

The Role of Parents and Teachers as Literacy Sponsor for Children with Dyslexia Disorder in *Taare Zameen Par* Movie

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Oct 27, 2020
Revised April 19, 2020
Accepted May 10, 2021

Keywords:

Literacy
Sponsor
Multimodal
Dyslexia

ABSTRACT

The role of parents and teachers is less to be considered in developing children's literacy skills such reading and writing. As literacy sponsors, both parents and teachers hold a critical role for the children, especially those with special needs such dyslexic ones, in acquiring literacy skills and knowledge. This study focuses on the role of parents and teachers as literacy sponsor portrayed in *Taare Zameen Par* movie and how the application of multimodal literacy is depicted through the story of a dyslexic boy, Ishaan. This study uses descriptive qualitative method to analyse and describe the data. The main data of this study are dialogues and screenshots taken from the movie. Furthermore, the data will be analysed using Brandt's literacy and sponsorship theories to support the argumentation and interpretation in the analysis process. The result shows that the role of parents and teachers has a great impact toward the literacy development of dyslexic children like Ishaan. Likewise, multimodal literacy gives a better outcome for the children with dyslexia disorder.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 20th century, text book has been replaced by digital media such mobile phone, tablet and etc. People can get information easily with a single search in Google search engine through their gadget such websites, YouTube, and any online sources which also can be called as Literacy. It is something that people unintentionally always do in their daily life even only as part of their hobby for example learning how to install Windows OS (operating system) in their personal computer or laptop and how to mod their android applications in their mobile phone. In Australia, some elementary teachers introduced multimodal learning with tablet to their students as the media of their learning process to improve their literacy skills (Yelland, 2018). All of the examples above show that digital literacy events in our society were caused by globalization which become part of our culture and this phenomenon can be called as cultural literacy. The impact of cultural literacy is caused by several aspects such family influence, self-exploration through literacy, and the cultural politics of literacy (Bedard et al, 2011). Those three aspects can be categorized as literacy sponsors, however, for some people, literacy is not something that they can do easily such people with dyslexia who are having a problem in recognizing letters that lower their learning capability such reading and writing.

In line with this matter, *Taare Zameen Par* (Every Child is Special) is a movie about an eight years old boy named Ishaan Awasthi who is suffering dyslexia, a neurological disorder. He always gets scolded by his teachers because of his incapability in writing, reading and counting and always skipped the classes. He always gets low score in every subject in the school and every teacher thought that Ishaan is a lazy, dumb and idiot child. One day when his parents found out about this matter, they took Ishaan to a boarding school to be disciplined. As a result, his condition became worst because of the pressure being in a new environment alone and the separation from his family. After several days in his new school, a new art teacher named Ram Shankar Nikumbh, who found out about Ishaan's disabilities tried to explain this to the people around Ishaan.

He taught him how to write, read, and count with patient and care. Until one day, Nikumbh helped him to find his self-confidence again.

Learning process in both adult and children with dyslexia disorder, the role of family and teachers are needed as literacy sponsor to support and motivate them to improve their learning capability. Well-educated parents in higher social status are more aware of dyslexia and consider this disorder as discrepancy between IQ, reading and spelling skills compared to less-educated parents in lower social status who consider this matter as a handicap (Elbro, 2010). In another case, the cause of dyslexia can be found as heritage disorder especially those who were born in a family with low levels of literacy and could lead to a cycle of educational disadvantage (Fisher & DeFries, 2002). Teachers usually found that dyslexic children avoid to study and become lazy are caused by lack of parental support (Alexander, 2006). Both parents and teachers have a critical role in the process of improving dyslexic children's learning capability and if one of them did not do their role properly, the children become the victim of their incompetence.

There are barely any studies in the field of literacy development especially in the case of dyslexic children. Hulme et al (2015) suggest that children who were born in a dyslexia family have a risk on the development of oral language skills such as phonological (speech sound) and phonic (understanding letter and sound relationships) skills that caused poor reading comprehension abilities. On the other hand, Bell (2013) conducts a research about the training needs in professional development for teachers and assessors of dyslexic children with literacy difficulties to support and assess them in the process of their literacy development. In the contrary, Mortimore and Crozier (2006) report that dyslexic students in higher education (secondary schools) have difficulties of literacy skills in larger areas such academic tasks, note taking, organization of essays and expressing ideas in writing than those in lower education. Linguistic features are the main focus of the studies above, but there is no study that focuses on the role of parents and teachers as literacy sponsors for children with dyslexia disorder. Likewise, it is quite difficult to find current study related to literacy sponsors even in well-known journals such TESOL quarterly, Monash journal, Taylor & Francis and Routledge journal. Thus, the objective of this study is to explore literacy phenomenon in *Taare Zameen Par* regarding the role of parents and teachers in literacy development of dyslexic children and how the phenomenon inside the movie can be related to language learning and teaching in today's context.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research design used in this study is descriptive qualitative which is used to to analyze the literacy phenomenon that occurs in *Taare Zameen Par* (Every Child is Special) movie. This study focuses on the role of parents and teachers in literacy development of dyslexic children which is portrayed in the movie. Furthermore, library research is used as the data collecting method. The primary data is taken from *Taare Zameen Par* (Every Child is Special) in the form of dialogues and some pictures (screenshot) of some scenes in the movie that represents literacy phenomenon. The subjects of this study are the main character's, Ishaan, parents and teachers such Ram Shankar Nikumbh, an art teacher in the movie that represents literacy sponsorship. In order to support this study, several articles as previous studies are mentioned in discussion section as secondary and supporting data. The data will be analyzed by using descriptive qualitative approach. In analyzing the literacy phenomenon in the movie, the writer used literacy sponsorship and multimodal literacy theories to support the argumentation and interpretation in the analysis process. After analyzing the literacy phenomenon in the movie, the result will be connected to the embodiment of literature and literacy in language learning and teaching context. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework of this study can be seen as follow:

Literacy Sponsors

Brandt explains that sponsors of literacy can be anyone and anything, it can be person, agent, government that control and advantage other people literacy (Brandt, 2001). In other words, it can be defined as persons, institutions and entities that have played a role in the development of their (people) reading (Benson, 2018). Moreover, literacy sponsors are usually remembered by the people because they give strong support in the literacy process such as older relatives, teachers, priests, supervisors, military officers, editors, influential authors. Literacy sponsors also have the ability to change the writing and reading skills of others and can also influence others how to use their literacy skills, whether in school or at home. There are some examples of literacy sponsors, such as parents, teachers, government official, social media sites, journalist, and consumer-based companies and from these six sponsors, they have some sub branches. The sub branches to show that they have reasons, target, and specification. The first sponsor is parents, the reason for this branch is to promote personal views, the target is for children, and the specific is because the beginning of literacy sponsors. The second sponsor is teacher, as the sponsor for students because their role is to give positive feedback in educational nature of literacy. The third sponsor is government official, this sponsor is targeted for students, teachers, and also general public and the government plays as promotion personal

views in approval literacy. Fourthly, the sponsor is social media sites, their target is general public and the reason is for self-promotion because social media sites are in social to socialization. The fifth is journalist sponsors, they are local, national, and international news for general public to promote personal views. And the last example of sponsor is consumer-based companies, they are advertisements for consumers to promote products (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012).

Multimodal Literacy

The way how people interact with a text called as a literacy practice, then the form of multimodal literacy is a new way seeing texts. The word multimodal can be described as the way people communicate, using a sign or number from any kind form of modes such visual, linguistic, aural or tactile to make meaning, and the word multimodality can be seen in any kind of texts depend on how people engage with text or literacy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). It can be underlined that multimodal literacy is the way how people make meaning of a text (not only written text but also in a form of audio and visual text). In 20th century, people are more often dealing with text using digital technology such as mobile phone and computer when they are texting with their friend, reading news from BBC, cartoon, *manga* (Japanese comic) or video games. It shows that Literacy practices happened every day and everywhere without people consider about it. Multimodal texts are print and digital texts that use more than one mode or semi-based resource to represent potential significance (Serafini, 2015). Multimodal literacy is study of language that combines two or more modes, for example visual texts (song, animation, games), all of them create different meaning based on different point of view (readers). It is not only children, adult people nowadays will get bored easily when dealing with text book, that is why multimodal literacy is exist in the form of literacy practice. In language teaching process, multimodal literacy can be used as a teaching method that help the language learners to learn the target language easily through its implementation by using both, written and visual text.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Data 1

Teacher: Ishaan!
 I said, page 38, chapter 4, paragraph 3.
 Just read the sentence, Ishaan.
 Ishaan: They're...dancing.
 Teacher: Silence! Speak in English!
 Ishaan: The letters are dancing.
 Teacher: They're dancing, are they?

Ishaan's reading problems is clearly depicted in data 1. His English teacher is angry at him and thought that Ishaan did not pay attention to her, then she asked him to read the material for the class. In this case, the teacher as his educator, did not even consider or even realize about this particular issue as serious matter and only judge him as a lazy and idiot student even though Ishaan already told her about his problem to recognize letters "*the letters are dancing*". One of criteria for a dyslexic person who has problem with motoric system can be seen from Ishaan case who cannot follow the instruction from the teacher properly and a dyslexic person will make a ruckus to avoid interact with letters. This particular issue shows in English class scene when Ishaan cannot read the letters in from of him, he will make ruckus and annoy the teacher. However, his English teacher failed to recognize her student's incapability as mentioned above '*they're dancing, are they?*' and failed to do her role as a teacher for her student.

Data 2

Mother: What's this?
 Every word is misspelled!
 Here 'table' is tabl, and over here it's tabel.
 And "d" is just "b".
 What is going on?
 How many times should we do this?
 Yesterday we went over this.
 How can you forget so quickly?
 Enough fooling around.

Data 2 shows his difficulties in writing, Ishaan cannot distinguish between 'b' and 'd' even in the same page and the outcome is misspelled words such 'table' become 'tabl' and 'tabel' or even 'tadle'. His mother is sponsor literacy because she always teaches Ishaan how to write, even though she does not recognize his son literacy problem which is dyslexia. It is already mentioned in the introduction section that parents' knowledge is also important in their children literacy development, because well-educated parents

are more aware toward this kind of issue, both literacy and dyslexia. However, when the parents have more knowledge about literacy developments and literacy skills, they will think about the suitable method to educate their children especially in literacy fields. When school is the place where a literacy practice was originally created and used, home is where literacy practices can be best supported but, in this case, parents have the important role to support their children's literacy learning. Home-school literacy is about the connection between children's text-making at home and at school with the parents as the bridge to strengthen their children's knowledge when they are at home.

Data 3

Father: You can't write, idiot! If you could, you wouldn't be such a failure.

This scene happened when his father found out about Ishaan's mischievousness. When it comes to literacy development for the children, Ishaan father has failed to be a literacy sponsor for his own child. Motivation from the parents is needed to develop literacy skills. Imagine if we are in the same position as Ishaan, then our parents told us that we are an idiot and a failure that became a shame for the whole family. It will break our mental if we do not have any kind support especially from the family and also will hate the things that our parents want us to do.

Data 4

Math Teacher: Class work and homework, there's no improvement.

Exactly like last year.

Books are still his enemies.

Reading and writing is like a punishment.

Sometimes his English handwriting looks like Russian.

He keeps making the same mistakes.

Doesn't pay any attention

whatsoever.

English Teacher: the whole class with his silly pranks.

I suppose you've seen his test papers with zeroes in all subjects.

In data 4, the measurement of students' ability only based on score and their obedience, but never consider about other aspect such learning process, mental or motoric disorder, and etc. These two teachers are failed to be literacy sponsor because a literacy sponsor is the one who can influence other literacy skills. Furthermore, they also do not know how to use multimodal that can be applied in learning and teaching process which some students need different methods and materials to improve and develop their literacy skills. For example, teachers should give a homework to the children to draw and write about their experience with their parents, about their hobbies, or anything that they are interested to, then on the next meeting, we ask them to retell about what they have wrote and drew in front of the class, so the children can practice their communicative skill which is part of literacy practices using ORIM Framework (Hannon & Nutbrown, 1997).

Data 5

Teacher: You teach at that Tulips School, right?

Mentally retarded, abnormal children?

In those schools, experiment all you like, what's the difference?

Those kids have no future, anyway.

According to data 5 above, some teachers such in the movie, underestimate the children who have mental disorder, abnormal, and etc. They think that children with mental retardation do not have bright future compare with normal children. In academic field, teachers who have this kind of thought are failed both as educator and literacy development especially in elementary range such in the movie because who will lead the students for brighter future if it is not the teachers, after their parents.

Data 6

Headmaster: There's Maths, History, Geography, Science, Languages!

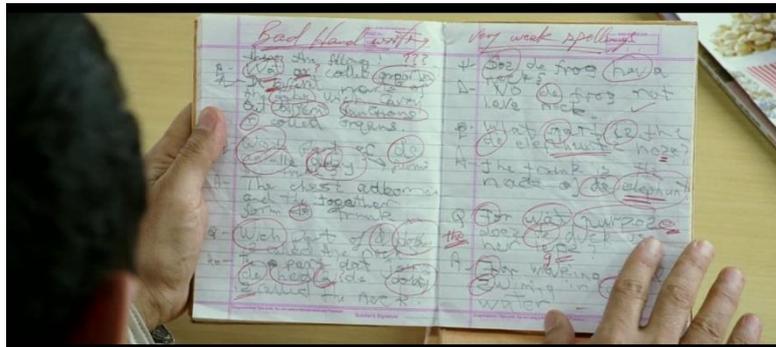
Nikumbh: He'll manage, sir. with a little help from us teachers.

Headmaster: Where do teachers have the time? Individual attention in a class of 40?

Come on, Nikumbh. It's impossible.

This dialogue happened when Nikumbh knows about Ishaan condition and persuades the headmaster of the boarding school to give him a chance if Ishaan can compete with other students because

child like him needs support from the teachers. In this scene, Nikumbh uses multimodal literacy to teach Ishaan how to read, write and count.



This is the first time when Nikumbh realize about Ishaan dyslexia problem by looking at his hand writing that fill with red marks from the teachers because of misspelled words. This picture shows that students writing can be used to see how the students developed their literacy skill in terms of spelling, wording, grammatical and their writing style. Also, the feedback from teacher through assignment is really needed for the benefit of the students to improve their skills. In the classroom, the students sometimes pay attention and sometimes not, we have to know the interest of each student by using Multimodal Literacy. As the literacy sponsor, Nukumbh provides Ishaan the way how to interact with a text called as a literacy practice, he teaches him a new way seeing texts by using multimodal approach, as follow:



Nikumbh uses box of sand as the media to teach Ishaan how to spell and write vowels such a, e, i, o, u by giving him an example first then followed by Ishaan. As the role model, providing example is the key factor to promote new knowledge for the students.



He teaches Ishaan how to distinguish between some mirroring letters such 'b' and 'd', also between 'p' and g'. It is really difficult for dyslexic children to remember alphabet patterns between words that consist of same letters in the same page.



The Role

Qais As-syauqi

- Where have you reached?
- Plus seven.

He uses a simple media such stairs to teach Ishaan to learn math, like multiplication, subtraction, division and addition. This scene can be interpreted that teachers as the literary sponsor should provide teaching material suiting their students' needs, depends on the students' capability.



The black board becomes another media that is used by Nikumbh to teach Ishaan about numbers, especially number 8 that has difficult pattern to follow for a perfect rounded number 8.



In the end, after several days of learning using multimodal approach, Ishaan can write normally without any misspell and he can distinguish between mirroring letters such 'b' and 'd', also 'p' and 'g'. Dyslexia children could overcome their literacy difficulties if both parents and teachers can give them motivation as literacy sponsors.

Data 7

Nikumbh: Caring

It's very important, Mr Awasthi.
 It has the power to heal.
 Like a balm that soothes pain.
 The child feels reassured that someone cares for him.
 An occasional hug, a loving kiss.
 Just to show that I really care.
 "My child, I love you.
 "If you have any troubles, come to me.
 "So, what if you slipped, messed up? I'm there for you."

In the scene when Ishaan's father, Mr. Awashi, told Nikumbh that he is not a bad parent who do not care about their children. Nikumbh gives him explanation about what care really is until he could not give a single replay. It can be concluded that children with this kind of problems need more attention especially from parents rather than the normal ones because of their mental and literacy skills development. However, the role of parents and teachers are really needed as literacy sponsor for children learning process.

As the educator and literacy sponsor, we have to consider about our students' cultural background because every parent has their own way to teach and interact with their children at home. For example, some parents talk to their children at home using different language than the language of the school (such Javanese language at home, while at school, students have to talk in Indonesia) because many texts produced by children are holding cultural identity in their writing or drawing based on their own memory. It is not only about cultural background, but also technological development that we have to consider about, because

Children's out-of-school literacy practices cannot be separated with the media that our students used such social media, mobile application, or any technology-related tools. We like it or not, in reality, technology become part of young people nowadays, such messaging, email, vlogging, mobile gaming, and etc. It can be underlined that multimodal literacy by using these forms of media have huge potential as the tools and resources especially for language learning and teaching materials in the current digital era 4.0.

The presented phenomenon as the embodiment of literacy in today's context is a clear example that shows literature and literacy are compliment one to another in the practice. It should be underlined that literature is not only in the form of written texts such novel but also in the form of visual, digital and cinematic forms such movie which is also known as popular literature (Fauziah, 2016; Kartikasari et al, 2019; Novianti, 2016). Apart from that, language teaching and learning process encourages students to meet an authentic language feature which allows them to experience the real exposure to the language being learned in the process of learning. The movie shows literature as a material of teaching exposes students to the real context on how language is used in the origin because culture influence what the students read and write (Bedard et al., 2011). This enhances the student to be more trans-lingual or inter-lingual and develop foreign language skill to successfully (Bloemert & van Veen, 2017). Besides, Djamàa (2018) also provides evidences in her study whether literature has the potentials as the material of learning can facilitate students to think more critical using cinematic adaptation approach. In line with this, it opens a new insight that, actually, the exploration of the material and approach related to literature may encourage the student to be a critical student and it must be underlined that both literacy and literature education especially in language learning and teaching context, are interrelated to oe another.

The implementation of popular literature (literary approach) in language pedagogy is also known as critical media literacy which is defined as a progressive approach to education that broadens the definition of literacy and literature education to include various forms of mass communication, popular culture, and emerging technology, as well as critical analysis of relationships between media and viewers, knowledge, and power (Garcia et al, 2013). This pedagogical approach is used with the intention of expanding the learners' and educators' understanding of literacy beyond the general concpets of literacy as print-based approach. In line with Garcia et al. (2013), Petrone (2013) also provided discussion about literacy in today's context which is the connections between young people's literacy and learning activities, as well as their involvement with pop cultures, in a variety of settings, including but not limited to, graphic novels, video games, mass media, anime, movie, and various available digital spaces in the present days. However, the concept of literary approach is not limited only to literacy teaching practice, but it is also highly recommended for building cultural literacy/cultural awarness (also know as intercultural competence) because it has several benefit such increasing students' awarness through the portrayal of beliefs and values inside the selected literary works (Kartikasari et al., 2019; Spirovska, 2019). In addition, this broader way of viewing literature both general and popular ones, is able to increase academic motivation of the students because they can explore different kind of learning environments inside their learning process (Garcia et al., 2013; Petrone, 2013).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion section above, it shows that the first environment to build children motivation toward literacy is family. When parents cannot do their role as literacy sponsor, it will impact the literacy abilities of their children such writing, reading, and counting. Motivation and attention from both parents are needed by the children to boost their will to improve their knowledge and abilities. The next one is teachers, who also have important role toward children literacy development. School becomes a second environment that has a huge impact toward children because they spent most of their times in the schools, with their friends and also the teachers. Dyslexic children need different kind of approaches to teach them how to write and read, that is why multimodal literacy could help them to develop their literacy skills. Both parents and teachers have to consider their important position and role in children life. Furthermore, the literacy phenomenon inside the movie portrayed the representation of beliefs and values which shows that popular literature/culture held such incredible potentials and values for educational purpose especially for language teaching material.

In the other hand, when we can use multiliteracy pedagogy (a literacy theory and pedagogical approach in language teaching) in our learning teaching practice, it will be a new experience for the students and the parents that were involved. As the educator, it is a must to follow the development of technology especially in this millennial era. Compare to the students nowadays who were born in 21st century, in their early live, they already used technology such mobile phone and laptop/computer. The old generation like the teachers, maybe just met technology in their young adult period when they were still in high school live or maybe just recently, in the campus live. It will be shamed (as the educator) if the students found out that their teachers cannot use technology while the students already know technology in their early live. Then, how can

we teach someone about multiliteracy if the educators do not know how to use technology effectively, because the used of multimodality especially new technology in literacy practice nowadays is really important.

This study is not limited to children or adults with special needs but it is also can be applied in common language teaching process. This study suggests language educators such teachers and lecturers to implement literary approach in their teaching process by using literature and popular literature/culture (such movie) as materials especially in higher education level, for building intercultural awareness and critical thinking through these resources. Multidisciplinary research is quite suitable for English education in digital era 4.0 especially using current pedagogical approach, EIL (English as International Language) by emphasized intercultural knowledge for the students.

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