

Students' Narratives: Reading Partners' Experiences

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the impact of peer- assisted reading on enhancing English reading skills among Grade 12 students in a public school in Irosin, Sorsogon. Utilizing reflexive thematic analysis, narratives from six participants, three proficient readers (tutors) and three developing readers (tutees)—were examined. The findings revealed that the reading partner strategy fostered accountability, improved comprehension, boosted confidence and motivation, and offered emotional and social support. Effective techniques included modeling, think-aloud, flashcards, and interactive questioning. To support these strategies, the study introduced assessment tools such as the Reading Peer Session Log, Fluency Rubric, Vocabulary Journal, and Comprehension Worksheet, alongside a workbook titled *Magic in Two Voices*. The study recommends integrating peer reading approaches into English curricula and providing training for peer tutors to ensure consistent application of these methods.

Keywords: Reading Partner Strategy, Students' Narratives, tutees, and tutors

1. Introduction

Education is one of the key components that one must acquire in adopting the constant change and trends nowadays. It is the single best investment countries can make to build prosperous, healthy and equitable societies. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “Everyone has the right to education.” Today, however, 57 million children remain out of school. Education is not only a right, but a passport to human development that opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms.

The emergence of assisted learning strategies also known as scaffolded learning, particularly, peer-assisted and tutor-supported approaches has become increasingly recognized as valuable intervention and instructional methods in education and plays a vital role in a peer reading process. According to Hott and Walker (2021) these are instructional strategies that involve fellow students helping each other learn and grow in their understanding of various subjects or concepts. It's a form of cooperative learning that encourages active participation and engagement, where students alternate taking the role of tutor and tutee.

Reading Partner strategy is not a new concept to us, in fact there are several studies that existed in connection with this. Gubalani et.al. (2023), have found that it is effective in enhancing fluency in reading among Ninth (9th) Grade learners. Cuizon (2022) in her abstract has proposed that teachers should design activities through Peer Tutoring to promote camaraderie as they continue learning and continue establishing and maintaining programs that can encourage and engage the learners to involve in accomplishing performance tasks and find more ways to maintain the very good state of willingness.

Currently, the reading problem among Grade 12 Students at Patag Integrated School remains a serious concern. These challenges underline several factors, making the issue more complex. During a recent Rapid Literacy Assessment (RLA), the researcher of this study had observed some students struggled with word pronunciation and slow reading fluency. Based on the result, 8.99% or 8 out of 89 senior high school students are under coping, 23.60% or 21 out of 89 are emerging, and 67.42% or 60 out of 89 are establishing. Specifically, for 12th grade there are 3/35 or 8.57% who are still coping, 12/35 or 34.29% are emerging, and 20/35 or 57.14% are establishing.

The use of narratives among students offers a wide array of cognitive, social, and academic benefits. From a developmental perspective, engaging with narrative forms fosters critical thinking, enhances language skills, and supports emotional intelligence that could lead to the holistic student development. According to Kuisma and Ratinen (2021), they found out that some students are learning diaries quite easily but considered portfolio work challenging, thus expressing the first counter-narrative. Data describes local students' self-narratives about 'identity or sense of self' and 'sense of belonging or connection with others.'

1.1. Objective of the study

The study was conducted among Grade 12 SHS in one of the integrated schools in the province of Sorsogon, School Year 2024-2025. This included a sample of 3 partners only (tutor as established reader and tutee as emerging reader) of grade 12 students at the designated school chosen for the study from the province of Sorsogon. Each student that took the class was asked to provide written narratives in every reading session. The participants had a twice a week session for February and March which enabled them to read sixteen (16) reading materials that were an excerpt taken from fables, short stories, and fairy tales. This study aimed to explore students' narrative using journal entries with reading partners. It described the experiences of tutors and tutees in a peer reading process. It also determined the reading strategies employed by the tutors and the learning uptakes gained by their tutees based on their approaches. Lastly, it designed a supplementary workbook "Magic in Two Voices", integrated the different stories, strategies and learning uptakes, and included different tracker and teacher tools to ensure its effectiveness.

2. Methodology

This study described the students' experiences through narrative on students' skills and strategies using

Peer Reading Process. It utilized the qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative descriptive study was an important and appropriate design for research questions focused on gaining insights about a poorly understood research area, rather than on a specific phenomenon. Since qualitative descriptive study design sought to describe rather than explain (Ayton, 2023).

2.1. Participants

The participants of the study were the 6 (six) enrolled Grade 12 learners from Patag Integrated School, one of the integrated schools in Irosin, Sorsogon, for School year 2024-2025. From this group, three (3) learners identified as emerging readers were selected as tutees through purposive sampling based on their suitability for completing the required journal entries. The teacher-researcher believed that these students possessed the ability to accomplish series of narratives. Each emerging reader underwent an intervention scaffolded by three (3) reading partners who were identified as established readers and served as tutors. The intervention was executed under the supervision and guidance of the teacher-researcher. The researcher's selection of participants was done purposively to ensure alignment with the study's objectives.

2.2. Data Gathering Procedure

The study employed Cresswell (2013), assured to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' identity. The participants' right is to withhold their personal information from public disclosure. Before participating in the research, they were thoroughly informed about their data usage, storage, and protection. At the beginning of the study, participants were not pressured as participants and the norms of the school and community were respected. Initially, the researcher administered the pretest to determine the three (3) reading partners consisting of: three (3) tutors who were categorized under established readers and three (3) tutees. After that, the researcher called for an FGD (Focus Group Discussion) to explain the roles and procedures to all participants, including how to engage in reading sessions and complete narrative entries. They were also asked to read and sign informed consent for participants. The selected tutors were also instructed to study the reading materials. Next, the teacher provided a carefully selected 16 set of reading materials, drawn from various excerpts, to support the study. The study was conducted over the 3rd and 4th quarters of the 2024-2025 school year, specifically from February 4, 2025, to March 25, 2025. The reading sessions were conducted twice a week for eight (8) weeks, totaling 16 sessions. Additionally, both the tutors and tutees documented their experiences and progress through journal entries, offered a deeper understanding of the learning journey and the effects of the Peer Reading or Reading Partner Strategy.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data for this study were collected through narratives with students who participated in reading partnerships. The data were analyzed by thematic analysis approach, followed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for qualitative data analysis. The analysis process involved the following steps: 1) familiarized with the data, 2) generated initial codes, 3) identified themes, 4) reviewed themes, and 5) defined and named themes. Hence, manual coding was utilized to ensure close interaction with the data (derived from the journal entries), accurate interpretation and representation of meaning, flexibility in coding, and transparent analysis. The researcher had carefully aligned and designed supplementary workbooks and additional peer reading assessment tools that reinforced the themes identified under objective number 1 and 2.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Success in Collaboration

Table 1.a shows the valuable experiences of Grade 12 tutors in a peer reading process relative to the themes that emerged in their journals. These include support through simplification, create safe spaces, and guiding discoveries.

Table 1. a Sample of tutors' experiences in a peer reading process

Theme	Experiences
1. Support through simplification	The tutors, acted as learning support buddies during peer-assisted reading sessions, played a vital role in making reading accessible through simplification strategies. They supported tutees by simplifying content, scaffolding vocabulary through using context-based clarification, and employing translation and code switching when needed. These approaches include rewording and underlining difficult words and recognizing repetition to develop fluency, comprehension, and language acquisition. Tutors show unstoppable patience, cultural sensitivity and strong foundation on how to adapt their support based on the needs of their tutees.
2. Create safe spaces	Tutors also acted as learning gatekeepers who make sure that their tutees do not only gain learning but felt emotionally safe and supported. They had created a safe space by offering a place and material that is timely and relevant to his/her peer tutee. Their support in emotional aspects such as recognizing openness of nervousness, offering motivation, and making an environment free from pressure had helped tutees overcome reading anxiety and engage with texts fully. These approaches appeared as a significant stage in the peer reading process, allowing tutees-built trust and confidence
3. Guide discovery	Lastly, tutors switch their roles from knowledge deliverers to facilitators of learning. This role evolved effectively in peer reading sessions. Tutors guided their peers through comprehension, reflection, and critical thinking rather than just simply providing answers. They had demonstrated that facilitation was a mutual process, discovered unfamiliar words, and modeled how to use dictionary. They described the effective use of purposeful questioning to test comprehension, indicated a shift from direct instruction to scaffold independent understanding.

On the other hand, table 1.b presents the experiences among tutees which reflected the following themes such as: growth through trial and error, the role of supportive tutoring, and learning through the lessons

Table 1. b Sample of tutees' experiences in a peer reading process

Theme	Experiences
1. Growth through trial and error	Tutees' experiences during peer assisted-reading sessions revealed that language learning involved ups and downs, where growth occurred through persistent trial and error. Despite initial findings of nervousness, confusion, and embarrassment, they gradually developed confidence, enjoyment and deeper understanding, showing resilience, and a growth mindset. This leads to self-awareness and a sense of accomplishment.
2. The role of supportive tutoring	Supportive tutoring with consistency played a crucial role in helping tutees conquer fears and personal barriers by combining academic guidance with emotional encouragement. Tutees enjoyed a safe, patient environment, where mistakes were seen as learning opportunities. With these, they reduced the feeling of frustration and fostered gradual improvement, allowed them to engage confidently and meaningfully with the texts.
3. Learning through the lessons of others	The facilitation made by tutors, allowed tutees to gain personal insights and moral lessons from the reading materials in peer-assisted sessions. They experienced learning that extended beyond language development. Despite of the personal and emotional barrier, and reading challenges that they encountered in

reading English, the sessions provided transformative and reinforced emotional and social growth. They also found emotional connections, self-reflections, and values formation by connecting the stories to their own lives.

Tutors reinforced peer assisted reading sessions more than just reading skills and academic support but language growth, confidence, and moral reflections. By offering word simplification through translation, code switching, and repetition, they scaffolded their tutees read at their own pace while creating also a safe space where they had surpassed fear and self-doubt. Based on the tutor's note "I, as a tutor helped him through explaining it in a concise yet precise way for him to have a better understanding. Once he mispronounced a word, I explained to him and I'm also adding some words that is related to what he mispronounced". In connection to these, a tutee affirmed, "He used different word related to what I was reading." This illustrates the tutor's awareness of balancing clarity with depth, a skill crucial in language facilitation. Beyond correcting mispronounced words, this tutor also understands by linking related words, showing emerging ability to connect the text with making deeper meaning. Another tutee reported, "I always get nervous when I'm reading because I'm afraid of making mistakes. I made a few mistakes, but the ending was great." This statement captures the emotional tension that many language learners feel. The fear of committing error was real, but persistence often leads to a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Another tutor added, "I tried underlying the words he mispronounced and after the readings I asked him to read those words and to read it properly. I thought to him one by one about those words and I gave him the chance to those loudly without my help."

Similarly, a careful selection of the reading materials had created an avenue for tutees to connect the materials in their own lives through empathy and resilience. The value of instructional and emotional was evident when tutee noted, "My favorite tutor is so very talented in English. There are times she is serious about grammar and how to pronounce the word." I'm having a hard time because I can't pronounce them correctly. But it's okay she's the one who is patient and explain things to me so I can understand". The peer-assisted reading program offered a transformative learning experience for both tutors and tutees. One tutor reflected, "The reading passages I selected had both familiar and challenging components, so it was great opportunity for him to stretch his skills." This shows how tutors balance to take care challenge and accessibility, offering materials that promoted growth without overwhelming the tutees. Another tutor noted "We started our reading with smile on our faces, I encourage and motivate him that you can do it, just do your best without holding back." This simple but meaningful encouragement reflects emotional support that helped lower affective filters, which is an emotional barrier that hinders language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

A tutor described a moment of mutual learning, "I explained the meaning of those word but surprisingly there's a word that I am not familiar too. I used my dictionary to explain to him the precisely and I'm grateful because he understood and I also learn something from our session". This experience proved that facilitation is not one-sided, it offers a reciprocal process. However, the journey was not without difficulty. One tutee claimed, "Reading in English is really challenging" acknowledging the ongoing challenge with language development. Thus, it plays a significant role in developing inclusive, reflexive, and emotionally aware tutees. All the experiences of tutors as a learning support buddy, gatekeeper, and a facilitator were anchored Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, Bruner's Narrative Theory, and Constructivist and Sociocultural Learning Theory of Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978), where tutors encouraged learners to read independently and critically and didn't merely provide answers but facilitated joint discovery. These significant experiences aligned with the study conducted by Barber & Klauda (2020), they find out that engagement predicts reading engagement. Likewise, Tutees' responses anchored with the different learning theories including Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), Self-Efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), Vygotsky's ZPD, Reader Response Theory (1978), demonstrate how peer-assisted reading became a space for transformative learning. Through these, learners not just gained vocabulary and grammar but also emotional

resilience, persistence, self-reflection, patience, social support, values formation, emotional insight, personal and moral reflection. In relation to this, Okpala et.al. conducted a study and the findings suggest that Reciprocal Peer Tutoring significantly improved reading comprehension and social interactions, highlighting the role of peer support.

3.2. Techniques for Peer Reading

Table 2.a evidently shows the different strategies utilized by the established reader (tutor) among their emerging reader (tutee). These were modeling and think-aloud, flashcards and games, and interactive questioning were highly effective in peer reading sessions. These strategies created a supportive, engaging learning environment that improved both literacy and communication skills.

Table 2. a. Sample of strategies employed by tutors

Theme	Strategies
1. Modeling and Think-Aloud	Tutors demonstrated ways to decode new and difficult words, infer meaning from the text, and reflect on understanding aloud. They had provided first direct guidance, then encouraged independent practice through rereading and reinforcement. These supported tutees with word recognition, pronunciation, and comprehension.
2. Incorporating flashcards and games	Tutors effectively used visual aids using flashcards and games to make vocabulary building engaging, interactive, and less intimidating. Strategies utilized like Pinoy Henyo, jumbled letters, and reading ball games encouraged active participation, reinforced word recognition, and supported comprehension in a fun environment. Visual aids were also used to introduce unfamiliar words before and after reading, helping tutees grasp the text and improve understanding of the story.
3. Interactive Questioning	Tutors used interactive questioning to enhance tutees' reading comprehension and critical thinking, started with literal questions and gradually guided them toward reflective and emotional insights. By asking about story events, morals, and personal connections, tutees acquired deeper understanding, empathy, and self-expression. For tutors, this served both a formative assessment and a tool for meaningful dialogue, encouraged tutees not only to decode text but also to interpret, reflect, and connect stories to their own lives.

Table 2.b presents the learning uptakes gained by the tutees related with the approaches used by the tutor. These were learning by example, vocabulary growth, and learning beyond text were highly appreciated in peer reading sessions.

Table 2.b Sample of learning uptakes gained by tutees

Theme	Learning Uptakes
1. Learning by Example	Tutees benefited from the modeling and think-aloud strategy, by observing how tutors decoded texts, interpreted meanings, and modeled correct pronunciations. This approach, paired with repetition and revisiting stories, helped solidify tutees' understanding and improved fluency. Tutees realized that hearing tutors verbalized their thinking made learning clearer and more encouraging, leading to noticeable gains in pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition.
2. Vocabulary Growth	Tutees experienced significant growth in vocabulary from the use of flashcards, word games, and context clues provided by tutors during peer-assisted reading sessions. These transformed and helped tutees decode unfamiliar words, practice pronunciations, and build word associations.
3. Thinking beyond the text	Through interactive questioning the tutees were able to move not only on simple recall but reflect on stories lessons, emotions, and personal experiences, which deepened their comprehension. They became

more engaged, improved pronunciation, and expressed joy and pride in their learning progress.

Burhansyah et al. (2020) and Chin and Ghani (2021), both studies found that students who were involved in think-aloud strategy significantly improved their reading comprehension, particularly in identifying making ideas, making inferences, summarizing, and interpreting vocabularies. In relation to this, the findings of the study showed that modeling and repetition in peer assisted reading sessions significantly aided tutees in improving word recognition, pronunciation, text comprehension. The tutors employed strategies like breaking complex and new words too simple, which did not address the language barriers themselves but also tutees' reading and learning independence. As one tutor explained, "I taught him how to read those words properly and gave the definition, then later I asked him to read and reread it loudly without my help. It wasn't perfect at all, but I know that we can still work it." Although the tutor noted that the process was not perfect, it reflected steady improvement and growing independence on the part of the tutee. One tutor shared, "My tutor and I started reading again beginning with ant and the grasshopper. We reviewed a previous story to practice tricky words." This demonstrates that tutors just do not modeled fluency but also revisited the text with repetition. These approaches employed the scaffolding principle of Vygotsky, where learners benefited from guided support before they switched themselves into confident and independent practice.

The study conducted by Syafrizal (2018), Lasut et al. (2020), Panjaitan (2020), and Bustrillo et al. (2024), their studies had similar findings with the present study where in the integration of flashcards and games had enhanced tutees' engagement, motivation, and retention. By incorporating instant feedback and context clues in the form of games like Pinoy Henyo, Reading Ball Games and Word Scramble, tutees benefited language learning and acquisition. One tutor shared, "I say the meaning, and he guesses the word. I prepared some jumbled letters, and my tutee needs to guess the words behind it. These words could be seen in the story." Consistent repetition through flashcards, games, and displays boosted recognition, aligned with studies showing improved outcomes through interactive vocabulary activities. One tutee wrote, "He occasionally give me clues to guess a word, he used different words to help me form a complete word related to what I was reading", reflecting how the tutor scaffolded vocabulary learning by offering contextual hints and semantic associations.

The utilization of practices like interactive questioning had proved understanding through guided discussion. This tool helped tutors and tutees create emotional and personal reflections after peer reading sessions. A tutor reflected, "We also had a Q&A portion where I asked him about the moral of the theory and try to reflect on that" This indicates the tutor's effort to guide the tutee toward understanding the underlying message or life lesson. Tutees who were initially hesitant began engaging more actively. One tutee shared, "I was able to read and answer the questions correctly and perfectly. I'm so happy for today." Another noted the tutor's persistence in improving pronunciation: "He asked me again to read my mispronounced words until I got the correct pronunciation." This technique required tutees to interpret, reflect, and express their understanding towards the materials that they had read. It was proved effective in building comprehension, confidence, and meaningful engagement. These findings re-echoed the studies found by Robison (2022) and Gubalani et al. (2023).

3.3. *Magic of Two Voices*

The development of the workbook *Magic of two Voices* is grounded in the findings and reflections found in the first two objectives of this study. These include the reading experiences and strategies found on

the participants' narratives. Analysis of participants' journal (both tutors and tutees) revealed that shared reading experiences, particularly those employed strategies such as think-aloud, flashcards and games, and interactive questioning, were instrumental in enhancing reading engagement, comprehension, and personal connection with the text. In response to these insights, the researcher created Magic of Two Voices, a supplementary workbook designed to mirror participants' shared experiences and extend these effective practices.

The workbook includes four key components: (1) a clear statement of the researcher's objectives, (2) preliminary activities that integrate peer reading strategies such as modeling, vocabulary games, and interactive questioning, (3) a curated collection of reading passages adapted from the narratives and themes encountered during the sessions, and (4) assessment tools designed to monitor fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development. By anchoring the material in real student experiences, this workbook becomes not only a tool for literacy development but also a reflection of learners' voices and needs. This is in line with the Vygotsky Concept and findings found by Tsuei et.al. (2020) that integrating peer tutoring with e-book reading significantly enhanced children's reading comprehension, highlighting the importance of interactive and engaging reading materials.

The material incorporates the following reading tracker: 1. Reading Progress Tracker. A reading log helped monitor reading frequency, fluency milestones, and book completion. Tutors used it to note improvements or concerns, such as one tutor's challenge with a tutee's "frequent absences and minimal participation." This tool supported consistent monitoring and helped build reading confidence. It aligns with Bottos & Balasingam (2019), who used eye-gaze tracking to measure reading engagement and progression. 2. Fluency Rubric was aligned with Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash (2020, who believed that tutees need to monitor themselves by regularly checking their reading pace, tone, clarity, and fluency. 3. Comprehension Worksheet. After reading a book or passage, the tutee can complete a comprehension worksheet that includes questions about the story's main idea, characters, and key events. It was anchored with the third reading partner strategy "Interactive Questioning", it is divided into two main parts: Understanding the Story (includes two literal and four inferential questions) and Think and Respond (consists of three open-ended questions). 4. Vocabulary Journal. The tutee can create a vocabulary journal where they list new words learned during each session, along with their meanings and example sentences. This journal can be a tangible reminder of vocabulary growth. It is aligned with the second reading partner strategy "Flashcards", these vocabulary entries are recorded in a journal notebook adopting the Frayer Model, which includes the word's definition, characteristics, examples, non-examples and using the term in a sentence.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The peer-assisted reading sessions revealed significantly those tutors enhanced tutees comprehension and emotional well-being by employing adaptive mentoring approaches, creating a supportive environment, and facilitating critical thinking. Tutees, in turn, demonstrated confidence, resilience, and personal growth, emphasizing the transformative impact of reading partner strategy.

Tutors employed effective strategies like modeling, use of visual aids and games, and interactive questioning to enhanced tutees reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Tutees demonstrated enhanced reading skills, vocabulary growth, and critical thinking benefiting from supportive and engaging learning environment.

With these experiences and reflected strategies, the researcher carefully designed Magic in Two Voices which is a workbook type that supports strengthening reading development and literacy acquisition among Grade 12 students. To effectively monitor and evaluate progress using the supplementary workbook, relevant assessment tools such as reading trackers, fluency rubrics, word for the day and vocabulary journals, and comprehension worksheets offer tangible, which are research-based tools for assessment.

To further strengthen the effectiveness of the reading partner program, it is recommended to provide comprehensive training for tutors on instructional and emotional support strategies. Additionally, integrating structured feedback mechanisms and incorporating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration will enhance the learning of both tutors and tutees. Establishing clear guidelines and continuous support systems will ensure the sustainability and success of such programs.

Similarly, it is recommended that schools and language educators should prepare a safe space and conducive for reading literacy. They were also expected to adopt the outlined strategies like Modeling and Think-Aloud, Word Walls and Flashcards, and Interactive Questioning in a regular reading session. These approaches not only support the development of essential reading skills but also foster student confidence and engagement.

Lastly, it was also advised among language teachers to validate the Magic of Two Voices before using. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct further research that will evaluate the long-term impact of using this supplementary workbook.

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