehension support in ways that differ from routine whole-class teaching. Scholarly discussions of intervention contexts tend to converge on one point: reading support is strongest when teaching is explicit, targeted, and responsive to evidence from learner performance. Carter (2021) show that structured literacy tutoring helps teachers use diagnostic information to design more focused lessons, while Tiba (2023) shows that professional support can increase teachers' willingness to teach comprehension strategies explicitly.

A first major empirical pattern is that stronger teacher preparation in reading sub-skills tends to support better instruction in intervention work. Hudson et al. (2021) report that teacher preparation can strengthen knowledge of foundational literacy skills, especially when training includes practical application. Milne and Topping (2025) likewise found that even a short, focused course improved trainee teachers' knowledge of phonics, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, and reading assessment. Parrila et al. (2024) extend this pattern by showing that teacher knowledge predicts instructional quality, especially when differentiation is part of the teaching process. Carter (2021) found that one-to-one tutoring supported both children's reading progress and preservice teachers' capacity to teach decoding, fluency, and comprehension more effectively. Carter et al. (2023) similarly found that structured literacy tutoring helped teachers use data to design targeted lessons and strengthen broader literacy instruction.

However, the evidence also shows mixed and weaker results. Kehoe and McGinty (2024) found that teachers often had low average reading-related knowledge and limited differentiation despite high self-belief. Davis and Bernadowski (2025) reported a similar gap, with teachers expressing confidence while still showing limited knowledge of early literacy teaching. Fraser (2024) further suggests that preservice teachers may enter literacy learning with oversimplified views of reading development.

A second empirical line concerns the role of explicit and targeted strategy instruction in improving vocabulary and comprehension within intervention settings. Tiba (2023) found that after a workshop, teachers were more motivated to teach comprehension strategies explicitly. Kumlu and Yürük (2022) likewise found that explicit reading strategy instruction increased preservice teachers' use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Relyea et al. (2024) add a practical dimension by showing that thematic informational texts and content-rich tutoring materials supported student engagement and vocabulary work in a virtual tutoring program.

Research on learning recovery has given growing attention to tutorial delivery because many schools now rely on targeted support to help learners who have fallen behind after disruption. Nickow et al. (2023) show that tutoring is commonly treated as a structured form of support that can produce strong learning gains when it is frequent, targeted, and embedded in school systems. Angrist et al. (2023) report that tutoring can work across different countries and delivery modes when the program remains structured and consistent. Yet Carbonari et al. (2024) show that recovery efforts may produce weak results when they are poorly coordinated or unable to reach the intended students. Hoffman et al. (2021) show that tutor training, fidelity, and family feedback all matter in judging whether tutorial support is functioning well. Asio and Jimenez (2021) also make an important distinction by showing that material provision alone is not the same as actual instructional support.

Contextual constraints refer to the conditions that shape, limit, or complicate the delivery of tutorial support, such as staffing shortages, weak coordination, time pressure, competing school demands, uneven access to materials, and differences in learner readiness. Ngoasong (2021) argues that programs operating in resource-scarce settings must adapt to local conditions because uniform models often fail when context is ignored. Carbonari et al. (2024) show that recovery interventions may underperform not because the idea of support is weak, but because delivery systems are fragile. Gregana (2023) shows that teacher readiness and recovery planning are linked to stronger student engagement and cognitive outcomes. Gahima et al. (2022) found that tutorial meetings, peer discussion, and support services improved learner participation. Comia and Chavez (2025) similarly show that underuse and weak coordination can reduce the value of support services even when these services already exist.

School-based support for learning recovery refers to the institutional arrangements that make tutorial work possible and more effective, such as tutor preparation, monitoring, coordination, supervision, material support, and systems for helping learners who need follow-up assistance. Asio and Jimenez (2021) show that schools can mobilize learning resources under pressure, but they also imply that resource provision by itself is not enough unless it is linked to actual implementation support. Mojab et al. (2023) show that layered mentoring and clear role structures can strengthen learning support and coordination in complex instructional settings. Sneddon et al. (2021) also emphasize that small-group learning works better when routines, interaction, and facilitator preparation are carefully planned.

A first major empirical pattern is that tutoring can produce strong learning benefits when delivery conditions are solid. Nickow et al. (2023) found that tutoring had substantial positive effects across PreK-12 settings, with stronger results when it was school-based, frequent, and delivered by teachers or paraprofessionals. Angrist et al. (2023) report that phone-based tutoring improved foundational learning in several countries, including the Philippines. Carter (2021) also found that one-to-one tutoring improved children's reading progress while helping tutors strengthen their instructional judgment. Even remote or expanded tutor models may help schools extend support when they are backed by preparation and structure, as shown by Hoffman et al. (2021). Still, not all

recovery efforts have produced strong effects. Carbonari et al. (2024) found that academic recovery interventions in several districts often failed to reach expected students and showed little detectable effect on test scores. McElhinney et al. (2023) also describe how disrupted delivery conditions weakened learning experiences even when tutors worked hard to sustain support.

A second empirical line concerns the role of institutional and school-based support in sustaining tutorial delivery. Gahima et al. (2022) found that tutorial services improved learner participation when they were backed by scheduled meetings and coordinated support structures. Gregana (2023) likewise found that teacher readiness and recovery planning were linked to stronger student engagement and cognitive outcomes. Comia and Chavez (2025) add that academic support systems are more useful when consultation, tutorials, and guidance services are coordinated rather than left disconnected.

Narrative inquiry begins from the view that human experience is understood and expressed through stories. Clandinin (2007) explains that narrative inquiry is grounded in the study of experience, while Kim (2016) shows that stories function not only as data but also as ways of knowing human life. A first key concept is temporality. According to Clandinin (2022), narrative inquiry asks how people carry earlier experiences into current situations and how current situations reshape future action and identity. Lima (2023) likewise shows that stories are layered through memory, reflection, and later interpretation. A second key concept is sociality, which refers to the personal and social conditions within which stories are lived and told. As discussed in Clandinin et al. (2016), narrative work requires attention to both inward conditions such as emotion and outward conditions such as social relationships and institutional life. Gavidia and Adu (2022) extend this point by showing that stories are socially situated and often shaped by broader assumptions and structural conditions. Closely tied to sociality is place. Clandinin (2007) shows that place is not a background detail added after the fact; it is part of the meaning of experience itself. Cable et al. (2022) demonstrate this clearly in practice, showing how the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place can guide narrative analysis.

Another key concept is that narratives are both told content and social practice. Andrews et al. (2013) explain that narrative research pays attention to voice, audience, context, and form, while Van De Mierop et al. (2021) argue that narratives should be studied as socially constructed acts rather than as isolated products. A further key concept is identity. Neupane et al. (2022) show that identity is one of the most productive concepts in narrative studies because professional lives are often formed through emotionally charged and socially situated stories. Syed and McLean (2020) add that personal stories are also in conversation with wider cultural and institutional narratives. Narrative inquiry also rests on the idea of meaning-making through interpretation. Butler-Kisber (2010) explains that voice, interpretation, and representation are central to narrative work. Bold (2012) also notes that memory, audience, and context influence what is narrated and how it is narrated. Finally, narrative inquiry depends on relational ethics and positionality. Clandinin (2022) stresses that narrative inquiry is relational and ethically grounded. Lima (2023) shows that positionality, access, and the researcher's own assumptions affect how narratives are generated and understood.

Within the broader body of literature on reading intervention, teacher preparation, and learning recovery, only a smaller group of studies has used narrative inquiry or clearly narrative designs to examine experience in depth. In literacy-related settings, the most directly relevant previous narrative study is that of Isidro and Teichert (2021). Their narrative inquiry showed that virtual tutoring helped preservice teachers develop literacy-related knowledge, interpretive frames, strategies, and advocacy-oriented practices. A second useful narrative study is Ngcobo (2023), which examined how novice teachers developed as subject specialists in a rural school context. Other previous narrative studies, though located outside school literacy intervention, also strengthen the case for this kind of inquiry. Whittam et al. (2021) showed that senior nurses' workplace stories were shaped by responsibility, memory, and relationships, while Cable et al. (2022) showed that narrative inquiry could reveal the emotional, professional, and relational demands of early-career work. James et al. (2022a) found that participants' stories about leadership were shaped by institutional context, emotion, and imagined future selves. James et al. (2022b) used teachers' blog narratives to show that temporality, sociality, and place can also be traced in online professional learning, while Lima (2023) demonstrated that positionality, ethics, and access are central to how narrative data are generated and interpreted.

Reading recovery remained a major educational concern after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Betthäuser et al. (2023) found that learning deficits continued across countries more than two years after the pandemic began, while Donnelly and Patrinos (2022) reported that most early studies recorded learning loss after school closures. This concern was linked to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education, and to AmBisyon Natin 2040, which envisions a better quality of life for Filipinos as emphasized by EDCOM II (2025).

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 12028 (2024) established the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program, commonly known as ARAL, as a national response to learning recovery needs. In public secondary schools in SDO Las Piñas, some ARAL reading tutorial sessions were handled by non-major teacher-tutors. Recent Philippine research showed that teachers working with struggling readers used timely intervention, individual support, and motivational strategies. However, much of this work was conducted in other settings and involved teaching roles that differed from those of non-major ARAL teacher-tutors in Las Piñas (Caballo, 2025). When the literature is narrowed to studies closer to the Philippine or school-improvement context, the evidence is still useful but less complete. Lagdaan and Sevilla (2025) report that structured comprehension strategies can

improve literacy performance among junior high school students, while Eduvala (2025) suggests that storytelling and interactive read-aloud can support vocabulary and comprehension in early readers. Asio and Jimenez (2021) show that Philippine schools were able to mobilize learning resources during disruption. Gregana (2023) moves closer to the recovery issue by showing that teacher readiness and learning recovery planning matter to student engagement.

The study was anchored in three complementary theoretical lenses: Borg's Teacher Cognition Framework, Duke and Cartwright's Active View of Reading, and the High-Impact Tutoring Framework associated with Kraft and Falken. Each lens served a distinct purpose. Teacher Cognition explained who made the instructional decision, the Active View of Reading explained what reading content was selected, and High-Impact Tutoring explained the conditions under which instruction occurred. These lenses guided the interpretation of the participants' stories rather than functioning as variables in a statistical model.

Borg's Teacher Cognition Framework explains how teachers' knowledge, beliefs, prior preparation, experience, and understanding of context shape classroom action. Borg (2015) argues that teachers do not simply follow a curriculum or program in a fixed manner. They interpret instructional demands through what they know, believe, and have experienced. Their classroom choices therefore involve judgment rather than mechanical compliance. Teacher cognition also develops within social and institutional conditions. Li (2020) explains that teacher thinking is shaped by school routines, professional relationships, curriculum demands, and interaction with others.

The Active View of Reading provided the basis for understanding the reading content described in the participants' stories. Duke and Cartwright (2021) explain that reading involves more than word recognition and language comprehension. It also involves bridging processes and active self-regulation, which help learners connect printed words with meaning and manage the demands of reading. Word recognition includes the processes needed to identify and read printed words. Language comprehension concerns understanding spoken and written language. Bridging processes connect these areas and include vocabulary, fluency, and other abilities that support the movement from print to meaning. Active self-regulation includes attention, strategy use, cognitive flexibility, and the ability to monitor understanding while reading.

The High-Impact Tutoring Framework explained the conditions surrounding ARAL reading tutorial delivery. Kraft and Falken (2021) identify focused instruction, coordination, tutor preparation, and careful implementation as important features of strong tutoring programs. Later work on tutoring also emphasizes regular sessions, manageable tutor-learner groupings, suitable materials, alignment with learner needs, and continuing support for tutors. Republic Act No. 12028 established ARAL as a national learning recovery program, while the Department of Education's implementing guidelines set expectations for tutorial support, learner assessment, tutor preparation, and program delivery (Department of Education [DepEd], 2025).

The conceptual framework presents how the study moved from the teacher-tutors' backgrounds and tutorial experiences to the development of the proposed practical output. It integrates the three theoretical lenses of the study. Borg's Teacher Cognition Framework explained the teachers' knowledge, beliefs, prior preparation, experience, and professional judgment. The Active View of Reading explained the learner needs and reading sub-skills addressed during instruction. The High-Impact Tutoring Framework explained the tutorial conditions that supported or restricted teaching. These elements guided the examination of instructional decisions, learner responses, reflections, and patterns across the participants' stories.

The framework began with the background and cognition of the teacher-tutors. Their beliefs, reading knowledge, prior preparation, teaching experience, confidence, and professional judgment shaped how they understood their ARAL assignments. The next element covered the learner signs and immediate reading needs noticed by the teacher-tutors. These signs included difficulty recognizing or decoding words, slow or hesitant reading, weak vocabulary, limited comprehension, silence, guessing, and inability to respond independently. The tutors' understanding of learner needs led to instructional choices. These choices included selecting one reading priority, choosing a strategy, simplifying directions, modeling a task, using repeated reading, explaining vocabulary, translating selected terms, dividing a passage into smaller parts, or asking guiding questions. Instructional choices were examined together with the learner's immediate response. The framework also recognized that instructional decisions occurred within contextual conditions. These included available time, workload, attendance, group composition, learner differences, materials, training, mentoring, and school support. Learner responses and contextual conditions led to review and reflection. These experiences formed the narratives examined in the study. The narratives were then examined through restoring, within-story analysis, and cross-story comparison. The cross-story patterns provided the basis for the Narrative-Informed ARAL Reading Tutorial Support Guide for Non-Major Teacher-Tutors.

The reviewed literature established that effective reading support depends partly on teachers' understanding of reading and their ability to turn that knowledge into suitable instructional responses (Hudson et al., 2021). It also showed that decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are related but distinct areas that may require focused and responsive instruction (Tortorelli et al., 2021). Research on tutoring further suggested that structured sessions, trained tutors, aligned materials, regular attendance, and school support may strengthen learning recovery efforts (Nickow et al., 2023). However, these findings did not fully explain how non-major teacher-tutors selected and adjusted reading sub-skills while working with learners during actual ARAL sessions.

Previous studies examined literacy intervention, tutoring, teacher readiness, and learning recovery in different national, local, virtual, and school-based settings. However, the reviewed research gave limited attention to ARAL

reading tutorial delivery in a public junior high school setting in SDO Las Piñas. Existing studies described broad program requirements and school implementation concerns, but they did not sufficiently show how local schedules, attendance, materials, workload, group composition, and school support shaped instruction during ARAL reading tutorials. The context gap therefore concerned the limited documentation of how reading support was carried out under the actual conditions experienced by teacher-tutors in the selected SDO Las Piñas setting. Much of the literature focused on reading specialists, language teachers, preservice teachers, trained tutors, or teachers whose professional preparation included literacy instruction (Carter, 2021). Studies on out-of-field teaching showed that teachers working outside their specialization may experience differences in confidence, content knowledge, professional identity, and support needs (Anselmo & Anselmo, 2024). Still, limited attention was given to in-service non-major teacher-tutors who were assigned to teach decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension during ARAL sessions. This group differed from reading specialists and preservice tutors because the participants were regular public-school teachers who handled reading support despite having other areas of specialization.

Prior research commonly examined intervention effects, teacher knowledge, reported practices, learner outcomes, training programs, or broad implementation conditions (Carbonari et al., 2024; Kehoe & McGinty, 2024). These approaches provided useful evidence about what teachers knew, which programs were implemented, and what results were associated with tutoring. However, fewer studies examined how teachers narrated real-time instructional decisions, including what they noticed, when they changed direction, why they selected one reading sub-skill over another, and how they understood their roles and limits. Such questions required attention to sequence, turning points, justification, professional meaning, and differences among individual stories.

The three gaps pointed to one unresolved problem. Research had not sufficiently explained how non-major teacher-tutors in the selected SDO Las Piñas setting experienced, interpreted, and justified the teaching of reading sub-skills during ARAL tutorial sessions. A qualitative narrative inquiry was therefore needed to retain the order of events in their accounts, examine the conditions surrounding their decisions, and identify common and contrasting patterns without removing the distinct character of each story. This gap led directly to the study's focus on tutorial experiences, instructional decision points, contextual pressures, teaching justifications, cross-story patterns, and the development of a practical support guide.

The study contributed a context-specific account of how teacher preparation, learner response, reading sub-skills, professional judgment, and tutorial conditions shaped the work of eight non-major teacher-tutors. It also provided the narrative basis for the proposed Narrative-Informed ARAL Reading Tutorial Support Guide for Non-Major Teacher-Tutors, which was designed to support reading-need identification, focused instructional responses, learner-response monitoring, mentoring, consultation, and referral during ARAL reading tutorials.

The study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. It also connects to SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals through collaborative efforts among teachers, school heads, instructional supervisors, program coordinators, and policy implementers in supporting ARAL reading tutorial delivery.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by examining how non-major teacher-tutors navigate reading instruction under real school conditions, thereby supporting more responsive tutorial practices that can help restore foundational learning. It also supports institutional sustainability by providing grounded evidence that may inform school-level planning, tutor assignment, mentoring, and program coordination within ARAL implementation.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative narrative inquiry design. This design was suitable because the inquiry focused on how non-major teacher-tutors organized and explained their experiences of teaching reading sub-skills during ARAL tutorial sessions. Rather than measuring variables or testing statistical relationships, the study examined how teachers described events, interpreted learner needs, made instructional choices, and formed meaning from their work within a specific school setting.

Narrative inquiry allowed the participants' experiences to be examined across time, place, and social relationships. Their accounts showed how tutorial situations began, what difficulties emerged, which learner signs became turning points, how teachers responded, and what happened after an instructional adjustment. This sequence was important because decisions involving decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension did not occur as isolated actions. They developed from the interaction among teacher preparation, learner response, available materials, time, workload, and program conditions.

The design also matched the research questions because the study examined instructional decision points, contextual pressures, teaching justifications, common patterns, and contrasting experiences across the participants' stories. Narrative inquiry made it possible to consider each account separately before comparing stories across participants. This process preserved individual differences while allowing recurring patterns to be identified (Kim, 2016).

The participants' accounts were restoried to present their experiences in a coherent sequence without adding events, motives, or outcomes that were not found in the interview data. Their stories were then examined through within-story and cross-story analysis. This process helped show not only what the teacher-tutors did but also why

they believed their choices were suitable, how they positioned themselves as non-major tutors, and what professional meanings they attached to their ARAL work.

The design had clear limits. It did not test the effectiveness of the ARAL Program, measure learner achievement gains, establish causal relationships, or produce statistical generalizations about all ARAL teacher-tutors. Instead, it provided context-bound interpretations of how eight non-major teacher-tutors narrated and understood their instructional experiences. This focus was consistent with qualitative research, which examines human action and meaning within the settings where experience occurs (Flick, 2018).

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in one selected public junior high school in the Schools Division Office of Las Piñas during School Year 2025–2026. The school implemented ARAL reading tutorial sessions and assigned teachers from different subject specializations to provide reading support. This setting was suitable because the study examined how non-major teacher-tutors made instructional decisions involving decoding, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension within an actual learning recovery program.

The school was described in protected form rather than identified by name. Naming the school, when combined with the participants' subject assignments, professional backgrounds, and ARAL roles, could have increased the possibility of identifying individual teacher-tutors. This decision followed the study's confidentiality safeguards while still providing enough information about the institutional setting.

The research locale formed part of the participants' experiences rather than serving only as the physical site of data collection. Tutorial schedules, learner attendance, workload, available materials, school procedures, mentoring, and program expectations shaped how the teachers understood and carried out their assignments. Narrative inquiry was suitable for this context because it allowed the participants' experiences to be examined through time, place, professional relationships, and school conditions (Clandinin, 2022).

The study did not attempt to describe or evaluate every public school in SDO Las Piñas. It focused on the selected junior high school only as the setting in which the eight participants experienced and narrated ARAL reading tutorial delivery. The locale was therefore discussed only in relation to the conditions relevant to the study.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participant pool consisted of teachers from the selected public junior high school who had directly handled ARAL reading tutorial sessions during School Year 2025–2026. These teachers came from subject specializations other than reading or literacy instruction but had been assigned to support learners with difficulties in decoding, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension.

A teacher was included in the study when the following conditions were met: The teacher was employed in the selected public junior high school in SDO Las Piñas. The teacher had directly handled ARAL reading tutorial sessions during School Year 2025–2026. The teacher's main academic preparation or specialization was not reading or literacy instruction. The teacher had taught or supported at least one reading area covered by the study, such as decoding, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension. The teacher was able to describe specific experiences and instructional decisions from ARAL tutorial sessions. The teacher voluntarily agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview and provided informed consent.

Teachers were not included when they had no direct experience conducting ARAL reading tutorials, worked only in administrative or supervisory roles, were reading specialists whose main assignment involved literacy instruction, worked at the elementary level, were employed outside the selected setting, or did not provide informed consent.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used criterion-based purposive sampling. Participants were not selected randomly. They were chosen because they met specific eligibility conditions and had direct experience that could help answer the research questions. This sampling method was appropriate because narrative inquiry requires storytellers who can provide relevant accounts of the phenomenon rather than a statistically representative sample of a larger population.

The selection focused on information-rich cases. Each participant had experienced the instructional demands of ARAL reading tutorial work and could describe actual situations involving learner difficulties, teaching choices, strategy adjustments, contextual pressures, and professional meanings. Differences in subject specialization, teaching experience, confidence, and tutorial conditions also allowed the study to examine both common and contrasting stories, although maximum variation was not treated as a separate sampling method.

After the required permission to conduct the study and recruit participants had been obtained, the researcher coordinated with the concerned school authorities and designated ARAL personnel to identify teachers who had handled reading-related tutorial sessions. The initial pool was limited to teachers whose ARAL assignments and experiences matched the focus of the inquiry. The selection of the storytellers followed a clear sequence. First, the researcher secured the required permission to conduct the study and recruit participants from the concerned school authorities. Eight non-major teacher-tutors who met the criteria were selected as participants.

2.5 Research Instrument

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide or conversation prompts were designed to elicit accounts of tutorial experiences, instructional decision points, contextual pressures, teaching justifications, and professional meanings. Instrument validation documents supported the development and refinement of the interview questions.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection procedures involved securing the required permission to conduct the study and recruit participants, coordinating with school authorities and designated ARAL personnel, obtaining informed consent from participants, and conducting semi-structured interviews. Participant profile information, tutorial context notes, and researcher reflexive notes supported the interview data. Ethical considerations in narrative work guided the process, including attention to trust, confidentiality, representation, and the researcher's own assumptions.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Narrative data analysis and restorying guided the organization and interpretation of the accounts. Labov's (1972) structural elements of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda guided the organization of the accounts, followed by restorying, within-story analysis, cross-story comparison, and interpretation through temporality, sociality, and place. Trustworthiness, narrative truth, and research reflexivity were addressed through reflexive notes, verbatim transcripts, evidence matrices, retention of negative and contrasting cases, separation of participant voice from researcher interpretation, and documentation of the analytic process.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards included informed consent, protection of participant identity through protected description of the school and generalization of identifying details, retention of silence, brief answers, and expressions of uncertainty as part of the evidence, and ongoing attention to relational ethics and positionality. The researcher's influence was examined through reflexive notes, checking of interpretations against actual words, and acknowledgment of uncertainty when sequence or meaning remained unclear.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Non-major Teacher Tutor's Narrated Experience in ARAL Reading Instructions

3.1.1 Narrative Threads and Meaning-Making

The participants entered ARAL with different levels of preparation and confidence. Some described initial uncertainty because reading was outside their specialization, while others drew on prior tutorial experience or broad teaching experience. Their stories showed sequences of assignment, orientation to learners and materials, emergence of difficulty, turning points, teaching responses, evaluation of effectiveness, and present recommendations.

These accounts reflected meaning-making through temporality, sociality, and place. Teachers carried prior preparation and experience into present tutorial demands and projected future needs for training or specialist support. Social relationships with learners and institutional expectations shaped how they positioned themselves. The actual tutorial setting in the selected public junior high school formed the concrete conditions under which decisions unfolded.

3.1.2 Cross-Narrative Themes and Patterns

Common patterns included returning to foundational skills when learners could not complete prepared tasks, using learner response as a trigger for instructional change, addressing comprehension difficulties despite oral reading ability, treating vocabulary as a bridge to meaning, employing simplification and scaffolding, supporting confidence and participation, relying on available materials, and requesting training, mentoring, or specialist help. Contrasting patterns involved foundational versus comprehension-first priorities, growing confidence versus continuing uncertainty or resistance, manageable non-major status versus serious role concern, and adaptation within the role versus preference for specialist or hired tutors.

These patterns indicate that instructional choices were produced through practical negotiation among learner performance, available time, teacher preparation, workload, materials, attendance, group composition, and perceived school or program support. The common story was not simply that non-major teachers lacked preparation, but that they had to make reading decisions while balancing learner needs, limited time, uneven support, and different levels of professional confidence.

3.1.3 Dialogues Between Stories, Theory, and Literature

The findings align with Borg's Teacher Cognition Framework in showing how knowledge, beliefs, prior experience, and practical judgment shaped classroom decisions. They also connect with the Active View of Reading in distinguishing word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension needs. The High-Impact Tutoring Framework helps interpret how time, materials, grouping, training, and mentoring influenced responses.

Prior literature on out-of-field teaching, literacy preparation, and tutoring conditions is consistent with the observed tensions between limited specialization and practical adaptation under real school constraints.

3.2 Recurring Instructional Decision Points in ARAL Reading Sub-Skill Selection and Teaching

3.2.1 Cross-Narrative Themes and Patterns

Recurring decision points involved observing learner signs such as silence, guessing, hesitation, facial expressions, repeated errors, oral reading performance, written answers, and participation; identifying an immediate reading need; selecting a sub-skill such as decoding, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension; applying a response such as slowing, simplifying, guiding, repeating, explaining, translating, or chunking text; and deciding whether to continue, shift, consult, or refer. Foundational skills were prioritized when learners could not read simple words. Vocabulary and comprehension were prioritized when learners could read but could not understand.

3.2.2 Narrative Threads and Meaning-Making

Teachers treated learner behavior as informal assessment. The absence of a shared assessment tool or decision rule meant that responses depended on individual judgment, available materials, and prior experience. Some relied heavily on manuals; others adapted more freely. Translation into Filipino was used by some when English vocabulary or passage length blocked understanding.

3.2.3 Dialogues Between Stories, Theory, and Literature

These decision points reflect the moment-to-moment judgments described in the literature on instructional decision-making in reading tutoring. They also illustrate how teacher cognition operates within contextual constraints and how reading sub-skills are selected according to observed learner need rather than a fixed sequence.

3.3 Contextual Pressures, Constraints, and Disruptions in Real-Time ARAL Tutorial Decisions

3.3.1 Cross-Narrative Themes and Patterns

Contextual pressures included lack of specialized reading preparation, mixed learner readiness, irregular attendance and weak participation, limited tutorial time, regular workload and paperwork, insufficient or unsuitable materials, unclear implementation and tutor roles, language difficulty, and limited individualized support. These conditions shaped pacing, skill selection, grouping, explanation, translation, repetition, scaffolding, and whether the teacher continued or changed the prepared task.

3.3.2 Dialogues Between Stories, Theory, and Literature

The findings are consistent with literature showing that tutorial delivery depends on frequency, targeting, tutor consistency, materials, and school-based support, and that recovery efforts may underperform when coordination, staffing, and competing demands are fragile. Contextual constraints are not peripheral; they are central conditions that shape tutorial practice itself.

3.3.3 Narrative Threads and Meaning-Making

Teachers experienced these pressures as immediate limits on what could be taught and how. Some responded through continuous learning and adjustment; others remained doubtful or resistant and preferred specialist support. Prior tutorial or broad teaching experience moderated the sense of unpreparedness for some participants.

3.4 Instructional Justification, Professional Beliefs, and Role Positioning in ARAL Reading Tutorials

3.4.1 Cross-Narrative Themes and Patterns

Justifications were commonly learner-need based, foundational-skill based, assessment-based, practical, experience-based, relational, resource-based, language-support based, professional-duty based, or specialist-support based. Professional beliefs centered on patience, encouragement, practice, duty, and the view that every learner can improve with appropriate support. Role positions ranged from adaptive supporter and developing reading-support teacher to constrained assignee, experienced generalist, committed professional learner, and responsive but reluctant tutor who prefers specialist-led intervention.

3.4.2 Dialogues Between Stories, Theory, and Literature

These justifications and identity positions align with narrative inquiry's emphasis on identity as formed through experience, memory, relationships, and institutional roles. They also reflect teacher cognition as shaped by prior preparation, beliefs, and context.

3.4.3 Narrative Threads and Meaning-Making

Non-major status carried different meanings: a temporary challenge for some, a manageable limitation when experience or support was present, and a serious barrier requiring specialists for others. Confidence grew through practice for some participants while remaining limited or accompanied by resistance for others.

3.5 Common and Contrasting Narrative Patterns in ARAL Reading Tutorial Delivery

3.5.1 Cross-Narrative Themes and Patterns

Common patterns included adaptation based on learner response, movement between foundational skills and comprehension, use of practical scaffolds, attention to confidence and participation, and demand for stronger support. Contrasting patterns involved foundational versus comprehension-first instruction, confidence versus continuing uncertainty, adaptation versus resistance, general teaching experience versus specialist preparation, and technical support versus workload and resource support.

3.5.2 Dialogues Between Stories, Theory, and Literature

The patterns support the need for a support guide that does not prescribe one sequence for every learner but helps tutors identify needs, select a starting skill, observe triggers, adjust strategies, and seek specialist support when needs exceed preparation.

3.5.3 Narrative Threads and Meaning-Making

Despite differences in detail, the accounts commonly followed a structure of assignment, orientation, difficulty, turning point, response, evaluation, and coda expressing growth, doubt, duty, resistance, or recommendation.

3.6 Narrative-Informed ARAL Reading Tutorial Support Guide and Decision-Making Framework

3.6.1 Narrative Threads and Meaning-Making

The proposed guide translates the participants' recurring experiences into practical decision support. Its central feature is a sequence that helps the tutor identify the learner's immediate reading need, select one starting sub-skill, observe the learner's response, continue, slow down, repeat, simplify, or shift instruction, support confidence and participation, document the immediate result, and consult or refer when the learner's needs exceed the tutor's preparation.

3.6.2 Dialogues Between Stories, Theory, and Literature

The guide is grounded in the problems, decisions, strategies, learner signs, contextual pressures, and support needs described by the participants and is consistent with the theoretical lenses of teacher cognition, the Active View of Reading, and high-impact tutoring conditions.

3.6.3 Cross-Narrative Themes and Patterns

Components include a rapid reading-need check, reading sub-skill decision flowchart, learner response signal and teaching action chart, short session flow, foundational, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension support sections, strategy-shifting guide, mixed-level group support, confidence and participation support, referral and specialist support guide, tutor reflection and learner response record, and school and coordinator support checklist.

3.7 Methodological Reflections and Ethical Considerations

3.7.1 Methodological Reflections

Reflexive notes recorded expectations, emotional reactions, emerging assumptions, and questions. Verbatim transcripts were repeatedly checked so that interpretations remained connected to the participants' actual words. Evidence matrices linked findings with specific transcript passages. Negative and contrasting cases were retained. Participant voice was separated from researcher interpretation. Restoring organized events without inventing missing details. Uncertainty was acknowledged when sequence or meaning remained unclear.

3.7.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards included informed consent, protection of identity through protected school description and generalization of identifying details, retention of incomplete responses as evidence, and ongoing attention to relational ethics and positionality. The researcher's professional predisposition toward positive views of tutoring was treated as requiring continuing examination rather than as an assumption guiding the findings.

3.8 Implications for Educational Practice, Policy, and Future Research

The findings may support clearer and more responsive instruction for learners, practical help for non-major teacher-tutors, mentoring by reading teachers, preparation for subject teachers assigned to ARAL, better decisions by school heads on assignment, scheduling, materials, monitoring, and coaching, focused coaching and observation tools for instructional supervisors, refined procedures for program coordinators, more usable materials and training content for curriculum planners, more realistic policy implementation, simple home support for parents and guardians, and related studies by future researchers.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found that non-major teacher-tutors performed meaningful but varied roles in ARAL reading tutorials. Their instructional decisions were generally learner-responsive and adaptive, following a process of observing learner signs, identifying an immediate reading need, selecting a sub-skill, applying an instructional response, and deciding whether to continue, repeat, simplify, shift, consult, or refer. These decisions were influenced by tutor preparation, prior experience, confidence, learner readiness, attendance, time, workload, group composition,

materials, language difficulty, and program support. Although the participants commonly adjusted instruction, simplified tasks, returned to foundational skills, and supported learner confidence, they differed in their instructional priorities, reliance on manuals, use of translation, confidence, acceptance of the tutor role, and preference for specialist assistance. The findings provided the basis for the proposed Narrative-Informed ARAL Reading Tutorial Support Guide, which should complement formal training, approved materials, qualified assessment, specialist support, and school- or division-level systems rather than replace them.

SDO Las Piñas and participating schools should provide practical, reading-focused training for non-major teacher-tutors, supported by actual tutorial situations, modeled lessons, guided practice, decision tools, lesson guides, and leveled materials reviewed by qualified reading personnel. Schools should establish protected tutorial schedules, manageable learner groupings, appropriate materials and spaces, attendance follow-up, clear workload arrangements, and simplified documentation procedures. Each school should also provide access to reading mentors or qualified support people for coaching, consultation, and instructional review, together with clear referral indicators for learners who continue to experience serious reading difficulties despite appropriate support. Program monitoring should consider tutor preparation, attendance, scheduling, materials, coaching, learner response, and referral support, reflecting the shared responsibility of teacher-tutors, coordinators, school heads, mentors, specialists, learners, and families in implementing ARAL reading tutorials.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to established ethical standards throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was secured by the appropriate school authorities, and informed consent was obtained from all teacher-tutor participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained by protecting participants' identities and using codes or pseudonyms. The collected data were securely handled and used solely for research purposes, with participants' experiences accurately and respectfully represented.

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