



Enhancing Literacy Skills Using Audiobooks

Comprehension and Enjoyment of Text in the Second Grade Classroom

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Master's Thesis

May 2019

Master's in business administration in Educational Leadership

ABSTRACT

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Master's thesis 69 pages, appendices 7 pages

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Audiobooks open a world of opportunity to anyone interested in reading yet might not have the time to sit down with a book for over an hour a day. Audiobooks can transform our daily car, gym, and other non-book friendly environments into places of enjoyment of fiction and nonfiction material. The majority of studies on audiobook use focus on underachieving readers or ESL students, with some success. In a similar way the researcher saw audiobooks as a possible means to encourage competent grade level readers to challenge and expand their comprehension and enjoyment of text

The purpose of this study was to gather information on the utility of audiobooks in the mainstream second grade classroom.

This study was completed in a second grade classroom with 22 participants. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Surveys and literacy circles along with multiple choice questions were used to record feedback on the comprehension and enjoyment of text of participants

This study found that children in second grade can benefit from the use of audiobooks in the classroom. Comprehension levels between audio and traditional reading did not have a significant variance. However, enjoyment of text was enhanced using audiobooks.

The results of this study will be of interest to any school, organisation or family which aims to curb the loss of enthusiasm which children experience in reading as they progress through the grade levels. The findings suggest that children do not lose comprehension when using audiobooks compared to reading. At the same time children enjoy the text more when listening to it on audiobook. Further study would be needed across the grade levels to show the full impact audiobooks can have on literacy skills and enjoyment.

Key words: education, literacy, audiobooks, reading, second grade

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

AWS	Aardvark Who Wasn't Sure
EIS	Espoo International School
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language Learners
L2	Second Language Learners
LEAP	Learning Everywhere with Alternatives to Print
LO	Listening Only
OAD	Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RO	Reading Only
RWL	Reading While Listening
SET	Special Education Teachers

1 Introduction

1.1 School Context

Espoo International School is a joint comprehensive school, EIS constitutes a uniform, international English-language comprehensive school, with more than 600 pupils in grades 1–9 and is in the municipality of Espoo, Finland. The students enjoy an active academic lifestyle both inside and outside of Espoo International School. As a country, Finland is renowned for its educational prowess, particularly in the areas of Reading, Mathematics and Science. Espoo, has seen an increase in English as a first language population with an exponential rise in English language speakers. This data is reflective in the rapid enrolment of students served at Espoo International School, growing to 600 students in 2018. Espoo International School is graced with a multitude of diverse cultures. The school is governed by Espoo and operates within the context of the rules and regulations of the Finnish National Curriculum. The principal, with the assistance of both the Senior Leadership Team and In-School Management Team, co-ordinates the day-to-day organization of the school and guides its direction. The school's staff are valued as the school's key and most important resource. Espoo International School teachers, all whom have varying roles from homeroom teachers, to resource/special educational teachers (SET), and subject teachers and supported by teaching assistants who positively support and contribute to the learning environment. The principal is very much open to innovation and encourages collaboration and a shared sense of leadership. Dutton highlights the importance of this in a school “High quality connections contribute substantially to individual's wellbeing and work performance. They also contribute significantly to an organization's capacity for collaboration, coordination, learning and adaptation” (2007, p. 4).

Espoo International School possesses many strengths leading to many successes in recent history. Espoo City provides strong direction and management to the school, while the in-school management team leads the planning process and co-ordinates a range of initiatives in the school. Espoo International school's provision for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs is extremely effective due to a strong and dedicated Special Educational Needs team, with high levels of parental involvement and satisfaction in this area. Another success of the school has been the recruitment of new staff and the pool of highly qualified applicants to choose from. The employment of

new staff in recent years strongly integrates and complements the existing staff of the school, thus contributing to the ever-present enthusiasm, cohesion and unity among teachers. Espoo International School has not been without recent challenges. One obvious challenge for both principal and staff has been the exponential population growth of the Espoo community and school, and its consequential pressures. This growth has led to inefficient and deficient infrastructure at Espoo International School. Currently, the number of students exceeds the capacity of original school building which has resulted in use of open learning spaces as full-time classrooms.

1.2 Background of the Study: Reasons for this research

This area of research is of personal interest to the researcher, as an educator and an avid reader. Audiobooks open a world of opportunity to anyone interested in reading yet might not have the time to sit down with a book for over an hour a day. Audio books can transform our daily car, gym, and other non-book friendly environments into places of enjoyment of fiction and nonfiction material. Another possible benefit of audiobooks could be in opening more difficult and challenging text to competent readers. The majority of studies on audiobook use focus on underachieving readers or ESL students. McCallister, Whittingham, Huffman and Christensen (2014) note how underachieving students were brought up to grade level reading through the use of audiobooks. In a similar way the researcher sees audiobooks as a possible means to encourage competent grade level readers to challenge and expand their reading level. The research aimed to measure comprehension and enjoyment of audiobooks to traditional reading of text. Audiobooks have been the subject of many studies to help students with reading difficulties, however, this research takes a different view on audiobooks, whereby already engaged readers can be provided with a supplementary avenue to explore to complement and expand their literacy skills.



FIGURE 1. A phone can store an unlimited number of books in today's world

McNiff and Whitehead highlight the importance of values. They state that “Your choice of ideas and concepts are informed by the values you hold” (2009, p. 23). Two values that the researcher strives to promote in their teaching are positivity and happiness. The researcher tries to implement these values in a classroom environment that is inclusive and where all children are challenged to reach their potential. The researcher has a great love for reading and hopes that in all the classes they have taught that this love of reading has had a positive impact on the children, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) in class is one way the researcher promotes and models good reading, but, during six years of teaching children from various grade levels the researcher notes that children can often have quite a negative attitude to reading. Williams makes the case in mathematics, which is equally valid in the literacy context, that: “If children’s interests are not kindled through using and applying mathematics in interesting and engaging ways, they are unlikely to develop good attitudes to the subject” (2008, p. 62). In this research, alternative ways of introducing and experiencing novels to young readers, which are, as Williams outlines, interesting and engaging, and in the process assessing whether comprehension of the text is compromised, and enjoyment enhanced.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Espoo City have highlighted reading as a key target in education. Hence, this present study investigates one possible way to support schools in their educational journey in meeting this goal of increasing reading competencies. This study hopes to provide an insight into a new avenue for reading which aligns with Espoo City's target. Change in Finnish education has often come about from the autonomy and trust granted to its teachers. Information in educational research propagates in a networked manner and in this way the researcher hopes that this study will have implications far beyond the classroom where it takes place. The promotion of reading is currently topical and relevant in Finland.

PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment) findings in reading, maths and science suggest that Finland are European and World leaders in these areas. PISA is an international survey of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) member countries, which assesses the skills of 15-year-olds in mathematics, science and reading. Results are published and are seen as a benchmark of educational standards of the OECD countries. Espoo schools achieved excellent results in the assessment in 2015. The tests examine how young people master key skills for the future, what factors influence these skills and how they develop over time (OECD 2018). PISA tests are conducted every three years. Results from year 2015 have been published. The focus area in year 2015 was science. Finland has placed among the top scores in all areas of PISA tests year after year: in science, mathematics and reading skills. In the year 2015 assessment, the capital region succeeded considerably better than the rest of the country. Furthermore, Espoo schools achieved clearly higher results than was the national average. Also, in the capital region, Espoo exceeded the average in all three areas. PISA reading achievements continued into 2018 with Finland remaining the top readers in Europe (Espoo 2017).

However, the shift in the reading culture has not gone unnoticed in Finland. More and more young people are moving away from reading. Reform of the comprehensive school is a government key project. The new core curricula for the comprehensive school were introduced in grades 1-6 in August 2016. The new curricula for grades 7-9 is ongoing. The new core curricula steers children and youths to assume more responsibility for their schoolwork and every student will be supported in their studies. The goal is to develop

the learning environment and working methods of the comprehensive school so that they inspire learning. The pupils set goals, solve problems and assess their learning based on the set goals. The objective of the new curriculum is to increase the pupils' motivation towards studying, to develop learning-to-learn skills, thinking skills and team work skills (Finnish National Board for Education 2016). Audiobooks are a resource that could provide support in meeting these goals and form the basis of this study. If students' motivation can be increased by enjoying audiobooks without the loss in comprehension schools might open up a new way of looking at reading for students of all ages. In 2018 Espoo have promoted reading as one of its educational developmental targets in recognition of this decline in reading among the city's youth. The newly formed curriculum in Espoo is shaping school culture. The school is seen as a learning community where learning, wellbeing and growth are key values. The new curriculum promotes a joy of learning and the researcher feels that their investigations into the effectiveness of audiobooks has the potential to contribute to this joy of learning, where each child can learn according to their own conditions. Digital know-how is considered an essential skill for every pupil in Espoo. The city aims at becoming the national pioneer of digital learning and new learning environments (Education in Espoo 2018-2019). Digital education is an integral part of school life. Espoo is investing in digital learning devices and spaces and, in the near future, all pupils will be able to use digital technology regularly in different subjects. (Education in Espoo 2018-2019) Helping schools with their 'digital leap', as the digitalisation of learning is called, is one of the current goals of education in Espoo (Ibid). Hence, the researcher sees this research on the use of technology in the classroom relevant to the current educational environment in Espoo. The goal in Espoo is to change the entire learning culture of schools so that modern digital interaction, flexible learning spaces and the pupil's active role as a learner are included (Education in Espoo 2018-2019). In this study the researcher focused on an area of literacy which samples the use of such new flexible learning and digital interaction. The children will deal with technology through the audiobooks and other audio materials. They regular use of audiobooks could open up opportunities for students to engage in an active role in their learning, the accessibility of audiobooks is a major positive, children can browse for their genre of choice with ease and efficiency. This efficiency removes the need for waiting on library holds or travelling to a book shop to find a book that interests them. Instead, books are now literally at everyone's fingertips, and can be experienced in a very flexible way through audio. However, the researcher found the need to investigate the impact of these audiobooks on comprehension of text and to ascertain

if students in second grade could enhance their enjoyment of text through such methods. Espoo International School has encouraged reading among its students. The majority of students have participated in a whole school “Read-a-thon” initiative, over the past two years, where an extra effort is made on the part of parents and teachers to encourage reading. Audiobooks were accepted as part of this program, where students kept a detailed reference of the amount they had read.



FIGURE 2. Children Using Audiobooks in Class

From “Teacher Voices”, by Michael Godsey 2018

(<https://www.common sense.org/education/articles/how-podcasts-can-improve-literacy-in-the-classroom>). Copyright 2019 by Common Sense Media.

Upon completion of the project, the researcher will communicate the findings of the project to the faculty of the school, to the City of Espoo and The Finnish National Agency for Education. As reading has been a targeted area for development, I am confident my findings can be useful in the further development of literacy education in Finland.

2 Literature Review

Moore and Cahill (2016) examined the question of audiobooks being a legitimate “reading” material for adolescents. The gaps in research in the use of audiobooks are numerous according to Moore and Cahill (2016) with varied findings and variability in outcomes. My research explores existing evidence relating to literacy developments through the use of audiobooks with a focus on comprehension. At the same time this study will contrast the enjoyment of text when experienced through audio in comparison to reading. The goal, as previously stated, is not to find an alternative to reading yet to expand the avenues through which children can experience literature and text. Penno, Wilkinson and Moore (2002) support the idea that reading development cannot be left to audiobooks alone and reading development needs additional targeted instruction. Likewise, McAllister et al (2014) don’t see audiobooks as an answer to all reading difficulties, yet they see them as a valued tool. Adolescents, in general, are experiencing declining rates of reading engagement (Egmont 2013), however, young adults use of audiobooks is on the rise (Audio Publishers Association 2013), along with the availability of young adult audiobook titles (Bowker 2013). Technological knowledge among elementary school children is on the rise. Computers, ipads, smart phones and MP3 players are popular among children, and although often regarded as toys, they can be utilised as an instructional tool, engaging and exciting children (Hett, 2012). Audiobook publishers are using trained orators who read books, such as “The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark” used in this study, with engaging and exciting expression that captivate listeners with vivid storytelling (Esteves & Whitten 2011).

The International Reading Association (2000) state that as there is no “clearly documented best, or only, way to teach reading, teachers who are familiar with a wide range of methodologies and who are closest to the children must be the ones to make the decisions about what reading methods and materials to use” (The International Reading Association, p.3). The researcher, in position as second grade classroom teacher examined the use of audiobooks in the classroom as a means to develop comprehension skills and analyse enjoyment of text.

2.1 The Importance of Reading

Reading is an essential skill in which literate adults must be capable of engaging with and capable readers must enjoy reading (Carbo, 1990). When studying literacy in the United States Carbo noted that one third of students cannot function at a basic literacy level (Carbo, 1996). Most students enter school with an enthusiasm for learning to read, a trend which the researcher has noted in his own experience at different grade levels in schools, however, many of these enthusiastic readers become less motivated to read as time progresses as outlined by Carbo in “Reading Styles Change from Second to Eight Grade” (Carbo, 1983). The researcher can still see a positive outlook on reading in second grade, yet, when speaking with other teachers during this study this positive outlook diminishes as the children rise through the grades. This is quite visible in Espoo International Schools aforementioned “Read-a-thon”, where total reading hours logged by students gets progressively less as students move closer to ninth grade. Some reasons for this drop in enthusiasm include overscheduled and overloaded timetable, the result of which sees reading for pleasure side-lined (Hett 2012, p. 6). Audiobooks can help bridge this gap and continue an interest and exposure to reading even at busy times, offering audiobook to older students can help them fit in homework reading or reading for pleasure into their busy schedules (Hett 2012 p6) and, if students have been accustomed to audiobooks from an early age they will have experience with this technology and with teacher guidance be able to get the best from it once the busier grades arrive. This present study aims to curb this loss of enthusiasm for reading among children by exposing students to audiobooks which could possibly increase the enjoyment which Carbo deemed necessary for capable readers into adulthood. Krashen who’s studies focused on teaching second languages believes that students who become enthusiastic readers, in any type of reading, will progress enormously (2003, p. 18). He also pointed to the evidence that recreational reading leads to an increase of second language competence. Moreover, Allington (2009) and Yopp (2003) found that spending time with text strengthens overall reading competency of struggling readers. The researcher in the present study will assess the utility of audiobooks in the mainstream classroom as a means of promoting comprehension and enjoyment of text and set students on a path where the current trend of enthusiasm loss as students get older is diminished.

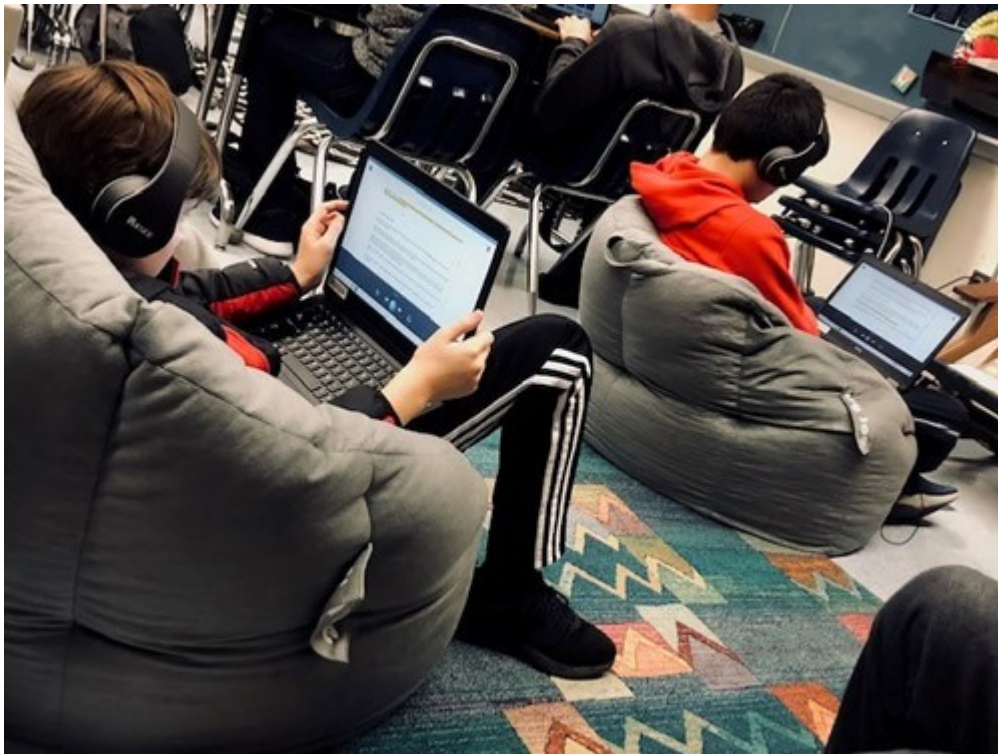


FIGURE 3. Audiobooks in a relaxing environment

From “Can audiobooks be the great equalizer for students with learning differences?”, by Valerie Cherek 2019 (<https://www.eschoolnews.com/2019/04/04/audiobooks-great-equalizer-learning-differences/>). Copyright 2019 by eSchoolMedia & eSchool News.

2.2 The History of Audiotapes in Education

Kuhn & Stahl (2000) completed a considerable review on programs created to enhance reading fluency. Hollingworth (1970) and Chomsky (1976) were the first to experiment with audio tapes. Hollingworth, considering assisted reading strategies as too time consuming, he experimented with students listening to tape recordings of text while the teacher monitored. Hollingsworth randomly experiment, and control groups Results highlighted no significant differences on any measure between the students who participated in the assisted reading procedure and those who did not.

Chomsky’s (1976) achieved more tangible success with her audio-tape strategy. Her sample of five 8-year-olds who were underachieving in reading. The children engaged in passage activities after listening. They listened and read along repeatedly on these passages, under supervision, and engaged in language games related to the passages. Af-

ter 10 months, Chomsky found significant improvements in fluency and comprehension. Although my research takes a different approach, the improvements made in other studies using audio material are encouraging.

Similarly, Carbo (1981) used audio tapes for children with learning difficulties. However, in this study tapes were individualised towards each student. Like Chomsky, Carbo discovered that the use of audio-tapes led to improvements in reading skills. Significantly for my own study, at the end of the above interventions, Carbo and Chomsky found that students enjoyed the experience of the studies.

Again, Dowhower (1987) who's studied was with Grade 2 students, who were reading at normal levels, but had word problems. Similar to my own study, half the group worked with audio while the other half read. Again, I acknowledge the difference of Dowhower's study as he used read-along, whereas I focus solely on listening. Positive results were found in reading rate, accuracy and fluency, but the comprehension comparisons showed only slight improvement. This read-along technique still requires the book to be physically with the child. My study explores the use of the audiobook in isolation, without the option of referring to the text.

Nadler and Elley (2003) also outline the steps taken in their native New Zealand to incorporate audio into the language curriculum. They point out the possible benefits of audiobooks in their 'Rainbow Reading' project: "the potential of audio-taped stories, or "talking books", for helping young readers has been recognized for several decades. Children typically read a high-interest story at their current level, while listening to a recorded version of the same story through a set of earphones. This way, they hear a good quality reader, who can read with fluency and expression, and who can fill in the gaps in the text, gaps that would normally cause them to stumble or stop." (Nadler & Elley 2003). However, Nadler and Elley acknowledged that many of the benefits of audiotaped stories were anecdotal and the extent of their utility in English as a second language teaching needed further research. Part of this study compared the benefits of audio taped stories between first (L1) and second language learners (L2) which is relevant to the present study. Their study revealed that, although L2 learners achieved higher benefits from the audio taped intervention, L1 students also made progress: "The main difference was found in the Neale Test of Comprehension, where L1 students showed gains on 47% of the comparisons, while L2 students showed gains on 85%." (Nadler &

Elley 2003). This showed that L2 learners benefited at over twice the rate of L1 learners. The present study takes encouragement from these comprehension results for L1 learners, although conducted in a different format, tape assisted reading, and having a different focus from the present study, the study shows increases in comprehension of text through the use of audio taped stories.

Continuing the theme of exposing under achieving children to audio Medcalf (1989) story-tape program for varying lengths of time. Medcalf's study contains some similarities to my study, with teacher discussion and conferencing with the teacher. However, my study conferences will be held in small groups and in contrast to my study the students selected a suitable book from the program, whereas I will be completing a class novel and short comprehensions. Medcalf also used the follow along while listening to the audio technique, which varies to my study. In Medcalf's first evaluation, mean reading levels were increased prompting others to enact similar strategies for underachieving readers.

Meryl-Lynn Pluck (1995a) took a pivotal role in utilising audio in the classroom. Her audio-taped package called the Rainbow Reading Program, was developed to assist struggling readers. The Rainbow Reading project (Nalder & Elley, 2003) focused on analysing the impact of audio books on children who were two years behind in reading. They found significant improvement in reading age levels, in word recognition, reading accuracy, comprehension, writing fluency, spelling and oral language. They concluded that there was a "definite place for a tape-assisted reading program in helping low progress students to improve their reading and language abilities" (Nalder & Elley, 2003). The program consists of 100 short, high-interest books, graded for reading difficulty level (Elley & Croft, 1989) into six levels. Children listening to the texts being read by competent readers. In preparation, Pluck (1995b) trialled the program with underachieving students. Positive results were reported both formally and informally by those adopting the program.

Again, audio has been used to help progress underachieving students. While benefits have consistently been shown in reading accuracy and fluency of such students, we have little data on the impact of audiobooks on the competent reader in areas of comprehension and enjoyment.

2.3 Audiobooks in ESL (English Second Language) Students

The research investigating audio delivery of content falls into three general categories of student groups: students with learning disabilities, second language learners, and typically developing adolescents (Moore & Cahill 2016). My investigation does not fit into any of these categories and hence represents an area of research that has not been examined in a comprehensive manner. Audiobook use has been encouraged for proficient and advanced readers for leisure reading purposes (Mol & Jolles 2014) which is the domain my study will examine. Some implications for researchers have been outlined by Moore and Cahill (2016). Firstly, they acknowledge that more research in the area of audiobooks is necessary, especially with the use of commercially produced audiobooks. My study will consist of two such commercially produced audiobooks. However, my study also includes researcher-developed materials and teacher read-alouds, in which the quality of narration may influence the learners' regard for the text (Cahill & Richey 2015). This quality of narration could have an effect on comprehension of text (Moore & Cahill 2016). Interestingly, Shany and Biemiller (1995) made significant progress in reading comprehension, in comparison control groups, his study with third and fourth grade consisted of tape-assisted practice Listening. Findings concluded comprehension and reading speed improved. The above studies, mostly consist of studies on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and underachieving readers, present some positive findings on the use of audio in classrooms. However, they leave unanswered questions about the utility of audio in the mainstream primary school classroom, where interest in reading and reading for fun are rated highly.



FIGURE 4. Audiobooks can help normally distracted students focus by blocking outside stimuli.

From “Audiobooks Can Support K-12 Readers in the Classroom” by Kate Stoltzfus 2016 (https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/bookmarks/2016/09/k-12_readers_audiobooks_can_support_classroom.html) Copyright 2019 by Editorial Projects in Education.

The positive influence of technology on English language learners is outlined by Patten and Craig (2007). They outline podcasting as an area where teachers can upload lectures, materials and presentations where students can access them. This leads to advantages such as, students learning at their own convenience and replaying lectures to increase comprehension (Patten & Craig, 2007, p. 40). In their research project four teachers used iPads as companion devices to reading the print version of books (Ibid). In these four classrooms each teacher had comprehension as a research focus. Their assessment tools for comprehension included: Open-ended questions, Depth of discussion and multiple-choice questions (Patten & Craig 2007, p. 43). Overall, the studies outlined by Patten and Craig on the use of audio technology in EEL classrooms was positive. Larson (2015) acknowledges that recent developments in tablet and e-book technology can provide enhanced literacy experiences that integrate both digital reading and audiobook listening to support comprehension and engagement (Larson 2015). Patten and Craig and Larson’s research is encouraging for the possibility of increasing enjoyment and comprehension of books in my second-grade classroom. Kartal and Simsek, (2017) investigated the effects of audiobooks on listening comprehension skills of uni-

versity level EFL Students, and their feelings towards using audiobooks in a foreign language classroom. Their rationale for using audiobooks followed Brown (2004, as cited in Kartal & Simsek 2017) as follows: “How could you speak a language without also listening?”. Their results showed gains in comprehension levels for the EFL students who used the audiobooks as well as increased motivation. These results, although far removed from the second grade English speaking classroom, show that audiobooks are having positive impacts in other domains of education. Studies have shown that elements of characterization, theme, tone, and setting in the classroom (Brown, 2002 as cited in Kartal & Simsek 2017) are enhanced through the use of audiobooks in EFL classrooms and these elements could also be utilised in the primary school classroom.

Moreover, audiobooks can contribute to the improvement of sound recognition and sound production (Taghinezhad & Khalifah 2015), in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Other studies have acknowledged the benefits of audiobooks in second language learners (Blum, Koskinen, Tennant, Parker, Straub & Curry 1995). Kuhn and Stahl (2000) concluded that audio assisted reading strategies produce significant gains for students (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Likewise, Ayunda (2013) in her EFL study on audiobooks concluded that “Audiobooks appeared to be successful...in that they led to considerable improvement in fluency and vocabulary size consistency during oral performance” (Ayunda 2013). Sousa, Carriere and Smilek (2013) present a warning for potential audiobook users. Their study suggests that mind-wandering was evident in students who listened to a passage being read to them, along with them having the least interest in the material (Sousa, Carriere, & Smilek, 2013). I would be hoping to combat such mind-wandering by presenting the audiobooks from professional readers, where tone and would play a role in keeping the children engaged. The value of having models of fluent reading has been shown to increase student fluency (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn 2001)

Given the ranges of success that audiobooks have brought to EFL and ESL classrooms in the areas of comprehension and motivation the researcher, while acknowledging the different educational contexts to this study, is positive about the above impacts in classrooms. If these results can be emulated in the second grade classroom it would provide a platform for higher attainment in reading for young learners.

2.4 Reading While Listening, Listening Only and Reading Only

The term Listening While Reading (RWL) is found in many studies involving audio material. It involves simultaneous listening and reading of text. Many studies have analysed the effects of RWL on second language learners with positive benefits for participants. Brown (2007) in a small scale study with second language participants that 58% of students preferred RWL with 40% reading only and 2% listening only. Given the difficulty in understanding the spoken language when learning a new language this 2% is not a surprising result. The present study examines if this unfavourable view of listening only in second language learning changes when the activity is completed by competent English language speakers. RWL still involves the physical book being present for the reading activity and hence removes the flexibility of the audiobook experience. The researcher acknowledges the potential positive influences on comprehension and enjoyment of text using RWL, however, this is not the focus of this study.

2.5 Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is the process of acquiring meaning from sound, yet the importance of recognising the sounds is not enough. One must also comprehend these sounds and the information they convey. This allows them to comprehend the world and create social relationships (White 2006). Distinguishing sounds, comprehending vocabulary, understanding grammar, stress and intonation all form part of the dynamic process of listening comprehension. These processes must then be related to the context (Vandergrift 1999). Success in reading is derived from the amount of exposure children receive to text at a young age. Reading aloud to children is seen as the single most important activity for eventual success as a reader (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985). Audiobooks expose children to expressive readers which make listening to a book pleasurable (Casbergue & Harris, 1996). In the second grade classroom, reading is often experienced through silent reading, listening to the teacher or listening to other students. These methods can lead to disengagement as the exposure is not as expressive and exciting as it could be when experienced through an audiobook. These methods could also lead to demotivation with reading. This present study will examine the impact of audiobooks on the enjoyment children get from exposure to audiobooks.

2.6 Enjoyment of Reading

The importance of motivation in active engagement in class is outlined by Nayir Funda's study. This research involving high school students revealed that motivation level is related to class engagement (Nayir 2017). Motivation levels must first be identified (Nayir 2017) For this reason I felt it important to establish my student's motivation in reading with a pre-study survey.

Engagement is an important predictor of success. The more students engage themselves in academic activities, the more they will be successful (Harboura, Lauren, Chris & Lindsay, 2015). Student engagement also means a students' enthusiasm to engage in the learning process gives him a need to learn, voluntary engagement in learning, and the will to succeed (Bomia, Beluzo, Demeeseter, Elander, Johnson & Sheldon 1997, p. 294). Rehder (1980) found that readers who felt in control of the content they read are likely to persist for longer periods of time, while paying closer attention and have a more positive attitude to reading. As mentioned, students now have access to books at their fingertips with their personal devices. This gives them a certain ownership of their learning through the use of audiobooks, which, if encouraged could lead to more engagement with text and hence more success.

Further, in her article "How Teachers Manage Classrooms to Facilitate Intellectual Engagement for Disengaged Students" (2009) Schussler proposes that educators create an intellectually engaging environment. Among her proposals is ensuring "that flexible avenues exist through which learning can occur" (Schussler, 2009). I believe that finding a supplementary learning avenue to reading could be one way in providing such an environment. Although the students in my class are not coming from the disengaged student category as outlined in Schussler's article, the message conveyed about how to engage students is relevant in my context. Schussler take a more comprehensive view of engagement whereby learning "involves formulating a deeper connection between the student and the material whereby a student develops an interest in the topic or retains the learning beyond the short term" (Schussler, 2009). Considering the current proclivity of a majority of my students not to read every day, audiobooks could establish this deeper connection and interest in topics. This theme of providing a multiple routes to success is

echoed by Robinson where schools should recognise the great range of talents of its members and provide multiple pathways to fulfil their aspirations (Robinson 2015, 204). “The primary purpose of reading is to gain meaning from connected text” (Wise et al 2010) If this meaning can be gained from an audiobook we are also achieving this primary purpose. Of course, there are different considerations such as fluency, grammar, spelling which are not taken into consideration in this study, and this study does not aim to minimise the importance of these other literacy factors. However, my study does aim to assess such an alternative pathway to learning as outlined by Robinson, the comprehension of text through audio, and ascertain if audio can become an enjoyable way for children to access books.

A study by Clark and Hawkins (2011) confirms that interest and participation in reading declines as children progress through the grade levels. Their study focused on library use of different age groups in the UK. 63% of second grade students used their public library, this dropped to 42% in grade three and 24% in grade four. This study in the UK mirrors the trend that has been observed by teachers throughout Espoo International School. As mentioned, the decline in participation in Espoo International School’s ‘Read-a-thon’ initiative is pronounced as the students rise through the grade levels. Clark and Hawkins study on the use of library’s seems to mirror the observations of teachers on the ground in Espoo International School. In this particular reading initiative students record the amount of reading they have completed over the month duration of the read-a-thon. The early grades record significantly more reading hours than the higher grades.



FIGURE 5: An ever growing number of books in libraries are available in audio form and accessible from an electronic device.

Another significant component in increasing enjoyment of reading is choice. Schraw et al, 1998 (cited in Research Evidence for Reading for Pleasure, 2012) found that there was a positive correlation between choice and motivation to read. Likewise, Gambrell, 1996 (cited in Research Evidence for Reading for Pleasure, 2012) discovered that when students were asked to rate books according to enjoyment levels 80% of them responded that the one they had enjoyed most was the one they had chosen themselves. This choice would play an important role in the audiobook environment as children have access to a wide variety of books online, leading to freedom of choice and possibly more enjoyment of text. This choice in the online environment can be contrasted to the limited availability of books in schools and libraries which could lead to children not being able to find books that would interest them.

Smith et al. (2012, cited in The Reading Agency 2015) who explored the relationship between ones belief in their ability to succeed and levels of enjoyment of reading with eight to nine year olds and thirteen and fourteen year olds across schools in New Zealand. Again, their results echoed those already cited in this study that reading enjoyment was higher among the younger age group and declined as children progressed through the grades. The authors concluded that children enjoy reading and achieve gratification from the process of reading, even when they do not think it is something, they are particularly good at.

De Naeghel et al. (2012 cited in The Reading Agency 2015) explored this in greater detail in a questionnaire study measuring recreational and academic reading motivation amongst ten and eleven-year-old American school children. The author found that children that had autonomy over their reading were more likely to read in their free time, more reading engagement and better comprehension. The author concludes “that interventions seeking to encourage reading and stem the decline of reading motivation as children grow older should focus on enhancing autonomous motivation for reading” (De Naeghel et al. 2012 cited in The Reading Agency 2015). This present study aims to enhance this autonomous motivation for reading through the use of audiobooks, which may lead to more recreational reading. For children to pursue reading in their spare time they must garner enjoyment from their reading experiences.



FIGURE 6. Children begin life with a high enthusiasm for reading which decreases as they grow older

2.7 Benefits of Audiobooks

The benefits which audiobooks present to young adults such as modelling reading, develop critical listening, improve vocabulary, build on prior knowledge and increase comprehension (Wolfson, 2008) make a compelling argument for further study on the use of audiobooks with younger elementary school children. Audiobooks can assist competent middle and high school readers in developing their comprehension skills: “For proficient readers, audiobooks present opportunities to develop comprehension skills and

strategies in critical and creative thinking” (Wolfson, 2008, p. 110). Other advantages of audiobooks include exposure to appropriate tone and inflection and modelling fluency (Hett 2012, p. 6) They can also remove the burden of decoding words, recalling them and reading them out loud (Byrom, 1998, p. 3). The use of earphones has an effect of intensifying focus by helping children to ‘hear’ the voices of characters (McAllister et al 2014). Likewise, the use of professional voice actors in commercial audiobooks brings a model of reading to children that they may not have previously experienced. Audiobooks, may also present students with the opportunity to access and comprehend books above their reading level, opening up a world of more complex literature (Beers, 1998: Kartal & Simsek 2011). Audiobooks have not been utilised in the elementary school mainstream classroom as a means of supplementing learning. Given the fact that “one of the most popular collections in many libraries” (Mediatore & Chelton 2003, p318). It is a wonder why schools and teachers have not widely embraced this popular technology in the mainstream elementary classroom as previous studies suggest adolescent strong readers can benefit from the use of audiobooks by exposing them to a genre that they might not have tried to read, yet may be enticed by the appeal of an audiobook to try (Hett 2012, p6). Advocates of instructional technologies such as audiobooks have been urging schools to take the focus away from the technology itself and focus on how this technology can be used to bring the best out of teachers and get the best out of students (Robin, 2008 p. 221).

In the article “Audiobooks: The Greatest Asset in The Library” (Gander, 2013) the author acknowledges the changes in the learning environment for children of the 21st century with students becoming visual and audio learners (Gander, 2013). The challenge for students with special needs with comprehension and basic reading is highlighted. Audiobooks provide many advantages to all children. The majority of audiobooks utilize professional voice actors, which can “hook the reader” in a way that traditional reading cannot (Gander, 2013). The accurate modelling of vocal emphasis and demonstration of proper punctuation are other benefits of audiobooks, adding to the ability to finish a full book with success and understanding (Gander, 2013) Which can be a challenge for some children in my second-grade class. Gander also praises the versatility of audiobooks which can allow reading of books while; running, working out at the gym or sitting by the pool or at the beach (Gander, 2013). Gander sees audiobooks as a way for students to gain new knowledge, expand their vocabulary and improve their comprehension skills. O Dea (2002) also backs up the usefulness of audiobooks for language learning purposes,

with word recognition, vocabulary acquisition, fluency and comprehension all positively affected. Likewise, (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek & Henry, 2013) share Ganders view that literacy is evolving, and the challenge is presented to teachers to transform reading instruction in response, as new possibilities for communication and collaboration emerge (Larson, 2015).

Similarly, in her article “A Great Leap Forward” Julie Dalke (2012) presents her findings of the “Learning Everywhere with Alternatives to Print” (LEAP) project. The project was aimed at students with disabilities, second language learners and other, struggling, reluctant readers. One of the most eye-opening findings was “special education teachers reported an average 48% increase in reading assignment completion” (Dalke 2012). Although I am not looking for an “alternative” to print for my second-grade class; Audiobooks are not intended to replace the act of reading text, but rather to provide students with another dimension for understanding. (Wolfson, 2008). I believe that a supplementary literacy tool would be a benefit. Robinson (2015) comments that “if you change the experiences of education for those you work with, you can change the world for them” (Robinson, 2015, p. 66). I believe by providing an alternative and supplementary way to develop literacy skills such as comprehension I will be changing the experience of education for a lot of my second-grade students..

The research above has broadly focused on the use of audiobooks in the context of EFL language skill acquisition, such as fluency, word recognition, improving comprehension and vocabulary. Likewise, the impact of audiobooks on adolescents is presented by Wolfson. By acknowledging the above benefits of audiobooks and the benefits of traditional reading this study will examine if audiobooks can supplement traditional reading in second grade in a way that comprehension and enjoyment are not compromised. As Larson (2015) highlights the goal of her study is not to replace print text with digital text, likewise, the goal of the present study is not to replace text with audio, however, educators must consider ways to expand their definitions of reading (Larson, 2015). As educators we must acknowledge the ever present trend of students becoming more technologically fluent through the use of computers, iPads, smartphones and MP3 players. Instead of branding these technologies as distractions educators should consider utilising the existing skills of students to promote learning in the classroom. Audiobooks could be one way to maximise student interest and learning potential. The research above supports the use of audiobooks in certain environments as beneficial to students.

However, the focus of these studies have broadly incorporated struggling, unmotivated and second language learners. This present study focuses on the impact of audiobooks on the mainstream second grade classroom and the possible impact on comprehension and enjoyment of text.

2.8 Research Questions

Comprehension and enjoyment of audiobooks in second grade students is an ideal candidate for research considering my observation of my second-grade classes proclivity to enjoy reading, yet not engaging in reading activities every day. If audiobooks can be presented as a companion and supplement to reading without effecting comprehension or enjoyment this would be a valuable supplementary activity for developing literacy skills. Therefore, the research questions investigated for this study were the following:

1. Can audiobooks be used in second grade to enhance comprehension of text?
2. Do audiobooks lead to increased enjoyment of text in the second-grade classroom?

3 Methodology

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of audio books in improving reading comprehension. This study also aimed to measure the subjective experience of enjoyment of text based on student surveys, observation and discussion. The research questions in this study as outlined above aimed at assessing the comprehension and enjoyment of text through audio and listening compared to traditional reading. The researcher employed the following methodologies within the study group to shed light on these research questions in the hope of expanding the scope of reading within the primary school setting.

The methodologies chosen are similar to those which have been used in previous studies which analysed the use of audio materials as a reading resource. In “Johnna's Project” (Patten & Craig, 2007, p. 42) two groups were formed where one would read aloud and one would listen to the audio. These groups then engaged in literature circle sessions. My methodology followed along these lines for the short comprehension part of my study. The researcher also employed some of these literature circle sessions as a methodology through the use of open-ended discussions within the classroom. During the novel reading and listening open-ended discussions were age appropriate for second grade students. Multiple choice questions through Kahoot were used in conjunction with open ended discussion at the end of each chapter in the book to measure the comprehension level of the material which had been read. Discussions were initiated by the teacher to encourage in-depth discussion on the previous chapter at the beginning of each new chapter. As with “Johnna's Project” (Patten & Craig, 2007) the group engaged in discussion using a set of focus questions. Discussions, interviews and surveys, with support from teacher observations, were used by the researcher in the present study to determine enjoyment of the text through both audio and reading modes.

3.1 Research Sample

The study population comprised students attending school in Espoo International School, Finland. Selected class was my own second grade class of 22 students. Admission policy of the school demands fluency in English, which is assessed through listening comprehension and interviews, therefore all of the students of the class had proficient fluency in English language, however, due to small variants in previous school comprehension tests, groups for the short comprehension assessments were structured to

reflect these variants and create two relatively comparable groups. The student population was mostly of international background, with many with English as a first language at home. English language education is provided to students as part of the curriculum and language of instruction in the classroom is English. The Oxford Reading Tree staged readers are the main source of reading for the children in the class. However, the class library provides a wider diversity in book genre and difficulty. Children receive homework reading every week and participate in read aloud in class on a regular basis. The school also has an adjoining public library which most children are members of and use regularly. The importance of reading is often communicated in class and in the whole school environment. Drop Everything and Read time (DEAR time) is often used by class teachers in the school and by myself in second grade. During DEAR teachers usually read their own book in order to promote and model good reading practices. Comfortable environments for reading are available in the school, beanbags are available outside of our second-grade classroom and children are encouraged to relax and enjoy their reading in a comfortable environment. Overall, reading is promoted well in the school, however the use of audiobooks is not very common and their potential for expanding reading competencies in children has not been examined in the school. This study aims to raise awareness of the educational and personal benefits of audiobooks and encourage teachers and students to supplement their current reading habits with an alternative form of gaining information from text.

3.2 Ethics

Written consent was given from the parents of the participants. The consent form contained details of the study being undertaken by the researcher and its background. The form outlined that participation in the study was voluntary. Upon receiving consent, the researchers applied to “Suomenkielisen Opetuksen Tulsysikko” as per the requirements of all researchers completing research in schools in Espoo. A research plan was submitted and consent for the study was granted. Upon completion of the study the researcher will provide a summary of the study to Suomenkielisen Opetuksen Tulsysikko. Anonymity and confidentiality was provided to all participants of the study.

3.3 Research Design

Conducted as a case study, the present study attempted, in the form of development work, to identify the relationship between audiobooks and books in comprehension and enjoyment levels among second grade students. Development work is often used in organisations to create new practices, methods, or services in order to meet ones own requirements and environmental requirements (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti, 2014). Espoo City has made reading development a key target in schools in its municipality. Considering this, the current study aims to provide valuable insight in how to develop this target. This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative strategy is sometimes discussed in terms of the ways in which it differs from quantitative research (Bryman, 2008, p366) However, the researcher felt that both strategies were necessary to obtain the full picture of the impact of audio on the study group. The researcher acknowledges the importance that the qualitative research is able to generalize to a wider population (Bryman , 2008, p. 375). This is the case in the primary school setting in Finland where the Finnish National Curriculum is followed by International Schools. The research can also be generalised to International and English-speaking schools outside of Finland. The researcher is aware of the problems of generalization and that it is often suggested that the scope of qualitative investigation is restricted (Bryman, 2008 p. 391), therefore, the researcher also included quantitative research as part of this study.

Data was collected through interviews and discussion with study participants, observation provided information to supplement these interviews and discussions. Observation makes it possible to access natural environments and it enables the researcher to get information for example on whether people behave in the way they say they do (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti, 2014). In the case of children this is an important qualitative method to include as from personal observations in primary classrooms, peer pressure can often lead children to mimic other childrens' answers in discussion. As the researcher has been class teacher of the study group since the beginning of the school year he was aware of the possibility of "social desirability bias" (Bryman, 2008, p. 211). The social desirability effect refers to the evidence of some respondents answer questions based on the perceived social desirability of the questions (Bryman, 2008, p. 211). The researcher feels that an environment has been established in the classroom where social desirability bias should not occur as a culture where it is safe to have differing opinions has been established

within the classroom. However, to ensure that this bias does not inhibit the participants responses the researcher held the interviews in smaller groups where the children were exposed to less social pressure that may have influenced their answers in a larger group. Data is communicated through the language of the students as well as statistical analysis. The case study is characterised by striving for producing in-depth and detailed knowledge about the studied case. The case study makes it thus possible to understand the development target holistically in a very realistic environment. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti, 2014). The researcher attempted, in the design of this study to balance measuring closely defined variables and the meanings and experiences the students encountered during the study. In completing this study, the researcher hoped to produce findings which would be of practical use to the education of children in the City of Espoo.

3.4 Research Instruments and procedures

Student Survey and Literacy Circle Discussions.

The researcher created a student survey to determine students' enjoyment level of reading and to ascertain if they had exposure to audiobooks. Post-study surveys and group discussion were used to determine enjoyment of text in both reading and audiobook. A class literacy circle discussion was had about audiobooks and the childrens' responses were noted by the researcher. Language played an important role in this research and it is a focus of attention in its own right (Bryman, 2008). Language plays an important role in qualitative research. Conversation analysis is defined by Bryman (2008) as:

“...the fine-grained analysis of talk as it occurs in interaction in naturally occurring situations. The talk is recorded and transcribed so that the detailed analyses can be carried out. These analyses are concerned with uncovering the underlying structures of talk in interaction and such with the achievement of order through interaction” (p. 494)

In this study the researcher recorded notes as the conversations took place within literacy circles during the reading and listening of the novels. Conversation analysis takes care to notice anything significant or striking about the way a speaker says something (Bryman, 2008). The literacy circle discussions in this study reflect some of the assumptions of conversation analysis such as structured talk and talk being forged contextually (Bryman, 2008). Childrens' responses in a literacy circle can often echo others in the group. This is

described by Bryman as: “action is revealed in talk and as such talk must be analysed in terms of its context. This means that we must seek to understand what someone says in terms of the talk that has preceded it and that therefore talk is viewed as exhibiting patterned sequences.” (Bryman, 2008 p. 496). To counter this, an environment needs to be created to foster responses that are natural and true reflections of experience and not just echo and add-on to other students’ responses. The researcher took measures, such as discussions in small groups where children would be more comfortable in expressing their true opinions and feelings, to mitigate this tendency.

The students completed a pre-study survey and literacy circle discussion. The researcher used this survey and discussion to determine pre-existing attitudes to reading and audiobooks. The survey ascertained if the students read books at home every day, if they listened to audiobooks and if they enjoyed reading. The results of these surveys and literacy circle discussions were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed by the researcher and compared and contrasted to the post-study survey and literacy circle discussion to measure childrens’ attitude to and enjoyment of audiobooks.

The researcher had taken some common sources of error in survey research into consideration. Some of these sources of error are outlined by Bryman (2008, p. 193):

- Poorly worded questions;
- The way a question is asked by an interviewer
- Misunderstanding on the part of the interviewee
- The way the information is recorded by the interviewer

Given the age of the students’ questions were kept short and precise and easy to comprehend. If a child had a question about any aspect of the survey the researcher took the time to elaborate on the meaning before the child proceeded. The pre and post survey interviews were coupled with the pre and post literacy circles on the experiences with audiobooks and reading. The researcher then analysed the data collected from both of these sources.

Standardised Comprehension Tests

The school administers English comprehension tests from the University of Oregon (2014) on a bi-annual basis. These tests, EasyCBM were “developed by educational researchers at the University of Oregon in close collaboration with school district partners across the United States. It is designed to give teachers insight into which of their students may need additional instructional supports as well as to provide a means by which they can measure the effectiveness of their teaching.” (EasyCBM 2014) These tests, which focus on progress monitoring in reading, were completed in the normal reading comprehension fashion with no assistance from the teacher. The children read the comprehension text and answer multiple choice questions based on what they read. For the purposes of this present study an alternative test, of the same standard, was then administered to the class through audio. A voice actor was used to communicate the text to the children to effectively communicate the voice annotation and expression of the text. The participants then completed the multiple-choice questions in the same way as the first reading comprehension task. In this way the researcher was able to quantitatively examine the similarities and differences between the comprehension levels of the participants on an individual basis. As the results are from a standardised test the comparison of the two results were considered as valid by the researcher. These results allowed the researcher to form two groups with similar comprehension levels for the following section of the study, involving short comprehension texts.

Short Comprehension Tests

Ten short comprehension tasks were used with multiple choice questions. Group 1 (11 students) read five comprehensions and answered multiple choice questions. This group then listened to a further five short comprehensions and answered multiple choice questions about what they had read. Group 2 (11 students) completed the ten comprehensions Group 2 read the five comprehensions that group 1 listened to and listened to the comprehensions that group 1 read. Group 2 also answered multiple choice questions about what they had read and listened to. Short comprehensions were used to ensure concentration levels were not a factor in influencing results of comprehension. These results were used to further determine the relationship between the listening comprehension and the reading comprehension and to ascertain if one mode resulted in loss of understanding over the other. To measure the students’ comprehension of the ten short texts the tests were developed using the questions from the publisher of the short comprehensions, which were presented as activities with the comprehensions. The

questions were reviewed by the researcher before administered to the participants. The researcher consulted with other grade level teachers to formulate a consensus on the suitability of the comprehensions to be administered. The researcher wanted to ensure the tests could only be interpreted by someone who has listened to or read the text. The tests were in multiple choice format and could be completed quickly by the participants, again, in an attempt to limit the effects of the aforementioned mind wandering that can be problematic with longer comprehension tasks. The results of these ten short comprehension tests were analysed quantitatively to compare the comprehension levels of students who listened to the text, then answered multiple choice questions, and those that read the text and answered multiple choice questions.

Class Novels

Finally, two novels were completed with the class. One novel “The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure” was read in class while the other novel “The Owl Who was Afraid of The Dark” was listened to on audiobook. These novels were chosen as they were appropriate for the proficiency level of the students. Kahoot quizzes were used after each chapter in both read and audio formats and comprehension levels of the books were compared. Students were asked to rate their enjoyment of the novels upon completion, this was done through surveys and literacy circle discussions with the researcher. Teacher facilitated discussion after each chapter was also used to determine students’ comprehension of the text. Audiobooks were selected on the basis of available second grade novels within the school that had corresponding audio versions available online. “The Owl who Was Afraid of The Dark” and “The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure” both by Jill Tomlinson were two such books. These audiobooks were narrated by native English speakers. “The Owl who Was Afraid of The Dark” was chosen as the audiobook to be used. The length of the books made them appropriate for such a study as one chapter could be completed in a single period of English class. I asked experienced teachers at second grade level in the school to review the selected books for appropriate level, with a sufficient challenge. The books were reviewed by these teachers as challenging for second grade students and were usually completed with second grade coming near the end of the school year. Selecting these books was important for ensuring the comprehensions were sufficiently challenging. However, this challenge did not put the novels beyond the linguistic capabilities of the participants regarding vocabulary. Teacher peer reviewing of the audio recordings assured the audio was clearly recorded at the proper speed, effective intonation

and clear accent. Therefore, after these peer reviews were taken into consideration “The Owl who was afraid of the dark” and “The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure”, in both audiobook and textbook, were concluded as appropriate for this study by the researcher.

During the literacy circle discussions with the participants the researcher didn’t communicate their personal views on audiobooks as this could have led to children reflecting the positive view of audiobooks in their own thinking. It was important that the children each thought about their own experience with the two novels and reflect their thoughts based on this. The researcher acknowledges the subjective nature of using ‘*enjoyment of text*’ as a metric of analysis, for this reason, discussions, interviews and observations were also taken into consideration when making conclusions about the participants enjoyment of text. This approach of interpretivism, in which the focus is on people and the way that they interrelate and form ideas about the world (Thomas, 2009, p. 74). Through interpretivism the researcher must look closely at what people are doing by using our own knowledge of the world. The researcher must immerse themselves in the research contexts in which they are interested- for example, talking to people in depth and attending to every nuance of their behaviour (Thomas, 2009, p. 75). Interpretivism requires the researcher to attend to the “blinks, winks, hums and hahs” (Thomas, 2009, p. 75) of the study participants, while being involved in the research at the same time as an insider (Ibid). However, in being so close to the participants and the study the researcher needs to be aware of their own own position, background, likes and dislikes and preferences, may impact their interpretation (Thomas, 2009, p. 76). In the present study the researcher has taken their positionality into consideration when dealing with the participants in open discussions. The researcher felt it was important to couple this interpretivism with objective quantitate data collection as outlined above.

Table 1: Books Used in this Study

Title	Author	Publisher	Pages
“The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark”	Jill Tomilson	Egmont UK (October 1, 2014)	112
“The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure”	Jill Tomilson	Methuen young books (March 1973)	96

3.5 Novel Summaries

3.5.1 The Aardvark Who Wasn't Sure

“Pim is a baby aardvark with a long, furry nose. He has tiny little claws instead of fingers and toes and sleeps in a cosy burrow. But he isn't sure what being an aardvark really means. He asks his mother all sorts of questions, and she decides it is time he found out what being an aardvark is all about.

In his quest to discover the world around him, he meets lots of exotic and interesting animals. There are snakes, cheetahs, elephants, and monkeys, and they all have something to teach him. He's disappointed that aardvarks can't climb trees, but as he learns how to find termites, fight predators, and build a burrow of his own, Pim realises there are some advantages to being an aardvark after all.

This is a heart-warming story from best-selling author Jill Tomlinson, whose books have been hugely popular for nearly 30 years. Told in clear, simple language, they are ideal for young listeners, who can identify with the baby animals and their attempts to find out who they are. *The Aardvark Who Wasn't Sure* is bound to appeal to children who love animals or are curious about the world around them.” (Amazon, 2019)

3.5.2 The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark

“Plop, the Baby Barn Owl, is like every Barn Owl there ever was, except for one thing—he is afraid of the dark. “Dark is nasty,” he says and so he won't go hunting with his parents. Mrs. Barn Owl sends him down from his nest-hole to ask about the dark and he meets a little boy waiting for the fireworks to begin, an old lady, a scout out camping, a girl who tells him about Father Christmas, a man with a telescope, and a black cat who takes him exploring. He realizes that through these encounters that dark is super after all.” (Amazon, 2019)

In this chapter the researcher discussed general information about the aim of the study, the setting, participants and data collection procedures. The researcher acknowledged the difficulty in measuring a subjective experience such as enjoyment, however, through the use of interpretivism, discussion, survey and observation the researcher is confident a reliable determination on the enjoyment of text was made. As the Finnish education system is currently promoting reading in schools the researcher sees the above

methodologies as a way to assess a new platform for promoting reading among young students. The researcher sees this new platform as important considering the cited drop in reading engagement of students in both Espoo International School and the wider international education community. In the next chapter the researcher outlines how these procedures were implemented in the second-grade classroom along with presenting the results of the study.

4 Data Analysis

This study was designed to investigate the use of audiobooks in the primary school, specifically, the second-grade classroom. The study concentrated on two aspects of reading; comprehension and enjoyment of text. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis procedures were used in this study. The research questions were defined as followed:

1. Can audiobooks be used in second grade to enhance the comprehension of text?
2. Do audiobooks lead to increased enjoyment of text in the second-grade classroom?

The study was conducted in a second-grade classroom with children of high proficiency in English. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods the study is seen as a mixed method research. The use of mixed method studies has gained momentum only in recent times (Bryman, 2008, p. 675). This method must do more than represent ‘strands’ from different quantitative and qualitative research, it must; integrate, link and connect these strands (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007, p. 108) For one aspect of the study half of the class was assigned as a control group, reading the text in a traditional fashion, while the experimental group listened to the same text. The students engaged with a variety of text ranging from short comprehension texts to novels. In this chapter, the researcher presents an analysis of the data collected from the student surveys, discussions, short comprehension tests, standardised testing and novels.

4.1 Data Analysis Procedure

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures were used. Due to the subjective nature of “enjoyment of text” group discussions and questionnaires were necessary for the researcher to analyse this aspect with a degree of validity. Quantitative data was gathered through the use of multiple-choice comprehension tests of the short comprehension texts.

The first research question aimed at exploring the effectiveness of audiobooks in comprehension of text. The standardised comprehension results were calculated using the

easyCBM web platform and each students comprehension score in the reading comprehension was compared to their score in the listening comprehension, which were calculated using the same software.

During the split group study on short listening comprehension versus reading comprehension, students were split into groups based on standardised test comprehension results. This ensured that the groups were comparable in comprehension proficiency levels. In this way the researcher could evaluate the results with a degree of validity. The tests were administered and raw score results were collected and converted to percentages for the purpose of analysis and comparison.

The second research question on enjoyment of text involved data collected from literacy circles and questionnaires to be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Childrens' experience with audiobooks and reading in general were collected in the pre-study survey. The pre study survey focused on frequency and general attitude towards reading. The survey was also used to determine the childrens' previous experiences with audiobooks. Data was collected during discussions after each chapter in both reading and listening versions of the novels. These discussions occurred with the researcher and the group of 11 participants as a 'literacy circle'. The researcher led the discussion on the chapter that the children had just experienced. Data collected in these discussions served both the research questions on comprehension and enjoyment of the text. Finally, a post-study questionnaire was conducted along with a final literacy circle which discussed experiences and feelings towards the novels and the two different forms of reading that were used to complete them. Again, these were teacher led discussions and participants were in groups of 11. The researcher recorded responses of the children for analysis of the second research question on enjoyment of text. The researcher payed particular attention to how the participants spoke about their experience of both audio and reading. This collected data was analysed along with the post study survey on the participants experience of both novels to make an accurate assessment on the enjoyment of text.

5 Results

5.1 Pre-study Survey

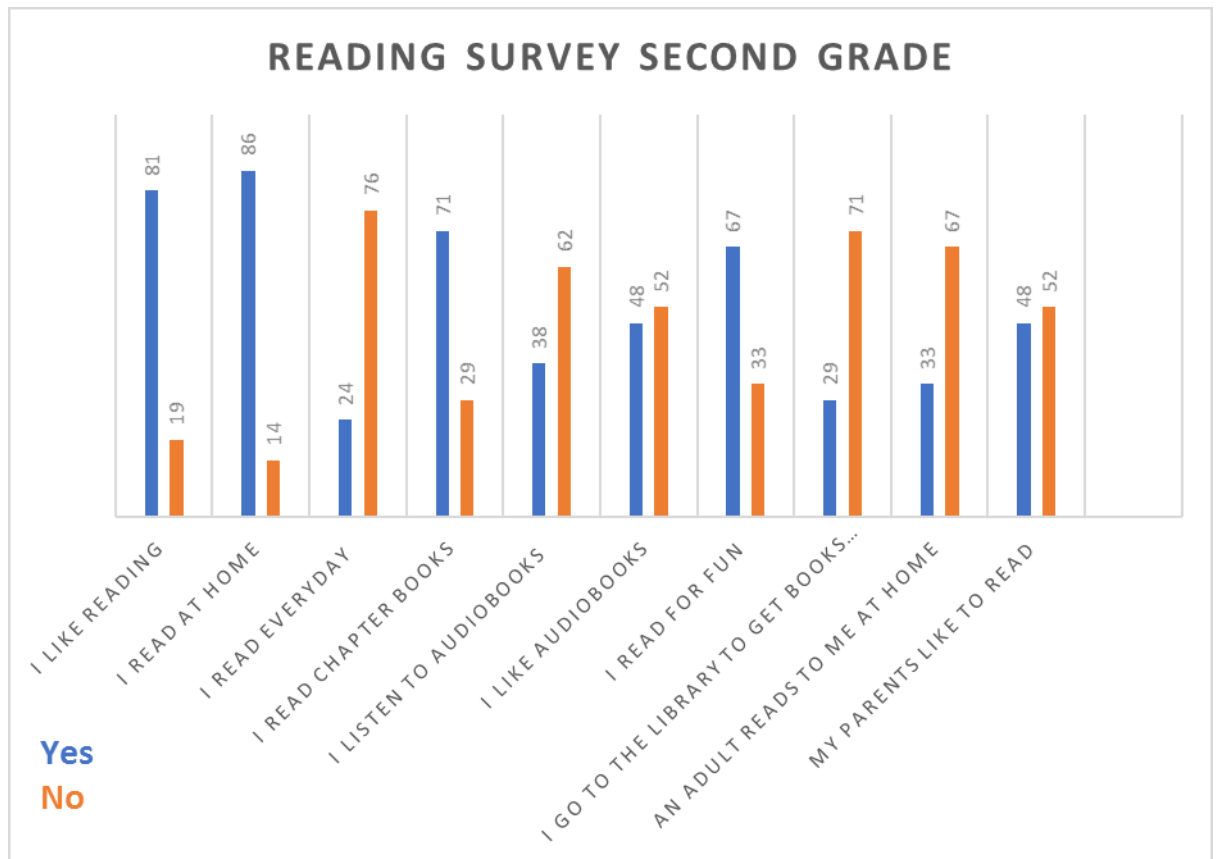


FIGURE 7. Reading Survey



FIGURE 8. Responses: Do you like reading?



FIGURE 9. Responses: Do you read everyday?

As noted students who show interest in class achieve a higher level of learning. The researcher's survey showed that a lot of children do not read every day at home. A vast quantity have never listened to audio books. The researchers is hoping that exposure to a new form of "reading" through audio books will help increase the frequency of engagement and add to the enjoyment of reading. In this second-grade class the pre-study survey showed a high interest in reading (FIGURE 1). However, this interest was not manifesting itself in the daily lives of students (FIGURE 2). Although the reasons for such a disparity were not ascertained from the survey, informal teacher observation suggests that time constraints due to evening activities are the likely cause. Audiobooks could be a useful resource to bridge the gap between this evident keen interest in reading and the manifestation of only 24% of children reading every day. Audiobooks also present the possibility to learn and listen. In today's busy world parents who take an active interest in their child's education see their child has a far better chance of thriving (Robinson, 2015). Audiobooks would open up opportunities for learning and enjoyment of books at times where such a pursuit is not practical with a physical book, such as, in daily commute to school and during family activities such as meal times. Audiobooks can provide an easy way for parents to become involved in their child's learning without too many time concessions. Currently, 62% of my second grade are not listening to audio books. This lack of interaction with reading on a daily bases is compounded by the fact

that 67% of the children like to read for fun. Therefore, the researcher feels that the majority are not matching their interest in reading with the amount they are reading. The researcher believes that introducing audiobooks into the lives of these children would capitalise on this interest in reading. This belief is drawn from the experience and enjoyment the participants derived from the audiobook in this study. As mentioned in this study, if the purpose of reading is to extract meaning from text, audiobooks seem to provide an alternative platform for this purpose, and this is a platform that is not yet being used by students.

This study intended explore new ways of looking at books and the reading experience. The researcher examines the results of the study in this chapter and the value of audio learning on comprehension through various audio vs reading tasks. Then the researcher presents findings of the childrens' enjoyment and comprehension level of the two novels.

5.2 Study 1: Comprehension Levels: Reading vs Audio using standardised tests

Reading comprehension "The Spelling Test" was administered in the traditional standardised test fashion where students read the text and answered comprehension questions in multiple choice format. The results were compiled and used to assure similar comprehension levels between the two groups that were used for study 2. An alternative standardised comprehension test "The Hide-and-Seek Scare" was transferred to audio and listened to by the class before completing the multiple-choice questions in the same way as the first comprehension.

The table below shows the comprehension results on a student-by-student basis:

Table 2. Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension Standardised Test Results

Student	Reading Comprehension	Listening Comprehension
1	10/12	10/12
2	10/12	10/12
3	10/12	11/12
4	9/12	9/12
5	12/12	12/12
6	12/12	11/12
7	11/12	11/12
8	10/12	11/12
9	10/12	9/12
10	8/12	9/12
11	8/12	10/12
12	9/12	9/12
13	10/12	9/12
14	8/12	9/12
15	9/12	9/12
16	9/12	10/12
17	10/12	10/12
18	11/12	11/12
19	11/12	11/12
20	5/12	7/12
21	8/12	7/12
22	8/12	8/12
Average	9.41/12	9.68/12

The results showed a slightly better average from the listening comprehension over the reading comprehension.

5.3 Study 2: Short Comprehensions, Listening vs Reading

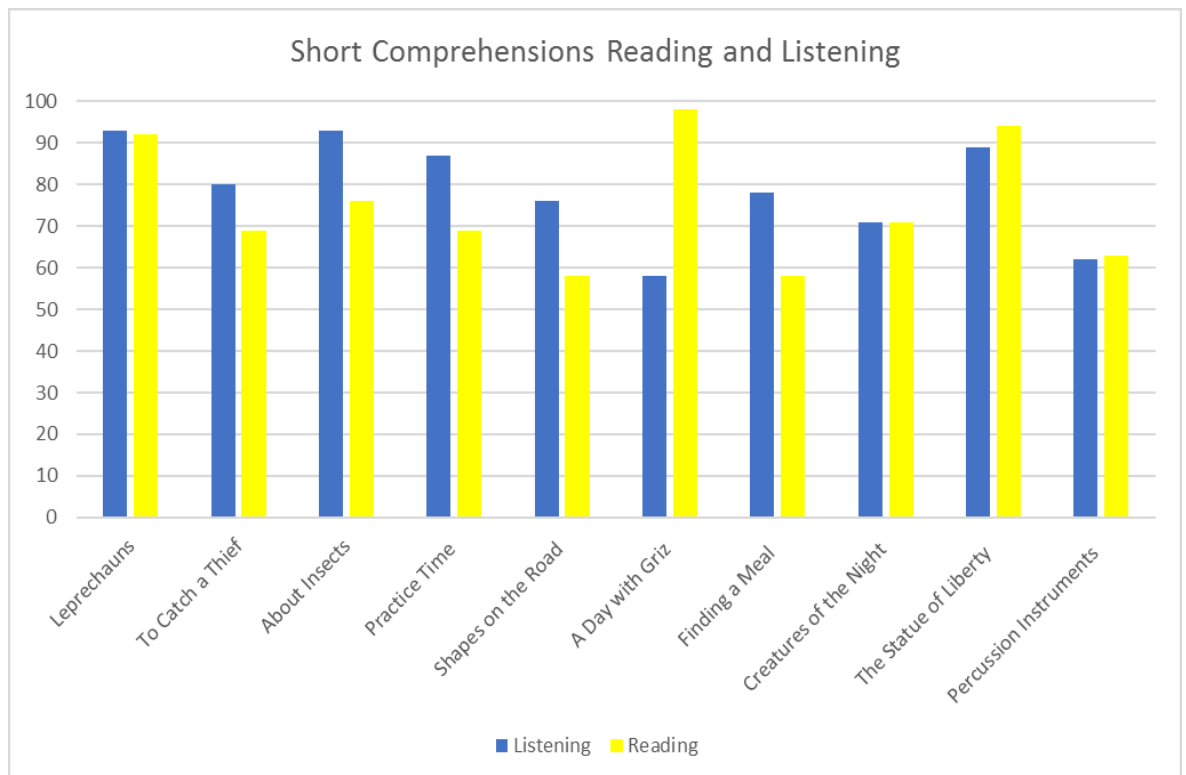


FIGURE 10: Short Comprehension Listening and Reading Results

Ten short comprehensions were used to compare the comprehension of reading and listening. The class was split into two groups based on standardised comprehension test results. Both groups read five comprehensions and listened to five comprehensions. The teacher read the comprehensions to the class. Upon completion, five multiple choice comprehension questions were answered on each piece of text. Texts were short to counter findings by (Sousa et al 2013) that mind wandering can occur when children are listening to text. By using short texts the children would not have to concentrate for large amounts of time at once. The ten comprehensions were of similar ability level and aimed at a second-grade level.

The results (FIGURE 10) show a greater comprehension level among the listening groups in 6/10 comprehensions. However, most comprehension level differences are only a small number of percentage points. Overall the class gained similar comprehension results from the independent reading and the listening comprehensions.

5.4 Study 3: Enjoyment and Comprehension levels of novels, Listening vs Reading

The Aardvark Who Wasn't Sure (Reading Comprehension)

Table 3: Results of Kahoot comprehension tests after each chapter:

	Ch1	Ch2	Ch3	Ch4	Ch5	Ch6	Ch7	Ch8	Ch9	Ch10
Correct %	82.00	68.69	76.53	39.76	67.68	72.73	67.00	66.00	63.00	62.63
Incorrect %	18.00	31.31	23.47	60.22	32.32	27.27	33.00	34.00	37.00	37.37

The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark (Listening Comprehension)

Table 4: Results of Kahoot comprehension tests after each chapter:

	Ch1	Ch2	Ch3	Ch4	Ch5	Ch6	Ch7
Correct %	63.05	68.18	77.28	52.38	60.00	80.46	78.00
Incorrect %	36.95	31.82	22.72	47.62	40.00	19.54	22.00

Overall the comprehension levels of the reading study were quite high in most chapters. The average percentage of correct answers in the book was 67%. The researcher concluded from literacy circle discussions after each chapter that this was an accurate assessment of the comprehension of the participants of the text. The results from the audiobook comprehension quizzes were 68% correct answers. The audiobook chapters were slightly longer than the reading chapters on average. From literacy circle discussion on the audiobook the research also concluded that this was an accurate representation of the comprehension levels of the participants. From this the researcher notes that similar comprehension levels were attained from reading and listening when both books are compared. The researcher also found similar results in the literature circle discussions after each chapter and children were able to discuss the chapters covered with a high level of comprehension of what they had read. The participants really looked forward to the Kahoot challenges at the end of each chapter and this was a good motivation for them to concentrate and try to take in as much information as they could. The children performed some of the reading in split groups and some as a whole class. The listening

comprehension was better when students were in smaller groups. This could be due to the existence of less distractions and disturbances during the audiobook listening. Ideally, the researcher would have liked to complete all the activities in small groups, however, timetable constraints made this difficult. The researcher discusses these aspects in more detail in the conclusion.

When these results from the novel are compared with those of the short comprehensions it is clear that comprehension levels appear not to be significantly different whether the students had listened to the text or read it. Listening to the short comprehensions the students did better on average than reading, whereas when the students had a sustained listening period, as with a chapter of a book, reading results and listening comprehension levels seemed to be on par with each other.

Literacy Circles, Surveys and Discussions

The researcher held literacy circles after each chapter in both novels used to reflect and discuss what had happened in the stories. Where possible the researcher completed these literacy circles in split class groups to give each child an opportunity to discuss the chapter and relate it to the overall story line. The researcher asked open ended questions to stimulate discussion and assess comprehension levels of the chapter. The researcher took notes as outlined in the research design. Upon analysing these results, the researcher found no significant differences between the comprehension levels of the audiobook and the regular reading book. Children were able to recall what had happened in each chapter to a satisfactory level as defined by the teacher. This conclusion was supported by the similar percentage of correct answers in the Kahoot quizzes after each chapter.

When both novels were completed the researcher facilitated a discussion about reading a novel versus listening to a novel in a literacy circle. The participations were asked to consider the differences of listening to a book versus reading one. Most discussion revolved around the fact that they could relax while listening to a book and that reading a book required a bit more effort on their part. Some students remarked that listening to a book was better because the voice actor said things in an interesting way with tone and expression of voice. Other students remarked that they liked the fact that they could learn how to say new words and couldn't get stuck on how to say a word when listening. Other responses from children who enjoyed the audiobook better than reading included;

- “The ‘EEEEK’ that Plop made in each chapter was fun to listen to and woke me up if I wasn’t paying attention”
- “I liked the woman’s voice that read the book”
- “It was nice to have a quiet classroom and listen to a book”
- “I could relax when listening...”
- “I wanted to do well in the Kahoot quiz, so I listened very carefully”
- “I think we should listen to more audiobooks in class because they are fun and relaxing”
- “I liked both the reading and listening, I enjoyed the two books”
- “There were some words I didn’t know and the audiobook just says them so you don’t have to worry”

The post study survey was administered to get further feedback on the childrens’ feelings and attitudes to the audiobooks and learning. This survey analysed in conjunction with the notes taken from the literacy circle in order to interpret whether the enjoyment of text was greater with audiobook or reading the book. The participants responses to both survey and literacy circle questions showed that children had an overall positive enjoyable experience with the audiobook. This coupled with no comprehension loss in any of the studies suggests a positive result for the use of audiobooks in the second-grade classroom.

The first question asked in the post study survey aimed to elicit which novel the class enjoyed better,

- “Which novel did you enjoy most? ‘The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark’ or ‘The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure’

The second question asked directly if the children preferred reading the novel or listening to the novel. “do you prefer reading a book by listening to a book or reading a book?”. The students were asked to consider the two books “The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure” and “The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark”. The researcher had a conversation with the class about the difference between this question and question one. For example; that they might have preferred the book “The Owl Who was Afraid of The Dark” but they

might have preferred reading experience of “The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure”. It was important for the researcher to make this distinction between these two questions and assess the atmosphere of enjoyment between the two options.

Post study survey results:

The following questions were asked in the form of an online survey:

1. Which novel did you enjoy most?
2. Was this your first audiobook to do in school?
3. Do you enjoy reading or listening more?
4. Do you enjoy novels? (Both reading and listening)
5. Would you like to do another audiobook in the future?
6. Do you think you learned more reading or listening to the novels?
7. Do you like reading?
8. Do you like audiobooks?
9. Do you read every day?
10. I liked doing Kahoot quizzes at the end of each chapter?
11. The voice actor made “The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark” more interesting?

The post study literacy circle discussion and survey were completed in groups C and M separately. Firstly, the results of group C will be presented, followed by group M results.

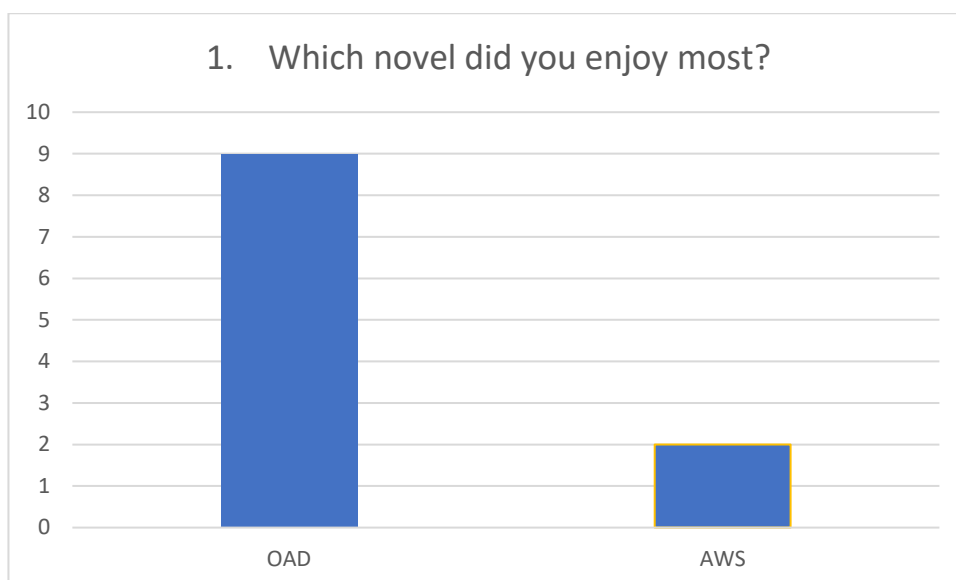


FIGURE 11. Novel the children in group C enjoyed most

In group C “The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark” was a lot more popular as a novel.

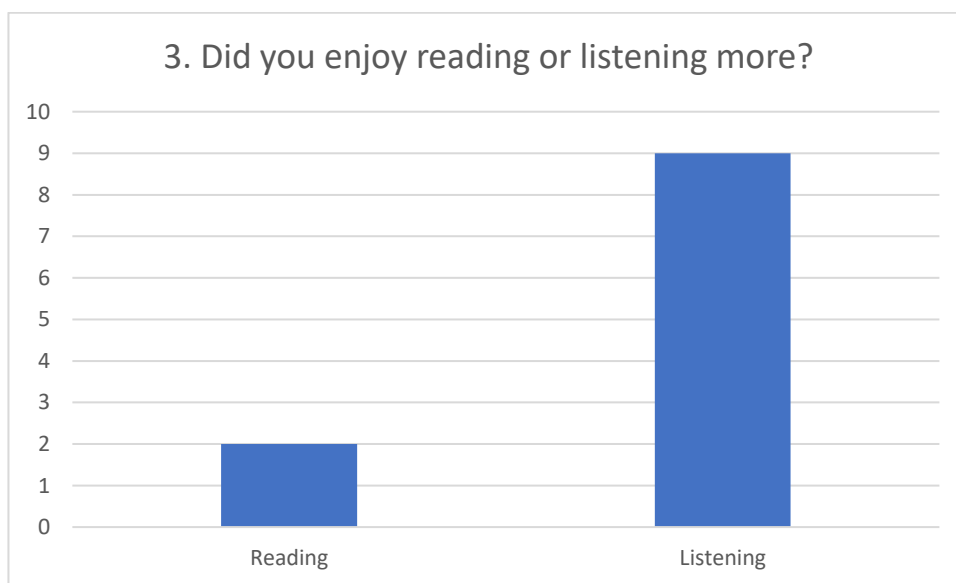


FIGURE 12. Reading and Listening Experience Comparison Group C

The group also enjoyed the listening experience more than the reading experience.

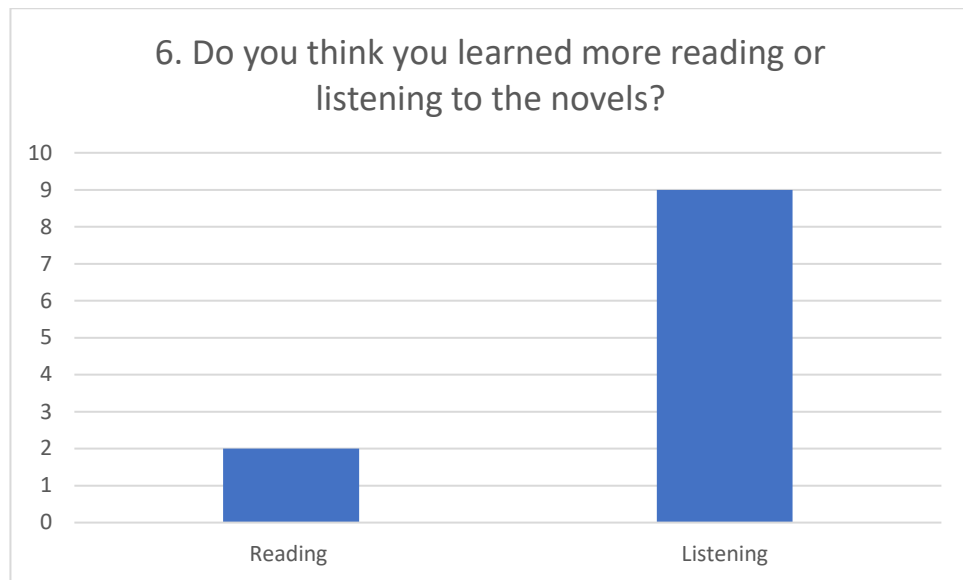


FIGURE 13. Which mode of learning the children felt they learned more from, Group C.

In group C's own opinion, they learned and retained more information during the listening. However, as seen from the comprehension results this level of understanding was similar. Nevertheless, this feeling of superior comprehension through listening could be an important motivator for children if they believe they are taking more information in by listening.

The following chart represents the questions with yes/no responses.

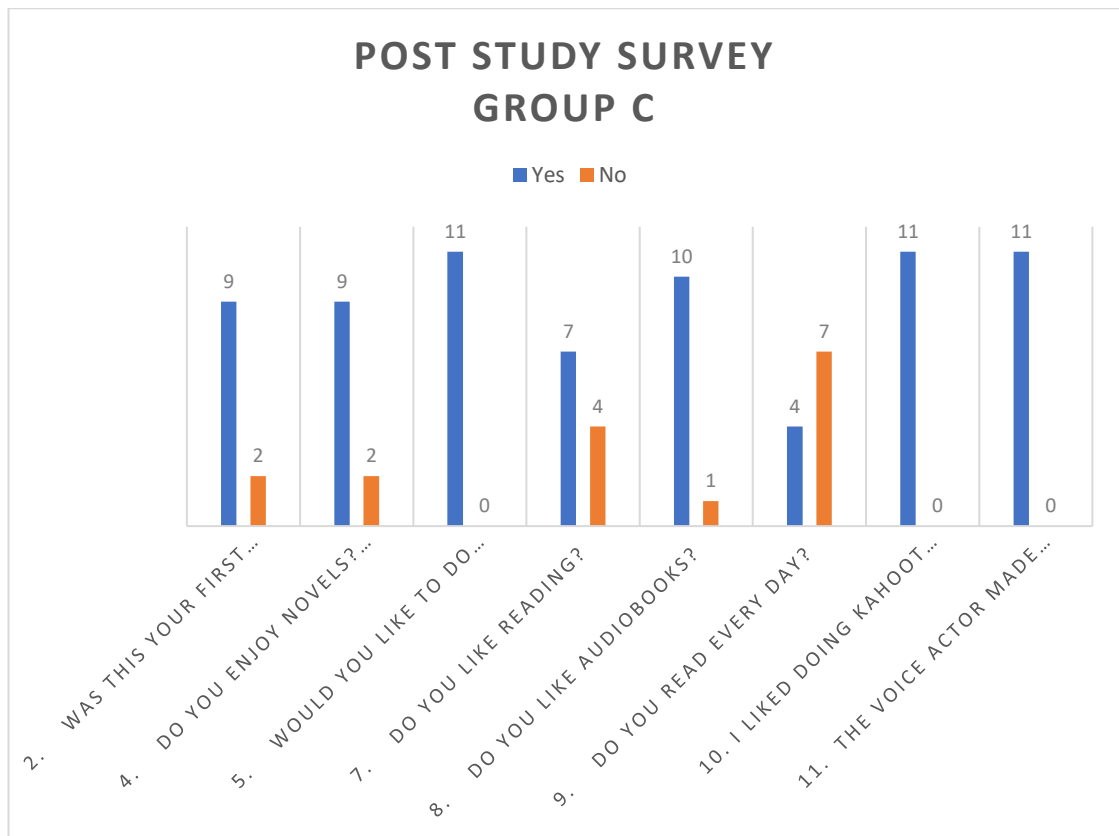


FIGURE 14. Post Study Survey Group C

The post study survey of group C showed that this was the first experience of an audiobook in class for most children. Those that responded yes had used audiobooks in kindergarten. Most of the class maintained the positive outlook on reading that was evident in the pre study survey. An interesting outcome from this survey was that 4 participants responded that they didn't like reading, however only 1 student responded that they didn't like audiobooks. This is interesting from the point of view of encouraging disengaged readers to enjoy text. The majority of this group do not read every day, with 7 participants responding no.

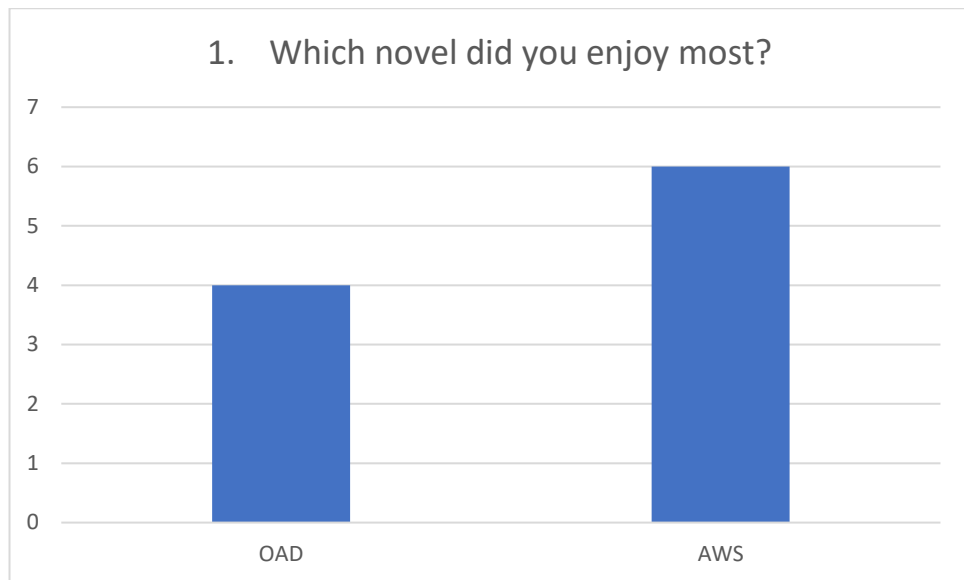


FIGURE 15. Novel the children in group M enjoyed most

According to the survey, group M enjoyed the novel “The Aardvark who Wasn’t Sure” best.

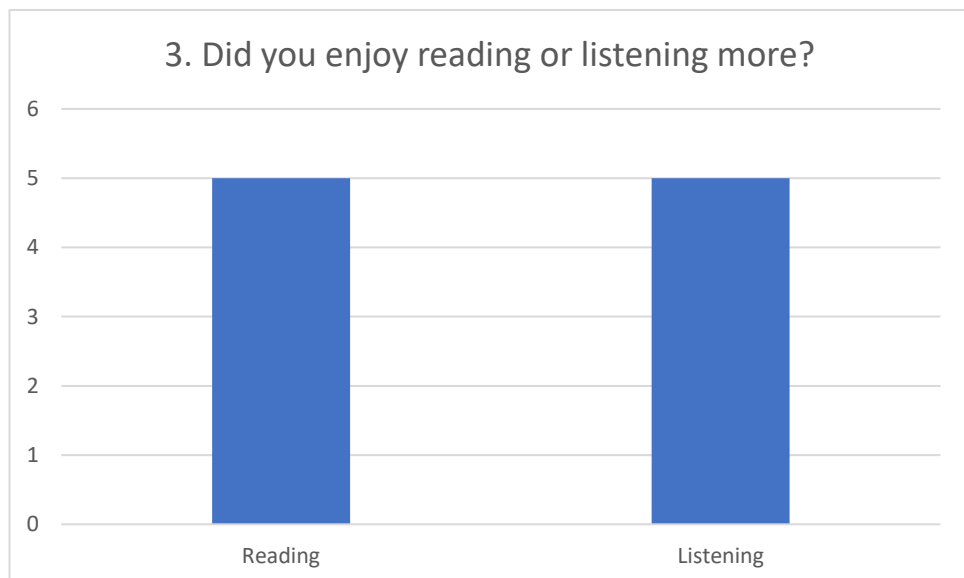


FIGURE 16. Which mode of learning the children felt they learned more from, Group M.

Group M had a more balanced view of the reading versus listening experience, with 50% enjoying reading and 50% enjoying the listening experience. As noted above, the comprehension levels between listening and reading were similar.

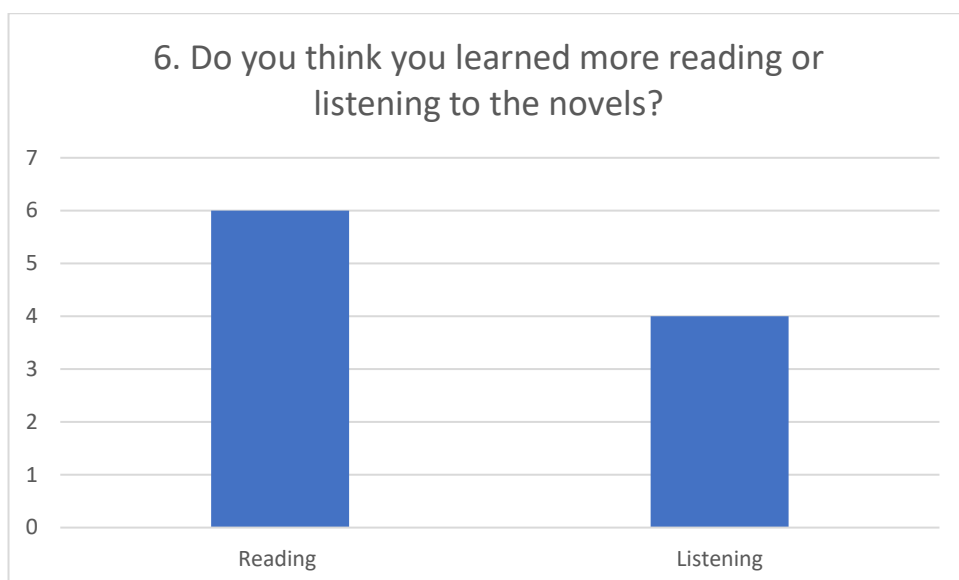


FIGURE 17. Which mode of learning the children felt they learned more from, Group M

Again, it can be seen from FIGURE 17 that, group M leaned in favour of the reading for their own opinion of their learning experience. This result may be influenced by the fact that in group M more children read on a daily basis and hence have more exposure to text and are more comfortable with it than listening.

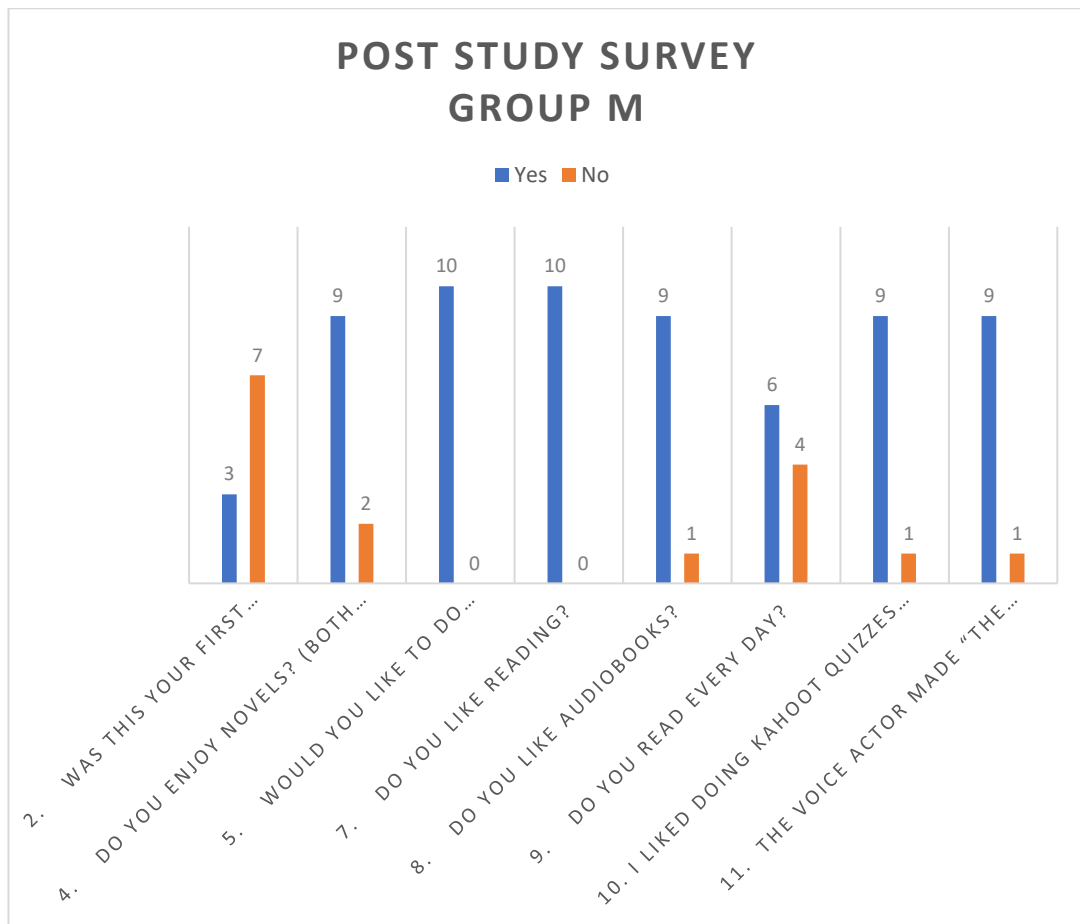


FIGURE 18. Post Study Survey Group M

The post study survey for group M resulted in broadly similar trends. One clear difference was the previous exposure to audiobooks in group M. After discussion in the literacy circles it seems that group M had a broader interpretation of what constituted an audiobook, such as listening to any piece of text within the classroom. Overall, these experiences of audiobooks were in kindergarten with no one reporting that they had completed an audiobook within the elementary school. More students read everyday in group M, this could explain the higher number of participants in group M responding that the preferred “The Aardvark Who Wasn’t Sure” and a larger amount feeling they learned more from reading the novel over listening.

Group C and M varied in their position towards the reading and listening experiences. Group M favoured the “Aardvark who wasn’t Sure” as a novel and presented a more positive outlook on the reading experience over the listening experience. In contrast group M, favoured “The Owl Who was Afraid of The Dark” as a novel and leaned in favour of listening for comprehension and enjoyment of the text. In the present study’s methodology chapter the researcher comments that childrens’ responses in a literacy

circle can often echo others in the group, this could be one explanation for the differences between group C and M in their post study survey outcomes. It is possible that the overall attitude of a few in the group were communicated to others in the group in the literacy circles, which were in turn used in formulating their own personal opinions on the novels.

As discovered in the pre-study survey most children enjoy reading. There were differences in group C and group M's outlook on the novels and reading versus listening experiences. The most striking change from pre study survey 48% of the participants said that they like audiobooks. In the post study survey, after the experiences with "The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark" 90% of participants stated that they liked audiobooks. 100% of participants said that they would like to do another audiobook in the future. This is an overwhelmingly positive result for the enjoyment second grade students attain from listening to audiobooks. As discovered from both post study surveys the participants thought the voice actor as playing an important role in the presentation of "The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark".

The results of the pre and post study surveys, coupled with the literacy circle observations of the researcher, suggest that the participants enjoyed the audiobooks better than reading the novels. 67% of participants responded that they enjoyed the listening experience more than the reading experience. 65% of students also preferred the audiobook "The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark". In the childrens' own opinions 65% of them felt they learned more through listening than reading. However, the researcher found, through MCQ and literacy circle discussions that the learning and understanding of text was similar regardless of reading or listening

Children performed similarly on multiple choice comprehension tests after each chapter when they read the novel "The Aardvark Who Wasn't Sure" and listened to the audiobook "The Owl Who Was Afraid of The Dark". There was not significant statistical difference between the two results. The researcher determined from the literacy circles that the comprehension levels chapter by chapter were similar, which was supported by the Kahoot quiz results.

The results of the standardised tests showed that comprehension levels were not significantly affected on a student by student bases whether the student listened or read the comprehension. Some students performed better on audio while others performed better

at the reading comprehension. This could be an area for consideration for further research, if teachers can ascertain if a student can comprehend a text better by reading or listening this could have implications for their future learning and motivation to read on an individualised bases, classrooms could become places where some children are sitting reading a novel while others in the class are listening to a novel.

6 Conclusion

While this study has several limitations, the results show that comprehension of text is not lost through the use of audio material. Also, in this small sample of second grade students' enjoyment of text was enhanced using audiobooks. Before the study 62% of the class had not listened to audiobooks before. However, the use of audiobooks had a clear impact on the students' satisfaction in a positive way. This is a pathway which could complement and enhance reading of text. Several studies on EFL students have shown the positive impacts of audiobooks on fluency and reading levels. The study does not intend to diminish the critical role of reading in the second-grade classroom but, in light of my second grade classes tendency to exclude reading from their daily lives, audiobooks could provide a fun way to fill this vacuum. The basic prerequisite for effective education is to cultivate students' enthusiasm for learning (Robinson, 2015). Based on my post study evaluation my students' enthusiasm for audiobooks has increased. As teachers we must understand that students learn in a variety of ways and supporting and discovering methods of teaching that motivate learning will help us cultivate this enthusiasm which Robinson calls the basic prerequisite for effective education (Robinson, 2015)

6.1 Findings and Discussion

The researcher concludes from the study that no significant statistical differences in comprehension level of text was observed between reading comprehension and listening comprehension. However, the researcher does not see these findings as insignificant. If the comprehension of text through audiobooks is similar to the comprehension of text through reading this is a positive result for the mainstream primary school classroom. There are many times during the day where children have some free time to spend on their own tasks. Reading in a quiet environment is not always an option in a primary school which are quite often filled with hustle and bustle activity. At such times where reading is not possible, audiobooks, which when used with headphones can be an escape into a book at a time when it was previously not an option. This could lead to a big increase in the amount of literature that children are exposed to at a young age. We should also consider those students that find concentration difficult. Being able to shut the outside world and distractions out using an audiobook might help such children in their overall reading and comprehension abilities. Likewise, audiobooks can open up times where reading wasn't possible, such as cycling, walking and commutes to children again

expanding the reach of literature. The study revealed that young learners can get more enjoyment from text when listening to it in audio form.

The study found that participants responded very well to the audiobooks. The pre and post study surveys should that by experiencing audiobooks in class 100% of students would like to do another audiobook in class. For a high percentage of children this was their first audiobook experience and for all it was their first in the elementary school classroom. Children responded at 48% to enjoying audiobooks before the study and 90% enjoyment after the study. This is a significant increase and the researcher putting the big difference down to children who had not previously experienced audiobooks assuming that they didn't like them.

The study found that the longer the listening task was the lower the comprehension levels on average were. The students retained more information when reading on longer texts. This study was completed with a class with little experience with audiobooks. The researcher suggests that literacy skills could be taught to students on how to work with audiobooks to help sustain comprehension levels over longer periods of listening. This would start with students being exposed to audiobooks on a more frequent basis and by encouraging them to listen to books at home. There is also the option of providing shorter listening periods to children intersected with engaging discussion to keep the mind wandering of students to a minimum. The audio sections in this study were approximately 9-10 minutes long. The researcher noticed some disengagement when the listening exceeded this time. The researcher believes that having shorter listening activities in the range of 5 minutes would ensure greater engagement from the class. This would mean pausing the recording and engaging the class in some discussion before continuing with the listening. Also, if the class were expecting this discussion after five minutes this might provide extra motivation to listen and avoid distractions in the environment.

During this study, as it is in day to day life in classrooms, there were times when some students weren't at their academic best. This can often be the case that external factors have affected their mood in class on a particular day, eg illness, problems from home, tiredness. In such cases, although few in this study, the researcher noticed abnormalities in mood and motivation of particular students which may have had an impact on their comprehension or enjoyment of the text on that particular day in school. This was the utility of the literacy circle discussion after every chapter, the researcher could compare

and contrast notes from certain students that may have communicated lack of comprehension one day and very good comprehension the next day, to get an overall picture on the comprehension levels of the book as a whole.

The researcher notes that children were excited about the Kahoot quizzes at the end of each chapter of the reading and listening novels. This created a sense of competition in the classroom which was extra motivation for children to listen and concentrate on the text, whether audio or visual. The children loved seeing their names on the interactive whiteboard after each round and seeing who was in the 'top 5' as the online game of Kahoot shows. The researcher acknowledges this atmosphere of competition would not be present in the day to day reading or listening for pleasure of the children and hence the results obtained in this study may have been affected by this abnormal motivation to comprehend the text that they were experiencing. However, there may be a lesson in this for educators and parents that providing incentives to read outside of the intrinsic reading for pleasure may encourage children to be more actively engaged in text.

Given that there was such a high increase in the children who liked audiobooks between pre and post study surveys there is evidence that exposure to audiobooks is likely to have a positive impact on the enjoyment of text. In the pre study survey 48% of participants said they liked audiobooks, this was given that only 38% of students had listened to an audiobook before there seems to be a preconditioned sense that they did not like this form of reading without having experienced it before. This study found, in the post study survey, that 90% of the participants liked audiobooks after their experience with the present study. Again, 100% of students responded that they would like to do another audiobook in the future. The above results reflect very positively on the impact of audiobooks on the enjoyment of text.

6.2 Pedagogical Implications

The city of Espoo has made reading a key goal for 2019. This case study, although small scale, indicates that comprehension and enjoyment of text are not compromised when using audio materials. There is much scope for a larger scale study into the possible use of audio books in the mainstream classroom. The researcher found that many children preferred listening to the novel than reading the novel. Given that comprehension was not compromised for the participants of this study this could open up a new platform and

mode of learning to already competent readers and also to those students who are not inclined to pick up a book and read every day. Most children commute to school by walking, bus or bike in Finland. These commutes could be used as time to be engaged in a book through audiobook and learning, as well as enjoyment of reading, can be extended to those times where they haven't been exploited before.

Currently in Espoo International School audiobooks are not used as part of the curriculum or day to day life in school. Some children have used audiobooks for pleasure at home. I believe a coordinated approach to audiobooks would be a real positive influence for reading in the primary school as children seem to respond so positively to audiobooks. Most classes at primary school will complete novels as part of the English curriculum every year. Audiobooks, which could be listened to at home and in school would promote the reading that Espoo is currently holding as a target.

There are some practical problems that might restrict schools in rolling out an audiobook programme. Children would need to have a device which is capable of storing an audiobook. Although most children in second grade have some form of device or at least their parents/guardians would have. The cost of getting reliable, clear and professionally produced audiobooks might be significant for a school. However, there are associations, such as parent teacher associations and local libraries that may be of help in this regard. Parents could be encouraged to hold a private Audible account and teachers could make recommendations of suitable books that could be bought for the appropriate grade level. However, there is an increasing number of free material available online which is accessible to children. Youtube hosts a wide variety of audio material which can be accessed for free by anyone. Considering that some students performed better on audio while others performed better at the reading comprehension. This could be an area for consideration for further research, if teachers can ascertain if a student can comprehend a text better by reading or listening this could have implications for their future learning.

Presently schools use graded readers and children often get no exposure to audiobook material. This study has shown that children respond very positively to audiobooks and educators should seize the opportunity to capitalise on this positivity to combat the increasing decline in reading that children experience as they rise through the grade levels. The successful outcomes of this study can be considered a first step in combatting

this decline and bolster educational institutions in their fight against the decline in reading.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

The present study had limitations that affect the generalisability and interpretation of the results. This study revealed positive results for the use of audiobooks among second grade children. Comprehension of text was not compromised by listening to the text when compared to reading them. Furthermore, children enjoyed the experience of listened to the audiobooks more than reading the books. However, the results may not be generalisable because of the small sample size of twenty-two students. As this was the first experience of audiobooks for the majority of the class this feeling of novelty may have given an inflated view of the enjoyment levels of audiobooks. Once the children are accustomed to audiobooks this novelty factor could dissipate and levels of enjoyment decline. Discussion assessments of comprehension during novel reading may not be reliable as children build on the contributions of others during the discussion. The enjoyment of text is a subjective idea and is not easy to interpret, this was measured by the class teacher in group discussions on the various text. The researcher holds a positive outlook on audiobooks from a personal perspective. This positivity may have been communicated to the children unintentionally which may have affected their perceptions of audiobooks. The researcher tried to be neutral when presenting the text in both audio and written form.

Some of the following conditions may have influenced the outcomes of this study. Firstly, the intensive listening environment of the classroom may have contributed to higher comprehension levels of the audiobook. This environment would be hard to replicate outside the classroom where external factors may be competing for the students' attention as they listen, hence, reducing comprehension of what they are listening to. Secondly, as this study focused on only two factors, comprehension and enjoyment, this may have resulted in loss of focus in other literacy areas, which this study did not focus on. Likewise, the element of competition which was presented through the Kahoot quizzes at the end of the chapters provided an incentive to concentration that may be lacking in a normal reading for pleasure environment.

Regardless of these limitations this present study provides scope for further research into the area of the utility of audiobooks in the second-grade classroom and beyond.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher suggests to any education system, like that in Espoo, which is embarking on promotion of reading, to strongly consider the role audiobooks might play in achieving their goal. This approach would need to be coordinated and funded by the highest levels in schools and cities. Further research is needed into the possible benefits of audiobooks, this study focused on comprehension and enjoyment of audiobooks. However, other areas of literacy, such as vocabulary, could warrant further research. Research has been limited in the sphere of mainstream elementary school environment. Audiobooks have been the focus of many studies on how to bring struggling readers up reading levels, but much less on the side of pushing already competent readers to extend their competencies through using audiobooks.

Further study might be warranted in the area of audiobooks and reading books combined. Where the children listen to the book as they follow the text along. This would provide a scaffold for pronunciation of vocabulary which is unknown to the student. Although this would remove most of the flexibility of audiobooks as a resource we can use on the move, as was the focus of this present study, it may be of interest for another classroom based study and may also have some positive pedagogical implications.

This study focused on a group of second grade students with very little previous exposure to audiobooks. We spend large amounts of time teaching children reading skills. The researcher would consider the implementation of audiobooks as part of the curriculum as part of the literacy program as an effective long-term plan in keeping young learners interested in reading. However, more research is needed into the effectiveness of audiobooks in the classroom. The researcher suggests research during a longer timeframe, over the course of the first few grade levels, where educators would take a coordinated approach to the implementation of audiobooks and teaching skills related to using audiobooks.

This study's focus and aim was to determine the utility of audiobooks in the primary school classroom, specifically in second grade. Much of the previous study in this area

has been in the second language classroom and with struggling readers. The present study focused on the mainstream English as a first language classroom. Given the noted decline of reading among students in Espoo International School, which, as studies suggest is a trend which is not unique and seems to be a wider cultural trend across the globe, this study aimed at bolstering the reading capacity of children through the use of audiobooks. The researcher highlighted two key areas for research, comprehension and enjoyment of text. As the researcher was also the class teacher of the study group this gave access to the participants on a daily basis over the life of the study. The researcher found through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods that students' comprehension of text was not compromised in any statistically significant manner by listening to an audiobook over reading a book. Moreover, the researcher found that, with shorter texts, comprehension was slightly higher in listening activities. The students concluded that they enjoyed listening to the audiobook more than reading the book. They cited many reasons for this mentioned in the above data analysis, but the most frequent being that they could relax and enjoy the audiobook more by listening. This finding was significant as children reported in the pre survey study that 62% of them had never listened to an audiobook before. The significance of this figure is compounded by the statistic that 67% of students responded that they read for fun. The researcher concludes that audiobooks are currently an underutilised resource among young learners.

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APPENDIX A: READING COMPREHENSION



Reading Comprehension: 2-Spring

The Spelling Test

Emmy was good at most things. She was good at dancing and swimming. She played the piano and flute better than most kids her age. Emmy was even pretty good at doing math in her head.

But there was one thing Emmy was NOT good at: spelling! In fact, Emmy was the worst speller in her third grade class. She hated weekly spelling tests.

Emmy also did not like going to school on Fridays. The other kids loved Fridays. Other than the spelling test, Friday was an easy day at school. Sometimes their teacher Mr. Park even showed a movie in the afternoon.

Emmy always studied for her spelling tests. But she could never get all the words right on the real test. Of the ten words, she missed at least one or two. Unlike Emmy, the other students usually spelled all the words right.

One Friday morning, Mr. Park made a surprising announcement. "If everyone gets a perfect score on the spelling test today, we'll have a popcorn party this afternoon before the movie." Everyone cheered, except Emmy. She was starting to feel bad. "What if I miss a word and mess up the party for everyone?" she worried.

The spelling test began. Emmy's hand shook as she wrote the words. She finished word nine with no mistakes! "Maybe we'll have the party after all," she thought.

"The last word is because," Mr. Park told the class. Emmy started writing b-e-c- next to the number ten on her paper. Then she stopped. She couldn't remember if the u or a came next!

Then Emmy did something she'd never done before. She peeked at her neighbor's spelling test. She saw that Todd had written the a before the u in because. Emmy quickly finished writing the word on her paper and turned it over. No one noticed her sneaky move.

After recess, Mr. Park announced that the class had won the popcorn party. Everyone cheered, except Emmy. She was starting to feel really bad. She knew that what she'd done was the wrong thing to do.

Emmy's friends had a great time at the popcorn party. They munched and talked and laughed together. But Emmy didn't feel like eating popcorn (even though it was her favorite snack). She didn't talk much and she didn't laugh at all. The party was the least fun Emmy had ever had at school.

During the movie, Emmy decided to tell Mr. Park the truth about her spelling test. Surprisingly, Mr. Park was not very angry. "It's better to be honest now than never," he told Emmy.

APPENDIX B: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

easyCBM
Progress made easy for RTI.

Reading Comprehension: 2-Winter

The Hide-and-Seek Scare

James and his parents lived in a large house. James didn't have any brothers or sisters, but he had many friends. His parents let him invite friends over a lot.

James' friends loved coming to his house. Their favorite game was hide-and-seek. Because James' house was so big, there were tons of great hiding places.

One day James invited his four best friends over: Charlie, Sadie, Peter, and Emma. "Want to play hide-and seek?" James asked. Of course, everyone did!

James agreed to be "it". He reminded his friends that all rooms were okay to hide in except his parents' room where they were reading. They were not allowed to go in the cellar too. But it was always locked, so James did not tell his friends about it.

James closed his eyes and started counting. "One, two, three . . ." As he counted, he listened to his friends' footsteps. They were all going different ways.

I'll find them all, James thought. He knew the hiding spots in his house by now. "Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred. Ready or not, here I come!" James called.

James walked through the house, looking and listening for his friends. He found Charlie quickly. He made a lot of noise each time he took a breath of air. James heard him before finding him hiding behind the bathroom shower curtain.

Charlie wanted to help James find the others. They saw Emma's foot sticking out under the bed. She slid out and joined the team looking for the others.

It took a long time to find Peter. They looked in all the usual hiding places, like the hall closet and behind the kitchen door, but he was not in any of those places. Finally, Emma checked the laundry room. Peter was hiding in a pile of dirty clothes!

"I'm glad you found me!" Peter joked. "It was starting to smell bad." Charlie and Emma laughed. But then they all got really serious. They had searched the whole house. There was still no sign of Sadie.

James decided to get his parents' help. They all walked through the house once more, looking in, over, and under everything. James' parents even checked their room. James wasn't surprised Sadie wasn't in there. She knew the room was not okay to go in.

By now it was getting dark, and the kids needed to go home. They were all worried about Sadie. "Maybe Sadie's trapped somewhere!" James said.

Then they heard a sound coming from the cellar! James ran to the door and heard a cry for help!

"What were you doing in there?" James' mom asked when she unlocked the door. Sadie said that the door was open so she had decided to hide there. Once she got in, the

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APPENDIX C: TEN SHORT COMPREHENSIONS

The following is a sample of one short comprehension. Links are provided to the other nine used in this study:

To Catch a Thief

A long time ago and far away a wise magician was traveling through a strange land. He was tired from traveling all day. He stopped at an inn to spend the night and rest. He was the last guest to arrive.

The innkeeper was very glad to see the magician.

"Oh wise magician," the innkeeper said. "My wife's ring has just been lost. Can you help us find it?"

"Have you searched for the ring?" asked the magician.

"We have looked and looked everywhere," said the innkeeper. "Maybe the lovely ring was stolen."

After the evening meal the magician announced, "I believe a ring was stolen tonight before I arrived. I carry with me magical sticks that determine the truth. Each stick is the same length but by morning a thief's stick will grow one inch."

The magician gave each guest a magical wooden stick. In the morning everyone gathered to prove that they were innocent. One by one they filed by to compare their sticks with the magician's. They all matched the magician's stick except one. Somehow one stick was shorter!

"I have found the thief!" explained the magician. "You see, the thief cut one inch off his stick because he believed it would grow during the night."

Name: _____

Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer.

1. When the magician stopped at the inn he was
 - a. The first guest of the day
 - b. The third guest of the day
 - c. The last guest of the day
2. The innkeeper wanted the magician to find a missing
 - a. Bracelet
 - b. Ring
 - c. Necklace
3. The magician's magical sticks were made from
 - a. Wood
 - b. Metal
 - c. Plastic
4. The magician gave magical sticks to
 - a. Guests at the inn
 - b. The innkeeper's family
 - c. Both guests and family members
5. Whose magical stick grew?
 - a. The magician's
 - b. The thief's
 - c. Nobody's

Links to other comprehensions used in this study:

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/leprechauns.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/insects.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/grizzly.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/creatures.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/eats.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/percussion.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/pianopractice.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/statueoflib.pdf>

<http://www.littleworksheets.com/worksheets/reading/grade2/theroad.pdf>

APPENDIX D: NOVELS



APPENDIX E: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Espoon sivistystoimi		Tutkimuslupahakemus	
1 TUTKIMUKSEN NIMI	The Use of Audiobooks in The Second Grade Classroom (Äänikirjojen käyttö toisessa luokassa)		
2 KOHDEYKSIKKÖ	Tutkimuksen suunniteltu kohdeyksikkö (-yksiköt) Espoon kaupungissa Espoo International School: Second Grade		
3 TUTKIMUKSEN KUVAUS	<p>Lyhyt kuvaus tutkimuksen sisällöstä ja menetelmistä (max. 160 merkkiä). (Liitä tutkimussuunnitelma liitteeksi.) Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan äänikirjojen arvoa tekstin ymmärtämisessä ja nauttimisessa. (This study will examine the value of audiobooks in comprehension)</p> <p>Aineiston otanta ja keruutapa Espoo International School-Second Grade</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tarkoitus</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pro gradu <input type="checkbox"/> Lisensiaattityö <input type="checkbox"/> Väitöskirja <input type="checkbox"/> Muu opinnäytetyö, mikä <input type="checkbox"/> Muu, mikä? </p> <p>Tutkimuksen arvioitu valmistumisaika: 30/05/2019</p>		
4 TUTKIMUKSEN TOTEUTUS	<p>Onko tutkimuksen kohteena henkilö (henkilöitä), jonka osallistumisesta päättää huoltaja tai edunvalvoja</p> <p>Käsitelläänkö tutkimuksessa henkilötietoja</p> <p>Muodostuuko tutkimusta tehtäessä henkilötietopohjainen tutkimusrekisteri</p> <p>Käytetäänkö tutkimuksessa jo olemassa olevien rekistereiden tietoja</p> <p>Onko tutkimus osa jotain laajempaa tutkimusta / projektia</p> <p>Lisätietoja Parents are currently responding to a permission form. English and Finnish forms were given to each parent as it is an International School and many parents speak only English,</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kyllä <input type="checkbox"/> Ei Jos kyllä, selvitä Lisätietoja -kohtaan, miten huoltajan suostumus hankitaan</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Kyllä <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ei</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Kyllä <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ei Jos kyllä, täytä myös Tutkimusrekisteritiedot -lomake</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Kyllä <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ei Jos kyllä, selvitys Lisätietoja -kohtaan</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Kyllä <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ei Jos kyllä, selvitys Lisätietoja -kohtaan.</p>	

APPENDIX F: PERMISSON FOR STUDY

8 PÄÄTÖS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tutkimuslupa myönnetään <input type="checkbox"/> Tutkimuslupa myönnetään ehdollisena:
	Myönnetyn tutkimusluvan numero: 15 / 20 19 <input type="checkbox"/> Tutkimuslupaa ei myönnetä seuraavin perustein:
	Pyydetään lähettämään tutkimuksen valmistuttua sähköpostitse samaan osoitteeseen kuin tämä tutkimuslupahakemus <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tiivistelmä <input type="checkbox"/> Koko tutkimusraportti
	Espoossa 18.3.2019
	Päätäjän allekirjoitus <i>Anne-Marie Rapp</i>
	Nimenselvennys Anne - Marie Rapp
	Virka-asema rehtori