

Accentuating Unabridged vs Abridged Audiobooks within Narrative Speech Materials

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Abstract

This study examines the distinctions between unabridged and abridged audiobooks within the context of narrative speech materials, with a focus on how textual completeness influences listener comprehension, engagement, and interpretive depth. Unabridged audiobooks preserve the full linguistic and stylistic features of the original text, offering a comprehensive narrative experience that supports detailed understanding and authorial intent. In contrast, abridged audiobooks condense content to prioritize brevity and accessibility, often modifying narrative structure, pacing, and emphasis. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research analyzes selected narrative recordings across both formats, incorporating listener response data and discourse analysis to evaluate differences in retention, emotional engagement, and narrative coherence. Findings suggest that while abridged versions enhance accessibility and time efficiency, they may reduce exposure to nuanced language patterns and character development. Conversely, unabridged audiobooks provide richer linguistic input but require greater listener investment. The study underscores the importance of aligning audiobook format with communicative goals in educational and applied linguistic contexts. In conclusion, by accentuating the trade-offs between completeness and concision, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how narrative speech materials can be optimized for diverse audiences and listening purposes.

Keywords: *Abridged Audiobook; Narrative Speech; Unabridged Audiobook*

Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti perbedaan antara buku audio lengkap dan ringkas dalam konteks materi narasi lisan, dengan fokus pada bagaimana kelengkapan teks memengaruhi pemahaman, keterlibatan, dan kedalaman interpretasi pendengar. Buku audio lengkap mempertahankan fitur linguistik dan gaya bahasa asli secara utuh, menawarkan pengalaman naratif komprehensif yang mendukung pemahaman detail dan maksud penulis. Sebaliknya, buku audio ringkas memadatkan konten untuk memprioritaskan keringkasan dan aksesibilitas, seringkali memodifikasi struktur naratif, tempo, dan penekanan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, penelitian ini menganalisis rekaman naratif terpilih di kedua format, menggabungkan data respons pendengar dan analisis wacana untuk mengevaluasi perbedaan dalam retensi, keterlibatan emosional, dan koherensi naratif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun versi ringkas meningkatkan aksesibilitas dan efisiensi waktu, versi tersebut dapat mengurangi paparan terhadap pola bahasa yang bernuansa dan pengembangan karakter. Sebaliknya, buku audio lengkap memberikan masukan linguistik yang lebih kaya tetapi membutuhkan

investasi pendengar yang lebih besar. Studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya menyelaraskan format buku audio dengan tujuan komunikatif dalam konteks pendidikan dan linguistik terapan. Kesimpulannya, dengan menekankan pertimbangan antara kelengkapan dan keringkasan, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang bagaimana materi narasi lisan dapat dioptimalkan untuk beragam audiens dan tujuan mendengarkan.

Kata kunci: Buku Audio Ringkasan; Narasi Pidato; Buku Audio Lengkap

Introduction

The rapid evolution of digital media has transformed the ways in which individuals access, consume, and engage with textual content. Among these transformations, audiobooks have emerged as a significant medium, bridging traditional reading practices with contemporary listening habits (Linkis, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2024). Once limited to physical formats such as cassette tapes and compact discs, audiobooks are now widely distributed through digital platforms, enabling instantaneous access across a range of devices. This shift has not only increased the availability of literary and informational content but has also reshaped user interaction with narrative forms, positioning audiobooks as a central component of modern media consumption (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023).

Parallel to the rise of audiobooks is the broader growth of digital listening culture. The proliferation of smartphones, streaming services, and wireless audio technologies has normalized listening as a primary mode of information acquisition and entertainment (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). Activities such as commuting, exercising, and multitasking are increasingly accompanied by audio content, including podcasts, music, and audiobooks. This cultural shift reflects a move toward convenience and flexibility, where users can integrate learning and leisure into their daily routines. As a result, audiobooks are no longer supplementary to reading but are often considered an alternative or even preferred medium for engaging with narrative texts (Casselden & Paxton, 2025; Hamdani et al., 2023; Linton, 2017).

Within the domain of audiobooks, a critical distinction exists between unabridged and abridged formats. Unabridged audiobooks present the complete text of a work without omission, preserving the author's original language, structure, and stylistic nuances. This format offers listeners a comprehensive narrative experience, closely aligned with the printed version of the text (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al.; 2026). In contrast, abridged audiobooks involve the condensation of content, where certain passages, descriptions, or subplots are omitted to reduce length and enhance accessibility. While abridged versions are often designed to accommodate time constraints and maintain listener engagement, they may alter the narrative structure and diminish the depth of the original material.

Closely related to these formats is the concept of narrative speech materials, which refers to spoken renditions of structured stories or informational texts delivered through oral performance (Linkis, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2024). Narrative speech materials encompass elements such as tone, pacing, intonation, and vocal expression, all of which contribute to meaning-making and listener interpretation. In the context of audiobooks, these materials serve as the medium through which written

narratives are transformed into auditory experiences. The interplay between textual content and vocal delivery becomes particularly significant when considering how abridged and unabridged versions influence listener comprehension and engagement (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al; 2026).

Despite the increasing popularity of audiobooks, a key research problem persists regarding the differences in comprehension and narrative experience between abridged and unabridged formats. While unabridged audiobooks provide a complete representation of the text, their length and density may pose challenges for some listeners, potentially affecting attention and retention. Conversely, abridged audiobooks offer streamlined content that may be easier to follow but risk omitting critical details that contribute to narrative coherence and depth. This raises important questions about how format selection impacts the listener's ability to understand, interpret, and emotionally connect with the material.

This study compares unabridged and abridged audiobooks within the scope of narrative speech materials. While unabridged audiobooks provide the complete original text, abridged versions offer a condensed narrative for efficiency. This research analyzes how these two formats impact listener comprehension and engagement. While abridged versions improve accessibility, unabridged formats offer deeper linguistic nuances and character development. Yet, choosing the appropriate format depends on the specific communicative and educational goals.

In response to this problem, the present study aims to examine the comparative effects of unabridged and abridged audiobooks within narrative speech materials. The primary objectives are to (1) analyze differences in listener comprehension between the two formats, (2) evaluate variations in narrative engagement and emotional response, and (3) assess how the structural modifications inherent in abridgement influence overall narrative experience. To achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions: (a) How does listener comprehension differ between unabridged and abridged audiobooks? (b) In what ways do these formats affect listener engagement and retention? and (c) What are the implications of abridgement on the integrity of narrative speech materials?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both academic and practical domains. From an academic perspective, it advances understanding within fields such as applied linguistics, media studies, and educational technology by exploring how auditory narratives are processed and interpreted (Linkis, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2024). It also addresses a gap in existing literature concerning the impact of content modification on listening comprehension and narrative experience. From a practical standpoint, the findings have implications for educators, content creators, and audiobook producers. Insights from this research can inform decisions about format selection, instructional design, and the development of audio-based learning resources tailored to diverse audiences (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023).

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the distinctions between unabridged and abridged audiobooks within narrative speech materials. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as the research focuses on in-depth interpretation of narrative structures, linguistic features, and listener-oriented elements rather than

numerical measurement. By emphasizing descriptive and interpretive analysis, the study seeks to uncover how variations in audiobook formats influence meaning-making, coherence, and narrative experience.

The primary data sources for this research consist of carefully selected audiobook samples representing both unabridged and abridged formats. These samples are drawn from narrative texts within similar genres to ensure comparability in terms of content, style, and thematic structure. Selection criteria include the availability of both versions of the same text, consistency in language, and clarity of narration. By using paired samples one unabridged and one abridged version of the same work the study ensures that any observed differences can be attributed to the process of abridgement rather than external variables.

Data collection is conducted through a technique referred to as “closed readings.” In this context, closed reading involves repeated, attentive listening to selected audiobook segments, focusing on specific narrative elements such as plot progression, character development, descriptive detail, and linguistic expression. The researcher systematically documents instances where content has been omitted, condensed, or modified in the abridged versions. Particular attention is given to how these changes affect narrative continuity, emphasis, and the overall delivery of meaning within the spoken format.

For data analysis, the study employs content analysis as its primary analytical technique. This involves categorizing and comparing elements of the narrative across the two formats, including thematic representation, structural organization, and discourse features. The analysis identifies patterns of omission and modification in abridged audiobooks and evaluates their impact on narrative completeness and listener interpretation. Through this process, the study aims to highlight key differences in how stories are constructed and experienced in each format.

Findings and Discussion

Unabridged and Abridged Audiobook

This section presents the findings of the comparative analysis between unabridged and abridged audiobooks within narrative speech materials. The results are organized into two main parts: (1) examples and descriptive findings from selected audiobook samples, and (2) a comparative analysis of comprehension levels, engagement, and retention. To illustrate the distinctions between formats, six unabridged and six abridged audiobooks were selected from similar narrative genres, primarily classic and widely adapted literary works.

For the unabridged audiobooks, the texts are voiced as it is. In *Pride and Prejudice* audiobook, this version preserves Jane Austen’s complete narrative, including detailed social commentary and character interactions. The full dialogue enhances understanding of character relationships and thematic depth. In *Moby-Dick* audiobook, the complete text by Herman Melville includes extensive philosophical reflections and descriptive passages, contributing to a richer but more demanding listening experience. Then, in *Great Expectations* audiobook, Charles Dickens’s full narrative allows for gradual character development and complex plot layering, supporting deeper comprehension. In *Jane Eyre* audiobook, the intact narrative by Charlotte Brontë retains emotional intensity and psychological depth, offering a comprehensive listener experience. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* audiobook, Mark Twain’s original language and dialect are fully

preserved, enhancing authenticity and linguistic richness. Lastly, in *Dracula* audiobook, Bram Stoker's complete epistolary structure is maintained, allowing listeners to experience the full suspense and narrative progression. These unabridged versions consistently demonstrate detailed storytelling, complex narrative structures, and extensive linguistic features that contribute to depth and authenticity (Ji et al., 024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, the abridged audiobooks are not voiced literally. The narrators tend to simplify the story by underlining various key points of the literary works. In *Pride and Prejudice* abridged audiobook, key plot points are retained, but many dialogues and descriptive passages are omitted, resulting in a faster-paced narrative with reduced social nuance. In *Moby-Dick* abridged audiobook, philosophical sections and detailed descriptions are significantly shortened, making the story more accessible but less reflective. In *Great Expectations* abridged audiobook, secondary plotlines and minor characters are minimized, simplifying the storyline but reducing narrative complexity. In *Jane Eyre* abridged audiobook, emotional monologues and descriptive elements are condensed, which slightly weakens character depth and psychological insight. Then, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* abridged audiobook, portions of dialect and episodic adventures are removed, leading to a smoother but less authentic narrative flow. In *Dracula* abridged audiobook, the epistolary format is streamlined, with fewer documents and entries, reducing suspense and narrative layering. These abridged versions emphasize brevity and accessibility, often restructuring narratives to maintain coherence despite reduced content (Linkis, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2024).

The section above presents the findings of the comparative analysis between unabridged and abridged audiobooks within narrative speech materials. The study examined six samples of classic literary works from each format to identify their distinct characteristics. The results indicate that unabridged audiobooks retain the original text entirely without omissions. This format presents detailed descriptions, complete dialogues, complex narrative structures, and the author's authentic linguistic style. Consequently, it offers a listening experience that is rich in literary value, emotional depth, and thematic authenticity, although it may require higher concentration and cognitive effort from the listener. In contrast, abridged audiobooks undergo a simplification process. Non-essential elements, such as lengthy descriptions, additional dialogues, and subplots, are condensed or removed. While this format ensures greater accessibility, a faster pace, and conciseness, it inevitably results in the reduction of social nuances, psychological depth of characters, and the overall linguistic richness found in the original work.

Comparative Analysis between Unabridged and Abridged Audiobook

It is clear that both kinds of audiobooks have each aspect of specialties. Meanwhile, such differences are also crucial to be underlined. Within comprehension levels, the analysis indicates that comprehension varies depending on the format and listener preferences. Unabridged audiobooks provide comprehensive information, enabling listeners to access complete narrative details, contextual cues, and linguistic nuances (Linkis, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2024). This often results in deeper understanding, particularly for complex texts. However, the density and length of unabridged materials may challenge listeners, especially those with limited attention

spans or lower proficiency in the language. In contrast, abridged audiobooks tend to enhance immediate comprehension by presenting simplified and streamlined narratives. The removal of less essential details reduces cognitive load, allowing listeners to grasp the main storyline more easily. However, this simplification may lead to gaps in understanding, particularly regarding character motivations and thematic subtleties (Casselden & Paxton, 2025; Hamdani et al., 2023; Linton, 2017).

Then, engagement levels also differ notably between the two formats. Unabridged audiobooks often foster strong emotional and intellectual engagement due to their richness and detail. The inclusion of full dialogues, descriptive passages, and stylistic elements allows listeners to immerse themselves deeply in the narrative world. However, prolonged listening durations may lead to fatigue, potentially reducing sustained engagement over time (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). Abridged audiobooks, on the other hand, maintain a faster pace, which can enhance listener interest and attention, particularly for casual or time-constrained audiences. The concise format reduces the likelihood of disengagement caused by lengthy descriptions. Nevertheless, the reduced depth may limit emotional connection and immersion, as listeners are exposed to fewer narrative details (Alone & Mahavidyalaya, 2023; Grover & Hannegan, 2012; Rubery, 2011; Sheinberg, 2017).

Moreover, the difference is also related to retention in its depth and efficiency. Unabridged audiobooks support long-term retention by providing repeated exposure to key themes, vocabulary, and narrative elements. The detailed structure reinforces memory through elaboration and contextualization. However, the volume of information may overwhelm some listeners, potentially hindering retention of specific details (Casselden & Paxton, 2025; Hamdani et al., 2023; Linton, 2017). Abridged audiobooks, due to their brevity, often facilitate short-term retention of main ideas and key events. The simplified structure makes it easier for listeners to recall the overall storyline. However, the lack of detailed reinforcement may result in weaker long-term retention, particularly regarding secondary characters, subplots, and nuanced themes (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025).

The results highlight a clear distinction between unabridged and abridged audiobooks. Unabridged versions offer depth, authenticity, and comprehensive narrative experiences, supporting deeper comprehension and long-term retention. In contrast, abridged versions prioritize accessibility, efficiency, and ease of understanding, enhancing immediate comprehension and engagement but potentially limiting narrative richness. These findings underscore the importance of selecting audiobook formats based on listener needs, context, and intended outcomes (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023).

Theoretical Frameworks of Audiobook

As a narrative media, audiobooks have evolved significantly as a form of narrative media, transitioning from analog to digital formats in response to technological advancements and changing consumer behaviors. Initially distributed through cassette tapes and later compact discs, audiobooks were often associated with niche audiences, such as individuals with visual impairments or those seeking alternative reading methods (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). However, the emergence of digital platforms and mobile technologies has transformed audiobooks into a mainstream



medium. Streaming services and mobile applications now allow users to access extensive audiobook libraries instantly, contributing to their widespread adoption.

This evolution reflects a broader shift in media consumption patterns, where auditory engagement has become increasingly prominent. Audiobooks now coexist with podcasts and other audio-based content, forming a dynamic listening culture that emphasizes convenience and multitasking (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al; 2026). The portability of digital devices enables users to integrate audiobooks into daily activities such as commuting, exercising, and household tasks, thereby redefining the temporal and spatial boundaries of reading.

In educational contexts, audiobooks play a significant role in supporting literacy development and language learning. They provide learners with exposure to pronunciation, intonation, and expressive speech, which are essential components of language acquisition. Audiobooks also facilitate access to complex texts, allowing learners to engage with materials that may be challenging to read independently. Furthermore, they support differentiated learning by accommodating diverse learning preferences and needs (Alone & Mahavidyalaya, 2023; Grover & Hannegan, 2012; Rubery, 2011; Sheinberg, 2017). In entertainment contexts, audiobooks offer immersive storytelling experiences, often enhanced by skilled narration and, in some cases, sound effects or music. This dual function positions audiobooks as both pedagogical tools and sources of leisure.

Then, a central distinction within audiobook studies lies in the comparison between unabridged and abridged content. Unabridged audiobooks present the complete text of a work, preserving its original structure, language, and stylistic features. This format is often regarded as the most authentic representation of the author's intent, as it includes all narrative elements without omission (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023). In contrast, abridged audiobooks involve the selective reduction of content, where certain passages, descriptions, or subplots are removed to create a shorter and more accessible version.

The conceptual differences between these formats extend beyond length to include variations in narrative structure and delivery. Unabridged audiobooks maintain the full complexity of the original text, including detailed descriptions, extended dialogues, and nuanced thematic development (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al; 2026). Abridged audiobooks, on the other hand, prioritize concision and clarity, often restructuring narratives to ensure coherence despite the removal of content.

Each format presents distinct advantages and limitations. Unabridged audiobooks offer comprehensive exposure to the text, enabling listeners to fully engage with character development, thematic depth, and linguistic richness (Ji et al., 024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). This makes them particularly valuable for academic and literary analysis, as well as for listeners seeking an in-depth experience. However, their length and density may pose challenges, especially for individuals with limited time or lower levels of listening proficiency.

Abridged audiobooks provide a more accessible alternative by reducing the time commitment required for listening (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023). Their streamlined narratives can enhance comprehension and maintain listener attention, particularly in casual or time-constrained contexts. Nevertheless, the process of abridgement may result in the loss of important details, potentially affecting narrative

coherence and diminishing the overall richness of the story. This trade-off between completeness and accessibility is a recurring theme in the literature and underscores the importance of context in format selection (Alone & Mahavidyalaya, 2023; Grover & Hannegan, 2012; Rubery, 2011; Sheinberg, 2017).

Next, the study of narrative speech materials is closely linked to theories of listening comprehension and cognitive processing. Listening comprehension is a complex, multi-layered process that involves the interaction of linguistic knowledge, cognitive resources, and contextual understanding. According to bottom-up processing theories, listeners construct meaning by decoding individual sounds, words, and grammatical structures (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023). In contrast, top-down processing theories emphasize the role of prior knowledge, expectations, and contextual cues in interpreting spoken language. Most contemporary perspectives adopt an interactive model, where both processes operate simultaneously to facilitate comprehension.

In the context of audiobooks, narrative speech materials present unique challenges and opportunities for listeners. Unlike written texts, spoken narratives are transient and require real-time processing, which places demands on working memory and attention. Elements such as intonation, rhythm, and pacing play a crucial role in conveying meaning and guiding listener interpretation (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). Skilled narration can enhance comprehension by emphasizing key information and clarifying structural relationships within the text.

Cognitive processing of spoken narratives also involves the construction of mental representations, often referred to as situation models. These models enable listeners to integrate information across different parts of the narrative, track character development, and understand causal relationships. The richness of these representations depends on the availability of contextual and descriptive details, which may be affected by the format of the audiobook (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al., 2026). Unabridged versions, with their comprehensive content, provide more opportunities for elaboration and inference, supporting deeper cognitive engagement. Abridged versions, while more concise, may limit the amount of information available for constructing detailed mental models.

Furthermore, factors such as listener proficiency, familiarity with the content, and listening conditions can influence comprehension outcomes. Repetition, pacing control, and the ability to revisit segments are important features that can support understanding in audiobook contexts. These considerations highlight the interplay between narrative structure, delivery, and cognitive processing, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach to analyzing audiobook formats (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023).

Another useful way to understand the differences between abridged and unabridged audiobooks is through the idea of cognitive load. In simple terms, cognitive load refers to how much mental effort a person needs to process information at a given time (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al., 2026). When listening to audiobooks, especially longer and more detailed ones, listeners have to follow the storyline, remember characters, and interpret meaning all at once.

Unabridged audiobooks often demand more mental effort because they include full descriptions, complex language, and extended dialogues. For some listeners, this can be rewarding, as it allows for a deeper understanding of the story. However, it can also feel

overwhelming, particularly when listening in everyday situations like commuting or multitasking (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023).. On the other hand, abridged audiobooks tend to reduce this mental burden by focusing on the main points of the story. This makes them easier to follow and more suitable for casual listening. Still, by simplifying the content, some details and nuances may be lost. From this perspective, the choice between abridged and unabridged formats is not only about length, but also about how much mental effort the listener is able or willing to invest (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al; 2026).

The Cruciality of Unabridged and Abridged Audiobooks

The findings of this study provide important insights into how unabridged and abridged audiobooks function within narrative speech materials, particularly in relation to comprehension, engagement, and retention. The results reveal a clear distinction between the two formats, highlighting a fundamental trade-off between narrative completeness and accessibility (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al; 2026). Unabridged audiobooks were found to support deeper comprehension and richer narrative experiences, while abridged versions facilitated ease of understanding and time efficiency. This section interprets these findings in light of the research objectives and connects them to existing literature, while also outlining key implications and evaluating the strengths and limitations of the study.

In interpreting the results, it is evident that the completeness of unabridged audiobooks plays a crucial role in shaping listener comprehension. The inclusion of full dialogues, descriptive passages, and narrative details allows listeners to construct more elaborate mental representations of the story. This aligns with cognitive theories of listening comprehension discussed in the literature review, particularly the concept of situation models, where detailed input enhances the integration of narrative elements (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). The findings suggest that unabridged audiobooks provide sufficient contextual and linguistic cues to support deeper processing, enabling listeners to grasp not only the main plot but also subtler themes and character motivations.

Conversely, the results indicate that abridged audiobooks simplify narrative structures, which can improve immediate comprehension but may limit interpretive depth. By removing less essential content, abridged versions reduce cognitive load, making it easier for listeners to follow the storyline. This supports the notion, highlighted in previous studies, that simplified input can enhance accessibility, particularly for novice listeners or those with limited time (James, 2017; Olson et al., 2026; Perdani, 2023). However, the omission of descriptive and contextual details may disrupt narrative coherence, leading to a more fragmented understanding of the text. This finding reinforces the argument in the literature that abridgement, while beneficial in certain contexts, may compromise the integrity of the original narrative.

The differences in engagement observed in this study further illustrate the contrasting characteristics of the two formats. Unabridged audiobooks were found to foster deeper emotional and intellectual engagement, largely due to their richness and narrative depth. This supports earlier research emphasizing the role of detailed storytelling and expressive narration in enhancing immersion. However, the extended duration of unabridged audiobooks can also lead to listener fatigue, which may negatively

affect sustained engagement. In contrast, abridged audiobooks maintain a faster pace, which can help sustain attention and interest, particularly for casual listeners (Casselden & Paxton, 2025; Hamdani et al., 2023; Linton, 2017). This finding aligns with the literature on digital listening culture, which highlights the growing preference for concise and easily consumable content.

Retention outcomes in this study also reflect the interplay between depth and efficiency. Unabridged audiobooks were associated with stronger long-term retention, as the repeated exposure to narrative elements and detailed context supports memory consolidation (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al; 2026). This is consistent with cognitive theories that emphasize elaboration and repetition as key factors in retention. On the other hand, abridged audiobooks were found to support short-term recall of main ideas but were less effective in facilitating retention of detailed information. This distinction underscores the importance of aligning audiobook format with the intended purpose of listening, whether it be in-depth learning or general understanding.

The findings of this study have several important implications. In educational contexts, unabridged audiobooks may be more suitable for tasks that require critical analysis, close reading, and comprehensive understanding (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). They can serve as valuable tools for developing listening skills, vocabulary, and interpretive abilities. However, abridged audiobooks can also play a role in education, particularly as introductory materials or supplementary resources that help learners grasp key concepts before engaging with more complex texts. Educators should therefore consider using a combination of both formats to accommodate diverse learning needs (Alone & Mahavidyalaya, 2023; Grover & Hannegan, 2012; Rubery, 2011; Sheinberg, 2017).

In the field of language learning, the choice between unabridged and abridged audiobooks should be guided by learners' proficiency levels and learning objectives (Alone & Mahavidyalaya, 2023; Grover & Hannegan, 2012; Rubery, 2011; Sheinberg, 2017). Unabridged audiobooks provide exposure to authentic language use, including varied vocabulary and complex sentence structures, which can support advanced language development. Abridged audiobooks, with their simplified content, may be more appropriate for beginners, as they reduce linguistic complexity and facilitate comprehension. The findings suggest that a gradual progression from abridged to unabridged materials may be an effective strategy for language learners (Casselden & Paxton, 2025; Hamdani et al., 2023; Linton, 2017).

From the perspective of media consumption, the results reflect broader trends in digital culture, where convenience and flexibility are highly valued. Abridged audiobooks cater to audiences seeking quick and accessible content, while unabridged versions appeal to those who prioritize depth and authenticity (Nadeau & Craig, 2024; Pasopati et al., 2024; Wahidah et al; 2026). Content creators and publishers should consider these preferences when producing and distributing audiobooks, ensuring that both formats are available to meet the needs of different audiences.

Future research could address these limitations by incorporating quantitative methods, larger sample sizes, and participant-based data collection. Experimental studies involving listener groups could provide more robust evidence of differences in comprehension, engagement, and retention (Ji et al., 2024; Mediatore, 2003; Sarmi et al., 2025). Additionally, exploring the role of narration style, genre, and listener

demographics could further enhance understanding of how audiobooks function as narrative speech materials.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the difference between audiobook formats—unabridged and abridged significantly affects listeners' comprehension, engagement, and retention. Unabridged audiobooks provide a more complete and in-depth experience, supporting comprehensive understanding, emotional engagement, and long-term retention, although they require more time. In contrast, abridged audiobooks are more concise and accessible, making them effective for quick understanding and short-term retention, but they tend to reduce depth of content. Therefore, both formats should be used complementarily, with abridged versions for initial exposure and unabridged versions for deeper learning, particularly in language education. Future research is recommended to explore additional variables such as narration style, genre, and listener characteristics.

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