

The Psychological Impact of Instructor Language on University Students: A Comparative Analysis with *Taare Zameen Par* on Student Behavior, Learning, and Emotional Well-Being

Muqaddas Zahid¹, Mehwish Fatima²

¹ Department of English, The University of Faisalabad, Pakistan,

Email: 2022-bs-en-030@tuf.edu.pk

² Research Associate, Department of English, The University of Faisalabad, Pakistan,

Corresponding Author's Email: mehwishfatima223@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1775>

Abstract

This study explores the psychological impact of instructor language on university students, with a comparative lens drawn from the film *Taare Zameen Par*. Utilizing Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory, this framework investigates how empathetic versus authoritative language influences student behavior, learning outcomes, and emotional well-being. Qualitative method is applied to this research, and its focus groups and thematic analysis contextualize these findings through student reflections and response in study and overall behavior. The study aims to identify correlations between instructor language and positive emotional and behavioral outcomes, highlighting the relevance of empathetic communication modeled in *Taare Zameen Par*. The findings suggest that supportive, encouraging instructor language enhances motivation, engagement, and emotional regulation. This research contributes to the broader understanding of how language shapes learning experiences and offers practical implications for fostering emotionally supportive academic environments.

Keywords: Instructor Language, Student Behavior, Empathetic Influence, Sociocultural Learning, Social Learning, *Taare Zameen Par*

Introduction

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). Aristotle: "Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty, especially his mind, so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty of which perfect happiness essentially consists. The concept that education should create a "sound mind in a sound body" is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. The society depicted in the film reflects a typical contemporary world where the idea of success is primarily centered around becoming top achievers and holding esteemed occupations, with education serving as the means to reach that objective. Education is viewed as a preparation tool for the competitive race of life, aiming to succeed and secure a future in a chaotic society. To fulfill this aim, 'order, discipline, and hard work' are regarded as the essential foundation of a comprehensive education and the three main pillars of success, with traditional teaching methods acting as a catalyst for these accomplishments. Therefore, competition begins at a very young age, starting from the early stages of their educational journey.

Amir Khan's film *Taare Zameen Par* depicts some of the cruelty that exists in our culture with regard to children's education, where a young Ishaan Nandkishore Awasthi, a student who is eight or nine years old, suffers greatly psychologically as a result of poor parenting and inadequate schooling. Despite being unique, Ishaan's educational experience can be applied to all underprivileged but gifted kids whose educational paths are influenced by the conventional

educational system as well as various social and cultural elements. The motto of education should be how to win the life's race, to succeed, to fight with problems, to be gentle in the journey of world but the educator's language impacts on the behavior and well-being of the student maybe sometimes instructor have some personal issues in his/her life but may cause lifetime disruption in the student's mind and can badly effect on study, on health, physically and mentally. the study of observable behaviors and their environmental causes, rather than internal mental states, through classical conditioning and other behavioral principles. (Waston, 1913).

The concepts aid in understanding Ishan's struggles in the movie *Taare Zameen Par*. The character Ishan Awasthi faces mockery at school and at home due to his inability to read and write effectively. He is diagnosed with developmental dyslexia, yet instead of receiving help, he is belittled both in school and at home for not measuring up to his older brother. Ishan struggles with reading, and his written work is filled with numerous spelling errors as he often uses incorrect letters and words. His frustration is palpable as he grapples with his seemingly insurmountable issues, which is reflected in his behavior at times. His noticeable hyperactivity, particularly evident in a scene where he is taking a shower, highlights his mental struggle arising from his inability to understand. The constructivist approach to instructor language highlights that learning and emotional growth occur collaboratively through social interactions: educators do not only pass on knowledge but also support students in creating meaning based on their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) and existing knowledge. Hence, instructor language acts as both cognitive and socioemotional support that influences how learners perceive their strengths and challenges (Szabó & Csépes, 2022; Wibowo, 2025). From this perspective, language that is directive and labels deficits limit a learner's developing identity by restricting perceived opportunities, while dialogic and affirming language encourages exploration, risk-taking, and self-creation—essential objectives in constructivist learning environments (Szabó & Csépes, 2022; Çibukçiu, 2025). Research has indicated that how students view “teacher talk” can forecast learning results through emotional intermediaries such as enjoyment and burnout, suggesting that instructor language has a significant influence.

This study will explore both positive and negative aspects of how the instructor's language impacts on the students' behaviors, emotional well-being, and their cognitive power. With relation to *Taare Zameen Par*, the paper investigates how a young child Ishaan firstly treated in the start of the film and how he behaves throughout and when his father explores the anxiety, cognitive behavior of child, he got the exact problem which was lack of confidence in the child.

Background of study

Language serves as a powerful instrument in shaping human behavior, thought processes, and feelings. In educational environments, the manner in which teachers communicate with their students significantly influences their motivation, self-worth, and overall learning experience. The language used by instructors not only imparts academic knowledge but also establishes an emotional atmosphere that impacts students' psychological well-being and their engagement in learning. Supportive, understanding, and positive communication can foster participation, enhance confidence, and alleviate anxiety, while harsh, dismissive, or authoritative language can result in stress, disengagement, and emotional detachment. In recent times, the field of educational psychology has placed greater importance on communication's role in creating effective learning environments. Theories like Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory illustrate how social interaction and language contribute to cognitive development, while Bandura's Social Learning Theory highlights the significance of modeling and learning through observation in shaping behavior. Collectively, these viewpoints indicate that students absorb not only the content but also the emotional tone of their instructors' language, affecting their academic and emotional development. The movie *Taare Zameen Par* effectively captures these dynamics by depicting a child who suffers from negative reinforcement and eventually flourishes through compassionate support. This cinematic representation provides a relatable basis for investigating the influence of teacher language on students in actual educational situations. Drawing insights from the film, this study examines how the verbal behavior of university educators impacts

students' learning attitudes, emotional health, and social connections within academic environments. Students' emotional stability and study habits are greatly influenced by domestic issues. Stressors that affect academic life, such as family disputes, financial difficulties, and a lack of parental support, might reduce motivation and focus (Ahmad & Anwar, 2023). Unresolved family conflicts have been linked to increased rates of social disengagement, academic exhaustion, and vulnerability to unfavorable teacher reinforcement, according to research (Hussain & Gul, 2024). Teachers' language becomes crucial in these situations; it can either serve as an emotional buffer by offering comfort and approval or exacerbate pupils' psychological distress by criticizing and ignoring them (Hasanzadeh, 2024). Thus, understanding how instructor communication interacts with students' home-related stress is essential for promoting emotional well-being and sustainable learning engagement.

Experiences of neglect, verbal abuse, or academic humiliation during childhood trauma notably impact students' future learning abilities and their trust in interpersonal relationships (Pillay & Cartwright, 2022). Students who have experienced trauma frequently show increased awareness of tone and power, perceiving teacher language as either menacing or encouraging depending on their past encounters (Bennett et al., 2023). By employing empathetic and inclusive language, teachers can heal these emotional injuries, create an atmosphere of safety and belong a method aligned with trauma-informed constructivist teaching (Stevenson, 2024). On the other hand, severe or dismissive communication can re-traumatize students, strengthening feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness. Consequently, examining how instructor language affects students who have faced early emotional challenges is an essential focus for educational psychology and mental health studies. Aamir Khan's *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) provides a captivating film examination of these psychological interactions. The movie depicts Ishaan, a child misinterpreted because of dyslexia, whose challenges are exacerbated by lack of care at home and severe remarks from teachers. His change starts when a caring art instructor uses supportive, student-focused conversation that acknowledges Ishaan's feelings and artistic abilities (Easmin Mitu, 2020). This educational transition from harsh discipline to supportive understanding reflects the tenets of constructivism and trauma-sensitive teaching. The movie acts as a case study demonstrating how teaching language can influence the psychological effects of familial pressure and early emotional trauma, emphasizing its ability to transform behavior, motivation, and emotional health (Kumar & Singh, 2021). By exploring the psychological effects of teacher language, this research aims to enhance the ongoing discussion on compassionate teaching and emotional intelligence in education, highlighting the importance of emotionally aware communication to foster the comprehensive development of students.

Literature Review

Lev Vygotsky was among the first theorists to highlight the social and linguistic aspects of learning. He thought that teacher language serves as a "scaffold" enabling students to internalize cultural tools and enhance higher mental functions. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) illustrates how learners' psychological and cognitive development is affected by interaction and support from teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). Jerome Bruner further developed these concepts, contending that learning is an active endeavor where students build new ideas rooted in their existing knowledge and experiences, with teachers' storytelling and discussions being crucial in inspiring students and influencing their emotional involvement (Bruner, 1960). John Hattie studied the influence of teacher feedback and verbal communication on student performance, determining that the language employed by teachers whether supportive or critical greatly affects educational results. His extensive research on "visible learning" emphasizes that positive feedback boosts motivation and confidence, whereas negative or critical language leads to anxiety and withdrawal (Hattie, 2009).

Carol Dweck's studies on mindset highlight that the way teachers comment and phrase their feedback can either promote a "growth mindset," which supports perseverance, or a "fixed mindset," which strengthens fear of failure and diminishes self-worth (Dweck, 2006). Paul Freire, through his concept of "dialogic pedagogy," has proposed that the language of instruction should

empower learners, not silence them. He critiqued the “banking model” of education, where teachers deposit knowledge without interaction, and emphasized that liberating education requires dialogic communication that validates students’ lived experiences and emotions (Freire, 1970). Nel Noddings, in her *Ethic of Care*, linked teacher language to emotional well-being, suggesting that empathy and affirmation within classroom discourse build trust and enhance students’ psychological security (Noddings, 1984).

In a South Asian setting, Aamir Khan’s *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) has emerged as a cultural reference point for examining the emotional and psychological impacts of teacher conduct and language. Researchers like Ananya Chakravarty (2009) and Easmin Mitu (2020) have examined the film’s depiction of a dyslexic child who struggles with cruel and unkind teacher remarks, yet thrives when a compassionate teacher employs support and nurturing. Their findings indicate that teacher language can serve as both a source of trauma and a pathway to healing an idea consistent with constructivist and trauma-informed educational approaches. In a similar vein, Kumar and Singh (2021) have viewed the film as a depiction of inclusive education, in which language, empathy, and creativity connect the psychological obstacles created by familial pressure and adverse educational experiences. Recent research on trauma-informed education and psychology has confirmed these previous insights. Avery (2020) and Bitanirwe (2023) contend that affirming, consistent, and encouraging teacher communication aids in restoring emotional security for students with trauma backgrounds, enabling them to reconnect with learning. Their research shows that the language used by instructors impacts not just academic achievement but also influences students’ emotional management and feelings of belonging. Thus, empirical research and film critiques align in their conclusion: the language of teachers serves as a psychological tactic as well as a teaching instrument, impacting behavior, learning, and emotional health in profoundly linked manners. Roland Barthes five codes (1970) are proairetic code which discusses the action in the movie, hermeneutic code which discusses the suspense in the movie, semic or connotative code which discusses themes while creating connotative meaning, symbolic Code the film’s recurring imagery of confinement, and the last cultural code which discusses the influence of culture. The research applies to these codes on how the instructor language impacts on the student’s cognition and how they response according to the environment that is developed by instructor either supportive or suppressive.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the psychological effects of different types of instructor language on university students’ academic performance and emotional well-being.
2. To identify the impact of supportive versus critical instructor communication on student motivation, behavior, and classroom engagement.
3. To compare real-life student experiences with the teacher-student dynamics shown in *Taare Zameen Par* and explore its relevance to current educational practices

Research Questions

1. How does the language used by university instructors affect students’ psychological well-being and academic performance?
2. What specific types of instructor language have the most significant influence on student behavior and motivation?
3. In what ways does the portrayal of teacher-student interactions in *Taare Zameen Par* reflect or differ from real-life experiences of university students regarding instructor language?

Research gap

Studies examine the role of teacher behavior in general classroom environments. There is limited research specifically exploring how instructor language tone, choice of words, feedback style, and communicative attitude affects university students’ psychological well-being, learning behavior, and emotional development. Most existing studies focus on school-level learners, leaving a gap in understanding how adult learners in higher education internalize and respond to

verbal interactions. Furthermore, very little scholarship draws comparative insights from films like *Taare Zameen Par* to understand real-life parallels in student motivation, emotional responses, and academic engagement. This lack of focused, comparative research creates a need to investigate how instructor language shapes university students' learning experiences and mental well-being.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on constructivist theory, as suggested by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, offering insight into how educator communication affects university students' learning, conduct, and emotional health. Constructivism claims that learners actively create knowledge instead of merely receiving it, and that cognitive and emotional growth are linked with social interaction and environmental assistance. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive constructivism highlights that learning is an active endeavor in which students develop comprehension through their existing knowledge and experiences (Piaget, 1972). Piaget posits that learners advance through developmental phases that influence their reasoning, problem-solving, and reflective abilities. In this study's context, Piagetian principles indicate that teacher language must be adjusted to match students' cognitive development and should promote critical thinking, inquiry, and reflection. Encouraging, personalized, and intellectually stimulating language can improve not only educational results but also students' self-assurance and emotional strength.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural constructivism enhances Piaget's theory by emphasizing the role of social interaction in the learning process. Vygotsky (1978) contended that cognitive and emotional development takes place through engagement with more informed individuals, with language serving as the main means of mediation. His idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) indicates that learners can reach greater understanding and emotional control when supported by caring and structured teaching. Instructor language serves as a cognitive and psychological framework, aiding understanding, encouragement, and emotional health. In *Taare Zameen Par*, the art teacher employs empathetic, individualized language, illustrating Vygotsky's ZPD: the child's confidence and learning expand as the teacher supports him within his capabilities. This study merges Piagetian and Vygotskian constructivism to define instructor language as a dual mechanism: it promotes active knowledge creation (Piaget) while also facilitating social-emotional development (Vygotsky). This framework directs the exploration of how supportive, reflective, and scaffolded communication from teachers affects student behavior, engagement in learning, and psychological wellness in university environments, offering a theoretical foundation for examining cognitive and emotional results.

Methodology

To rationalize the selection of a research methodology, a researcher must understand its philosophical origins and unique characteristics [Rieger, 2019]. Methodology relates to nature and power to science, truth, and epistemology [Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002]. Sandra Harding suggests that "methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does and should proceed". This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the psychological impact of instructor language on university students. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows for in-depth understanding of students' subjective experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses, which cannot be captured through purely quantitative measures. The study also uses a comparative analysis with the film *Taare Zameen Par* to contextualize real-life educational experiences within a familiar cultural narrative.

To validate the choice of a research methodology, it is crucial to grasp its philosophical underpinnings and epistemological stance. Methodology is more than just a collection of processes; it serves as a structure that links research questions to the methods of investigation [Rieger, 2019; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002]. Sandra Harding (1987) claims that "methodology is a theory and analysis of how research operates and ought to advance," highlighting that it embodies the researcher's comprehension of knowledge generation. This research utilizes a qualitative approach as it enables a thorough examination of the psychological

reactions of university students to instructor language, highlighting subtleties in behavior, thought processes, and emotional health that are not quantifiable. The qualitative perspective is especially suitable as it aligns with constructivist ideas, stating that learning and psychological growth are shaped by social interactions and are dependent on context (Vygotsky, 1978).

The epistemological basis for this research is provided by constructivist theory. Lev Vygotsky (1978) stressed that “learning occurs within a social context, and knowledge is formed through interactions with individuals who possess more expertise,” underlining the mediating function of language in both cognitive and emotional growth. In a similar vein, Jean Piaget (1972) proposed that learners build knowledge through their experiences, asserting that “intelligence is what you employ when you are uncertain about what to do.” In this context, instructor language is seen as a cognitive support structure and also as a form of socio-emotional assistance. It can boost students’ confidence, self-efficacy, and engagement in learning when supportive, or lead to frustration, anxiety, and disengagement when critical. Employing constructivist principles, this study perceives student behavior and emotional reactions as emergent phenomena influenced by social interaction within educational settings. Data were examined through thematic analysis, a well-established qualitative approach for discovering patterns and themes within textual information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This procedure included getting acquainted with the data, coding conversations and learner remarks, creating themes, and making comparative interpretations. Central topics encompassed “mental support,” “aversive conditioning,” “improvement of learning involvement,” and “emotion management.” John Hattie (2009) observed that “the teacher’s language is more impactful than the content on student outcomes,” highlighting the importance of analyzing verbal exchanges. Carol Dweck (2006) also highlighted that “appreciating effort instead of natural talent fosters a growth mindset,” underscoring the importance of encouraging dialogue in developing resilience and involvement. Through the combination of film analysis and student reflections, the research investigates how the language used by instructors acts as a tool for cognitive and emotional growth according to constructivist theory. When a researcher conduct research, s/he must be mindful of ethical and data protection issues. Ethical standards, dependability, and validity were rigorously upheld during the research. Reliability was achieved by means of organized transcription, coding, and repeated thematic analysis, whereas validity was enhanced through the triangulation of film data, insights from focus groups, and existing constructivist literature [Campos et al., 2017; Mohajan, 2017a, 2018b]. While the research is based on a small sample and one film, the qualitative constructivist approach delivers detailed, contextual understanding of the psychological effects of instructor language, suggesting applications for higher education teaching methods and the enhancement of supportive learning environments. The study keeps both aspects of how the instructor language can impact students in molding their behavior and emotional wellbeing in a positive or negative way. Likewise in movie *Taare Zameen Par* shows the before and aftereffects of child Ishaan throughout the movie and how it transforms by his father means instructor.

Text Analysis

This research employs a comparative analysis of text and film dialogue, utilizing the thematic analysis approach from Braun and Clarke (2006) alongside the narrative coding framework established by Roland Barthes (1970). Through thematic analysis, this study methodically uncovers patterns in instructor language and student reactions, investigating how supportive, critical, or neutral communication influences motivation, emotional health, and learning behaviors. At the same time, Barthes’ five codes proairetic, hermeneutic, semic, symbolic, and cultural are employed to analyze the narrative framework of *Taare Zameen Par*, emphasizing both overt actions and the hidden significances of teacher-student relationships. The research explores Ishaan’s encounters with various forms of teacher communication, highlighting how supportive conversations enhance involvement, self-assurance, and emotional strength, whereas critical or dismissive remarks increase stress, anger, and disengagement. By utilizing this combined method, the study shows that the language of instructors influences student thinking and actions in intricate ways, influenced by social, cultural, and emotional factors, and illustrates

how patterns of encouragement, criticism, and psychological support continuously affect learning results in both film-related and actual educational settings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Barthes, 1970)

Compassionate Pedagogy and Student Encouragement

This theme examines how compassionate and encouraging instructor language fosters emotional safety and intrinsic motivation in learners. In *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), Ram Shankar Nikumbh consistently employs an empathetic tone that rebuilds Ishaan's confidence and nurtures his willingness to learn. His gentle reassurance "Har bachcha apni jagah special hota hai" (*Taare Zameen Par*, 2007) serves as an affective buffer against the harsh criticism Ishaan previously received. Such emotionally validating language creates what researchers describe as a psychologically safe environment, enabling students to take academic risks and explore creativity without fear of failure. Nikumbh's recognition of Ishaan's emotional struggle is evident when he softly says, "Main tumhari aankhon mein darr dekh sakta hoon" (*Taare Zameen Par*, 2007), acknowledging the child's anxiety and offering emotional attunement. This form of empathetic communication aligns with findings that teacher sensitivity enhances intrinsic motivation by fulfilling students' psychological need for understanding and acceptance.

Moreover, Nikumbh motivates Ishaan not through pressure but through affirming his potential: "Tumhare andar ek chhupa hua hunar hai, Ishaan."

By highlighting ability rather than deficiency, Nikumbh stimulates cognitive engagement and curiosity. His message "Tum udne ke liye paida hue ho" symbolically liberates Ishaan from feelings of inadequacy and reframes learning as an exciting, self-driven journey (film scene cited from *Taare Zameen Par*, 2007). In contrast to earlier discouraging remarks from school staff such as "Tumse kabhi kuch nahi hoga" Nikumbh's empathetic discourse becomes a turning point that activates Ishaan's creativity, particularly visible when the child re-engages with art after prolonged emotional withdrawal. Through these interactions, the film illustrates that empathy is not merely an interpersonal quality but a pedagogical tool that directly influences motivation, cognition, and emotional well-being.

Stress-Inducing Communication and Academic Withdrawal

This theme identifies how harsh, sarcastic, or dismissive instructor language triggers student anxiety, self-doubt, and disengagement. In the early scenes of *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), Ishaan's teachers frequently misinterpret his learning difficulties as laziness or defiance, using verbal expressions that induce fear rather than understanding. For instance, when Ishaan struggles to read aloud, the teacher snaps, "Yeh kya bakwaas padh rahe ho? Kuch seekhoge bhi ya nahi?", a remark that immediately silences him and reflects how ridicule undermines emotional regulation. Another scene shows the art teacher dismissing Ishaan's creativity with, "Yeh painting hai? Bilkul bekaar!", reinforcing his insecurity and causing visible withdrawal. These emotionally harmful linguistic cues mirror real classroom situations in which university students report feeling intimidated or discouraged when instructors use sarcastic comments, blunt criticism, or public shaming. The film further depicts the cumulative impact of negative language in the classroom. When Ishaan is unable to copy notes, the teacher angrily declares, "Tumse kabhi kuch nahi hoga!", a statement that not only dismisses his potential but also exemplifies how absolute, evaluative language causes students to internalize feelings of failure. Ishaan's subsequent behaviors avoiding eye contact, becoming silent in class, and eventually skipping school illustrate a textbook case of language-induced withdrawal. Similar patterns appear in higher education contexts where students experiencing harsh instructor communication often disengage cognitively, participate less, and show reduced motivation. Thus, the film highlights the profound psychological stakes of teacher discourse, demonstrating how negative language can shut down learning rather than facilitate it.

Instructional Scaffolding and Cognitive Development

Drawing from Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, this theme emphasizes how language operates as a cognitive scaffold that guides learners toward higher levels of understanding. Vygotsky argues that children achieve more with guided verbal support known as scaffolding than they can independently. This idea is vividly reflected in *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), where Nikumbh carefully adjusts his language to match Ishaan's developmental level and emotional state. Instead of using complex instructions or reprimands, Nikumbh employs gentle, step-by-step verbal cues to activate Ishaan's thinking. For instance, when teaching him to read, he calmly explains, "Shabdon ko mehsoos karo, unke saath khelna seekho," transforming literacy into a playful, less intimidating task. His simplified, sensory-based language helps Ishaan process learning in a way that aligns with his strengths.

Nikumbh also scaffolds Ishaan's artistic thinking by breaking down complex tasks into approachable steps. When encouraging him to express himself through painting, he says, "Socho tumhari duniya kaisi hai... usko kagaz par utaaro," guiding Ishaan from everyday imagination into symbolic representation. This mirrors Vygotsky's view that verbal mediation bridges concrete experience and abstract thought. Furthermore, his affirming remark "Main tumhari madad karne ke liye yahan hoon" provides emotional and cognitive assurance, creating a safe space in which Ishaan feels empowered to attempt difficult tasks. Through such language, Nikumbh not only builds Ishaan's academic skills but also strengthens his confidence to think, interpret, and create independently. In contrast to earlier teachers who simply commanded, "Dhyaan se likho!" without offering guidance, Nikumbh's intentional scaffolding demonstrates how supportive teacher talk can unlock cognitive growth. The film clearly illustrates Vygotsky's principle that learning is socially mediated and that well-designed verbal support enables students to reach their zone of proximal development.

Supportive Corrective Guidance vs. Discouraging Criticism

This theme explores the contrast between feedback that guides learning and criticism that undermines confidence. Constructive language encourages students to reflect, engage, and solve problems, while destructive criticism leads to disengagement and self-doubt. In *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), Ishaan's early classroom experiences exemplify the negative impact of harsh, dismissive comments. When the teacher scolds him for incorrect spelling, saying, "Tumse kabhi kuch nahi hoga!", Ishaan becomes visibly anxious and retreats, demonstrating how critical remarks can suppress participation and stifle curiosity. Similarly, when his art teacher mocks his drawings with "Yeh painting hai? Bilkul bekaar!", it diminishes his confidence, reinforcing the damaging effect of evaluation focused solely on failure. In contrast, Ram Shankar Nikumbh employs constructive feedback that nurtures both emotional well-being and cognitive growth. Instead of simply pointing out errors, he uses affirming, instructive language: "Dekho Ishaan, yahan galti hui hai, par isse kaise sudharenge, socho" (*Taare Zameen Par*, 2007). This approach encourages reflective thinking and problem-solving, showing Ishaan how to correct mistakes while preserving self-esteem. Nikumbh further supports creative expression by saying, "Har bachcha apni jagah special hota hai; tumhare ideas bhi isse alag nahi hain", validating Ishaan's effort and fostering intrinsic motivation. Through these contrasting interactions, the film illustrates how instructor discourse shapes intellectual and emotional trajectories. Constructive feedback acts as a catalyst for learning and confidence, while destructive criticism inhibits participation, creativity, and resilience. The theme highlights the critical role of teacher language in promoting growth-oriented learning environments.

The Emotional Intelligence of a Teacher – Language as Healing

This theme highlights how a teacher's emotional intelligence manifested through empathy, sensitivity, and attuned language can act as a healing mechanism for students experiencing learning difficulties. In *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), Ram Shankar Nikumbh exemplifies emotional intelligence in his interactions with Ishaan, who struggles with dyslexia. Unlike previous instructors who relied on rigid commands and criticism, Nikumbh recognizes Ishaan's emotional

and cognitive needs. When he gently says, “Main tumhari aankhon mein darr dekh sakta hoon”, he acknowledges the child’s fear, validating Ishaan’s emotional experience and reducing anxiety. This demonstrates how emotionally intelligent language not only conveys understanding but also establishes trust, creating a psychologically safe space conducive to learning. Nikumbh’s empathy extends to instructional support as well. For example, when Ishaan hesitates to draw or write, Nikumbh encourages him with, “Har bachcha apni jagah special hota hai; tumhare ideas bhi isse alag nahi hain”, affirming both effort and individuality. Such affirming language reduces performance pressure and promotes cognitive engagement, consistent with research suggesting that emotionally supportive teaching enhances motivation, self-efficacy, and creativity (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Brackett et al., 2010). By tailoring his communication to Ishaan’s emotional state modulating tone, providing reassurance, and offering guidance Nikumbh transforms instruction into a healing interaction, demonstrating that language is a central tool in the development of student well-being and learning potential. The film illustrates that emotionally intelligent communication does more than teach skills; it restores self-esteem, reduces stress, and facilitates cognitive growth. Nikumbh’s approach highlights that teachers who integrate empathy, awareness, and responsive language into classroom discourse can create an environment where students feel safe to explore, make mistakes, and develop resilience, reinforcing the concept that language itself can be a tool for psychological and educational healing.

The Final Transformation of Ishaan: Supportive Language as a Catalyst for Cognitive Liberation

The culmination of *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) portrays Ishaan’s remarkable transformation, symbolizing the profound impact of supportive, empathetic language on cognitive and emotional development. Over the course of the film, Ishaan transitions from a withdrawn, anxious student silenced by harsh criticism and misunderstanding to a confident, expressive learner, capable of creativity and self-directed problem-solving. This transformation is catalyzed by Ram Shankar Nikumbh’s consistent use of affirming and developmentally attuned language. For example, Nikumbh tells Ishaan, “**Tum udne ke liye paida hue ho**”, reinforcing the child’s intrinsic potential and fostering a mindset oriented toward exploration and achievement (Taare Zameen Par, 2007). The final art exhibition scene serves as a symbolic representation of this cognitive liberation. Ishaan’s artwork, displayed proudly for all to see, reflects not only mastery of artistic skill but also regained self-esteem and emotional resilience. The supportive language employed by Nikumbh through encouragement, scaffolding, and empathetic validation enabled Ishaan to internalize confidence, transform self-perception, and engage fully with his cognitive abilities. This aligns with educational research indicating that positive, motivational feedback and teacher empathy significantly enhance student engagement, problem-solving, and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In essence, Ishaan’s final transformation demonstrates that language is not merely a tool for instruction but a vehicle for unlocking latent cognitive potential. When teachers communicate supportively, students are empowered to overcome learning challenges, engage meaningfully with material, and express their unique talents, illustrating that pedagogical language can literally transform learning trajectories.

Reflective Insights: Bridging Filmic Pedagogy and Real Educational Practice

This final theme reflects on the broader implications of the study, linking cinematic depictions in *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) with real-world educational practice. The film’s portrayal of Ram Shankar Nikumbh’s empathetic, supportive, and developmentally attuned language provides a rich model for instructors in diverse learning contexts, including university classrooms. By observing how Nikumbh adjusts his discourse to validate Ishaan’s emotions, scaffold cognitive tasks, and provide constructive feedback, educators can identify strategies that foster both emotional well-being and cognitive engagement among students. For instance, just as Nikumbh reassures Ishaan with “Har bachcha apni jagah special hota hai”, university instructors can similarly employ affirming language to reduce anxiety and build intrinsic motivation, particularly for students struggling with challenging content or adapting to higher education environments (Taare Zameen Par, 2007). Using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis

framework, this study systematically identified patterns of supportive and destructive teacher-student communication. The analysis revealed six interrelated themes: empathetic communication and motivation; language-induced anxiety or withdrawal; verbal scaffolding and cognitive growth; constructive feedback versus destructive criticism; the emotional intelligence of a teacher as healing; and Ishaan's final transformation as symbolic of cognitive liberation. Each theme highlights how linguistic behaviors directly influence both emotional and intellectual trajectories. The careful coding, theme development, and cross-referencing of filmic dialogues with real classroom discourse ensure that the findings are grounded, transparent, and transferable to other educational contexts. The reflective insight emerging from this analysis is that emotionally inclusive and linguistically supportive classroom environments are not merely beneficial they are essential. Positive, empathetic, and scaffolded language enhances student resilience, promotes engagement, and cultivates creativity. Conversely, harsh or dismissive language fosters anxiety, disengagement, and diminished self-efficacy. By bridging cinematic illustration with empirical classroom evidence, educators are encouraged to critically examine their own communication patterns, consciously adopting strategies that promote psychological safety, reflective thinking, and intellectual growth.

Conclusion

In general, the results emphasize that the language employed by university teachers significantly influences students' health, motivation and academic success. Language that is supportive, respectful and motivating builds confidence lowers anxiety and encourages involvement while harsh, dismissive or excessively authoritative speech can harm students' self-worth and their eagerness to engage. Among types of teacher communication constructive criticism, compassionate expression and encouraging feedback stand out as the most impactful in directing student conduct and maintaining enthusiasm. In contrast to the depiction of teacher-student dynamics, in *Taare Zameen Par* genuine university environments exhibit both parallels and differences: although the movie highlights the influence of empathetic dialogue real classroom encounters present a more intricate combination of nurturing and demotivating teaching approaches. Together, these insights underline the urgent need for universities to promote mindful, student-centered communication practices that enhance learning environments and support students holistically academically, emotionally, and socially.

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