

LISTENING TO THE “BARD”: ENHANCING COMPREHENSION OF SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS AMONG DYSLEXIC COLLEGE LEARNERS THROUGH AUDIO DRAMAS

^{*1}Al Rynne Gabonada Gatcho, ²William Salas Teleg & ³Romeo Ballon, Jr.

¹ Hunan Institute of Science and Technology, 414000 Yueyang City, China.

² Department of Education Schools Division Office, 1807 Marikina City, Philippines.

³ Department of Education School Division Office, 1870 Antipolo City, Philippines.

*Corresponding author: 42023001@hnist.edu.cn

Received: 02.10.2024

Accepted: 10.02.2025

ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: This study explores audio drama's effectiveness in supporting understanding of Shakespearean text among dyslexic college students, aiming to challenge existing pedagogical paradigms and develop more inclusive literary education strategies.

Methodology: The research utilized mixed methods for data analysis: descriptive statistics, paired and independent t-tests for quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative insights from focus group interviews. A crossover design ensured all participants experienced both audio drama and traditional text-based interventions, with data collected over five consecutive weeks using structured lesson plans that included pre-activity, while-activity, and post-activity components.

Findings: The results suggest that audio dramas can be a powerful tool for inclusive literature education, particularly for learners with dyslexia, and recommend integrating audio formats into traditional curricula to support diverse learning needs.

Contributions: The study proposes an approach that prioritizes accessibility and meaningful interaction with complex literary works. Ultimately, it calls for reevaluating teaching practices, suggesting that embracing audio-based methods could revolutionize literary education and provide marginalized learners with pathways to understanding and appreciating challenging texts.

Keywords: Audio drama, comprehension, dyslexia, inclusive education, Shakespeare.

Cite as: Gatcho, A. R. G., Teleg, W. S., & Ballon, R. Jr. (2025). Listening to the “bard”: Enhancing comprehension of Shakespearean plays among dyslexic college learners through audio dramas. *Journal of Nusantara Studies*, 10(1), 114–135. <https://doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol10iss1pp114-135>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The works of William Shakespeare are celebrated worldwide for their rich language, and complex themes. Therefore, his plays are part and parcel of English literature, and scholars of literature may never study English literature without going through his plays. As noted by Purewal (2017), Shakespearean plays remain relevant in modern classrooms because they portray universal themes, cultivate interpretation skills, and mirror historical insights. For Elliott (2019), the inclusion of Shakespeare’s masterpieces in the literature curriculum is a manifestation of his enduring impact. However, the unusual syntax, archaic vocabulary, and complicated plot (Murphy et al., 2020; Russell-Brown, 2011) could heighten the challenges in decoding and comprehension of dyslexic learners. Thus, these probable barriers should not be overlooked. The review of Shores (2017) highlights a panoply of teaching approaches to make student interactions with Shakespearean plays more engaging such as using modernized versions, theatrical techniques, and digital games. These strategies are frequently considered effective especially for primary and secondary learners who may consider studying Shakespeare a daunting task (Schupak, 2018).

Audio drama is a form of narrative innovation that uses sound alone to deliver a story (Hand & Traynor, 2011; Richard, 2018). In elementary and high schools, the use of this media tool showed a heightened reading motivation of literary texts (Taib et al., 2022; Vachon, 2022). While it has been instrumental in developing literary analysis skills of learners across the educational spectrum, its potency for promoting better understanding of literary texts to adult learners with special needs such as dyslexia remains sparse. Shakespearean plays could be a good starting point to test the efficacy of audio drama for better literary comprehension of dyslexic learners due to their global presence in literature curricula. Therefore, this study addresses these key questions:

- i) How do audio dramas affect the comprehension of Shakespearean plays among dyslexic college learners compared to traditional text-based methods?
- ii) What impact do audio dramas have on the ability of dyslexic college learners to comprehend Shakespearean plays?
- iii) Do audio dramas enhance learning satisfaction in studying Shakespeare among dyslexic college learners?

It is hoped that this study may expand the academic discourse regarding the role of media tools in literature education, thereby rethinking traditional approaches to studying literary canon. Also, the focus on dyslexic learners in higher education offers an opportunity to revisit the adaptability of educational media tools in accommodating diverse learning needs.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teaching Shakespearean Plays

The ways to teach Shakespeare's works are vast. Conventional approaches are highly textual (Gibson, 2016). Lectures and writing critical analyses are common too since some perceive reading Shakespearean literature intellectually stimulating (Edens, 2015). However, more interactive approaches were innovated throughout the years to foster deeper engagement with Shakespearean texts. When it comes to reading Shakespearean plays, performance-based learning has garnered an immense attention since learners can demonstrate their comprehension creatively via reenactment of the events found in the texts (Schupak, 2018; Suppiah, 2016). Likewise, dramatization was effective in deep understanding of Shakespearean plays due to its evocative element (Gürayay, 2014). Moreover, technology integration has been present in a wide range of classrooms to study Shakespeare through a modern lens. Digital storytelling, gamified learning, and use of interactive e-books have been found effective as supplementary materials in comprehending Shakespearean plays (Rall & Harper, 2023; Squeo et al., 2021; Turchi, 2020).

There are several challenges related to studying Shakespeare. A common predicament is unlocking the meaning of archaic lexis since original Shakespearean manuscripts were written in Old English (Murphy et al., 2020). A study revealed that students have demonstrated increased appreciation of Shakespearean plays when they read modernized versions instead of those who read the original versions (Demmen, 2020). Additionally, the cultural distance between settings and themes could diminish relatability, especially for younger generations of learners (Espinosa, 2016; Lind, 2018; Rayner, 2021). For Dyches (2017), contextual teaching

addresses such challenge by relating personal experiences to the narrative elements of Shakespearean plays. On the other hand, there is also a growing demand for professional development of literature teachers to equip them with innovative pedagogies to teach Shakespeare (McLaren, 2013). Ongoing improvements in teaching methods reaffirm Shakespeare's lasting importance and the undeniable influence of his works today.

2.2 Reading Literary Texts by Dyslexic Learners

Although literature is primarily meant to be appreciated, it may pose comprehension difficulties for dyslexic learners. As a learning disability, dyslexia impairs phonological processing and decoding skills. The condition results in slow-paced reading and difficulties in comprehension of excessively long narratives (Sotirovska & Vaughn, 2022). Information retention is another critical issue. Wennås Brante (2013) investigated this and discovered that dyslexic readers, despite reading (or being read) stories many times, tend to include critical information when asked questions. Likewise, the recall of names of characters is also observable among dyslexics when they read prose passages (Pickering, 2012).

In the study of Hamilton et al. (2021), they discovered that children with dyslexia struggle with locating specific information within the storybooks they read. Difficulty tracking information resulted in dyslexics over-repeating words or lines from stories they recite during read-aloud sessions (Suarez-Coalla et al., 2016). The linguistic features of literature such as symbolisms, idioms, metaphors, and complicated sentences could add another layer to reading barriers (Bonacina et al., 2015). Also, the potential occurrence of images, especially in storybooks, could exacerbate the visual stress of dyslexic children (Hamilton et al., 2021; Sotirovska & Vaughn, 2022).

Neglecting the aforementioned issues may leave long-lasting negative implication to what and how dyslexic learners conceive literature. High degree of stress, low self-esteem, and avoidance of social interaction are potential effects of overlooking these challenges experienced by dyslexics. Without proper intervention, dyslexic learners may not be able to develop the requisite skills for higher education.

2.3 Approaches in Teaching Literature to Dyslexic Learners

A deeper understanding of dyslexia and challenges faced by dyslexic learners led to paradigm shifts in literature education (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020). This has spurred the adoption of multisensory teaching methods incorporating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements to improve comprehension of literary texts (Hagen et al., 2017; Knoop-van Campen et al., 2018).

Interactive e-books have gained traction too. Wood et al. (2018) punctuated that such books made literary analysis more engaging. Likewise, graphic organizers simplified complex plots, which may be too difficult for dyslexic learners to grasp (Awada & Plana, 2018; Lopez & Campoverde, 2018).

Text presentation can also impact readability among dyslexics. Rello and Baeza-Yates (2013) recommended heavier baseline, less crowding, and increased letter spacing. Additionally, Chen and Keong (2017) suggested that the careful choice of backgrounds and colors, as well as selecting the appropriate ones, can reduce visual stress. On the other hand, film adaptations support the comprehension of novels through motion visuals (Awada & Plana, 2018). In some contexts, the implementation of literature circles was found to improve critical thinking skills among dyslexic learners (Fain & Craig-Unkefer, 2015; Jacobs, 2016). Although these approaches could assist dyslexic individuals in reading literary texts, their effectiveness heavily relies on teachers' skills. This calls for evidence-based practices that empower dyslexics to understand and enjoy literature without obstacles.

2.4 The Use of Audio Drama as an Educational Media Tool

Audio drama has attracted attention due to its unique feature of bringing stories to life through active listening. Its impact on learning is supported by various studies. For instance, Rodero (2012) found that students demonstrated easy information recall due to audio drama's ability to evoke mental imagery. Likewise, it also triggered emotional responses. In English as a second language (ESL) environment, learners improved their listening and vocabulary skills through the use of audio dramas (Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017). Liontas (2022) also attested its efficacy in gamified language learning environments. Similarly, Truax (2012) introduced audio storytelling through soundscapes to assist students in understanding environmental concepts.

Audio drama is useful not just in conventional subjects but also in specialized fields like medical training. Baker and Brown (2012) noted that it improves medical students' empathy and communication skill. In mobile learning settings, audio dramas boosted critical thinking and reached a wider audience, making it a promising tool for distance education (Hargis et al., 2014). Collectively, these studies underline audio drama's versatility as an educational medium.

The reviewed literature reveals the gaps in teaching Shakespeare. Even though some studies explored how audio drama can leverage language learning experience and engagement (Liontas, 2022; Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017), the focus on Shakespeare in higher education,

especially to learners with dyslexia, remains minimal. Most research in dyslexia and literature targets younger learners (Hamilton et al., 2021). Comparisons of audio drama with traditional teaching methods are also limited. Though multisensory teaching is explored (Knoop-van Campen et al., 2018; Hagen et al., 2017), its application to complex texts in college is under-researched. Thus, the role of media literacy, particularly in interpreting audio adaptations, is an interesting topic for exploration. The study aims to fill the gaps by investigating how audio dramas aid dyslexic college learners in comprehending Shakespearean plays. It will also probe into their impact on learners' satisfaction. It could transform teaching practices by offering teachers insights and enriching discussions on literary media and literacy education for dyslexic learners.

2.5 Theoretical Underpinning

The study is grounded on Bloom's (1968) Mastery Learning Theory which contends that learners can attain mastery through the appropriate learning conditions that cater for their individual needs (Zhang, 2010). Hence, despite having a learning disability or difficulty, learners will still learn if the right support, which is aligned with their learning styles, is given (Dorji & Sakulwongs, 2024). By exposing dyslexic learners to audio dramas, they are afforded with the opportunities to engage with Shakespearean plays that recognizes their auditory processing capabilities. Additionally, the learner-centered approach advocated by Mastery Learning may develop dyslexic learners' comprehension mastery through self-paced learning and repeated exposure. Such flexibility could be helpful to those who may need more time to process information. Thus, by varying the learning condition by integrating auditory modality, dyslexic learners can become proficient comprehenders of literary texts at par with their counterparts in a conventional setup.

The use of Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory in this study also shows the potentiality of audio dramas as a tailored learning condition for dyslexic college learners, resolving research questions by analyzing the impact that this auditory approach offers in relation to comprehension and retention concerning traditional classic text. Audio dramas align with the theory's focus on learner-centered strategies and repeated exposure, enhancing dyslexic learners' comprehension and engagement with Shakespearean plays by allowing them to follow at their own pace and revisit the material as needed. The theory compares audio dramas with conventional teaching in terms of their impact on comprehension and learning satisfaction.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

This study examines two types of variables: independent and dependent. The implementation of audio dramas for Shakespearean literature is the independent variable. The outcomes, measured by learners' comprehension and their satisfaction, are the dependent variables. Here, comprehension refers to the depth of learners' understanding of Shakespearean plays. Satisfaction, on the other hand, measures their content and positive reception to lessons using audio dramas. Figure 1 illustrates the study's conceptual framework.

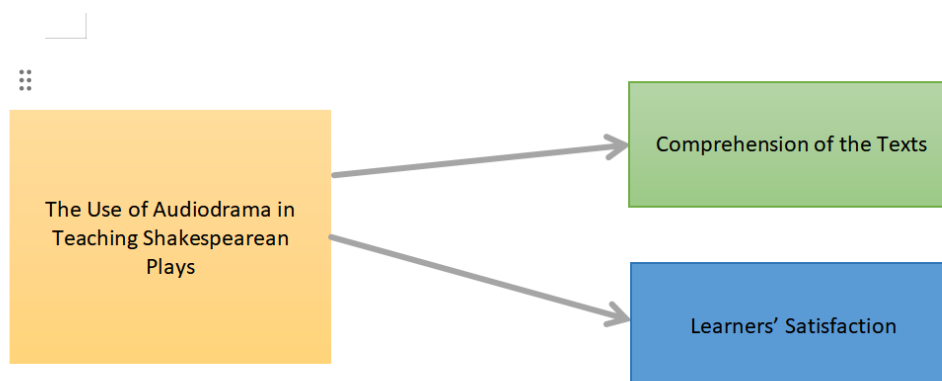


Figure 1: Visual representation of the dependent and independent variables

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research implemented a quasi-experimental design to collect, analyze, and interpret quantitative and qualitative data. The quasi-experimental design was chosen as it allows for comparing groups in real-world educational settings where random assignment is not feasible (Thyer, 2012), which is particularly relevant when working with specific populations like dyslexic college learners. It effectively addresses the key research questions regarding the impact of audio dramas on comprehension and learning satisfaction with Shakespearean plays among dyslexic learners. Furthermore, it evaluated how audio dramas could improve the comprehension of Shakespearean plays among dyslexic college learners. Their satisfaction with using audio dramas as an educational tool was also examined.

Quantitative data were gathered through pre-tests and post-tests conducted before and after the audio drama intervention. Surveys were administered to gauge learners' satisfaction with this approach in understanding Shakespearean plays. To complement this, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted at the end of the intervention to further assess learners' experiences.

Participants came from a public university in Yueyang City, China. The said institution established a research center for learning disability in 2023. Thus, it offers diagnosis and

support services for dyslexic learners. At the time of this study, the center had 28 dyslexic freshmen. Their ages fall between 18 and 25, and vary in gender and socioeconomic status. Purposive sampling was used, selecting participants based on a formal diagnosis of dyslexia and their enrollment in 'English Reading,' a course where Literature is crucial. Four students were excluded as they were not enrolled in this course. The remaining 24 learners were evenly split into two groups for the study, consisting of 12 members each in the control and experimental group.

3.1 Quantitative Data Collection Tool

3.1.1 Comprehension test of Shakespearean plays

Learners undertook a 50-item multiple-choice test covering five Shakespearean plays: 'Hamlet,' 'Macbeth,' 'The Merchant of Venice,' 'Othello,' and 'Romeo and Juliet.' Three experts were consulted to pinpoint the plays to be included. Their perspectives ensure that the selections are pedagogically sound and appropriate for learners with dyslexia. Two of them are litterateurs with a PhD in Literature; the other is a literacy specialist who holds a PhD in Reading Education. The questions aimed to evaluate higher order thinking skills (HOTS). Learners analyzed key plot points, character developments, and themes. This approach was intended to deeply probe learners' understanding of complex elements in Shakespearean plays. Consistency in the question sets between the pre-test and post-test ensured reliable measurement of student progress.

3.1.2 Questionnaire

The researchers developed a questionnaire with 25 items to gauge the satisfaction of dyslexic college learners regarding the use of audio dramas to study Shakespearean plays. The questionnaire addressed learning satisfaction among dyslexic college learners studying Shakespeare's works. Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale: 5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. Also, the interpretation was that the mean score ranges from 4.21 to 5.00 as Highest, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Lowest. Statements were grouped under five domains: ease of use, engagement enhancement, accessibility improvement, collaboration facilitation, and overall effectiveness of audio dramas in enhancing the understanding of Shakespearean plays. These domains were chosen to comprehensively assess the potential benefits of audio dramas as an alternative to traditional text-based methods, aligning with the study's aim to expand academic discourse on media tools in literature education and

accommodate diverse learning needs. Researchers oriented the participants about the questionnaire prior to actual administration to avoid any misunderstandings.

3.2 Qualitative Data Collection Tool

FGD was employed to clarify ambiguities from the questionnaire. A total of ten dyslexic college learners who also participated in the comprehension test and questionnaire were included. These interviews offered deeper perspectives on using audio dramas to study Shakespearean plays. The researchers formulated 12 questions based on the five domains in the questionnaire. These questions allowed a thorough assessment of learners' satisfaction with audio dramas. Prior to the FGD, all participants were briefed to ensure a clear understanding of the questions.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

Research instruments were validated by the same three experts consulted for the Shakespearean plays to be included in the comprehension test. The Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was calculated using the formula $IOC = r/n$, with 'r' being the total scores from the experts and 'n' the number of experts involved. The instruments scored +1 on the IOC, confirming their validity. Experts reviewed each item for clarity, relevance, linguistic appropriateness, and content alignment.

Ten dyslexic college freshmen from a neighboring university participated in the pilot not involved in the main study. This approach helped mirror the profiles of the actual participants without overlap. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient measured reliability. Score values of .94 for the test and .93 for the questionnaire were yielded. The results indicate strong internal consistency within the assessment tools.

3.4 Lesson Plans

Five lesson plans were prepared for the study, each dedicated to one of the five Shakespearean plays over five consecutive weeks. Each lesson was broken into two 45-minute periods. Audio dramas of these plays were produced by Shakespeare Network and are accessible via YouTube. Study guides with character maps, plot summaries, and thematic discussions accompanied the audio materials. Learners delved into 'Hamlet,' 'Macbeth,' 'The Merchant of Venice,' 'Othello,' and 'Romeo and Juliet' respectively. The structure included a pre-activity to introduce themes, a while-activity to engage with audio dramas, and a post-activity for discussions and feedback. The pre-activity (15 minutes) involved introducing key themes, providing character overviews,

discussing historical context, and preparing learners with relevant vocabulary. The while-activity (60 minutes) centered on listening to the audio drama, with learners engaging in guided note-taking and participating in periodic comprehension checks. The post-activity (15 minutes) allowed for reflection, small group discussions, and a whole-class debrief to reinforce understanding and make thematic connections. This structured approach aimed to enhance comprehension and learning satisfaction among dyslexic learners through multi-sensory methods and active participation.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Ethical Measures

Stringent ethical measures were observed throughout the study. Prior to commencement, the ethical committee of the first author's institution reviewed the research protocol. Consent forms were distributed and obtained from the participants to guarantee their familiarity with the study's nature and the extent of their participation. Participants' identities were anonymized, with only the researchers having access to the data. It was made clear that involvement was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without negative consequences

In order to avoid systematic biases resulting from intervention timing differences in quasi-experimental research, a crossover design was used. The experimental group started by listening to audio dramas, then also received traditional text-based materials, while the control group began using traditional text methods, then began listening to audio drama materials. This was ethical in that all participants gained from both kinds of instructional methods, and so equity in educational opportunity was preserved.

3.6 Data Analysis

Several statistical methods were utilized to analyze the quantitative data. Mean and standard deviation provided a basic descriptive statistical overview of the pre- and post-test scores. Changes in scores between these tests within the two groups were compared by employing paired t-tests. On the other hand, performance differences of the two groups were measured through independent t-tests. As for the qualitative data, FGD was conducted via Tencent VooV at the time convenient for all participants. Five areas were explored: ease of use, engagement, accessibility, collaboration, and effectiveness of audio dramas for comprehending Shakespearean plays. Interviews were audio-recorded and were later transcribed verbatim.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Test Results Comparing the Effectiveness of Traditional and Experimental Teaching Methods

Results from the study indicate improvements in comprehension of Shakespearean plays among dyslexic college learners. Traditional and experimental methods both enhanced learning. However, the audio drama approach led to better outcomes. Both groups started with similar low pre-test scores (Traditional: $M=15.07$, $SD=4.68$; Experimental: $M=15.71$, $SD=4.73$), but diverged markedly in post-test performance. The traditional group showed significant improvement ($t=-20.20$, $p<0.05$) with a large effect size ($d=2.15$), increasing to $M=27.93$ ($SD=7.05$). However, the experimental group demonstrated even more substantial gains ($t=-24.78$, $p<0.05$) with a larger effect size ($d=3.18$), achieving $M=36.29$ ($SD=7.83$) in the post-test. The statistical analysis also revealed a larger mean score increase in the audio drama method over the traditional lecture-based approach of 20.58 points as opposed to 12.86 points, post-test mean, and large effect size. These results clearly indicate that despite equality in the effectiveness of the two strategies, the audio drama version is much effective for the dyslexic learners in understanding Shakespeare because of the nature of this strategy as an auditory one that does not entail reading that normally poses a challenge to the dyslexia learner. The enhanced standard deviations of post-tests for both groups means that learners respond differently to the intervention, making it necessary that future research explores such differences. Table 1 below shows the effect of audio dramas to the comprehension of Shakespearean plays among dyslexic college learners through Paired T-Test result.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and t-test results for traditional and experimental groups

Group	Pre-Test M (SD)	Post-Test M (SD)	t	p	Cohen's d
Traditional	15.07 (4.68)	27.93 (7.05)	-20.2	< .001	2.15
Experimental	15.71 (4.73)	36.29 (7.83)	-24.78	< .001	3.18

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; p -values

A comparison of the pre-test means of the traditional and experimental groups using an independent t-test yielded a t-value of -0.36 and a p-value of 0.72, indicating that both groups possessed similar prior knowledge of the material aimed to be taught. However, post-intervention results showed a statistically significant difference between the traditional ($M = 27.93$, $SD = 7.05$) and experimental ($M = 36.29$, $SD = 7.83$) groups ($t = -2.97$, $p = 0.01$, $d = 1.12$). An analysis of the effect size indicates that the experimental method has a significant

practical impact, demonstrated by a large effect size of 1.12. Both groups improved from pre-test to post-test, with the experimental group showing a more marked increase (20.58 points) compared to the traditional group (12.86 points). These findings indicate that the experimental method, potentially involving audio dramas, was significantly more effective in enhancing learners' understanding of Shakespearean plays. This result is particularly noteworthy given the initial equivalence of the groups, strengthening the conclusion that the experimental approach offers meaningful benefits for teaching Shakespearean literature, possibly to dyslexic college learners. Table 2 below shows the effect of audio dramas to the comprehension of Shakespearean plays among dyslexic college learners through Independent T-Test result.

Table 2: Independent t-test of audio dramas on the comprehension

Groups	Pre-test Mean (SD)	t	p	d	Post-test Mean (SD)	t	p	d
Traditional	15.07 (4.68)	-0.36	0.72	0.14	27.93 (7.05)	-2.97	0.01	1.12
Experimental	15.71 (4.73)				36.29 (7.83)			

Note: p-values are reported as two-tailed significance levels d represents Cohen's d effect size

4.2 Effect Size Result

The pre-test results showed no significant difference between the experimental (M = 15.71, SD = 4.73) and traditional (M = 15.07, SD = 4.68) groups (t = -0.36, p = 0.72), with a negligible effect size (d = 0.14), indicating comparable initial comprehension levels. However, the post-test results revealed a statistically significant difference favoring the experimental group (M = 36.29, SD = 7.83) over the traditional group (M = 27.93, SD = 7.05), t = -2.97, p = 0.01. Crucially, the effect size for this difference was d = 1.12, which falls within the range of $0.8 \leq |d| < 1.2$, categorized as a "Large effect" according to Cohen's d interpretation guidelines. This large effect size indicates that the experimental method had a substantial practical impact on improving comprehension of Shakespearean plays among dyslexic college learners. The magnitude of this effect suggests that the experimental approach, potentially utilizing audio dramas, offers a highly effective alternative to traditional methods for teaching Shakespearean literature to this specific student population, potentially overcoming some of the unique challenges faced by dyslexic learners in engaging with complex literary texts. Table 3 below shows the impact audio dramas has on the ability of dyslexic college learners to comprehend Shakespearean plays.

Table 3: Effect size of the impact of audio dramas on the ability of dyslexic college learners to comprehend Shakespearean plays

Cohen's <i>d</i> Effect Size	Interpretation of the Effect Magnitude
$0.01 \leq d < 0.2$	Very small effect
$0.2 \leq d < 0.5$	Small effect
$0.5 \leq d < 0.8$	Medium effect
$0.8 \leq d < 1.2$	Large effect
$1.2 \leq d < 2$	Very large effect
$2 \leq d $	Huge effect

4.3 Results of the Questionnaire

To assess the learning satisfaction of dyslexic college learners with the use of audio dramas in understanding Shakespearean plays, the study used a structured questionnaire. The instrument comprised 25 items designed to assess the learners' satisfaction along with different dimensions. All the respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire by indicating their level of agreement with the various statements on the 5-point Likert scale of agreeing, neutral and disagreeing, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The items were categorized under five domains: ease of use, enhancement of engagement, accessibility improvement, facilitation of collaboration, and overall effectiveness of audio dramas in supporting comprehension. Prior to distribution, all participants underwent a briefing session to clarify the purpose of the study and the questionnaire's content, ensuring that responses were well-informed and unbiased. A 5-point Likert scale was interpreted using the mean score ranges from 4.21 to 5.00 as Highest, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Lowest. Table 4 below shows the learning satisfaction in studying Shakespeare among dyslexic college learners through audio dramas.

Table 4: Learning satisfaction in studying Shakespeare among dyslexic college learners

Domain	M	SD	Interpretation
Ease of Use	4.72	0.461	Highest
Engagement Enhancement	4.48	0.521	Highest
Accessibility Improvement	4.63	0.484	Highest
Collaboration Facilitation	4.50	0.536	Highest
Overall Effectiveness of Audio Dramas in Enhancing Comprehension	4.38	0.592	High
Overall Mean and SD for all 25 items	4.54	0.519	Highest

Table 4 shows that the highest mean score of 4.72, with a standard deviation of 0.461, was recorded for the domain Ease of Use. This may mean that participants considered audio dramas to be easy to use, most likely due to the way they were designed. On the other hand, “Overall Effectiveness of Audio Dramas in Enhancing Comprehension” received a low mean score of 4.38 (SD = 0.592) but still a highly positive reaction on the part of the respondents. With a total average of 4.54 (SD = 0.519) across all domains, the results showed that the learners agree with the multiplier that the audio dramas play a crucial in enriching the understanding of Shakespeare’s plays.

It was found that dyslexic learners perceived great value in audio dramas being easily accessible and engaging while enhancing collaboration. Though there was a slight difference across the domains, the percentages represent the extent of satisfaction with use of this learning tool as high.

4.4 Results of the Focus Group Discussion

The FGDs that were conducted after the audio drama intervention aimed at capturing the impact of this approach on improving understanding of Shakespearean plays by college learners with dyslexia. Ten participants who had previously completed the comprehension test and

questionnaire engaged in discussions structured around five key domains: ease of use, engagement enhancement, accessibility, collaboration facilitation, and overall effectiveness.

The main themes that emerged from the FGDs corroborated the quantitative data and provided more details on using audio dramatised content to reinforce comprehension among the learners. The “Ease of Use” domain got the highest mean score, indicating participants' higher level of satisfaction with the user-friendliness of the audio format. As Student 1 noted,

In fact, the audio dramas were very easy to incorporate into the lesson. I also used to be able to easily move from one scene to another and act, which made reading Shakespeare less overwhelming.

Likewise, Student 4 pointed out that, *“I like the simplicity of the interface. It made it much easier to concentrate on the content than when one is struggling with the tool to use.”* Others said it made directing the content easier rather than being bogged down by the tool.

The “Engagement Enhancement” domain also received a very positive response. Student 7 agreed:

In this case, I was glad to listen to what the voice actors have become of. Not only that [but by having it read to me] the emotions let me comprehend the motives of the characters more so than when I attempted to read the play myself.

Meanwhile, Student 10 stated, *“For the first time I started developing interest in Shakespeare. The audio format made the plays lively. I never felt this way before.”*

Participants appreciated the easy access to the audio dramas during the intervention and rated it highly. Student 5 affirmed this observation by saying,

Having an ability to listen to the plays while doing household chores was such a plus for me. It made Shakespeare a thing which I encounter every day and not that I should face as compulsory assignment.

Student 2 had this to say, *“The feature to set and change the playback speed means that I can rewind confusing parts. As someone with dyslexia, this does not slow me down anymore”.*

Using audio format also enhanced learners' accessibility as individuals and cooperation among learners. After analyzing the results, it was found that the group measurement index for the domain "Collaboration Facilitation" got higher approval. Student 9 shared,

I would listen to a scene then with my group, we reflected how we understood it. The main idea, which was to understand how others may interpret the same set of audio files, was interesting to test.

Student 3 also had the same impression. She said, *"The shared listening experience has provided group discussion points hence our group study was productive."*

Although the "Overall Effectiveness" of audio dramas had a slightly lower mean than the other subscales, the FGDs supported it. Student 6 agreed that separating characters and plots was a challenge for her:

Before using the audio dramas, I learned that. I have been able to gain considerable mastery of the content of play by Shakespeare after going through the article.

This was supported by Student 8, who said,

The audio format has changed the way I look at Shakespeare. It no longer feels like his works are difficult to understand. I can listen to his plays all day long without feeling burdened.

Overall, the FGDs provided critical qualitative insights that complemented and expanded upon the questionnaire findings. The high satisfaction reported across all domains—ease of use, accessibility, engagement, and collaboration—demonstrates that audio dramas effectively address many of the challenges dyslexic learners face when studying Shakespeare. Besides enhancing understanding as well as developing learners' confidence in addressing the texts, this suggests that the approach was simpler and more effective as compared to the traditional one. These outcomes thus lean heavily in favor of audio drama as effective means of assisting dyslexic learners in their analysis of Shakespeare's plays and, by extension, possibly other complicated texts.

5.0 DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates the use of audio dramas as an innovative, multisensory tool to close the pedagogical gap in higher education literature courses. By using this media, it promotes satisfaction and comprehension among dyslexic college learners regarding Shakespearean plays. The findings provide evidence for the significant positive impact of audio dramas across five key domains: ease of use, engagement enhancement, accessibility improvement, collaboration facilitation, and overall effectiveness. Audio dramas evidently play an important role among dyslexic learners who are expected to learn Shakespearean plays. Among the most notable results was the improvement of the experimental group using audio dramas over the traditional group in post-test results, thus demonstrating the remarkable effectiveness of this innovation.

These findings are, therefore, important within the broader framework of literature education and especially media literacy, as they extend or challenge previous assumptions in various ways. They make a significant contribution, particularly by addressing the unique needs of dyslexic learners. Building on Güray (2014), it demonstrates that audio dramas improve appreciation of Shakespeare and the comprehension of literary texts for learners with dyslexia. This study also challenges Jacobs' (2016) assertion that literature circles specifically promote comprehension. The results suggest that similar benefits can be achieved through audio dramas, which additionally offer unique accessibility advantages. Extending Hobbs and Coiro's (2019) digital literacy framework, audio-based approaches are set as important and under-utilized tools for teaching complex literary texts like Shakespearean plays.

This study reshaped long-held assumptions about dyslexic learners and their learning satisfaction with Shakespearean plays. For instance, it argues against available research in the discipline that indicated dyslexic learners have a high tendency to struggle in literature classes (Purewal, 2017) and learn better in isolation (Knoop-van Campen et al., 2018). It also shows how audio drama transformatively inspires collaboration and participation. The results challenge the notion that Shakespeare's plays are intrinsically too difficult for dyslexic learners (Murphy et al., 2020). It shows that the mode of delivery of content matters greatly in improving comprehension.

Instead of visual and text-based aids used in Hargis et al. (2014) and Pham and Nguyen (2023), this study proposes using audio dramas. Audio dramas bypass the widely recognized text decoding challenge (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020; Chen & Keong, 2017). This allows distractions to be removed to foster focus in dyslexic learners. According to Gibson (2016), this format should first be incorporated as a primary educational tool, not as additional material.

Educators can integrate audio dramas into their lessons so that those who struggle with literature can have the opportunity to learn it in ways that are unique to dyslexic learners.

This research reveals critical insights for teaching literature. Such dyslexic learners find that audio dramas are rewarded with progressive comprehension and learning satisfaction for challenging literary texts. This calls for a reevaluation of teaching practices. Incorporating audio-based methods into lessons could transform how literature is taught. By doing so, they can create more inclusive learning environments. As the field evolves, embracing these media tools may help all learners connect more meaningfully with literary works.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using audio dramas as a pedagogical intervention in teaching Shakespearean plays to college learners with dyslexia. It reveals that audio dramas offer learning satisfaction in ease of use, engagement, accessibility, collaboration, and overall learning effectiveness. Moreover, audio dramas were more effective at improving comprehension than other traditional text-based methods, shattering previous beliefs about what the learning blind spots are for dyslexic learners. They are complementary to the use of methods based on audio within the frameworks of media literacy, allowing the use of these methods more broadly in literature education. Specifically, practical recommendations for educators include using listening guides as the primary tool in educational activities involving audio drama, building groups around particular audio drama episodes, and tailoring classroom activities for an auditory format. There is a need to modify the standards of education to embrace the use of audio learning; funding should be made available to participate, and professional development should be embraced in this specific area. The curriculum developers should then develop extensive audio drama-integrated curricula, develop assessment tools to match the curriculum, and work in conjunction with the producers of the audio drama to produce the correct type of educational content. Future researches need to explore these findings further to discover the long-term impacts, broaden the methodology to other complex texts, and further explore their applicability to other learning challenges.

There are a number of strong implications for this study; however, there are also several important limitations. The small sample size and its source from one educational institution limit the overall external validity of the findings with regard to the whole spectrum of dyslexic college learners. Generalization of these results is limited by methodological limitations such as inadequate randomization and control for comparison. Cross-sectional surveys with self-completion questionnaires, when used alongside FGDs, can introduce biases, potentially

leading to a disjoint between participants' reported perceptions and their actual experiences. Only specific audio dramas have been used, and certain defining characteristics of participants can make generalization of results limited.

While the research forwards insightful improvements in comprehension, it does not address important questions of meta-comprehension concerning longer-term retention and overall long-term consequences. The positive results obtained in the experimental group can be partially attributed to the novelty effect of the intervention; therefore, it is important to conduct follow-up studies. Additionally, the current study may not fully address significant interfering factors that can bias the study's outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Awada, G., & Plana, M. G. C. (2018). Multiple strategies approach and EFL reading comprehension of learners with dyslexia: Teachers' perceptions. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(3), 463-476.
- Bloom, B. M. (1968). *Learning for mastery*. Center for the Study of Evaluation of Instructional Programs.
- Bonacina, S., Cancer, A., Lanzi, P. L., Lorusso, M. L., & Antonietti, A. (2015). Improving reading skills in students with dyslexia: The efficacy of a sublexical training with rhythmic background. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6(1510), 1-8.
- Chen, C. J., & Keong, M. W. Y. (2017). Affording inclusive dyslexia-friendly online text reading. *Universal Access in the Information Society*, 16(1), 951-965.
- Demmen, J. (2020). Issues and challenges in compiling a corpus of early modern English plays for comparison. *ICAME Journal*, 44(1), 37-68.
- Dorji, N., & Sakulwongs, N. (2024). The use of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) through Cake application to improve speaking skill of grade 6 Bhutanese ESL students. *THAITESOL Journal*, 37(1), 49-71.
- Dyches, J. (2017). Shaking off Shakespeare: A white teacher, urban students, and the mediating powers of a canonical counter-curriculum. *The Urban Review*, 49(2), 300-325.
- Edens, W. E. (2015). *Teaching Shakespeare*. Princeton University Press.
- Elliott, V. (2019). Detecting the Dane: Recreating Shakespearian genre in A-level literature. *English: Journal of the English Association*, 68(262), 283-304.
- Espinosa, R. (2016). Diversifying Shakespeare. *Literature Compass*, 13(2), 58-68.
- Fain, J. G., & Craig-Unkefer, L. (2015). Middle school adolescents developing critical stances around difference in young adolescent literature in literature circles. In T. E. Smith & C.

- Kleist (Eds.), *Lessons in disability: Essays on teaching with young adult literature* (pp. 53-73). McFarland & Company.
- Gibson, R. (2016). *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gürüyay, B. (2014). Creative drama: A way to understand Shakespeare? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116(1), 1127-1131.
- Hagen, Å. M., Melby-Lervåg, M., & Lervåg, A. (2017). Improving language comprehension in preschool children with language difficulties: A cluster randomized trial. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 58(10), 1132-1140.
- Hamilton, L. G., Hayiou-Thomas, M. E., & Snowling, M. J. (2021). Shared storybook reading with children at family risk of dyslexia. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 44(4), 859-881.
- Hand, R. J., & Traynor, M. (2011). *The radio drama handbook: Audio drama in context and practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Hargis, J., Cavanaugh, C., Kamali, T., & Soto, M. (2014). A federal higher education iPad mobile learning initiative: Triangulation of data to determine early effectiveness. *Innovative Higher Education*, 39(1), 45-57.
- Hobbs, R., & Coiro, J. (2019). Design features of a professional development program in digital literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(4), 401-409.
- Jacobs, M. (2016). *Using literature circles to increase reading comprehension and student motivation* [Unpublished Master thesis]. Rowan University.
- Knoop-van Campen, C. A., Segers, E., & Verhoeven, L. (2018). How phonological awareness mediates the relation between working memory and word reading efficiency in children with dyslexia. *Dyslexia*, 24(2), 156-169.
- Lind, P. B. (2018). Translating Shakespeare, translating culture: Text, paratext, and the challenges of recreating cultural meanings in text and on stage. *Studia Litteraria Universitatis Jagellonicae Cracoviensis*, 13(3), 219-235.
- Liontas, J. I. (2022). Let the games begin! Harnessing the power of gaming in language education. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 6(3), 1-13.
- Lopez, J., & Campoverde, J. (2018). Development of reading comprehension with graphic organizers for students with dyslexia. *Journal of Technology and Science Education*, 8(2), 105-114.
- McLaren, M. R. (2013). 'We know what we are, but not what we may be': Teaching Shakespeare to future teachers. In K. Flaherty, P. Gay, & L. E. Semler (Eds.), *Teaching Shakespeare beyond the centre: Australasian perspectives* (pp. 181-192). Palgrave Macmillan.

- Moreno, A. I., & Vermeulen, A. (2017). Audio description for language learning purposes in formal and non-formal educational contexts. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 178(1), 132-138.
- Murphy, S., Culpeper, J., Gillings, M., & Pace-Sigge, M. (2020). What do students find difficult when they read Shakespeare? Problems and solutions. *Language and Literature*, 29(3), 302-326.
- Pham, C. T., & Nguyen, C. T. (2023). The EFL 9th graders' attitudes toward the use of visual aids in reading comprehension at a secondary school in Kien Giang, Vietnam. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 10(4), 201-218.
- Pickering, S. J. (2012). Working memory in dyslexia. In T. P. Alloway & S. E. Gathercole (Eds.), *Working memory and neurodevelopmental disorders* (pp. 7-40). Psychology Press.
- Purewal, S. (2017). Shakespeare in the classroom: To be or not to be? *Warwick Journal of Education-Transforming Teaching*, 1(1), 26-35.
- Rall, H., & Harper, E. (2023). Pericles, Prince of Tyre: Transforming a Shakespeare play for gamified experience. *Sic: časopis za književnost, kulturu i književno prevodenje*, 13(3), 1-23.
- Rayner, F. C. (2021). *Shakespeare and the challenge of the contemporary*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Rello, L., & Baeza-Yates, R. (2013). Good fonts for dyslexia. In *ASSETS '13: Proceedings of the 15th International ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility* (pp. 1-8).
https://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/sites/default/files/good_fonts_for_dyslexia_study.pdf
- Richard, J. H. (2018). Sound stories: Audio drama and adaptation. In T. Leitch (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to adaptation* (pp. 372-381). Routledge.
- Rodero, E. (2012). See it on a radio story: Sound effects and shots to evoked imagery and attention on audio fiction. *Communication Research*, 39(4), 458-479.
- Russell-Brown, J. (2011). *Studying Shakespeare in performance*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Schupak, E. B. (2018). Shakespeare and performance pedagogy: Overcoming the challenges. *Changing English*, 25(2), 163-179.
- Shaywitz, B. A., & Shaywitz, S. E. (2020). The American experience: Towards a 21st century definition of dyslexia. *Oxford Review of Education*, 46(4), 454-471.

- Shores, A. (2017). Play the Knave in the English Shakespeare curriculum: A review. *Play the Knave*.
https://www.playtheknave.org/uploads/1/3/0/7/130747582/curriculum_review_of_play_the_knave_1.pdf
- Sotirovska, V., & Vaughn, M. (2022). The portrayal of characters with dyslexia in children's picture books. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(5), 731-742.
- Squeo, A., Pennacchia, M., & Winckler, R. (2021). *Experiencing Shakespeare in digital environments*. *Lingue e Linguaggi*, 45(1), 7-22.
- Suárez-Coalla, P., Álvarez-Cañizo, M., Martínez, C., García, N., & Cuetos, F. (2016). Reading prosody in Spanish dyslexics. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 66(3), 275-300.
- Suppiah, S. (2016). Creating a meaningful learning experience through a performance-based pedagogy (PBL) in the learning (teaching) of drama—The case of Shakespeare's King Lear (Li er). *Jurnal Penyelidikan Kent Bil*, 1(1), 29-40.
- Taib, S. A., Sa'adan, N., Saidalvi, A., Nurmaisarah, S., Fkhururazi, A. A., & Jenal, N. (2022). Investigating the effects of radio drama activity in ESL learning on male and female students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(4), 817-833.
- Thyer, B. A. (2012). *Quasi-experimental research designs*. Oxford University Press.
- Truax, B. (2012). Sound, listening and place: The aesthetic dilemma. *Organised Sound*, 17(3), 193-201.
- Turchi, L. B. (2020). Shakespeare e-books: An account of promising practice. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 25(1), 143-146.
- Vachon, W. (2022). Audio drama inquiry: A telling method of research. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *Sonic engagement* (pp. 44-63). Routledge.
- Wennås Brante, E. (2013). 'I don't know what it is to be able to read': How students with dyslexia experience their reading impairment. *Support for Learning*, 28(2), 79–86.
- Wood, S. G., Moxley, J. H., Tighe, E. L., & Wagner, R. K. (2018). Does use of text-to-speech and related read-aloud tools improve reading comprehension for students with reading disabilities? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 51(1), 73-84.
- Zhang, A. B. (2010). The integration of mastery learning in English as a second language (ESL) instruction. *International Journal of Instructional Media*, 37(1), 91–103.