



# Degree Project

Teacher Education (Upper Secondary School),  
300 credits

## The Audiobook as a Teaching Tool:

English teachers' attitudes towards using the audiobook as a  
teaching tool in the SLA classroom

English for Students in Teacher Education, 15 credits

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## Abstract

The increased popularity of listening to audiobooks has influenced the discussion of literacy, pressuring the educational system to adjust accordingly. This study investigates if the audiobook is being used as a teaching tool in the upper secondary, SLA classroom and what attitude teachers have toward using audiobooks in their teaching as well as the reasons behind their attitudes. This research also investigates whether there is a correlation between age or student program and the usage of audiobooks. To gather data, a questionnaire was sent out to 46 English language teachers in upper secondary school in Halland. The questionnaire included open-ended questions which resulted in qualitative answers from 28 participants. The retrieved result proved that most upper secondary school English teachers are using the audiobook as a teaching tool, however, the reason for their usage differed. Some participants, who did not make use of the audiobook in their classroom still had a positive attitude towards using it and could present many beneficial aspects of it. The result contradicts the initial hypothesis about teachers showing reluctance using audiobooks in their teaching.

**Keywords:** audiobooks, reading experience, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, SLA

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# 1.Introduction

Language studies in upper secondary school were for us fashioned in a traditional manner where reading literature only was done with the printed copies, rather than using any other literary input. Listening was not considered equivalent to reading and as students we were never offered any other options to reading quietly by our benches in our books. It is up for debate whether it counts as reading a book if it is simply listened to. However, excluding audiobooks in the discussion of literacy will not be possible. With its easy access and mobile as well as flexible nature, audiobooks have become more popular in the last two decades (Cunningham 64).

In the core content of the curriculum in the English unit plan for upper secondary school, it says that students, by using various media forms, “should be given the opportunity to interact in speech and writing, and to produce spoken language and texts” (Skolverket 3). Upper secondary students are supposed to interact with different dialects as well as sociolects in their English education, moreover, it is stated in the curriculum that this should be taught through different media (Skolverket 3). However, it is not specified from what type of media form such opportunities should be given, which leaves it open for teachers to interpret. Regardless, the requirements of what students should be taught include perception as well as production and interaction (Skolverket 2)

The four learning skills: writing, speaking, reading and listening, where reading and listening belong to the perceptive skills, are all important aspects in second language learners’ classroom (Kartal and Simsek 112). What we have noticed is that listening has become overlooked in educational contexts and considering the content of the English unit plan regarding different usage of media, we want to raise the question about audiobooks. Kartal and Simsek claim that students with English as a second language struggle with the receptive skill, listening, since the occasional exposure to such educational content is inadequate (113).

Research on how audiobooks affect literacy learning has been made. However, earlier research seldom addresses this topic in relation to young adults such as upper secondary students. It detects a noticeable age gap in the research field about audiobooks and not until recent years, have the benefits that young adults gain from listening to audiobooks, been brought to the surface. A possible reason for the limited research amongst students of older ages can be due to the fact that it is more common to read aloud to young children (Beer 33). According to Harris, the standard practice in literacy learning has been to read aloud to children, which enhances their ability to read independently in later stages of their lives (48). According

to Beer, while older students still benefit from auditory input, they are not as much or sometimes no longer exposed to it as they are in younger ages even though “they increase their knowledge in decoding and comprehension” as well as younger learners do (33).

Our perception of the audiobook as an educational tool is that regardless of its accessibility and popularity it is not as commonly used for educational purposes as we think it should be. Since research also indicates an age gap, we saw great potential in conducting our research in the upper secondary schools. This is why the aim of this study is to find out if the audiobook and its potential for adolescents is being used in the upper secondary, SLA classroom in Halland. Furthermore, we want to explore English teachers’ attitudes towards using the audiobook in their teaching and the reasons behind their attitudes. In addition, we want to find out if the participants’ attitude towards audiobooks relates to previous research findings. Thus, our study is founded on the following research questions

- Do teachers in the upper secondary, SLA classroom in Halland use audiobooks in their teaching?
- What attitudes do teachers in the upper secondary, SLA classroom in Halland have towards using the audiobook as a teaching tool?

This study will also be investigating the correlation between the following variables: age, what program the participants teach and whether the audiobook is being used or not. Due to our experience regarding the usage of audiobook in instructional settings, our hypothesis is that we are going to find a correlation between these variables and that the attitudes towards using audiobooks in teaching are still outdated and that the majority of teachers do not use the audiobook as a teaching tool despite its many advantages.

## 1.2 Essay structure

Following this section, relevant research for the study will be presented. Audiobooks and comprehension, audiobooks and the reading experience and who the audiobook is most suited for, are aspects to be investigated. The methodology of this essay will then be presented. It contains the selection of participants for the study, the design of the questionnaire, how the questionnaire was analyzed, delimitations and ethical aspects to consider within the field of humanities and social sciences research. In the following section, the results of the study are

introduced and later discussed in relation to previous research in the discussion section. Lastly, the study is concluded and suggestions for further research are presented.

## 2. Previous research

In the research field of using audiobooks as a pedagogical tool several beneficial aspects have been found, which support the usage of the audiobook in the language classroom. According to Grover and D. Hannegan, this research promotes the usage of audiobooks in order to obtain vocabulary knowledge, comprehension and fluency. Further, it facilitates the job of decoding words for the listener. They suggest that listening to a narrative enables the students to see “the big picture” (10). In addition, Wolfson states that “Audiobooks can model reading, teach critical listening, build on prior knowledge, improve vocabulary, encourage oral language usage, and increase comprehension. Essentially, reading audiobooks supports the development of all four language systems; phonological, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic” (106). According to Grover and D. Hannegan the positive aspects of using audiobooks in teaching benefit all learners, from the students with special needs to the avid reader, but in different ways. Moreover, they mention how the audiobook is particularly suited for all ELL learners (11-12):

Listening to audiobooks improves not only vocabulary and comprehension but also their ability to communicate what they are reading to others. By acting as a scaffold that allows students to experience literature above their actual reading level, audiobooks encourage participation in classroom discussions with more proficient readers. ... All students, those who read well and those who do not, should be encouraged to voice their opinions. And audiobooks can definitely level the playing field. (Grover and D. Hannegan 12)

The quotation above agrees with the idea of utilizing audiobooks in young adult learners’ classroom. It also points to how all students could benefit from the usage of the audiobook as a teaching tool. The aim of this study is to investigate if the already researched potential of audiobooks as a teaching tool are being utilized in the upper secondary, language classroom and

what teachers' attitudes towards using the audiobooks are. The researched potential of the audiobook will be reviewed below.

## 2.1 Studies about audiobooks and comprehension

Kartal and Simsek conducted a study with first-year university students where their aim was to investigate the effects of audiobooks on listening comprehension in the EFL classroom. They also investigated the students' opinions about using the audiobook whilst learning a foreign language (115). The general listening comprehension skills scale (GLCSS) determined the different levels of listening comprehension of the students and an opinion survey obtained the qualitative data (115-116). For the execution of their experimental study, Kartal and Simsek chose two different audiobooks narrated by English native speakers and divided the students into one control group and one experimental group which, at the beginning of the study, determined by a pre-test, showed no significant difference in level of listening comprehension (116). The experimental group listened and read simultaneously whilst the control group did not have the opportunity to listen to the text but only to read a printed copy (116-117). The results of the study showed that the students in the experimental group had a significantly higher level of listening comprehension than the control group, which Kartal and Simsek concluded correlated directly to the usage of the audiobook (117). Furthermore, the results showed that all of the students in the experimental group believed that the usage of the audiobook had improved their reading and listening comprehension, English pronunciation and had increased their motivation to read and listen to audiobooks in the future. There were only two students who did not appreciate working with the audiobook in foreign language learning (117-118).

A similar study was conducted by Türker where the aim was to test the effectiveness of audiobooks on different ESL university students' comprehension and to investigate their attitudes towards working with audiobooks. The students investigated were on different proficiency levels (32). He divided students into control and experimental groups and compared them, as one group was reading the narrative and the other was reading it while they had access to the audio version to listen to simultaneously (34-35). The result of Türker's study was that the usage of audiobooks showed an increase in reading comprehension in the experimental groups (45-49) and, more significantly so, for the students on the intermediate level than the students on the elementary level. Türker concluded that the effectiveness of audiobooks differed according to proficiency level (50). Furthermore, much like Kartal's and Simsek's results, Türker's study showed that having access to the audiobooks and the printed



narrative simultaneously as the printed narrative, rather than to only the printed narrative, gave the students more motivation to actually read. It also improved their fluency in English and expanded their vocabulary knowledge (56-58).

Another study about audiobooks and comprehension was conducted by C. Larsson in a six-grade classroom where her aim was “to learn more about how students navigate and perceive digital texts and audio contents in a combined reading/listening experience” (170). The students in this study had access to headphones, a kindle, e-books and audiobooks. After the students had received instructions about what they were going to do, they were observed whilst working with and discussing the material at hand. The result of the study showed that the students found many advantages of using the audiobook as a complementary tool to classic reading. One of these advantages was the possibility to decide at what pace the story was recited, which allowed the students to work at their own rate. Another advantage found by the participants was that the audiobook allowed them to hear how words were supposed to be pronounced which increased their comprehension. By reading and listening to an unfamiliar word simultaneously, students felt more comfortable in knowing that they would now recognize the word and that next time they would know how to pronounce it (173). The third advantage of listening found by the participants was that they could choose the narrator from their own preferences since the audiobooks had several different versions with different narrators. In this way, they could influence their own reading experience (173-174). Concluding her study, C. Larsson found that the usage of audiobooks and e-books in the classroom had many positive effects on the students’ learning. In addition to the advantages already mentioned, she stated: “During the five weeks that I worked with Mr. Clark and his students, I noticed tremendous excitement and growing confidence as they engaged in digital reading and implemented student-centered instructional approaches” (176).

Unlike the other studies presented, Rogowsky et al. highlight the discussion about what reading should be considered as and if audiobooks can be reckoned as reading. Their study originated from this debate as they suggest that reading printed texts in comparison to listening to the same version would, as a result, benefit comprehension (1). Rogowsky et al. examine the impact modality has on reading comprehension in three groups of university students who read a text through different modalities. The students’ profile was set as “adults between the ages of 25 and 40; college educated (bachelor’s degree only), native speakers of English, of normal hearing and vision (with correction), and no self-reported history of neurological or learning impairments” (2). Rogowsky et al. performed their research by letting the research groups

listen, read or listen and read simultaneously. Afterwards, they all received a comprehension test where they were supposed to fill in answers to questions from the text (2). The results of this study showed no difference in comprehension of using different modality input. However, they problematize their research group in relation to their research question and point out the participants' proficiency in English which can be a factor to the inconclusive result (7).

## 2.2 Audiobooks and the extended reading experience

It is well known that audiobooks can extend the reading experience. However, "reading experience" can be a difficult concept to explain since there are several accepted definitions. A well-respected definition is the one by Langer. She presents her idea of experiencing literature through "envisionment building" which she divides into five stances that describe the development of envisionment (17-21). Envisionment refers to a student's or teacher's understanding of a literary text and the modality of this text does not only need to be print text but can also include a discussion about the text. She describes envisionment as the process through which readers, from their individual experience, create a world, from a text, inside their minds. Nevertheless, Langer points out how envisionment not only is limited to text and literature, but also emerges in people's perceptions of the world (10). She phrases envisionment and the building act as follows: "We can think of envisionment building as an activity in sense-making, where meanings change and shift and grow as a mind creates its understandings of a work." She opposes the thought of envisionment being only connected to its visual parts and limited to "language experience" when it incorporates thought, feeling and sense (15). Langer concludes her line of argument by determining literature as a way of thinking and opposes the idea of literature being merely text bound (156).

Besides improvement in comprehension skills, some research also indicates that the audiobook, as a pedagogical tool, can extend the reading experience itself. Baskin and Harris write about the value of the audiobook as a pedagogical tool in the secondary classroom. Furthermore, they explain how some forms of literature are best received through "auditory channels" such as audiobooks, and that a professional narrator, may extend the reading experience and help the students to move into and through their envisionments (373).

Trained actors who read texts for audiobook recordings, even when their native speech patterns do not reflect those of the books' characters, can simulate local

accents, phrasing, emphasis, and other phonological attributes that clearly distinguish various types of speakers. Dialects, often problematic for less than proficient readers to decode, are rendered intelligible in this format. (Baskin and Harris 373)

In addition to expanding the reading experience by making the narrative more authentic and easier to comprehend, Baskin and Harris mention how the professional narrator may generate excitement and passion with the reader since the narrator knows how to deliver the text in a dramatic manner suited for the theme. In addition, they recommend the act of reading and listening simultaneously to further expand the reading experience. Moreover, Baskin and Harris acknowledge how the usage of audiobooks makes the reading experience dependent on the narrator and how the different narrators might make different impressions on the reader (372).

As mentioned above, the reading experience can be affected by environment building and the degree of dramatization different narrators. Similarly, different modalities can also affect the reading experience. Stougaard Pedersen and Have discuss the act of listening as a reading strategy equivalent to the idea of reading physical texts (25). The experience of listening to an audiobook becomes different in comparison to reading printed text because of how the “sensorial experience” changes (30). The main difference here, as they point out, is that print is stable (in the physical book) while sound is ephemeral but both may be seen as having materiality. The voice, or narrator, is different in the two modalities. The voice from an audiobook changes the perspective and influences the way the listeners interpret the text but also makes the reading experience more intense (29). The surroundings contribute to the impact of the reading experience depending on what modality the text is coming from. For instance, while listening, viewing the surrounding can affect the perception of the story (30).

Another contributing factor that may impact the reading experience is digitization. Stougaard Pedersen and Have refer to Katherine Hayles as one of the pioneers within digital literature (25). In her article “How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine” Hayles, after presenting how digital reading has been said to have a negative impact on literacy skills, investigates how digital reading, with its rapid growth, can “increase reading ability” (62). Her research covers different types of reading and she initiates her presentation of the reading types with “close reading” (63). According to Hayles, what close reading is most recognizable as is the “detailed and precise attention to rhetoric, style, language choice” in text, as examined word by word (64). Hayles explains how there is also a contrast between close and digital reading. Close

reading is a more disciplined and focused reading technique, while digital reading is a more sporadically and fast reading technique.

Due to digitization, close reading, being the most common reading strategy in the history of reading, is now competing with other reading strategies (Hayles 64). In contrast to other reading types, such as hyper reading, close reading differs because of its traditional way of reading texts (Hayles 66; 72). According to Stougaard Pedersen and Have, hyper reading, or as they also refer to it, digital reading, is a more “fluent or hyper-attentive way of reading” where “flexibility between information streams” is a necessity (26). Hayles uses words like “sloppy” and “distracting” as examples of the prejudice hyper reading is subject to (66). However, hyper reading is not necessarily equivalent to lacking comprehension and has potential as well as limitations. Future developments in the literary field are inevitable and through technological development, new reading techniques enable pedagogical strategies to expand. As of today, the digitized world requires hyper reading and the advantages it brings (Hyles 65-66). Stougaard Pedersen and Have state that deep reading is possible through digital media, such as tablets and mobile phones as well as printed text (26-27). Deep reading through digital media can enhance our knowledge about reading through different forms of media and our historical knowledge about reading practices (26). They also believe that it is necessary to explore the influence that different modalities have on our interpretation of a text (26-27). Reading practices undergo historical changes and will include auditory as well as a visual representation of literacy; thus, it is about time to consider the effects of such changes (Hayles 78).

### 2.3 Audiobooks and its audience

Educational auditory tools are frequently used to benefit learners with special needs. The usage of sound as a replacement for text plays a vital role for learners with impaired vision or for those with dyslexia (Stougaard Pedersen and Have 2). Learners with reading disabilities are given the opportunity to implement another type of digital format into their education, such as talking books. However, compared to talking books, the audiobook offers dramatization through intonation, dialects, and variation.

Casbergue and Harris present several suggestions as to what type of learners benefit most from listening to literature instead of exclusively reading printed texts. According to them, audiobooks can be a vital element in such learners’ education. An example of such

learners are those with impaired vision (53). Further, Casbergue and Harris, explains how easily distracted learner, for instance learns with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyper disorder (ADHD) will greatly benefit from listening. Since listening to audiobooks on digital devices facilitates mobility, learners who struggle in instructional settings where sitting down as a conventional system is practiced, can be offered other alternatives. Also, by using headphones, they can reduce external impressions considerably (54). According to Casbergue and Harris “behaviors which would otherwise impede learning can, at least in part, be neutralized through the medium of audiobooks” (54).

According to Casbergue and Harris, other examples of a “potential audience” are learners who are not fluent in English; these learners will find it easier decoding auditory literature than printed text (53). They discuss the advantages these learners gain from including audiobooks in their education:

Students who are not fluent in English will find listening to stories easier than decoding print. ... As they follow the printed text while listening to an identical taped version, they are helped not only in the decoding process, but also in emulating phrasing, pronunciation, accent, emphasis, tone, and other attributes which characterize standard English speech patterns. (Casbergue and Harris 53-54)

Further, Casbergue and Harris discuss the benefits of using audiobooks for learners who are not struggling with reading disorders, but still have low reading skills. According to them, these learners are often limited to the use of other types of literature, adjusted for those with reading difficulties, but can also be restricted to printed text which then is overly challenging. Audiobooks offer a chance to experience “fluency” but also to turn a negative association of literature and printed text into something more positive when encountering a new modality (54). Lastly, Casbergue and Harris also include skilled readers as a group that benefits from listening to audiobooks. Through auditory input, they experience other narratives and perspectives in literature than the ones restricted to the printed page. Hearing dialects, intonation and other language varieties are as beneficial for weak readers as for strong readers (55).

Like Casbergue and Harris, Baskin and Harris also discuss for what category students the audiobook is most suited. In the article “Heard Any Good Books Lately? The Case

for Audiobooks in the Secondary Classroom,” Baskin and Harris state that audiobooks are particularly suited for youths with special needs of various kinds. They mention how the most obvious category of students with special needs who would benefit from the usage of audiobooks in the classroom are those with vision impairment. Without being able to read a printed text, they would still be able to partake in the reading experience. Moreover, Baskin and Harris mention how the audiobook can benefit those with physical impairments as well. They explain how a person with a physical disability could find it easier to listen rather than holding a physical book or a printed text where they need to turn the page and hold the book in position. Other categories of students with special needs who could benefit from listening to the audiobook are the slow learner, learners with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and foreign-born learners. The audiobook offers a more efficient way of decoding and interpreting text and exposes the reader/listener to speech patterns and pronunciation. The last category of students who could benefit from listening to the audiobook is, according to Baskin and Harris, those diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD). They argue that listening offers fewer distractions than focusing on printed text, as listening also enables that student to do other things simultaneously. (376)

### 3. Method

This study was conducted by using a qualitative questionnaire that was sent out to forty-six English language teachers for upper secondary students in Halland (see appendix 2). The purpose of conducting the research in only one region was to limit the data and gather qualitative answers. That is why a convenience selection was made. The questionnaire contained eleven questions related to the research questions of this study which focused on the participants’ attitudes towards using audiobooks in the SLA classroom. The questions also addressed the participants age and what type of students they were teaching. The ages were deployed in a range between twenty and seventy years to include as many participants as possible for this research. The question of what type of students the participants were teaching was divided into three options covering all possible students.

### 3.1 Design of questionnaire

The questionnaire (see appendix 2) was designed in a manner so that it would answer the question about what attitudes English teachers in upper secondary school have toward using audiobooks in their teaching and to find out the reasons for their attitudes. There were also questions about age and what programs they were teaching since the hypothesis of the study states that a correlation between those variables and whether a teacher uses audiobooks or not in their teaching would be possible and interesting to investigate.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was designed in such a manner that depending on whether the participants answered yes or no to the question *Do you use audiobooks in your teaching?*, they answered separate supplementary questions. However, three supplementary questions were the same for all participants: *What advantages do you see in using audiobooks in English teaching? What disadvantages do you see in using the audiobook in English teaching? For what students do you believe that the audiobook is most suited? Explain why.* The reason for this was that one of our hypotheses was that the teachers who do not use audiobooks in their teaching would still be able to understand that there are advantages of this use and that the teachers who did use audiobooks in their teaching would still be able to see its disadvantages.

In the questionnaire, three of the questions were designed as multi-answer questions: *Do you use audiobooks in your teaching? Age?* and *What type of programs do you teach?* The interest to discover if there was a significant correlation between these variables and the usage of audiobooks in teaching affected how the questions were designed. Age and program were unspecified to preserve the participants' anonymity as well as to limit the variables considering the registration of the results. The remaining questions were designed as open-ended questions to receive a qualitative result.

In addition, despite the fact that the study was conducted in English, the questions in the questionnaire, along with the consent letter, were written in Swedish. The reason for this choice was to facilitate the teachers' participation so that they would be able to take the time to answer the questionnaire

### 3.2 How the questionnaire was analyzed

Considering the low number of multi-answer questions, the questionnaire contained only three questions which resulted in answers presented in diagrams. Questions about age and what type of program the participants taught were compared to the question if the participants used audiobooks in their teaching or not. The result is presented in four different pie charts. To find a correlation between the usage of audiobooks, the age of the participants and what type of program they were teaching, a chi-square test was conducted. The results from such a test can be used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between two variables or if they are independent of each other (Stukát 73). Through a chi-square test, it is possible to find out whether a certain age group or a certain type of upper secondary program is a contributing factor to the reason teachers use audiobooks in their teaching or not. The open-ended questions were presented with the participants' answers. They were either inserted as a representation of a general opinion or quoted as a more distinctive answer which later had value in the discussion about the results. The advantages and disadvantages the English teachers saw in using audiobooks in English teaching were presented in a chart where the most common answers were placed in the left column and the number of participants was presented in the right column. All answers have been translated and interpreted by the authors of this research.

### 3.4 Ethical aspects

Within the field of humanities and social sciences research, there are some guidelines to uphold for good and ethical research practices. The Swedish Research Council has established these guidelines and their research codex consists of four research principles: *The information principle*, *the consent principle*, *the confidentiality principle* and *the utilization principle*. The present study has been conducted in line with these principles (5-6). The authors of this study have translated the principles from Swedish to English.

The first principle, *the information principle*, states that all participants in a study must receive correct and detailed information about the purpose of the study and their partaking. They should also be informed that their participation is voluntary and that they have the right to discontinue the study at any given opportunity (7-8). By attaching a consent letter to the questionnaire sent out in this study, the participants received all the important information about their partaking in the study.



The second principle, *the consent principle*, states that all participants have the right to decide whether to participate or not. All participants partake voluntarily. It also states that the researcher must retrieve consent from the participants before they may participate in the study (9-11). Consequently, the participants taking part in this study, filled in a consensual form (see appendix 1) before answering the questionnaire and the consent letter stated that the partaking in the study was voluntary. Teachers who did not answer the questionnaire were considered using their right to choose not to partake in the study.

The third principle, *the confidentiality principle*, states that all participants should be, as far as possible, given confidentiality if they are partaking in a study. Furthermore, it states that all personal data of the participants must be stored in such a way that unauthorized people cannot access it. The participants in the study should not be able to be identified by a third party (12-13). Accordingly, no participants in our study had to give up any private information about themselves while answering the questionnaire. Thus, all participants were given confidentiality.

The fourth principle, *the utilization principle*, states that the collected data from the participants must not be used for any other purpose than research purposes. The collected data must not be used in commercial and non-scientific purposes (14-15). This study upholds this principle, thus the collected data are only intended and utilized for this study. When the purpose of the questionnaire was fulfilled, the questionnaire was deleted along with its answers.

## 4. Result and analysis

In this study, the questionnaires were sent to forty-six English teachers divided between all upper secondary schools in Halland. Out of the forty-six teachers addressed, twenty-eight replied to the questionnaire. The questions and answers in the Results section have been translated from Swedish into English by the authors.

### 4.1 Do English teachers use audiobooks in their teaching?

The result shows that nineteen out of twenty-eight (67,9%) of the participants use audiobooks in their teaching and nine out of twenty-eight (32,1%) of the participants do not use audiobooks

in their teaching (appendix 3, figure 1). However, eight out of nine of those who did not use the audiobook replied that they would like to do so in the future. Only one participant was totally against the usage of audiobooks as a teaching tool.

Furthermore, the participants answered a question about their age and a question about what type of programs they were teaching. Among the participants who answered the questionnaire, all of the suggested age groups were represented, however, the result shows that the age group 41-50 y/o had the largest number of participants and the age group 20-30 y/o had the lowest number of participants (appendix 3, figure 2). The distribution of participants across the age groups, is uneven, unlike the distribution of participants for what type of programs they teach, which is equally divided (appendix 3, figure 3).

Moreover, the results showed how many teachers in each age group and in each program group who answered yes or no to whether they use audiobooks in their teaching. In the age span 41-70 y/o there are participants who represent both the usage and the non-usage of audiobooks in their teaching. No participants in this study younger than 31 y/o use audiobooks in their teaching and all participants in this study between the ages of 31-40 y/o use audiobooks in their teaching. Out of the participants who do use audiobooks in their teaching, half of them are in the ages between 41-50 y/o. Out of the participants who do not use audiobooks in their teaching, two thirds are in the ages between 41-60 y/o (appendix 3, figure 4 and 5). The result further showed that the participants who use audiobooks in their teaching and those who do not, are split almost evenly across vocational-, university prepatory-, or both programs (appendix 3, figure 6 and 7).

The result of these questions made it possible to investigate if there is a correlation between the variables: age, program and usage of audiobooks, by using a chi-square test. The result of the chi-square tests is displayed in appendix 3, figure 8 and 9. The first Chi-square test was conducted with the variables age and the answers about whether the participants were using audiobooks or not. The test showed no statistical significance between the variables which means that they are most likely not dependent on each other (appendix 3, figure 8). The second Chi-square test was conducted with the variables program and the answers about whether the participants were using audiobooks or not. This test, like the first test, showed no statistical significance between the variables either, which means that they are most likely not dependent on each other (appendix 3, figure 9).

## 4.2 How often do English teachers use audiobooks in their teaching?

The nineteen participants who answered that they use audiobooks in their teaching were also asked to answer how frequently they used audiobooks. Firstly, the result showed that seven participants consistently offered audiobooks as an option in connection with reading. Secondly, eight participants use audiobooks sporadically in their teaching which, according to their answers, means that they either use them several times during a semester or less. Two participants had used audiobooks only during one specific occasion in class (appendix 4, figure 10).

Furthermore, the results show a specific pattern where none of the participants use audiobooks without including a printed copy (appendix 4, figure 11). The participants thus show a positive attitude towards using audiobooks if they are combined with printed text. They answered that they believe that input from different modalities combined can improve their students reading comprehension.

## 4.3 Why teachers choose to use or not use audiobooks in their teaching

The participants who use audiobook as a teaching tool were asked to what purpose they are do so. Many of the participants had similar answers with certain variations. Some participants answered that the purpose of the usage was dependent on the project/assignment. Furthermore, the participants answered that they use the audiobook in teaching to practice listening comprehension, pronunciation and vocabulary, to entice reluctant readers, to expand the reading experience, to inspire and motivate reading for pleasure and to help students with reading and writing difficulties and special needs (appendix 4, figure 12).

The participants who do not use audiobooks in their teaching were asked to explain their reasons for the non-usage. The answers indicate that they prefer that these participants preferred printed text to audiobooks as they believe it is more beneficial for students to read than to listen. However, all but one of the participants answered that they are not reluctant to the idea of using audiobooks in the future (appendix 4, figure 13).

#### 4.4 The advantages and disadvantages of using the audiobook in the SLA classroom

All participants were asked to explain what advantages they could find for using the audiobook as a teaching tool in the SLA-classroom. Only two of them saw few to no advantages in using audiobooks (appendix 4, figure 14). The other twenty-six participants saw many advantages in using audiobooks in English teaching. Different responses included similar or equal answers which are all complied to present each answer and in what range they were answered by the participants (table 1).

<b>Most Common Answers</b>	<b>Number times the answer was brought up in the questionnaire</b>
Audiobooks offer a more advanced or varied English considering dialects, intonation and idiomatic expressions	8
Audiobooks enhance pronunciation	7
Audiobooks enhance listening comprehension	6
Audiobooks enhance students' ability to understand the written text	5
Audiobooks entice student to read and can change their attitude towards literature	4
Audiobooks help weak students	3
Audiobooks help dyslexic students or students with attention deficit (hyper) disorder and offer room for other sensory stimulation	3
With audiobooks, students have a chance to read and finish chapters simultaneously	2

Students cannot lose their copies since the audiobooks are digital	1
Audiobooks are viewed as effortless reading	1
All students are given an equal chance of learning	1

*Table 1. Advantages of using audiobooks in teaching*

All participants were also asked to explain what disadvantageous they could find to using the audiobook as a teaching tool in the SLA-classroom. Four participants answered that they were not able to see any disadvantages in using audiobooks (appendix 4, figure 15). The other twenty-four participants saw several disadvantages of using audiobooks in English teaching. Several responses included similar or equal answers which are all compiled to present each answer and in what range they were answered by the participants (table 2).

<b>The Most Common Answers</b>	<b>Number of Times the Answer was Brought up in the Questionnaire</b>
It does not practice reading skills	8
There are no resources	4
Inhibits the spelling	2
Students are unable to focus	2
The reading becomes passive	1
It is not challenging enough to listen to audiobooks	1
The narrators are inadequate	1
Audiobooks are not considered reading unless it is used with text	1
There is not enough time to educate students on how to use audiobooks	1
Stressful	1
Time consuming	1

*Table 2. Disadvantages of using audiobooks in teaching*

#### 4.5 For what students are the audiobook most suited?

All participants were asked to answer for whom they thought the audiobook most suited. Fourteen of the participants answered that the audiobook is suited for all students in one way or another. The participants who answered that the audiobook was suited for all students, stated that the audiobook has different benefits to different individuals depending on proficiency level and interests. Furthermore, some of the benefits mentioned for all students were: practicing listening comprehension, activating more than one of the senses in education, improving language skills, enticing and stimulating and giving the possibility to relax while reading. Amongst the other fourteen participants who answered the question, the answers differed a great deal even if the majority thought the audiobook was most suited for struggling, unwilling or limited students such as students with ADHD or Dyslexia. However, some also thought the audiobook more suited for students on a higher proficiency level (appendix 4, figure 16).

Out of the twenty-eight answers received on this question, twenty-seven were quite general and gave explanations as to why audiobooks could suit both skilled, limited and unwilling students. However, one answer was very specific and stated that the audiobook is most suited for students in the vocational programs during the course of English 5. The participant who answered this gave no further explanation.

### 5. Discussion

As the audiobook is becoming more popular and available amongst adolescents due to their digital and mobile lifestyles, researchers have discovered its potential in both second language acquisition and in developing students' literacies. This is forcing the educational system to adjust accordingly. However, a common prejudice is that listening is not equivalent to reading (Rogowsky, 1), and C. Carlson explains how teachers then might be reluctant to use a tool that they have not been educated to use in their teaching (171). As the question of whether the audiobook should be included or not in the curriculum is a pressing matter, the formerly conducted research is to be scrutinized and discussed in line with this study and its result.

One of the main focuses of this study was to find out the reasons for English teachers' attitudes towards using audiobooks in their teaching. As the majority of the participants had a positive attitude towards using audiobooks, there were also many different reasons as to why they were using them. As the result shows, one of the main reasons for the

usage of audiobooks in teaching is that it improves or facilitates the students' listening comprehension. However, the majority of these participants stated that they found the usage of audiobooks and the printed text simultaneously to be the best option, since this approach helps students to practice pronunciation, intonation and vocabulary, factors which all contributed to the comprehension of a text as a whole. This agrees with both Türker's and Kartal and Simsek's studies, state that listening to audiobooks and reading the printed text simultaneously in the EFL classroom improve students' listening and reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation of words. Furthermore, their studies show that the usage of audiobooks increase the students' motivation to read. Similarly, the result the result of the present study the show that other reasons for the usage of audiobooks are to entice and motivate both the skilled, the reluctant and marginalized reader to read.

Another reason why the participants made use of the audiobook in their teaching was because of the reading experience. However, an elaboration on what the participants intend reading experience to be defined as is not clarified. A possible explanation to what reading experience could be is letting students construct the story world in their own minds through audio, which is in line with Langer's idea of envisionment building which refers to the understanding of a literary text. Interestingly, Langer points out that a literary work can include auditory as well as printed text (10). While reading, a story can shift and change in meaning and according to Langer, this process describes the activity of building envisionment. Her description gives a possible definition of what "reading experience" could be (15). Envisionment building is connected to "thought, feeling and sense" which proves that it is not merely connected to reading books as physical objects (Langer 15). This makes it possible to include audiobooks in her depiction of envisionment building. However, even though Langer presents an idea about what reading experience could be defined as, there is no way of telling if Langer's definition agrees with the participants' definition of reading experience. The participants' definition remains unclear.

According to Baskin and Harris, the reading experience from audiobooks is dependent on the narrator's voice acting and the listener's impressions of the narration (372). The dependency on narrators relates to the participants' answers from the questionnaire where they considered the reading experience to be highly influenced by narrators. A narrator contributes to an authentic reading of the story as well as creating an excitement about literature (Baskin and Harris 372). This relates to many participants' answers regarding the positive aspects of listening to another narrator. Dialects, intonation, idiomatic expressions and so much

more were factors contributing to why teachers included audiobooks in their teaching. Baskin and Harris promote the use of audiobooks since “certain forms of literature” for instance foreign literature written by native authors, is received well through such input and that students experience a motivational approach to literature (373).

Stougaard Pedersen and Have discuss the importance of the sensorial experience of reading, since using different modalities can alter the reading experience (30). They state that audiobooks as digital media has an impact on the reading experience. The participants of our research showed a great interest in adding auditory input to their reading classes. Considering the participants answers regarding the use of audiobooks with or without text, their use of audiobooks works like an aid to keep students’ reading experience text based. However, the participants of our study showed a negative attitude towards the audiobook in the sense that it does not practice reading skills when dissociated from the printed text. This attitude resembles Hyles discussion about hyper reading. She declares that hyper reading has both advantages and disadvantages and only by embracing the affordances of digitization, will teachers benefit from the pedagogical aspects of new techniques (65-66).

As stated above, many teachers are reluctant to using audiobooks in their teaching. In this study, nine out of the twenty-eight participants answered that they do not use audiobooks as a teaching tool. The most common reason to why they chose to not include audiobooks in their teaching was because they preferred the printed text over the audiobook. Further, they were hesitant to leave out the printed text because of what the students might be missing out on in practicing reading. One of the participants answered that students benefit more from reading than from listening, in terms of comprehension, and that reading is the foundation for writing. These statements could be seen as reflecting how some participants do not consider listening to audiobooks as actual reading. Similarly, eight of the participants answered that listening is not a means of practicing reading skills. However, this view contradicts the study by Rogowsky et al. which examines the impact of modality on reading comprehension. The result of their study showed that different modality inputs showed no difference, in terms of reading comprehension, in either of the three groups using different reading channels (7). Their study favors neither those who advocates for audiobooks to be seen as a proper teaching tool, nor those who believe the printed text to be the better choice when practicing reading comprehension. However, looking at all other advantages of using audiobooks as a teaching tool presented in this study, it would be naive to exclude them altogether in teaching; especially since we are living in a digital age.



Another focus of this study was to find out for what type of learners the participants considered the audiobook to be best suited. The results of this study show a great range of different answers to that question. Even though the answers differed in detail, half of the participants answered that they found the audiobook suited for all students if used appropriately and a vast majority found the audiobook most suited for marginalized students. In fact, some of the participants who thought the audiobook most suited for students on a higher proficiency level suggested that it could possibly work as a tool for different types of marginalized students as well. The participants specifically suggested that the audiobook would benefit a large variety of students: reluctant readers, students with reading difficulties, students with dyslexia and students with neuropsychiatric disabilities (NPF) such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism.

What was found interesting with the results, based on the reviewed studies, is that both the participants who thought the audiobook most suited for the higher proficiency level students and the participants who thought the audiobook most suited for the marginalized students are considered correct in their assumptions. Firstly, the result of Türker's study, as mentioned, showed that the audiobook increased reading comprehension more significantly on the students on the intermediate level than the students on the elementary level which indicated that the effectiveness of audiobooks differed according to proficiency level in favor of those on the higher level (50). In contrast to Türker's study, Baskin and Harris mention how the audiobook is particularly suited for students with special needs such as the students with dyslexia or attention deficit disorder (ADD) (376).

Similarly, Casbergue and Harris suggest that learners who especially benefit from accessing literature through auditory channels are those with special needs (54). However, they further mention the skilled readers as a learner who would benefit from listening to audiobooks. In comparison to printed texts, by listening to audiobooks, the students experience dramatized narration performed by voice actors which included other perspectives in literature. According to Casbergue and Harris, listening to dialects, intonation and other varieties in language is as beneficial for weak readers as for avid readers (55). Baskin and Harris find the audiobook particularly suited for students with special needs; still they state that it "guides the sophisticated reader into sensing the subtleties of the text while it guides a developing reader into becoming aware of a whole array of interpretive possibilities in style, color, emphasis, and other facets of the narration" (374).

In this study the correlation between such variables as the teacher's age, the type of program taught and the use/non-use of audiobooks was investigated. As the result shows, no

statistical significance between the variables was found. This outcome, according to Stukát, could be dependent on various factors such as the extent of the selection and participants and the time lapse. In this study, a convenience selection was made which could have affected the result. There is no guarantee that a larger selection would have made a difference, however, it would possibly have increased the reliability of the study (73). The chi-Square test falsified this hypothesis as it showed no statistical significance between neither of the variables.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out if the audiobook is being used in the upper secondary SLA classroom in Halland and to investigate English teachers' attitudes towards using the audiobook in their teaching and the reasons behind their attitudes. The study shows that the majority of English teachers actually make use of audiobooks in their teaching. Furthermore, the study shows that 97% of the participants have a positive attitude towards using the audiobook as a teaching tool as those who had not yet tried it could see its advantages and were not reluctant to try its potential as a teaching tool in their classrooms in the future. Only 3% of the participants showed a negative attitude towards using the audiobook in their classroom.

These results prove our hypothesis that the attitudes towards using audiobooks as a teaching tool, amongst the upper-secondary school English teachers, would be outdated and negative to be incorrect. Moreover, our hypothesis that a correlation between the variables age, program and use/non-use of the audiobook would be found in the result was also false as no statistical significance between either of the variables were found with the conducted chi-square test.

The reliability of this study can be questioned because of the limited number of participants and due to the fact that the attitudes investigated in this study, are in a continues process of change. There is no way of knowing if the participants' attitudes will stay the same over a longer period of time. However, the result is still valid and relevant for further investigation in the field of audiobook usage in schools within the near future. It is particularly relevant for Halland since this is where the participants of the study all work in that county.

Further research in the field of audiobooks and auditory channels as pedagogical tools in the educational system is essential in our digital age. Now that this study has found that teachers are willing to include audiobooks in their teaching, at least in Halland, a suggestion

for further research would be to find out how the audiobook is best utilized in the classroom to retrieve as much out of its didactic potential as possible. The results of this study show that even if the teachers were using audiobooks in their teaching, many of them did not fully understand in what ways it was most beneficial and they lacked special competence in how to use it as a teaching tool.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 - The Consent Letter

Hej!

Vi heter Hanna Envall och Elina Ala-Jukuri. Vi studerar till ämneslärare med inriktning svenska och engelska vid Högskolan i Halmstad och håller just nu på att skriva vårt examensarbete i engelska. I vårt arbete undersöker vi engelsklärares attityder till användning av ljudboken (inte talboken) som läromedel i engelskundervisningen på gymnasieskolor i Halland. Med tanke på ljudbokens stora uppsving generellt sett under det senaste decenniet vill vi studera hur dess potential utnyttjas i undervisningen. Därför skulle vi uppskatta mycket om du som undervisande lärare i engelska skulle kunna tänka dig att svara på några frågor i form av en webbenkät. Vi är väldigt tacksamma om du har möjlighet att svara på enkäten före 6 maj 2022.

Enkäten består av 11 frågor och tar cirka 5–10 minuter att fylla i. Du svarar anonymt och enkäten kommer att raderas så snart vi har sammanställt svaren (senast 1 juni 2022).

Samtycke till att delta i undersökningen ges i formuläret genom att klicka vid följande formulering: Härmed ger jag mitt samtycke till deltagande i undersökningen "Engelsklärares attityder till att använda ljudböcker i undervisningen". Resultatet kommer att presenteras i vårt examensarbete inom engelska och kommer att vara tillgängligt på internet. Här är länken till enkäten:

## Appendix 2 - The Questionnaire

### Engelsklärares attityder till att använda ljudböcker i undervisningen

Denna enkät undersöker engelsklärares attityder till att använda ljudboken i engelskundervisningen på gymnasieskolan och bakomliggande faktorer till dessa attityder.

Härmed ger jag mitt samtycke till deltagande i undersökningen "Engelsklärares attityder till att använda ljudböcker i undervisningen"

- Ja, jag samtycker.

#### 1. Ålder:

- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70

#### 2. Vad för typ av program undervisar du?

- Yrkesprogram
- Högskoleförberedande program
- Båda

#### 3. Använder du ljudböcker i din undervisning?

- Ja
- Nej (hoppa till fråga 7)

#### 4. Hur ofta använder du ljudböcker i din undervisning?

Svar:

5. Använder du fysisk text i samband med användandet av ljudböcker? Förklara varför.

Svar:

6. I vilket syfte använder du ljudböcker i undervisningen? (Ex. för läsupplevelsen, träna hörförståelse...)

Svar:

7. Om du svarat nej på fråga 3, skulle du kunna tänka dig att använda ljudböcker i din undervisning i framtiden?

Svar:

9. Vilka fördelar ser du i att använda ljudböcker i engelskundervisning?

Svar:

8. Vilka nackdelar ser du i att använda ljudböcker i engelskundervisning?

Svar:

11. Vilka elever tror du att ljudböcker lämpar sig bäst för? Förklara varför.

Svar:



### Appendix 3 – Pie Charts and Chi-Square test

Do you use audiobooks in your teaching?

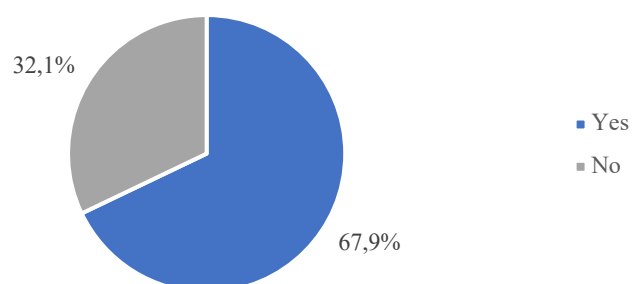


Figure 1. Do you use audiobooks in your teaching?

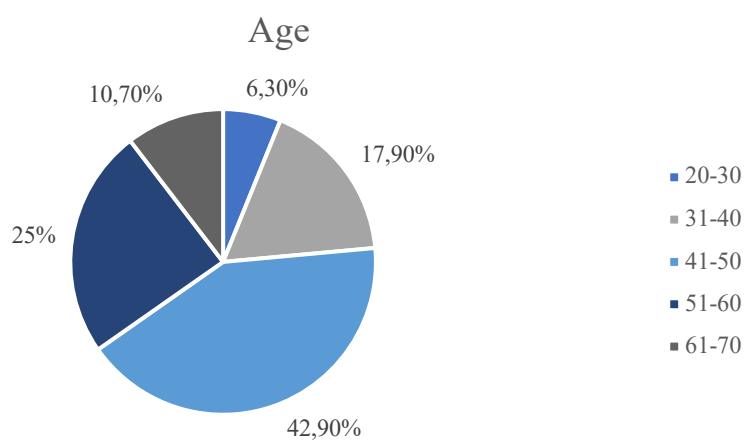


Figure 2. Age

What types of program are you teaching?

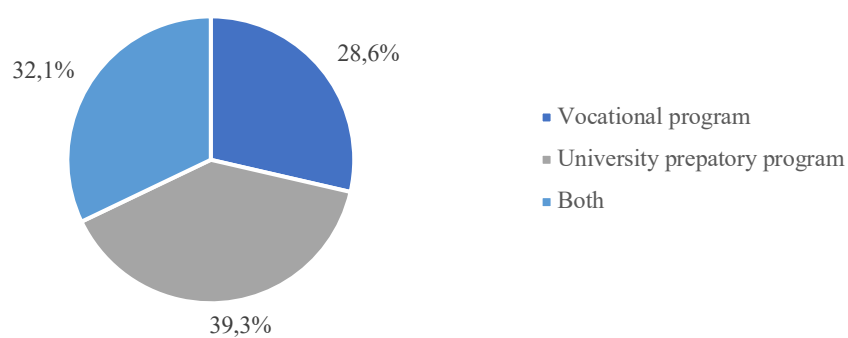


Figure 3. What type of programs are you teaching?

Participants answering 'Yes' to the question 'Do you use audiobooks in your teaching?'

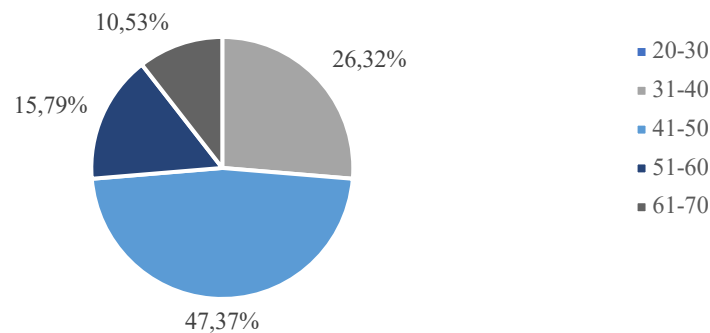


Figure 4. Correlation between age and the participants who use audiobooks in their teaching.

Participants answering 'No' to the question 'Do you use audiobooks in your teaching?'

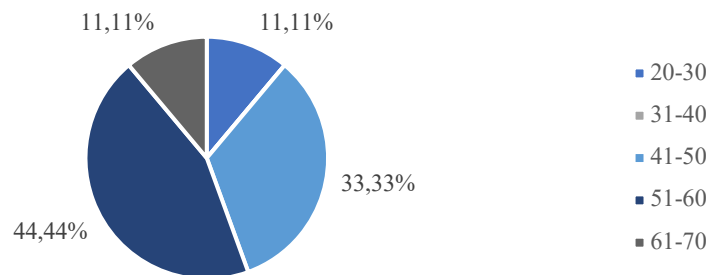


Figure 5. Correlation between age and the participants who do not use audiobooks in their teaching.

Participants answering 'Yes' to the question 'Do you use audiobooks in you teaching?'

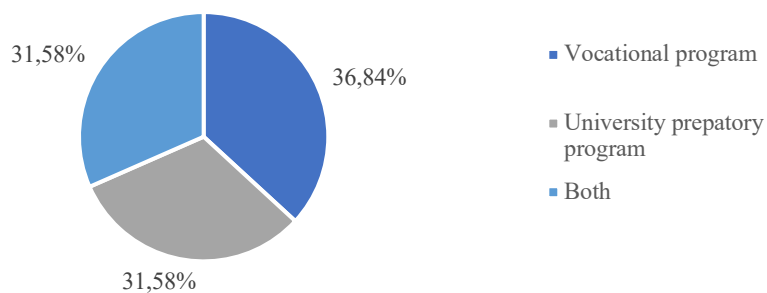


Figure 6. Correlation between program and the participants who are using audiobooks in their teaching.

Participants answering 'No' to the question 'Do you use audiobooks in you teaching?'

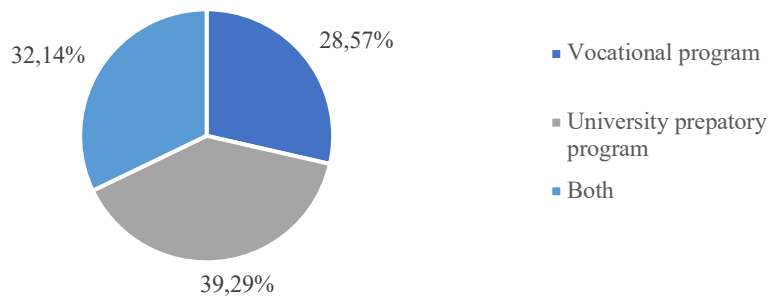


Figure 7. Correlation between program and the participants who are not using audiobooks in their teaching.

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.768 <sup>a</sup>	4	.149
Likelihood Ratio	8.289	4	.082
Linear-by-Linear Association	.710	1	.399
N of Valid Cases	28		

a. 9 cells (90.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .32.

Figure 8. Age and attitude. To see a significance the Asymptotic significance, in the same row as Pearson Chi-square should be 0.05 or below.

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.315 <sup>a</sup>	2	.314
Likelihood Ratio	2.521	2	.284
Linear-by-Linear Association	.734	1	.391
N of Valid Cases	28		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.57.

Figure 9. Program and attitude. To see a significance the Asymptotic significance, in the same row as Pearson Chi-square should be 0.05 or below.

## Appendix 4 – Quotes from the Questionnaire

“Regularly in units where we work with, for instance, readings of various texts and literature.”
“I always offer the possibility to listen as a replacement for reading or to vary the reading experience.”
“Always, but it is also always in combination with the text.”
“A few times each semester. “
“Not very often, maybe once or twice each year, it all depends on the texts I am going to teach.”

*Figure 10. How often do you use audiobooks in your teaching?*

“Yes, because students’ reading comprehension is important to practice since the students rarely expose themselves to texts privately.”
“Always text together with sound because it is easier for the students to follow along with the text and also that they have an advantage by taking in the texts, sentence structures, grammar, vocabulary and so on.”

*Figure 11. Do you use printed text in conjunction with audiobooks?*

“It’s dependent on the assignment. Phonetics, listening comprehension, inclusion, reading experience, searching for new knowledge.”
“There are different purposes to different projects. Sometimes it’s to practice reading comprehension but more often it is used as a complement for the struggling reader.”
“For both the listening comprehension, reading experience and to practice and understand different dialects e.g. especially for students who think that it is hard and difficult to get

through a whole book or to understand something that is being narrator to them. These students have the audiobook simultaneously while reading literature.”
“Partly to practice reading comprehension, partly as adaptation for students with special needs, partly for engaging in literature other than traditional reading.”
“Enthusiasm and variation. Arouse interest.”

Figure 12. Why do you use audiobooks in your teaching?

“I prefer the printed text; however, students are of course allowed to listen if they would like that during the reading session that happens at the students own pace during a longer period, which can mean audiobooks.”
“A printed text practices the students’ writing abilities. They get more out of reading than from just listening to a book. Students with difficulties such as dyslexia or struggling readers have the opportunity to listen, or to read and listen simultaneously. To read a text, make use of post-it notes, choose quotes, and read aloud from parts of the book is priceless. Students are encouraged to use quotes and page reference in their analysis and the weekly seminars during the periods where we read novels.”

Figure 13. Why do you not use audiobooks in your teaching?

“Rather few. Still, students are reluctant to read and it is our job to encourage reading. The brain does not activate in the same way by listening as by reading, however, I personally listen to audiobooks and I encourage students to listen in their spare time.”
“None”

Figure 14. What advantages do you see in using audiobooks as a teaching tool?

“None”
“None, unless it is done in way that inhibits learning in reading”

Figure 15. What disadvantages do you see in using audiobooks as a teaching tool?

<p>“All. It is another way of engaging with stories. The unwilling readers can be enticed and the skilled readers can be stimulated”</p>
<p>“All students, it is good to switch between the reading and the listening experience. Possibly we can get more students to find their way into fiction by presenting and practicing audiobooks in school.”</p>
<p>“All students benefit from listening to audiobooks occasionally, regardless of their reading abilities. Besides, I believe that it would help students with attention deficits, provided that you use the correct audiobook considering the students skill level and interests. For students with diagnosed reading- and listening difficulties this is an opportunity to show their abilities in the classroom.”</p>
<p>“Students with dyslexia/ other types of reading/writing difficulties. Forgetful students who forget to bring their physical copy of the book.”</p>
<p>“On the one hand, students who have a reluctance/difficulty in absorbing written text. Audiobooks can then be a way into discovering literature and in the long run also becoming curious about/ challenging oneself to read. For students with NPF or reading difficulties, it can be a way to absorb literature at all. reading/listening is also about learning about different cultures and developing your emotional life and creating your identity. Not only do I practice reading and listening comprehension through literature, but I also want to broaden students’ perspectives and enrich their lives!”</p>

*Figure 16. For what students are the audiobook most suited?*

