Transformative Pedagogy in the Film *Taare Zameen Par:* An Empirical Analysis under the Light of Transformative Learning Theory

Mohammad Delwar Hosen[1, 2]

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Chittagong, Chittagong, Bangladesh.

[2] Ph.D. Student, Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, United States of America.

Correspondence: Mohammad Delwar Hosen, Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Chittagong, Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh.

Abstract

This article examines how transformative pedagogy happens in the Indian film *Taare Zameen Par*. This film has been analyzed under the lens of transformative learning theory introduced by Jack Mezirow. The author of this article purposively selects some critical scenes, dialogues, and situations that appear throughout the film to understand transformative pedagogy and transformative learning theory. This study employs the textual analysis method suggested by Frey et al. (1999). The prime intention of this study is to investigate how transformative learning happens in that film and find out ways to overcome the challenging situation in classrooms. This study finds that substantial transformative learning happens in the film's last half. Communication or dialogue is the most important element to engage students in transformative learning activities. This study discovers the teacher's extensive communication or communication efforts that support Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Teaching critical thinking is another vital element of transformative learning. This study observes teachers could change students' views about themselves and turn perplexed or shattered students into successful ones. Desire to change students, empathy for students, trusting students, and caring for students are some of the essential elements of transformative learning. This study notices that all those components of transformative learning exist in the film *Taare Zameen Par*. This study is crucial from the pedagogical point of view, which applies film as a transformative learning tool. Later, this article suggests how the school system and higher education institutions across the globe might be beneficial by employing a transformative learning approach in the classroom to make learners confident and successful in their life.

Keywords: transformative learning, pedagogy, Taare Zameen Par, film as a learning tool

1. Introduction to Transformative Pedagogy

Educators all over the world want their students to engage in critical thinking and learning, but those educators are uncertain about how to achieve those objectives (Meyers, 2008). Transformative pedagogy is a helpful theoretical perspective to show them the proper path (Meyers, 2008). Many researchers define transformative pedagogy in various ways. Ukpokodu (2009) described transformative pedagogy as "an activist pedagogy combining the elements of constructivist and critical pedagogy that empowers students to examine critically their beliefs, values, and knowledge with the goal of developing a reflective knowledge base" (p. 43). Transformative pedagogy believes that students are enthusiastic learners in the classroom; to promote engagement in the classroom, the teacher often utilizes tactics such as cooperative learning, problem-centered training, conversations, or else role plays (Meyers, 2008). Thus, communication plays an important role in the classroom for knowledge construction (Bertrand, 2003).

Transformative pedagogy develops from the idea of dialogic education by Paulo Freire. Freire (1970) introduced the concept of banking model education and dialogic education. The banking model of education assumes that students are only the recipients of information, and teachers rely mostly on lectures (Freire, 1970). That means teachers mostly deposit information to the students via lectures. In dialogic education, both students and teachers play important roles in effective learning activities (Freire, 1970). Dialogue is an important element of educational activities and assists in achieving transformative pedagogy (Nagda et al., 2003). Transformative pedagogy proposes a learning model that replaces the banking model with "a model that is more supportive of self-directed teaching and learning that is

underpinned by moral-ethical values" (Farren, 2016, p. 191). Freire (1970) claimed that "the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (p. 60).

Due to technological advancement, the world is changing swiftly. As a result, the education system faces numerous challenges while we are moving deeper into the twenty-first century (Jones, 2015). These changes and challenges have an impact on our education as well. However, traditional teaching-learning is a bit static. Farren (2016) claimed that teaching and learning in post-primary education are too strongly inspired by unsuitable, formal examinations that lead to teaching and learning performance being pitched towards rote learning. That is why transformative pedagogy discusses changes in the learning process and encourages students to actively engage with the learning process (*Transformative Pedagogy*, n. d.). Under this approach, learning activities turn out to be appropriate to the situations, and students get involved actively with inter-group or within intra-group (*Transformative Pedagogy*, n. d.). Farren (2016) stated that transformative pedagogy is crucial for the student's development, as it "supports participants in developing as 'beings-in-relation' and also as 'beings-in-becoming'" (p. 190). That means transformative pedagogy establishes environments that support teachers and students in expanding their individuality as persons concerning one another (Farren, 2016).

Transformative pedagogy can be described as a cycle that rotates and promotes students' thinking and assists them in doing something for other people (Meyers, 2008). Meyers (2008) claimed that transformative pedagogy helps develop students' critical thinking and facilitates expanding their understanding of how social powers influence people. Overall, transformative pedagogy inspires teachers to do more than just deliver information to the learners and assist students to "fundamentally and respectfully change students' attitudes and analytic skills to facilitate their growth" (Meyers, 2008, p. 223).

Different scholars analyzed transformative pedagogy in different ways. Farren (2016) believed key features of transformative pedagogy are "a) identity, b) beliefs and attitudes, c) knowledge, d) moral-ethical values, e) socio-affective factors, f) social interaction and collaboration, g) critical reflection, h) school and wider society" (p. 191). Transformative pedagogy is committed to bringing a transformation in the classroom by connecting educators and learners (Farren, 2016). Transformative pedagogy also presents a structure for building up a transformative relationship in the classroom and promoting transformation (Farren, 2016). Farren (2016) found that transformative pedagogy motivates students to accept "responsibility for expressing their meanings that imply metacognitive and socio-affective factors, and social interaction" and assists learners to develop "self-awareness and social awareness" (p. 191). Farren (2016) claimed that transformative pedagogy supports a person in "being-in-relation" as well as "being-in-becoming". (p. 196).

Freire prioritized dialogic education over the banking model, where "the knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of students and teachers are honored as central to the education process" (Nagda et al., 2003, p. 168). Mezirow (1997) added that transformative learning in the classroom supports to development of self-directed rationality among students. Transformative pedagogy helps students engage in discussion to "co-construct meaning from educational material and experiences through an inquiry-based approach" (*What is Transformative Pedagogy*, n. d., p. 1). Fetherston and Kelly (2007) claimed that transformative learning contains a thoughtful understanding of our knowledge and other elements of the surrounding environment. The authors believed that "teaching for transformation involves creating spaces for critical engagement and dialogue (Fetherston & Kelly, 2007, p. 269). Jones (2015) stated that transformative learning is very efficient in adult learning, creates broad-ranging conversation and arguments about learning, and relates those discussions to own and social changes. Transformative learning is "about developing leadership attributes; its purpose is to produce enlightened change agents" (Frenk et al., 2010, p. 6).

Online teaching is getting popular all over the world (Deady, 2018). After the COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions worldwide were forced to shift traditional face-to-face teaching-learning activities to online and hybrid modes. Meyers (2008) suggested five things to use transformative pedagogy efficiently in online courses: "(1) creating a safe environment; (2) encouraging students to think about their experiences, beliefs, and biases; (3) using teaching strategies to promote students' engagement; (4) posing real-world problems that address societal inequalities; and (5) helping students implement action-oriented solutions." (p. 219). However, both online and in-person learning environments require active students' engagement to make the education process effective.

Diversity exists everywhere in the world. The classroom is also full of diversified students regarding genders, races, colors, physical and mental capabilities, intellectual heights, socioeconomic backgrounds, etc. That is why teachers and students "can greatly benefit from understanding how learning works for different students." (*What is the transformative learning*, 2020, para 1). From the theoretical perspective, transformative learning theory is a suitable approach to understanding transformative pedagogy. Transformative pedagogy helps to develop, test, and retest the

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT).

2. Literature Review

2.1 An overview of Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) argues that students can think differently based on new information exposure. Transformative learning happens when students believe that their opinions, engagements, and dialogues are essential for the class and transformative learning motivates students to engage in classroom discussion and activities (Hooks, 1993). Jack Mezirow is the founder of transformative learning theory (*What is the transformative learning*, 2020).

Mezirow first introduced the term *transformation* in his study about U.S women returning to postsecondary study or the job market after a long gap in their education or job (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow (1994) stated that this theory is "intended to be a comprehensive, idolized, and universal model consisting of the generic structures, elements, and process of adult learning" (p. 222). Mezirow (1997) explained that transformative learning is essential because "we have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration, aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken." (p. 5). Transformative learning theory has "attracted researchers and practitioners from a wide variety of theoretical persuasions and practice settings, yet it is a complicated idea that offers considerable theoretical, practical, and ethical challenges" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 1). Enkhtur and Yamamoto (2017) claimed that transformative learning theory "sets a guiding conceptual framework to understand how adults learn, grow, challenge themselves and engage in transformative processes" (p. 208).

According to Mezirow (1997), there are four processes of learning. The first one is "to elaborate an existing point of view" (p. 7); the second one is "to establish new points of view," (p. 7); and the third one is "to transform our point of view" (p.7). Finally, the last process is to "transform our ethnocentric habit of mind by becoming aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view groups other than our own." (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7). Children's learning process is a bit complex in that children use their imagination to conceptualize descriptions and contemplate hypothetically (Mezirow, 1997). To enable transformative learning, "educators must help learners become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10).

Mezirow (2003) described transformative learning as "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (p. 58–59). Jones (2015) said that the main argument of TLT is to create a meaning of learning based on the learners' needs. Jones (2015) added that transformative learning happens in "those situations where we become aware of the inadequacy of these frames of reference (often through an explicit, disorienting experience) and subsequently engage in critical reflection on their very basis" (p. 268-269). This essential reflection, a fundamental procedure in transformative learning, leads to creating an understanding of unconventional approaches to thinking via conversation and activities (Mezirow, 2012).

Another vital process of transformative learning is the role and importance of critical dialectical discourse (Mezirow, 2003). Here discourse indicates a process where learners actively participate in a dialogue to understand more of their experience and make their experience more meaningful (Jones, 2015). Very specifically, "Mezirow is concerned with dialogue devoted to assessing contested beliefs, and it is through such discourse that the process of transformation is promoted, developed and enacted" (Jones, 2015, p. 269). Tylor (1998) argued that discourse helped learners to put thinking into action. Jones (2015) added that "most of the transformative learning theorists agree that such learning can only be said to have truly occurred when it produces action based on the newly transformed frames of reference" (p. 269).

John Dirkx has the credential to expand the transformative learning theory introduced by Mezirow. Dirkx et al. (2006) focused on the learner's inner world instead of the intellectual, epistemological, and sociocultural proportions of the learning process. Here inner world stands for the ways learners communicate and shapes their learning experience (Dirkx et al., 2006). Dirkx et al. (2006) focused more on an abstract inner world than our daily experience, particular views, and ideals or attitudes.

Transformative learning happens when students are involved in-class discussions, evaluate their concepts, analyze those concepts for regularities and irregularities, and build consolidative inferences (Meyers, 2008). Taylor (2007) stated that TLT is "the most researched and discussed theory in the field of adult education" (p. 173). Research on TLT has increased significantly both in the U.S. and outside of the U.S. (Taylor, 2007). Transformative learning offers a theory of learning that is uniquely adult, abstract, and idealized, grounded in the nature of human communication (Taylor, 2007, p. 173). Taylor (2007) claimed that transformative learning was found to be effective among adult learners in capturing the meaning-making process. Among the adults, transformative learning "allows individuals to have questioning discussions, share information openly and achieve mutual and consensual understanding" (Taylor, 2007, p. 179).

Eisen (2001) studied community college teachers and found that peer-learning partnerships are crucial in transformative learning and professional development. Taylor (2007) also echoed Eisen (2001) and stated that in transformative learning, the role of communication is most important. Taylor (2007) added, "transformative learning process dependent upon the need for support, trust, friendship and intimacy" (p. 187). Research on TLT discovered that a learning process requires to give more commitment to: "the role of context, the varying nature of the catalysts of transformative learning, the increased role of other ways of knowing, the importance of relationships and an overall broadening of the definitional outcome of a perspective transformation" (Taylor, 2007, p. 174). Transformative learning remains to be a sustainable and effective field of study concerning adult education and other associated subjects (Taylor, 2007).

Research about TLT has grown exponentially, and publication on this theory has doubled every five years in North America over the last 15 years (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Many theories such as 'conception of paradigm' by Kuhn, 'conscientization' by Freire, and 'domains of learning' by Habermas contributed to developing Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Kitchenham, 2008). The important concepts of those theories updated Mezirow's "transformative learning theory and the significant concepts of disorienting dilemma, meaning schemes, meaning perspectives, perspective transformation, frame of reference, levels of learning processes, habits of mind, and critical self-reflection" (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 106).

Mezirow (1991) stated that critical reflection, dialogue, and experience are central elements in transformative learning. Taylor and Cranton (2013) claimed that experience, empathy, and desire to change are the most significant elements in transformative learning. Experience is the most central component of transformative learning, and experience works as a medium of transformation (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Mezirow (1996) stated that "learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 162).

Transformative learning is infrequently defined or examined crucially in research about it, though the experience is a crucial element in transformative learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Taylor and Cranton (2013) believed that "not only is the interpretation of an experience mediated by context, but also the personal and historical context is significant to the evolution and outcome of a transformative experience" (p. 36). To evaluate 'experience' critically in transformative learning, Taylor and Cranton (2013) posted some questions for a researcher, such as "What is the nature of experience? How does experience unfold in the context of transformative learning? How can we describe people's experiences? How can we foster new experiences that have the potential to lead to transformative learning?" (p. 43).

Empathy is one of the most significant elements of transformative learning that is missing in Mezirow's discussion (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Empathy is seen as the capability to share own experience with another emotionally (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Taylor and Cranton (2013) claimed that empathy "provides the learner with the ability to identify with the perspectives of others; lessens the likelihood of prejudgment; increases the opportunity for identifying shared understanding and facilitates critical reflection through the emotive valence of assumptions" (p. 37-38). Taylor and Cranton (2013) suggested exploring 'empathy' in more depth to understand transformative learning accurately. Taylor and Cranton (2013) recommended some questions to explore 'empathy' in transformative learning, such as "Are emphatic teachers more effective at fostering transformative learning and if so, how? What is the relationship between critical reflection and empathy in transformative learning? Does transformation lead to greater empathy?" (p. 38).

The desire to change is another important element in transformative learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). The authors believed that "individuals cannot be forced to transform, but rather that people need to be willing and able to engage in activities that have the potential to lead them to shifts in perspectives" (Taylor & Cranton, 2013, p. 40). In transformative learning, learners examine their values and beliefs and move away from their communities and cultures (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Though it is believed that transformative learning is intended, and individuals expect to be open and eager to participate in the process, this desire is not clearly defined and addressed in the academic explanations of transformative learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). That is why Taylor and Cranton (2013) proposed some questions to explore the 'desire to change' properly in transformative learning, such as "Why do some people revise their perspectives and others not? Is it a characteristic of the person? A characteristic of the event? Or where the person is in his or her life?" (p. 43).

Christie et al. (2015) investigated how Mezirow's transformative learning theory "can be put into practice in Adult and Higher Education via three case studies undertaken by the authors in different places, at different times, and with different sets of learners" (p. 9). Data were collected through the survey and interview, and the authors found that Mezirow's transformative learning contributed positively to university staff training and teacher education courses (Christie et al., 2015). The findings of Christie et al. (2015) are applicable to adult education and other related fields as well. Christie et al. (2015) argued that "every individual has a particular view of the world" (p. 11) which is different than others. Christie et al. (2015) asserted that Mezirow's transformative learning theory clarifies "how adult learners

make sense or meaning of their experiences, how social and other structures influence the way they construe that experience, and how the dynamics involved in modifying meanings undergo changes when learners find them to be dysfunctional" (p. 10).

Kitchenham (2008) concluded his article by showing some statistics about how this theory is applied in many ways. As of 2006, transformative learning theory resulted in seven international conferences, 150 doctoral dissertations, hundreds of scholarly peer-reviewed papers, and presentations (Kitchenham, 2008). Kitchenham (2008) asserted, that although transformative learning theory had experienced many modifications, this theory will "continue to influence adult learning praxis across many disciplines" (p. 120).

Transformative learning theory investigates the impact of video and photography in adult education (Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) claimed video and photography facilitate a mutual visual context both for teachers, learners, participants, and researchers. Taylor (2007) quoted Prosser (1998) as that photography and video help with "the express aim of exploring participants' values, beliefs, attitudes, and meanings and in order to trigger memories or to explore group dynamics or systems" (p. 188). The film is the articulated presentation of the video. That is why films are a very important tool in transformative learning. This study intends to propose one research question here.

2.2 Film as an Instrument of Transformative Learning

Films can be instruments for transformative pedagogy. Freire (1970) believed that teachers should develop a transformative relationship between teacher and learners, learners and their learnings, and learners and society. Freire (1970) argued that education does not limit to the classroom but remains in all segments of a learner's life. The film can be a new way to build a transformative relationship. Jarvis (2012) stated that film and fiction enhance transformative learning in the classroom and build up a strong relationship among all stakeholders. Jarvis (2012) explained the role of film in the classroom and said, "through the use of imagery, symbolism and sensory stimulation, they startle us into recognizing new patterns and connections in the world, stimulating our imaginative faculties and expanding our perceptions" (p. 486). With the help of camera, film, and television, fiction draws us directly into the characters' experiences and generates a passionate and important understanding (Jarvis, 2012).

Transformative learning theory focused on social development is particularly well-served in film and fiction (Jarvis, 2012). The film "not only creates understanding and empathy with those who are different from us, but it also allows us to imagine alternatives to the way we live now" (Jarvis, 2012, p. 488). The film and fiction have been exceptionally beneficial to educators involved in transformative teaching for diversity (Jarvis, 2012). An important aspect of the contribution that fiction and film make to transformative learning is related to the constructive role of the reader/ viewer. Jarvis (2012) claimed film and fiction "offer opportunities to students to share the experience of social and cultural groups different from their own" (p. 488). Film and fiction enabled students to "identify some of the contradictions and ruptures within texts that may mask the ideologies…that are not apparently supportive of obvious stereotyping" (Jarvis, 2012, p. 494).

Educators began to explore how the film could be a useful tool to promote learning in the classroom after motion pictures emerged as a medium of entertainment (Butler et al., 2009). Butler et al. (2009) claimed, "today films are commonly used as an instructional aid in the classroom" (p. 1161). Many educators believe that films increase students' interest in the given subject topic and learn course material accordingly (Butler et al., 2009). Between text and film about the text, "If films do increase interest in the topic covered, then subjects should have rated texts as more interesting when a film clip about the same topic was shown than when a clip was not shown." (Butler et al., 2009, p. 1165).

Jarvis (2012) gave examples of two films that contribute to the teaching-learning process. The film *Dead Poet's Society* "is superficially liberal in its approach to teaching, showing resistance to outmoded attitudes towards class and authoritarian teaching styles" (Jarvis, 2012, p. 496). And the film *Crazy/Beautiful* "challenges stereotypes, showing the impoverished Latino hero as a good student, a positive member of society with a supportive, ambitious family, and the wealthy White heroine as a waster whose lack of conventional family life leads to her downfall." (Jarvis, 2012, p. 496).

Jarvis (2012) claimed that the use of film and fiction in the classroom strengthened many claims of transformative learning theory over the last 40 years as it "draws on many aspects of our humanity, on our emotions and our unconscious fears and desires, as well as on our intellectual and cognitive facilities" (p. 500). The findings of Butler et al. (2009) indicated that "popular films can increase learning and interest in the classroom" (p. 1167).

King (2002) investigated using DVD feature films in the EFL classroom and found that "DVD films provide more pedagogical options and are a rich resource of intrinsically motivating materials for learners" (p. 509). Films motivate students to learn English, bridge the gap between reading skills and listening skills, and promote learning different strategies and styles for processing information (King, 2002). Video use in the classroom is "a much more dynamic

medium than a static text or a sound-only recording" (King, 2002, p. 509). To explain why the film is important in the classroom learning activities, King (2002) quoted Ward and Lepeintre (1996) as "a film with a story that wants to be told rather than a lesson that needs to be taught" (p. 510).

The length of the film in learning activities should be selected carefully. King (2002) advised that "For mature and advanced learners, films should be chosen not simply for their entertainment value; they should be timely and deliver a clear message to enhance classroom discussion" (p. 513). King (2002) said, the majority of the time, short video clips or movie clips are effective in the learning process. However, sometimes long video clips or a full movie strengthen understanding of a complex topic or situation (King, 2002). King (2002) concluded that "DVD feature films provide enjoyable language learning opportunities for students if the teacher chooses appropriate length films, either complete one or segments, which are purposeful and tailored to students' learning needs and proficiency level." (p. 520).

Popular culture and media have a significant influence on all of us (Tisdell, 2008). Tisdell (2008) said, more people voted for the 2006 winner of "American Idol" than the winner of any presidential election. From this perspective, Tisdell (2008) investigated "how, and to what extent, adult educators can draw on popular culture and entertainment media to facilitate transformative learning around diversity and equity issues, primarily in adult higher education classroom-based settings" (p. 48). For this study, Tisdell (2008) selected some movies: *Crash, Brokeback Mountain, Whale Rider,* and *The Hours.* The findings showed that the film helped make meaning of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation among adult learners (Tisdell, 2008). In higher education settings or adult education, films and other popular entertainment media can effectively make meaning of critical issues (Tisdell, 2008). The pleasure aspect of entertainment media can easily engage people in the discussion and facilitate transformative thinking about diversity issues (Tisdell, 2008).

The following discussion is about how transformative learning took place in an Indian film named *Taare Zameen Par* (Like Stars on Earth) and why we should take advantage of film in the classroom as a tool of transformative learning. The last research question intends to answer this study is:

3. Methods

This study is qualitative content analysis, textual analysis in nature. As this study examines the critical roles of teachers and students throughout the film, quantitative analysis is not a suitable method for this study. Qualitative content analysis is more convenient for this study. Frey et al. (1999) claimed that textual analysis explains the contents of audio or video messages thematically or explicitly. The sample for this study is the Indian film *Taare Zameen Par,* a Hindi-language drama film released in 2007. From that film, this study purposively selected some scenes and dialogues to test the transformative learning theory by Jack Mezirow. In other words, this study analyzed some scenes and dialogues where transformative learning happened. This study intends to extend the literature on transformative learning and test transformative learning theory. This study also expects to provide some guidelines for educational institutes to handle challenging situations, care for different students differently, and make every study student successful in their own way.

This study intends to answer two research questions:

RQ1: How does transformative learning happen in the Indian film Taare Zameen Par?

RQ2: Why is transformative learning essential in all kinds of educational institutes?

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Film Taare Zameen Par under the Lens of TLT. Setting the Background: A Dyslexic Student

Taare Zameen Par is an Indian film directed and produced by Aamir Khan, distributed by Aamir Khan Productions. This film showed that all children have potential if they get proper caring from their teachers. The film's main character is Ishaan Awasthi, an eight-year-old boy who reads in third grade and has dyslexic symptoms. He has been living with his parents along with an elder brother. Both read in the same school.

The film showed that Ishaan has no interest in reading and writing. He doesn't pay any attention to the classes. He goes to school as usual and comes back. Teachers were angry and disgusted with his behavior and his performance in the exams. Most of the spelling was wrong in all his classes works, and he didn't even answer all the exam questions. Whenever teachers asked him to read loudly, he couldn't read. As a result, they kicked him out of the class most often. One day, Ishaan left school early and went to roam around the city. Later he managed to take an absent note from his elder brother and the next day gave that note to the teachers for his absence. At home, his father is always angry with him due to his failure in the exams. His mother and brother were supportive but couldn't stand against his father. He used to paint, drawing adorable pictures.

One day Ishaan was involved in a fight with other children. So, the neighbors come to Ishaan's home to complain about him. Ishaan's father did not listen to any explanation from Ishaan and hit Ishaan again. Another day, Ishaan asked his father to take him to visit the aquarium, but his father was not saying anything. Then he found out that Ishaan was absent from school due to a fever. Immediately, they figured out that Ishaan didn't attend school and went somewhere else. His father beat him again. His parents went to school to meet the principal. The principal said it's the second year in the same class. If he can't pass this time, they will not promote him to the next level. Teachers were complaining and showing his performances to them as well. Then, Ishaan's father decided to send him to the boarding school. Ishaan's mother tried not to send him and couldn't stand against her husband. Ishaan cried a lot not to go to the boarding school. But finally, he had to go.

In the boarding school, teachers told him about discipline on the first day. He met Rajon Damodaran in the class and started sitting beside him during the course. Rajon was the topper in the class. Ishaan began to do the same performance in the class as in the previous school, and the teachers were angry and behaved roughly with him. They bit him for inattentiveness. Ishaan was always in a thoughtful mood in the boarding school. When his parents came to visit him, he closed the door and started crying. He ran from the room and went to the basketball field. His brother gave him some colors as they know that Ishaan loves to paint. Another day, Ishaan's mother called to say that they could not visit him as his elder brother had the final tennis match. Ishaan listened to her, cried, and did not say a single word to her over the phone. Ishaan faced more torture from the teachers and was depressed as his parents sent him to the boarding school. One day he was standing on the edge of the rooftop and looking down. Maybe he wanted to jump from there. But Rajon came and said, "we got a new teacher; let us go to the class."

4.2 Transformative Learning: A Brilliant Student

The new teacher was Ram Shankar Nikumbh, a temporary art teacher in Ishaan's school. While entering the class, Nikumbh was playing flute and dressed up like a clown. Just after seeing him, the students were delighted, and everyone joined him by singing and dancing except for Ishaan. Nikumbh noticed Ishaan. Nikumbh gave some art papers to everyone and asked them to draw or paint whatever they wanted. Everyone started drawing or painting except for Ishaan. Ishaan was sitting in the classroom and thinking about something. The teacher asked him, "Where are you, friend? Are you lost in your dream?" Ishaan did not reply to anything. Then the teacher said, "no problem, no hurry."

Nikumbh noticed Ishaan carefully and understood that Ishaan had a problem. But he could not figure out what the problem was. He asked Rajon about Ishaan. Rajon told Nikumbh that Ishaan wanted to go home. Rajon described that Ishan does not have any concentration in study. He can't read and write correctly. His performance was very poor. Nikumbh went to the teachers' room and checked all the class works of Ishaan. He figured out that Ishaan wrote the same type of letters reversely. He read the comments of the teachers as well. Nikumbh decided to visit Ishaan's home to meet his parents to know Ishaan more clearly. He talked to his parents and saw the paintings and drawings of Ishaan. He was amazed to see the excellent drawing capabilities of Ishaan. He explained to Ishaan's parents that Ishaan has difficulty knowing the letters and understanding the meaning of the words. Nikumbh told them that Ishaan had a problem called dyslexia.

The teacher came back to school with some paintings and drawings of Ishaan and with his notebook. He talked with the principal of Ishaan's school and explained Ishaan's problem with reading and writing. He convinced the principal that other teachers should not say any bad comments about Ishaan's homework. In the meantime, he will work with Ishaan to improve Ishaan's reading and writing skills.

Nikumbh shared stories of Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Abhishek Bacchan, and Thomas Alva Edison in the class who had reading and writing difficulties in their childhood. He said everyone could do their best. Some may express it, and some may not. He asked students to pick anything and make something from the materials available outside. Ishaan made a boat within a short time, and everyone was surprised to see that. Nikumbh said to Ishaan that he also had the same difficulty as Ishaan in his childhood. He ensured that Ishaan was not alone, and surely Ishaan would overcome this challenge like others, like Nikumbh. This conversation influenced Ishaan very much, and Ishaan started believing in Nikumbh.

Nikumbh started playing with Ishaan and teaching Ishaan how to pronounce and write the letters and make words while playing with him. Nikumbh showed his caring to Ishaan, and Ishaan started to respond to Nikumbh. Nikumbh gave time to Ishaan to write a single letter within a small box and many more. Gradually, Ishaan began to know the letters and started to read the words and sentences. Ishaan also learned to wear his clothing and tie up the shoes, which he could not do earlier. Ishaan felt the care of the teacher, and he was trying to do better. His handwriting improved a lot.

Nikumbh organized an art competition for all students and teachers. Ishaan drew a lovely picture and won the first prize. Nikumbh drew Ishaan's picture and became the runner-up. Ishaan was crying and overwhelmed with joy when he heard

his name from the principal as the competition's winner. Ishaan's parents came and heard about Ishaan's improvement. They thanked Nikumbh.

Nikumbh figured out Ishaan's complexities from the root. He worked very diligently and made Ishaan feel that Ishaan was not alone in overcoming this difficulty. The teaching methodology helped Ishaan to think that he also can learn and perform better. Ultimately, Ishaan proved that he had a strong capability of learning and being creative as a painter.

4.3 Connecting TLT and Taare Zameen Par

Communication and dialogue are essential elements in learning activities that help achieve transformative pedagogy (Mezirow, 1991; Meyers, 2008; Nagda et al., 2003; Farren, 2016; Taylor, 2007; Eisen, 2001). In the film, we see that the art teacher Nikumbh was always eager to make conversation with Ishaan by sharing stories and personal experiences and taking extra care after class time. That caring creates trustworthiness between teacher and student, leading to effective communication and transforming Ishaan from a dyslexic patient to a brilliant artist and student. Even when Ishaan did not reply to Nikumbh's questions, the teacher waited patiently to understand Ishaan. Later both student and teacher have good communication. This is transformative education that connects educators and learners (Farren, 2016). This connection helps learners and educators to engage in learning activities which is the prime element of transformative learning. In this film, we notice a tireless effort from Nikumbh to make communication which is the most important in transformative learning.

Transformative pedagogy encourages educators to do something more than deliver information and engage learners in classroom activities that help learners to put thinking into action (Meyers, 2008; Hooks, 1993; Taylor, 1998). Meyers (2008) also says that educators change the learner's skills to accelerate their progress in transformative pedagogy. We see that Nikumbh went to Ishaan's home to talk to his parents, check teachers' comments on other courses of Ishaan, and try his best to understand Ishaan's problem. Then Nikumbh figured out Ishaan's problem and took care of it. Gradually, Ishaan becomes a confident and successful student. As Tylor (2007) says, support, trust, and friendship from teachers can change students positively. We see this type of change and transformation in this film.

Empathy toward students is another essential component of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Empathy enables educators to understand learners' problems, share the same feelings, and connect educators and learners emotionally (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). In this film, the art teacher Nikumbh shared his childhood problem of learning with Ishaan, gave some examples from other countries with dyslexia, and assured him that Ishaan is not alone. Teacher Nikumbh has always been empathic to Ishaan. In the first school, Ishaan did not get any empathy from school, teachers, friends, and not even from his father. This film shows how empathy can change the life of a student.

The desire to bring changes among students is another significant element in transformative learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Nikumbh noticed on the very first day that Ishaan was not paying any attention to classroom instructions and not participating in any conversations with friends and teachers. Ishaan even did not reply to direct questions from Nikumbh. That silence of Ishaan strikes Nikumbh's mind, and he wishes to bring changes in Ishaan. However, every individual is different, everyone has a different view of the world, and everyone requires proper attention for their development (Christie et al., 2015). So, Nikumbh did the same thing as Christie et al. (2015) suggested and helped Ishaan to overcome his challenges.

The film *Taare Zameen Par* can be used as an example of transformative learning in higher education institutes, specifically in teacher education classes. We see that transformative learning is very efficient among adult learners in capturing the meaning-making process (Taylor, 2007). Jones (2015) also stresses that transformative learning is very efficient in adult learning. If future teachers and educators watch this film, they could understand how crucial transformative learning is and how they can achieve transformative learning. Jarvis (2012) says that film in the classroom enhances transformative learning and builds a strong relationship among all stakeholders. Most importantly, the film assists in making meaning of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation among adult learners (Tisdell, 2008). In a multiracial country like the USA, the film can be a valuable tool to teach race and gender in higher education.

Tisdell (2008) shows that entertainment media can quickly engage people in the discussion and facilitate transformative learning and thinking. Transformative learning can be achieved through dialogue, participation, and engagement in classroom activities. Entertainment media like film encourage discussion, and discussion promotes transformative learning. The film *Taare Zameen Par* can be used as an example of transformative learning in adult education.

Jarvis (2012) claims that the use of film and fiction in the classroom strengthens many claims of transformative learning theory. Butler et al. (2009) say, recently, educators used films frequently in the classroom as an instructional aid. Jarvis (2012) says selected films for educational purposes create and understand empathy who have learning challenges. We know that empathy is an important element in transformative learning and the film helps to produce empathy. Thus, the film can help to achieve transformative learning. We see how a teacher can change the life of a student with learning

difficulties. We can use the film *Taare Zameen Par* to teach future educators how to overcome challenging classroom situations, engage students in learning activities, and transform students into confident and successful human beings.

4.4 Limitations

Indian film as a sample is a limitation. The classroom scenarios in Europe and America are far more different than in India or South Asian countries. Due to cultural differences and socioeconomic diversity, the findings of this study may not be applicable to all countries. This study has poor external reliability.

In the method section, there is no precise description of selecting scenes and dialogues between students and teachers. This is another limitation. As this study aims to test transformative learning theory, the author purposively selects scenes and dialogues relevant to the theory. So, if this study was conducted in a different country with different cultures, the findings of that study may be varied from this study.

4.5 Future Directions

It would be better to take the sample from different countries of the world to test transformative learning theory. Then we will get a clear picture of global learning activities. In that way, it would be possible to compare the difference between countries and cultures. Then it will be easier for education authorities to update their teaching-learning activities. The theory can be tested in the real classroom, apart from the films. In that way, this theory will be more solidified.

5. Conclusion

This study examines transformative learning that happened in the Indian film *Taare Zameen Par*. As a method, this study applied textual analysis in the light of transformative learning theory by Mezirow. This study found many components of transformative learning in that film. Transformative learning happens when the teacher inspires students to do more than just share mere information. In the film *Taare Zameen Par,* this study found inspiration from the teacher who turns a dyslexic student into a brilliant painter. Encouraging students and believing in them is also part of transformative learning. The teacher Nikumbh did it continuously to his student Ishaan. Educators must help students to overcome their challenges. This film demonstrated how to be helpful to unconventional students. Dirkx et al. (2006) prioritized learners' inner world to make them successful. In this film, the teacher took time to figure out the strength of the student Ishaan and what was his excellent capability of drawing. Support, trust, and friendship from teachers can help students to be successful. Taylor and Cranton (2013) prioritize empathy towards students to make students confident and successful. This study found significant empathy from the teacher towards the dyslexic student. Last but not least, the desire to change a teacher's mind is essential. If a teacher wishes to contribute to developing a student's learning capability, the student obviously will be able to learn something and change himself or herself. Overall, the findings of this study strengthen the transformative learning theory introduced by Jack Mezirow. So, educators, policymakers, and administrators could be beneficial by introducing transformative learning in their classrooms. For transformative learning, the film could be an essential tool. The audience simultaneously could enjoy the film and learn about transformative pedagogy. That is why transformative learning is important in all kinds of educational institutes. A film like *Taare Zameen Par* could demonstrate how to handle challenging classroom situations and how to turn students into successful human beings.

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