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Impact of the Secondary Education Examination (English) on Students and Parents in Nepal

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IMPACT OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION (ENGLISH) ON STUDENTS AND PARENTS IN NEPAL

By

SARASWATI DAWADI

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the impact of the secondary education examination English test on students and their parents in Nepal. It was conducted with Grade 10 students (N=247) and their parents (N=6) in Nepal. It employed a mixed methods methodology comprising a longitudinal survey (pre-test and post-test survey) with students, oral diaries recorded by six students intermittently for three months and interviews with those six students and their parents both in the pre-test and post-test context. The test impacts were critically examined through the lens of critical language testing theory.

The findings suggest that the majority of students (79%) were motivated to learn English in the pre-test context, but not in the post-test context. Most students and their parents had positive attitudes towards the test fairness and accuracy in the pre-test context but they considered the test to be unfair and inaccurate in the post-test context. They reported feeling extremely anxious about the test and under enormous pressure to raise test scores. The test had huge impact on learning English; students' learning was limited to the test contents and they rarely used the strategies that develop their English language skills. Parents provided any possible support to their children for the test preparation. They even tended to coerce their children to use certain strategies for the test preparation and to work very hard for the test. However, individual differences were observed in each case. Despite the fact that the test supported students to study the subject of their choice at higher secondary level, the overwhelming majority of students had difficulty in learning different subjects taught through English at Grade 11. Thus, the study provided a set of implications for teaching English in an English as a foreign language context along with some recommendations for the improvement of the test and for future research.

Acknowledgements

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original piece of work. It is being submitted for the degree of (Doctor of Philosophy) at The Open University, England.

It has not previously been submitted for any degree or publication elsewhere, either in the form of extracts or as a whole.

Saraswati Dawadi   The Open University, February, 2019

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List of Acronyms

CAQDAS: Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

CLT: Critical Language Testing

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

EMI: English as a Medium of Instruction

ESL: English as a second language

FCE: First Certificate in English

GEPT: General English Proficiency Test

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

L2: Second Language

LD: Language Development

MOE: Ministry of Education

NAPLAN: National Assessment Programme- Literacy and Numeracy

NMET: National Matriculation English Test

NEB: National Examination Board

PED: Provincial Education Directorates

PI: Parental Involvement

SBA: School Based Assessment

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

SEE: Secondary Education Examination

SLC: School Leaving Certificate

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Science

TA: Test Anxiety

TAKS: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

TP: Test Pressure

TPM: Test Preparation Management

USA: United States of America

UK: United Kingdom

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter situates the current study by identifying test impact issues and a need for test impact studies in the Nepalese context. It begins with a brief introduction to the study and presents my motivation for undertaking this research. It offers insights into the complex issues related to test impact and indicates research gaps in this field to justify the rationale and significance of this study. Additionally, its aim and research questions are presented. The final section presents the organisational structure of this thesis.

1.1   Introduction to the Research Context

The context for this study is the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) - a national level examination conducted at the end of 10-year school education in Nepal. The students who take this examination are 15 to 16 years old.

It should be noted that the SEE was previously known as the School Leaving Certificate (SLC). Therefore, the terms SLC and SEE are used to refer to the same examination in this thesis (see further discussion in 2.1). The examination has become one of the major educational events in Nepal for the last 86 years. In fact, a large amount of money, time and energy are spent on the SEE both at the individual and national level. No other educational activity in Nepal attracts as much public attention as the SLC/SEE does (Bhatta, 2005). The news related to the SEE receives a good headline in most national newspapers and on television and radio channels in Nepal, particularly during its conduction and results publication. In other words, media generate a feeding frenzy among the Nepalese communities and the examination becomes one of the major discussion issues for most people in Nepal.

Indeed, success in the SEE is associated with social prestige in the Nepalese society as it is the first recognised qualification that the Nepalese students gain after they spend 10 years at schools. Any person holding the SEE certificate is socially recognised as an educated person in the Nepalese society and achievement of high grades in the SEE receives high prestige in Nepal. Because of such recognition and/or social prestige, anyone, whether or not they want to continue further education, desires to perform well in this examination.

Most people in Nepal believe that good performance in the SEE creates more career opportunities and leads to a better life. Therefore, parents, irrespective of their educational

and social background, contribute to the development of such psychology in their children's minds so that their children consider the SEE to be everything in their life; "failure in the exam equating to failure and meaninglessness in life" (Bhattrai, 2014, p.70). The main reason behind parental beliefs and their influences on their children can be seen as their poor economic condition and their hope for a better future resulting from better performance in the SEE. It is estimated that about half of the population in Nepal live below the poverty line. So, the parents who are living a miserable life seek their children's secure future through education (Bhattrai, 2014).

However, the SEE is not free from criticism despite several efforts made by the Nepalese government to make it capable of triggering more positive impacts on its stakeholders. To be more specific, it is usually argued that the examination brings severe consequences to students and their parents (Shrestha, 2018). Nevertheless, examination reform initiatives of the Nepalese government seem to be directed more towards administrative reforms than improving the quality of the test in order to make it more reliable and valid (Budhathoki et al., 2014). Additionally, very little research has explored the impacts of the SEE on its key stakeholders, especially students and their parents. So, it is still not clear how the examination affects students and their parents. Nevertheless, this study focuses only on the English test and not the other subjects (e.g. Nepali and maths) assessed in the SEE.

It is also worth pointing out that English plays a great role in career development of SEE graduates as many institutes in higher secondary level require a high level of proficiency in English (Bista, 2011) as these institutes teach both English and other content courses through English. Furthermore, many jobs in the Nepalese market require good English proficiency. Indeed, the rapid wave of globalization has sparked a desperate demand for English use in Nepal; it has been used more than ever before (Giri, 2014) and is considered to be an indispensable means for success in virtually all walks of life in the Nepalese context. This scenario obviously acts as a strong motivation for Nepalese students to learn English in order to fulfil their dreams of English proficiency and the best possible career prospects. In other words, people in Nepal consider English learning as a venue opening up with gateway to better career opportunities both inside and outside the country. However, the vast majority of students in Nepal go to public (i.e. state) schools, which use Nepali as a medium of instruction, and most of them complete school education without developing their communicative competence in English.

1.2 Motivation for Undertaking This Research

The SEE is a high-stakes examination in Nepal as it has continuously become a major landmark in an individual's life in Nepal. It provides an opportunity for students to study in higher education and also supports them for their career development. Indeed, it is the sole factor that dictates one's career path, as success in this examination plays a decisive role in a course selection for a student in higher education and getting entrance to highly prestigious higher secondary schools in Nepal. Furthermore, to apply for most jobs in Nepal, the minimum qualification required is the SEE. This means that success in this examination widens students' prospects for employment and educational opportunities and failure in this examination greatly narrows students' options for self-development. Because of this, many people in Nepal take failure in the SEE as a failure in life. For this reason, student performance in the SEE has received intense attention of all students and their parents.

The SEE results are viewed as an indicator of school quality by both the Nepalese government and the general public. Therefore, the examination makes schools and teachers accountable for student performance as the schools securing high grades are regarded to be 'prestigious' and are rewarded by the Ministry of Education (MOE) Nepal whereas failure to obtain good results in the SEE is considered as a loss of competence, and demonstrates inefficiency and poor management. So, there is a danger of the potential for the naming and shaming for those poorly performing schools. In adverse cases, strong sanctions such as the closing of schools may also be imposed on those poorly performing schools.

The pass rate in the examination remained less than 50% for most years and around 90% of those failures failed in core subjects including English (Yadav, 2014). Budhathoki et al.'s (2014) study on the SLC drop outs reported that most of the failures have no intention to retake the examination: some of them start working in factories and hotels and some others go abroad to work while some others take some skill-based training. Nevertheless, students who pass the examination also face difficulty in their academic career. For instance, Khaniya's (1990) study indicated that the school English was inadequate for reading and writing purposes at the upper Grade (Grade 11). So, students had difficulty to study at Grade 11 for the lack of the adequate skills needed to study at that level. Nonetheless, almost no research (except Khaniya, 1990) has explored how the SEE English test affects students' learning and future academic career.

Reflecting back on my high school days, the SEE had a huge impact on my life and the way I learnt English. I had been ever-conscious of the SLC examination since I entered high school. In those days, learning for me meant memorising answers as we were simply encouraged to memorise answers by rote and get good scores on tests. As mentioned by Shohamy (2007), I do not remember being asked a question about 'what I learnt in my school' but rather about 'what scores and positions I got on given tests.' Therefore, my major focus was simply on memorising the test contents. As the examination was the sole criterion to judge my skills, I would learn English just for passing tests. I was fortunate enough that I passed the SLC examination with high scores but I faced significant challenges to study at higher levels. I was not able to understand lectures and take part in classroom discussions using English. I was so hopeless that I nearly dropped out my studies at that time. Additionally, it was a compulsion for me to find a job as it was beyond the means of my parents who were simply depending on traditional subsistence farming and had the responsibility to take care of nine other children, to provide for my higher education. So, I applied for several jobs that mainly looked for the people with the SLC level qualification without any success. Then, I realised that I did not have the English language skills needed for those jobs. This scenario taught me very well that the examination prepared me neither for higher education nor for employment. However, I was still not able to understand all the dynamics of assessment practices in Nepal and to reflect well on my experience and critique the examination practice. I never questioned the system as I was not aware of my rights to raise my voice against it.

Later, my enrolment at Tribhuvan University, Nepal and then at Lancaster University, England for a master's course offered me "an excellent opportunity to delve deeply into the topic of testing, for no reason other than to better understand its mysteries, rationale, purposes, benefits, and costs" (Shohamy, 2007, p.142). I could even collect better experience of being tested, particularly at Lancaster University which offered me an unprecedented opportunity to broaden my knowledge in the field of language testing. I also learnt about the critical language testing (CLT) theory that made me aware of the power of language tests. My interest, during those days, was directed at test construction process, test uses and its ramifications. My involvement in those universities led me to pursue a somewhat different direction in language testing, i.e., to focus instead on the impacts of a test on its stakeholders. I realised that tests are not only about accuracy of results but rather a tool in the hands of test designers and policy makers to impose and perpetuate specific agendas. I also saw a dire need to examine the ramifications of language tests, their uses,

misuses, power, biases and language learning practices they create for certain groups (Shohamy, 2007), particularly in the Nepalese context.

The literature on language testing also informed me that students and their parents, the most vulnerable people to test impacts, have been researched less compared to other stakeholders. I also came to know that there has been very little research on the impacts of the SEE English test. As Shrestha (2018) rightly points out, "research on the SLC English test is limited to only a few studies" (p.48). Indeed, only one study (Khaniya, 1990) has explored the impacts of the SEE English test on students and the study was limited to the post-test impacts.

Furthermore, I have one-year experience of teaching to Grade 10 or SLC students studying in a private English-medium school in the capital city of Nepal. During the year, I could sense the level of stress and anxiety in students associated with the examination although their English language proficiency was good. However, I did not really know whether students from other schools, especially those students who studied in Nepali-medium schools, had similar kind of feelings associated with the test. Later, I conducted a study to explore the impacts of the SLC English test on teachers' pedagogical practices and students' motivation to learn English (see Dawadi, 2018) but I could not record the voices of students in that study as the data was collected only from teachers. Furthermore, I could not find even a single study that has explored the impacts of the SEE English test on parents. Therefore, I decided to undertake this study with an aim to explore the nature of the impacts of the SEE English test on students and parents in Nepal and to contribute to the development of the test.

1.3   Aims of the Study

The overarching aim of the study was to explore the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents. To be more specific, the study aimed to explore the actual influences of the test on students' motivation to learn English, test preparation practices and career development. Additionally, it aimed to explore psychological impacts (i.e. pressure and anxiety) of the test on students and their parents along with parental involvement (PI) in the test preparation.

The study aimed to look at the examination process from students' and their parents' perspectives and give them a voice rather than writing about them as the success of any educational system depends on learner-relevant factors such as students' perceptions and

motivations (Cheng, Andrews, & Yu, 2010). Anyone concerned with test impacts can imagine that test impacts are usually most potent on an individual being tested; " he [sic] is the one whose status in school and society is determined by test scores and the one whose self-image, motivation, and aspirations are influenced" (Kirkland, 1971, cited in Scott, 2007, p.29). Similarly, parents are vulnerable to test impacts. Nonetheless, they have been under researched in previous test impact studies. In other words, parents have received the least attention (Rogers, Barblett, & Robinson, 2016). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the nature of the impacts of the SEE English test both on students and their parents.

1.4   Research Questions

Bachman and Palmer (1996) argue that test-takers can be affected by three aspects of testing procedure: (a) the experience of preparing for the test and taking the test, (b) the feedback they receive on the test performance and (c) the decision that may be made about them on the basis of their test scores. Following the argument, this study aimed to explore both the pre-test and post-test impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents. The overarching question of this study was: 'What are the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents?' The specific research questions to be addressed in the study included:

a. What are students' and their parents' pre-test and post-test attitudes towards the SEE English test?

b. Does the test motivate students to learn English? If yes, how does it affect students' motivation to learn English in the pre-test and post-test context?

c. How do students prepare themselves for the SEE English test?

d. Do students and their parents suffer test pressure and anxiety? If yes, what sorts of pressure and anxiety do they suffer?

e. How do parents involve themselves in preparing their child for the test?

f. What are the impacts of the test on students' career choices and learning at a higher Grade?

1.5 Rationale of the Study

School education in Nepal, after a number of attempts, came to a critical turning point in 2016 when it revised the Education Act (1971- Eighth Amendment), restructured school education and adopted a letter grading system in the SEE abandoning a century old marking system (Chhetri, 2019). Additionally, some changes in the school curriculum and the SEE tests format have been made. However, almost no research has been carried out to investigate the impacts of such changes on students and their parents. If the impacts of a high-stakes test is not known, this might bring undesirable consequences to the society (Messick, 1998). It is potentially like "a police force without a court system, unfair and dangerous"(McNamara, 2007, p.280). Therefore, the rationale for this study begins with the need to explore the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents.

High-stakes tests are usually used as an agent to bring desired changes in education system throughout the world but our understanding of whether they are capable of functioning as an agent for change is too limited because of the lack of sufficient empirical studies on this issue (Qi, 2007). Also, the impacts of such tests are not widely discussed in the Nepalese context and previous studies on the SEE English test impacts are confined to its washback (e.g. Dawadi 2018; Khaniya, 1990). As the studies were limited to the context of teaching and learning, they might not contribute much to the improvement of the exam system. So, it is necessary to explore broader consequences of the SEE English test in the Nepalese context. New insights in this area might be useful to improve the testing practice in Nepal. By using CLT theory (Shohamy, 1993, 2001a), this study attempts to consider the test impacts on students and their parents from a suitably critical perspective.

The SEE is deeply embedded in the Nepalese meritocracy. Underlying this power-coercive, top-down approach to educational reform is the assumption that the SEE can influence learning. Unfortunately, however, the test has some unintended consequences to its stakeholders (Dawadi, 2018). Despite this, criticising the testing practice openly is not easy in the Nepalese society where a strict academic hierarchy exists that elevates unequal power relationship between test designers and test-takers. Nepalese society grants the SEE so much power that students and their parents, the primary stakeholders, are placed in such a weak position that they are unlikely to challenge their roles and positions. On the one hand, they are unwilling to express their opinions and feelings freely in public and, on the other hand, their voices are rarely heard by the people responsible for designing and conducting the SEE. In many cases, students and parents even appear to be unaware of

their rights to express their views about the test and simply follow the examination process without any question. Most students undoubtedly attribute their success or failure in the exam to their own efforts without questioning whether the exam fairly and accurately assesses their abilities. Nonetheless, any stakeholder of the exam should have the right to question the use or misuse of the SEE, if any, and develop a critical view towards the examination system.

For the improvement of the SEE, it is highly important that students and their parents are encouraged to develop a critical view towards the testing practice. It is hoped that this study will reveal their views and indirectly empower them so that they will be able to raise their voices about the examination. So, one of the main characteristics of the current study is that it looks at the SEE English test from students' and their parents' perspectives and gives them a voice rather than writing about them. The main rationale for this study is that the least heard voices are made known through it to the public and to policy makers in order to promote further discussions on how to improve the education system in Nepal.

1.6   Significance of the Study

High-stakes tests are likely to affect students and their parents but they have tended to be researched less in comparison to other stakeholders, such as teachers, in previous test impact studies (Cheng, et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2016). Furthermore, studies that have linked both students' and parents' attitudes are almost non-existent (Cheng, et al., 2010). Having collected both students' and their parents' views about a high-stakes test, this study aims to illuminate the areas which are not fully explored and to provide solid research evidence to explain and predict the nature of test impacts on students and their parents.

In the context of Nepal, the SEE results have long been used as a means to judge the quality of school education without paying attention to the test preparation processes that students go through. Nevertheless, in order to judge the value of a test end or outcome, we "should understand the nature of the processes or means that led to that end. It is not just that means are appraised in terms of the ends they lead to, but ends are appraised in terms of the means that produce them" (Haladyna, Nolen, & Haas, 1991, p. 6). The data collected in this study provides important information about the processes that students go through to prepare themselves for the test. Moreover, despite the fact that this research provides evidence of the impacts of a high-stakes test in a specific educational context (i.e. the

Nepalese context), it might contribute to the general understanding of high-stakes test impacts in a broader context.

This study has both theoretical and pedagogical significance. Since it seeks to illuminate the consequences of the English test to its primary stakeholders, it should contribute to the improvement of the test. It should also offer educators and policy makers an insight into the test impacts on the English language learning practices in Nepal and should provide a theoretical framework that can be applied to conduct test impact studies in future. Additionally, the findings of this study related to students' motivation to learn English and their test preparation strategies may have important pedagogical implications for shaping English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching practices both in local and global contexts.

As test impact on students and parents is under-researched, the testing community seem not to know how or to what extent students and parents of a high-stakes test are affected. Therefore, there is potentially a great deal that language test designers and researchers can learn about the nature of high-stakes test impacts on students and their parents. Furthermore, the study provides a new theoretical framework for exploring the nature of test impacts and expands the research area. It is hoped that this study will provide valuable guidelines for future studies in the same and related fields.

1.7   Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis has been divided into nine chapters. Chapter one (this chapter) is a general introduction of the study whereas Chapter two presents a brief background to the study along with an overview of the English language teaching and testing practices in Nepal and an introduction to the SEE. Chapter three reviews related literature in the field of test consequences. The major focus of the chapter is on test washback and impact studies. The literature on CLT has also been reviewed as it guides this research. Chapter four outlines the research methodology used in this study. It gives a detailed description of the research methods, participants and research tools. Then, it discusses the pilot study and my learnings from the pilot study. Chapter five, six, seven and eight present the findings obtained from the study along with discussions of those findings. Chapter five presents the findings related to students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test whereas Chapter six considers the psychological impacts of the test on students and their parents; Chapter seven presents the findings on the test preparation strategies used by students and PI in the test preparation and Chapter eight considers the test impacts on students' educational and

career development. In each chapter, both quantitative and qualitative findings are presented followed by a discussion of those findings. The final Chapter concludes the study highlighting some of its implications and providing some suggestions for the improvement of the test and some recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Background to the Study

This chapter aims to situate the study by discussing some current issues in the context of language testing in Nepal. It begins with a brief history of English language teaching and testing in Nepal and gives a brief background to the SEE and its administration practice. After this, a discussion on the high-stakes nature of the SEE in general and the SEE English test in particular has been presented, highlighting research gaps in this area to ultimately justify the need for the present research. The final section presents some concluding remarks.

2.1   English Language Teaching and Testing in Nepal

Nepal is a small mountainous country squeezed between two giant countries: India and China (bordered on the north by China and on the south, east and west by India). Nepal comprises an area of 147,181 square kilometres, extending about 885 kilometres in the east-west direction and 193 kilometres in the north-south direction. Geographically, the country can be divided into three regions: the mountain region (that extends across the north and includes Mt. Everest- the highest mountain in the world- along with seven other peaks over 8000 metres), the hilly region (which makes up the central region of Nepal with high hills and a number of fertile valleys), and the Terai region (that extends from the Indian border to the bottom of the foothills and includes plain and fertile area). The population of Nepal is around 30 million. As it is a developing country, there has not been much progress in the fields of education, transportation and communication. It is estimated that about half of the population in Nepal still live below the poverty line. Despite this, it accommodates amazing ethnic and cultural diversity. The majority of Nepalese are Hindus but several religions including Buddhism, Islam and Christianity have co-existed in harmony through centuries.

Linguistic diversity is a major national asset; most people in Nepal are bilingual, if not multilingual. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal (2012), 123 languages are spoken as a mother tongue. Highlighting the linguistic diversity in Nepal, Turin (2007) mentions, "Nepal is not only home to more language families than all of Europe combined, but also has more distinct and individual languages in one country than the whole of the European community" (p.5). However, it is hard to find a particular speech community that uses English for day-to-day communication. Despite this reality, English has become the most prestigious language in Nepal. Every educated person in Nepal is expected to have learnt some English and those who have good English are thought to be knowledgeable

people. Knowledge of English is expected to provide better career prospects and choices. The Nepalese government has also shown an enduring interest in promoting English language teaching in Nepal. Therefore, English has been taught as a compulsory subject throughout Nepal for academic and communicative purposes from Grade One to the Graduate level through a centralized system of education with a centrally prepared curriculum.

The history of English language teaching (ELT) in Nepal began in 1850 when the then Rana ruler, Jung Bahadur Rana, travelled to England and elsewhere in Europe (Duwadi, 2018; Weinberg, 2013). Being highly impressed by the education system that he observed during his visit to the western world, he established the Durbar (Palace) school on palace ground upon his return. Only the members of the Rana family were allowed to study in the school though it was later moved off palace grounds and some students from non-Rana family, though still elite, were allowed to study (Weinberg, 2013). English was the medium of instruction in this first government-run school in Nepal and this practice continued nearly for 100 years. While the Rana family were in power, they provided education only to their family members as they saw an educated populace as a big threat to their regime (Weinberg, ibid).

It was only after 1951, when the country witnessed a great political change (i.e. the establishment of democracy), that all the people in Nepal were allowed to get education (Bista, 2011). Many schools were established throughout the country and the Nepali language became the medium of education; English was taught as a subject. Nepali-only schools continued for nearly 40 years (1950 to 1990) (Weinberg, 2013) but they received criticisms from the Nepalese academia. Then, English, both as a medium of instruction and a subject, began to receive increased attention in Nepalese academic discourses. There was also a demand for mother tongue education highlighting the need to use children's mother tongue in their classroom. Then, in 1990, the constitution of Nepal outlined the provision for mother-tongue education in primary level to create some possibilities for promoting local languages and also for cognitive development in children through L1; schools were also allowed to use English as a medium of instruction (EMI), if wished. Following the policy, the Curriculum Development Centre produced textbooks in 18 different local languages. The School Sector Reform Plan (2016/17-2022/23) has also supported the use of mother tongues in early grades (MOE, 2016) but the present scenario indicates that mother tongue education has not proliferated (Ojha, 2018).

There has been a high demand of English language in the Nepalese society. The English language has been associated with social prestige and more and more people in Nepal seem to be interested in learning English. Dahal (2000, p.176) points out a number of factors that have contributed to the gravity of English in the lives of Nepalese people including Nepal's diplomatic relation with several countries, its heavy dependence on foreign aid and job opportunities. Realising the public demand, the Nepalese government has introduced the policy of EMI targeting public schools in Nepal.

Currently, there are two types of schools in Nepal: private (fee paying schools) and government funded public schools (non-fee paying schools). Most private schools use EMI as a key selling point. So, students get ample opportunities to practise English as they use English both inside and outside their classrooms. Graduates of these schools feel more comfortable in using English for personal development. These schools are considered to be better than public schools because of their students' higher pass percentage in the SEE. However, these schools have been accessible to only a limited group of people as they are expensive and city-oriented. The vast majority of students study in public schools which are funded by the Nepalese government. The schools teach English as a subject about four hours a week and most of them use the Nepali language as a medium of instruction. Students in those schools do not have enough exposure to practise English language as there is limited use of English language in those schools (Bista, 2011; Khati, 2011). Therefore, most students from public schools complete 10-year school education without necessarily having adequate level of English proficiency (Dawadi, 2016). The SEE results indicate that private schools have been outperforming state schools (Thapa, 2011, 2013). As a result, much more people in Nepal are attracted to send their children to private schools. That's why, there is a high demand of English medium schools in Nepal.

The scenario mentioned above shows that the two different practices of ELT have created some asymmetries in the Nepalese society. The introduction of EMI in Nepalese schools can be seen as an education policy of the Nepalese government to avoid such kind of asymmetries; many public schools are switching from Nepali medium to EMI. The schools seem to believe that not using EMI is the only reason to lose their popularity among the people in Nepal but the absence of the EMI policy may not be the only reason behind low student enrolment in public schools. Previous research provides no clear evidence to prove that EMI necessarily improves learning and quality of schools (Karki, 2018; Ojha, 2018).

The government of Nepal made an amendment to the Education Act in 2016 and the revised Act (Eighth Amendment of Education Act 1971) has restructured the school education system as Basic education (Grade 1-8) and secondary education (Grade 9-12) while it was previously organised as primary (Grade 1 to 8), secondary (Grade 9-10) and higher secondary (Grade 11-12) education. The national level standardised examination conducted at the end of Grade 10, which was previously known as SLC, has been renamed as SEE now. However, no difference can be noticed between them in terms of their purpose and the stakes associated with them. The data for the study was collected around one year after the amendment to the Education Act.

Despite the fact that the Nepalese government has embarked upon reforming the school education sector in order to meet the changing social needs and educational aspirations of the people in Nepal, significant changes have not been made in terms of the examination system. For instance, the letter grading system in the SEE has been recently implemented abandoning 84-year long practice of numeric scoring system in the examination, without making any changes in its tests format and marking criteria. So, it may not be plausible to expect a positive change in ELT practices in the Nepalese classrooms as a result of the implementation of the letter grading system in the SEE. Unfortunately, almost no research has explored the impacts of the letter grading system on students and parents given its newness.

English language testing practice in Nepal has always remained in a bad shape despite the fact that reforming examination might be the cheapest and most effective way of reforming English education in developing countries like Nepal (Giri, 2010). Although one-off exams have been criticised throughout the world, the revised Act also suggests to run one-off exams at the end of Grade 10 and the exams are still traditional; "there has been no major shift from testing students' memory (e.g. seen reading passage, decontextualised grammar) to creativity and real communication skills in English" (Shrestha, 2018, p.48).

2.2   Background to the SEE/SLC

The SEE/SLC is controlled by the National Examination Board (NEB) - a constituent organisation of the MOE, Nepal. It is the first national level examination students take in their school life. It is mandatory that each student sits for this examination as it is conducted as a gatekeeper for entry into the higher secondary education (Dawadi & Shrestha, 2018).

Since the commencement of the SLC examination in 1934, there have been some changes in the examination system including its test format, administration and marking scheme. Before 2016, the examination had a scoring practice with a cut-off point at 32% and to be considered having 'passed' the SLC examination, students had to secure passing scores (32%) in each of the eight SLC subjects: six compulsory subjects (English, Nepali, Maths, Science, Social Studies, and Health, Population and Environmental Education) and two elective subjects (elective I- including Maths, and Economics, and Elective II- including Account and Education); the total score for each subject was 100.

Students who could pass the examination with an average score of less than 45 were given a third division pass certificate; students with 45 to 59 and 60 to 79 were given a second and first division pass certificate respectively; and students, who could score 80 percent and above, were given a 'distinction' pass certificate. If a student failed in any one of the eight SLC subjects, his or her prospect of pursuing further studies or getting an official job would be lost there and then and they would also have to live with the stigma of being 'unsuccessful' for the rest of their lives (Mathema, 2016). So, Mathema and Bista (2006) recommended to abandon the scoring system as the scoring system was not scientific. The authors argued:

> The certificate should be made more descriptive of the achievement of the individual student. To achieve this, the scoring currently done in terms of numerals should be replaced by the letter grade system, which would enable us to positively recognise as many individuals as possible and help eliminate the Pass, Fail, and Distinction categories (p.38).

The 'Letter Grading System' was introduced in the SEE in 2016. Since then, students' performances in the examination have been graded using some letters (see the grading criteria in Table 1) and there is no such cut-off point or pass/fail criterion now. A student needs not excel in all the subjects now to be eligible to pursue higher education. Therefore, even if a student is deficient in one or two subjects, the student can continue further studies in the subjects he or she is good at. Nonetheless, it has been argued that introducing the grading system just for the sake of using new evaluation system is meaningless, when the curriculum and examination pattern are still traditional. It is surprising that there was almost no significant debate about the implementation of the grading system in the Nepalese academia. Despite repeated recommendations made by Nepalese scholars, the government just introduced the letter grading system without making any changes in the

curriculum and in the test format, and without training teachers on how to use the new system. Now, students take a written test and a practical/oral test in each SEE subject and their scores on the tests are converted into letters. The meanings associated with each of the seven letters are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Students grading criteria in the SEE examination

Letter	Score in %	Description	Explanation	GPA
A+	90-100	Outstanding	Exceptional evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of extra ordinary performance in problem-solving, creativity and participation, exceptionally independent in learning and organizing contents; higher performance in balancing knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of contents with superior in communication skills.	4.0
A	80-90	Excellent	Strong evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of higher performance in problem-solving, creativity, critical expression and participation; admirably independent in learning and organizing the contents with advanced communication skills.	3.6
B+	70-80	Very Good	Very good understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of higher performance in problem-solving, creativity, critical expression and participation; greatly independent in learning and organizing the contents with sound communication skills.	3.2
B	60-70	Good	Good evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of reasonably good independent performance in problem-solving, creativity, critical expression and participation; very	2.8

Letter	Score in %	Description	Explanation	GPA
			independent in learning and organizing with reasonable communication skills.	
C+	50-60	Satisfactory	Adequate evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of reasonably good but not particularly independent performance in problem-solving, creativity, critical expression and participation; reasonably independent in learning, and analysing contents with sufficient communication skills.	2.4
C	40-50	Acceptable	Sufficient evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of acceptable performance in problem-solving; creativity, critical expression and participation; reasonably independent in learning and organizing contents with satisfactory communication skills.	2.0
D+	30-40	Partially acceptable	Some evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of limited performance in problem-solving; creativity, critical expression and participation; partially independent in learning and organizing contents with basic communication skills.	1.6
D	20-30	Insufficient	Minimal evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; demonstration of deficient performance in problem-solving; creativity, critical expression and participation; needs close supervision in learning and organizing contents minimal communication skills.	1.2
E	0-20	Very insufficient	Negligible evidence of understanding and summarizing the subject matter; seriously deficient performance in problem-solving; creativity, critical expression and very minimal participation; needs	0.8

Letter	Score in %	Description	Explanation	GPA
			constant supervision in learning and organizing contents with inadequate communication skills.	

(Note: GPA stands for Grade Point Average) (Source: MOE, 2015)

It is worth pointing out that the above criteria are used in each subject included in the SEE. If students obtain grade C or less in any subject, they are allowed to take supplementary exams which provide students with an opportunity to improve their grade. The exams are conducted after two months of the SEE result publication.

2.3   Administration of the SEE

The SEE is administered simultaneously to all Grade 10 students in Nepal. Before students sit for the SEE, they go through a school level qualifying test known as the 'send-up' test which is controlled by the schools themselves. The SEE is annually conducted in March-April with a steadily increasing number of students every year. Nearly 500,000 school graduates take the SEE each year; the exact number of SEE candidates in the academic year 2017- 2018 (the year when this study was conducted) was 485, 586. The students sat for the examination in 1956 exam centres scattered all over the country (*Himalayan Times*, 2018).

When conducting the exams, the same exam -one subject exam per day- is conducted in all the seven provinces on the same day and exactly at the same time, but the test papers are not exactly the same for all students throughout the country. The test papers differ province wise but they all are parallel to each other. Then, the scores that each student gets on the written tests are converted into letters/grades and the results are published on the NEB website as well as in Gorkhapatra, a national daily newspaper, mostly within 60 days of the last exam date.

2.4   English Test of the SEE: The Focus of the Research

The English test mainly aims to record the achievement of the SEE candidates in the SEE English curriculum which "is based on language skills and aspects […]; language skills are considered as different areas of learning" (MOE, 2014, p.78). The curriculum aims to:

enable the learners to: understand spoken English for general purposes with a good degree of precision; use spoken English for general purposes with a good degree of fluency and accuracy; interact, communicate and collaborate effectively with others orally in pairs, groups and whole class discussion; read a range of fiction and non-fiction texts in a range of media understanding the ideas and information they convey with a good degree of precision; write descriptive, narrative and imaginative texts in a range of different forms and media with a fair degree of accuracy; use all four language skills in a variety of personal, social and academic contexts; and use English language to think creatively, critically and to solve problems that crop up in the real life and to promote tolerance and maintain sociocultural harmony (MOE, 2014, p.51).

The SEE English curriculum mentions that students' listening comprehension skills can be assessed through a multiple-choice test format or a series of other types of comprehension questions like true/-false, matching, listen and act, table completion and drawing a map, whereas various other tasks/activities such as role-playing, discussion, giving speech, interview, reading aloud, picture description, retelling a story, picture narrating, and dramatization can be used to assess students' speaking skills in English. It further mentions that students' reading skills can be assessed by asking them questions (such as gap filling, multiple choice, cloze tests, true/-false, and information transfer) relevant to the passage or text they are asked to read and their writing skills through other tasks such as developing a skeleton into a story, writing essays, describing events, describing pictures, describing situations and writing stories (see MOE, 2014 for detail).

The total marks of the SEE English test is 100.

> Out of total 100 (hundred) marks, 25 (twenty five) percent is allocated for listening and speaking skills which are tested conducting practical tests. Likewise, 40 (forty) percent is allocated for reading, and 35 (thirty five) percent is allocated for writing. The language functions are tested under speaking, grammar is tested within writing, and vocabulary is tested within reading (MOE, 2014, p.73).

It is worth pointing out that students' listening and speaking skills are evaluated internally by their own English language teachers. This means, the listening and speaking test (usually known as speaking test) is conducted by the schools themselves whereas the reading and writing test (usually known as written test) is externally controlled by the

NEB. As the listening test is conducted by the schools themselves, there might be differences in the design and conduct of the test among the schools in Nepal. However, all the SEE candidates throughout Nepal take the written test on the same day and exactly at the same time, and the tests are also similar. As mentioned in 2.3, each of the seven provinces in Nepal design a written test but all of them are parallel to each other. The tests include several tasks such as multiple choice, true/false, gap filling, essay writing and report writing (see Appendix 4).

Before 2016 (i.e. during the time when the SLC had scoring practice with a cut-off point at 32% in each subject) students' performance in the examination was very poor. The pass rate remained less than 50% in most years and "90% out of those who fail their SLC exams, fail in core subjects such as Mathematics, English and Science" (Yadav, 2014, p.2). The recent results of the SEE (published on 27 June, 2019) also indicate that a significant number of students, particularly from public schools (which enrol around 80% students in Nepal) , "have cleared the SEE securing significantly lower grades […]; for example, 278,276 students (85.5 percent) from public schools have scored less than 2.80 GPA" (Chhetrai, 2019, p.12). It can be assumed that the students who obtained less than 2.80 GPA performed poorly in the English test.

The test plays a very crucial role in a student's life. In order to be eligible to study certain courses in higher secondary level, students must get a good grade on the test, among others. For instance, students wishing to join humanities and management courses must get minimum D+ grade on the test. The test is also likely to play a crucial role in getting a job in the Nepalese market though there is a lack of educational policy that can clearly tell us about the grades on the SEE English test and possible employment opportunities for an SEE candidate.

The above argument indicates that the test is a high-stakes test in the Nepalese context. High-stakes tests refer to any measurement of student attainment which carry significant consequences (either positive or negative) to test-takers, their teachers, parents and schools/educational institution (Davies, 2015). Such tests are perceived as having a decisive role in the future education of a country and career development of students. That is why, they can immediately and directly affect students and their parents, the primary stakeholders of those tests.

The test is not free from public criticisms. Pinpointing the weaknesses of the test format, Giri (2005) recommends to change it and make it compatible with the curriculum. He argues that changing the nature of the test might exert positive impact and potentially improve the ELT practices in Nepal. Similarly, Shrestha (2018) puts forward a potential model for the examination reform. However, there have still not been noticeable changes in the test format. More importantly, very little is known about its consequences to the Nepalese society. Therefore, the main rationale for this study begins with the need to explore the impact of the test on students and their parents.

2.5   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a brief background to the current study by presenting an overview of the ELT and English language testing situation in Nepal along with the role of the SEE in the Nepalese society. It also offered insights into the structure of the SEE English test and some recent changes in the testing practices in Nepal. Moreover, it identified various issues associated with the test pinpointing some weaknesses of the test format. Chapter three will review the relevant literature with an aim of identifying the research gaps that this study aims to fill.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter aims to discuss the theoretical underpinnings that guide this study and present an overview of relevant studies on language test impacts. It begins with a brief introduction to the power of tests followed by a discussion on CLT. Then, the two key terms used in the study, test washback and test impact, are introduced before reviewing relevant literature for the study. Finally, it introduces the theoretical framework that guides this study and summarises the chapter.

3.1   Power of Tests

Tests have continuously been in use for more than two thousand years and their use is increasing each year. They were first used in China to provide fairer selection of the required people mainly for government positions, schooling, and the military services than the nepotism that prevailed during the Han dynasty two thousand years ago (Carless, 2011). The practice of bureaucrat selection by written public examinations later became increasingly common in other countries including the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). Korea also adopted civil service examination system in 958 to recruit men into government (Kwon, Lee & Shin, 2017).

At present, the educational system around the world use high-stakes tests for several purposes. In most cases, those tests are used as a driving force to induce desirable changes, with improved student learning as the ultimate goal. This power-coercive top-down approach to educational reform reflects the assumption that language tests have the power to exert a desirable influence on teaching and learning the languages because of the consequences they are likely to bring about (Qi, 2007). Tests are also used to select the most suitable students for further education. Furthermore, tests are capable of dictating many other educational decisions as Madaus (1990) highlights, "A single standardised test score independently triggers an automatic admission, promotion, placement or graduation decision" (cited in Shohamy, 1993, p.1). Tests are seen as a primary and cost-effective tool through which desired changes can be brought in the educational system without necessarily improving other educational components, such as curriculum and teacher training (Hsu, 2009).

High-stakes tests have also been widely used for accountability purposes quite for a long time with a belief that the promise of threats of sanctions or rewards may ensure change. External written tests were introduced in order to improve students' performances and

education standards at Cambridge University at the end of the eighteenth century. The practice of using external written examinations to raise education standards then spread all over the world and across different educational sectors. For instance, England introduced an incentive approach in 1862 which was called 'Payment-by-results' through its Revised Code to address the increasing demand for elementary schooling and the scheme provided grants to schools based on students' performances in reading, writing and arithmetic tests (Rijn, Béguin, & Verstralen, 2012) that affected teachers' salaries and funding to schools. A similar kind of accountability assessment can be seen in the USA (such as the No Child Left Behind legislation, later replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act) (Resnick & Schantz, 2017) and in Australia (such as the National Assessment Programme- Literacy and Numeracy- NAPLAN) (Lingard, 2010). Indeed, the educational landscape in the current world is dominated by high-stakes testing and tests are given much more power than ever before.

Tests have been so influential and dominating that they play a central role in society. They have been widely used without considering their possible effects on the people involved in the process. The use of tests as a power and control leads to such kinds of hierarchical relationships that people involved in a test design try to impose their ideas to other people who are relatively in lower positions; students are always in the lowest position in such kind of hierarchy. Therefore, students are most affected by such kind of testing practices, as highlighted by Shohamy (2001b):

> Test-takers have no say about the content of tests and about the decisions made based on their results; worse, they are forced to comply with the demands of tests by changing their behaviour in order to succeed on them. Test-takers are, moreover, not aware of their rights and very rarely defend these rights as individuals (p.375).

Similarly, Bourdieu (1991) explains the wide public acceptance of tests that there is an unwritten contract between testers (those who are in power and want to dominate) and test-takers (those who are subject to tests to maintain their status in their society). For Bourdieu, tests are instruments of symbolic power which set a major criterion of individual worth and they contain a competitive element which is illustrated by the fine line between success and failure. The use of tests for control and power, especially in the countries with centralized education systems, where curriculum and tests are controlled by central agencies, can be seen as a top-down educational change strategy that is undemocratic, unethical and detrimental to test-takers (Shohamy, 1998). For Foucault (1979),

The examination combines the technique of an observing hierarchy and those of normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to quantify, classify and punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of disciplines, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected (p. 184).

It is therefore of interest to explore whether or not tests can exercise power in the Nepalese context, as in some other contexts mentioned above. Since the SEE has long been used as a high-stakes test, it is likely that it exercises power in the Nepalese society but very little is known about how the stakeholders have been affected by the examination. So, this study was designed to explore the power of the SEE English test with an aim of informing the policymakers and testing professionals about the nature of its impacts on students and their parents.

3.2 Theoretical Background to the Study

Language assessment is a social activity which is connected to a whole set of variables that interact in a society (Shohamy, 1993). Therefore, the true nature of assessment can be understood only by taking account of the educational, cultural, political and social contexts in which it operates (Gipps, 1999). Tests are likely to bring consequences to students, teachers and other people who are directly or indirectly involved in it. Foucault (1979) regards assessment as a source of power and a disciplinary tool setting norms to qualify, classify and punish individuals, and hold them under surveillance.

Since examinations are likely to bring consequences to students, it is not surprising that they have a deep influence on students' emotions and feelings (Xiao & Carless, 2013). Test pressure on students usually intensifies in secondary schools as terminal school examinations, which are high-stakes in nature, approach (Shrestha, 2018). High-stakes tests in most cases seem to create anxiety and pressure on students and also affect teachers' pedagogical practices. Pennycook (1994) claims that test consequences are not only educational but also political and social.

Shohamy (2001a) provides a detailed discussion of the power of testing, its sources, temptations and manifestations. She also presents some examples that indicate how tests can manipulate human behaviours and their lives suggesting that tests sometimes have detrimental effects on test-takers because the results obtained from those tests often determine high-stakes decisions for individuals. Shohamy (2001b) argues,

> Test-takers are the true victims of tests in this unequal power relationship between the test as an organisation and the demands put on test-takers; they do not have the right actively to pursue or understand the inside secrets of tests. It is rare for a test-taker to protest, complain or claim that the test did not fit their knowledge; the authority of tests has been accepted without question (p.386).

From this perspective, it is important to ensure that test-takers know about their rights to question test practices and raise issues regarding test methods wherever there is a feeling that their rights have been violated.

However, language testing researchers, quite for a long time, addressed only the measurement issues while overlooking the various roles that language tests can play in society (Shohamy, 1998). In the past, there was little interest in examining how language tests are used in a society and what sort of consequences tests can have in stakeholders' lives or in society at large. Later, Shohamy (1998) introduced the concept of CLT that examines the educational, social and political role of tests in society, considering tests in relation to their power and consequences in social, educational and political contexts. Shohamy further argues that language tests should be seen as powerful tools that are directly related to levels of learner success and they are deeply embedded in social, cultural and educational arenas as indicated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: A basic model of high-stakes language test impact
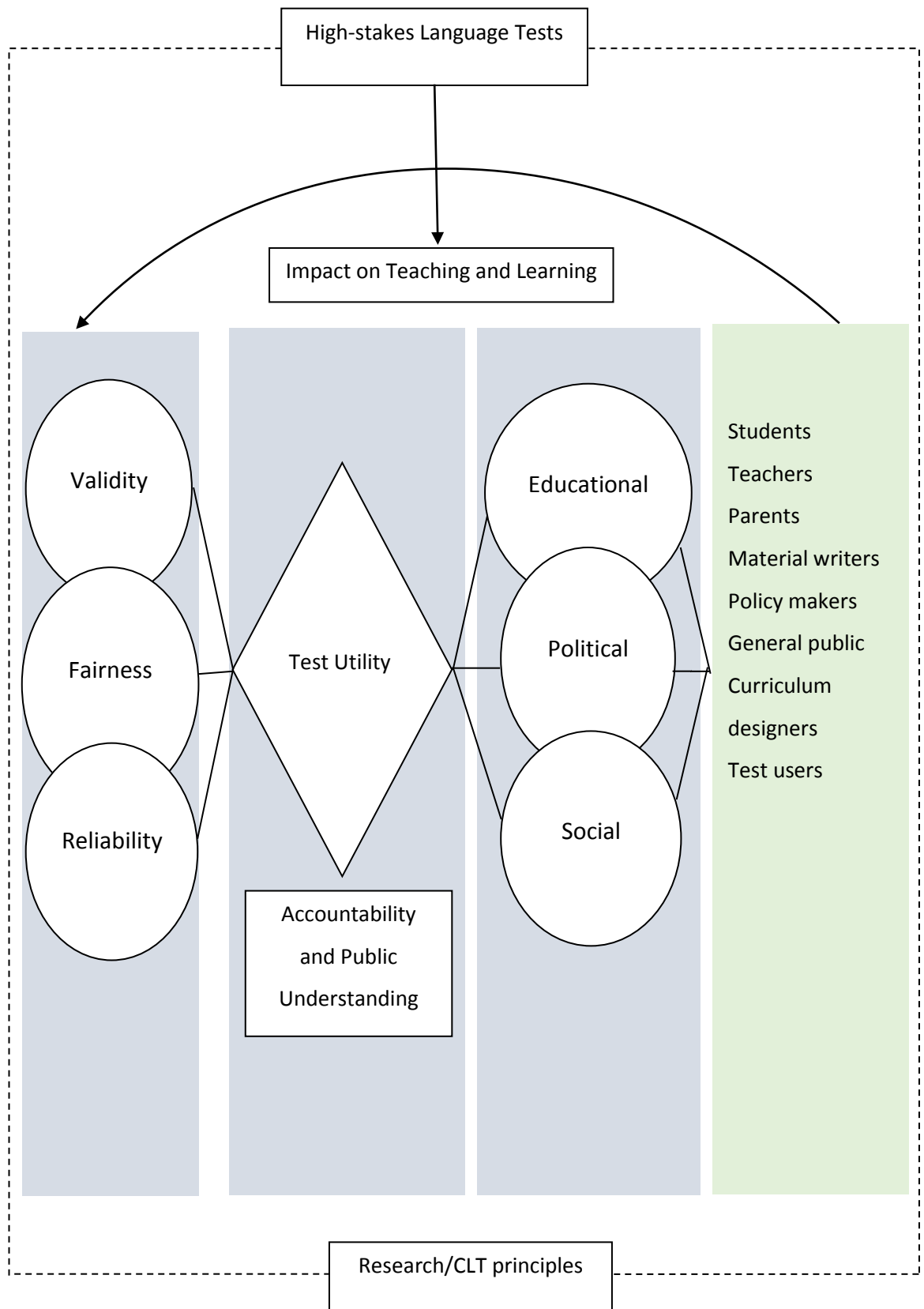
(Adapted from Gipps, 1999)

As the diagram suggests, tests might directly affect the pedagogical practices in which students and teachers are involved (as indicated by the arrow directly below 'high-stakes tests' in Figure 3.1). Since tests are used for accountability purposes, tests may encourage students and teachers to focus only on the test contents and test preparation may evoke feelings of fear, anxiety, pressure and suspicion in students. However, a test's impact is not limited to the teaching and learning context. It can have other educational impacts, such as students' career development along with social and political impacts on society; a test exerts power over different groups of people in the society including parents and teachers. It is not surprising that parents are very much affected by a test as they are the people who take financial and caring responsibility for test-takers. Therefore, a critical observation is needed to explore the true nature of a test's impacts on its stakeholders and to ensure fairness in the testing process and its use (or misuse) in the society so that the test can be a socially just measurement that can support educational improvement and bring positive consequences to students.

It should also be noted that among the various aspects included in Figure 3.1, this study has a major focus only on the fairness, and public understanding (i.e. through parents' perspective) of the test use. It explores the type of impacts the test has on students' and parents' psychology, test preparation practices and students' career development. It is worth noting that among the three kinds of impacts (educational, political and social) that the SEE English test might have in the Nepalese societies where the test operates, this study has a major focus on the educational and social impacts; social impact of the test in this study is limited to the impacts on parents. Furthermore, the English test is likely to have impacts on several people or stake-holders (such as teachers, students, parents, material writers, curriculum designers and test users) but only the impacts on students and parents are explored in this study through the lens of CLT framework.

CLT acknowledges that the knowledge of any tester is incomplete and limited. There is a need for testers to rely on additional knowledge sources in order to obtain more accurate and valid description and interpretation of knowledge. They have to construct their knowledge by working together with test users and test-takers. CLT claims that the balance of power between testers (or the authority) and test-takers should be changed. As Lynch (2001) argues, test-takers should actively participate in the assessment development procedures including the standards and criteria used to judge their performances.

Furthermore, testers need to be fully aware of the power of tests. Tests should be designed in such a way that they can bring the intended impacts on stakeholders. It is equally important to respect the rights of each stakeholder including students and parents. As Shohamy (1993) argues, testers' role does not end in the development phase of language tests, rather they have to examine the consequences of those tests to the people involved.

CLT also challenges the use of 'tests' as the only instrument to assess knowledge (Shohamy, 1993). It recommends for the use of multiple techniques or procedures which together can provide a more valid picture for interpreting the knowledge of individuals.

This means that CLT is also concerned with test fairness (that is closely linked with test validity and reliability) which has been a hotly debated topic in the testing literature. Test fairness mainly refers to impartiality and an absence of favouritism and prejudice. It refers to the condition in which students' skills are accurately measured and scores have the same meaning in different population groups and social contexts (Messick, 1998). A language test is biased when test-takers having the same language ability perform differently (Amiryousefi & Tavakoli, 2014). The underlying belief of test fairness is that it gives equitable treatment to all the test-takers in the testing processes. According to Xi (2010), it refers to "equitable treatment of all test-takers in the testing process, and equity in opportunity to learn the material in an achievement test" (p.47). Unequal learning outcome can be partly reflective of unequal opportunity to learn and partly of biased treatment during the test process. Equality of outcome can be generally expected only when there is genuine equality of learning opportunity and genuine equity of treatment in the test process. Thus, in order to make a test fair for its candidates, the quality of testing instruments and awarding procedures should be of the highest quality (Stobart & Eggen, 2012). There should be no bias or weaknesses in the way students' performances are scored or graded and there should be a valid interpretation of the scores/grades. The meaning of each score and/or grade should be the same everywhere and there should be no bias in scoring and interpretation of test scores (Messick, 1998). The fairness issue should be considered throughout the interconnected phases of the testing process, namely test design, development, administration, scoring and interpretation (Willingham, 1998).

Considering the objectives of the current study, i.e. to explore the nature of the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents, the theoretical framework of this study employed CLT hoping that CLT would enable me to critically observe the nature of the test consequences.

Shohamy (2001a, pp.131-132) states 15 different principles of CLT. Later, having linked Pennycook's (1999, 2000) ideas about critical applied linguistics with Shohamy's (2001a) CLT principles, Lynch (2001, p.363) provides a framework (see Table 3.1) to operationalise a CLT model that consists of four critical perspectives.

Table 3.1: CLT principles and the critical perspectives

Critical perspective characteristic 1: an interest in particular domains such as gender, class, ethnicity, and the ways that language and language-related issues (like all human relations and activities) are interconnected with them.
Shohamy's CLT Principles:

1) Critical language testing (CLT) is not neutral, but is shaped by cultural, social, political, educational and ideological agendas.
3) CLT views test-takers as political subjects within a political context.
4) CLT views tests as tools within a context of social and ideological struggle.
*5) CLT asks questions about which and whose agendas tests serve.
*6) CLT claims that testers need to understand the tests they create within a larger vision of society and its use of those tests.
*7) CLT examines tests in terms of their measurement and assessment of knowledge vs. their definition and dictation of knowledge.
*8) CLT questions the nature of knowledge that tests are based upon: whose knowledge? Independent 'truth' or negotiated and challengeable?
9) CLT examines the influence and involvement of the range of stakeholders in a testing context.
10) CLT perceives the embeddedness of tests within social and educational systems.

Critical Perspective Characteristic 2: the notion that our research needs to consider paradigms beyond the dominant, postpositivist-influenced one.
Shohamy's CLT Principles:

*7) CLT examines tests in terms of their measurement and assessment of knowledge versus their definition and dictation of knowledge.
*8) CLT questions the nature of knowledge that tests are based upon: Whose knowledge? Independent 'truth' or negotiated and challengeable?
11) CLT admits to the limited knowledge of any tester and the need for multiple sources of knowledge.
12) CLT challenges the dominant psychometric traditions and considers 'interpretive' approaches to assessment that allow for different meanings and interpretations rather than a single absolute truth.
13) CLT considers the meaning of test scores within this interpretive framework, allowing for the possibility of discussion and negotiation across multiple interpretations.
15) CLT challenges the primacy of the 'test' as assessment instrument and considers multiple procedures for interpreting the knowledge of individuals.

Critical perspective characteristic 3: a concern for changing the human and social world, not just describing it: the 'transformative agenda', with the related and motivational concern for social justice and equality.
Shohamy's CLT Principles:

2) CLT encourages an active, critical response from test-takers.
*5) CLT asks questions about which and whose agendas tests serve.
*6) CLT claims that testers need to understand the tests they create within a larger vision of society: What vision do the tests create? What vision and purposes are they used for?
14) CLT challenges the knowledge that tests are based upon and advocates a democratic representation of the multiple groups of society.

Critical perspective characteristic 4: the requirement that critical applied linguistics be self-reflexive.
Shohamy's CLT Principles:

*5) CLT asks questions about which and whose agendas tests serve.
*8) CLT questions the nature of knowledge that tests are based upon: Whose knowledge? Independent 'truth' or negotiated and challengeable?
*13) CLT considers the meaning of test scores within this interpretive framework, allowing for the possibility of discussion and negotiation across multiple interpretations.

Notes: Numbering refers to the order in which Shohamy (2001) presents the principles. Asterisks (*) indicate that the principle appears under more than one characteristic.

(Source: Lynch, 2001, p.263)

The framework was truly instrumental in supporting critical observation on this study's data. However, it should be noted that all the 15 CLT principles highlighted by Shohamy (2001a) are not equally pertinent to this study. In other words, this study employed just a few of them (particularly 1, 2, 3, 10 and 12) which are related to the issues raised in this study as revealed by the data. Nevertheless, all the four critical perspectives in general are employed in this study to unpack the test impact issues in the Nepalese context. Indeed, the four critical perspectives guided the whole process in this study.

3.3   Test Washback and Impact

The idea that tests have influences over education in general, and individuals in particular, is relatively new. The concept was first vaguely used around the 1960's but better established in the 1990's (Loumbourdi, 2014). The term 'washback' (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Khaniya, 1990) or "backwash" (Hughes, 2003; Prodromou, 1995) originated in Khaniya (1990) and was then used in the oft-cited article 'Does washback exist?' (Alderson & Wall, 1993) in which the authors stress that washback is a very complex concept and it has not yet been well established. The article drew attention of language testers and researchers in such a way that they very quickly entered into this area and developed a debate on test washback.

There is an extensive body of research that not only confirms washback does exist but also suggests that washback is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Most language testing researchers have now reached a consensus on its definition that it refers to the effects of a test on teaching and learning the language (Green, 2007a, 2013; Saif, 2006; Saville, 2009; Takagi, 2010; Tsagari, 2012).

At present, it has widely been accepted that language tests have consequences beyond the teaching and learning context (Saville, 2009, 2012; Shohamy, 1993, 2001a; Takagi, 2010). They can significantly affect both individuals and society at large. For instance, tests affect career development and the life chances of individual test-takers by controlling access to high quality institutions, international education and employment opportunities (Saville, 2009). The term 'test impact' is used to describe all these wider consequences of language tests within the society.

The term impact has recently appeared in the literature of language assessment as an extension of washback - thus a relatively new concept (Saville, 2009). Since test impact

goes beyond classroom context, it is regarded as the superordinate concept. According to Saville (2009), it operates "broadly on at least two levels: on a socio-cultural level, within educational systems and society in general; and on a local and personal level in terms of the people who are directly affected by tests" (pp.24-25). This is consistent with the distinction made by Bachman and Palmer (1996) who look at "micro" level (such as the effect of a test on individual students and teachers) and "macro" levels (such as the impact on society and its educational systems) of test impacts in a society. Thus, impact has been seen as the general effects of a test on education, society and the people involved but washback as an effect on immediate environment, that is, on teaching and learning the language.

However, it seems very difficult to clearly differentiate between 'washback' and 'impact'. Messick's (1989) unified theory of validity includes both washback and impact under the cover term 'consequential validity'- which refers to different sorts of consequences a test is likely to have in the society. Wall (1997) defines test impact as any effects of a test on individuals or classroom practices, schools, education policies or system and society at large. This definition does not really differentiate between washback and impact. Hughes (2003) also does not differentiate between washback and impact when he views that washback can be seen as a part of the impact a test "may have on learners and teachers, on educational systems in general, and on society at large" (p.53). Similarly, Hsu (2009) views that washback can be interpreted broadly as encompassing test effects not only on teaching and learning but also on education system and society as a whole. Chalhoub-deville (2015) further argues that the terms 'washback' and 'impact' are interrelated terms, so they can be used interchangeably; the variation in use seems to be a matter of tradition in a discipline. For instance, impact seems to be favoured in language testing while washback tends to be favoured in instruction. Nevertheless, the current study, following Wall (1997), uses the term impact to refer to any sort of effects of the SEE English test on students and their parents.

3.4   The Washback Mechanism

The nature of washback seems to be affected by several factors. Therefore, it is hard to tell exactly what washback looks like. Alderson and Wall (1993, pp.121-122) have made an attempt to unpack the concept of washback mechanism and put forward 15 different hypotheses on the nature of washback (see Table 3.1). Those hypotheses have been considered to be the foundation of all washback studies conducted so far.

Table 3.2: The 15 wash back hypotheses

1	A test will influence teaching.
2	A test will influence learning.
3	A test will influence what teachers teach.
4	A test will influence how teachers teach.
5	A test will influence what learners learn.
6	A test will influence how learners learn.
7	A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching.
8	A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning.
9	A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching.
10	A test will influence the degree and depth of learning.
11	A test will influence attitudes to content, method, etc. of teaching/learning.
12	Tests that have important consequences will have washback.
13	Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.
14	Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers.
15	Tests will have washback effects for some teachers and some learners, but not for others.

Later, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) added one more hypothesis as an expansion to those 15 hypotheses: "Tests will have different amounts and types of washback on some teachers and learners than on other teachers and learners" (p.296).

The above mentioned hypotheses indicate only a linear relationship between tests and teaching or learning. Considering washback as a complex phenomenon might suggest that there might be two-way interactions among several factors in the society. Highlighting the complex mechanisms through which washback occurs in a real context of teaching and learning the language, Hughes (1993) introduced the concept of trichotomy and argued for distinguishing between participants, processes and products. In his framework, participants refer to the people such as students, teachers, parents, administrators, material developers and publishers who are directly or indirectly affected by the nature of a test. Thus, Hughes did not limit washback to teachers and learners. The term 'processes' refers to any actions that the participants take for the sake of learning the language, such as syllabus design, material production and teaching and learning activities whereas the term 'product' refers to learning outcome. Hughes further discusses,

The trichotomy into participants, process and product allows us to construct a basic model of backwash. The nature of a test may first affect the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards their teaching and learning tasks. These perceptions and attitudes in turn may affect what the participants do in carrying out their work (process), including practising the kind of items that are to be found in the test, which will affect the learning outcomes, the product of the work (p. 2).

In order to illustrate the mechanism of washback as a trigger for change, Bailey (1996) developed a washback model (see Figure 3.1) based on Hughes' (1993) tripartite distinction between participants, processes and products.

Figure 3.2: Washback model
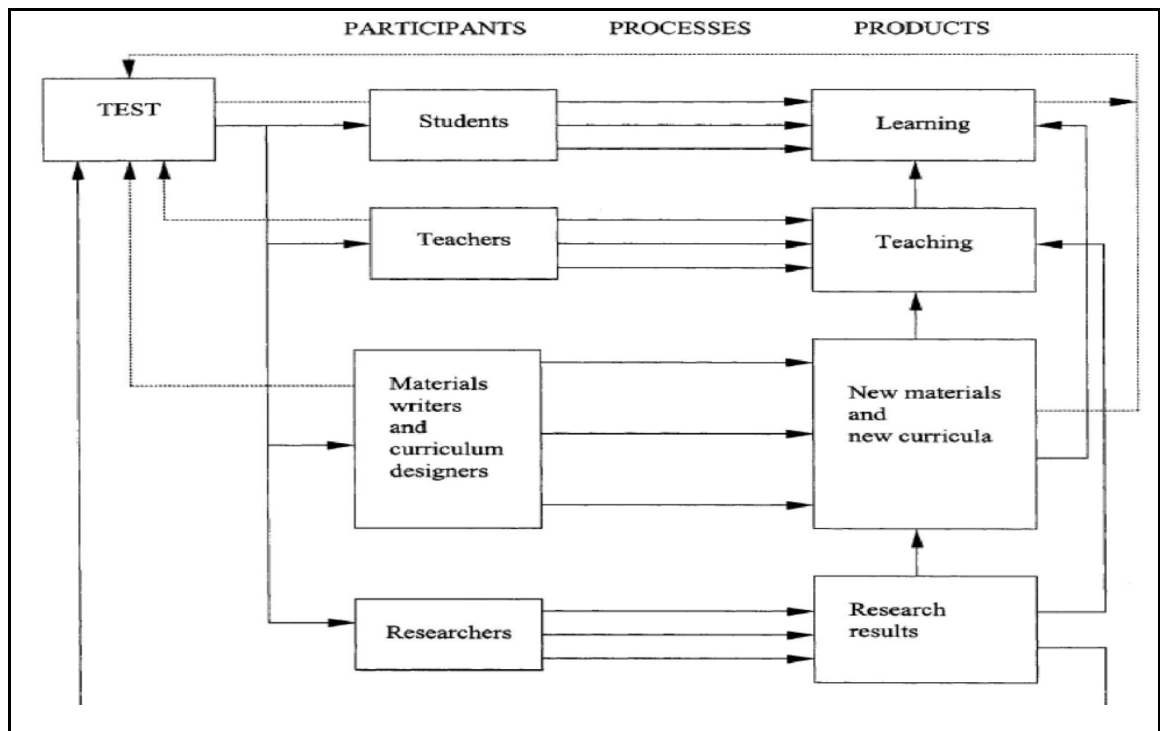
(Source: Bailey, 1996, p.264)

Bailey's model suggests that there is a two-way hypothesis; the test itself might be reciprocally influenced by its participants as represented by the dotted lines in Figure 3.1. There is no direct effect of a test on teaching and learning the language, rather washback can be seen as a process and the process is not always linear. The model does not limit washback to teaching and learning the language and suggests that involvement of researchers, material writers and curriculum designers make the washback mechanism

intricate and comprehensive. As the model focuses only on test washback, it does not include the effects of a test on parents and their role in children's learning.

3.4.1 Categorisation of Washback

The influence of a test has been observed on various aspects of teaching and learning the language. The language testing literature indicates that washback is usually mediated by numerous factors. The nature of washback seems to differ according to the sociocultural context where the test is situated. Three major categories have been used to discuss the complex nature of washback; each of which is discussed below.

3.4.1.1 According to Quality: Positive and Negative

Some effects of a test can be helpful for developing learners' abilities while others might be damaging (Green, 2007a). Washback can be positive (beneficial) or negative (harmful) depending on whether or not test-takers' actions promote their actual language development (Bailey, 1996). Positive washback is said to occur when teachers and learners have positive attitudes towards the test and work willingly to achieve the test objectives. Thus, it promotes productive/ creative language learning (Takagi, 2010). A test enhances learning when students are motivated to work harder in order to get a sense of accomplishment. A well designed test creates a less stressful environment and pays attention to students' individual needs (Loumbourdi, 2014) to promote good teaching and learning practice; a poorly designed test simply tempts teachers and students to learn for the test but not for developing their skills (Ahmad & Rao, 2012; Green, 2013).

A test may produce positive washback if there is a correlation between the test contents and the actual world (Cheng, 1998). Messick (1996) states: "for optimal positive washback there should be little if any difference between activities involved in learning the language and activities involved in preparing for the test" (pp.241-242). A test is said to have positive washback if it enhances students' language skills, i.e., students are motivated to develop their language skills but not simply to do well on the test.

Negative washback is said to occur when a test constrains teaching and learning too narrowly, i.e. the test encourages teachers and learners to narrow the curriculum to the test. According to Prodromou (1995), negative washback refers to the context where learning becomes stressful and limited to textbook contents, i.e. a test affects language teaching and learning in an unhelpful and undesirable way.

Several related concepts are used to highlight possible negative effects of language tests including 'teaching to the test' in which teachers try to have a match between the content and format of the test and of the curriculum (Madaus, 1988), measurement-driven instruction that leads to unproductive learning (Popham, 1987; Vinet & Zhedanov, 2010) and curriculum alignment or distortion (Ahmad & Rao, 2012; Shepard, 1993).

3.4.1.2   According to Intensity: High and Low/ Strong and Weak

Washback intensity refers to the degree of a test's effects on teaching and learning the language (Cheng (1997). It considers the extent to which students adjust their learning behaviour to the demands of a language test. Hughes (1993) claims that washback can only be anticipated when students have motivation to succeed on the test. It is usually argued that whether a test creates high or low washback depends on how important the test is for individual candidates; the more significant the test is for them, the more intense its effects would be (Loumbourdi, 2014). For instance, the Chinese EFL students in Xiao, Sharpling, and Liu's (2011) study were found ready to do anything that could increase their scores on the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) as the test was likely to have strong consequences to their lives. Green (2006a) further argues that washback will be most intense where students "see the test as challenging and the results as important" (p.339).

3.4.1.3   According to Timing: Pre- and Post-Test Washback

The nature and intensity of test washback may differ according to the time or the stage in which the test is: pre-test or post-test. Pre-test refers to the situation in which students are learning before they actually take a test. In other words, this is the phase when students are preparing for a test. Post-test refers to the situation in which students have already gone through the test (and/or are learning at upper grade).

Pre-test washback on students might depend on how they are taught in their classroom, what they are taught, what they have heard about the test and how much they value for the test whereas post-test washback primarily depends on their own experience of going through the test and the test consequences. Thus, the washback nature of a test could change over time (Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996).

To sum up, washback refers to the effects of a test on teaching and learning the language. As Alderson and Wall (1993) state, washback is more complex than assumed; both good and bad tests may have both beneficial washback (e.g., more motivation, more learning

activity) and negative washback (e.g., teaching to the test, more learner anxiety, more pressure, the fear of poor results and the associated guilt, shame, or embarrassment). Nevertheless, the degree of the effects may vary from person to person or from context to context.

3.5   Empirical Studies on Washback

There has been a steady interest in investigating the nature of washback. Consequently, there is an extensive body of research that has explored test influences on various classroom aspects, such as teaching content/curriculum (e.g. Au, 2007; Cheng, 1997; Wall & Alderson, 1993), teaching material (e.g. Cheng, 1997; Luxia, 2005) and teachers' classroom activities (e.g. Dawadi, 2018; Onaiba, 2013; Smith, 1991; Wall & Alderson, 1993). However, most previous washback research is limited to classroom practices and teachers' views (Kim, 2016). Therefore, learner washback research remains limited (Green, 2006b; Pan, 2014) and learner voices are frequently neglected despite the fact that it is the students who are most affected by those tests.

It is necessary to understand students' views in a testing context in order to be able to accurately predict their learning practices under the influence of those tests (Huhta, Kalaja, & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2006). Students' perspectives are particularly important because the power of testing directly impacts their motivation and attitudes towards learning (Xiao & Carless, 2013). The following section presents a brief overview of the studies that have explored students' attitudes towards high-stakes tests and test impacts on students' and parents' psychology (motivation, pressure and anxiety).

3.5.1   Students' Attitudes towards High-Stakes Test

The term attitude has been defined as a tendency to express views, positively or negatively, about a certain thing such as an object, person or situation (Rasti, 2009). It is an individual's cognitive judgement about a psychological object or entity that is reflected along affective dimensions, such as "good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likeable-dislikeable" (Ajzen, 2001, p. 28) and it predisposes a person to act in a certain way though the relation between attitudes and action is not very strong (Baker, 1992). Attitudes include both affective and cognitive components. Positive affect, such as feelings of potential success or safety, enhances positive attitudes while negative affect, such as fear of failure, can weaken positive attitudes (Chu, Guo, & Leighton, 2014).
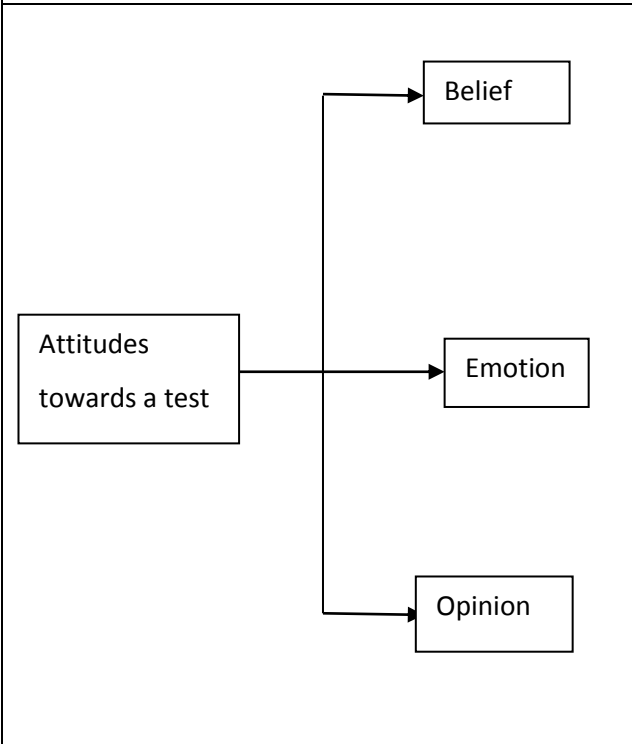
Attitude has long been considered to be one of the affective variables that affects language learning (Poorsoti & Asl, 2015). Positive attitudes on the part of language learners seem to facilitate learning as the learners with positive attitudes would be more motivated to learn the language. Research in the field of L2 acquisition suggests that L2 learners' positive attitudes towards the target language have beneficial effects on learning the language (see Hosseini, Hosseini, & Roudbari, 2013; Malallah, 2000). It is assumed that having positive/negative attitudes towards a test can exert considerable effects on learners' efforts to learn the language and their performances on the test. Bachman's (1990) model of language use and language test performance also suggests that test performance is affected by test-takers' personal characteristics. Therefore, it is widely claimed that language ability is not the only thing that affects test-takers' performance on a language test; test performance is affected by a wide range of affective factors (see Lumley & O'Sullivan, 2005; Rezazadeh & Tavakoli, 2009). In addition, having parents involved might be beneficial for EFL learning (He, Gou, & Chang, 2014). Despite this widely recognised importance of students' and parents' attitudes towards a test for learning the target language, it has not been adequately explored in the area of language testing (Fan, 2014). As Fan points out, there might be two reasons behind the paucity of attitudinal research in language testing.

 First, attitude itself is a "hypothetical construct which cannot be measured directly" (Murray, Riazi, & Cross, 2012, p.582) and the term itself has not yet been firmly established in the testing literature. Several terms such as reactions, views and psychological factors have been used to describe test-takers' attitudes towards language tests (Fan, 2014). Moreover, the construct of attitude has been operationalised in manifold ways in previous studies (see Baker, 1992; Chu et al., 2014; Fan & Ji, 2014; Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004; Murray et al., 2012; Rasti, 2009).

The current study follows Fan (2014) as the author links attitude to testing context, not only to language learning context, which is the case in most other studies. Having looked into test candidates' attitudes towards the Versant English Test (i.e. an automated spoken English test developed by Pearson Knowledge Technologies), Fan argues that attitude involves three components: beliefs, emotion and opinions. She puts forward a new framework to look at the relationship between test takers' attitudes towards a test and their learning behaviour supposedly affected by their perceptions of the test. Indeed, as Fan mentions, the framework was adopted from Murray et al. (2012) as the authors also link attitudes to testing context. The term beliefs in a test context refers to test takers'

perceptions of a test with regard to its fairness (i.e. whether it is fair or unfair); validity (whether it is valid or invalid), relevance (whether it is relevant or irrelevant to workplace needs) and its real purpose. The term 'emotion' refers to test takers' feelings towards the test. The feelings may concern love or hate of the test, a passion for learning the language or a pressure and an anxiety for learning the language (as it is not normally used in their day to day communication) as a part of the test preparation, and confidence in learning the language or doing well in the test. The component 'opinion' considers test takers' readiness to perform actions (i.e. views about whether an actual or hypothetical action should or should not happen). In other words, opinion refers to test takers' readiness to make efforts for learning the language or preparing themselves for the test. Thus, the current study conceptualises attitudes as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.3: The conceptualization of attitudes in this study

Construct	Component	Operationalisation
Attitudes towards a test	Belief	I believe that a proposition is or is not true (e.g. I believe that the SEE English test is a fair test and my score on the test is a valid indicator of my English ability).
	Emotion	I feel that I can or want to OR cannot or do not want to perform an actual or hypothetical action (e.g. I am worried about whether I can do well on the test).
	Opinion	I think that an actual or hypothetical action should or should not happen (e. g. I think I should study hard for the test).

(Adapted from: Fan, 2014, p.3)

As the diagram suggests, there might be interrelationship between these factors; for instance, "a belief that the test was unfair could lead to anger, which could reinforce an opinion that an individual or nationality should be exempt from taking the test" (Murray et al., 2012, p.582). In contrary, a belief that the test is fair and reliable could develop a passion in test takers for learning the language and they get ready to perform an action (i.e. to work hard for the test).

However, the three components of attitudes may not always be in harmony. For instance, test takers may have a belief on the fairness and validity of a test but they may lose their confidence in learning the language or they may have test related anxiety because of the perceived difficulty of the test. Consequently, they may not make much effort to learn the language. Nevertheless, it can be argued that in most cases, test takers' attitudes towards a test largely affects their readiness to learn the language. In other words, a belief on a test quality (such as reliability and validity) develops positive emotions (such as confidence, motivation and/or passion for learning the language) in test takers. Consequently, they

make more efforts to learn the language which might lead to better performances on the test.

It is also worth noting that test takers' attitudes towards their test may not be solely affected by the test quality as a test is a social process. There might be various other factors, such as parental roles and schooling systems that may affect their attitudes towards the test. Therefore, it is important to explore parents' attitudes towards a test and their roles in helping their children for the preparation of the test. Hence, this study, besides exploring students' attitudes towards the test, explored parents' attitudes towards the test and their involvement in the test preparation.

Second, stake-holders' attitudes towards a test is often regarded to be synonymous to face validity which has been defined as "surface credibility and public acceptability of a test" (Ingram, 1977, cited in Fan, 2014, p.2). Face validity is often regarded as unscientific and irrelevant by quantitative researchers as it is based on subjective judgements that people (including lay people) make. Because of this, face validity does not receive due attention from researchers though many scholars including Alderson, Clapham, and Wall (1995) highlight the importance of face validity. They argue that if test-takers find their test to be face valid, they try their best to perform well on the test. Karelitz (2013) adds that face validity can affect test-takers' motivation to prepare for and do well on the test. Messick (1989) also recommends including face validity as an important source for construct validity.

A number of studies have explored students' attitudes towards high-stakes tests. For instance, Cheng and Deluca (2011) explored university level students' perspectives of high-stakes EFL written tests. In the study, students reported some instances of both systematic biases (that would disadvantage a particular group of test-takers by virtue of test administration protocols) and random biases, such as inconsistent invigilation protocols, low volume on tape recorders along with timing, test contents and format, scoring practices and some external factors that would affect the reliability of those tests. Similarly, in the study by Hughes and Bailey (2001), students were suspicious about the scoring practices. They did not seem to believe that tests would be scored by people who could judge the value of their work. Furthermore, Australian students' drawings about NAPLAN in Howell's (2012) study indicated that most students had negative views about the examination. However, Li's (1990) study found that the test-takers of Matriculation English Test (the secondary school leaving test in China) had positive attitudes towards the

test mainly because it did not demand them to memorise answers. Similarly, the test-takers of Versant English Test (a test developed by Pearson) in Fan's (2014) study reported positive attitudes towards the test as they believed that the test largely reflected their spoken English ability.

3.5.2 Test Impact on Student Motivation

Motivation has been defined as a person's desire or drive to perform a particular task. It is usually considered to be one of the most important determinants of students' success in high-stakes tests. Gardner (1985) defines motivation as the extent to which an individual learner exerts effort to learn a language because of his or her desire to do so and the satisfaction derived from the task. Dörnyei (2005), a renowned figure in L2 motivation studies, considers motivation as one of the major factors that not only stimulates learners to initiate L2 learning but also equips them with the subsequent driving force to maintain the demanding and laborious L2 learning process.

Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that as motivation is hardly a unitary concept, people vary not only in terms of the degree of motivation but also in the orientation (type) of motivation. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) present several motivation theories based on reasons for engagement in tasks (e.g., intrinsic motivation theory, flow theory, self-determination theory and goals theory); theories that integrate expectancy and value constructs (e.g., self-worth theory, expectancy-value theory and attribution theory); and theories that focus on integrating motivation and cognition (e.g., theories of motivation and volition, and theories of self-regulation and motivation). A full discussion of those theories is beyond the capacity of this thesis.

As the main concern of the current study is on whether or not the SEE English test motivates students to learn the English language, this discussion focuses more on the self-determination theory (SDT) which mainly focuses on human beings' natural tendencies to behave in an effective way (Cheng, et al., 2014). SDT was first developed by Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci who later developed the notions of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT, depending on the degree of self-determination, puts human motivation on a continuum ranging from amotivation (the state of lacking willingness to act) to passive compliance (i.e. controlled forms of extrinsic motivation) to active personal commitment (i.e. intrinsic motivation) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In a high-stakes test context, "motivation to succeed is not static but occurs along a continuum. In

particular, motivation varies according to the complex interaction of test-takers and test contexts based on both the intended and unintended test use" (Cheng, et al., 2014, p.306). However, Ryan and Brown (2005) claim that high-stakes testing policies are mostly developed based on the notion that punishments, rewards and self-esteem-based pressures function as effective motivators for learning. It is usually believed that tests provide incentives to test-takers to improve their performances. Nonetheless, tests might be more motivating for those test-takers who expect success.

Gardner (2001) uses the terms 'integrative' and 'instrumental' to classify motivation. The term 'integrative' is synonymous to intrinsic motivation and instrumental to extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the context when a person is doing something as s/he finds it inherently interesting or enjoyable whereas extrinsic motivation refers to the context when the person is performing an action as s/he thinks that learning will be beneficial for future career (Ryan & Deci, 2000). An intrinsically motivated person shows interest in learning about the people of the target language and their culture and also enjoys learning the language (Gardner, 2001) but an instrumentally or extrinsically motivated learner has more pragmatic considerations or instrumental purpose for L2 learning, such as getting a reward, earning money and obtaining a job. Learning for a test is generally regarded as instrumental which is normally an extrinsic motive for students (Zhan & Andrews, 2014). Kwon et al. (2017) and Choi (2008), based on their research in the Korean context, argues that tests lead to low intrinsic motivation in students as most students' drive and motivation for learning is closely linked to instrumental motivation such as getting admission in a good university.

There are different views regarding test motivation. For instance, Hsu (2009) argues that students in high-stakes test contexts are less likely to hold positive attitudes towards learning English as the performances in those tests are likely to determine their career or lives. Tsai and Tsou (2009) also claim that high-stakes tests lead to a decrease in motivation to learn English as classes are test-oriented; thus, enhance only test-taking skills instead of developing communicative competence. Nonetheless, Abu-Alhija (2007) opines that large-scale tests in some contexts may motivate students to work harder and more effectively. Some previous washback studies (e.g. Dawadi, 2018; Shohamy, Dontisa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996) further claim that high-stakes English tests are a strong instrumental motivation for students to learn English.

3.5.3   Test Anxiety and Pressure on Students

Test anxiety (TA) and test pressure (TP) have become serious issues in this contemporary society because of the wide spread use of assessment. As tests are likely to bring life changing consequences to students, it is likely that students feel anxious and also feel pressured to do well on those tests.

TA is an intense psychological state experienced by test-takers concerning the evaluation of their test performance and possible consequences that would happen in their personal or academic lives after test results. Horwitz and Young (1991) define it as students' apprehension over their academic evaluation which is usually a fear of failing in test contexts. According to Sommer and Arendasy (2015), TA comprises two components: cognitive components (such as worry and test-irrelevant thinking) and affective components (such as emotionality and bodily symptoms). While the cognitive component worry refers to test-takers' negative thoughts about the possibility of failure on a test and its consequences, the affective component emotionality comprises physiological reactions (such as headache and increased heart beat) and feelings of nervousness and tension. Failure in this context does not only refer to the doubt over securing the minimum required grade or pass mark but also to the failure to meet the requirements for their career progression or to meet parents' expectation and so on (Joy, 2013).

Based on Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis that high anxiety leads to negative impact; it can be assumed that TA negatively affects language learning and then test performances. This means, TA is believed to cause cognitive interference while learning a language (i.e. test preparation) and taking a test or both (Amiryousefi & Tavakoli, 2014). TA may lead to poor understanding of the concepts during the preparation and it may decrease students' attention during a test, thereby increasing the number of errors (Ohata, 2005). Intense and prolonged anxiety may harm students' performances, "the higher the anxiety level is, the lower the language performance of the students appears" to be (Joy, 2013, p.3).

Kleijn, van der Ploeg and Topman (1994 cited in Birjandi & Alemi, 2010) present three models to explain possible causes of TA. The first model is termed as the 'learning-deficit model', which mentions that the problem lies in preparing for a test, but not in taking the test. Students with high TA tend to have inadequate learning during the preparation phase. According to the second model called the 'interference model', students with TA focus on

task irrelevant factors during tests which negatively affect test performances. Two kinds of distractions are reported during test tasks: physical distraction (that indicate heightened autonomic activity such as sweaty palms and muscle tension) and inappropriate cognitions (includes comparing themselves with other test-takers and feeling bad during the test). Both distractions are supposed to negatively affect test performance. The third model includes students who think they have prepared very well for a test but in reality did not. Those students have anxiety after the test that creates anxiety during the next test (Birjandi & Alemi, 2010).

The literature on testing indicates that there are mainly two strands of studies on TA. One strand focuses on the effects of TA on student performances. Most studies in this strand have reported that TA negatively affects performances (see Basol & Zabun, 2014; Chapell et al., 2005; Karatas, Alci, & Aydin, 2013; Putwain, 2008; Rezaabadi, 2016; Rezazadeh & Tavakoli, 2009; Salari & Moinzade, 2015; Seipp, 1991; von der Embse & Witmer, 2014). Eum and Rice (2011) claim that test anxious students often put unrealistic demands on themselves and expect to do things perfectly. Consequently, test performance becomes a failure for those students. However, TA may not always be a deterrent to better learning conditions. TA, at a reasonable level, sometimes can be facilitative for learning (Joy, 2013) as it may motivate students to work harder. Gerwing, Rash, Gerwing, and Landine (2015) view that facilitative anxiety leads to better language learning. Some studies have also reported that there is no significant negative relationship between TA and EFL test performance (see Birjandi & Alemi, 2010; Cakici, 2016). Mulvenon, Stegman, and Ritter (2005) also argue that students' own anxiety had negligible effects on their performance; the main factor influencing test scores was student perceptions of pressure from their parents and teachers regarding the high-stakes tests, with high scores suggesting more pressure.

The other strand, which is the major focus of this study, is within the area of washback studies of testing. Within this strand, the major focus is on the level of TA. The studies within this strand have explored whether or not test-takers suffer TA. Most of them have reported that students overwhelmingly become test-anxious. For instance, Takagi's (2010) study indicated that students experienced a psychological burden while preparing for and taking the University Entrance Examination in Japan; they also suffered from extreme pressure to perform well on the test. Similarly, Triplett and Barksdale (2005) found that the elementary students in the USA were overwhelmingly stressed, worried, anxious and isolated as a result of high-stakes testing. Furthermore, in Shohamy, et al.'s (1996) study,

almost all the students (96%) preparing for a high-stakes EFL test in Israel were found quite anxious about the test. Reports of high-level of anxiety related to high-stakes testing are not confined to these three countries. Test-takers from several other countries or social and educational contexts are also reported to be test anxious. For instance, test-takers in Australia (Polesel, Dulfer & Turnbull, 2012), China (Li, Zhong, & Suen, 2012; Xiao & Carless, 2013), India (Joy, 2013), Iran (Aliakbari & Gheitasi, 2017), Nepal (Bhattrai, 2014), Turkey (Basol & Zabun, 2014), USA (Segool, Carlson, & Goforth, 2013) and UK (Denscombe, 2000; Putwain, 2008; Putwain & Daly, 2014) were found to be test-anxious.

Some studies have also reported psychological, physiological and behavioural changes in students. For instance, Kirkpatrick and Zang (2011) reported that high-stakes testing in China led to inadequate psychological development, self-hatred and repressed personality, and a general lack in the development of other abilities. In Newspoll's (2013) study, parents reported that NAPLAN had negative impacts on their child's self-esteem and their child showing signs of stress and anxiety due to NAPLAN; the children had a fear of freezing up during the examination. Similarly, the majority of students in Wyn, Turnbull and Grimshaw's (2014) study reported the feelings of stress associated with NAPLAN and a smaller number also revealed some physical reactions, such as nail biting, hyperventilation, headaches, profuse sweating, migraines and stomach aches. Furthermore, Aydin (2013) found that the EFL test-takers in Turkey had some negative physical effects, such as rapid heartbeat, trembling, anorexia, panic, worry, depression and apprehension about the future.

Some studies have also reported that TA increases when exams are closer and it continues even after the test is over. For instance, Gosa (2004), having studied on the impact of the English test on students in Romania, reported:

> The levels of stress and anxiety steadily increased as the dates of the exam were approaching […]. Students experienced equally negative feelings of embarrassment, stupidity, sadness, and guilt immediately after taking the tests […].Waiting for the test results was also stressful (pp.268 - 270).

Furthermore, Joy's (2013) comparison among the pre, during, and post stage TA on students (Grade 10 and Grade 12 students in India) indicated that the level of anxiety was comparatively higher during the second stage than the preceding and succeeding stages.

Aydin (2013) also reported that EFL test-takers suffer anxiety both before and after taking the test.

Some studies found both the positive and negative responses of students towards high-stakes tests. For instance, Xiao et al. (2011) reported that NMET invoked a sense of anxiety, uneasiness and fear on the part of students whilst at the same time motivated students to learn English. Two years later, Xiao and Carless (2013) also reported similar effects of the NMET on students. Having collected data through picture-drawing and in-depth interviews, the authors reported negative affective responses of the students to be the most frequently occurring element in the data. However, some of the students had a sense of achievement, received praise from teachers and support from peers and teachers.

Previous studies have also reported various factors that might cause TA in students, such as test format, test techniques, test environment, test difficulty (Aydin, 2013), lack of test validity (Horwitz & Young, 1991), students' attitudes towards tests (Aydin, 2012), teacher attitudes, time limit, test length, (Gursoy & Arman, 2016), parental expectation (Peleg, Deutch, & Dan, 2016) and academic buoyancy (Putwain, Daly, Chamberlain, & Sadreddini, 2015). Nonetheless, the factors that cause anxiety to students vary from person to person and from situation to situation (Basol & Zabun, 2014).

Students in a high-stakes test context are usually forced to work hard for the test by their family members and teachers. This kind of force is called test pressure (TP) on students. For instance, the test-takers of NAPLAN in Australia, (Polesel et al., 2012) and General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in Taiwan (Shih, 2007) experienced pressure because of the exams. Similarly, the Greek students in Loumbourdi's (2014) study and the American students in Mulvenon et al.'s (2005) study stated that they suffered much pressure from parents and teachers to perform well on high-stakes tests. Kirkpatrick and Zang (2011) further reported that the Chinese students felt moderate pressure to excel in school. Shohamy (2007) has beautifully presented her own personal narrative to indicate how high-stakes tests create anxiety and pressure on students.

However, there is little research that explores the extent to which the SEE students in Nepal are affected by TA and TP. To the best of my knowledge, only one study (Bhattrai, 2014) has explored the issue. The study reported that the SLC examination caused both short- and long-term psychological consequences, such as depression, mental illnesses and loss of confidence and self-esteem including extreme emotional consequences, such as

suicide and violent attack. Nevertheless, Bhattrai's focus was on the SLC examination in general, but not particularly on the English test. Therefore, an additional aim of the current study was to address this research gap in the literature and capture the nature of TA and TP in students associated with the SEE English test.

3.5.4   Impacts on Test Preparation

Test preparation is often seen as a potential factor influencing students' performances beyond their ability on the construct measured by language tests (Clause, Delbridge, Schmitt, Chan, & Jennings, 2001). There are several definitions of test preparation. For instance, Stockwell, Schaeffer and Lowenstein (1991) define it as an attempt made by students to "acquire techniques for the purpose of attaining the highest score possible on a test" (cited in Kim, 2016, p. 10). It aims to increase test scores by focusing on test-taking skills rather than improving students' language competence (Fulcher, 2010). For Xie and Andrews (2012), it refers to students' learning behaviours directed by personal goals of being able to fulfil cognitive demands of a language test. It is an effort made to reach the goal of successful test performances or to enhance knowledge in a defined domain that is supposed to be tested later (Clause et al. 2001).

When a student decides to prepare for a high-stakes test, the student tries to find effective techniques to increase his/her test scores; at the same time, the student becomes a test-taker within that high-stakes test preparation context (Kim, 2016). Then, learning for a test differs from learning something as a learner. A student in a high-stakes test context is under pressure to achieve as high scores as possible rather than engaging in learning for the joy of it (Kim, ibid). Thus, when students are engaged in a test preparation, they make efforts to learn such kind of techniques that support them to increase the test scores.

Test preparation is a hugely complex construct. It can be seen as a component of the wider issues of test washback (Pan & Newfields, 2011). Washback, according to Prodromou (1995), proceeds on a continuum from covert to overt when a test approaches. Test influence is more overt when the date is known in advance. Prior to the preparation period, washback is indirect and less observable but during the preparation period, washback is more direct, intensive, and observable (Xie & Andrews, 2012). Because of overt washback, students are heavily engaged in test related tasks and contents to maximise test scores. It is assumed that the higher the stakes of a test, the more likely that students are engaged in the test preparation (Zhengdong, 2009).

Testing literature indicates that there are two strands of studies in test preparation (Xie, 2013). One strand focuses on the effects of test preparation on test scores; the main concern is on whether or not test preparation can increase scores on the test. Most studies in this strand employed a longitudinal design, with pre-test and post-test design; they have produced mixed results. While some studies report that there is no significant relation between test preparation and test scores (e.g. Green, 2007b; Liu, 2014; Powers, 1993; Read & Hayes, 2003; Zhengdong, 2009), some others claim for positive effects of test preparation (e.g. (Allen, 2016; Basol & Zabun, 2014; Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert, 1984; Xie, 2013). Nevertheless, a recent trend in this field indicates "a shift from questioning whether test preparation works to asking why it works and how to make it more effective" (Appelrouth, Zabrucky, & Moore, 2017, p.79).

The other strand, the focus of this study, greatly focuses on test preparation strategies used by test-takers. Xie (2013, 2015) classifies test preparation strategies into six: memorising, drilling, socio-affective (learning with or from other people such as seeking help), rehearsing test taking skills, test preparation management (TPM), and language development (LD) strategies. Her studies indicated that the test-takers of CET-4 (a high-stakes English test in China) used more TPM strategies (such as analysing previous test papers to identify frequently assessed areas and/or the level of difficulty of each section, and familiarising themselves with the test contents) than LD strategies (such as reading extensively in English, using English to communicate, listening to authentic English broadcasts and reading for pleasure). Similarly, Greek students preparing for the FCE exam in Loumbourdi's (2014) study were found using traditional techniques, such as cramming, memorising and drilling. However, Shih (2007) found that the test-takers of the GEPT in Taiwan, besides taking preparatory courses at cram schools, tended to use various LD strategies such as practising speaking with classmates, reading previous textbooks out loud and listening to a local radio station and repeating what has been broadcast. Kim (2016) also reported that the Korean students preparing for the tests of English speaking proficiency, besides taking test preparation classes at a specialised test preparation institutions, learned in groups and independently using a textbook or online coaching programme.

There are also concerns regarding what students learn under the high-stakes testing context. Test-driven learning has been proved to be a worldwide issue. Students preparing for high-stakes tests have been reported to focus obsessively on passing the examination or learning the test contents (Dawadi, 2018; Ferman, 2004; Gosa, 2004; Onaiba, 2013;

Takagi, 2010; Xie, 2013; Zhan & Andrews, 2014; Zhan & Wan, 2016). This suggests that curriculum has been driven by tests and thus narrowed. Resnick and Schantz (2017) argued that students in the USA focus only on test contents and they take practice tests that closely match test contents. Furthermore, Takagi (2010) found that the majority of students preparing for the University Entrance Exams in Japan focused only on the skills assessed by the exams. Similarly, having explored the impacts of the NMET in China, Xiao et al. (2011) reported that the development of language skills was overshadowed by the high-stakes nature of the examination. Furthermore, Qi (2007) found that the Chinese EFL learners were not motivated to develop their ability to write communicatively in real-life situations though it was hoped that the NMET would motivate them to write for communicative purposes. The students tended to focus only on those aspects of writing that they believed would support them in gaining better scores.

Some researchers have expressed the view that if a particular content or skill is not assessed, the content is likely to be ignored by teachers and test-takers (Dawadi, 2018; Xie, 2015). For instance, the students in Pakistan (Abbasi, Ahmad, & Khattak, 2010) and Turkey (Akpinar & Cakildere, 2013) did not practise listening and speaking at home when preparing themselves for high-stakes tests because the two skills were not tested. Xie (2015) and Li et al. (2012) also reported that the CET students spent more time and efforts on the components with higher weight. However, Shih (2007), having explored the impacts of the GEPT on English learning in Taiwan, reported that the examination seemed to have induced limited degrees of washback on learning. Students resisted learning specifically for the test. Shih claims that the strategy of using language tests as a lever to bring positive impact does not seem to work; if policy-makers intend that a test brings beneficial impact on learning, students' perceptions of language tests must be changed. The finding is echoed in Pan and Newfields's (2011) study that the university policy in Taiwan requiring all students to pass an approved EFL proficiency test prior to graduation had minimal washback on student learning; many students did not devote substantial time to prepare themselves for the exit tests after class.

Another concern of test preparation is about the time and effort spent on test preparation. Shih's (2007) study indicated that Taiwanese students had little preparation for the GEPT: while some had no preparation, some others had geared themselves up for a portion of the tested skills for a short period of time (e.g., from one or two days to two weeks). Interestingly, some students, who had a plan to pursue further education, commenced taking preparatory courses from cram schools one or two years beforehand. Tsagari (2009)

also reported that the students in Greece preparing for the Cambridge First Certificate in English examination spent a considerable amount of time studying and preparing for the examination, both in class and at home.

Some studies have also observed the role of personal characteristics (particularly language proficiency) in test preparation. For instance, Cheng et al. (2010), having investigated the impacts of the School Based Assessment (SBA) in Hong Kong, claimed that test preparation depends on students' perceptions of their competence in the target language; students who viewed themselves as competent English learners tended to prepare more for the SBA than those who did not. The findings had resonance in Xie and Andrews's (2012) study which reported that CET-4 students with higher self-efficacy were engaged in more test preparation activities than the students with lower self-efficacy in the English skills. Nonetheless, Shohamy et al. (1996) found that students with lower proficiency, given their belief that cramming enhances their test scores, engaged in a more intense form of test preparation than their counterparts.

Despite their useful findings, previous washback studies on test preparation seem to have two major limitations. First, as pointed out by Kim (2016), they limit "test preparation to classroom activities or test taking skills and strategies which are taught in classroom settings rather than to explore test preparation as a context where test-takers actually prepare for a test" (Kim, 2016, p.12). Consequently, testing literature does not seem to tell us much about test preparation practices in informal contexts including the home context although most students spend more time in informal contexts. In other words, the studies that have explored test preparation practices outside a classroom context are scarce. Therefore, there is limited understanding of test impacts on students' out-of-class learning (Zhan & Andrews, 2014). To the best of my knowledge, just a couple of studies, reviewed below, have explored this area.

Huhta, et al. (2006) explored the impacts of the Finnish school-leaving examination on students' after school test preparation or learning practices. They found that test preparation was influenced by students' expectation for success or failure, their perceptions of hard work and their expectations for credit and blame. Furthermore, Zhan and Andrews (2014), and Zhan and Wan (2014) investigated out of class learning practices of the CET 4 test-takers in China. Zhan and Andrews's study mainly focused on 'what and 'how' students learnt outside the classrooms. The findings suggested that the test impacted more on what they learnt than on how they learnt for the test. Similarly, Zhan and Wan's study

suggested that students' out-of-class learning practices "appeared to be divided into two distinct periods, namely the regular learning period and the examination preparation period" (p.828). The students started their preparation for the CET-4 as soon as they were informed that they were selected as CET-4 candidates at the beginning of the second semester.

Second, many studies on test preparation seem to regard teachers, but not students, as the main participant of test preparation (Kim, 2016). There is an extensive body of research on how teachers' teaching contents and methods have been affected by high-stakes tests (e.g., Alderson & wall, 1993; Dawadi, 2018; Onaiba, 2013; Wall & Horák, 2011). Thus, teachers' perceptions of tests and their classroom practices have been more widely explored than students' own perceptions of tests and their learning practices despite the fact that tests are mainly targeted for students, and it is the students whose life chances are affected by tests.

3.5.5 Post-Test Impact on Students

A test can have both pre-test impact (i.e. impact observed before a test) and post-test impact (i.e. corresponding impact after a test has been administered) but the literature on assessment indicates that while pre-test washback/impact has been extensively researched, very little is known about the post-test impact of high-stakes tests. As Loumbourdi (2014) points out, by examining only the impact produced before a test or during preparation, we exclude a significant factor of impact, i.e. the test itself. By exploring the variations in test impact produced during the different stages (i.e. pre-test and post-test), we can understand the nature of test impact better and in greater depth. Nonetheless, studies that have explored both the pre-test and post-test impact of a test are rare.

While reviewing the literature for the current study, only two studies could be found (Berwick & Ross, 1989; Loumbourdi, 2014) that explored both the pre-test and post-test impact of a test on students. Loumbourdi's exploration on the impact of the FCE exam in Greece indicated that students felt much stressed from the toil of the preparation for the FCE during test preparation. Nevertheless, they felt less stressed after they went through the test and the anxiety created by the test was lowered after the exam; they also found themselves to have better skills in the English language. However, the majority of students changed their attitudes towards the test as they thought that it was not as fair as they had expected it to be and they were found less motivated to learn English. Consistent with

Loumbourdi's finding, Berwick and Ross's study in the Japanese university context indicated that students lost motivation to learn after they went through the tests. Nonetheless, none of the studies have explored the extent to which the tests offered students chances for their career development.

The paucity of research on post-test impact but extensive body of research on pre-test impact of high-stakes tests make us rethink about the definition of test impact. It seems as if we consider the impacts of a test to be over by the time students take a test which is absolutely not true. The narratives presented by Shohamy (2001a) suggest that tests are likely to bring long-term effects on test-takers' lives in terms of their career development.

In the context of Nepal, to the best of my knowledge, only three studies (Bhattrai, 2014; Budhathoki et al. 2014; Khaniya, 1990) have explored the post-test impact of the SEE. As reported in 1.2, Khaniya found that the SLC English test did not equip its candidates with the skills needed to study at the upper Grade (Grade 11) and Budhathoki et al. found severe impacts of the examination on students' career. Bhattrai also identified a number of negative consequences of the SLC to students including pressure and anxiety associated with the examination. However, the major focus of the two studies (Bhattrai, 2014, Budhathoki et al., 2014) was on the SLC examination in general.

Therefore, I embarked on exploring the post-test impacts of the test on students. It was hoped that collecting information related to the adequacy of the SEE English for the higher secondary courses would be helpful in determining the contents of the SEE English course and the English test contents.

3.5.6   Factors Affecting Washback

It has been widely accepted that tests do not have direct impacts on teaching and learning as various factors seem to be involved in determining the nature of washback. Existing studies on language assessment, particularly in high-stakes testing context (e.g., Alderson &Wall, 1993; Gosa, 2004; Shih, 2007) have evidenced that the nature of test washback is complex because multiple stakeholders and multiple factors co-exist within the social context where a test exists; their complex interactions largely determine the nature of washback getting into the classroom (Matoush & Fu, 2012; Shih, 2010; Xie, 2015; Zhan & Andrews, 2014). Hence, it is difficult to establish whether it is the test itself that triggers changes in pedagogical practices, or it is other social or educational factors including the test use in the society. Alderson and Wall (1993) rightly point out that other forces exist

within society and schools that may also affect the nature of test impact. This means that the nature of washback might be independent of the quality of the test. If a test is designed to influence instructional practices in a certain way, this may not automatically influence the instructional practices in the desired way. In other words, simply changing test tasks and contents do not necessarily bring about desirable changes in teaching and learning.

The existence of a test by itself does not seem to have any kind of washback; the amount and type of washback seems to be affected by different factors, such as the level of the stakes associated with the test, the extent to which teachers and textbook writers are prepared to innovate, the extent to which teachers think about test preparation (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996) and teachers' and learners' attitudes toward the test. Messick (1996) points out, "a poor test may be associated with positive effects and a good test with negative effects because of other things that are done or not done in the educational system" (p. 242). Therefore, it might be plausible to argue that washback is caused by the testing regime rather than the quality of a test (Saville, 2009).

Allen's (2016) study on the IELTS test preparation practices in Japan indicated a range of mediating factors that shaped washback to the learners such as perceived importance of the test, test-takers' interest and learning environment. Learners' perceptions of the status and stakes of the test seem to affect students' learning practices; students spend more time to develop language skills tested by the high-status or high-stakes tests than they do on lower-status or lower-stakes tests (Shohamy et al., 1996). Huhta et al. (2006) further reported that expectations of success seemed to affect the rate and amount of test preparation practices. There is also some sort of link between expectations and the types of washback that the students diversely experienced. In addition, economic status of parents affect students' learning practices; "high-quality coaching is available only to those who can afford it" (Ingulsrud, 1994, p. 72) and teachers' teaching techniques. Teachers in Sri Lanka had time-consuming but widespread practice of having students copy test related texts from the chalkboard as the books were too costly for the parents (Wall & Alderson, 1993).

Shih's (2008) exploration on the effects of GEPT on English learning in Taiwan suggests that washback is inextricably linked to the social and educational contexts in which a test is administered and washback varies from person to person. Shih argues that test washback is intertwined with internal factors (individual differences, personal characteristics and personal perceptions of the test), external factors (e.g., socio-economic factors, school and educational factors, family, friends and colleagues) and test factors. Gipps (1999) also

argues, "The way students respond to assessment is subject to social and cultural influences" (p.355).

It might be equally important to see the issue the other way round, i.e. test impacts on society. What comes next is a short overview of some empirical studies that have explored social impacts of tests through parents.

3.6   Test Impacts on Parents

Test impact is broad and goes beyond the learning context. It affects the whole society as language testing is a social activity (Shohamy, 1993). However, language testing literature indicates that most test impact studies are limited to test impacts on teachers and students, overlooking test impacts on parents (one of the primary stake-holders of tests and a unit of the society) and their roles in test preparation. It is obvious that among several people affected by a test, parents, in most cases, are severely affected (Cheng, et al. 2010). The following section reviews some available studies that have investigated parents' attitudes towards high-stakes tests and impacts of those tests on parents.

3.6.1   Parents' Attitudes towards High-Stakes Tests

Parents are an important part of high-stakes testing practices in schooling contexts as they can help improve students' performance (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000) as they see themselves as having a responsibility to support their children in learning. Nevertheless, research into parents' views on high-stakes testing and their involvement in preparing children for those tests is scarce.

Many Nepali parents [or parents in different national contexts] believe that they should be well informed about high-stakes test process and the nature of the tests. Therefore, before discussing parental attitudes towards high-stakes testing, it is important to unpack the extent to which parents have knowledge about high-stakes tests. As parents have a vital part to play in high-stakes testing practices, they have to learn what the tests include and how to prepare their child for those tests. Parents should be well informed about what their children's tests mean and the level of performance of their children on those tests along with the possible consequences of the tests' results to their children's lives. If parents do not understand tests and their possible consequences to their children, this may deter them from being supportive of high-stakes testing. In other words, they may not be able to provide a good support to their children for learning or test preparation. Nonetheless,

parents do not seem to be well informed about their children's tests. Test results are not explained adequately to help parents better understand their children's learning achievement. For instance, Desforges, Hughes and Holden's (1994) study on parents' perceptions of SATs in the UK indicated that the majority of parents (i.e. 63%) had little or no knowledge of what was involved in those tests. The finding had resonance in Scott's (2007) study that most parents in the UK had very little understanding of what statutory testing usually entails and what the test information they receive actually means. Similar is the case in the USA. Mulvenon et al. (2005) state that most states in the USA do not have formal policies for communicating test results to parents. Consequently, there is a lack of communication between parents and teachers. Thus, many parents would receive only some or no explanation of the test results by schools or teachers. Nonetheless, Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (2000) reported that parents in the USA, to a large extent, know about high-stakes tests through their children, school newsletters and flyers and social media, but the extent to which they understand the meaning and purpose of those tests is not clear.

There are some studies which report that parents have negative attitudes towards high-stakes tests. There have also been petitions and protests against high-stakes tests for young children, particularly in the USA and the UK. In some extreme cases, "parents kept their children out of school on test day" as they regarded those tests just as a waste of time (Schrag, 2000, p.20). In Douney's (2000) study, parents in some states in the USA questioned the validity of assessment and the accountability of high-stakes testing practices. They doubted the integrity of those tests as they thought that scores did not match their children's learning achievement. They reported that an increasing number of children suffered from sleep disorder as those tests placed undue pressure on them. Similarly, Westfall's (2010) investigation into parents' perceptions of the influences of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) on the family lives of the students identified as at-risk of failure on the test indicated that many parents had negative perceptions of the TAKS; they viewed that TAKS is not a fair measure of students' achievement. Wyn et al. (2014) also found that Australian parents were confused about the purpose of NAPLAN and the majority of parents (65%) had scepticism about the value of the tests, though approximately one quarter of parents expressed very positive opinions about NAPLAN and viewed the test results to be important.

In a very recent study (PDK & Gallop, 2015), the vast majority of public school parents in the USA expressed positive views towards high-stakes tests. They viewed that such tests are important for improving public schools in their community, besides measuring what

students have learned. However, the majority of parents (67%) felt that there was too much emphasis on testing in the public schools in their community. Newspoll's (2013) telephone survey among Australian parents also indicated that the majority, though not an overwhelming majority of parents (56 %) were in favour of the NAPLAN. The parents considered the test results to be useful and did not seem to believe that the test had negative impacts on their children. Congruent with these findings, parents in the USA in Mulvenon et al.'s (2005) and Osburn, Stegman, Suitt and Ritter's (2004) study reported the belief that standardised testing is important for their children.

To reiterate, previous studies that examined parents' attitudes toward high-stakes tests are equivocal. These contradictory findings regarding parents' attitudes highlight the need for further exploration in this area.

3.6.2 Test Pressure and Anxiety in Parents

As parents play a vital role in their children's education, they seem to be vulnerable to the negative impacts of high-stakes test results (Abu-Alhija, 2007) but little research has explored the level of emotional distress experienced by parents (Rogers et al., 2016). Discussing the University Entrance Examination in Japan, Ingulsrud (1994) reflected on anxiety and pressure on parents resulted from the examination system in Japan. Parents who received pressure for raising test scores or who wanted to send their children to a prestigious university would send their children to coaching schools. Similarly, in the study by Cheng (1997), the test-takers of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination reported that their parents became anxious and put more pressure on them. Furthermore, the parents of TAKS test-takers, who had been identified as at-risk of failure in Westfall's (2010) study, felt elevated stress due to their child's performance on the test. They were worried about how their children would react to the pressure of the test and also about how to make their children pass the test. The transcript quotes presented by Wyn et al. (2014) also indicated that some parents in Australia experienced elevated stress due to their concerns about their children's performances on NAPLAN and also about how their children would react to the tests. Similarly, Rogers, et al. (2016) reported that NAPLAN had a broad negative impact on the well-being of students and parents although the level of distress did not appear to be severe for the majority of parents and "the experience of NAPLAN was not overly stressful for most parents" (P.338).

The majority of parents from the USA in Mulvenon et al.'s (2005) study reported that they neither felt increased level of stress or anxiety associated with the SAT-9 tests nor did they experience pressure to help their children score well on those tests. The findings corroborate Osburn et al.'s (2004) finding that the majority of parents (73%), whose children had just taken the SAT-9 test in Northwest Arkansas, had moderate level of stress and anxiety associated with the tests and they also did not feel pressure to support their children to perform well on the tests.

Similar kinds of individual and/or contextual differences were reported by Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (2000). The authors interviewed parents from North State and South State in the USA whose high-school children were taking high-stakes tests. The study observed some differences between the parents from the two states in terms of their test related anxiety. While North State parents felt under great pressure because of the tests, South State parents did not feel pressure; they thought that this type of pressure should be a part of the job of teachers. However, almost no research has explored how parents in Nepal are affected by the SEE. This study aims to fill this research gap.

3.6.3   Parental Involvement in Test Preparation

Parental involvement (PI) generally refers to parents' participation in educational activities with a purpose of promoting their children's academic or social success. It has been defined across educational studies as representing various behaviours and practices either at home or at school including parental expectations, aspirations, beliefs and attitudes regarding their child's education (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007). PI, according to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), is "motivated by two belief systems: role construction for involvement, and sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed in school" (p.108). According to the authors, parental role construction involves a sense of shared responsibility for the children's educational achievement and their concurrent beliefs about whether one should be involved in helping the child's learning and school achievement. It is usually influenced by parents' beliefs about how the child learns and what they can do at home to help the child succeed in school. Parental sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed in school involves one's belief that personal actions will support the child in learning. According to Pavalache-Ilie and Tirdia (2015), parents' most important educational actions include: maintaining communication with children, talking about children's progress, offering help with homework and taking children to extra classes.

In a test context, PI refers to the type of support parents provide to their children for the preparation of a test. The concept of PI in a test preparation is closely linked to the concept of 'home affective environment' and 'structure for learning' as discussed by Christenson, Rounds and Gorney (1992). Home affective environment generally refers to emotional environment at children's home. It has a major focus on the relationship between children and their parents. A positive parent-child relationship is expected to increase the likelihood that the child will initiate and persist in challenging intellectual tasks suggesting that children who have positive responses and support from their family are likely to be successful. 'Structure for learning' is the learning environment at home and how the environment can be manipulated to enhance children's learning. It "includes what many researchers refer to as 'press for achievement,' a term used to describe a family environment that emphasizes achievement and intellectual pursuits" (Christenson, et al., 1992, p.184).

Most parents do not seem to know how to assist their children (Christenson, et al., 1992), particularly in an EFL test context. Parents do not seem to believe that they are well equipped to assist their children in preparing for tests (Gleason, 2000). As pointed by Cojocariu and Mareş (2014), there might be some barriers in PI, such as parents' feelings of inferiority, parents' low level of education and/or low proficiency in English, absence of parent-school communication, parents' doubts about being competent to help EFL learning and economic issues.

It is argued that all parents, irrespective of their ethnic background, economic status and educational level, try their best to support their children (Basol & Zabun, 2014) and previous studies on PI in EFL learning provide some evidence that having parents involved is beneficial for EFL learning (e.g. Cojocariu & Mareş, 2014; He et al., 2014; Necşoi, Porumbu, & Beldianu, 2013). It has also been argued that "even when parents do not have a command of the English language, they have the potential to help with EFL learning from a non-linguistic point of view" (Aldemar, Torres, & Castaneda-Pena, 2016, p.156). For instance, they can monitor children's homework, give advice to children and provide learning conditions at home. It should be noted that parental support involves both socio-academic support which includes helping children to learn for the test and emotional support which includes encouraging children to trust in their ability to perform well on the test. It is worth noting that PI in children's learning (in a non-test context) has been widely explored but our understanding of PI is largely limited to the Western or American practices. Little research has explored the nature of PI in Asian countries (Ho, 2006).

Previous studies on PI are limited to parental role in children's learning in a non-test context and PI on test preparation has not become an important research issue in relation to high-stakes testing. However, it can be argued that learning in a non-test context and in a test context differs. Accordingly, PI in a test context might differ from its role in a non-test context.

The literature on PI in test preparation indicates that only a couple of studies have explored the issue. Among the studies, Ingulsrud's (1994) study on university level students (and families) in Japan indicated that it was a common practice in Japan to send children to coaching classes for a test preparation. Similarly, Ferman (2004) reported that parents of the children preparing for the National Oral Matriculation Test in Israel were involved in the test preparation by urging their child to study hard and by hiring tutors to support their child. Similar is the situation in Korea. High-stakes tests in Korea have made parents spend an enormous amount of money on private tutoring and private education (Kwon et al., 2017). Choi (2008) further argues that most parents in Korea are extremely sensitive to their children's performances on high-stakes tests. Therefore, they put enormous pressure on their children to perform well on those tests. However, none of these studies provide a comprehensive picture on PI in test preparation as the major focus of these studies was not on PI.

Some other studies claim for a high level of PI in test preparation but fail to provide evidence. For instance, Lisle, Smith, Keller and Jules (2012) claim that Trinidad and Tobago families often make a considerable emotional investment in preparing their children for high-stakes tests but the authors fail to provide evidence to indicate how parents were involved in test preparation. Similarly, the studies by Mulvenon, et al. (2005) and Osburn et al. (2004) reported that the vast majority of parents in their study felt a responsibility to support their children to improve test scores but none of the studies mentions clearly how children were supported by their parents.

To reiterate, previous studies have not extensively explored the types of support parents can provide to their children for a high-stakes test preparation. In the Nepalese context, almost no research has explored how the parents of the SEE test-takers provide support to their children for the preparation of the examination. This study has been designed to fill these research gaps.

3.7   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive review of the most relevant studies on high-stakes test washback or impacts and confirms that test impact/washback does exist, though in different forms. In other words, it suggests that both students and parents are vulnerable to test consequences. Findings of previous studies on test impact indicate that impacts of a test are closely embedded in the educational and social contexts in which the test is administered. High-stakes public tests have psychological impacts on students and their parents, though varying in form and intensity. Consequently, students' test preparation practices and PI in test preparation seem to be affected. It is necessary to explore the impacts of each administered test so that the test can be improved in such a way that it triggers beneficial impacts on its stakeholders. Nonetheless, there is a paucity of empirical data on how the Nepalese students and parents are affected by the SEE English.

High-stakes tests may not always trigger the consequences envisaged by the tests constructors. In many cases, tests seem to produce bad or unintended consequences. However, the literature on assessment suggests that there is no direct and linear relationship between tests and test consequences. Test consequences can be mediated through a variety of intervening variables, such as socio economic context and characteristics of students and parents. Thus, it is very difficult to assume the exact factors that predict test impact as its direction and intensity seem to be affected not only by test usage but also by several other factors including social and educational contexts. Thus, the review highlights a need for a meticulous research design, as presented in the following chapter, to explore the complex issues associated with test impacts.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

The main purpose of this chapter is to describe and justify the research design and methodology used in the study. This chapter first establishes the research questions and then discusses how to answer them well. A research design is set up for the study by establishing its theoretical orientations and methodological considerations and the research methods adopted for this study are justified. Then, the chapter discusses the sample population and research design followed by an introduction to the the pilot study. Finally, some ethical issues associated with the study and the data collection procedures used for the main study are discussed before presenting the data analysis techniques/procedures used in this study.

4.1   Research Questions

The literature review presented in the previous chapter indicates a need to answer the following six research questions:

1.What are students' and parents' pre-test and post-test attitudes towards the SEE English test?

Students' and parents' attitudes are mainly used to describe students' and parents' views about the importance of the SEE English test for students, the test quality and its importance for students. The aspects investigated include:

• students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test quality in terms of its accuracy in measuring the English language skills and its fairness in terms of its conduction and grading practices

• students' and parents' attitudes towards the importance of the test in terms of career development

The above aspects were mainly studied via student survey (both pre-test and post-test survey) and interviews (both pre-test and post-test interviews) with students and parents.

2. Does the test motivate students to learn English? If yes, how does it affect student motivation to learn English in the pre-test and post-test context?

Student motivation to learn English was explored through student diaries and interviews (both pre-test and post-test interviews) supplemented by student survey (both pre-test and post-test survey).

 3. How do students prepare themselves for the SEE English test?

Students' test preparation strategies were explored through student oral diaries, survey (post-test survey) and interviews (both pre-test and post-test interviews) with students and their parents.

4. Do students and their parents suffer test pressure and anxiety? If yes, what sorts of pressure and anxiety do they suffer?

This research question was answered mainly through pre-test survey, oral diaries and pre-test interviews with students and their parents.

5. How do parents involve themselves in preparing their children for the test?

PI was explored mainly through parents' and students' interviews (both pre-test and post-test interviews) supplemented by post-test survey.

6. What are the post-test impacts of the test on students'career choices and learning at a higher Grade?

This research question was addressed mainly through post-test survey supplemented by students' post-test interviews.

4.2   Theoretical Perspectives and Philosophical Underpinnings

Philosophical underpinnings of a research design, as advocated by Crotty (1998), are constantly "informing the methodology and therefore, providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria" (p.3). Several philosophical underpinnings are important in this study to address the complex issues associated with the SEE English test impacts. The following section presents an introduction to the pragmatic paradigm which leads to a discussion of mixed methods as a methodology.

4.2.1   Pragmatic Approach

Researchers' underlying philosophical views with regard to the truth and reality are usually referred to as research paradigm. A research paradigm is a philosophical position about the

world or the nature of reality and how we understand it (Maxwell, 2005). It includes researchers' assumptions about ontology and epistemology that guide the research process. Ontology is concerned with the nature of truth (i.e. what is the nature of reality?) whereas epistemology refers to the nature and forms of human knowledge, i.e. how do we know what reality is (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

There are a number of research paradigms such as positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, criticalism and pragmatism. Having considered the complex nature of the research questions in this study, pragmatism was employed. Pragmatism is not committed to any sort of philosophical stance (Creswell, 2007). It argues that the forced choices between positivism and interpretivism should be abandoned as it views reality as both singular and multiple. Pragmatism "is pluralistic and oriented towards 'what works' and practice" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.41). In other words, pragmatism uses multiple methods but the use of the methods should always be guided by research problems. It values both objective and subjective knowledge to meet research objectives. Researchers adopting a pragmatist position are free to choose those research methods or strategies that can best answer their research questions (Creswell, 2007). Feilzer (2010, p.14) states,

> Ultimately, pragmatism brushes aside the quantitative/qualitative divide and ends the paradigm war by suggesting that the most important question is whether the research has helped ''to find out what [the researcher] want[s] to know'' (Hanson, 2008, p. 109). Are quantitative and qualitative methods really that different or is their dichotomy politically motivated and sociologically constructed?

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) suggest that pragmatists study what interests them and is of value to them. They study research problems in the different ways that they deem appropriate. Therefore, the main reason for adopting a pragmatist position in this study was that pragmatism allowed me to have a pluralistic stance of gathering all sorts of data in order to best answer my research questions. A description and justification for the incorporation of mixed methods as a methodology in this study is presented below.

4.2.2 Mixed Methods as a Methodology

Mixed methods is a research methodology that involves collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in response to research questions (Creswell, 2015). By design, mixed methods refers to the incorporation of multiple methods to address research questions in an appropriate way (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Mixed

methods is a research methodology in its own right. As stated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), mixed methods research design is a research design with its own philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it includes philosophical assumptions that provide the direction for the collection and analysis of data from multiple sources in a single study.

A mixed methods design offers a number of benefits to approaching complex research issues associated with test impacts as it integrates philosophical frameworks through careful listening to both post-positivism and interpretivism (Fetters, 2016) interweaving qualitative and quantitative data in such a way that research issues are best explained. Using a quantitative approach, test impact issues can be operationalised in terms of well-defined indicators, tracing trends and relationships, making comparisons and using large and perhaps representative samples; on the other end, a qualitative approach has the strengths of being sensitive to multiple meanings of the test impacts. It also offers a logical ground, great methodological flexibility and an in-depth understanding of smaller cases (Maxwell, 2016). The use of mixed methods enables researchers to answer research questions with sufficient depth and breadth (Enosh, Tzafrir, & Stolovy, 2014). Moreover, quantitative results can be triangulated with qualitative findings and vice versa. A mixed methods design offers the best chance of answering research questions by combining two sets of strengths while compensating at the same time for the weaknesses of each method (Burke & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, "mixed method research designs are becoming increasingly relevant to addressing impact research questions (Saville, 2012, p.7).

By using a mixed methods design, this study also aimed to generalise the findings to the whole population (i.e. Grade 10 students in Nepal) and to have an in-depth understanding of the issues being investigated. The quantitative approach helped the collection of data from a large number of participants; thus, increasing a possibility to generalise the findings to wider population. The qualitative approach provided a deeper understanding of the nature of the test impacts, honouring the voices of its participants. In other words, quantitative data brought breadth to the study and qualitative data provided depth to this study.

There were mainly four justifications for combining quantitative and qualitative data in this study: triangulation (seeking corroboration between the two sets of data), complementarity (elaboration, illustration and explanation of the results from one method with the results from another), expansion (extending the breadth and range of enquiry by using different

methods) and convergent findings (using both data sets to answer the same research question and producing greater certainty in the conclusion) (Maxwell, 2016; Morgan, 2014).

However, as pointed out by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the mixed methods design used in this study had inherent disadvantages too. One prominent disadvantage was that it required a large amount of time, effort and planning but my enrolment as a full-time PhD researcher allowed me enough time to give full focus to the research. Secondly, it required me to have a wider set of skills to conduct the research rigorously as it involved data collection and analysis from multiple sources. Therefore, I took training on both qualitative and quantitative research design and data analysis. An additional support came from my supervisors and colleagues/staff at the university. One more challenge for me was to suitably combine different methods so that there would be no compromise on the robustness and reliability of the research. To compensate for this, the research methods used in this study were piloted and cross-validated.

4.2.3   Key Decisions in My Journey of Mixed Methods

Following Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.64), four key decisions were made in this study: level of interaction between the qualitative and quantitative approaches, the relative priority of the approaches, the timing of the approaches and the procedures for mixing the two approaches. The following section discusses each decision.

The level of interaction refers to the extent to which qualitative and quantitative approaches "are kept independent or interact with each other" (Creswell &Plano Clark, 2011, p.64). When they are independent, the researcher mixes the two approaches only at the final stage, i.e. after the analysis of the data. As the main purpose of using mixed methods methodology in this study was to obtain different but complementary data on the same issue to best understand the research problems, the data was collected separately and the findings were mixed before interpreting the results. The qualitative data was analysed before the quantitative data. If the quantitative data had been analysed first, the qualitative findings might have beeen affected by the quantitative results, but the reverse was not possible.

The second decision was about the relative priority of the approaches. Priority refers to the relative importance of the qualitative and quantitative data for answering the research questions (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). The priority usually depends on the research

questions and the research participants. This study had three possible priority options: quantitative priority (i.e more emphasis on the quantitative data collection and analysis), qualitative priority (i.e more emphasis on the qualitative data collection and analysis), or equal priority (i.e considering both data sets to be equally important to answer the research questions) (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Equal priority was given to quantitative and qualitative data considering equal importance of both types of data in answering the research questions of this study.

The third decision considered the timing of the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Timing refers to "the entire quantitative and qualitative strands, not just data collection" (Creswell &Plano Clark, 2011, p.65). Two kinds of timings (concurrent and sequential) are used in most mixed methods studies. This study used concurrent timing: both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time, but independently from each other. This timing was used to ensure that there was no chance that one approach influenced another approach as in a sequential design. Therefore, data was collected concurrently but analysed separately.

The fourth decision was about the stages for mixing the two approaches. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) discuss four possible stages for mixing two data sets: at the level of design, during data collection, during data analysis and during data interpretation. In this study, the two data sets were combined during the data interpretation phase only.

Figure 4.1: Design of the study
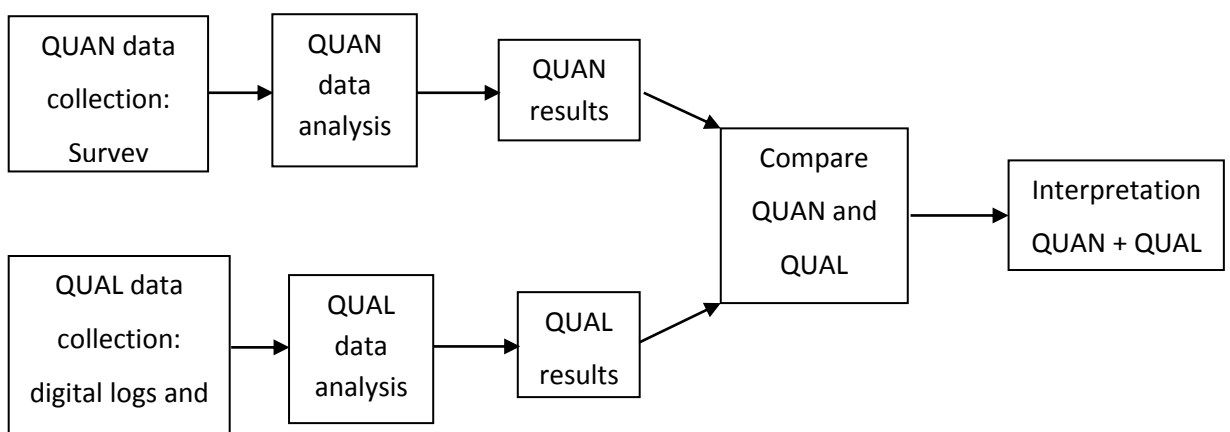
(source: Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.63)

Thus, this study collected quantitative and qualitative data concurrently but independently, analysed them separately, and finally mixed the results for their interpretation.

4.3 Research design

An explicit research design is essential for any kind of research. A research design is a true guide to a researcher as it informs the researcher about what to do and/or what not to do. It usually involves the strategies of inquiry (methodology) and specific methods for data collection. The following section presents a discussion of the design of the current study.

4.3.1 Sampling Frame and Population Selection

Following Creswell (2015), the sampling for the study adopted logical and rigorous procedures. At first, the population (i.e. Grade 10 students) was identified and their major characteristics were listed. As it was not practical to deal with the whole population (i.e. all the tenth graders and their parents in Nepal), it was decided to select a sub-sample of the population. It was very important to determine the sample size which could represent the wider population. At the beginning, it was realised that the bigger the sample size, the more representative it would be. However, Balnaves and Caputi (2001) argue "a large sample is no guarantee of the accuracy" (p.93) or it "cannot guarantee precision" (Bryman, 2008, p.178). Therefore, it was decided to follow Aldridge and Levine's (2001) advice that the size for a quantitative study should be a minimum of 50. Additionally, the constraints of time and costs were considered to determine the sample size. Finally, it was decided to select 260 Grade 10 students in Nepal as the sample population for the study but 13 of the students did not return my questionnaire. So, the quantitative data ended up with 247 students' questionnaires.

Due attention was paid to ensure that right people are selected for the study. As the vast majority of students live in rural parts in Nepal and study in public schools, it was decided to collect data only from public school students from rural parts in Nepal. Hence, two districts were purposively selected as the research sites for this study; they are very similar in terms of the transportation and communication facilities, and school education practices. The majority of people living in the districts are Hindus and Buddhists. Most of them speak Nepali language though they have several local languages such as Gurung, Magar and Newari. Their main occupation is farming. However, the current situation indicates that many people from the districts have moved to cities and also gone abroad in search of a job. The vast majority of students in the areas go to public schools as there are very few private schools and most parents cannot afford tuition fees for private schools.

All the student participants in this study were studying at Grade 10 in public schools in rural parts of Nepal. They had been learning English as a foreign language for a minimum of 10 years and their age ranged between 14 and 16 years old. The schools they attended were very similar in terms of the medium of instruction used in the schools (i.e. all the schools used Nepali as a medium of instruction) and a greater percentage of students coming from low economic background. Additionally, students had similar kinds of family background in terms of their culture (mostly Hindus and Buddhists) and language (mostly Nepali) spoken at home.

The participants for the survey were selected by using a simple random sampling procedure which is one of the most widely used sampling designs in educational research (Bryman, 2008). At first, eight schools (four from each district) were purposively selected in order to ensure that I could visit the schools without much difficulty and collect required data for my study. Then, Grade 10 students were randomly selected in each school; this sampling allowed every individual in a population an equal opportunity of being selected for the study, thus kept sampling errors to a minimum. It was found that seven of the schools enrolled around 50 students each at Grade 10 but one of the schools had around 80 students at Grade 10. Therefore, 30 students in each of the seven schools and 50 students from the school with around 80 students were selected for the study.

Among the 260 students, eight students were purposively selected for the case study as it was highly important to ensure that case(s) that would most likely illuminate the research questions were selected (Yin, 2014). In order to capture diversities of the participants, the following criteria were used for their selection:

> • Half of them should be high achievers and the other half low achievers based on their performance in the final English test at Grade 9.

> • Half of them should be the children of parents with high education (at least SLC graduates) and the other half should be from parents with low education (under SLC or who cannot read and write).

> • There should be a good gender balance. However, my interest in balancing gender was not to make gender wise comparison but to capture their diversities of the emergence of test impacts on both male and female students.

They were selected from three schools. Four students were selected from School A (it enrolled more students than other selected schools) and rest of the students from School B and School C (two each), but the students from school B withdrew their participation a few months later. Consequently, the study ended with six case study students. The general characteristics of the students are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1: General characteristics of case study students

Student	Sex	Age (Yrs.)	Parents' background	Students' Proficiency
S1	Female	15	Parents with high education	High achiever
S2	Female	16	Parents with low education	Low achiever
S3	Male	15	Parents with high-education	Low achiever
S4	Male	15	Parents with low education	High achiever
S5	Female	16	Parents with low education	Low achiever
S6	Male	15	Parents with high education	High achiever

It should be noted that students' categorisation (as high achiever or low achiever) was based on their performance on their class tests at Grade 10 when they were selected for the study and their performances on the SEE test also indicated similar picture. Among the three high-achievers, one obtained A (80-90%) two obtained B+ (70-80%) Grade and two of the low achievers obtained D+ (30-40%) and one obtained C (40-50%) Grade in the SEE English test.

It is also worth mentioning that the case study students were also asked to respond to the questionnaires prior to interviews so that the questionnaires would facilitate interviews and also provide deeper insights into the issues included in the questionnaires.

However, these students were not treated as a 'sample' of their group but were regarded as individuals. It was hoped that each student's definition of the test impact would be as broad as possible. Nevertheless, being so diverse, with different family background and personalities, they somehow represented the wider population they came from. The experiences they shared might be indicative of the test impacts on students in the Nepalese context.

It was assumed that the SEE has some impacts even on parents because of the stakes associated with the examination. However, it was difficult to collect written data from parents from those rural parts as many of them were not able to read and write. Therefore, only the parents of the case study students (one parent each) were selected for the study. The parents were informed that any one of them could be a part of the study but it was made clear to them that the one (either father or mother), who wants to be a part of the study at the beginning, should remain till the end of the data collection. Their age ranged between 35 to 62 years and they had different professions: teacher (N=2), farmer (N=2), shopkeeper (N=1) and stone-breaker (N=1). They could represent different socio-economic classes. It seemed like two of the parents were flat broke and living hand to mouth. The rest of the parents did not seem to have such problems but they were also not very rich. Indeed, almost no one in that area had a very high economic condition.

The two districts were selected mainly for three reasons. First, as I was educated in one of the districts, I know the people, their culture, language and educational practices. It was expected that my familiarity with the context would support me to get access to the field, maintain a good rapport with the people there and collect in-depth information for the study. Second, around 80% population in Nepal live in rural areas and they are the people whose voices are least heard. Therefore, this study aimed to capture those unheard voices. Third, they are less privileged people as they are getting less benefits or facilities in every sector including education compared to city people in Nepal.

Access to the participants was negotiated through the head teachers of the selected schools. The following section introduces the methods of data collection used in this study.

4.3.2   Survey Strategy

Survey strategy, the most used quantitative method in social sciences (Czaja & Blair, 2005; Fogelman & Comber, 2007), is used to collect factual information about participants' background and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes and perceptions of the issues being investigated, or both. Using questionnaires, concepts can be operationalised in terms of well-defined indicators using large and hopefully representative samples. A survey design enables researchers to generalise the findings from a sample to a population.

This study employed a longitudinal survey design as it aimed to explore both the pre-test and post-test impacts of the test. Furthermore, it was realised that "students' learning leading up to a high-stakes examination is a process that needs longitudinal and systematic

investigation" (Zhan & Andrews, 2014, p.74). The first survey was carried out when students were preparing for the test (i.e. about six weeks before the test) and the second survey was conducted when they were studying at upper grade (i.e. at Grade 11). The time gap between the two surveys was about six months. It should be noted that only the students who took part in the first survey were asked to take part in the second survey so that a comparison could be made about them. A student questionnaire was used as the chief instrument for the survey.

The questionnaire survey was limited to students as the pilot study indicated that many parents in those rural areas were not able to read and write. With a national literacy rate of 65.94% (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012), it is not surprising that many parents are illiterate in that remote part of the country.

4.3.2.1 Student Questionnaire

Questionnaires are used to make inferences about people's attitudes to or opinions about the issues being investigated (Bryman, 2008). As this study aimed to explore students' and parents' perceptions of the SEE English test and the nature of the test impacts on students and their parents, questionnaires were purposefully used. There were mainly two reasons for using questionnaires in this study. First, questionnaires require respondents to reveal their feelings and express their values "in a way that calls for a judgment about things rather than the mere reporting of facts" (Denscombe, 2003, p.146). Moreover, data elicited through questionnaires, in most cases, enable researchers to make a comparison systematically (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). Second, questionnaires have an advantage of collecting information from a large sample (Sekaran, 2003) within a relatively shorter period of time and with less efforts, compared to other methods. In other words, they are economical, compared to other research methods.

Questionnaires have some drawbacks too, especially when used in isolation. One of the main drawbacks of using a questionnaire survey is that it can only provide a 'thin description' of the issues; it may not provide deep insights into the issues under investigation. Another disadvantage concerns the time and effort for its preparation and administration. It is demanding in terms of preparation and administration, and it is hard to evaluate the truthfulness of the answers (Denscombe, 2003). In order to compensate for the drawbacks of the questionnaire survey, a case study strategy was adopted.

Many factors were considered when designing the questionnaires for this study. The first and probably the most important was: an attempt to match the questions/items in the questionnaire with the research questions to ensure that all the research questions were properly addressed. Moreover, as some of the items were borrowed from the literature (e. g., Cheng, et al., 2010; Onaiba, 2013; Takagi, 2010), a great attention was paid to ensure that those questions truly measure the variables that I intended to explore (Czaja & Blair, 2005) and they are relevant to the Nepalese context.

A set of steps were followed when designing the questionnaires for this study, such as listing research questions and major issues to be covered in the study, designing questions, getting insights from my supervisors and making some amendments based on the pilot study.

Two sets of questionnaires were developed getting insights from previous washback studies (e. g., Cheng, et al., 2010; Onaiba, 2013; Takagi, 2010). The first questionnaire aimed to collect information about the pre-test impacts on students and the second questionnaire considered the post-test impacts. Both questionnaires consisted of close-ended questions (see Appendix 1A and 1B, pp.240-257), except one open-ended question in the pre-test questionnaire and three in the post-test questionnaire. The statements were on a five point Likert-Scale from 'strongly agree to strongly disagree'. However, close-ended questions do not support the researcher to understand what a respondent means in selecting answers in the questionnaire. Therefore, some spaces were provided in each of the questions to allow the participants to express their views.

Both the questionnaires were first written in English as many questions were adapted from previous washback studies (e. g. Chu et al., 2014; Li et al., 2012; Onaiba, 2013; Tagaki, 2010; Xie, 2013, 2015) carried out at an international level. The questionnaires were translated into Nepali by the researcher herself considering that the participants would not be able to understand the English version. Then, the questionnaires were translated back to English by the researcher herself to cross check whether the translation caused any distortions in the intended meaning; there was no distortion caused by the translation.

Furthermore, due attention was paid to the validity of the questionnaires which generally refers to the ability of "questionnaire to measure what you intend it to measure"(Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p.365). A questionnaire should have both content validity (the extent to which the questionnaire provides adequate coverage of the research questions)

and construct validity (the extent to which the questionnaire actually measures the presence of the construct we want to measure). In order to ensure both kinds of validity of the questionnaires, following Onaiba (2013), "two stages of design were undertaken: careful qualitative input, to ensure content validity; and piloting, to ensure construct validity" (p.115). The questionnaires' qualitative input design was largely based on test impact theories and the empirical studies in language testing reviewed in Chapter 3. While adapting the questions, great attention was paid to ensure that the questions would be fit for the purpose of the study. There were two main reasons for adapting the questions. The first reason was that those questions had already been successfully used in previous test impact studies. Secondly, the tests that previous studies explored were similar to the SEE English test in terms of type and importance (all of them were high-stakes public tests conducted at the national level). I also designed some other questions myself based on the relevant literature. My supervisors and two of my colleagues at the university were also requested to comment on the questionnaires and the questionnaires were modified based on their input. Both the questionnaires were piloted before actually using them for this study. Section 4.5 outlines how piloting the questionnaires contributed to their validation. What comes next is an introduction to the case study strategy used in this study.

4.3.3   Case Study Strategy

The second research strategy employed in this study was the case study strategy. Yin (2014) defines it as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in-depth and within real world context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p.16). It answers 'how' and 'why' questions and provides an in-depth understanding of a case by collecting detailed information through multiple sources. In other words, in this strategy researchers implement an in-depth exploration to interpret the research issues (Creswell, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Yin, 2014). It is flexible in dealing with complex issues. As Hempel-Jorgensen (2011) argues, one of the main strengths of a case study is that it has an explanatory power to provide data for theory development and case studies are thought to be useful for investigating the complex nature of test impacts (Saville, 2010).

A case study design was chosen for this study as one of its aims was to provide a theoretical explanation for how students and parents are impacted by the test. A multiple case study design, which has been increasingly used in educational research in recent

years, was considered to be the most appropriate way for investigating the issues of the test impact in this study as it supported me to collect and analyse rich or in-depth data to understand students' and parents' attitudes towards the test and how they were affected by the test. Yin (2014) argues that a multiple-case design is very similar to the concept of replication in multiple experiments, in which pressing priority would be to replicate the findings of the first study by conducting a second, third or even more experiments. Yin further argues, a case study with 6 to 10 cases, if arranged effectively, would provide both literal replication (predicting similar results) as well as theoretical replication (predicting contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons). Thus, the study had six case studies as it aimed to provide both literal and theoretical replication. The students were considered to be the cases in this study as the question was about understanding the impacts of the SEE English test at individual level. It was assumed that the test has different impacts on students.

Another purpose of using case study strategy in this research was that it aimed to capture the nature of test impacts on students over a period of time as it was realised that confining test impacts on students and their parents within the test preparation period might not reveal the comprehensive picture of the test impacts (Zhan & Wan, 2014). It was equally important to explore how each individual student experiences test impacts over a period of time (i.e. during pre-preparation, preparation and after the test conduction). Therefore, it was decided to use longitudinal design with an aim of improving my understanding of the test impact although it was realised that the longitudinal research can be challenging.

When designing this case study, the focus was on the bounded nature of each specific case. As the major focus of this study was not intrinsic in nature (not focusing on just one specific participant's experience), a case, in this study, is defined by the notion that it is bounded by the experiences of each of those six students (i.e. the case study students in this study) along with their parents. That is why, "the specific case is presented as 'complete' in itself, rather than based on an assumption that the findings will lead to generalizations in the way that a 'typical' child might ordinarily be presented in a more traditional qualitative approach" (Chamberlain, 2015, p.47). It was decided to make this case study temporally bound by a timeframe (i.e. before and after taking the test). The study took place across 12 months. This was the specific time frame that constituted the bounded nature of the case in this study.

4.3.3.1   Student Diaries

A diary is a personal account created by an individual about his or her own experiences. Diaries are recorded/written on a regular basis, such as daily, weekly and fortnightly, for a period of time (Halbach, 1999). They are supposed to record real experiences as students are free to express themselves and they are not under the control of so-called high-ranking people. Diaries may tell the 'truth' and may give an authentic perspective which is almost impossible to acquire in any other way. They provide richer information than the information obtained through recall at an interview and capture students' experiences in such a way that it is almost impossible to do this using traditional designs (Alaszewski, 2006; Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Burns & Grove, 2005). Diaries can be seen as an instrument that enables the researcher to gain insights into the students' feelings or reflections about the issues being investigated (Halbach, 1999). Students' diaries, in this study, were seen as one of the best sources to obtain information about students' attitudes and their practices (Nicholl & Nicoll, 2010).

However, there might be some weaknesses in using diaries recorded upon the request of the researcher as they are written or recorded with the researcher in mind and the students try their best to reflect on issues that are of interest to the researcher. Therefore, it was explained orally to the students in this study that they could express themselves freely. Moreover, the students record their diaries with the knowledge that their diaries will be read or interpreted by the researcher (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). This might affect the information to be included in the diaries. Therefore, Huang (2009) and Tsagari (2006) have pointed out problems of diary use in terms of practicality, reliability, validity and generalizability.

Regarding practicality, diary recording may sometimes be burdensome and fatiguing for the students (Huang, 2009); they may not remain focused on what they are recording. Farrell (1998) suggests the need to ask students to make a fixed period of commitment so that they know how many diary entries they need to create and when they finish recording; this information may motivate them to carry on. In this study, following Huang (2009), the frequency of diary recording was once a week which intermittently continued for three months. The students were asked to record their diaries orally as it was realised that writing would be more time consuming.

There are also some validity issues associated with diary studies. In the case of unstructured diaries, there might be a danger that students provide data which is not relevant to the study (Tsagari, 2006) and if diaries are too structured, students might only record the things they believe are desired by the researcher (Huang, 2009). To minimise this problem, the students in this study were provided with some recording guidelines (See Appendix 3 on pages 278-281) and they were also encouraged to express their opinions freely, but truthfully.

As argued by Huang (2009), reliability issues in diary studies might appear in the data coding process and result interpretation as such interpretations are highly subjective. In order to minimise subjectivity of my interpretation, i.e. to increase reliability of the findings, a researcher was also asked to code about 10% of the data (see 4.8 for further discussion).

The diary study approach has also been "criticised for its lack of generalizability" (Huang, 2009, p.93). This means that findings from a diary study cannot be extended to its wider population. Nevertheless, it was decided to use diaries as the main purpose of using diaries in this study was not to generalise findings but to unpack the nature of the test impact on students. There were certainly some other good reasons for using student diaries, as discussed below.

It was assumed that students' diaries were one of the most useful instruments to generate the kind of data that I wanted to explore because such diaries would provide me with an opportunity to look 'inside the black box', meaning that the diaries give access to the otherwise unobservable elements of an issue being explored (Long, 1980). The diaries allow the participants to express themselves most freely. They are free to choose the place and time for recording their diaries and "expressing one's thoughts and feelings is not strictly limited by the questions presented by the interviewer" (Huhta et al., 2006, p.332). They are also not interfered by others, as in interviews or discussion. Another important reason for using the diaries was that I wanted to show respect to my participants and minimise encroachment on their social world. Diaries were supposed to provide reliable and valid data needed for this study.

My decision of choosing diary study was also rooted in my own experience of being an English teacher of Grade 10 students for three years and the educational context in Nepal in which most students feel disempowered and sometimes are unwilling to speak their

minds in the presence of someone whom they perceive as being on a higher rank of the hierarchy. I believe that diaries enable students to express their feelings freely as diary recording is an individual task performed at their own home.

Finally, the decision to use students' diaries in this study was also made based on the available literature in education. I found that diaries have been widely used in educational research (e.g. Gosa, 2004; Huang, 2009; Huhta et al., 2006) with a common purpose of exploring the issues that cannot be normally explored through other methods of data collection. In this study, diaries were expected to enable me to explore what and how students learn outside their classroom for the preparation of the SEE English test. The longitudinal personalized (diary) approach in data collection and the context-sensitive ways of analysing those diaries enabled me to capture individual variations in terms of the test impacts on students and their learning process which would have remained uncovered with, for example, a questionnaire administered at one point of the test preparation process.

4.3.3.2   Interview

There were several reasons for using interviews in this study. First, it was hoped that interviews would provide rich data that can lead to more comprehensive picture of the test impact in the lived world and how it may have been impacted. Wall and Horak (2006) argue that interviews enable the researchers to collect data that can provide deeper insights than questionnaires can offer. Second, I wanted to understand the test impact issues from students' and parents' point of view to unfold the meanings of their own experiences and to uncover their lived world supposedly impacted by the SEE English test. Third, interviews provided me with opportunities to ask questions to my participants that would properly address my research questions. I could also seek clarifications of some issues found in the (diary) recordings. Fourth, interviews in this study were used to mitigate the drawbacks of the student questionnaires, such as "imposing restrictions on respondents' answers" (Onaiba, 2013, p.119) and also triangulate the data collected through the questionnaires and student diaries. In the case of parents, it was realised that interview was the best method to collect data as many of them could not read and write.

To sum up, this study used three different research instruments: survey questionnaires, oral diaries and interviews. It is worth pointing out that the selection of each of the instruments arose out of the theoretical model and research questions used in the study. For instance, the use of questionnaires was mainly guided by its aim to explore students' attitudes

towards the test and its impacts on them, and the theoretical model on attitudes presented in 3.4.1 which highlights the roles of students' test attitudes in their learning. The use of diaries in this study was mainly guided by the CLT theory, which highlights the point that tests are used as a powerful tool to control stakeholders' behaviours. As this study aimed to explore the impacts of the test on students' learning practices (particularly research questions 2 and 3) and PI in the test preparation (research question 5) presumably affected by the test, it was assumed that diaries would be one of the best options. Finally, interviews were employed to clarify the issues found in the data collected through questionnaires and diaries, and dig more into the data. Indeed, the use of multiple methods to collect data in this study was guided by the theoretical framework (particularly the Critical Perspective Characteristics 2) of this study (see Table 3.1) which suggests that "our research needs to consider paradigms beyond the dominant post positivist-influenced one" (Lynch, 2001, p.263).

4.4 Research Phases and Timeline

Based on the nature of the study, the empirical parts of the study were carried out in three different phases (see Table 4.1).

Phase I was the preliminary stage in which I carried out my pilot study. This phase mainly aimed to ensure the accuracy of the tools designed for the main study. It was conducted in July and August, 2016. The major activities carried out in the pilot phase included: getting access to the field, selecting the participants for the case study, piloting research tools, interviewing students and parents and training case study participants on how to record their diaries.

Phase II, the pre-test data collection stage, aimed to collect data regarding the pre-test impacts on students and their parents. Therefore, it was scheduled to run from 1 January to 28 February when the students were preparing for the test. This phase was mainly concerned with the parents and students' perceptions of the SEE English test, test preparation strategies employed by students and PI in the test preparation. The methods used for the data collection in this phase included: a student survey, interviews and oral diaries.

Phase III, the post-test data collection stage, looked at the impacts of the test on students and parents after its implementation. So, this phase was scheduled three months after the conduction of the test (i.e. July- September, 2017). This phase was mainly concerned with

the post-test impacts on students. The methods of data collection used in this phase were the same as in phase II. The research stages and timescales are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.2: Research stages and timeline

Phase	Stages	Timelines	Tasks/Activities
Phase I	Pilot stage	28 July to 28 August, 2016	Got access to the field, selected case study participants, piloted research tools and trained case study participants on how to record diaries
Phase II	Pre-test data collection stage	1 January to 28 February, 2017	Carried out a survey, interviewed the case study students along with their parents and collected students' oral diaries which were recorded in September, 2016
Phase III	Post-test data collection stage	20 July to 02 September, 2017	Tasks fulfilled in this stage were the same as with the phase 2 tasks

(Note: The SEE English test was conducted on 04 March and the test result was published on 24 June, 2017).

The three phases were conducted sequentially which captured the participants' one-year long academic journey. This study was successful to capture both the pre- and post-test impacts of the test on its participants. The following section introduces the pilot study.

4.5   Pilot Study and Implications for the Main Study

The main purpose of the pilot study was to test research instruments and make necessary changes, if required, before conducting the main study (Seliger, 1989). In other words, the pilot study aimed to refine the questionnaire so that students would have no problems in understanding the questions. It was conducted in July and August, 2016, immediately after I got permission from my probationary viva examiners, university ethics review committee and my supervisors. The pilot study had the practical aims of gathering evidence in order to:

- establish the existence of the test impacts on students and their parents,
- ensure the best way to get access to the field and select suitable participants for the case study

- check the accuracy of the research tools for the participants and the volume of the data that could be generated through the tools
- ensure that the methods of data collection were appropriate to address the research questions
- be aware of the difficulties that would exist in the process of data generation and/or analysis
- find ways for addressing ethical concerns

The purpose of the pilot study was to have a clear understanding of the nature of the test impact and refine the research plan by sharpening ideas and establishing the most appropriate research design (Tsagari, 2006). The same methods of data collection were used in the pilot study and the main study.

4.5.1 Sampling

The participants for the pilot study were selected following De Vans's (2002) advice: "the closer the match between the pilot sample and the final sample the better" (p.17). The population of the study included students (N=40) studying at Grade 10 (to explore pre-test impacts) and Grade 11 (to explore the post-test impacts), 20 students from each Grade. They were randomly selected from two schools in Lamjung district. Among them, four of the students (two from each grade) were purposively selected for the interview. One of the major criteria for their selection was: two students were from the parents with high education and two from the parents with low education. This further indicates that parents were purposively selected in this study. There were altogether 44 participants in the pilot study and all of them had a similar background to those of the main study participants so as to be as close to the real scenario of the study.

4.5.2 Piloting the Research Instruments

This study used three major tools (questionnaire, interview schedule and diary recording guidelines) for the data collection as planned for the main study. All the instruments were piloted before they were actually used for the main study in order to ensure their accuracy and appropriacy for this study. The following section discusses procedures used to pilot each instrument.

4.5.2.1   Piloting Student Questionnaires

It is always desirable to pilot any questionnaire before administering it to the sample population (Bryman, 2008). There were several reasons for piloting the student questionnaires in this study. The first reason was to ensure the construct validity of the questionnaires, i.e. to ensure that the survey questions could measure the test impact issues being investigated in this study. The second reason, as Bryman (2008) mentions, was to ensure that the survey questions operate well and the questionnaires as a whole function well. It was very important to gain feedback on the questionnaires' readability (Onaiba, 2013) and to ensure that the instructions given in the questionnaire were clear to the students. Hence, 40 students were asked to fill out the questionnaires and comment on the clarity of the instructions or the language used in the questionnaires to get a tentative idea of instructions clarity in the questionnaire. Besides completing the questionnaires, students were asked to provide feedback on the instruction clarity and language used. The third reason was to find out whether all the students could understand each question, irrespective of their language ability. Also, I wanted to know whether the questionnaire items were understood the same way by each student. The fourth reason was to get an idea about the tentative time needed for the students to complete the questionnaires.

As most questions in the questionnaire were close-ended, there would be ambiguity in how to interpret what a respondent means in selecting an option. Therefore, the participants were interviewed after they completed the questionnaires; each interview lasted for about half an hour.

It is worth pointing out that both the pre-test and post-test questionnaires were piloted twice. The questionnaires were first piloted with the students (in the pilot study phase) and then some changes were made in the questionnaires based on students' comments. Then, when I went back to the field for the main study, those revised questionnaires were piloted again with those students (N=40) before actually administering them to the real participants and a few changes were made in the questionnaire based on their comments. The questionnaires presented in the appendices in this thesis are the revised ones (both pre-test and post-test questionnaires).

4.5.2.2   Piloting Student Interviews

In the pilot study, four semi-structured interviews, two pre-test and two post-test, were conducted. The main purpose of piloting the interviews was to ensure the appropriacy of

the interview schedule at the level of participants and to get an idea about the richness of the data that could be pooled through in the main study. An additional aim was to investigate whether the instruments, the questionnaires and diary keeping guidelines designed for the main study could accurately serve their purpose and, if necessary, what changes had to be made to the instruments. The major focus during the interviews was on the difficulties students faced while responding to the questionnaires to determine the extent to which students could understand questions as intended, i.e. to assess what was and was not working. Each student was asked to give feedback on any kind of difficulties they encountered when responding to questions. In other words, the students were asked about the clarity of each question in the questionnaire and whether they had problems in answering any of those questions. Moreover, the interviews aimed to ensure whether the instruments designed were accurately measuring the test impact issues under investigation.

4.5.2.3   Piloting Parent Interviews

Like students' interviews, four parent interviews, two pre-test and two post-test, were conducted in the pilot study. Before the interviews, the parents were informed that the main purpose of the interviews was to ensure the appropriacy of the interview schedule at the level of participants and to ensure whether the interviews designed could accurately measure the test impact issues raised in the study concerning the test nature. In other words, I wanted to get an idea about whether the parent interviews enabled me to collect in-depth data for this study.

As parents had little knowledge about the purpose and nature of this study, following Gray's (2009) advice, it was explained clearly to them about the purpose of the interview and how the information was going to be used. As parent interviews mainly aimed to obtain feedback on the usefulness of the interview schedules, the parents were encouraged to report to me if they were not able to understand any of the questions asked and/or if they had difficulty in answering any of the questions during the interview. They were occasionally found making requests for further clarifications of my questions.

It should be noted that students and parents were interviewed separately to ensure that there was no undue influence of this study on the participants, and parents' views on students, and vice versa. All interviews were conducted individually in Nepali language on a face-to-face basis. Each interview lasted for about 40 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' permission.

4.5.2.4   Piloting Student Diaries

The main purpose of piloting students' oral diaries was to collect students' feedback on the diary recording guidelines prepared for the main study and also to find out the richness of the data aimed to obtain from student diaries. Therefore, the students who were interviewed after they filled out the questionnaire were asked to record three diaries (one diary entry each day) using the diary keeping guidelines provided to them. They were given clear instructions on how to use those guidelines to record their diaries. Then, each of the students was interviewed about their experiences of diary recording. The interviews were also audio-recorded.

4.5.3   Lessons Learned from the Pilot Study

One of the first and most valuable lessons I learned from my piloting phase concerns the test impact issues that I wanted to explore in this study. As little research has been carried out to explore the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents, I wondered what would be the nature of the test impacts. The pilot study indicated that the test had impacts on students and their parents in several ways, including English learning strategies, student motivation, test pressure and test anxiety. These findings made me more confident about the research instruments I had designed.

The following table summarises my other learnings from pilot study and actions done differently as a result in the main study which better enabled it to address the RQs.

Table 4.3: Changes made based on the learning from the pilot study

Lessons learned from the pilot study	Changes made in the Main study
Questionnaires were designed in both languages but all the students preferred the questionnaires in Nepali over the ones in English.	Only the questionnaires written in Nepali were used to collect data in the main study.
All the students and their parents preferred Nepali language over English for their interviews.	Only the Nepali language was used during the interviews.
Students were first asked to record their oral diaries in English but it was found that they	They were asked to record their diaries in Nepali in order to ensure that there was no

could perform better in Nepali than in English.	hindrance caused by language use.
All the case study students and parents (excluding one) stated that they would feel more comfortable to be interviewed at their own home than at school.	All of them (excluding one parent) were interviewed at their home.
During the interviews, the participants answered most questions very briefly. So, the interviews did not provide much information about the issues being explored. There could be two possible reasons behind this. First, the participants might not have felt comfortable enough to be interviewed as we did not have a close relationship before the interview. Second, my questions might not have been clear enough to facilitate my participants to elaborate their answers.	I met my participants informally for a couple of times and maintained a good relationship with them before interviewing them. I also made interview questions simpler and more direct, avoiding jargon; I used more probing and guiding questions. Additionally, I used some of the instances from students' oral diaries and questionnaires to stimulate them.
Some of the questions asked in the interviews were found irrelevant to the study.	Only the questions relevant to the study were included in the interviews.
It was found that the participants were aware of my identity as an academic and researcher.	I tried my best to underplay my identity as a researcher in such a way that the social and knowledge gap between me and my participants were minimised.
It was realised that the Q9 in the pre-test was not directly relevant to the study.	This question was dropped.
The statements in Q10 in the pre-test questionnaire were found overlapping.	The question was modified and it was also included in the post-test questionnaire.
In the post-test questionnaire, most students did not understand the meanings of the term 'mock exams' in Q11.	The word was replaced with 'similar exams'.
The data indicated a need to add questions about	Two questions (Q15 and Q16) were

the materials the students used for the test preparation and the support they got from their parents.	included in the post-test questionnaire.

4.6   Research Ethics

Researchers are responsible for all ethical issues related to their studies. According to Bryman (2008), there might be violation of four ethical principles: lack of informed consent, deception, invasion of privacy and harm to participants. In order to make sure that none of the four situations happens to my participants, I was extremely conscientious about the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the data itself. The study consciously adopted stances that would enable the participants to systematically think through why and how they participate in this study as research informants. The following procedures were followed to maintain ethics both in the pilot and the main study.

In order to maintain ethics in my study, I followed the code of practice for research at The Open University, England and British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (2011). I got permission from the ethics review committee (HPEC 2016 2287 Dawadi) in my university to collect data from human participants before visiting Nepal for my data collection.

I got access to the selected schools with permission from the head teachers. The sample population was selected with the co-ordination of the head teachers in each school. The head teachers introduced me to their students and also informed the parents about my visit to the schools along with the purpose of my visit. They also provided me some information about the educational background of the parents and students' proficiency level in English which I needed to select my case study students.

I visited the parents of the selected students in person and informed them about the purpose of the study. Prior to taking the parents' consent to involve their children in this study, they were provided with written as well as oral information in Nepali about the nature and purpose of the research, their children's role as a participant, how much time they would need to devote to this research, the type of data I needed from them, and how the data would be used. Similar procedures were used to get consent from the parents of the case study students to involve themselves in this study. Children's oral consent was also

obtained after they were informed about the purpose of the study and their role in this research. All the data collected from the participants was carefully stored to guarantee that I was the only person who had access to the data. In order to avoid deception, the participants were clearly explained that the information collected from them would be used in my doctoral thesis along with some publications and conference presentations.

The participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time during the study. All they needed to do was to tell me that they no longer wished to participate or that I could no longer use their data, and I would not use the data. Accordingly, two of my case study students along with their parents wanted to withdraw their participation after the students recorded a few diaries. Respecting their views, I did not use their information in this study. I also maintained all of my participants' confidentiality throughout this research report. No physical or psychological harm on my participants was recorded during this study.

However, I could observe some ethical issues resulted from the Nepalese academic hierarchy. As I mentioned above, I approached the participants through the school head teachers. At first, when the head teacher requested the students and their parents to take part in my study, all of them accepted the request. Then, I realised that the participants probably did not have a choice when the head teacher told them to participate in my study. Therefore, I met each of my participants again in the absence of their head teacher and asked them whether they were really happy to participate in this study. I also told them that they could withdraw their participation, if they did not want to be involved in this study. Later, 13 survey students and two case study students along with their parents withdrew their participation from this study. Furthermore, four of the parents showed their concerns about the recordings after the interviews were over though they voluntarily took part in this study. They requested me to delete the recordings as soon as I use them for this study. Hence, the recordings were deleted immediately after they were transcribed and the filled out questionnaires were also destroyed after the data was used for the study.

4.7   Introduction to the Main Study

The heart of this research lies in the nature of the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents. In order to fully explore both the pre- and post-test impacts on students, following Loumbourdi (2014), a minimum of a one-year-time schedule was devised for the data collection so that it would be possible to follow students during both pre-test and post-test stages. The data for the study was collected on different dates from

the first week of September, 2016 (when students began to record their diaries) to the first week of September, 2017. Thus, the participants were followed for a period of one year, covering the whole process from the initial months of the academic year at Grade 10 to the test preparation to studying at Grade 11. Also, the study employed multiple methods of data collection: questionnaire survey, student diaries and interviews to collect in-depth information about the students' and parents' attitudes towards the SEE English test and the nature of the test impacts on them.

4.7.1 Research Instruments

This study employed three main kinds of research instruments. One, the student questionnaire, was for collecting quantitative data while the other two, interviews and oral diaries, were for qualitative data collection. As noted in Section 4.5.3, some important lessons about the research instruments were learned from the pilot study. All the problems associated with the instruments were addressed before carrying out the main study. The following section presents a discussion on the contents of the questionnaires.

4.7.1.1 Student Questionnaire

The study employed two questionnaires: pre-test and post-test questionnaires. The pre-test questionnaire (see Appendix 1A) consisted of 15 questions divided into five parts: Q1- Q8 sought information about participants' demographic details, such as their age, gender and expected grade in the SEE English test. Q9 comprised five statements that explored students' perceptions of what they have to do to perform well on the test. Q10, that comprised three statements, sought information about students' perceptions of the test fairness and accuracy. Similarly, Q 11 aimed to measure the extent to what the students were motivated to learn English and Q12 about the perceived importance of the test. Q13 and Q14 concerned with the test related pressure and anxiety in students, respectively. The final question aimed to collect students' general opinions of the test. All the items, except Q1 to Q8, Q11 and Q15, were Likert-scale items based on a scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

Similarly, the post-test questionnaire (see Appendix 1B) consisted of 17 questions divided into four parts: part one was about general background of the participants including parents' education and their actual grade on the SEE English test; part two considered students' judgment about the test quality; part three comprised information about student motivation to learn English and the test related support for their career development, and

the final part considered test preparation strategies and time spent for the test preparation. Like pre-test questionnaire, most of the questions in this questionnaire were closed-ended.

Most of the questions included in the two questionnaires were different. However, two of the questions were repeated. The first question was about the impacts of the test on students' motivation to learn English and the second was about students' perceptions of the test quality (i.e. test fairness and accuracy). The main reason for the repetition was to explore whether students' perceptions of the test quality and their motivation level remained the same before and after they took the test. In other words, the study aimed to compare students' opinions before and after they took the test.

4.7.1.2   Student Diaries

To the best of my knowledge, previous diary studies, except Huhta et al. (2006), used written diary of the participants but preference was given to an oral diary over a written diary in this study mainly for four different reasons. First, it would be more convenient and time saving for the students to record their daily activities orally. I did not want to increase pressure on students by asking them to write their diaries in their sensitive situation as writing takes a longer time and I did not want to take their precious time away from their studies. Second, "talking about one's thoughts and feelings seemed to be easier, more natural and spontaneous than writing about them" (Huhta et al., 2006, p.332). Third, children in this communication era love using technological devices (Michael, 2012), such as the recording devices that they were provided in this study. Fourth, there might be issues of literacy. Not all children can express themselves well in writing but they might be more articulate speakers.

Previous researchers have used different formats of diaries. Some researchers allowed their participants to write whatever came to their mind whereas in some other cases a format was designed beforehand by the researcher. The students in this study were situated halfway along the continuum; they were given some guidelines (see Appendix 3) to record their diaries and they were also encouraged to express their opinions freely and include as much information as they could about their learning and the test.

4.7.1.3   Interviews

A semi-structured interview was preferred over a structured interview because of the flexibility of such interviews which enable the interviewers to ask any kind of relevant

questions during the interviews to collect rich data. Another motive of using those interviews was to enable me to control the interview and also allow some sort of freedom for my participants (Bryman, 2008) so that my interviews would run smoothly and support me to collect appropriate information for this study. Furthermore, interview templates used in such interviews "can be drawn on in whatever way and to whatever extent is appropriate" (Richards, 2003, p.69). This means, such interviews do not necessarily follow the order of questions and/or themes and also make use of additional questions to explore the research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, four interview schedules, which contained clearly focused specific topics or themes, were developed (see Appendix 2). The schedules enabled me to be flexible in how I used them and in what order I asked questions to my participants. The schedules also allowed me to ask additional questions that arose from the responses of the participants but more in order to probe the meanings the participants attached to the issues being explored.

4.7.2 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure in the main study was largely similar to the pilot study. It started with the sample population selection and ended up with interviews. The study employed multiple methods of data collection. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently but independently of each other. It might be more appropriate to discuss the procedures separately.

4.7.2.1   Survey Data Collection

A longitudinal survey was conducted in two different stages. The first survey was conducted about six weeks before the test (i.e. in January and February 2017) when the students were studying at Grade 10 and preparing for the test whereas the second survey was conducted about two months after the test results (which was published on 24 June, 2017) when students were studying at Grade 11.

In order to carry out the first survey, I personally visited each of the schools and took consents from all the students and their parents. Then, 260 questionnaires were handed out to the students and the questionnaires were collected back after they had been filled out by the students. Of them, 247 were returned with a final return rate of 95% which was a high response rate in educational research (Cohen et al., 2007).

The second survey was carried out with the same students. Therefore, I did not have to select students again. However, when I went back to the field for the second survey, I found that the students had spread in many parts of the country. This is because they had passed the SEE and started to study in different higher secondary schools/colleges in Nepal. At first, I visited each of the eight schools from where I had collected data for the first survey. I could meet 164 students (out of those 247) there but the rest students had already left the schools. I found that they were studying in 20 different higher secondary schools in different parts of the country. Fortunately most of them were studying in three of the big cities in Nepal. I visited all those cities (Kathmandu, Pokhara and Bharatpur) to carry out the survey and collected data from 62 students from there; I met the students somewhere outside the schools/colleges to hand out the questionnaires to them and collected the questionnaires back after they were filled out. Thus, I could finally collect data from 226 students.

I visited all the participants in person to collect the data for the study as it was not feasible to employ other strategies because of some difficulties encountered. For instance, it was not possible to use email survey strategy as almost no participant used computers or had access to the internet. Similarly, it was not possible to use telephones for the survey because of the high cost of telephone calls.

4.7.2.2   Diary Data Collection

The participants for the diary recording were selected during my visit to Nepal for the pilot study in August, 2016 as they were supposed to start recording their diaries in the first week of September, 2016 (i.e. in the fifth month of their academic year at Grade 10).

Before the students started to record their diaries, they were explained the purpose of recording their diaries with a full set of written instructions and guidelines (see Appendix 3). Most instructions were concerned with ensuring that their oral diaries were an accurate record of their experiences. Following Alaszewski's (2006) advice, they were also given some generic guidance for their recording their diaries, stressing the importance of accuracy and honesty. They were trained on how to record their oral diaries using the recording guidelines. During the training period, each student was asked to record his/her diary thrice to ensure that the instructions given in the guidelines were clear to them and they felt comfortable with the task.

Each student was provided with a recording device and written guidelines for diary keeping. They were asked to record their activities related to English language learning or test preparation along with any incidents or their feelings related to the test. They were also asked to take pictures of the materials they used for the preparation of the test. They were asked to start recording their weekly diaries on 1 September, 2016 and continue until they had four. Their diaries were collected when I was back to the field for my first phase data collection in January, 2017. I listened to their diaries and noted some points that needed clarifications. I had a discussion with each diarist about my queries.

They were asked to restart recoding their diaries on 14 January, 2017 and record four diaries. During the time, they were preparing for the test; they had just around six weeks before the test. This time, their diaries were collected as soon as they finished recording as I was in Nepal during the time. I listened to their diaries on the same day and then had discussions about the confusing points in their convenient time. Finally, they started recording again on 10 June, 2017. They were reminded to start recording around the time. I went back to the field in August, 2017 and collected their diaries and listened to all the diaries including the diaries that I collected in February and had some discussions about what I found confusing in their diaries. The diary recording schedule is presented below.

Table 4.4: Diary keeping schedule

Stage	Start	End	Recordings per student	Remarks
First	01-09- 2016	24-09-2016	4	Usual classes
Second	14-01- 2017	06-02-2017	4	Test preparation time
Third	10-06-2017	01-07- 2017	4	Around the test result

Each student produced 12 recordings (4 to 10 minutes long each), intermittently recorded over a year. In each phase, students were asked to record their diary once a week. There was a good logic behind dividing the diary-keeping period into three distinct phases, i.e. to explore variations in examination effects on students at different times as indicated by previous washback studies (e.g. Gosa, 2004; Takagi, 2010; Wall & Alderson 1993).

4.7.2.3   Interview Data Collection

As mentioned in 4.7.1.3, four interview schedules were developed for the main study and each case study participant was interviewed twice. All the interviews were semi-structured, the most widespread form of interviews in social sciences (Leavy & Brinkmann, 2014).

The first interviews were conducted in January and February, 2017 when the students were preparing for the test. Each participant was interviewed face to face. The first interviews had a major focus on students' experiences of the test preparation, the test pressure and anxiety on students and parents, and PI in the test preparation.

Each participant was interviewed again in August and September, 2017. By the time, the students had already gone through the test and started to study at Grade 11. The interviews considered students' experiences of taking the test and their experiences of learning English at Grade 11 along with the students' and parents' attitudes towards the test quality. Furthermore, there were some discussions about PI in the test preparation.

I conducted 24 interviews in total, excluding my discussions with the students about their diaries, most of which were also recorded. Each interview was 25 to 45 minutes long and audio recorded with the permission of the participants.

Before the interviews, a good rapport was developed with the participants as asking participants to share their experiences requires a great deal of trust and respect for all involved (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Glesne, 2011). The discussions always started with a question about their own background which put my participants at ease and allowed them to remain in their comfort zone (Atkins & Wallace, 2012); they were never threatened by my questions. Similarly, care was taken not to interrupt the participants unnecessarily, acknowledging that "many forms of research interviews suppress stories […] by interrupting narratives when they do occur" (Elliott, 2005, p.21). I listened to their views with great interest and also allowed them enough opportunities to express their views.

I was aware that the power relationships within an interview setting should not be underestimated; there is a need for considering the significance of such relationship (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). In order to avoid the effects of my social identity, as an academician and a researcher, on the nature of my conversation with my participants, I tried my best to create a comfortable setting and I tried to be respectful and courteous. The

interviews were largely informal and flexible. There was enough space for the participants to ask questions and clarify their responses.

As the main purpose of using different kinds of data in this study was mainly for triangulation, the same concepts were addressed in both the qualitative and quantitative data collection efforts. Therefore, somehow parallel questions were asked in the survey and interviews, and a similar kind of data was expected from the student diaries so that the findings can be compared.

Before I visited the field, I had also a plan to make frequent home visits during my first phase of the data collection so that I could observe their family environment in terms of their family support for the preparation of the test. However, I could not visit them as often as I wanted as I found that two of the students were staying at the school accommodation and four others used to go to school early in the morning (around 5.30 am) and come back home only in the evening (around 7 pm). They were taking coaching classes in the morning and evening. Nevertheless, my home visits offered me ample opportunities to maintain a good relationship with my participants and understand their home environment. I made notes of each home visit so that I could record all the information I collected there.

4.8   Transcription and Validation of the Interviews

The interviews and diaries were transcribed and coded as soon as possible to sharpen my understanding of the data and help to alleviate the feeling of being swamped by the data (Bryman & Tevin, 2005). There might be some issues associated with my transcription as the data was in Nepali language and the transcription was done in English. In some cases, there might be information gap despite my several and serious efforts to transcribe the data as accurately as possible. Therefore, I wanted to follow Philips's (1987) suggestions that if the purpose of a qualitative work is to give an account of how participants in a situation feel and see it, it is important that the account is checked with the participants. Nevertheless, it was beyond the capacity of my most participants to read the transcriptions in English and find out the extent to which my transcriptions were correct. So, a small portion of the transcriptions was translated back to Nepali. Then, the Nepali version was given to the participants, excluding the parents who were unable to read, and they were asked to report me whether their responses were accurately reported; none of them reported any gap in the transcriptions.

Having considered the possibility that there could be some problems with my coding, an independent researcher was requested to code around 10% data (6 diaries and 2 interviews) for the sake of validation. The two coding were compared which indicated a high degree of concordance. The comparison indicated around 90% similarities which is a high rate. Confidence in the coding system was also established.

Some of the codes along with the texts were discussed with my supervisors to collect their views. When coding the interviews, I found some of the texts/lines confusing. I collected all the confusing lines, discussed about those lines with my supervisors and coded them based on their suggestions. However, there were a few phrases and/or sentences (though not significant for the study) of which I could not find an equivalent form in English (e.g., a direct translation of some Nepali sentences into English: यो गाइ खाने भासाले बिस्व खाएको छ आज भोली (This cow eating language has eaten the whole world); के गर्नु र यो कुटुम्बको जात (What can I do for my daughter who is the property of husband's family); तेरो छोराले बिज्ञान पढेछ भने मेरो मुखमा थुकिदिनु (If your son studies science, you can spit at my face). Therefore, they were not translated into English.

4.9   Data Analysis

In this study, there was a parallel but separate analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data- "probably the most widely used mixed data analysis in the social and behavioural sciences" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p.128). In order to ensure that there was no influence of the results of one method upon the results of another method, I purposefully did not analyse the quantitative data until I had completed the analysis of the qualitative data. This separation enabled me to compare those two completely separate sets of findings to assess their degree of convergence (Morgan, 2014). The methods used to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data are discussed below.

4.9.1   Quantitative Data Analysis

At first, each of the participants' responses to the questionnaire were entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20 for further analysis. Frequency distributions were calculated for each item included in both questionnaires, following Brown's (2001) advice on presenting quantitative results in percentage terms. Thus, frequency rate has been reported in most cases. In some cases central tendency statistics (i.e. mean percentage) was used to present an overall picture of the students' views on the nature of the test impacts. Brown (2001) recommends to calculate the mean scores because the scores provide more power in the

analysis of the Likert-scale type data. Mean scores have been widely reported in previous studies with Likert-scale questions (e.g. Dawadi, 2018; Fulcher, 2012; Onaiba, 2013). As the questionnaires were in a five-point Likert Scale, the highest mean scores in each statement could be five suggesting that the higher the mean scores the higher the level of student agreement with the statement and the lower the mean scores, the lower the level of student agreement with that item. Additionally, standard deviation (SD) was calculated to indicate the degree of uniformity in the responses, the lower the SD, the more uniformity in the data reported.

4.9.2   Qualitative Data Analysis

The study generated a huge amount of data through 72 diary entries and 24 interviews. Therefore, it was highly important to use a systematic approach to analyse the data in order to gain a deeper understanding of the data. For the systematic organisation of the data, the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was employed. CAQDAS increases the access to whole data files in a single minute; makes it easier to have live contact to source data (Lewins & Silver, 2014); enhances the efficiency of the researcher and makes analysis more organised and easier. The chosen application for the study was NVivo 10 because of its flexibility and its efficiency to integrate different kinds of qualitative data. Using the software, a thematic analysis was made as "it is a flexible method which can be incorporated into any epistemological approach" (Chamberlain, 2015, p.68).

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is theoretically flexible for identifying, describing and interpreting patterns (themes) within a data set in a great detail. It fits well with any qualitative study like this which attempts to explore the complex social and educational issues related to test impacts. However, there is a potential limitation of thematic analysis, i.e. its methodology is not often clearly reported although it has been widely used in qualitative studies. Nevertheless, this reported drawback was outweighed by the benefits of using thematic analysis for this study as it would make the analysis more valid because of its accessibility, transparency and flexibility.

Thematic analysis can be made in both deductive (top-down) and inductive (bottom-up) way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In inductive analysis, the data is coded without trying to fit the themes into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's preconceptions about the research (Brown & Clark, 2006). So, themes emerge through the data itself without paying

attention to the themes included in other studies. Themes are strongly linked to the data instead of the researcher's theoretical interest in the topic. On the other hand, deductive approach is explicitly researcher-driven allowing the researchers to analyse the data in relation to their theoretical interest in the issues being investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher using this approach usually begins the analysis with the themes that are identified by the researcher through literature review.

In order to maximise the overall depths of the analysis, both deductive and inductive approaches were utilised in this study. A deductive approach was used as the starting point which allowed analysing the data in relation to the findings or the test related themes that had emerged through the review of literature done for this study, such as test anxiety, pressure, test fairness, accuracy and motivation. However, each of the interesting or relevant information (themes) emerged through the data was also considered. Even the unexpected themes were taken into consideration for better understanding of the phenomenon in question. Therefore, a large number of inductive codes emerged when analysing the data.

Thematic analysis is a constant-comparative method which involves reading and rereading the transcripts in a systematic way (Cavendish, 2011) and the most important aspect in thematic analysis is that the analysis process should be systematic so that the final product is of good quality. In order to maintain necessary rigour in the analysis process, this study adopted the six-phase process as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006); each of which is discussed below. Nevertheless, those analytic procedures were not a linear series of steps but rather an iterative process.

4.9.2.1   Phase One: Familiarisation with the Data

At first, all the oral diaries and interviews were transcribed in full to have a sense of how the participants reacted to the test impact issues raised in this study. Then, a repeated careful reading of transcript was made with an intention to read the transcripts as 'things in themselves' (Denscombe, 2007, p.77) and to avoid the influence of my prior knowledge and experience in the field. While reading the transcripts, all the interesting information was highlighted; 507 points of interest in total were detected and cross-referenced against the Research Questions (see Table 4.4). The main purpose of going through all the data in such a way was to become fully immersed in the whole dataset and collect initial points of

interest (Chamberlain, 2015). Thus, this step informed me well about the depth and breadth of the content.

Table 4.5: Phase one: Familiarisation of Data - Points of interest linked to Research Questions

Research questions	Codes	Initial points of interest
What are students' and parents' pre-test and post-test attitudes towards the SEE English test?	Test quality, Test fairness, test accuracy	84
Does the test motivate students to learn English? If yes, how does it affect students' motivation to learn English in the pre-test and post-test context?	Motivation, test preparation strategies	103
How do students prepare themselves for the SEE English test?	Test preparation	113
Do students and parents suffer test pressure and anxiety? If yes, what sorts of pressure and anxiety do they suffer?	Test pressure, test anxiety	101
How do parents involve themselves in preparing their children for the test?	Parental involvement	49
What are the impacts of the test on students' career and educational development?	Study at grade 11, learning English after the test, career development	52
Uncertain points of interest		5
	Total	507

As indicated in Table 4.4, there were 5 uncertain points of interest. Those points were accepted after the discussion about the points with my supervisors; two were subsumed into the theme career development, two into test preparation and one into PI.

4.9.2.2   Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

The first phase of the data analysis (i.e. familiarisation with the data) allowed the richness of the initial findings to emerge. However, the importance of rereading the transcripts before creating codes was considered. Therefore, I reread the transcripts carefully and coded all the data. The NVivo coding feature, which is efficient, enabled multiple codes to be applied by selecting phrases or sentences/paragraphs that were of interest. All the transcripts were coded after reading the transcripts carefully for several times. A large number of codes (N=116) emerged, some containing just one phrase and others containing one or more sentences. Table 4.5 presents a few examples of how codes were applied to short segments in the data set.

Table 4.6: Data Extracts and Codes

Data extracts	Coded for
My mom is very much worried about me and she has a hope that I can do well on the test.	Test anxiety on parents
I am scared of the test.	Test anxiety on students
I am also worried that there might be some carelessness when checking our answer sheets.	Test anxiety Test quality
If I do well on the test, people think that I am a smart girl and I will be praised by them. All the people in my village will know that I have done well on the test. So, the way they look at me will be different. I also think that they will present me as an example to other students for encouraging them to work hard and do well on the test.	Test and social prestige
I understand that I must try my best to learn English and do well on the test. My parents also always tell me that I must practise hard for the test. So, I am working hard these days.	Motivation to learn English. Test pressure
I have told her that the SEE is an iron gate for her. If she cannot do well on the test, her future will be dark.	Test importance- parents' view
My mother has also guessed some of the important questions, especially essay topics, for the SEE and she has asked me to write the answers of those questions.	Parental support
I memorised a lot of answers for the test.	Memorisation

The above table indicates the sorts of operations involved in the data coding process. In order to have an overall picture of the codes, all the 116 codes, along with some relevant extracts, were exported from the NVivo and presented on a table. The table supported me to further understand the nature of the data in the study.

4.9.2.3   Phase Three: Searching for Themes

This phase, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), began with a long list of the codes that were identified across the data set. The main purpose of this phase was to find out the patterns and relationship between and across the entire data set (Chamberlain, 2015). The codes had to be analysed considering how different codes could be combined to form an overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In other words, the major focus in this step was on the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes. It was important to conceptualise those codes as the building-blocks and combine similar or multiple codes to generate potential themes in relation to the research questions (Ansari, 2015).

This phase was the most difficult phase in the analysis process. In order to ease the process, following Braun and Clark's (2006) suggestions, I made a list of the codes on a separate piece of paper and then organised them into theme-piles which supported me to understand the relationship between codes and themes. Because of the explorative nature of the study, it was also important to return to and re-read all the transcripts before clustering codes according to the themes. Thus, the transcripts were re-read and different codes were combined into potential themes, collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. When developing the themes, I could bring in the concepts and issues that I had previously identified in my literature review. I found that some of the themes from the literature review were really meaningful as some codes could be subsumed under them.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that themes in a study should be prevalent in most or all of the data items. However, if there emerged relevant information, though in a few sources, it was given importance in this study. In order to cluster all the codes, a thematic map was initially created (displayed in Figure 4.2) which contained 12 overarching themes (namely: test fairness, test accuracy, test difficulty, test support for educational development, test support for career development, doing well on the test, instruction clarity, psychological domain, importance of English, learning English after the test, test preparation, and parental involvement). As the main purpose of creating main themes or categories was to

capture the essence of the clustered codes, a main code would include all the related codes. For instance, the main code, test preparation would contain all the codes and sub-codes aimed at capturing students' strategies to prepare themselves for the test preparation. It was found that all the codes were somehow connected to at one of the main codes.

Figure 4.2: Initial thematic map
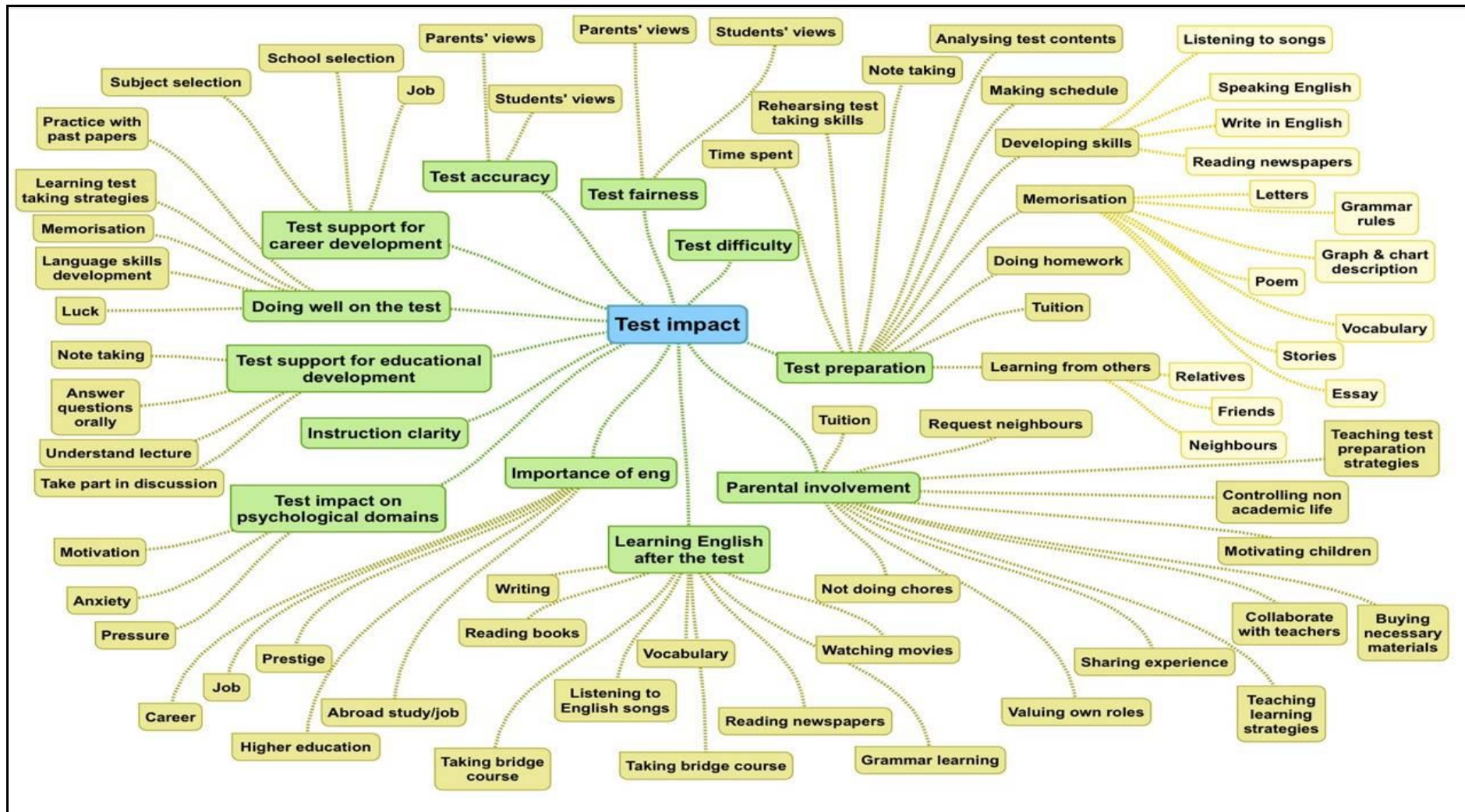
As seen in Figure 4.2, the first thematic map was really huge that included 12 main themes, 54 sub-themes along with their 14 lower level codes that initially emerged through the data. All these initial themes were further refined at the next stage of the analysis. The process of refinement in the phase of the analysis is explained in the next section.

4.9.2.4   Phase Four: Reviewing Themes

At this stage, all the themes (master themes, main themes and sub-themes) were intentionally brought together as it was aimed at the refinement of those initially grouped themes and presentation of those themes in a more systematic way. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that themes must be checked for internal homogeneity (coherence and consistency) and external heterogeneity (distinctions between themes).

This stage consisted of two levels. At level one, all coded extracts relevant to each initial theme were extracted from the NVivo file and pasted into a Microsoft Word document to facilitate cross-referencing of coded extracts with the themes and to carry out the retrieval, comparison and organisation of coded extracts and themes in a meaningful way. I reread all the collated extracts for each theme, clustered all the themes and sub - themes to check whether they could form a coherent pattern. All the codes and themes along with the collated extracts were considered to see whether they could form a coherent pattern adequately capturing the contours of the coded data.

At level two, a similar process was followed but in relation to the entire data set. At this level, the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set was considered. It was very important to ascertain the "thematic map 'accurately' reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91). Therefore, all the transcripts were reread, (where appropriate, the extracts were also recoded) to ensure that the themes 'work' in relation to the entire data set. Some new codes even emerged at this stage. Nonetheless, the last few codes did not add anything substantial. That is why, I stopped recoding the data. All the themes were put back together and the thematic map was refined which could give a fairly good idea of the type of themes developed for the study, how the themes in the study fit together and the overall story the themes tell us about the data.

During the reviewing process, many of the themes or sub-themes were either merged with other (main) themes or discarded. For instance, taking a bridge course did not appear to belong to any thematic category. Similarly, the theme 'importance of English', which contained five elements, was later considered not to be directly related to the objective of

this study. Therefore, those two themes (taking a bridge course and importance of English) were later deleted on the ground that they were not directly relevant to the study. Similarly, 'making schedule' was found to have little data to stand as a separate sub-theme. There was only one student who made a daily schedule following her parents' suggestion, so it was merged with 'time spent'. Some new themes were also introduced that could merge some related themes. For instance, one new theme 'memorising text' was introduced that could include four sub-themes: memorising stories, essays, letters and description. Furthermore, five of the main themes: test fairness, test importance, test accuracy, instruction quality and test difficulty were merged in a new theme 'perceptions of the test'. Moreover, since two of the main themes 'educational development' and 'career development' showed similar patterns, they were brought together within a new name as 'test importance'.

Other themes and/or sub-themes were also reviewed, renamed, discarded or merged in the same way. The outcome of the whole process of revision is set out in Figure 4.3.

Having clustered the themes together five different categories/codes emerged: Test preparation, perceptions of doing well on the test, psychological domains, test importance and parental involvement (see Figure 4.3). Those five themes (in yellow colour in the Figure) were the master themes and 17 main themes (blue colour) subsumed under those master themes. Among them, four had several sub-themes (brown colour) and four of the sub-themes had also some lower level codes (green colour). Figure 4.3 captures all of them.

Figure 4.3: Revised thematic map
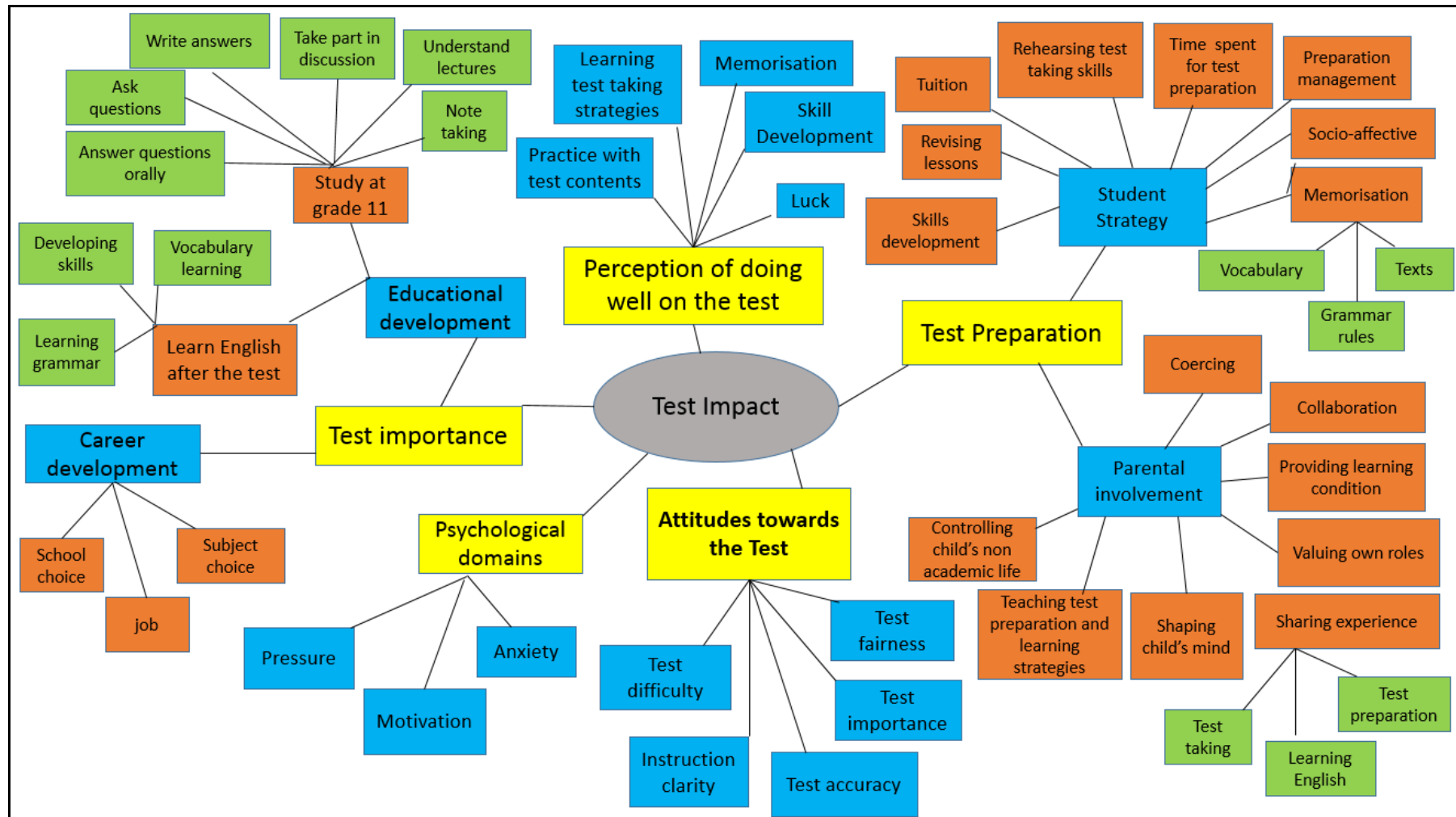
4.9.2.5   Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

This phase began with an aim of further refining and defining the themes, i.e. "identifying the essence of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). Braun and Clarke argue that a theme cannot be too diverse and complex. Therefore, I went back to collated data extracts for each theme and organised all the themes into a coherent and consistent account. Careful attention was paid to identify the 'story' that each theme told, and how it fitted into the broader overall 'story' that I wanted to tell about my data in relation to my research questions and to ensure that there was not too much overlap between the themes. The specifics of each theme were refined carefully.

The themes were further refined by reading through all the main themes and sub-themes, codes and extracts. Then, final name along with its definition was assigned to each theme to tell a story about the data. In this stage, some of the lower level themes were merged with higher-order themes as it was realised that those lower level themes would make the thematic map more complex and also add little to the story told by the data. For instance, the three lower level themes (job, school choice and subject choice) of the sub-theme 'career development' were merged in it. Furthermore, one of the sub-themes (i.e. tuition) of the theme 'student strategy' was considered to be a common sub-theme of the two main themes, student strategy and parental involvement, as it was found that both the students and parents followed this strategy. Similarly, the sub-theme 'time spent on test preparation' was considered to be a part of student test preparation strategy. However, after reading the extracts, it was realised that 'time spent on test preparation' was not clearly a strategy for the test preparation, rather it was related to the amount of time spent for the test preparation. So, it was treated as a separate theme.

The final mind-map for the entire dataset resulted from this phase has been displayed in Figure 4.4. This has been interpreted to report the qualitative findings in this thesis.

Figure 4.4: Final thematic map
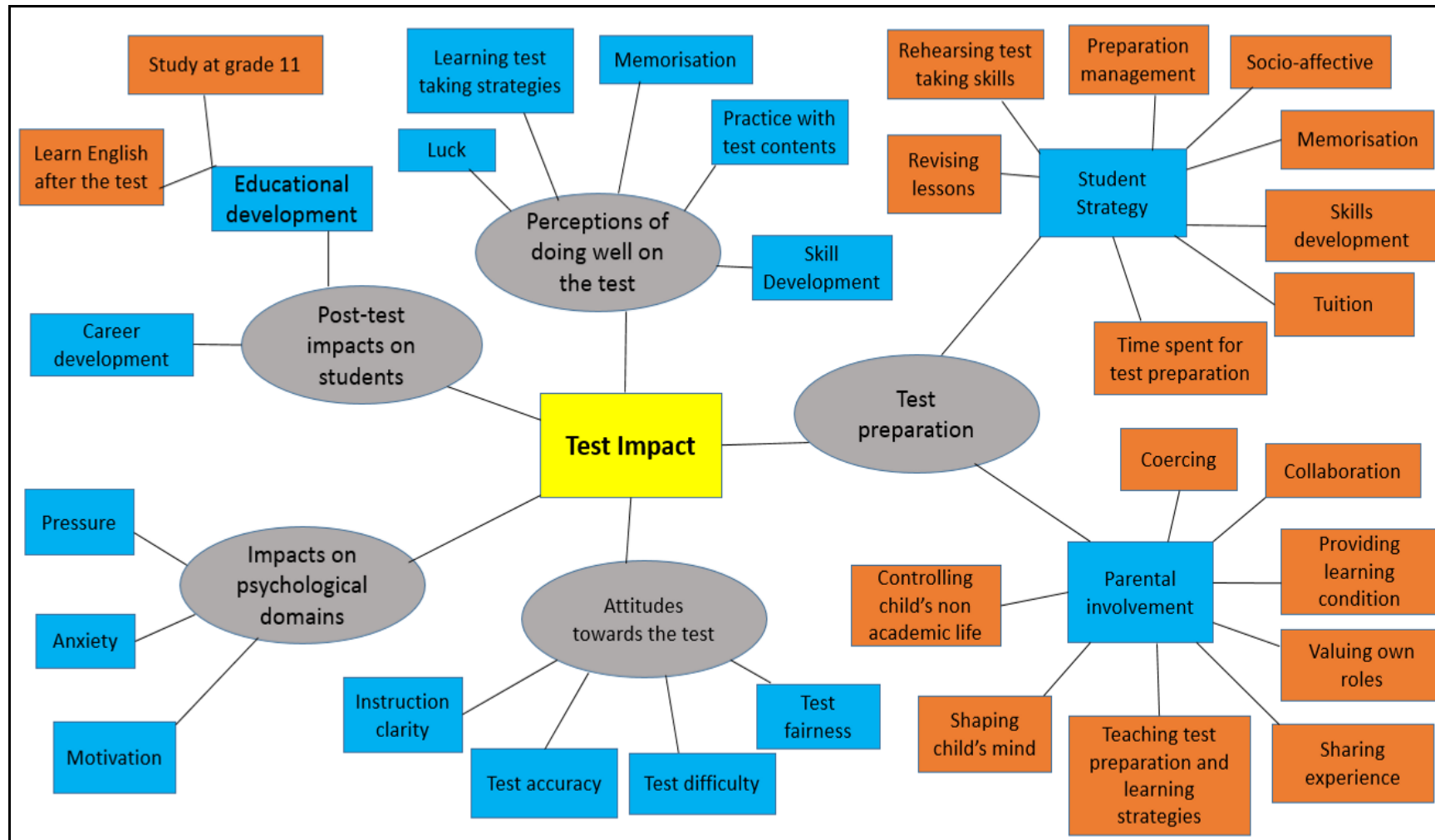
4.9.2.6   Phase Six: Writing Report

The final phase of the analysis was to write down the report of my findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that report of a thematic analysis must convince the readers of the merit and validity of the analysis. Therefore, I made an effort to provide a concise, coherent and logical account of the story that my data represented within and across themes by providing sufficient evidence and particular examples and/or extracts which could capture the essence of the point I was demonstrating. The examples and extracts were embedded within the analytic narrative in such a way that they could make an argument in respect of the research objectives, besides illustrating the story being told. The following chapters contain a lot of extracts   or direct quotes taken from student interviews and oral diaries. However, it should be noted that the extracts presented in those chapters are the translated versions of students' and parents' original words in Nepali as both the interviews and diaries were in the Nepali language.

When presenting extracts/quotes, the code numbers 1-6 have been used followed by diary numbers or the type of interviews (i.e. either pre-test or post-test). In order to indicate diary numbers, the alphabet D followed by the numbers 1-12, has been used. For instance, D1 means first diary and D12 means last diary. Thus, if a quote from S1's diary 10 is taken, it is indicated as S1-D10. Similarly, in order to indicate pre-test and post-test interviews, the codes 'PreInt' and 'PostInt' respectively have been used while the pre-test survey and post-test survey have been represented as PreSur and PostSur, respectively. Thus, if a quote from S1's pre-test interview is drawn, it is presented as S1-PreInt. Similarly, if a quote from S10's pre-test survey questionnaire is taken, it is reported as S10-PreSur. The same number is used to represent a student and his/her parent. For instance, P1 means only the parent of S1 and P2 means only the parent of S2 and so on.

In order to present qualitative findings from the survey, the students' code numbers (7 to 247) are used so that the readers can easily understand what the source of the extracts is. For instance, if a quote from a student with the code number 102 is cited, the same number is used in the text (e.g. Student 102 reported…). The survey students were provided with a space in each question to express their views regarding the question. Very few students used the spaces, however.

As the main purpose of collecting both the quantitative and qualitative data was to compare and triangulate the findings, both kinds of data under a certain theme, stemmed from the

research questions, are presented together so that the findings can be directly compared or triangulated. Quantitative results are presented before qualitative findings to make data presentation and verification systematic and organised.

4.10   Chapter Summary

This chapter has explicated the research methodology employed for this study in order to answer the research questions. This study opted for a mixed methods design following pragmatism and utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches, i.e. survey and case studies. By collecting both the qualitative and quantitative data, it was hoped that the findings could properly address the research questions. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS while a thematic analysis was made to analyse the qualitative data. The findings of the study are reported in the following chapters.

Chapter Five: Students' and Parents' Attitudes towards the SEE English Test

The study employed mixed methods. Student questionnaires, oral diaries and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect empirical data in order to appropriately answer the research questions which mainly covered two broad aspects: students' and parents' attitudes towards the SEE English test and the impacts of the test on students and their parents. It was decided to present and discuss the results of the study in four separate chapters.

In each chapter, quantitative results are presented before presenting qualitative findings and a discussion based on the findings (both quantitative and qualitative) has been made. In other words, quantitative and qualitative data are presented respectively and then quantitative results are triangulated with qualitative data, and vice versa. Finally, a discussion based on the findings has been made to reflect on the issues raised in the study. By doing this, it has produced a comprehensive picture on the nature of the test impacts in the Nepalese context.

This chapter presents and discusses the findings on students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test while Chapter six considers the impacts of the test on their psychology. Chapter seven presents the findings on the impacts of the test on test preparation practices and Chapter eight considers the test impacts on students' career choices and educational development.

It was assumed that students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test might affect language learning or test preparation practices. Therefore, the first area studied in this study included students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test.

Before presenting the findings of the study, it might be meaningful to present a short background to the case study participants. It is reminded that among the six case study students, three students were from the parents with high education and the remaining students were from the parents with low education. So, two case studies (one representing the stories of parents with high education and their child and another representing parents with low education and their child) have been introduced below.

Case Study One

The first case study, which represents the parents with high education in most respects, includes S1 and her mother (P1). P1 is in her late forties and has some experience of teaching to primary school children. She has completed an under-graduate degree. She is jobless now; she quitted her job a few years before as she was not paid well there. She seems to believe that she did not find a good job because she was not good at English:

> *I became a victim myself. I mean, because of the lack of the English language skills, I could not find a good job. I have realised how important English is for me. I regret a lot these days for not working hard to learn English.*

She believes that the English language is very important for her child's future career. Therefore, she tends to encourage her child to work hard for learning English. She also considers the SEE English test to be very important for her child and she has a strong belief that doing well on the test depends on her child's effort.

During the interviews, it was revealed that she and her husband (a teacher) provided enormous support to their child for the test preparation. For instance, they watched English movies and listened to English programs with their child so that the child would get an opportunity to develop English language skills. Her husband even took help from his colleagues at school when he was unable to help the child to learn English. He first would learn answers from them and help the child to learn the answers. They provided every kind of possible support to their child for the preparation of the test. Among the six case study parents, they were the only parents who even provided CDs and DVDs to their child for listening to English programs and/or watching English movies.

During my stay in the village for around three months for the data collection, I could sense that they had a good prestige in their society as both of them were graduate degree holders and their economic condition was also better than many other people living in the village. They considered the SEE test to be associated with their social prestige.

Their child (S1) was one of the high performing students in her class and English was her favorite subject. She considered both the English language and the SEE English test to be important for her future career. Very similar to her parents, she also did not believe that doing well on the test depends on her luck. Therefore, she tried her best to learn English and perform well on the test. She was hoping that she would get a chance to study in a reputed college after the SEE. However, she had to go through a tough competition to get admission in such a college; she even had to take an entrance test to join such college. That is why, she left her village as soon as she had completed the SEE. She went to a city and took a bridge course (the course that prepares students for college entrance tests) for

three months. During the time as well, she worked really hard to develop her skills in English language. Finally, she got an opportunity to study the subject of her choice in a reputed college in a city.

Case Study Two

The second case study, which is a representative of the parents with low education in most respects, involves S2 and her mother (P2). P2 is in her mid-forties. She has never gone to a school; she cannot read and write in any language. She basically does a manual job and farming. She has a responsibility to take care of her two children. She thinks that the English language is very important for her children's future. So, she keeps on encouraging her children to learn English well. She also thinks that her daughter's future will be dark, if she cannot perform well in the SEE.

Being an illiterate person and fully dependent on a manual job, her economic condition seems to be poor. Her economic condition is so poor that she is living in a small hut (one roomed house made of wood and straw) with her two children. Indeed, they lost their house because of the devastating earthquake four years before and they are not able to build a new house.

She is very much motivated to support her child for the preparation of the SEE. It is so heart touching to know about the level of her sacrifice to her child's education that she is ready even to have insufficient food but spend money for her daughter's education: "*I am ready to have even insufficient food but I give priority to her education now. I am ready to do anything for her education.*" Although it is really hard for her to earn money; she sent her child to take coaching classes for almost the whole year and also provided some learning materials or resources needed for the test preparation. However, she was not able to provide all the necessary things needed to learn English. For instance, they did not have a television at home so children were not able to listen to English programs or watch English movies. Nevertheless, she tried her best to provide every kind of possible support to her child for the preparation of the test. She even guarded her child till late evening to make sure that her child studies till the time.

She also believes in luck. She thinks that her daughter's performance on the test depends on her luck: "*I think, you can do nothing if your luck does not support you.*" Nevertheless, she keeps encouraging her child to work hard for the test and also suggests her child to memorise all the things/contents that are likely to appear in the examination.

She knows very little about the test. She even does not know that her child has to take one

speaking test in her school. Furthermore, she cannot easily understand the meanings of the letters used in the SEE to grade students' performances.

Her daughter (S2) is one of the low performing students in her class. She finds that English is the most difficult subject for her. Very similar to her mother, she also believes in luck. So, she thinks that her performance in the SEE depends on her luck. Nevertheless, she tries her best to learn English.

After she takes the examination, she just supports her mother with her farming. She does almost nothing in English language during the three months when she waits for the examination results. After the result publication, she even tries to find a job but she is not lucky enough to grab an opportunity. Therefore, she seems worried about her future study.

Now, she has been studying at Grade 11 in the same school from where she completed her secondary education. Indeed, she is compelled to continue her study in the same school as her mother is not able to afford money if she wants to go to a city for her higher education. She really wants to go to a city and study in a better school/college.

The above vignettes display the setting for the case studies. The role of setting was one of the identifying features of this study as it sought to survey students' social world as a whole. All the case studies were conducted in students' home environments and both the participants and context were observed together in this study to reflect on the true nature of the test impact in the Nepalese context.

5.1   Attitudes towards Successful Test Performance

In order to explore students' views about what they needed to do to perform well on the test, pre-test question (PreTQ henceforth) 9 was designed and both students and parents were asked questions on the same during the interviews. Furthermore, related information found in students' oral diaries was considered.

Students' responses to each of the statements included in the PreTQ 9 have been summarised in Figure 5.1 which suggests that the majority of surveyed students had a belief that they needed to memorise a lot of answers (36% strongly agreed, 40% agreed) and practise with previous test items (29% strongly agreed, 45% agreed) for the successful performance on the test. However, just 40% students (13% strongly agreed and 27% agreed) stated that they needed to develop communicative skills in English language to get

good grades on the test and about a quarter of students (9% strongly agreed, 16% agreed) also seemed to believe that doing well on the test depends on their luck.

Figure 5.1: Students' views about what they need to do to perform well on the test

Students' views about what they need to do to perform well on the test   (N=247)
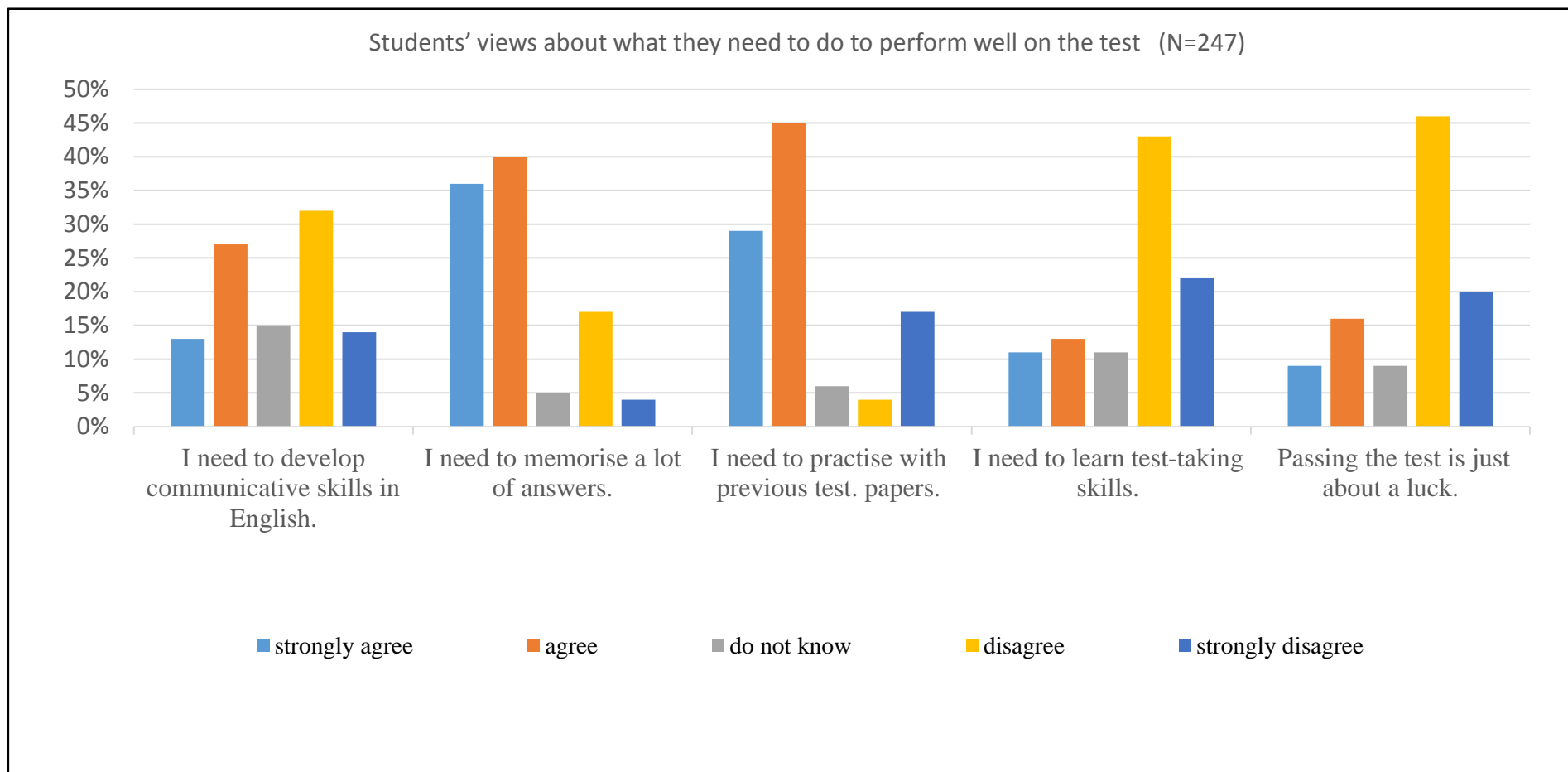
The students' views in each of the statements seemed to be quite uniform, as was indicated by the small SD in each response (SD=/< 1.87).

As students noted in the comment space provided in PreTQ9, a few students considered that they also needed support from other people and had to take tuition classes to be able to perform well on the test: "*We need to take support from our teachers and seniors. More importantly, we have to take tuition classes to be able to perform well on the test*" (S105-PreSur).

Similar findings emerged through students' interviews (though the diaries did not clearly reflect on the issue). Four of the case study students reported that they did not need to develop communicative skills in English language to perform well on the test but all the case study students reported that memorisation would help them to secure good scores on the test:

> *If I can memorise a lot of answers, I can get good grades on the test* (यदी मैले धेरै उत्तरहरु घोक्न सकेँ भने मैले SEE मा राम्रो ग्रेड ल्याउन सक्छु) *(S2-PreInt);*
> *If I do not memorise answers, I may forget important points to write during the test as I will be in time pressure to complete the test. I also think that if I memorise answers, I can write answers fast. So, I have time to answer all the questions asked on the test* (यदी मैले उत्तरहरु घोकिन भने मैले महत्वपूर्ण कुराहरु परीक्षामा लेख्न विर्सन्छु किनकी म परीक्षामा समय सिमित भएको हुनाले कसरी परीक्षा सक्ने भन्ने एचभककगचभ मा हुन्छ । मलाई त्यस्तो पनि लाग्छ की यदी मैले उत्तरहरु घोके भने म उत्तरहरु छिटो लेख्न सक्छु त्यसैले मैले परीक्षामा सोधिएका सबै प्रश्नहरुको हल गर्न समय पाउछु) (S4- PreInt).
> "*If I write answers myself, I might make some grammatical errors that affect my scores*" (यदी मैले उत्तरहरु आफै लेखे भने धेरै गल्ति हरु हुन्छन जसले मेरो मार्क्स लाई प्रभाब पर्दछ) (S1-PreInt).

It should be noted that because of the word limit problem, Nepali transcriptions are not included from this point onward.

The above quotes indicate that students would memorise answers to make sure that they can remember important points for the test. Furthermore, all of them reported that they memorised answers as their teachers and parents encouraged them to do so: "O*ur teacher would always say like: why you become lazy to memorise answers, try to memorise as many answers as you can*" (S1-PostInt); "*My mother has suggested me to memorise*

answers" (S2-PreInt), "*My mother sometimes asks me to tell her some answers that I have memorised. She even looks at the written answers to see how accurately I have memorised the answers*" (S1-PreInt).

The students also reported that some questions might be repeated in the test: "*Many questions are repeated each year. I think some questions will be repeated this year too. Therefore, I have selected some important questions and memorised their answers*" (S2-PreInt).

All the case study students also maintained that practice with previous test papers would support them to perform well on the test: "*If I practise with previous questions, I can write better answers in my examination*"(S2-PreInt). Additionally, they believed that they needed to take tuition classes and learn test-taking skills to be able to perform well on the test: "*I have realised that I have to learn some test-taking skills to perform well on the test. I particularly need to learn how to manage time on the test so that I can answer all the questions*" (S3-PreInt); "*I need to learn some techniques to select right answers in some questions such as matching and gap filling items to increase my test scores*" (S5-PreInt); "*I have to take tuition classes to do well on the test*" (S4-PreInt).

Two of the case study students (S2, S5) also reported that doing well on the test depends on their luck: "*For me, we cannot be successful at any cost, if our luck does not favour us*" (S2-PreInt) but four of the case study students had a belief that their scores on the test do not depend on their luck: "*I do not trust on luck. My grades on the test depend on my effort. I should work hard if I wish to get good scores on the test*" (S4-PreInt).

Similar findings emerged through parents' interviews. All the parents, irrespective of their educational background, had a belief that their children had to memorise answers to be able to perform well on the test: "*She also needs to memorise so many answers for the preparation of the test*" (P1-PreInt); "*She might need to memorise many answers but I do not know much about this as I have never gone to school*" (P2-PreInt).

None of the parents (excluding P1) with high education believed that their children had to develop communicative skills in English language, rather practise with test contents and test-taking skills, to be able to perform well on the test. For instance, P3 during her pre-test interview reported, "*I think he has to go through his text book and some previous test papers, and practise a lot from there. He also has to learn some test-taking skills.*"

However, the parents with low education did not seem to be familiar with such aspects and they had very little knowledge about the test.

Interestingly, two of the parents (P2, P5), the parents of students who believed in their luck, had also a belief that their child's performance on the test also depends on the child's luck:

> *I trust on our luck. Everything is fine because of the blessings from the God till now. However, I am worried these days about her examination. She has tried her best but her performance on the test also depends on her luck* (P5-PreInt).

P3 seemed to hold a bit different opinion. *"In order to do well on the test, he has to work hard and he should also have a good luck. So, there should be both: his hard work and also his good luck"* (S3-PreInt). However, her son did not have a belief in luck.

Thus, having brought both the quantitative and qualitative findings together, this study has reflected on students' and parents' views about what students need to do to be able to perform well on the test. The two data sets off each other very well. Students' interviews were useful to understand why students prefer memorising answers to developing their language skills. Similarly, had the parents not been interviewed, this study would not be able to reflect on how students' views are influenced by their parents. For instance, two of the students' (P2, P5) belief on luck seemed to be a result of the influence of their family members.

Discussion of the findings

The picture that emerged through the data implies that both students and their parents did not seem to believe that students needed to develop their communicative competence in the English language to be able to perform well on the test. As Joy (2013) points out, they had a belief that one of the guaranteed ways of getting high marks in the SEE English test is through rote-learning. In other words, the test simply encouraged students to memorise words and their meanings, English grammar rules, and a number of texts such as poems, and stories.

The findings indicated several reasons behind why students had a belief that memorisation helps them to perform well on the test. First, the SEE graduates do not seem confident enough in English writing in spite of their 10-year period of English language learning in schools. Second, they seem to be influenced by their teachers or classroom practice. There

are so many indications that teachers themselves pressurise students to memorise answers to improve test scores. Since teachers' quality is judged primarily based on the marks their students obtain in the SEE, teachers might have suggested their students to memorise answers as a technique to increase the test score (Dawadi, 2018). Third, students seemed to believe that some questions might be repeated in the test. Furthermore, the test format did not seem to require students to perform communicative tasks in a true sense. The written test (which covered 75%) did not include much communicative tasks as it included many non-communicative tasks such as true false, matching, ordering sentences, short answer questions and gap filling items. Moreover, many of the questions on the written test are designed from the single textbook. Therefore, it is likely that questions are repeated, wholly or partly. Finally, students seemed to be influenced by their parents as their parents would encourage them to memorise answers.

All this might indicate that both their parents and teachers regard education as a memorisation of facts rather than acquisition of knowledge and skills or a medium to foster creativity in children.

However, the SEE English curriculum focuses on developing students' communicative competence and some changes have also been made in the SEE English test to bring about positive changes in the teaching learning practices. The findings in this study suggest that the examination reform might not always begin to serve as a 'lever for change' (Pearson, 1988, p. 101) in ELT.

Students' belief in their luck to some extent seemed to be a result of the influence of their family members. Discussing about the impact of a high-stakes test in China, Cheng et al. (2010) also argue that children's views about the test are directly associated with their parents' views.

5.2   Attitudes towards the Test Importance

The PreTQ10 was designed to explore students' views about the importance of the test for their future, and participants were also asked to express their views about the importance of the test during the interviews. The survey results presented in Figure 5.2 indicate that the overwhelming majority of students had a belief that doing well on the test would increase their social respect (41% strongly agreed, 44% agreed) and provide them a chance to study the course they wish to study in higher secondary school (26% strongly agreed, 53% agreed). All of them had a belief that it was important for them to do well on the test

in terms of what they want to do in future. However, they had mixed views about the extent to which doing well on the test would provide them an opportunity to study in a higher secondary school of their choice and find a job in future.

Figure 5.2: Students' attitudes towards the test importance
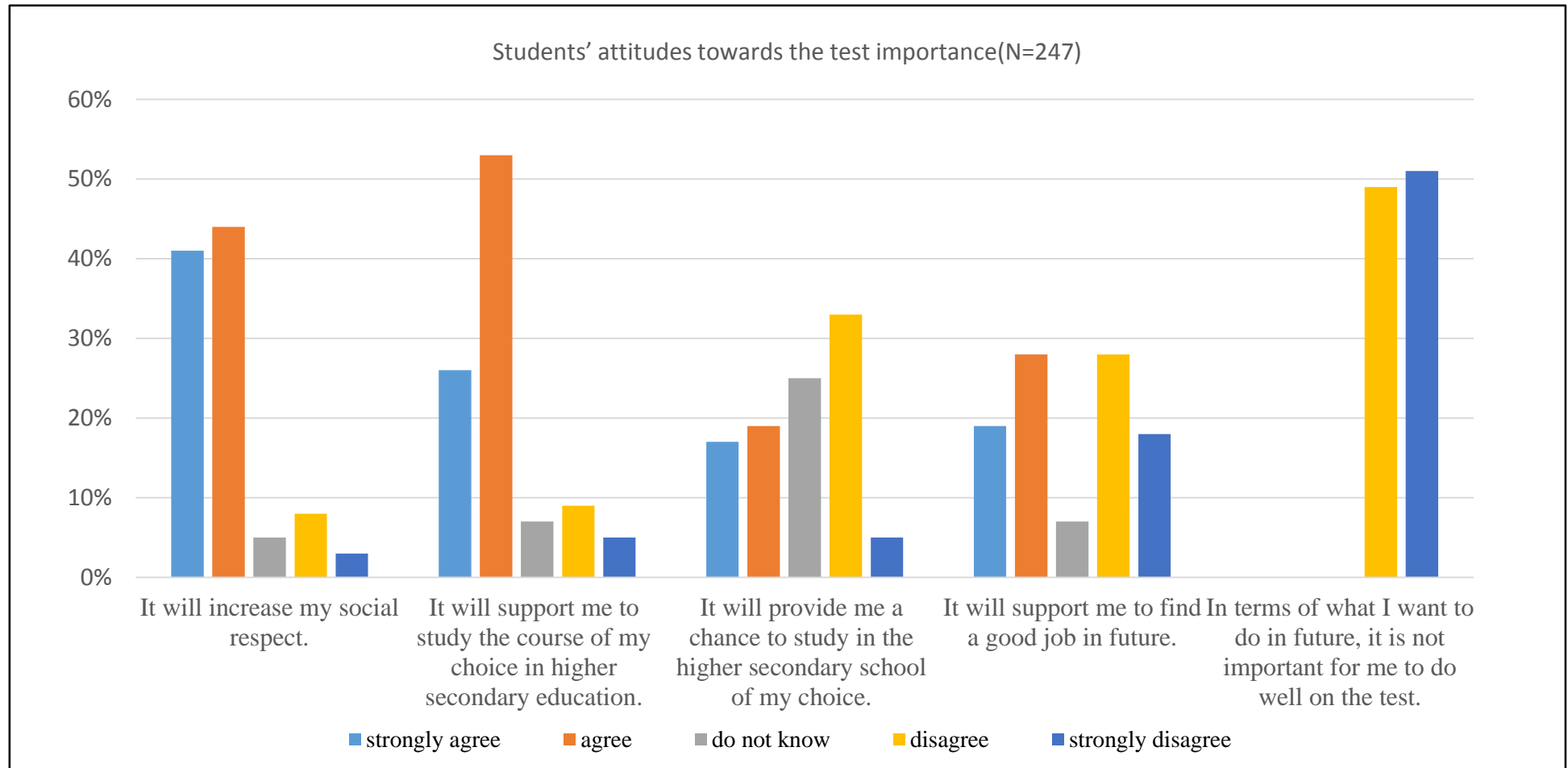
Students' attitudes towards the test importance(N=247)

strongly agree — agree — do not know — disagree — strongly disagree

Similar findings emerged through qualitative data. All the case study students had a belief that doing well on the test would be important for their future career: "*I think, the test is very important for my future career. I want to continue my study. For this, I must do well on the test*" (S6-PreInt); "*If we cannot do well on the test, we can neither continue our study nor find a job. I feel like we can do nothing if we cannot do well on the test*" (S1-PreInt).

All the case study students had also a belief that doing well on the test would provide them a chance to study the subject of their choice: "*In my case, if I cannot get minimum C+ Grade, I am not allowed to study Science*" (S3-PreInt).

However, none of them (except S4) believed that doing well on the test would support them to study in a higher secondary school/college of their choice as they seemed to believe that several other factors, such as parents' economic condition and their performance on college entrance test, might affect their choices:

> *I do not trust that doing well on the test supports me to study in a higher secondary school of my choice. I think, our school choice largely depends on our economic condition. My parents are not able to afford money if I wish to study in an expensive school* (S2-PreInt).

> *I am not very sure about the extent to which the test result will support me to study in a higher secondary school of my choice. I want to join a medical institute. I have heard that it is very competitive to get a place there and we have to do well on the college entrance test* (S1-PreInt).

However, one of the case study students in this study had a strong belief that doing well on the test would offer him an opportunity to study in a higher secondary school of his choice: "*I do strongly believe that the test results will support me to find a good school. I know that good schools accept only the students who have done well in the SEE*" (S4-PreInt).

All the case study students considered the test to be associated with their social prestige:

> *If I do well on the test, people think that I am a smart girl and I will be praised by them. All the people in my village will know that I have done well on the test. So, the way they look at me will be different. I also think that they will present me as an example to other students for encouraging them to work hard and do well on the*

test. My teachers also give examples of some other students who did well on the test. So, I think if I can do well on the test, I can be an example in my society (S1-PreInt).

If in case, I cannot perform well on the test, it will be shameful for me to visit the school. Even the people in my village may have negative views about me (S3-PreInt).

My parents will be respected more in our society, if I can perform well on the test (S6-PreInt).

I feel like I must try my best to learn English and do well on the test to save my prestige in my society (S2-PreInt).

Contrary to the quantitative results which indicated that nearly half of the students did not have a belief that doing well on the test would support them to find a job, all the case study students seemed to believe that the test would support them to find a job in future: "*I think, the test results will play a great role in future when we apply for jobs*" (S5-PreInt).

Like students, all the parents considered the test to be very important for students:

The test is very important for his career. If he cannot do well, there will be different problems. One of the immediate problems will be associated with his higher education. For instance, as I told you earlier, he seems interested in studying science in his higher secondary level but, if he cannot get good Grade on this test, he will not be eligible to study science (P3-PreInt).

If she does well in the examination, her future will be bright (P2-PreInt).

The above quotes indicate parents' beliefs that doing well on the test would create life changing opportunities for their children, such as getting scholarships and a chance to study the subject of their choice or in a college/higher secondary school of their choice. However, the parents with low education did not seem to know much about the role of the test in career development.

Very similar to students, all the parents also thought that the test performance is a matter of social prestige: "*If she performs poorly on the test, it might be shameful for us*" (P1-PreInt).

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Triangulation of the data suggests that the SEE English test is considered to be important for students. Indeed, qualitative data has provided further explanations to the quantitative results in most cases in this study. However, students think that the test might be important in helping students find a job in future, contradictory findings have emerged through quantitative and qualitative data. This sort of contradiction may highlight the importance of collecting data from different sources.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study provide further evidence to the claim made by previous studies (e.g. Bhattrai, 2014; Dawadi & Shrestha, 2018; Khaniya, 1990) that the SEE is considered to be very important for students. Almost all the students and parents in this study believed that good performance on the test heightens their status in the society and supports students to have a better career (particularly by offering them an opportunity to study the subject of their choice). These findings reflect the Nepalese culture very well. As Bhattrai (2014) rightly points out, a student who performs poorly in the SEE is stigmatised as an unsuccessful person in his/her life, and success is equated with an individual value to the Nepalese society. Therefore, success in the examination is hugely celebrated in a family as a feast.

The majority of students did not seem to believe that the SEE offers students an opportunity to study in a higher secondary school/college of their choice. One of the reasons could be that prestigious higher secondary schools in Nepal are very expensive. Therefore, they are accessible to only a limited group of people. Furthermore, most prestigious schools also require students to sit for an entrance test before they select the students and students are selected based on the test results.

However, the findings regarding students' and parents' views about 'the extent to what the test results support students to find a job in future' are not clear as a slightly different picture emerged through qualitative and quantitative data. While all the case study students reported that doing well on the test would support them to find a job in future, nearly half of the survey students did not have a belief that doing well on the test would support them to find a job.

The finding that parents with low education lacked knowledge about the role of the test in career development might suggest that secondary schools do not have a clear policy to inform parents about the test and its role in students' future career goals.

To reiterate, having brought both the qualitative and quantitative findings together, this study has provided a comprehensive picture on students' and parents' attitudes towards the test importance. The findings have clearly highlighted the importance of the test for the SEE candidates.

5.3   Attitudes towards the Test Fairness, Accuracy and Instruction Clarity

The term 'test fairness' in this study refers to the extent to which the test was conducted well and its scoring practice was fair whereas 'test accuracy' considers the extent to what the test accurately measures test-takers' English language skills and reflects their strengths and weaknesses. Since test fairness and accuracy are considered to be the most important aspects of any test, this study explored both the pre-test and post-test attitudes. It was hypothesised that students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test fairness and accuracy remains the same in both the pre-test and post-test contexts. So, students and parents were asked the same questions in both phases of the data collection. The findings from the two phases are combined and presented together in the following sections.

Before presenting the results, it is worth reminding the reader that the SEE English test consisted of two tests: writing and speaking test. As mentioned in 2.5, the written test was externally controlled by the NEB while the speaking test was conducted by the schools themselves. During the data collection, the pre-test interviews did not include separate discussions about the speaking and writing test. Through an informal discussion with the survey students and their parents during the second phase of the data collection, I came to know that they had different opinions regarding the speaking and writing tests. So, we had separate discussions about the two tests in the post-test interviews.

5.3.1   Test Fairness

The survey results on students' attitudes towards the test fairness have been summarised in Figure 5.3 which indicates that the majority of students in both the pre-test and post-test contexts believed that the test was fair. Nonetheless, a substantial number of students in both the contexts were suspicious about the test fairness.

Figure 5.3: Test fairness in terms of its scoring practice

The test is fair in terms of its conduction and scoring practice (N=247 pre-test, 226 post-test)
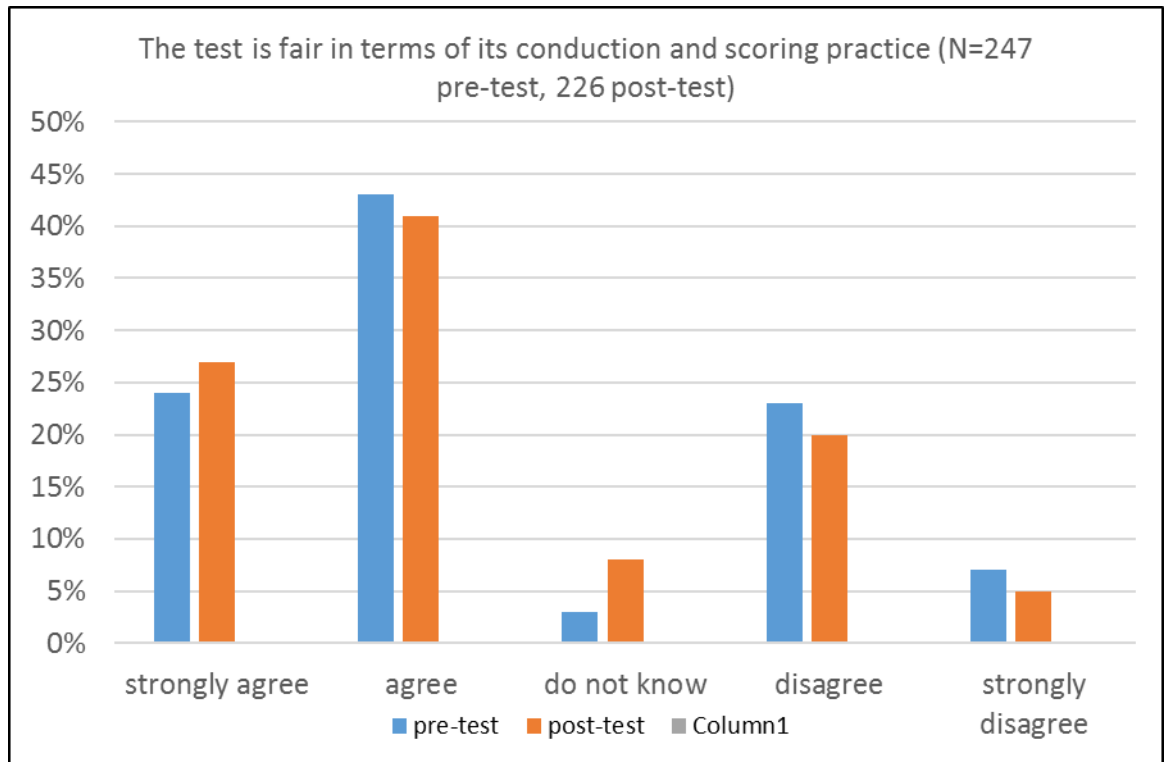
The findings were somehow confirmed by the qualitative findings, particularly with regard to the pre-test attitudes. All the case study students (except S2) during their pre-test interviews reported that the test would be fair: "*I fully trust on its quality. It will be fair*" (S6-PreInt); "*I have heard that the teachers, who are involved in checking our answer sheets, do not know anything about students. So, I think it will be fair*" (S1-PreInt).

When they were interviewed after the test, four of the students still had a trust on the fairness of the written test and also reported that the exam hall was very strict: "*The test was fair. Our examination hall was very strict. We were not allowed to take any cheats in the exam hall. We were also not allowed to talk there*" (S5-PostInt).

However, two of the students did not think that the written test was fair though they had a trust on its fairness in the pre-test context. They also reported that they did not get their expected grade on the test: "*I could not get my expected grade. So, I think there might be some problems related to the process. I do not know whether the examiners were qualified enough for the job*" (S1-PostInt).

Moreover, all the case study students (except S2) reported that speaking test was not fair:

In the speaking test, we did a small group work. Our teacher read a paragraph two to three times and then he asked a few questions only to the group leader. I did not have to speak there. All of us in our group got the same score (S4-PostInt).

I think, there was a problem with the speaking test. We were asked just to tell our name, address and the aim of our life. We had just two minutes to answer the questions. All of the students in our class were asked to sit in the same room and each of us was asked to answer the same questions (S3-PostInt).

We did not have to take any speaking test. Our teacher sent our scores based on our classroom performance and discipline (S6-PostInt).

The above quotes indicate that the speaking test was not conducted well and the marking system was also not fair.

Similar findings emerged through parents' interviews. The pre-test interviews indicated that half of the parents had a trust on the test fairness:

The test has a good quality. I am sure that my child gets score on the basis of his performance on the test. I do not think that there will be any sort of unethical activities related to the test (P3-PreInt).

As it is controlled by the government and they have very tight rules and regulations, people will be certainly scared to do unethical activities […] I think it will be fair (P1-PreInt).

Nevertheless, the remaining parents were suspicious about the test fairness as they had heard negative news about the test:

Sometimes, we hear news on the television that some unethical activities are taking place during the test conduction. For instance, last year, I heard that a girl and a boy changed their symbol numbers. This may happen again (P6-PreInt).

In the post-test context, four of the parents had positive attitudes towards the written test: "*I think that the test was conducted very well. I did not hear anything wrong about the test*" (P1-PostInt).

Nevertheless, two of the parents did not trust on the fairness of the written test; they believed that the test was not conducted well:

> *I do not think that the test was conducted well. My daughter could not get good Grade on the test although she had worked very hard for the test* (P2-PostInt).

> *There were some problems during the test conduction. My son was telling me that the exam centre was loose and his friends cheated a lot. I think, this is not fair and this practice should be controlled. I cannot fully trust on their scoring practice as well* (P3-PostInt).

With regard to the speaking test, all the three parents with high education were suspicious about its fairness in the post-test context: "*The test was not conducted well and all the students obtained either A or A+ Grade on the test*" (P1-PostInt); "*My son told me that he did not have to take the speaking test but they all got similar scores. That's not a good practice*" (P3-PostInt).

However, all the parents with low education did not seem even to know that their children had to take the speaking test: "*I do not know about how many tests they take and what that speaking test is*" (P4-PostInt). For them, the SEE means only the written test.

To reiterate, both the qualitative and quantitative findings on the test fairness supported each other and they (together) unpacked the test fairness issues very well. Indeed, qualitative findings strengthened quantitative results, and vice versa. Students' and parents' interviews were very useful to understand the reasons why they had negative attitudes towards the test in the post-test context. Had they not been interviewed, the issues associated with the conduction and marking of the test (particularly the speaking test) would not have been unpacked.

Discussion of the findings

Both the qualitative and quantitative findings of this study indicated that students and their parents generally considered the test to be fair in the pre-test context. It can be assumed that their positive attitudes towards the test might have encouraged students to learn English. Murray et al. (2012) argue that students' positive attitudes towards the test fairness encourages them to try their best to become more effective learners. The majority

of students in this study were highly motivated to learn English in the pre-test context (see 6.1).

However, both students' and parents' attitudes towards the test fairness did not remain constant. They were mostly positive in the pre-test context but negative in the post-test context, particularly about the speaking test. Loumbourdi (2014) also reported that the majority of Greek students changed their attitudes towards their English proficiency test after they took the test as they did not find the test as fair as they had expected it to be. The students (along with parents) in the current study reported some biases, such as loose invigilation, cheating, and unfair scoring practices. Somehow similar kinds of biased activities associated with a high-stakes test have been reported by students in previous studies (e.g. Cheng & Deluca, 2011; Hughes & Bailey, 2001). Furthermore, as indicated by previous studies (Desforges, et al., 1994; Mulvenon et al., 2005; Scott, 2007), this study indicates that parents (particularly the parents with low education) had little knowledge about their children's test. Most public schools in Nepal do not have formal policies for communicating test process and test results to parents. Consequently, there is a lack of good communication between parents and teachers. Therefore, it is highly important that the test designers and secondary schools in Nepal pay attention to this issue and work for the betterment of the test.

5.3.2   Test Accuracy

Another area of exploration in this study included students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test accuracy. The survey results have been summarised in Figure 5.4. It was found that the majority of survey students both in the pre-test and post-test contexts considered the test to be an accurate measure of their English language skills.

Figure 5.4: The test is a true measurement of English language skills
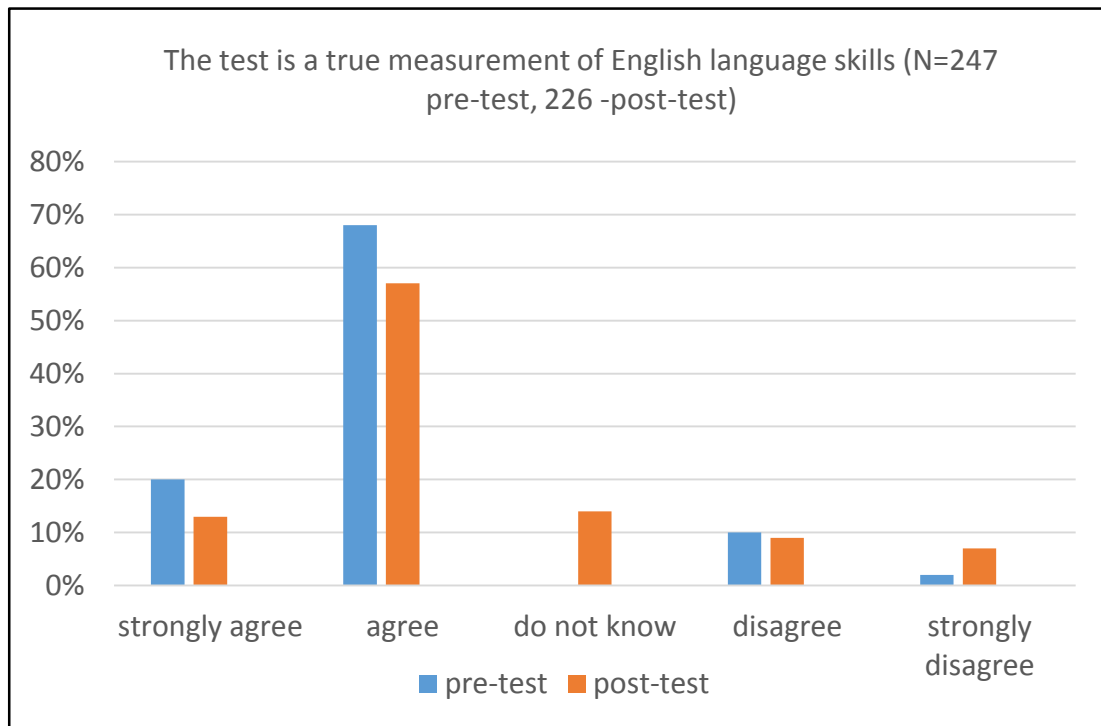
The quantitative results were not well supported by the qualitative findings, particularly regarding the post-test attitudes. When the case study students were interviewed before the test, all of them (except S2) had a belief that the test would accurately measure their language skills: "*I think, it can accurately measure our language skills*" (S1-PreInt). However, just the opposite findings emerged through the post-test interviews: the student having negative attitudes in the pre-test context had positive attitudes in the post-test context, and vice versa. All the case study students (except S2), in the post-test context, did not think that the test was an accurate measure of their language skills: "*I do not think that the test is a true measurement of my language skills […] I just answered a few short-answer questions based on the reading text*" (S1-PostInt); "*I think the written test measured our skills but I do not know about our speaking test*" (S6-PostInt).

The findings emerged through parents' interviews indicate that parents had mostly negative attitudes towards the test both in the pre-test and post-test context. Among the six parents, three parents (the parents with low education) were not familiar with the concept of test accuracy in both the pre-test and post-test contexts. So, they could not comment on this aspect. This means that only three parents (the parents with high education)

commented on the test accuracy. Among them, two parents (P1, P3) expressed their suspicions about the test accuracy during the pre-test interviews:

> *It cannot accurately measure students' language skills. Students are much more creative than this test requires them to do. The test does not focus on creativity but focuses just on memorisation* (P3-PreInt).

Therefore, this study highlights the need to use multiple measures, such as portfolio, oral presentation, project work etc., to judge students' English language skills and to interpret the knowledge of individuals.

However, P6 had a trust on the test accuracy: "*The students get their grades on the basis of their performance. There is no chance that a very weak student gets a good grade on the test*".

When parents were interviewed after the test, P1 and P6 believed that the written test could accurately measure the language skills but they did not trust on the speaking test: "*I think, the written test could measure their skills but I am not happy with the speaking test as it was not conducted properly*" (P1-PostInt); "*All students have got either A or A+ Grade on the speaking test. I think, it is not possible*" (P6-PostInt).

P3 had a belief that neither the speaking test nor the writing test could accurately measure students' language skills. "*I think, none of the tests could accurately measure the language skills. However, I am particularly concerned with the speaking test. It seems as if the speaking test is included to increase students' overall Grade*" (P3-PostInt).

Furthermore, both students and parents were asked to express their views about the extent to which the test reflects students' strengths and weaknesses in the English language. The survey results have been displayed in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5: The test reflects my strengths and weaknesses
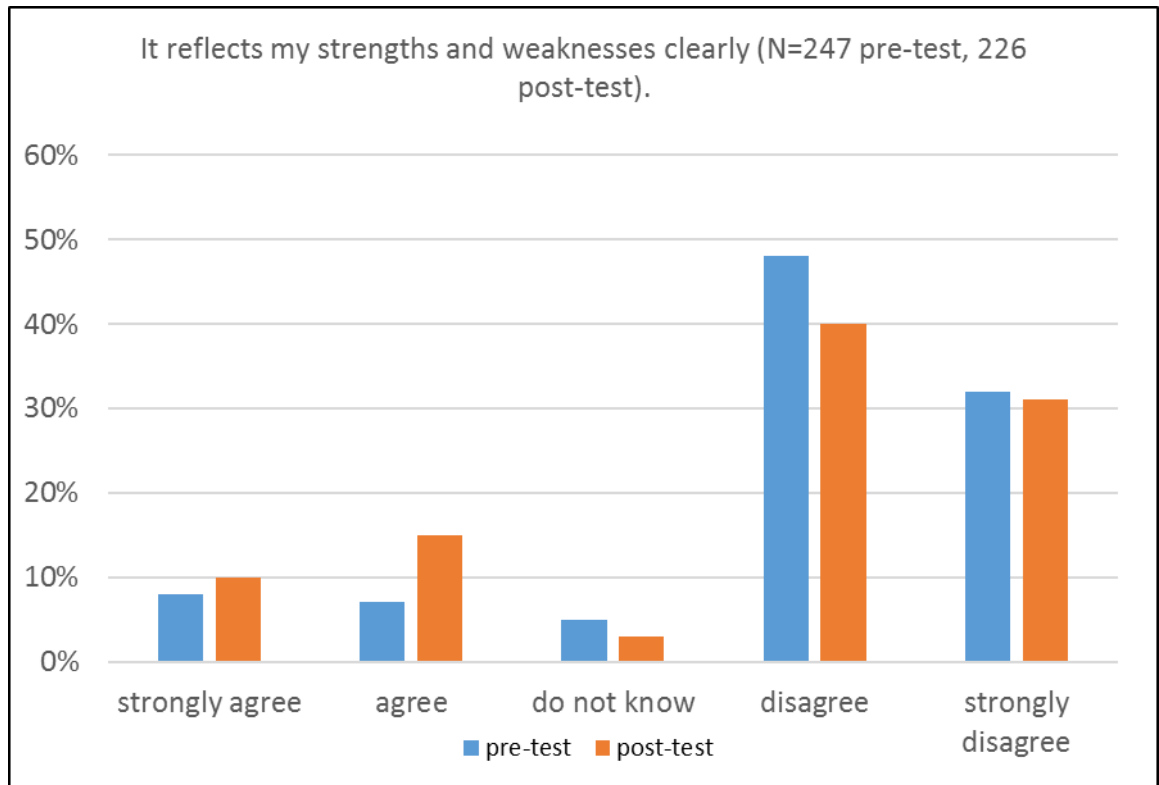
It was found that the vast majority of students both in the pre-test (32% strongly disagreed, 48% disagreed) and post-test context (31% strongly disagreed, 40% disagreed) did not think that the test reflects their strengths and weaknesses. Similar findings emerged through the qualitative data. None of the case study students believed that the test reflects their true skills.

> *I do not think that the test reflects my strengths and weaknesses. After I take the test, I just get my final Grades* (S4-PreInt).

> *I had practised reading and writing a lot for the written test but I had never practised speaking. I did not even have to speak on the speaking test. However, I got A Grade on the speaking test but D on the written test. So, I am just confused these days* (S2-PostInt).

Similar views were expressed by the parents with high education but the parents with low education could not comment on this aspect.

To reiterate, with regard to the extent to which the test reflects on students' strengths and weaknesses, students' interviews provided support to the quantitative results. However, the quantitative results on students' and parents' attitudes towards the extent to which the test

accurately measures language skills were not clearly supported by the qualitative findings. Interestingly, students' interviews indicated that their attitudes towards the test accuracy did not remain constant (i.e. mostly positive in the pre-test context but mostly negative in the post-test context). Had this study been limited to quantitative data, this reality would not have been revealed.

Discussion of the findings

The study revealed interesting findings on students' and parents' views about the test accuracy. Neither students nor parents believed that the test reflected students' strengths and weaknesses clearly. The findings related to the test accuracy were more interesting. Both the qualitative and quantitative data indicated that students had a trust on the test accuracy in the pre-test context. However, there were contradictions between the qualitative and quantitative findings regarding students' post-test attitudes towards the test accuracy. This means, the quantitative results suggested that the majority of students had a belief that the test accurately reflected their language skills but all the case study students (except one) raised question about the test fairness. One of the main reasons behind the contradiction could be: the survey students might have simply considered the written test when responding to the questionnaire. During the post-test interviews, the case study students reported that when they responded to the questionnaire, they had thought only about the written test. It was also found that the students had more trust on the written test than on the speaking test.

Similarly, a comparison between students' and parents' pre-test attitudes towards the test accuracy is interesting. In the case of children from the parents with high education, two of them (out of three) had a trust on the test accuracy though their parents did not have such kind of trust on the test. However, in the case of the students from the parents with low education, this study fails to make a comparison between students' and parents' views as none of the parents commented on the test accuracy because of their lack of knowledge about the test accuracy.

To reiterate, participants felt that the test results, particularly the speaking test results, could not accurately measure the language skills. These findings support Giri's (2011) claim that the SLC examination does not reveal the actual language proficiency of a candidate. Regarding the speaking test quality, Dawadi (2018) also reported some problems associated with the speaking test. In her study, the secondary level English

teachers in Nepal argued that the test cannot truly reflect students' real levels in English. Moreover, as mentioned in 5.3.1, the finding that some parents, particularly the parents with low education, know very little about the test are consistent with the findings of some previous test impact studies (e.g., Mulvenon et al., 2005; Scott, 2007) conducted in the western world.

5.2.3 Students' Views about the Test Instruction Clarity

Another area of exploration in this study included students' views about the test instruction clarity. The survey results have been displayed in Figure 5.6 which indicates that the overwhelming majority of survey students found the test instructions clear to them.

Figure 5.6: Students' views about the test instruction clarity
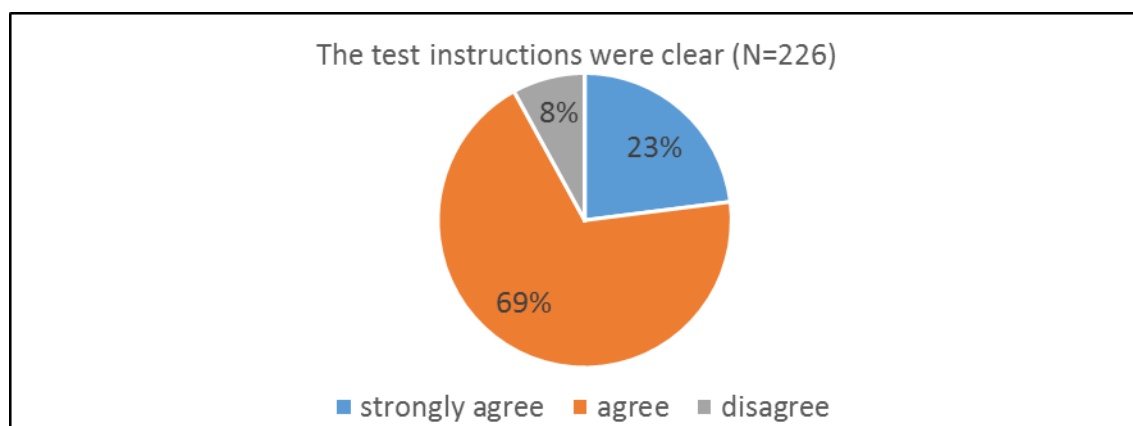
The qualitative findings support quantitative findings. All the case study students (except S2) reported that the instructions were clear to them: *"All the instructions were very clear to me. I did not have any confusion about the instructions"* (S5-PostInt).

However, a few surveyed students and one of the case study students (S2) had problems with the test instructions, to a lesser or greater extent: "*For me, the instructions in most questions were clear but I was lost in a few questions. For instance, I could not clearly understand the instruction given for writing news report in question 6"* (S2-PostInt).

The students were also asked to report on the extent to which the test items were clear and well written. The quantitative results, summarised in Figure 5.7, indicate that the majority of surveyed students (24% strongly agreed, 49% agreed) found the test items clear and well written.

Figure 5.7: Students' views about questions clarity
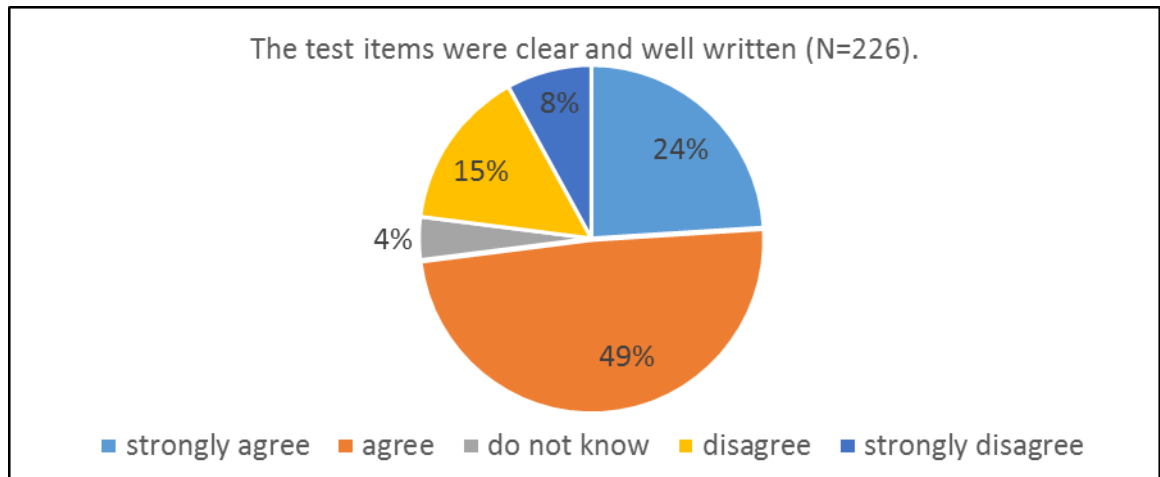
The test items were clear and well written (N=226).

- strongly agree — 24%
- agree — 49%
- do not know — 4%
- disagree — 15%
- strongly disagree — 8%

Similar findings emerged through qualitative data. All the case study students reported that the test items were clear and well written: *"The questions were clear and well written. I could easily understand the questions"* (S5-PostInt).

To reiterate, both the qualitative and quantitative data revealed similar pictures on the instructional clarity. In other words, qualitative findings really strengthened the quantitative findings, and vice versa.

Discussion of the findings

The study indicated that the instructions given in the test were clear and the test items were also well written. Nevertheless, there might be an issue regarding students' ability to judge on the question quality. In other words, they might not be able to critically judge whether the questions were well written. Despite this, the study simply aimed to collect their views about the test quality as they had fresh experience of taking the test.

It can be assumed that students' performances on a test might be affected by instructional clarity in the test. Even a good student may perform poorly on a test if they cannot understand the test instructions clearly. However, none of the previous studies, to my knowledge, have explored this issue.

5.4   Students' Views about Test Difficulty

The post-test questionnaire (PostTQ hence forth) was designed in order to explore students' views about the test difficulty (see Appendix 1B). The results presented in Figure

5.8 indicate that the majority of survey students (67%) found the test easier than they had expected.

Figure 5.8: Students' views about test difficulty
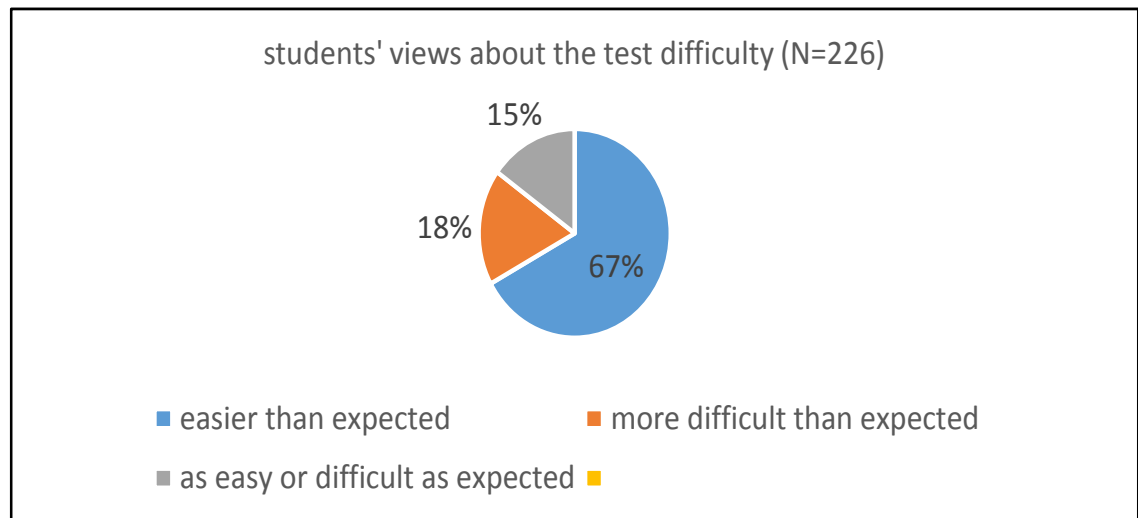
It is worth pointing out that in the post-test survey, the students were also asked to report the grade they obtained in the SEE English test and it was found that most of the students performed poorly on the test.

Similar findings emerged through qualitative data. Among the six case study students, four of the students found the test easier than they had expected: "*All the questions were easier than I had expected*" (S3-PostInt) but they could not get their expected grade. They even accepted the authority of the test without asking a question to the test quality: "*I could not get good grade on the written test but I do not blame other people. I think, I should have worked harder for the test*" (S2-PostInt).

It was found that their perception of the test difficulty was influenced by their teachers, parents and other people in their village: "*Our teacher had frequently told us that the questions in the SEE will be very difficult but only easier questions were asked on the test.*" (S3-PostInt); "*My father used to ask me to practise with difficult questions*" (S6-PostInt); "*Even in the village, there was a rumour that the test would be very difficult this year because of the introduction of the grading system on the test*" (S5-PostInt).

Triangulation of the data suggests that students found the test easier than their expectations. Students' interviews were further useful to understand why they had expected the test to be very difficult.

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Discussion of the findings

The findings indicated that the majority of students found the test easier than their expectation but they performed poorly on the test. Therefore, it is highly important that teachers and the policy makers work together to find out the reasons why students are poorly performing in the English test and also carry out research to explore the inhibiting factors for the test performance.

There were several indications that students were unaware of their rights and responsibilities as a test-taker and simply considered the exam as a necessary evil. Some of them even attributed their low performance to their own efforts without questioning whether the exam was fair enough to measure their skills in English. These findings are consistent with Takagi's (2010) finding that the Japanese EFL learners were not aware of their rights to question the test quality. Interestingly, students considered the test to be very difficult as they heard similar comments from their teachers, parents and other people in their society.

It is also worth pointing out that although students in this study found the test easier than their expectation, the post-test survey data indicates that the majority of students could not perform well on the test. Even in past, students could not perform well on the English test as claimed by Yadav (2014) that the pass rate in the SLC examination remained less than 50% in most years. Therefore, it is highly important to find out the inhibiting factors for the test performance.

5.5   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and discussed the findings on students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test. The findings indicated that both students and their parents had a belief that doing well on the test generally requires students to memorise answers and practise with previous tests. However, about a quarter of students believed that doing well on the test depends on their luck. Both students and their parents considered the test to be very important for students' future and doing well on the test would enhance social prestige. They generally considered the test to be fair and an accurate measure of the language skills in the pre-test context; yet, they were suspicious about the test fairness and accuracy in the post-test context, although almost all the students reported that the test items were well written.

Chapter Six: Psychological Impact of the Test on Students and Parents

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and discussion of the findings on the psychological impact of the test on students and their parents in terms of student motivation to learn English and the test related anxiety and pressure on students and their parents. Accordingly, three sub-themes have been developed to present the findings in a systematic way. Each of the sub-themes has been briefly discussed below.

6.1   Test Impact on Student Motivation

The study explored both the pre-test and post-test motivation to learn English. Students' responses to the questionnaires are summarised in Figure 6.1 which indicates that the majority of students (79%) were motivated to learn English in the pre-test context. However, there was a sharp decrease in the number of students who were motivated to learn English in the post-test context. Only 30% students were motivated to learn English and slightly more than half of the students (52%) were even discouraged from learning English after they took the test. There were also a few students who reported that there was no effect of the test on their motivation, both in the pre-test and post-test contexts.

Figure 6.1: Test impact on student motivation to learn English
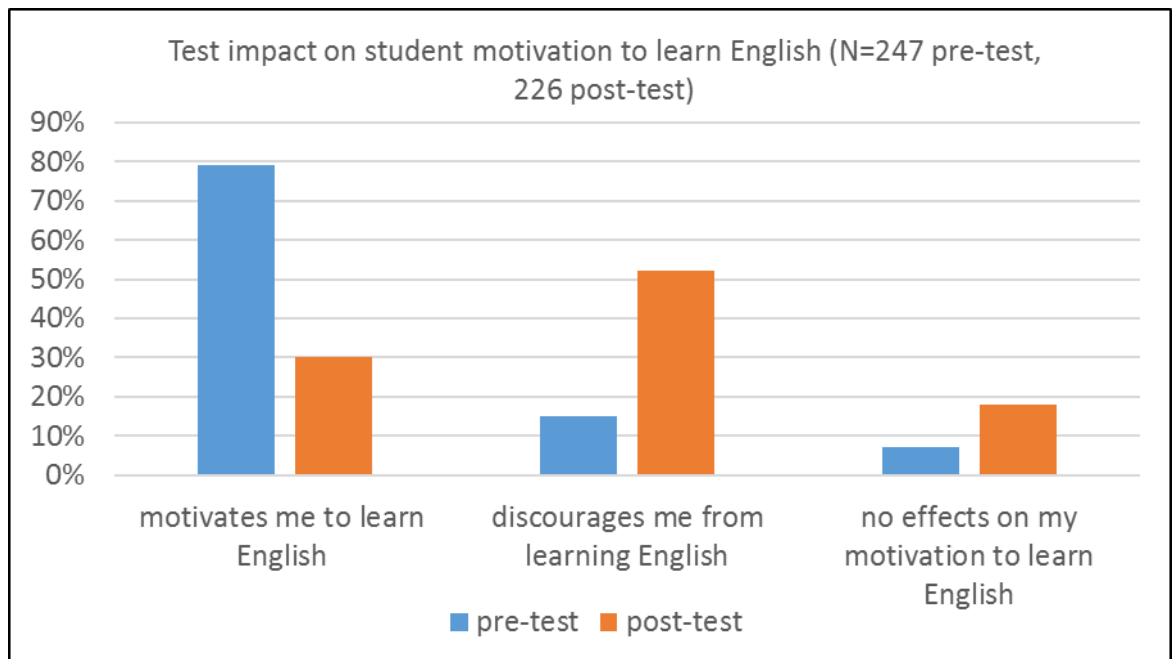
With regard to the pre-test motivation to learn English, the quantitative results were well supported by the qualitative findings. Test motivation for learning English was one of the most frequently occurring sub-themes in the qualitative data analysis. Most of the pre-test

diaries indicated that the students were motivated to learn English and do well on the test: "*Last week, I was motivated to learn English as I knew that the SEE is very important for my future*" (S3-D4); "*I am really interested in learning English these days as the SEE is coming soon. I know that the SEE is very important for me. I must try my best to do well on the test*" (S1-D3*).* Additionally, all the parents, during their pre-test interviews, reported that the test motivated their children to learn English: "*I think, she is more motivated to learn English this year because of the SEE*" (P1-PreInt). Furthermore, all the case study students reported that their parents would motivate them to learn English and work hard for the test: "*My mother always encourages me to learn English*" (S5-PreInt).

Interestingly, it was also found that one of the case study students (S5), who did not like the English subject before she started to study at Grade 10, got interest in it and also had a sense of achievement when she prepared for the SEE English test.

> *When I was at Grade 9, I was never interested in learning English as I found the subject very difficult. This year, I am a bit more interested in this subject. I started to take tuition classes right after I began to study at Grade 10. I spent more time for this subject. Now, I have somehow learnt English and also performed better in our class tests. I have realised that English is not a very difficult subject, if we work hard* (S5-PreInt).

The findings indicated that there were two main reasons for their motivation to do well on the test: they had a plan to continue their study after the SEE and wished to study in a good higher secondary school or college of their choice:

> *I am very much motivated to learn English because I need to do well on the test to be eligible to continue my study. Also, I need to get minimum C+ grade on the test to be eligible to study science at Grade 11*(S3-PreInt).

> *I want to work hard for the test as I want to study in a good higher secondary school in Kathmandu* (S3-D7).

> *I know that good colleges enrol only the students who have got good Grade on the test* (S1-PreInt).

The findings further indicated that the students had a belief that doing well on the test would support them to find a job in future: "*If I do well on the test, it helps me to find a*

good job in future" (S5-PreInt). Thus, the test use seems to be one of the motivating factors for them.

Interestingly, two of the students (S4, S6) were also interested in learning about English people and their culture: "I am interested in learning about English people and their culture." (S6-D6).

The diaries also indicated that doing well on their class tests would sometimes be a source of motivation for them: *"Last week, I was really interested in learning English because I got good scores in our class test. My teacher praised me in front of my class mates that made me feel proud"* (S4-D5). Conversely, not being able to perform well on those tests would discourage them from learning English: *"I performed poorly on the test last week. So, I was just worried and could not study much"* (S2-D7).

With regard to the post-test motivation, it might be logical to divide it into two sections on the basis of the timing (i.e. before and after the test results publication). It should be noted that the quantitative data presented in Figure 6.9 represents only post-result motivation.

The quantitative finding that just above half of the surveyed students (52%) were discouraged from learning English after the test results were supported by the qualitative findings. Three of the case study students reported that the test results discouraged them from learning English: *"I am really discouraged from leaning English these days. I really feel bad as I could not get my expected Grades"* (S1-PostInt).

Nevertheless, rest of the students reported that they were more motivated to lean English because of the test results: "W*ith a great surprise, I got better grades than I had expected. I feel proud and more motivated to learn English now"* (S4-PostInt); "T*he test results have really encouraged me to work hard"* (S5-PostInt).

The findings related to S2 were more interesting. She was motivated to learn English during the first phase of diary recording, then she was discouraged from learning English when the test grew closer mainly because of the perceived difficulty of the test:

> *English is the most difficult subject for me. Although I try my best, I cannot get good scores on our class tests. I have heard that the SEE will be more difficult than*

our class tests. Therefore, I sometimes feel really discouraged from learning English (S2-PreInt).

She was again motivated to learn English after the test results as she obtained higher Grade than her expectation: "*I got higher Grade on my speaking test that made me happy and also encouraged me to lean English*" (S2-PostInt). Indeed, the excerpt indicates that successful performance on the test became a motivating factor to learn English after the results.

The diaries recorded just one week before the test result indicated that three students were learning English during the time. Among them two students were living in a city and preparing for their college entrance exam as both of them had a plan to apply for a reputed college in a city. They were also taking a bridge course and trying to develop their language skills: "*I spent the whole week in reading and writing as I had to go through a very tough competition to get admission in a good college*" (S1-D9); "*I also practised speaking English with my friends in my bridge course*" (S3-D10).

However, their interviews suggested that their motivation to develop language skills was triggered by the format of the college entrance exam that would include a large sample of writing such as essay writing, report writing and letter writing, as indicated by the following excerpt:

> *I basically tried hard to develop my writing skills during the time as I knew that there would be different kinds of free writing questions in our college entrance test* (S1-PostInt).

An additional factor of their motivation was the medium of instruction at Grade 11:

> *All the subjects are taught in English at Grade 11. Therefore, I tried my best to develop my speaking skills as I had not practised it before* (S3-PostInt).

Nevertheless, three other students did almost nothing in English during the time, except occasionally listening to English songs: "*I have done nothing in English after I took the test. I will restart learning it after I begin to study at Grade 11*" (S5-D9).

To sum up, having brought both the quantitative and qualitative data together, this section has produced a comprehensive picture of the impacts of the test on students' motivation.

The quantitative results were well supported by qualitative findings, and vice versa. Students' diaries and interviews provided further explanations for the reasons of their motivation. Indeed, students' diaries have beautifully captured how students' motivation level kept changing during different stages of the academic year. In other words, had the students not been asked to record their diaries, it would not have been possible to capture students' motivation level through the pre-test context to the post-test context to the post-results context.

Discussion of the findings

With regard to the pre-test motivation to learn English, the findings of the study indicate that the students perceived the test impact as more positive than negative. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous washback studies (e.g. Dawadi, 2018; Gu, 2005; Huang, 2010; Li, et al. 2012; Takagi, 2010) that taking or preparing for a high-stakes EFL test usually motivates students to learn English.

There could be possibly two reasons behind students' motivation to learn English in the pre-test context. First, the test results are used as a gateway to higher education and also a criterion for subject selection in higher secondary education. This test policy seems to be effective to motivate students. Second, the SEE English test results may affect their chances to study in the higher secondary schools/colleges of their choices and to find a job.

Indeed, previous research also indicates that students who consider a test to be important for them tend to study hard for it (Allen, 2016; Cheng, 1997; Chu et al., 2014). In other words, if students know that their test performance will have significant effects on their career goals, it is more likely that they expend greater efforts to perform well on the test.

The findings emerged through the qualitative data collected from S2 (that she was discouraged from learning English when the test grew closer mainly because of the perceived difficulty of the test but she was again motivated to learn English after she got good results in the SEE) provide further evidence to the claim that assessment can motivate students when results are good (Xiao & Carless, 2013). Additionally, the findings might indicate that students' motivation level does not remain constant and they lose interest in learning if they perceive a test to be very difficult for them.

Contrary to Shohamy, et al.'s (1996) claim that high-stakes EFL test-takers' motivation to learn English significantly decreases after the test administration, half of the case study students (i.e., three out of six) in the current study were still motivated to learn English. They were actively learning English in the post-test context (i.e. about three months when they were waiting for the test results) and trying their best to develop their language skills. However, college entrance exam, rather than the SEE English test, seemed to be the key motivating factor for them to learn English during the time. It can be assumed that if they were not supposed to take the exam, they might not have been motivated to learn English during the time.

It is also worth noting that four of the case study students in this study were instrumentally motivated to learn English. Very similar to Greek students (Tsagiri, 2006), incentive values and instrumental benefits were a stronger motivation for learning English than their interest in learning about cultural artefacts, such as English movies, books, newspapers and magazines, or learning about English speakers and their culture. More specifically, the main reason for their motivation was that English would help them to make their future bright due to its importance, popularity and usefulness in the Nepalese context. However, the rest of the students were intrinsically motivated to learn English.

As reported by Tsagiri (2006), the initial driving force of their motivation to learn English seemed to be influenced by the social milieu, especially their parents. All the case study students reported that their parents motivated them to learn English. The general perception that there is a great role of family in motivating Asian students (Life, 2011) is well supported by this study.

No matter what the source of motivation was for the SEE students, what was more important for this study was that the students were highly motivated to perform well on the test. It seemed that the SEE was perceived as a goal which gave them a direction for promoting their learning. Studying for the SEE also seemed to help students develop good learning habits, such as getting up early and doing homework every day.

To sum up, students' motivation level does not remain constant; generally it was stronger in the pre-test context than in the post-test context. The main reason behind this could be that the reward for the students who succeed in the SEE is potentially very positive, with some very attractive career and life-altering possibilities.

6.2 Test Pressure on Students and Parents

In order to explore whether or not the SEE students feel pressure because of the English test, PreTQ 14 was designed. Among the 247 survey students, almost all the students (234 students) reported that they were under tremendous pressure to perform well on the test. Students' responses to the question have been summarised in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Test pressure on students
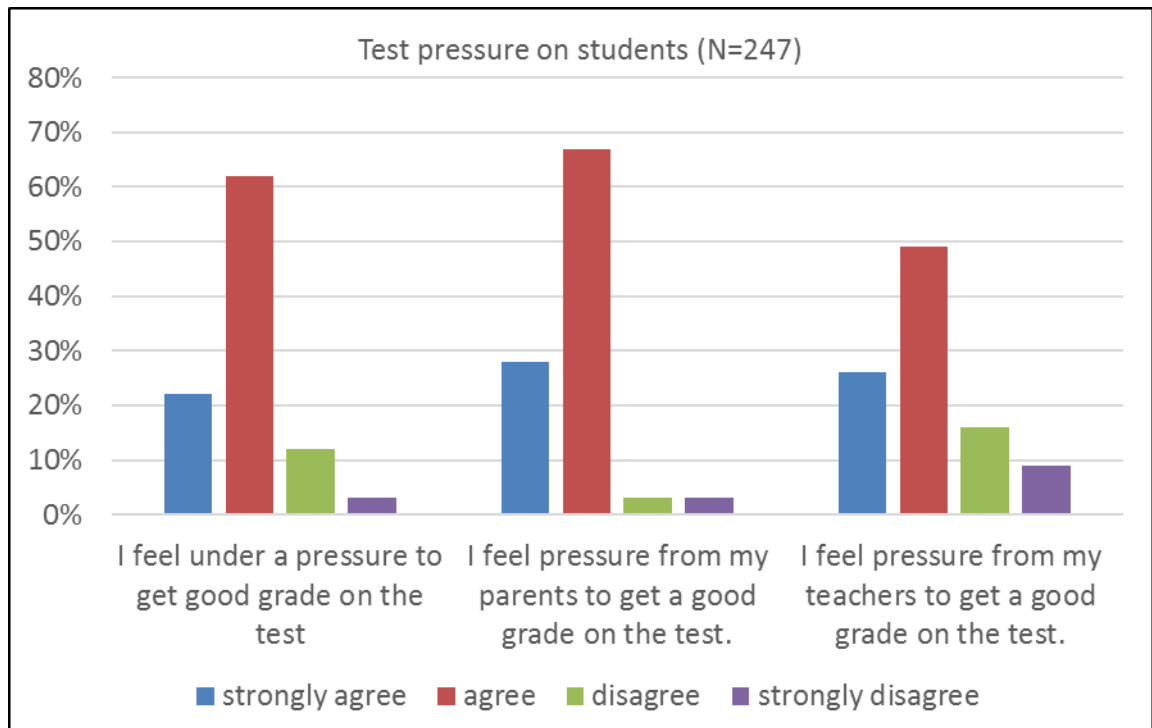
The vast majority of students (22% strongly agreed, 62% agreed) reported that they felt under pressure to get good grades on the test. The results also indicate that they received more pressure from their parents than their teachers, with the mean scores 4.14 and 3.66, respectively. It was also found that students' views with regard to parental pressure was the most uniform with the smallest SD (0.78).

As some students noted in the comment space provided in PreTQ12, they would also get pressure from school head teachers:

> *Our head teacher comes to our class and tells us that we should focus mainly on three subjects: English, math and science. He also tells us that if we do not perform well in the SEE, it will affect our future career and also the prestige of the school (S35-PreSur).*

The quantitative results were supported by the qualitative findings as all the case study students (except S6) reported that they were under enormous pressure to work hard for the test. However, contrary to the quantitative results, students reported that they got more pressure from their teachers than their parents.

> *I got more pressure from my teachers than my parents. Our teachers made a very strict rule that we all had to stay in the school accommodation for three months. So, I am staying in the school accommodation nowadays* (S5-PreInt).

> *I get more pressure from my teacher than from my mother. He gives us homework every day and also asks us to memorise answers* (S3-PreInt).

The findings also indicated that the test increased workload for students. All the case study students reported that they had to study till late at night: "*My parents do not allow me to go to bed early. I have to study till 11pm*" (S1-PreInt); "*When the examination was very close to him, he was working so hard that he did not even have enough time to have food*" (P3-PostInt). Two of the students were staying at the school accommodation. Both of them reported that they had to work hard in school:

> *Our teachers make us study for about 12-15 hours a day. We have to get up around 5 am in the morning. Our class starts at 5.30 in the morning and runs till 10 pm. We have three breaks in between for our meals. Each break is for about one hour* (S5-PreInt).

The test also seemed to increase parents' workload and affect even their daily routines:

> *I have to get up early in the morning to wake her up and make her ready to go to tuition classes by 5.30 am. In the evening as well, I sit in her room till 11.00 pm to make sure that she is studying there* (P1-PreInt).

Like students, four of the parents felt elevated pressure to raise test scores: "*I feel pressure because of the test. If he cannot do well on the test, his future will be affected. So, I feel like I should support him in whatever way I can*" (P3-PreInt).

It was also found that very similar to students, their parents also got pressure from their schools to raise test scores:

> *He is not good at English subject. His teachers have also asked me to pay more*
> *attention to his study. This has created me more pressure these days* (P3-PreInt).

> *We feel that our daughter should get A Grade in all the subjects [...] The school*
> *has also expected that she will perform very well in the SEE. Because of this, we*
> *feel more pressure but we love it because it is for the good future of our child* (P1-
> PreInt).

It was also observed that the test created economic burdens on parents as they were compelled to send their children to extra tuition classes. One of the parents included in this study was simply a stone breaker. It was very hard for her even to feed her family but she was compelled to send her daughter to private tuition classes throughout the year. It was really heart-breaking to listen to her stories during my visit; the concerned authority should pay attention to such issues.

Indeed, there were several indications that the test increased workload pressure both for students and their parents. When I went back to the field for my second phase data collection in mid-January, it was very hard to find my case study students at their home. Two of them were staying in the school accommodation and would come home only on Friday evening and go back to school on Saturday afternoon while four others would leave home at 5:30 am and come back home around 7.30 pm (Sunday to Friday) as they were taking extra classes in their schools in the morning and evening. Then, they were guarded by their parents for a few hours at home to ensure that they study till late at night. Similarly, the students who were staying at the school accommodation reported that they were not allowed to go to bed early in the evening. Thus, they did not seem to have enough time even to sleep at night.

However, individual differences could be observed in this study as two of the parents (P4, P6) did not feel any pressure because of the test: "*I do not have any kind of pressure. I know that my child is one of the best students in his class and he has been doing really well on his class tests*" (P6-PreInt). Moreover, one of the case study students (S6) and 12 surveyed students reported that they did not get any kind of pressure associated with the test.

The triangulation of the data indicates that both students and parents had enormous pressure associated with the test. The interviews were really helpful to understand different

sources of pressure. Had the students and parents not been interviewed, the issues like workload pressure felt by both students and parents, and schools' pressure on parents to raise test scores and send their children for tuition classes would not have been unpacked in this study. It is also worth pointing out that there was a contradictory finding, i.e. the quantitative data indicated that students got more pressure from their parents than their teachers but just a reverse finding emerged through qualitative data. This finding may highlight the need to collect data from different sources.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study that SEE candidates had pressure associated with the English test are consistent with the findings of previous test impact studies (e.g. Cheng, 1997; Choi, 2008; Li et al., 2012; Odo, 2012; Xiao & Carless, 2013) that EFL students feel enormous pressure to perform well in a high-stakes test. Kirkpatrick and Zang (2011) also report that high scorers in China garner praise while low scores lead to punishment. The situation seems to be worse in Singapore as so many students in Singapore commit suicide because of high-stakes test pressure and "two-thirds of Singaporean parents have punished their children for performing poorly by caning them" (Gregory & Clarke, 2003, p.71). However, none of the students in the current study reported that they were punished by their parents though many of them could not perform well on the test and I did not hear any news about suicide cases associated with the SEE during the time of my study.

High pressure on students both from their parents and teachers suggest that, very similar to the Chinese parents and teachers (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011), the Nepalese parents and teachers consider test scores to be the only criterion to judge students' abilities. The exam-centric education in Nepal evaluates students' quality and skills based only on test scores.

Parental pressure on children might have also resulted from the perceived importance of the test along with their poor economic condition and hope for future through good education. Most parents in Nepal seek their children's secure future through education (Bhattrai, 2014). Consequently, they put pressure on their child for high achievement on the test.

Another possibility would be that as parents were involved in the test preparation (see 7.2 for detail), they might have high expectations from their children. Peleg et al. (2016) argue, "The more parents are involved in their children's lives and schoolwork, the higher their

level of expectations for academic success" (p.433). However, high parental pressure on students might lead to a lack of self-confidence in students (Ringeisen & Raufelder, 2015) and to high test anxiety (Putwain, Woods, & Symes, 2010). That is why, it is highly important that parents are aware of such negative impact of their pressure on their children.

However, the test pressure was not limited to students; even the parents felt pressure associated with the test. Contrary to Osburn et al.'s (2004) findings that the parents of the children who were the low performers on the SAT-9 had more pressure to raise test scores than the parents whose children were high performers, the current study indicated that most parents, irrespective of their children's proficiency level in English, had a high level of pressure to raise test scores. There were different reasons that created pressure for both kinds of parents in Nepal. For instance, the parents of the children with low proficiency showed their concerns about whether or not their children become eligible to study at a higher level whereas the parents of the children with high proficiency were more motivated to send their children to prestigious schools/colleges and ask their children to participate in different competition for scholarships provided by the Nepalese Government.

However, individual differences could be observed in this study. The findings related to S6 were interesting. Neither his parents nor he felt pressure to raise the SEE Grades. This sounds like the entire spirit within the family was confident and relaxed about the test. As the parents put no pressure on their child; the child experienced no pressure either.

The findings that schools pressurised both students and parents might be associated with the accountability use of the test. In other words, the main reason why schools pressurise students and their parents for better achievement would be because of the increased use of the SEE scores by the Nepalese government as the sole criterion to judge the quality of school education. The public schools in Nepal are rewarded or penalized and also supported with funding based on students' performances in the SEE and it is obvious that every school wants to have good results to be rewarded or to save their reputation and prestige (Bhattrai, 2014). The SEE results have also been used to judge the quality of individual teachers. Therefore, the fear of poor results in the SEE and the associated punishment, shame, or embarrassment might have led teachers to strive for high SEE scores. Consequently, they might put pressure on their students to achieve high scores.

6.3   Test Related Anxiety in Students and Parents

In order to explore whether or not students had test related anxiety, PreTQ 13 was designed. Almost all the students reported that they had test related anxiety. The quantitative results, summarised in Figure 6.3, indicate that students had test related anxiety mainly because of their perception that poor performance on the test has negative effects on their social prestige (27% strongly agreed, 61% agreed) and on career prospects (23% strongly agreed, 59% agreed). Additional reasons of their anxiety included high expectations from their parents (22% strongly agree, 53% agreed) and teachers (16% strongly agree, 28% agreed). Furthermore, low confidence of doing well on the test and their perception that they lack test-taking skills created anxiety in students.

Figure 6.3: Test anxiety on students

Test-related anxiety in students (N=247)

Legend: strongly agree, agree, do not know, disagree, strongly disagree

Categories:
- The test results may affect my career prospects.
- My parents are expecting me to do well on the test.
- My teachers are expecting me to do well on the test.
- The test is associated with my social prestige.
- I am not good at taking tests.
- I am not confident of doing well on the test.
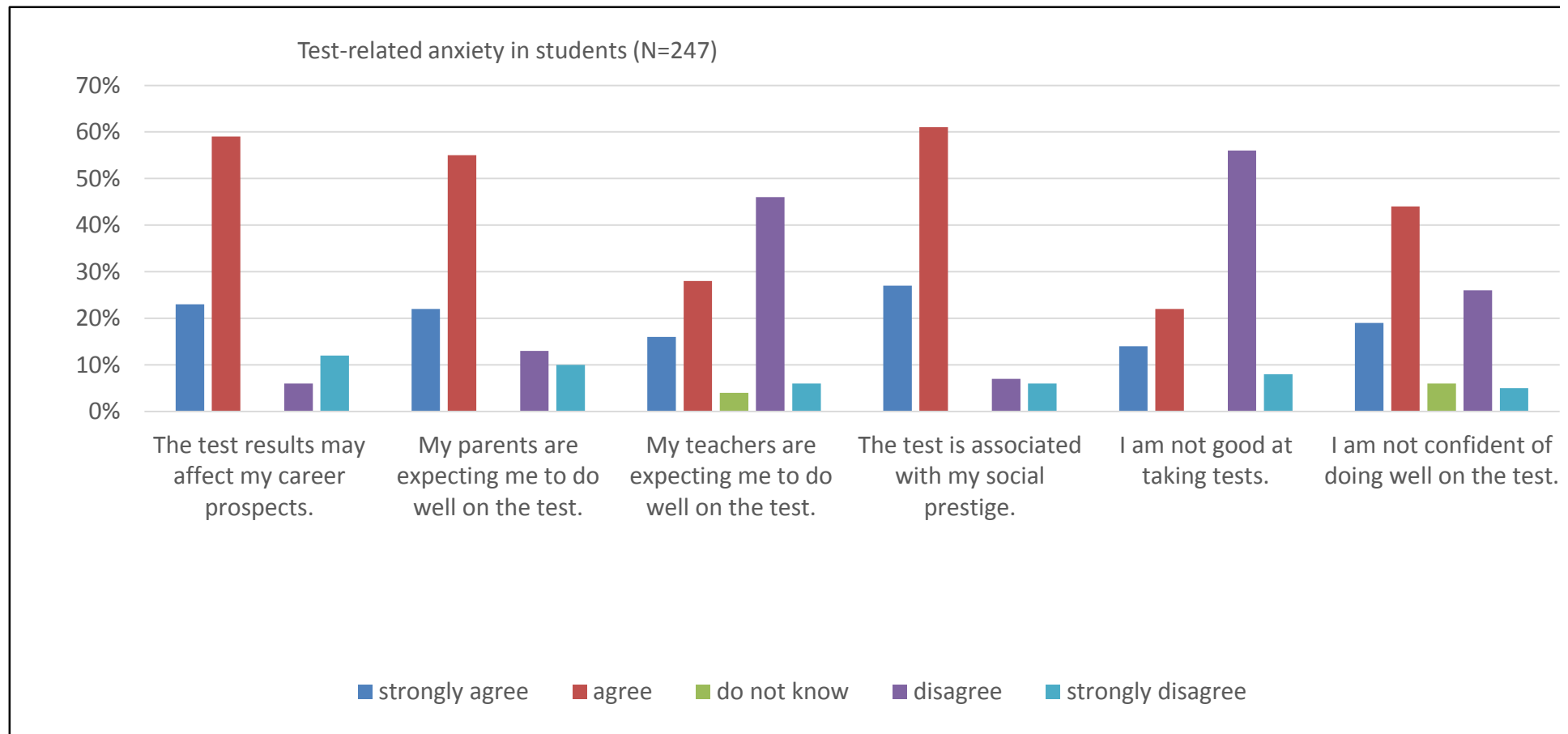
Similar findings emerged through qualitative data. Test anxiety was one of the most recurring sub-themes in the qualitative data analysis. All the case study students (except S6) were found to have test related anxiety because of the possible test consequences to their career prospects and social criticism associated with poor performance on the test:

> *I am very much worried about the test as it is very important for my future. If I cannot do well on the test, I will not be allowed to study science at Grade 11. I think, my future will be dark* (S3-D7).

> *One of the main reasons of my worry is that everybody in my village will know my test results and if in case I cannot do well on the test, they will criticise me* (S1-PreInt).

Furthermore, the case study students (except S6) reported that they had the test related anxiety because of their parents' high expectations from them:

> *My parents are expecting me to do well on the test. They have spent a lot of money hoping that I can do well on the test. If in case I cannot do well on the test, they will be very much cross with me. Therefore, I am very much worried these days because of the test* (S5-PreInt).

Although the quantitative results indicated that half of the surveyed students (46 disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed) were not worried because of their teachers' expectations, all the case study students (except S6 and S2) reported that they had test anxiety because of their teachers' expectations from them:

> *I am worried thinking that if I cannot do well on the test, my teachers would not be happy with me* (S4-D8).

> *My teachers are expecting me to do well on the test as I usually get the highest scores in my class tests. However, I am not very sure whether I can get A+ on the test. So, I am worried these days (*S1-PreInt).

An additional reason for the test anxiety in four of the case study students was a lack of test-taking skills,

I really do not like taking tests. In my class tests as well, I feel a bit nervous and I cannot complete the tests on time. I find my hands sweating and also my handwriting gets worse when I take a test. In the SEE, I think the situation will be worse as I might be more nervous (S3-PreInt).

I do not feel comfortable with any kind of test. I do not know what happens to me. Something goes wrong with me when I start taking a test (S2-PreInt).

Furthermore, students had test related anxiety because they seemed to have low level of confidence in doing well on the test and they had to take the test in a new school: "*I am quite petrified about the SEE as I think the test will be very difficult for me*" (S2-D5); "*I am very much scared of the English test as I know that the test will be very hard for me. I do not really think that I can get good grades on the test*" (S5-D1); "*I have to go to another school to take the test. I think, I do not feel comfortable enough to take the test in that new school and in front of new teachers*" (S2-D5).

However, it was found that teachers did nothing to support students tackle the test anxiety as indicated in the following excerpts from pre-test interview.

Researcher: Does your teacher tell you not to worry much about the test?

S3: No, he just asks us to work very hard for the test.

Like students, all the parents (except P6) had the test related anxiety as they considered the test to have consequences to their children's career and affect their social prestige:

I never got a chance to go to a school, and I have a painful life. Therefore, I want to see my daughter well educated and working in a good office. For this, she first has to do well in the SEE. Sometimes I feel like if in case she cannot do well in the examination, her future will be dark. This makes me really worried (P5-PreInt).

I am worried that if he cannot do well in the examination, it will be a great shame for me in my society (P3-PerInt).

It was also found that both students' and their parents' test related anxiety increased nearer the test: "*The closer the exam is, the more tensed and worried we are*" (P1-PreInt). In comparison to the first phase diaries, second phase diaries indicated more anxiety and nervousness in students. S2 in particular felt so stressed that she was demotivated to expend any effort in improving her performance when the test grew closer.

Students' anxiety was also accompanied by their bodily reactions such as loss of appetite, headache and fever:

> *He did not even have good appetite. He would tell me that he was feeling like his mouth was completely dry and he was not able to swallow food properly. Actually, he had fever just the day before the test* (P3-PostInt).

Physical and psychological changes resulted from the test anxiety were not limited to students. Parents seemed to be equally affected by the high-stakes nature of the test:

> *I am worried as her teachers have told me that she is a bit weak in English and she also tells me that English is the most difficult subject for her. I am so worried these days that I cannot even sleep well at night* (P2-PreInt).

It was also found that waiting for the test results was very much stressful for the students: *"I am very much worried about the test results these days. So many things come to my mind. Sometimes, I cannot even have a good sleep at night"* (S1-D9), and the anxiety continued even after the test results: *"Last week, I was very much worried because of the test results. I was feeling bad. I would just be thinking about why my grades were lower than I had expected"* (S3-D11).

However, the personality of individual student needs to be considered. It was found that 12 of the surveyed students and one of the case study students (S6) did not have test-related anxiety.

To reiterate, having brought both the quantitative and qualitative data together, this study has unpacked the issues related to the test anxiety in students and parents. The quantitative results were well supported by qualitative findings in most cases, and vice versa. The interviews provided further explanations about their views. If the students and parents were not interviewed, the issues like physical and psychological changes (such as loss of appetite and sleep) in students and parents associated with the test anxiety would not have been revealed. Furthermore, had the students not been asked to record their diaries, the reality that the test creates anxiety in students throughout the year (from pre-test context to post-test context to post-results context) would not have been captured in this study.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study are consistent with the findings of previous test impact studies (e.g. Aydin, 2013; Li et al., 2012; Shohamy, et al., 1996; Takagi, 2010) that EFL students experience an intense level of anxiety of taking high-stakes tests.

There were several reasons behind students' anxiety associated with the test. One of the most apparent reasons included their perceived social prestige associated with the test because of the lack of confidentiality of the test results. Contrary to most western countries, individual students' performances in the SEE are publicised by most schools (in some cases individual students' photographs along with their Grades in the SEE are even displayed on the school walls and in different public places) to attract students for admission. Because of this practice, it is clear that the achievement of high grades in the SEE is likely to earn social prestige while low grades may degrade the prestige. This also suggests that the achievement of high scores/grades on a test receives high prestige in the Nepalese society without necessarily considering the knowledge and skills the student has in the related subject.

As reported by previous studies (e.g. Basol & Zabun, 2014; Peleg et al., 2016), parental expectations and the perceived importance of the test results also seemed to trigger anxiety in students. All the parents, irrespective of their educational background, contributed to the development of such psychology in their children's mind that their children consider the SEE to be everything in their life, "failure in the exam equating to failure and meaninglessness in life" (Bhattrai, 2014, p.70). Indeed, it has now been a general phenomenon that poor performance on the test is a failure in an individual's life; most students consider the SEE to be a landmark in an individual's life as they believe that the examination provides the ladder for one to get higher education and also opens up the vista of developing his/her career (Giri, 2011).

Some students were also anxious because of their perception that they lack test-taking skills. This anxiety seems to be related to our one-off exam system. It is true that all the students cannot perform efficiently under time pressure. Furthermore, it could be the result of the mark-oriented and rigid practice in the SEE. Additionally, no provision has been made for students with dyslexia and other educational needs. Such students could be the silent victims of the rigid testing practices in Nepal. Although the Education Act has been just renewed, the SEE still focuses on one-off examination which does not seem effective

enough to capture the real skills of students, and also does not offer opportunities for students of being assessed in a natural setting.

Students' anxiety could also be a result of their thriving interest in getting good scores on the test, rather than learning English. Ahmad and Rao (2012) argue, "Students suffer from examinations when their primary concern becomes to perform well in exams, not to learn well" (p.179). As discussed in 6.1.2, the students in this study were under an intense pressure to perform well on the test. Thus, the findings suggest that students, who are obliged to perform a task under pressure, may experience anxiety (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Furthermore, the SEE students' test anxiety was rooted in their self-confidence; many students had a low level of confidence of doing well on the test. Hence, they would feel insecure about their test performance.

With regard to parents' anxiety, the findings of this study are consistent with the findings of previous test impact studies. For instance, Cheng (1997) and Insgulsurd (1994) also reported that the parents in Hong Kong and Japan, respectively, became tense and anxious about their children's high-stakes tests. Similarly, Wyn et al. (2014) reported that parents in Australia had elevated stress due to their concerns about their children's performances in high-stakes tests.

There could be two main factors that created elevated level of stress and anxiety in parents of this study. First, as Budhathoki et al. (2014) pointed out, Nepalese parents take the test as a matter of their social prestige. Second, parents consider the SEE to be everything for their children's career. In other words, they think that their children's future will be ruined if they cannot perform well in the SEE. Therefore, parents want their children to perform well in the examination. However, the majority of parents might consider that their children might not be able to perform well on the test. Consequently, they feel anxious about their children's performance on the test.

However, individual differences were observed with regard to test anxiety in parents. Interestingly, in a comparison between the parents of high achievers, parents with high education were found more worried about the test results than the parents with low education. One of the reasons behind this appeared to be that parents with high education had more concerns about the future consequences of the test to their children but the parents with low education did not know much about such aspects.

Interestingly, all the parents reported that their children were worried about the test but none of them were helping their children to lower down the test related anxiety in their children, rather they seemed to keep pressurising their children to work hard for the test. Ringeisen and Raufelder (2015) point out that "parental support is crucial if students are to meet high academic demands, develop positive attitudes towards their capabilities, and regulate their achievement-related anxieties" (p.68) which seems to be lacking among the parents in this study. Similarly, teachers also need to support their students to minimise the test related anxiety. However, it is hard to know whether or not their teachers were aware that such a problem really exists as I did not collect the data from them and there were no indications that teachers supported their students to minimise the test anxiety.

It is highly important that both teachers and parents are aware of such issues. While it may sound trite to state this, it cannot be denied that the role of parents and teachers is paramount in moderating anxiety. Therefore, both of them should be "provided with intensive training on how to behave around sensitive students at school and at home. As well, the students should be counselled to reduce exam related anxiety and emotional distress" (Bhattrai, 2014, p.82). Bhattrai further argues that school level teachers in Nepal do not take any counselling training for stress and anxiety management. Similarly, parents receive no training on how to understand their children's psychology and problems to be able to support them in an appropriate way.

Students' anxiety was not static nor was it a one-off result created by their class tests or mock tests. As reported by Aydin (2013), the students in this study suffered anxiety both before and after the test. Indeed, students' diaries indicated that they had test related anxiety throughout the year but the level of anxiety steadily increased when the date of the test grew closer. Similar findings were reported by previous test impact studies (e.g. Gosa, 2004; Huhta et al. 2006; Joy, 2013; Lotz & Sparfeldt, 2017; Tsagiri, 2006).

Heightened anxiety nearer the test date might have also resulted from the intensification of teaching and learning at school in view of the imminent exam. There was an intense level of preparation for the test nearer the test date in each school from where the data for this study was collected.

As reported by previous studies (e.g. Aydin, 2013; Birjandi & Alemi, 2010; Newspoll, 2013; Takagi, 2010; Tsagiri, 2006; Wyn et al., 2014) test anxiety revealed some physical responses. Both the students and parents were severely affected by the test. These findings

highlight that there is an urgent need for stress management sessions and workshops for students (Bhattrai, 2014) and their parents. Addressing students' anxiety and fears about tests can make students more proactive and careful use of tests may encourage students to use deep instead of shallow approaches to learning and also improve students' study habit (Chu et al., 2013). For this, teachers need to be trained. Additionally, parents also need to learn some techniques to palliate their child's anxiety, for example by stressing the importance of getting proper rest during revision and taking regular breaks.

It is worth presenting the findings revealed from S6 in this regard. Interestingly, S6 was not anxious about the test though he considered the test to be important for his career. What is more interesting is that his parent (P6) was very much anxious about the test but he never put pressure on his child to perform well on the test. This particular case might suggest that there is a great role of parents in helping students to lower down the level of test anxiety. Other parents need to learn from him and lower down the parent-induced anxiety in their children.

6.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter was dedicated to present and discuss the findings regarding the test impacts on students' and their parents' psychological domains. Having brought both the qualitative and quantitative data together, this study has unpacked the issues very well. Both the qualitative and quantitative data indicated that the majority of students were motivated to learn English in the pre-test context but more than half of the students (52%) were discouraged from learning English in the post-test context. The findings further indicated that the test had negative psychological impacts on most students and their parents; they had an intense level of anxiety and pressure associated with the test. Therefore, as CLT claims, it is highly important that the test designers understand how the SEE English test is used in the Nepalese societies and how its stakeholders are affected by the test use.

Chapter Seven: Impacts on Test Preparation

This chapter presents the findings related to the impacts of the test on learning English and test preparation. The term 'test preparation' in this study includes both the test preparation strategies used by students and PI. For the systematic presentation of the findings, student test preparation strategies are presented before presenting the findings on PI in test preparation.

7.1 Test Preparation Strategies Used by Students

In order to explore the test preparation strategies used by students, PostTQ 16 was designed which included five different test preparation strategies: Language skills development (LSD), test preparation management (TPM), memorisation, socio-affective (i.e. learning from other people in an informal context) and drilling. The questions related to the test preparation strategies were included in the post-test questionnaire in the expectation that the students might use some new strategies right before the test. As the pre-test survey was conducted about six weeks before the test, it was assumed that the survey might not capture all the strategies used by the students, particularly at the last moment of their test preparation.

The overall results indicated that memorisation and TPM were the most common strategies while LSD and the socio-affective strategies were the least common ones, suggesting that students did not prioritise the development of their language skills during the test preparation. Each of the strategies is presented under separate heading below.

7.1.1 Memorisation

Three statements were included in the PostTQ 15 in order to find out the extent to which students memorised answers during the test preparation time. Students' responses to each of the statements have been summarised below. It was revealed, as shown in Figure 7.1, the majority of students used all three memorisation strategies included in the questionnaire.

Figure 7.1: Memorisation strategies used for the SEE English test preparation
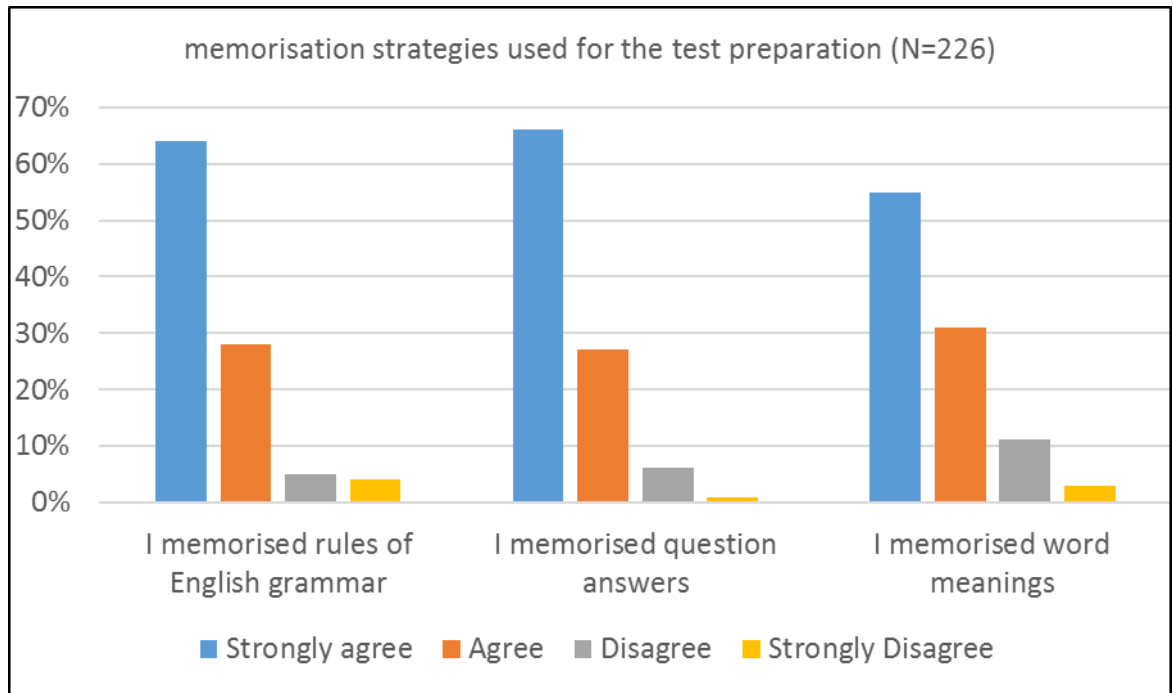
The quantitative results were supported by qualitative findings; memorisation was one of the most frequently occurring sub-themes in the qualitative data analysis. Almost all the first eight diaries of each student indicated that the students memorised question answers:

> *Last week, I memorised some short answers that our teacher had asked us to memorise. He has also asked us to memorise some long answers. So, I am trying to memorise them* (S1-D5).
>
> *I have already memorised some answers. I have decided to memorise as many answers as possible for the test* (S5-D8).

words,

> *I memorise the meanings of all the difficult words. I have already memorised so many words from the SEE preparation book* (S3-D5).

and the rules of English grammar:

> *I have also memorised so many vocabularies and grammar rules. I am very much hopeful that I will be able to get good scores on the test* (S1-D6).

Moreover, all the case study students memorised so many other texts- the SEE oriented texts. 'Texts' here refers to essays, news reports, and pie-chart and bar-diagram

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descriptions including dialogues. They memorised all those texts by rote, often mechanically and repetitively.

> *I have memorised so many things such as short question answers, long question answers, essays, letters and dialogues […]. I have also memorised some structures for dialogue writing and bar diagram descriptions* (S2-PreInt).

Their diaries also indicated that they spent significant time memorising answers. Two of the case study students reported that they started memorising answers right from the beginning of the academic year. They also used different techniques to memorise answers. For instance, S1 and S3 would first memorise answers and then write them down to check how much of the answers they could remember. Additionally, S4 used interesting techniques:

> *I have started to use new strategies to memorise answers, such as linking system, and morning and night system […]By morning and night system, I mean, I repeat or remember the answers in the evening that I learn in the morning and vice versa [….] Linking system means, I link the information and answers. For instance, if I am memorising an essay, I look at the whole essay as a house and then remember the important points that need to be included in the essay. Then, I link those important points with different parts of the house. For instance, I link all the points that need to be mentioned in the introduction part of the essay with the roof of the house. These strategies have developed my memory power. I can very easily remember essays and stories these days* (S4-PreInt).

The interviews revealed extreme cases of rote memorisation. The students memorised even long essays, stories and news reports: *"I had also memorised some essays, two letters related to job application. Our teacher had also given us some news reports and I had memorised those news as well"* (S1-PostInt).

There were a number of indications that the students were provided with ready-made answers and they were asked to memorise the answers by rote: *"On Friday, our teacher had written answers on the blackboard and asked us to copy the answers and memorise them"* (S2-D1). They also had a belief that memorisation helps them to develop their language skills: *"I think, we need to memorise grammar rules as they help us to speak and write English correctly"* (S4-D4).

Indeed, there were some problems with the test. The majority of questions are true/false items, gap filling, matching, short answer questions and choosing correct answer (see Appendix 4). Even some reading texts are taken from their own textbook that have already been taught by their teachers. For instance, the very first question (i.e. reading comprehension question) asked to the students was the poem 'Where the Rainbow Ends', which was taken from their textbook. Additionally, the questions based on the poem are also very much similar to the ones given in the textbook.

To reiterate, the triangulation of the findings indicated that students used memorisation as one of the main strategies to prepare themselves for the test. Students' diaries and interviews were helpful to understand how and why students memorised answers. Furthermore, if the students were not asked to record their diaries, this study would not be able to reflect on the amount of time they spent for memorising answers along with the type of answers or what they memorised.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study are in line with the claims made by previous test impact studies (e.g. Loumbourdi, 2014; Xie, 2013, 2015) that learners use memorisation as one of the main techniques to prepare themselves for an EFL test. Huang (2010) also reported that memorisation was the most popular strategy among the Chinese EFL learners; 80% of the CET students memorised answers for its preparation. Furthermore, Andrew, Fullilove and Wong (2002) reported that students in Hong Kong employed "the rote-learning of exam-specific strategies and formulaic phrases strategies" (p.220).

There could be various factors that motivated students to memorise answers for the SEE English test. First, rote memorisation might be closely associated with the Nepalese educational culture. Very similar to the Chinese culture (Huang, 2010), memorisation has been the most popular strategy in Nepal for learning English. Although the SEE English curriculum in Nepal focuses on the development of communicative competence, memorisation has been used as a predominant strategy for teaching and learning English in the Nepalese schools (Dawadi, 2018). Thus, the Chinese saying "If you get familiar with the 300 poems of Tang Dynasty, you would write poem by yourself" (Huang, 2010, p.121) seems to be applicable in the Nepalese society too.

Second, the type of the questions included in the test might have motivated students to use memorisation as the chief strategy to prepare themselves for the test. The SEE questions did not seem to give an opportunity to students to articulate their creativity and reflexivity. As Davies (2015) reported, there were very few higher-order questions in the SEE English test requiring students to interpret unseen texts and use higher-order thinking skills. Consequently, this practice motivated students to memorise answers. It can also be argued that those questions cannot measure students' reading comprehension skills as students have already practised them in their classroom.

Finally, students seemed to be influenced by their teachers. The findings suggested that students were even provided with ready-made answers and encouraged to memorise them. However, students' memorisation was not merely mechanical and superficial; in some cases, it was very comprehensive too. By memorising answers and rewriting the texts out or retelling them, students were not only preparing for the test but also practising their ability to write and speak; this could be considered to be some positive effects of the test preparation on learning (Huang, 2010). Furthermore, as mentioned in 5.1, parents also motivated them to memorise answers.

All the arguments indicate that the current ELT practice in Nepal is in a bad shape. The students prepared themselves through revision and repetition without truly understanding the contents and developing their skills. In other words, practice and memorisation rather than the development of communicative skills appeared to be seen by students (and also teachers) as the requirements for success in the SEE English test.

The findings of the study also suggest that students' attitudes towards a test affect their language learning or test preparation practices (Poorsoti & Asl, 2015). As discussed in 5.1, most students had a belief that they had to memorise answers to be able to perform well on the test and they were actually doing the same for the test preparation.

7.1.2   Test Preparation Management Strategy

In order to explore the extent to what students use TPM strategies, four statements were included in the PostTQ 15. Students' responses are summarised in Figure 7.2 which indicates that the majority of students employed all four TPM strategies included in the questionnaire.

Figure 7.2: TPM strategies used for the test preparation

TPM strategies used for the test preparation (N=226)

Legend: Strongly agree | Agree | Do not know | Disagree | Strongly disagree

Categories:
- I familiarised myself with the test contents.
- I analysed previous test papers to identify frequently assessed areas.
- I analysed score distribution to judge the relative importance of question types.
- I learnt test-taking strategies.
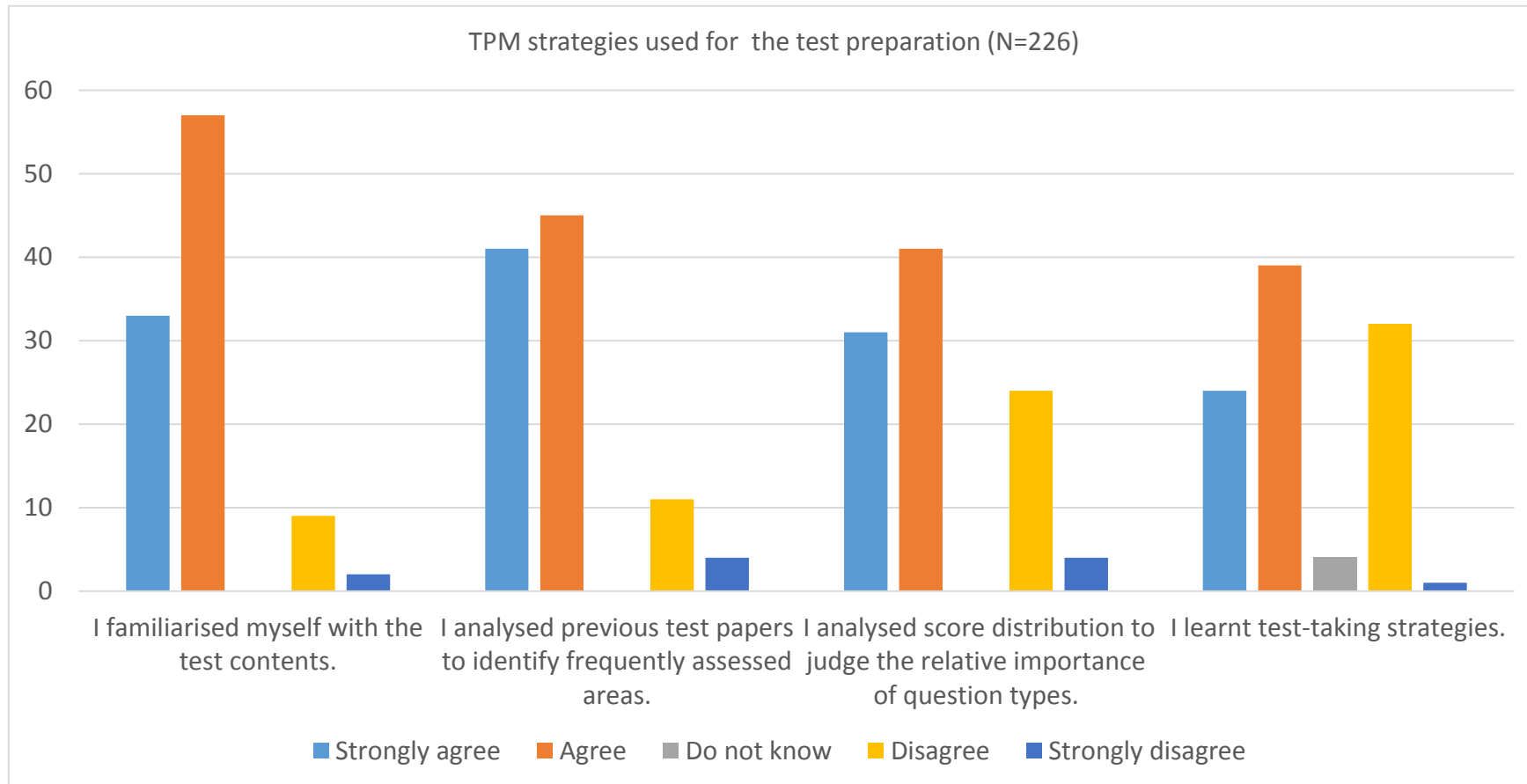
The quantitative results were somewhat supported by qualitative findings. All the case study students were found frequently practising three of the TPM strategies: Familiarising themselves with the test contents,

> *I have gone through previous test papers, Ten Sets and my text book. I have seen that long answer questions are mainly from unit three, six and twelve* (S3-D2).

analysing previous test papers to identify frequently assessed areas or questions,

> *I have also gone through the past test papers and found out the questions that are frequently asked in the test (S1-D5).*

> *I have even collected some SEE test papers to find out what sort of questions are repeatedly asked in the examination (S2-D1).*

and learning test-taking strategies:

> *I have learnt how to manage time during the test. I have a plan like to give around 10 minutes for short questions and 20 minutes for long questions* (S2-PreInt).

> *I have learnt a technique to write a job application letter that is common to all types of letters and how to guess answers in an unseen text* (S3-D5).

With regard to the analysis of score distribution in the question types, the majority of surveyed students reported that they used the strategy but only two of the case study students reported that they analysed score distribution to judge the relative importance of the question types.

The qualitative findings also indicated that students were encouraged to learn test-taking strategies by their teachers: *"Our teacher also has suggested us some test-taking strategies such as solving easy questions first and reading questions carefully before writing their answers"* (S6-D5).

Having brought both the quantitative and qualitative data together, this study has reflected into the use of TPM strategies in the SEE English test preparation. The triangulation of the data suggests that students used TPM strategies hugely to prepare themselves for the test.

Students' diaries provided further explanations for using TPM strategies. For instance, there were some indications that teachers encouraged students to learn TPM strategies.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study indicated that almost all of the students used TPM strategies to prepare themselves for the test. These strategies were the second most frequently used strategies. Similar findings were reported by Xie (2013) that the Chinese EFL test-takers used TPM strategies to prepare themselves for a high-stakes EFL test.

There could be two tentative explanations for these findings. First, students seemed to be influenced by their teachers. Their diaries indicate that teachers tended to make efforts to train their students on how to take the test and also encouraged them to analyse test contents. As Giri (2011) points out, schools and teachers in Nepal are mainly concerned with training their students with exam tactics and equipping students with well-prepared answers in order to improve their test scores. Second, questions asked in the SEE unfailingly get repeated year after year (Budhathoki et al., 2014). This might have encouraged them to analyse the test contents and the previous test papers.

However, it is somehow not clear the extent to which the SEE candidates analysed the score distribution to judge the relative importance of the question types in the test as the quantitative results are not well supported by qualitative findings.

7.1.3   Drilling

The PostTQ 15 included four statements to explore the extent to what the SEE students drilled for the test. Figure 7.3 summarises students' responses to each of the items, suggesting that the majority of students practised with the past test papers (38% strongly agreed, 48% agreed); composed essays using the SEE essay topics (42% strongly agreed, 32% agreed) and tried to improve their SEE reading speed (30% strongly agreed, 39% agreed). A substantial number of students took some other similar tests as well.

Figure 7.3: Drilling strategies used for the SEE English test preparation
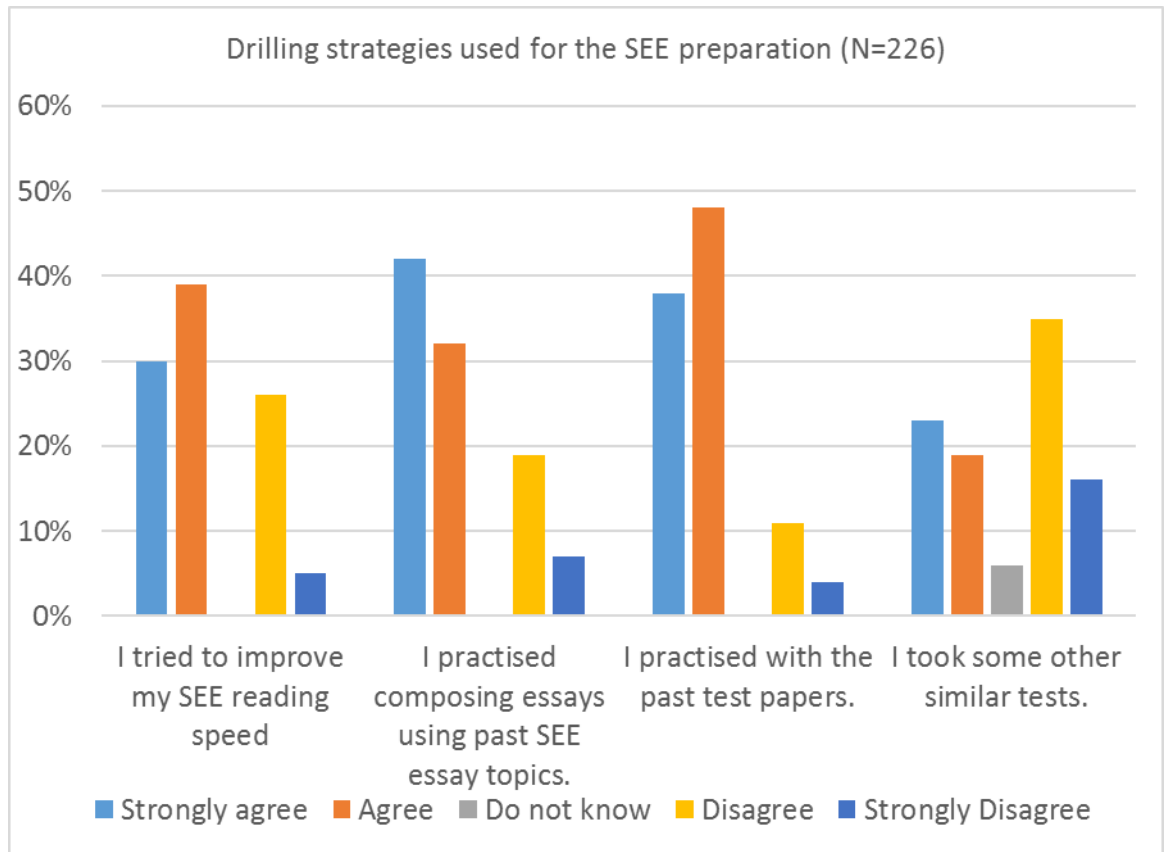
The quantitative results were not supported well by qualitative findings; there were some contradictions between the two findings. Very similar to quantitative results, the qualitative findings indicated that all the case study students frequently practised with old SEE questions: "*I have done most of the exercises from my SEE practice book and made notes of those questions*" (S6-D5). Even the first phase diaries indicated that they were practising with old questions.

However, with regard to the use of mock test, there were some contradictions between the two findings. The survey results indicated that just about one third of students took mock tests but all the case study students reported that they took such tests for a number of times in their schools when the test grew closer: "*Our teacher would ask us to take so many tests*" (S1-PostInt); "*Last year, I took so many other tests which were similar to the SEE English test*" (S6-PostInt).

Furthermore, the majority of surveyed students reported that they practised composing essays using the past SLC/SEE papers but the case study students (except S6) were found rarely composing essays using the past papers (or any other topics). Instead, they were found memorising the SEE essay topics:

On Monday, I tried to memorise the essay on 'Pollution' that was in the SEE practice book. I became very happy for being able to memorise the whole essay. Then, on Tuesday I repeated it and also wrote it on a separate piece of paper (S4-D5).

I did not try to write any essays on my own. Actually, I was not able to write long answers on my own. So, I would just memorise essays that were asked in the past SEE and then write them on my notebook (S3-PostInt).

During the interviews, it was revealed that they would consider it as their essay writing practice, as indicated in the following excerpts:

Researcher: *In the questionnaire, you have mentioned that you used to write answers in English. What did you use to write?*

S2*: I used to write letters and some question answers that our teacher would ask us to write. I also used to write essays.*

Researcher: *Wow, that's great. You even tried to write essays on your own.*

S2: A*ctually, I would first read the answers many times so that I could memorise them. Then, I would write them to know how much of those answers I could remember.*

Similarly, the survey results suggested that the majority of students seemed to make efforts to improve their reading speed but the case study students (except S1 and S3) did not make much effort to improve their reading speed.

To reiterate, both the qualitative and quantitative data were gathered to explore the extent to which the SEE candidates use drilling strategies to prepare themselves for the English test. Despite the fact that the two data sets did not support each other in most cases, students' diaries reflected the extent to which the students used drilling strategies during the academic year. Furthermore, their interviews were very much helpful to understand the reasons behind some contradictory findings. Had the students not been interviewed, it would not have been possible to understand how they drilled with the past SEE papers to be able to write texts in English such as essays and letters.

Discussion of the findings

The overall findings of this study indicate that students frequently used drilling strategies. This finding echoes the finding reported by Xie (2013) that the Chinese EFL test-takers heavily used drilling as a key strategy for CET preparation. Gosa (2004) also reported that the Romanian secondary students felt a strong need to practise exam related tasks and contents. Indeed, practising with past papers and mock tests are the two most common test preparation strategies in several countries (Huang, 2010). In the Nepalese context, high use of drilling strategies at home by the SEE students seems to be a result of their classroom practices. Bashyal (2018) also contends that drilling is one of the most frequent activities in the Nepalese ELT classrooms, particularly at the secondary level.

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that the vast majority of students frequently practised with the past test papers. This finding suggests that the collections of past and mock test are probably the two most popular and most profitable SEE materials sold in the Nepalese market. There are also some unofficial collections available in the Nepalese market. The lucrative practice of publishing the SEE preparation materials is an indicative example of the social and or economic impact of the SEE. Looking at this practice from another angle, test preparation practices have been largely affected by publishing industries.

With regard to the contradictions between the quantitative and qualitative findings, there are several indications that the contradictions seem to have emerged from students' understanding. For instance, all the case study students seemed to memorise essays and also write them down. By doing this, they considered that they were practising to compose essays. The surveyed students also might have similar practices and understanding when they were responding to the questionnaire. With regard to the use of mock test (i.e. the quantitative results suggested that just about one third of the surveyed students took mock tests but all the case study students reported that they took such tests for a number of times) it can be assumed that the surveyed students may have misunderstood what the question in the survey referred to.

7.1.4   Language Skills Development Strategies

In order to explore the extent to which students used LSD strategies, six statements were included in the PostTQ 15. Students' responses have been summarised in Figure 7.4, which suggests that students did not use LSD strategies much. Among the six strategies, they

employed only two strategies (reading English books and writing in English); four other strategies were rarely used.

Figure 7.4: LSD strategies used for the test preparation

LSD strategies used for the test preparation (N=226)
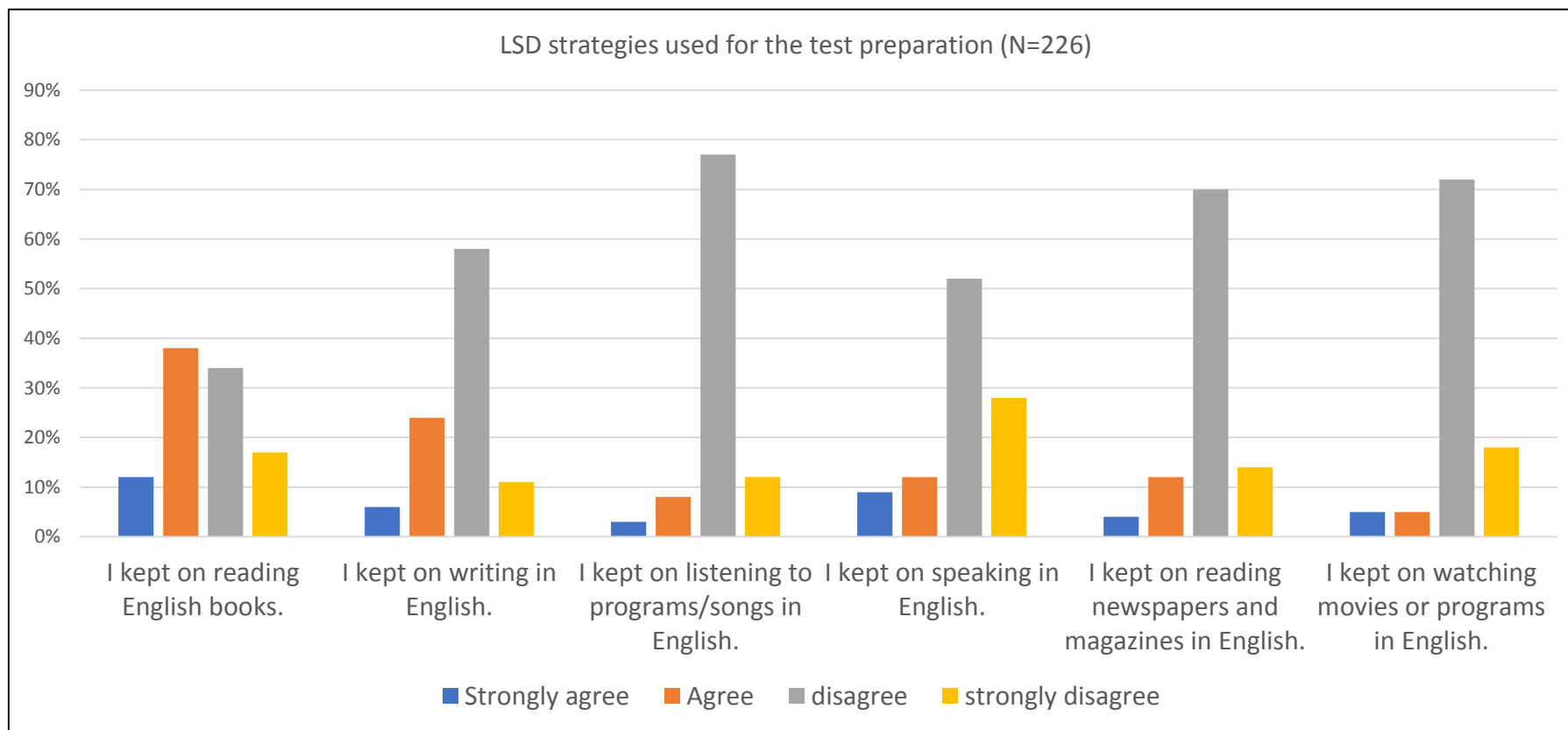
The quantitative results were supported by qualitative findings but the qualitative findings related to LSD strategies are not clear. Four of the students limited their reading to the SEE contents throughout the year. The books used by them included Grade 10 English textbook, the SEE preparation book, Ten Sets (i.e. the collection of SEE papers), Essay Composition Book and Pocket Dictionary (the SEE vocabulary). However, the first phase diaries recorded by two students indicate that they were frequently reading English books: "*On Monday, I read some essays and stories […]. I am really interested in reading story books in English*" (S6-D2)*; "I am spending more time on reading books these days. I read the story books that I have at home. Yesterday, I also went to our library and borrowed two story books and I read them*" (S1-D4).

Interestingly, these two students' reading was also limited to the SEE related books when the test grew closer and they rarely practised writing in English. Indeed, some students, if not all, did not seem interested in reading English texts and writing in English because of their low proficiency in English:

> *I really do not like reading stories or essays in English as I cannot understand them* (S2-D2).

> *On Monday, our home work was to write an essay on Youth and Education but I was not able to write essay on my own. I found the essay in the SEE Practice book so I just copied the answer from there (*S5-D6).

> *Our teacher had asked us to write an essay on 'Agriculture in Nepal' but we were not able to write the essay. So, he wrote the essay on the blackboard and asked us to memorise the essay* (S3-D8).

The above excerpts indicate that most students were only reading about the writing components without actually writing answers themselves and they did not make much effort to develop their reading and writing skills in English.

Four of the students were found frequently listening to songs in English during the first phase of the diary recording:

> *I listened to English songs for about 30 minutes almost every day […] I love listening to English songs. I also think that I can improve my listening and speaking*

skills in English, if I keep on listening to English songs. I can also learn so many new words through those songs (S3-D2).

They tended to listen to English songs less frequently when the exam grew closer; the two other students rarely listened to the songs throughout the year. Similarly, the first phase diaries indicated that four of the students tended to watch movies in English at the beginning of their academic year but they rarely watched movies in English when the exam grew closer:

> *Last Sunday, I watched an English movie which was about 2 hours long. I sometimes watch English movies because I like the stories* (S1-D2).

> *I love watching English movies with my friends. My friends sometimes help me to understand the meaning when I am lost. I think, watching movies is a good way to improve English* (S3-D3).

> I *used to watch movies like twice a week in my computer that time but I stopped watching the movies when the exam was closer* (S6-PostInt*).*

Moreover, one of the students (S1) also used to watch some videos in English that were particularly designed for learning English during the first few months of the year: *"I also watched some videos in English. I think, those videos help me to improve my English"* (S1-D4). However, she stopped watching them when the test grew closer.

In a manner consistent with the quantitative results, the case study students did not practise speaking skills much. Only three students (high achieving students) were found practising English (but not very frequently) during the first phase of diary recording and they rarely practised English speaking when the exam grew closer. They did not even seem confident enough to speak English: "*I just feel shy to speak English. I get scared to speak English as I think that I make so many mistakes*" (S3-PreInt). Indeed, students' diaries suggest that listening and speaking skills were not focused in their class. "*Our teacher also does not teach listening and speaking. We do not do any listening and speaking activities in our class"* (S3-PreInt).

Furthermore, none of the students (except S1) was found watching and/or listening to English programmes. Two of the students did not even have a television at home: "*I did not watch any programme in English as we do not have a TV at home"* (S4-PreInt).

Furthermore, three of the case study students (S2, S3, S5) did not read any newspapers and magazines: "*I did not read any newspapers in English. We do not find them in our village*" (S2-PostInt). However, the remaining three students were found occasionally reading newspapers and magazines in English. Their reading would also be mostly limited to vacancy announcements as one of the questions in their SEE would be related to vacancy announcement: "*I also read the Kathmandu Post for about 20 minutes. I just wanted to see the type of vacancy announcements given there. This is important for my SEE*" (S1-D5).

To reiterate, having brought both the quantitative and qualitative data together, this study has provided an in-depth understanding of the use of LSD strategies in the SEE English test preparation by the participants. The triangulation of the findings suggests that students did not use LSD strategies much to prepare themselves for the test. Students' diaries have captured the type of LSD strategies the students used in different stages of the academic year. Furthermore, had the students not been asked to record their diaries, it would have been almost impossible to understand the extent to which they used LSD strategies. Their interviews provided additional support to understand the reasons for not using some LSD strategies. For instance, two of the students did not watch any programmes in English as they did not have a television at home. Thus, qualitative findings supported to understand quantitative results in this study.

Discussion of the findings

The findings in general suggest that students did not use LSD strategies much and their reading and writing practices were limited to the SEE contents, particularly when the test was close. The findings are consistent with Xie's (2013) finding that the Chinese EFL learners did not use LSD strategies much when preparing for the CET. As reported by Cheng (1997), communicating with classmates, parents and teachers were among the least frequent activities the SEE students did. These findings suggest that students gave top priority to improve test scores, but not to develop their language skills.

It is interesting to see that their use of LSD strategies decreased as the test got closer. This indicates that when pressure builds up, 'softer' learning strategies are abandoned for 'hard core' test drilling. In other words, when tests get closer, students give up precisely those strategies that would promote more flexible and individual ways of learning.

As Davies (2015) pointed out, the inclusion of speaking test was considered to be an encouraging feature of the SEE English test since its focus was on the functional use of English rather than merely its academic study. However, the findings of the current study indicate that students rarely practised these skills as students knew that their teachers would give them high scores on the test, regardless of their performance.

One possible factor that discouraged the SEE students from speaking English would be that they were afraid of losing face in front of others. Davies (2015) also reported that the SLC students were understandably shy in their use of spoken English which might suggest that they were not used to speaking English.

There are some indications that participants in this study share concerns of learners in other EFL contexts that there exists very little opportunity to practise listening and speaking in school that leads them to ignore the practice of those skills (Shih 2007). Nevertheless, it is not entirely sure that this was true as I neither observed their classes nor collected data from their teachers. However, students' diaries suggest the position. Thus, it is important to ensure that the SEE speaking test has a positive impact on SEE students' English skill development and a marked effect on encouraging them to improve their listening and speaking skills in English.

Contrary to Cheng's (1997) finding that the Hong Kong EFL learners frequently watched movies and read newspapers in English, Watching TV and reading newspapers or magazines in English were the other least frequent activities among the SEE candidates. To explain this difference, the social and/or economical differences between the Hong Kong and the Nepalese contexts need to be considered. Students in this study did not frequently read newspapers and magazines as they were not easily available in their village. Similarly, they did not watch TV programmes in English much as they did not have access to those programmes; two of the students did not even have a television at home.

7.1.5 Socio-Affective Strategies

The PostTQ 15 included three statements with an aim of exploring the type of socio-affective strategies students used for the test preparation. Figure 7.5 summarises students' responses to each of the statements suggesting that the majority of surveyed students did not use socio-affective strategies when they were preparing for the SEE English test; the mean score in each of the statements was low (M=/<2.60).

Figure 7.5: Socio-affective strategies used for the SEE English test preparation
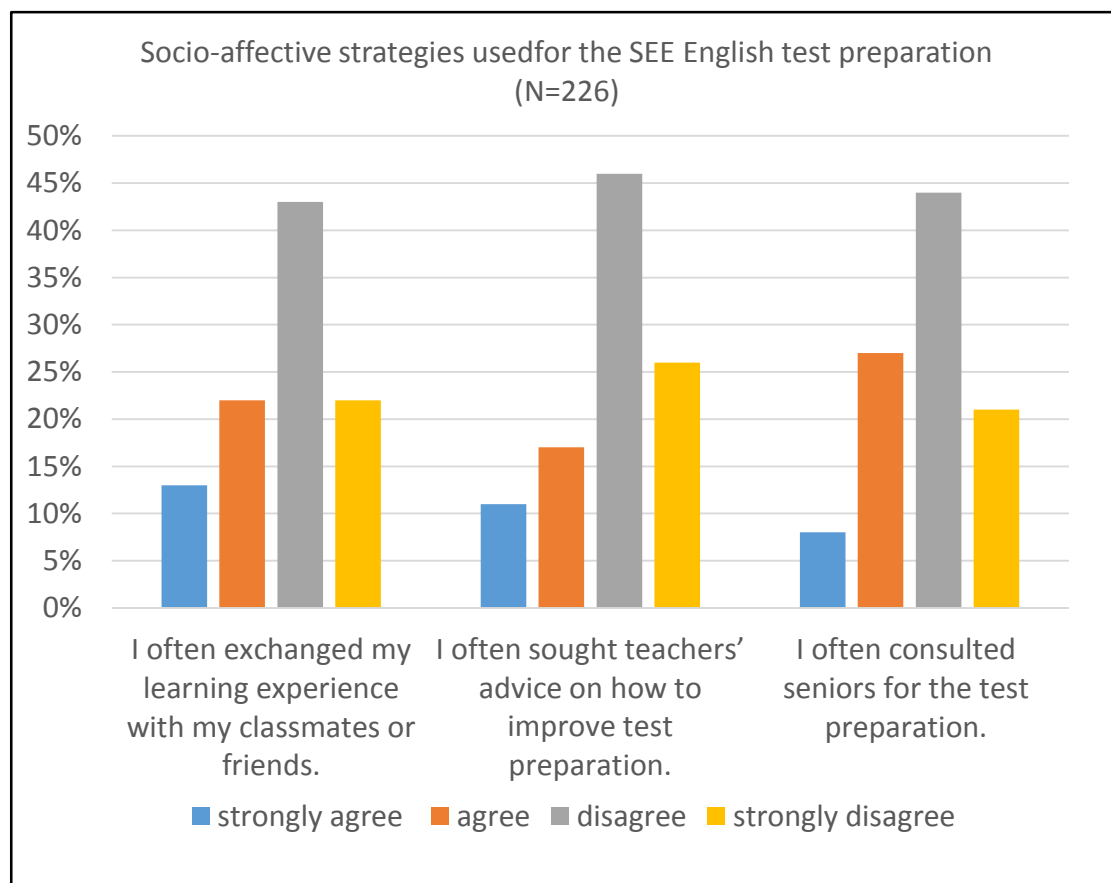
The quantitative results were not clearly supported by qualitative findings. The students in general did not exchange their learning experiences with their classmates or friends: "*I never shared my experience of learning English with my friends. I never asked questions to my friends as they were also not good at English*" (S3-PreInt); "*I would rarely take help from my friend*" (S4-PostInt).

Furthermore, although more than one third of participants reported that they sought teachers' advice, none of the case study students sought for teachers' advice on how to improve test scores: "*Our teacher is very strict. I always feel scared to talk with him*" (S5-PreInt); *"I do not* take my teacher's suggestion for the test preparation" (S6-PostInt). It was also found that students did not feel it necessary to seek advice from their teachers as their teachers would give them all the necessary information in the classroom: "*I did not take suggestions personally from my teachers about this as he used to tell everything in our class*" (S1-PreInt).

However, all the case study students (except S1) were found consulting their seniors: *"I sometimes talk to seniors about the test preparation. They tell me what type of questions*

are asked on the test" (S2-PreInt). Interestingly, they even took help from their neighbours and relatives: *"Yesterday, I went to my neighbour's home to learn English as* he is also an English teacher in another *school"* (S1-D1); *"I sometimes take help from one of my relatives to learn English"* (S3-D2).

Despite the fact that the quantitative results were not clearly supported by qualitative findings, and vice versa, this study has reflected well on the use of socio-affective strategies in the SEE preparation. The qualitative data were useful to dig more into the issues. Had the students not been asked to record their diaries, the fact that they took help even from their relatives and neighbours would not have been revealed.

Discussions of the findings

The overall findings of the study indicate that students did not frequently use socio-affective strategies. Contrary to the findings reported by Allen (2016) that EFL students in Japan seek advice from their peers and also share their beliefs, the SEE candidates made very little use of friends as a source of knowledge in the test preparation process. This finding might suggest that the Nepalese students do not usually value friend's knowledge for the test preparation. One of the tentative explanations for this finding would be associated with their classroom practices in the Nepalese schools which usually promote rote memorisation rather than communication. Despite the fact that "students generally enjoy group work more than individual work" (Life, 2011, p.27), most teachers in Nepal do not usually conduct pair or group work in their classroom. So, students rarely get an opportunity to share their learning experiences with their friends. For instance, Bashyal's (2018) exploration on the ELT practices in the secondary schools of Nepal indicated only a few examples of role play and group and pair work; teachers "allowed very little time for student talking, there is almost 80% teacher talking time in the classroom" (p.227).

Students' hesitation to seek suggestions from their teachers on how to increase their test score could be a result of academic hierarchy and a cultural practice in Nepal. Teachers are always in a higher rank than their students in the Nepalese honorific hierarchy and they simply seem interested in maintaining a formal relationship with their students. As Bhattrai (2014) points out, a significant gap between students and teachers always remains in Nepal, in terms of collaboration and interaction; teachers might feel that they lose the admiration and respect of students by being friendly with their students. Budhathoki et al. (2014) also argue that students in the Nepalese classroom study in a subdued manner and

they perceive their teachers to be superior. This means that there is a lack of informal bonding between teachers and their students. Consequently, students are reluctant to talk to their teachers as they may feel apprehensive about confronting their teachers. Students' interaction with their teachers might also depend on teachers' personal characteristics. One of the quotes presented above indicates that teachers do not sound friendly enough to their students. However, teachers seemed to provide all the necessary information to their students.

Interestingly, the study further indicated that students took help even from their relatives and neighbours. None of the previous studies have reported the use of such strategies by students for learning English. One of the tentative explanations for this finding would be that, contrary to many other countries, Nepalese societies have a good bonding among the people living there. As they are living in good harmony, it seems quite common for them to take or give help among the people.

7.1.6 Additional Strategies

In addition to the five major strategies mentioned in the previous sections, students tended to use several other strategies. This section is devoted to present and discuss those strategies.

Among those strategies, doing homework and revising lessons regularly were the two most common strategies used by the case study students: "*Last week, I spent a lot of time for English subject. I did home work every day and also revised some lessons*" (S2-D2). An additional strategy used by all the case study students was note making: "*I have been making notes of the answers which are important for the SEE*" (S6-D1).

Moreover, all the case study students took extra coaching classes. PostTQ16 was designed to find out whether or not students took any tuition or coaching classes for the test preparation. In the Nepalese context, both tuition and coaching classes refer to some extra classes students take for a test preparation. Tuition classes usually enrol very few students (ideally five to six students per class) whereas coaching classes are usually large. Therefore, tuition classes are more expensive than coaching classes.

The quantitative results indicated that almost all the students (95%) took coaching classes run by their school teachers and 9% students also took some private tuition classes.

Figure 7.6: Tuition/coaching classes taken by students for the test preparation
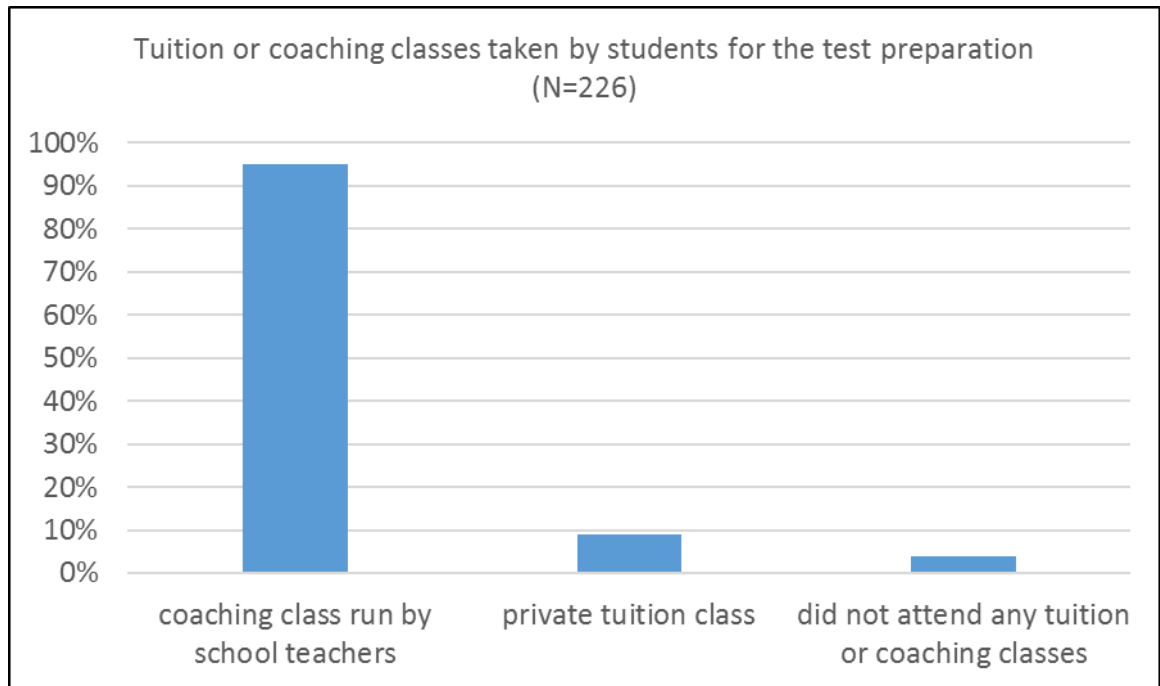
The quantitative results were supported well by qualitative findings. All the six case study students had taken coaching classes in their own school for a minimum of eight months. Two of the students (S4 and S5) even stayed in the school accommodation for three months just before the SEE.

The diaries indicated that coaching classes would usually focus on test contents and test-taking skills and they would be mostly repeating what students did at school, such as learning test contents, practising with previous tests and using materials that mimic the test. Among the contents, grammar exercises, short question answers and vocabulary learning were most frequently learnt:

> *Last week, I also went to take tuition classes every day. In the classes, we repeated what we had already learnt in our classes. We did a lot of grammar exercises and also learnt so many new words* (S1-D5).

Indeed, students practised only the contents that were likely to appear in the examination.

To reiterate, the triangulation of the data indicates students' over dependence on tuition classes for the test preparation and qualitative data provided further support to dig more into the test preparation practices. If the qualitative data was not gathered, this study would not be able to reveal the fact that students took tuition classes throughout the academic

year and used several strategies (such as revising lessons and doing homework regularly) to prepare themselves for the test.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study are consistent with Misra et al.'s (2013) claim that the SLC students over depend on additional tuition classes. Additionally, such practices have been reported by other test impact studies conducted in different contexts. For instance, Li et al. (2012) report that over 75% of the Chinese EFL learners took coaching classes for the CET preparation. Huang (2010) adds that coaching has been a popular form of test preparation in China. Similar practices are found among the Korean EFL learners (Kim, 2016). Furthermore, sending children to tuition classes is a common practice in Bangladesh (Hamid, Sussex & Khan, 2009) and in Japan (Ingulsrud, 1994). Indeed, private tutoring has recently been "a common phenomenon in ESL/EFL education in many parts of the world" (Hamid et al., 2009, p.280).

The findings of this study indicated that students practised only the contents that were likely to appear in the examination. Similar findings were reported by previous studies. For instance, Xie (2015) found that the CET students spent more time on the components with higher weight and less time on those with lower weight. Li et al. (2012) further reported that CET students were willing to put more efforts on the language skills or contents most heavily weighted in the test. Gosa (2004) also found that the Romanian secondary students felt a strong need to practise exam related tasks intensively.

The findings of this study further indicated that the SEE candidates used several other strategies, such as doing homework regularly, revising lessons and making notes, to prepare themselves for the SEE. Similar findings are reported by Carless and Lam (2014) that students in Hong Kong revise lessons and do homework regularly to prepare themselves for their tests.

7.2 Time Spent on Test Preparation

PostTQ 17 was designed to investigate how much time students spent for the test preparation. The survey results, summarised in Figure 7.7, indicate that the overwhelming majority of students (85%) spent more than 100 hours in total (excluding their regular class hours in their school).

Figure 7.7: Hours spent on test preparation (excluding regular class hours)
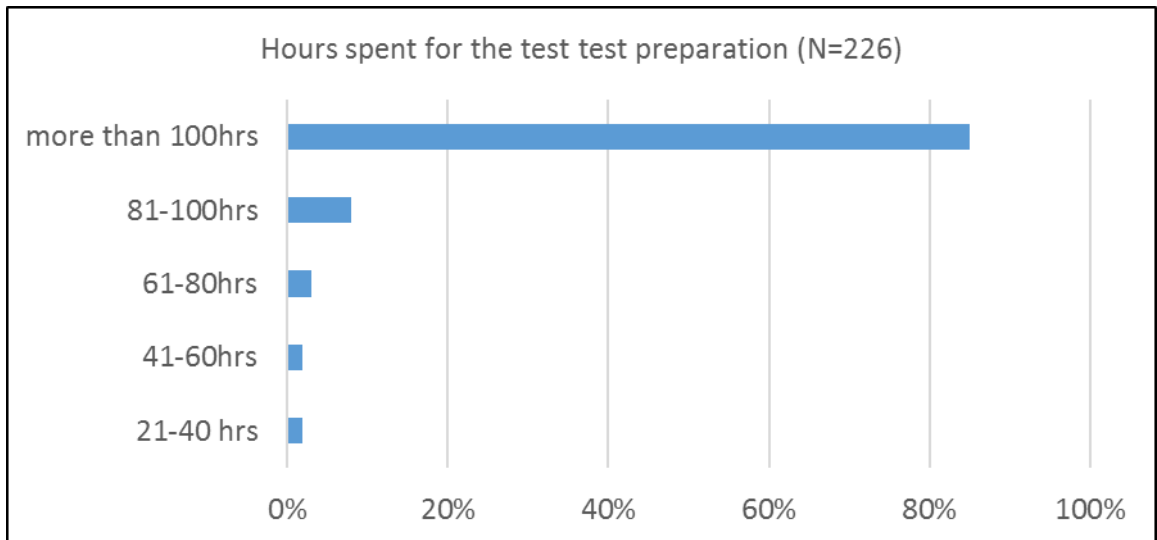
The quantitative results were supported by the qualitative findings. All the case study students reported that they spent more than 100 hours for the test preparation: " *I spent more than 100 hours for the test preparation. I really worked hard for the test*" (S6-PostInt); "*English is the most difficult subject for me. So, I spent more time to this subject than to other subjects. I really cannot tell you how much time I spent for this subject*" (S2-PostInt). Students' first phase diaries indicated that they spent around four hours a week while the second phase diaries indicated that they roughly spent seven hours a week, suggesting that they spent more time for learning English when the test grew closer.

Students were also asked to report the time when they started to prepare for the test. Figure 7.8 summarises students' responses.

Figure 7.8: The time students started to prepare for the test
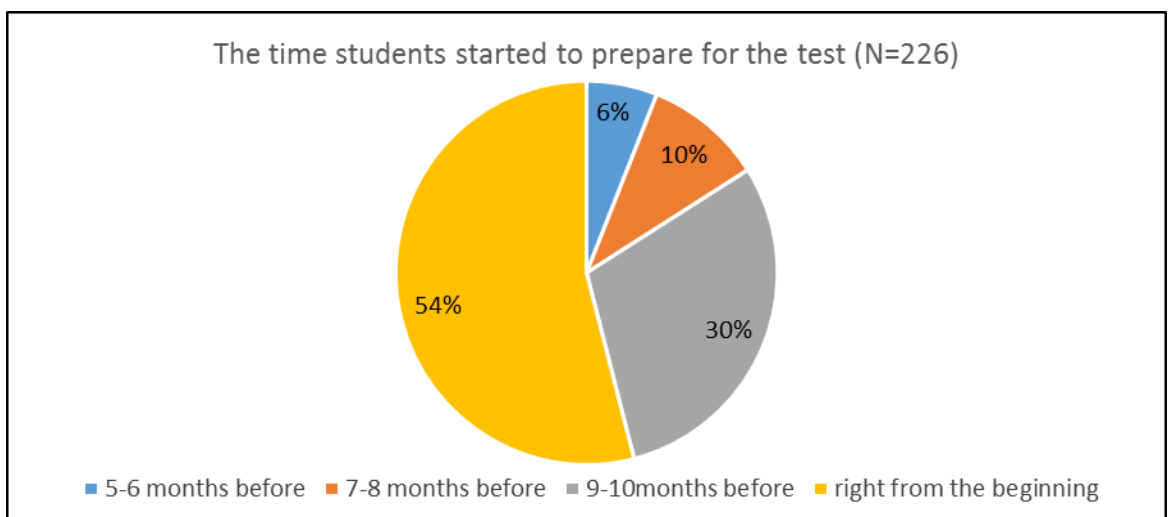
Interestingly, more than half of the survey students (54%) reported that they started to prepare themselves for the test right at the beginning of the academic year and about one third of the students (30%) started about 9 to 10 months before the test. The quantitative results were well supported by the qualitative findings. All the case study students (except S6) reported that they started to prepare for the test right at the beginning of the academic year: "*I started to prepare myself for the test as soon as I began to study at Grade 10 as I had to take the SEE this year*" (S2-PostInt).

Thus, the triangulation of the findings indicated that students spent a huge amount of money and time for the test preparation. However, their post-test survey (in which students were asked to report the Grade they received in the SEE English test) indicates that most of them performed poorly on the test.

Discussion of the findings

The findings suggest that students spent a huge amount of money and time for the test preparation. These findings provide further evidence to Bhattrai's (2014) claim that the examination "has been made a scary beast/monster" by teachers/schools, parents and mass media (p.13). My own experience also tells me that the SLC year was the most fearful and stressful year in my whole academic career, and I had spent a huge amount of time to prepare myself the test.

Previous studies have indicated a connection between the time spent for a test preparation and the test performance. For instance, Basol and Zabun (2014) claimed that students who took test preparation courses for a longer time outperformed their peers who took the courses for a shorter time in Turkey. However, the SEE students did not perform well on the test although they spent a huge amount of money and time for the test preparation.

7.3 Summary on Test Preparation Strategies and Time Spent for Test Preparation

The findings of this study suggest that the majority of students spent a significant amount of time on test preparation. However, the test seemed to tempt (teachers and) students "into practices that have limited value in relation to long-term learning goals" (Green, 2013, p.41). Memorisation was the most popular strategy but the strategies that develop their language skills were scarcely used, particularly when the test grew closer. They were learning only the test contents that were likely to appear in the test. This suggests that the

SEE drives (teaching and) learning in the direction of memorising and drilling for what is required in the examination which Cheng (1998) calls 'superficial' influence (p.297).

Thus, the major purpose of the Grade 10 English curriculum, i.e. to develop communicative proficiency in English, has not been achieved. In other words, learning for the SEE test has not succeeded in causing the SEE candidates to shift their focus from linguistic knowledge to the learning of language use.

The study also provides evidence to Xie and Andrews's (2012) argument that the washback of a test is more direct and observable during the test preparation. Although many students started the test preparation as soon as they began to study at Grade 10, the washback was more observable when the test grew closer. Hence, this study provides further support to the claim that the time of year is a washback factor (e. g. Wall & Alderson 1993; Watanabe, 1996).

To reiterate, despite the fact that the SEE had significant negative impacts in the Nepalese society, there were obviously some strengths of the assessment in the social dynamics that could be harnessed to bring about improvement. For instance, parents had a great commitment to helping their children. If schools can make an effective co-ordination with parents, provide them all the necessary information about the assessment process and train them on how to support their children in learning, parents may involve themselves in children's learning in a better way and that might have positive effects on students' learning. The findings also indicate that the assessment practice has developed a culture of study discipline. As the students had willingness to achieve, they were self-motivated to learn for the test. Because of this, they had developed good study habits during the test preparation time. The assessment also created close-knit communities where neighbours and relatives were willing to help students for the test preparation.

7.4   **Parental Involvement in Test Preparation**

PI in this study refers to the activities that parents performed to support their children for the preparation of the test. In order to explore the nature of PI in test preparation, all the case study students and their parents, during both the pre-test and post-test interviews, were asked a few questions about how parents supported their child. Furthermore, an open-ended question was included in the post-test questionnaire (i.e. PostTQ15) and relevant information found in students' diaries was also considered.

It was found that all the parents, irrespective of their education background, provided support to their child for the preparation of the test. However, the nature of support provided by parents with high education and the parents with low education seemed different in some cases. In order to capture all kinds of parental support to their child, eight different sub-themes have been developed. Each of the sub-themes has been presented and discussed below.

7.4.1 Valuing Own Roles in Test Preparation

Analysis of this sub-theme suggests that parents had the feelings of being co-responsible for the test preparation process. In other words, they considered themselves to be an important part of the process. They reported that test preparation is a matter for both parents and child as suggested by the excerpts below:

> *I think, children cannot be successful if they do not have parents' support […] So, in my case I understand that supporting my child for the test preparation is my responsibility too* (P6-PreInt).

> *We should not depend only on teachers. I think, we have an equal responsibility to prepare our children for the test. I also think that children's learning depends on the relationship between teachers, parents and students* (P1-PreInt).

These findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Mulvenon et al., 2005; Osburn et al., 2004) that parents feel responsible to support their children to raise test scores. Test preparation becomes a part of PI when parents hold a belief that they can play an important role in test preparation. It is interesting to know that even the parents with low education (the parents who have never gone to school and cannot read and write in English) in this study had a belief that test preparation is a joint venture.

It is important that parents understand the elements of the task to be able to support learning properly (Aldemar et al., 2016). Although parents want to take responsibility for preparing their children for a high-stakes EFL test, it may not be an easy job for most parents. Nevertheless, it can be argued that although parents with low education cannot directly support children for test preparation, there might be a chance that cultural values could support learning (Lee & Bowen, 2006). For instance, home rules and values about learning may also support learning for a test.

Social interactions between children and parents at home may serve as a source of social capital that may favour students' learning; "social capital can be understood as the ways in which students benefit by being members of social networks that provide them with positive role models, encouragement, support and advice" (Kim, 2011, p.16). Parental support and advice for the test preparation may always favour children's learning and test performance.

7.4.2   Shaping Children's Mind towards the English Language and the Test

The theme 'shaping children's mind towards English language and the SEE English test' in this study refers to parents' attempt to influence their children's attitudes towards the English language and the test. It was found that all the parents attempted to instil positive attitudes in their children's mind towards learning English and preparing for the test, highlighting the profound importance of the English language and the test in their children's future:

> *Although I have never gone to school, I understand that English is one of the most important subjects for her. So, I have asked her to learn English well* (P2-PreInt). *I have told her that the SEE is an iron gate for students. If she cannot do well on the test, her future will be dark* (P1-PreInt).

Interestingly, parents used to tell both successful and unsuccessful stories to motivate their children for learning English. For instance, they would give their own examples that they lost so many opportunities in their lives because of the lack of skills in English language: "*My father is in a foreign country now. He tells me that if he were able to speak English, he would get better salary there*" (S2-PreInt). They would also give examples of some successful people:

> *I also give her examples of some successful people from our own village. For instance, one of our neighbours is an English teacher in a university and he is well respected in our village"* (P1-PreInt).

Furthermore, they tried to build up their child's confidence: "I would always ask him not to lose hope and feel confident that he can also do well on the test" (P3-PostInt).

These findings suggest that the social milieu, especially the parents in Nepal, influence children's motivation towards learning English. Parents contribute to the development of such psychology in students' mind that students consider the SEE to be everything in their life (Bhattrai, 2014). This is evidenced by the fact that students echoed their parents' views about the reasons for learning English. For instance, all the students reported that it was their parents who motivated them to learn English telling them about the importance of the language (e. g. S1-D5, S6-D2), job opportunities it might offer (e. g. S1-PreInt, S4-D5), the prospect of getting opportunity to go abroad (S2-D4) and to be successful in their life (e. g.S1-PreInt).

7.4.3 Providing Learning Conditions at Home

The sub-theme 'providing learning conditions at home' in this study refers to parents' role to facilitate EFL learning mainly by being providers of required information and help, or by being engaged with the activities that their children did in English (thus nurturing language learning) or by providing materials and/or resources needed for learning English. For instance, children sometimes asked their parents about the information required for performing a task and parents helped them with the necessary information. In those conditions, parents' role was an information provider. Sometimes, parents and children would work together to perform a task for learning (teaching) English; in such moments parents were playing a role of a language nurturer.

Parents in this study were found as active agents in providing learning opportunities at home and facilitating test preparation though some differences could be observed between the parents with high education and the parents with low education. It was found that parents in this study provided learning conditions at home in five different ways. First, they provided information needed to perform a task:

> *On Wednesday, we were asked to write about the importance of education but I found it very difficult to write. I asked my father to help me. He told me some important points and I wrote the essay* (S6-D2).

Second, parents were closely involved in their child's learning by being with them (i.e. nurturing language learning):

> *I was practising with the SEE model questions but all those questions were very difficult for me. So, I asked my father to help me. We read the essay together and tried to find the answers* (S1-D6).

> *On Saturday, I watched an English video with my father. We sometimes watch English videos together* (S6-D4).

Third, they provided learning materials or resources needed for the test preparation: "*I have bought so many books for him […] I have bought whatever book he needs for the test preparation*" (P3-PreInt); "*My parents bought all the necessary things needed for the test preparation*" (S18-PostSur).

Fourth, they often created peaceful/favourable environment at home for learning English: "*We do not even watch the television with a loud volume when she is home thinking that it disturbs her. We also ask her sister not to speak loudly when she is studying*" (P5-PreInt), "*My parents also created a peaceful environment at home*" (S215-PostSur).

Finally, they encouraged their children to spend time just for their study. None of the parents asked their children to support them for farming and other works or household chores. The children's job was just to study: "*I have not asked her to help me this year. I do everything myself and I just let her study at home*" (P2-PreInt). "*Last year, my job was just to study. I did not have to do any chores*" (S127-PostSur).

Thus, the findings in this study indicated that parents tried their best to provide learning conditions at home. All the parents expressed their willingness to provide time, learning materials and other resources that facilitate children's learning. They also provided direct support to their child for learning English, such as supporting them to do homework. As Aldemer et al. (2016) pointed out, the findings suggest that "parents can be a big source of help, and such help can take the form of material and non-material things, both human, and other resources" (p.160).

There were some differences in the ways parents with high education and parents with low education supported their child for the test preparation. It is obvious that the first two strategies, providing information and nurturing language learning, were limited to parents with high education. Furthermore, individual differences were observed with regard to providing resources to their children. It was found that all the case study students had the English text book and some other test preparation materials (see 7.1 for detail). However,

only P1 (the parent with high education) provided her child with some CDs and DVDs for watching videos and movies in English and only two of the parents (P1, P6- parents with high education) would occasionally buy newspapers in English.

7.4.4   Collaborating with Other People

The parents in this study tended to collaborate with other people to be able to support their children. One of the most common ways for them to get involved in test preparation was to finance English tuition or coaching classes for their children. As discussed in 7.1.6, almost all the students took coaching classes for the test's preparation.

All the parents (except P4 and P6) tended to collaborate with some other people in their community (particularly their neighbours and relatives) to support their child.

> *Last week, I visited my auntie's home to learn English and she helped me to answer some grammar related questions from the question collection book. My parents have requested her to help me for the test preparation* (S5-D3).

> *We have requested our neighbour, who is also an English teacher, to support our daughter for the preparation of the test* (P1-PreInt).

It was also found that the parents with high education, who were teaching in a school, would also be collaborating with their colleagues to support their children:

> *I found the questions very difficult to understand. So, I asked my father to help me with the questions. He also could not find the answers. He told me that he would discuss about this with an English teacher at his school. Then, he told me the answers in the evening* (S1-D5).

Furthermore, parents tended to collaborate with other people to provide the test related support to their child and sending their child to coaching classes was the most common practice among them.

Giri (2011) also argues that Nepalese parents make special efforts to make their children successful in the SLC by sending them to tuition classes. It can be assumed that this kind of supplemental education would cost a good deal of money but the parents were willing to make such sacrifice for their children's achievement. This might indicate that parents in Nepal are desperate to see their children's success on the test.

Similar findings have been reported by other test impact studies conducted in different ESL/EFL contexts. For instance, sending children to tuition classes or private preparation courses is a common practice in Japan (Insgulsrud, 1994) and Turkey (Basol & Zabun, 2014) and hiring tutors is a common practice in Israel (Ferman, 2004). Xuesong (2006) also reports that one of the most common ways for Chinese parents to get involved with their children's EFL learning is to finance private tuition classes.

It seems that parents' obsessions for making children successful in the SEE at any cost have spawned a coaching industry in Nepal. However, as Bhattrai (2014) reported, many parents in Nepal "cannot create a good learning environment at home and also cannot provide necessary support, such as tuition and coaching fees due to poverty (p.71)."

None of the previous studies have reported that parents also collaborate with other people, such as neighbours and relatives, to be able to support their children for the test preparation. There could be two tentative explanations for this finding. First, high level of collaboration with other people for the test preparation might have resulted from the cultural norms and practices prevailing in the Nepalese societies. Second, the parents were not able to support their children for the English test preparation. Even the parents with high education were not able to support their child in many cases. Therefore, it was some sort of compulsion for the parents to collaborate with other people in their community.

7.4.5 Sharing Experiences of the Test Preparation and Test-taking

It was quite common for those parents who had an experience of taking the test to start teaching their child about the test preparation strategies and test-taking skills. The parents with high education (except P6) tended to share their experience of learning English and taking the test:

> *Both of us share our own experience of preparing for the test* (P1-PreInt).

> *I teach him some test preparation techniques, such as collecting all the important questions and answers in a separate notebook, memorising those answers and improving reading speed […]. I also tell him to be careful during the test* (P3-PreInt).

Xuesong (2006) also reported that EFL parents in China, particularly those who were English teachers, tended to teach their children how to learn English. The parents who did

not necessarily have professional knowledge of English language teaching or learning also gave suggestions to guide their children's learning and strategy use.

However, unfortunately these two strategies were limited to the parents with high education as the parents with low education had no experience of learning English or taking the test. Even P6 (a parent with high education) did not share his experience of learning English or test preparation with his child as he thought that there had been a lot of changes in the ways English is taught, learnt and/or tested in the Nepalese schools.

> *I can see that there are so many changes in the way English is taught and learnt. In our time, we did not even have electricity at home, but now they have computers and also internet access. Even the examination system is different. We had more grammar related questions on the test but now there are more long answer questions. So, I do not like to share my experiences of the test with him* (P6-PreInt).

Nevertheless, the current study lacks information about how often the parents shared their experiences and to what extent their experiences were useful for their children.

7.4.6 Teaching Test Preparation and Test-Taking Strategies

It was not unusual for those parents who had experience of preparing for the test and also going through the test to teach test preparation strategies to their child but even the parents, who had no experience of learning English and taking the test, were also suggesting their child to use some test preparation strategies: "*I have heard that they have to memorise so many things for the test. So, I have suggested her to memorise as many answers as she can*" (P5-PreInt).

Two of the parents (P3, P6) tended to build up their child's confidence: "I would always ask him not to lose hope and feel confident that he could also do well on the test" (P3-PostInt).

Moreover, they tended to suggest their child to focus more on test contents: *"Right from the beginning of this year, we have suggested her to focus more on the test contents"* (P1-PreInt)*; "I always suggest my son to read all the important lessons for the test"* (P6-PreInt).

Parents with high education tended to teach even some test-taking skills to their child:

I have suggested him not to leave any question in the test [...] I have also suggested him to use a Nepali word and underline it, in case he does not know proper word in English (P6-PreInt).

I am teaching him some techniques for managing time during the test. I am also telling him to solve easy questions first (P3-PreInt).

They would also guess important questions for the test: *"My mother has guessed some important questions, especially essay topics, for the test. She has asked me to write or collect the answers of those questions"* (S3-D5). However, parents with low education did not seem to have knowledge about the test contents. It was also beyond their capacity to guess important questions for the test and teaching test preparation and test-taking skills to their child. Nevertheless, they used to suggest their child to use some strategies, such as memorising answers.

More importantly, the study observed very rare examples of parents encouraging their child to use language development strategies. As Joy (2013) reported, parents were apparently insisting too much on marks-driven procedures. Consequently, children also did not make much efforts to develop their language skills.

7.4.7 Coercing Children

Despite the fact that all the parents made great efforts to improve their child's performances on the SEE English test, three of the case study students (P1, P2, P3) had over-zealous parents who forced their children to employ certain strategies out of their convictions about test preparation and also forced their child to work really hard for the test. For instance, P1 and P3 (both parents with high education) forced their children to memorise so many answers including long essays without paying due attention to their child's interest:

My mother has asked me to memorise some long answers by rote. I must tell her the answers one day but I really do not like memorising such long answers (S3-D6).

When S3's mother was interviewed later, she reported:

I have asked him to memorise some important answers for the test. Actually, when I was preparing for the test, I would also memorise important answers (P3-PreInt).

The above excerpt indicates that the mother forced her child to use memorisation strategy out of her convictions about test preparation. Furthermore, they even guarded their child till late in the evening to ensure that their child works hard for the test: "*When she is at home, either I or my husband follow her all the time. We sit in her room till 11pm to make sure that she studies till the time*" (P1-PreInt).

This particular finding indicates that parents did not even care about their child's health during the test preparation time. Students were not even allowed to go to bed early (e.g. *my mother does not even allow me to go to bed on time*" (S2-D8).

The findings of the study corroborate Bhattrai's (2014) argument that most parents in Nepal impart their ideologies and thoughts onto their children without carefully listening to their children's needs and desires. Similar findings were reported by Xuesong (2006) that the parents in China would force their children to use rote memorisation for learning English.

The above situation might indicate that due to the value placed on the SEE, parents probably see no alternative and force their child to work hard for the test. The findings also suggest that parents lack knowledge about how to support their child and they are not aware of their child's health condition. Hence, there is a need to make parents aware of the health issues of their child and they might need some help to be able to support their child for the test preparation in a better way.

7.4.8 Controlling Child's Non-Academic Life

All the case study parents tended to control their children's non-academic life, particularly when the SEE grew closer. Those who had TV at home controlled their children's TV watching time (e.g. "*I am not allowed to watch TV these days. I even do not have time for watching TV*"- S1-D7) and all the parents did not even allow their child to visit their friends' and relatives' homes when the test grew closer (e.g. "*I am not allowed to go anywhere these days. I cannot even go to my friends' home. My job is just to study*"-S5-D7).

Parents in this study controlled their child's play time (e.g. my *mother does not allow me to go out to play- S3-D8)* and sleeping hour/ rest time as well:

When the examination was running, I would not sleep till 2 o'clock at night. I would listen to the radio using head phones and ask her to study. I just wanted to make sure that she is studying till the time. Then, I would wake her up at 4 O'clock (P2-PostInt).

It should be noted that any child loves playing and playing also keeps children healthy. Similarly, enough sleep is needed for a healthy life to anyone, particularly children need more sleep.

Georgiou (1999) reported similar findings that the parents in Cyprus controlled their children (sixth Graders) TV watching time. However, "the child's actual school achievement was directly related to the parental interest-developing behaviour but it was not significantly related to the parental controlling behaviour" (p.409). Nevertheless, the current study lacks information about the impacts of such kind of pressure on students' learning. Based on Georgiou's claim and the findings of the study, it can be argued that a careful step needs to be taken to make parents aware of their roles in the test preparation. They might need some training on how to support their children in a better way.

7.5   Summary on Parental Involvement in Test preparation

The findings of the current study are somehow consistent with Aldemar et al.'s (2016) claim that even when parents do not have a command of the English language, they have the potential to help with EFL learning from a non-linguistic point of view. In the current study, even the parents who had almost no knowledge of English endeavoured to get their children through the test. They adopted any means in order to enable their child to perform well on the test as the test holds the key to any walk of life in the Nepalese society and low performance on the test is a great loss of family prestige and resources (Giri, 2011). All the parents also believed that test preparation is a co-responsibility between students, teachers and parents.

Georgiou (1999) also argued that the parents who believed that their own role is important for their child's performance tended to be more supportive in developing their child's interest for learning English. Nonetheless, the current study observed some individual differences in terms of PI in the test preparation. For instance, the two strategies, sharing experiences of preparing for the test and taking the test, were, unsurprisingly, limited to the parents with high education.

High levels of PI might suggest the Nepalese parents' belief that EFL achievement depends on child's effort, as opposed to child's ability. Stevenson and Lee (1990) also argued, "when parents believe that success in school depends on ability in contrast to effort, they are less likely to foster participation in activities related to academic achievement" (p. 66). Despite their good will, most parents in this study did not necessarily provide a suitable environment in terms of getting enough rest and leisure time to reduce stress and improve productivity.

Parents (particularly the parents with low education) had little knowledge about the test. Cheng et al. (2010) argue that if parents have an opportunity to know about their children's test, they could provide better support to their children. So, it can be argued that had the Nepalese parents been better informed about the test, they might have provided better support to their children. In other words, Nepalese parents need to be better informed about what the assessment involves and its possible consequences to their child.

7.6   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings related to the test preparation practices. The findings showed that both students and their parents strove very hard for the successful performance on the test by hook or crook; they spend huge amount of money and time for the test preparation. Both students and their parents prioritised only on the strategies that they saw as being likely to increase test scores rather than developing their English language skills, particularly when the test grew closer. Parents made children work so hard that children did not even have good sleep and rest during the test preparation time. The study also evidenced that not only the students but also their parents work hard in order to achieve good results on the test. Therefore, this study questions the knowledge that the SEE English test was based upon. The test seems to prioritise memorisation and rote learning but over dependency on memorisation seems to result from the one-off examination practice. This suggests that, as Lynch (2001) rightly points out, an alternative assessment system needs to be introduced to overcome such problems.

Chapter Eight: Impacts on Educational and Career Development

This chapter presents the findings regarding the test impacts on students' educational and career development opportunities. In other words, it is devoted only to the post-test impacts of the test on students. Accordingly, two main themes have been developed: impacts on career development and impacts on educational development. The term 'career development' in this study refers to the chances that the SEE Grades offered the SEE passers for studying at the school of their choice and choosing the subject to study in higher secondary level whereas 'educational development' refers to the test related support for studying at higher secondary level, particularly where English is used as a medium of instruction. This study is aimed to explore the extent to which the SEE English test equipped students with the English language skills needed to cope with higher secondary education.

8.1   Impacts on Students' Career Development

As discussed in Chapter two, subject selection in higher secondary level largely depends on their SEE Grades. Additionally, higher secondary schools/colleges use the SEE Grades as one of the main criteria to select students. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the extent to which the SEE candidates get a chance to study in the school and the subject of their choice in higher secondary level and find a job after they complete the SEE. So, PostTQ 9 was designed (see Appendix 1B); students' responses to the question have been summarised in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1: SEE English test impact on career choices
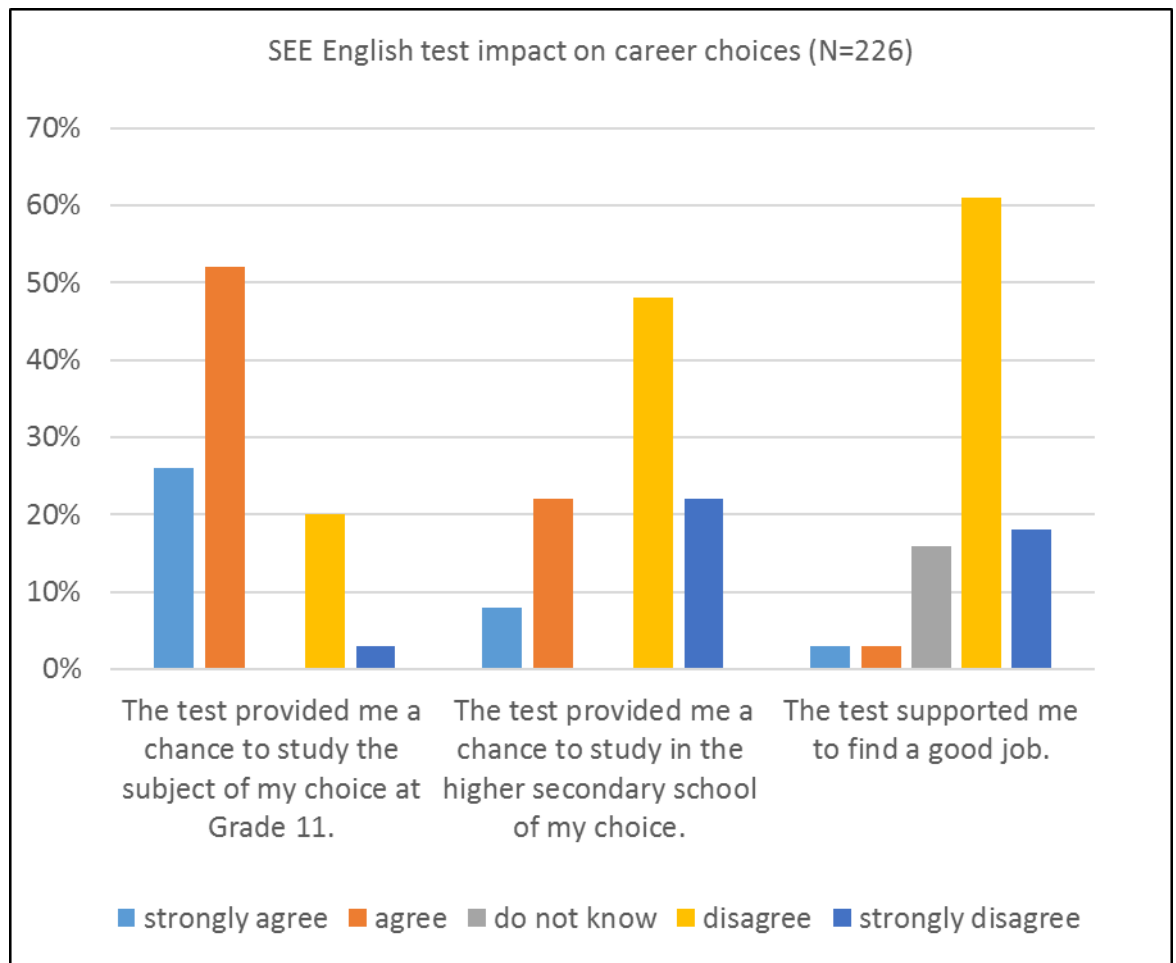
Figure 8.1 indicates that the test supported the majority of students to select the subject of their choice to study at higher secondary level but it did not support them to study in a higher secondary school of their choice and find a job. The results are reported in 5.2. A comparison of the results indicate that there was not a big gap between students' expectations and what really happened to their lives.

The quantitative results regarding the test related support to study the subject of their choice were, to some extent, supported by the qualitative findings. All the case study students reported that the test provided them an opportunity to study the subject of their choice: "*If I had obtained like C or D Grade on the test, I would not be allowed to study English as a major subject at Grade 11*" (S6-PostInt).

However, the quantitative results on the test related support to study in a higher secondary school/college of their choice were not supported by the qualitative findings. Four of the case study students reported that the test supported them to study in a higher secondary school/college of their choice: "*I have been studying in a good college now. I know that if I*

had not done well on the test, I would not get this opportunity" (S4-PostInt). Nonetheless, two of the case study students reported that the test did not support them to study in a higher secondary school of their choice:

> *Before getting admission at this school, I went to another school. I had heard that the school is very good. I was very much hopeful that I could get a chance to study in that school but I did not get any opportunity as they told me that my test results were not good enough. That made me really upset* (S3-PostInt).

The findings further indicated that the opportunities for students to study in a prestigious school/college seem to be affected by the socio-economic status of the parents: "*I wanted to go to a city and study in a better college but I did not get that opportunity as my mother is unable to pay money for that* (S2-PostInt).

The findings with regard to the job opportunities created by the test are also mixed. One of the case study students, who has been doing a job to finance his study, stated that the test supported him to find a job: "*I have a job now. I think, they saw my good grade on the test and offered me the job*" (S4-PostInt) but S2 reported that the test did not support her to find a job. Nonetheless, the rest of the case study students maintained that they did not look for a job as their family members wanted them to continue their studies: "*I did not try to find a job. My family members are telling me that I have to continue my study now*" (S5-PostInt); "*I think, it is not a good time to start a job as it may affect my study*" (S1-PostInt). However, they had a belief that the test supports them to find a job in future. Moreover, some surveyed students also reported that they did not look for a job as they wanted to continue their study.

Thus, the triangulation of the data indicates that the test supported students to study the subject of their choice. However, it is not clear about the extent to which the test supported them to study in a school of their choice and find a job as the quantitative findings were not well supported by qualitative findings, and vice versa. Nevertheless, qualitative data provided further explanations for students' views. For instance, the qualitative data reflected students' belief that getting admission in a prestigious school/college is affected by their parents' socio-economic status.

Discussion of the findings

The findings indicated that the test supported students to study the subject of their choice but it did not offer them chances to study in the school/college of their choice. This finding might depict a clear picture of the current admission practices in higher secondary schools/colleges in Nepal. In terms of the admission practices in those institutions, a clear gap between the two types of higher secondary schools/colleges (popular and unpopular) can be seen. My own experience indicates that many unpopular schools/colleges are in danger of bankruptcy because of the scarcity of students. So, they accept all the students who apply to the institutions but entering the prestigious schools/colleges is very competitive. Most of those schools have two main criteria for their student selection: students' grades in the SEE and their scores in entrance examination. As the schools/colleges are very expensive, they also consider the background of the parents as they want to make sure that the parents are able to make payments on time. Consequently, even an academically strong student sometimes may not get a chance to study in those schools/colleges.

As the data in this study was collected from a remote part of Nepal, it can be assumed that most of the parents did not have a high economic status to be able to send their children to those prestigious and expensive schools. Furthermore, most of the students might not have performed very well in the SEE as all of them were studying in public schools. The bitter reality is that most public school students perform poorly in the SLC/SEE (Thapa, 2011, 2015).

The findings of the study further indicate that the test did not support the majority of students to find a job. However, the findings of the study might have been affected by its timing. As the post-test survey was carried out right after three months of the SEE results publication, the students did not have enough time to look for a job. Moreover, the majority of parents in Nepal want their children to continue their study after the SEE. For instance, four of the case study students (among six) did not even try to find a job as their parents did not allow them to do so. Those four students were further asked to report on the extent to what the test might support them to find a job in future. All of them had a belief that the test would be a great support for them to find a job.

To reiterate, the SEE English test offered students a chance to study the subject of their choice in higher secondary school but the majority did not get an opportunity to study in a

higher secondary school/college of their choice. The findings regarding the job opportunities created by the test were not clear and there are no other studies examining these issues.

8.2   Impact on Educational Development

As mentioned in Chapter three, most public schools use Nepali as a medium of instruction but many higher secondary schools/colleges use English for the purpose. Thus, there is a kind of transitional phase for the SEE candidates and the SEE English test is the only test that measures the adequacy of English needed for higher secondary level. Therefore, one question in the post-test questionnaire (i.e. Q10) that included six statements on a Likert point scale (see Appendix 1B) was designed to explore the extent to which the SEE English test supported students to cope with the transitional phase. Moreover, the case study students, during the post-test interviews, were asked to share their experience of studying at Grade 11. As the students in this study had fresh experience of studying at Grade 11, they were considered to be able to reflect on the adequacy of their school English in light of the demands the higher secondary courses placed on them. In other words, it was hoped that they could provide the information about whether their secondary school English was adequate for those higher secondary level courses they were studying.

It is also worth noting that the case study students had joined four different institutes or courses after the SEE: medicine (S1), science (S3), commerce (S4), and education (S2, S5, S6). Among them, three students (S1, S3, and S4) reported that English was the medium of instruction in their colleges whereas the remaining students, who had joined Education Institute, reported that Nepali was the medium of instruction in their classes, even in the English classes.

Students' responses to the survey question (i.e. PostTQ10, that asked the students to report on their ability to perform activities using English at Grade 11), have been summarised in Figure 8.2 which indicates that the vast majority of students were unable to understand lectures (64% disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed), take part in classroom discussion (57% disagreed, 24% strongly disagreed), answer questions orally in English (60% disagreed, 19% strongly disagreed) and write answers in English (58% disagreed, 16% strongly disagreed) at Grade 11. However, almost half of the students reported that they were able to ask questions and take notes in English.

Figure 8.2: Test impacts on learning at higher grade

Test impacts on learning at higher grade (N=226)
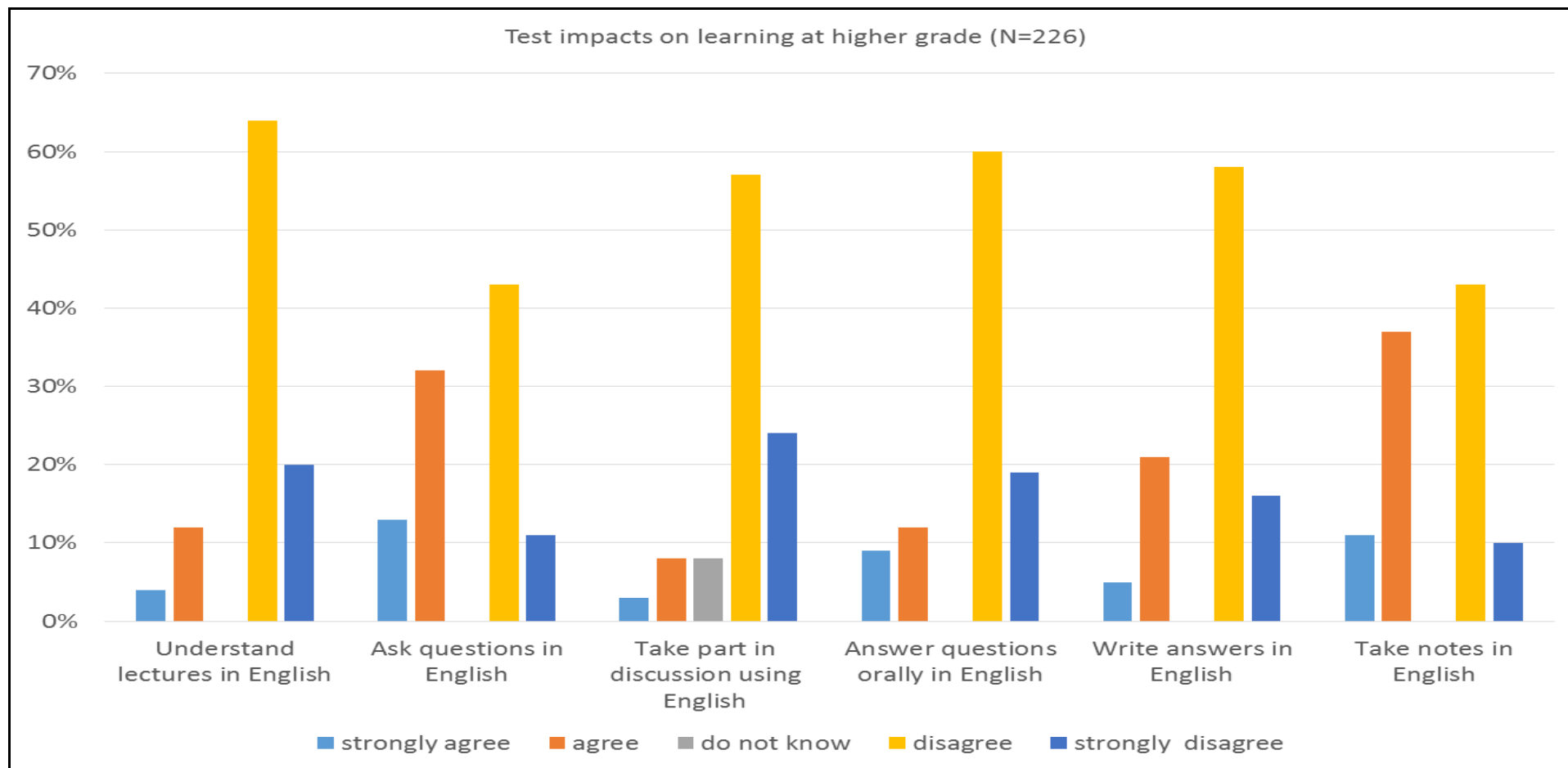
The graph indicates that there was a lack of confidence in all areas. The results were well supported by the qualitative findings. Four of the case study students reported that they were unable to understand lectures in English at Grade 11:

> *It has been a bit difficult for me to understand all the lectures at Grade 11. I wish, I had studied in an English medium school before […] Sometimes, I cannot understand the whole concept and feel really bad* (S3-PostInt).

However, the students (except S2 and S5) reported that they were able to ask questions in English:

> *I can ask questions in English these days. I had a difficulty to ask questions during the first few days in this school as I had never asked questions in English before. Now, we are not allowed to speak Nepali in our class* (S4-PostInt).

Four of the case study students further reported that they could write answers and take notes in English:

> *I can write answers in English. I am trying my best to improve my writing skills now. I can also take notes in English. I have been doing that since I started to study at Grade 11 as everybody in my class takes notes in English. So, I feel ashamed to write in Nepali. Most of my friends are from English medium schools so they are very good at English* (S3-PostInt).

Moreover, two of the case study students (S2, S5) were able neither to write answers nor to take notes in English. Unfortunately, none of the six students could take part in classroom discussion using English:

> *It has been very difficult for me to take part in classroom discussion. I just listen to my friends. I can understand them but do not feel confident to speak English with them* (S4-PostInt).

> *We are not allowed to speak English in our class. So, sometimes I feel nervous and do not ask questions even if I cannot understand the concept. I really find it difficult to take part in classroom discussion* (S3-PostInt).

Similarly, all of them reported that they found it difficult to answer questions orally in English, particularly when the answers were long: "*Long answer questions are really*

problematic for me. I do not feel confident enough to answer those questions" (S6-PostInt).

The findings further indicated that three of the institutes (medicine, science and commerce) that the case study students joined used English as a medium of instruction but Nepali was the medium of instruction in the Institutes of education; even English was taught by translating it into Nepali.

> *In our English class, we cannot understand our teacher if he speaks only English. So, we ask him to repeat it in Nepali and then he tells everything in Nepali. Now a days, he tells stories or lessons in English first and then summarises that in Nepali. He uses Nepali when we cannot understand him but other subjects are taught in Nepali (S5-PostInt).*

To reiterate, this section has unpacked the impacts of the test on learning at higher Grade. The quantitative data was well supported by qualitative data, and vice versa. Both the data sets revealed that students were not equipped with the English language skills needed to cope with the English language demand in higher secondary education.

Discussions of the findings

It can generally be argued that the test did not support students much for their educational development. Sadly enough, the findings suggest that the majority of students were not able to perform most of the activities included in the questionnaire. Misra et al. (2014) also reported that Grade 10 students in Nepal had problems with writing and communicating appropriately in a variety of formal and informal situations and because of the lack of required degree of vocabulary and grammatical competencies, they generally hesitate to take part in conversations.

Nevertheless, it was at least good to know that many students were able to ask questions and make notes in English. Note-taking is an important skill for students in higher secondary level as it helps students understand the passage/text (read or listened to) much better and remember the points for a long time, identify main points and organise them in order (Khaniya, 1990).

As Khaniya (1990) reported, one of the problems I had when exploring the extent to which the test supported students to study at Grade 11, was to reconcile the assessment of general

ability in English language (i.e. core abilities) and the specific language activities that the students in different faculties require. I was aware that, for practical reasons, it was not possible for this study to cover all those different types of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities demanded by different faculties, such as writing a news report in the Faculty of Journalism and writing a prescription in the Faculty of Medicine. Therefore, only the six supposedly most common activities (i.e. understand lectures, take part in discussion, take notes, answer questions orally, ask questions and write answers in English) that usually take place in higher secondary classrooms were included in the questionnaire. However, it was hoped that the collection of this type of information would reflect on the predictive and content validity (from the washback point of view) of the test.

Interestingly, the findings of the current study are consistent with Khaniya's (1990) study which was conducted almost three decades ago; the way the SLC/SEE English was taught and tested did not equip students with the knowledge and skills that are needed for higher secondary education. In other words, whatever the SEE English test assessed was not congruent with the language skills that the SEE graduates needed to cope with higher secondary education. Hence, this study raises a question about the adequacy of the SEE English for the purpose for which English has been taught in secondary schools as the students, who completed the SEE English (even some with very good grades), still found it difficult to cope with the higher secondary level courses. The problem lies in the test design process as the test does not align with the curriculum goals in the sense that the SEE curriculum gives priority in developing language skills and creativity in students but the test had almost no space for these aspects.

The students became a true victim of the testing practice. Had their speaking skills been tested properly, they might have developed at least some basic skills in English speaking and they might not have to suffer much in higher secondary level. Thus, as CLT highlights, it is crucial that the policy makers and the test designers are responsive to measures in order to change the test in such a way that it can bring positive impacts on learning and on students' career prospects.

The findings of this study also indicate that Nepali has been extensively used even in higher secondary level and students are able neither to understand nor to speak English even in higher secondary level. This reality might further raise a question about the possibility that students develop their English language skills in higher secondary level

needed for their university education which requires high level of competence in English. So, the concerned authority needs to pay due attention to this situation.

8.3   Factors Affecting the SEE English Test Impact

As discussed in Chapter three, this study suggests that the nature of the test washback is complex; multiple stakeholders and multiple factors seem to coexist within the social context where the test exists and their complex interactions largely determine the nature of the test washback (Alderson & wall, 1993; Gosa, 2004; Xie, 2015; Zhan & Andrews, 2014). In other words, washback is complex; there may not be direct effects of a test on teaching and learning the language.

The findings of the study suggest that English language learning in the Nepalese context can be characterised by a concentration on intensive learning, dependency on memorisation and a lack of attention to communicative skills. However, this particular practice might be the outcome of the historical, sociocultural and economic setting in Nepal. Actually, ELT in Nepal has long been characterised by a major focus on drilling, note providing, translation, memorisation and rote learning of vocabulary, preoccupation with examinations of grammatical structures and lack of attention to communicative skills, critical thinking (Kandel, 2014) and creativity. Consequently, some lower-level language skills, such as vocabulary and grammar, are highly focused while higher-level communicative skills do not usually receive adequate attention. It sounds plausible to argue that poor (teaching) and learning practices associated with the SEE might have resulted from a pervasive culture within the ELT profession in Nepal rather than the content and format of the SEE English test. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that this will change in a short time despite the recent efforts made by the Nepalese government to bring changes in the ELT practices.

It was found that students were very much motivated to learn English before they took the test. Nonetheless, it was really hard to decide whether the students were motivated to learn English because of the high-stakes nature of the test or their perceived importance of English for their future career, most probably both. All the case study students and parents considered the English language to be an important language:

> *I am very much motivated to learn English these days as I know that English is one of the most important languages in the world [...] we need it for different purposes*

such as travelling to other countries, finding good jobs and communicating with
other people (S6-D2)

Parents further reported that their children were motivated to work hard for the test because of their neighbour's support:

> *Another reason of her motivation could be the support she is getting from our*
> *neighbour, who is an English teacher in a school. He is so kind and supportive that*
> *he frequently helps her to learn English* (P1-PreInt),

An additional factor of motivation was the researcher's presence:

> *Your presence has really a good impact on my child. He seems more motivated*
> *these days as he knew that you are in a good position now because of your good*
> *English. Also, when he knew that you were going to follow him for the whole year*
> *and he had to record his English language learning experiences, he was much*
> *excited. He has a wish to get a good grade on the English test and tell the news to*
> *you* (S3-PreInt).

> *Honestly speaking, we think that she is more interested in learning English after*
> *she met you. She is practising more for the test* (P5-PreInt).

Thus, student motivation to learn English seems to be affected by several factors suggesting that test impact is not limited to the test quality.

As discussed in 6.5, the low use of LSD strategies resulted from the lack of opportunities. For instance, some students did not watch TV programmes and did not read newspapers in English as they had almost no access to those items. Furthermore, the findings suggest that students' choice of strategy was influenced by their parents:

> *We also bought some CDs and DVDs and allowed her to watch some English*
> *movies and some other videos in English during the first few months at Grade 10.*
> *However, we have not allowed her to watch those videos these days as the*
> *examination is very close and we think that she needs to focus only on reading and*
> *writing now* (P1-PreInt).

> *I have asked him to make notes of all the important answers and then memorise*
> *them* (P3-PreInt).

Moreover, all the six parents tended to motivate their children to work hard for the test which might have affected their test preparation practices. As reported by Allen (2016), the potential for the test washback was mediated by students' wider learning environment.

As reported in 6.1, three of the case study students were not motivated to learn English when they were waiting for the test results. Unfortunately, they all were from the parents with low education. All of them reported that their parents did not encourage them to learn English during the time while the parents of the remaining students tended to encourage their children to learn English even in the post-test context. This finding might suggest the role of parents in student motivation to learn English. Students' motivation was also associated with economic aspects. The study also suggests that there are important financial implications associated with the test impacts. The parents (P1, P3), who were able to afford money for a bridge course and also had a plan to send their children to a prestigious college, sent their children to a city and constantly motivated their children to learn English even in the post-test context. However, the parents (P2, P4, P5), who were not able to afford money for the bridge course and had a plan to send their children to a normal (i.e. less prestigious) school, did not seem to encourage their children to learn English in the post-test context. Furthermore, S1's parents provided her with some CDs and DVDs in English and bought some magazines or newspapers in English from the city. They also bought so many test preparation materials for their child while P2 could not provide all those things to her child except some test preparation materials and the text book; they did not even have a television at home.

A number of other factors were also influential in affecting test preparation practices. For instance, the case study students reported that they did not practise speaking as their friends were not interested in speaking English and their family members were not able (or not interested) to speak English: "*My parents are not able to speak English. So, I cannot practise English at home*" (S5); "*I never asked questions to my friends as they were also not good at English"* (S3-PostInt). However, the parents with high education directly supported their child to develop their listening and reading abilities while it was beyond the capacity of the parents with low education (see further discussion in 7.2.3). As a result of this, some individual differences among the students could be seen in terms of their test preparation practices. This implicates people (i.e., peers and their family members) as an essential resource that can mediate the impacts of an examination that involve productive skills (Allen, 2016). The findings also confirm the concern of learners in EFL contexts that

they get little opportunity to practise English speaking which ultimately leads them to ignore the practice of this skill (Allen, 2016; Shih 2007).

The test preparation was partially directed by students' interest as well. All of them seemed to have a strong determination to perform well on the test as they considered the test to be important for them. The students were willing to invest energy and effort as most of them had a belief that hard work was the key to be successful. These findings indirectly corroborate the findings by Zhang and Andrews (2014) that students who reported the test was not very important for them made little effort for it. Therefore, it sounds meaningful to end this discussion with Messick's (1996) argument: "A poor test may be associated with positive effects and a good test with negative effects because of other things that are done or not done in the educational system" (p. 242).

8.4   Chapter Summary

The findings of this study indicated that the test supported students for their career development to a certain degree, but not for educational development. In other words, the test provided students with an opportunity to study the subject of their choice and some of them also got a chance to study in the college/higher secondary school of their choice though college selection in many cases seemed to be associated with parents' socio-economic status as well. However, the test did not equip students with the English language skills needed to study in higher secondary level; the majority of students were not able to understand lectures, take part in classroom discussion using English and write answers in English at Grade 11. Moreover, several factors affected the nature of the test impacts in the Nepalese contexts, such as parents' education and economic status, students' and parents' attitudes towards the test, students' interest and future goals along with the educational values prevailing in the Nepalese society.

Chapter Nine: Implications and Conclusion

This final chapter draws together this study's final outcomes by reflecting on its findings through the lens of CLT and outlining its important contributions to the body of knowledge in language testing. Moreover, it will discuss the potential implications of the study at various levels followed by a discussion on the limitations of the study. It finally presents a few recommendations for future research to further explore test impact issues in an EFL context.

9.1   Summary of the Findings

This study explored the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents by employing mixed methods: a longitudinal survey, longitudinal oral diaries and semi-structured interviews. The key findings of the six research questions in this study are summarised below.

9.1.1 Research Question 1: What are students' and their parents' pre-test and post-test attitudes towards the SEE English test?

The findings indicate that the majority of students and their parents had a belief that students need to memorise answers and practise with previous test items rather than develop their language skills for the successful performance on the test. Interestingly, some students also had a belief that doing well on the test depends on their luck. The majority of them had positive attitudes towards the test in terms of its fairness and accuracy in measuring the language skills in the pre-test context whereas they considered the test to be an unfair and inaccurate measure of the language skills in the post-test context. They particularly raised issues about the quality of the speaking test. Nevertheless, both students and their parents considered the test to be very important in students' lives: doing well on the test increases their social prestige and supports students for their career development. The finding that all the students disagreed with the statement 'In terms of what I want to do in future, it is not important for me to do well on the test' highlights the perceived importance of the test in the Nepalese context. Furthermore, almost all the students found that the test items were well written and the test was easier than their expectations. However, the majority of students performed poorly on the written test.

9.1.2 Research Question 2: Does the test motivate students to learn English? If yes, how does it affect student motivation to learn English in the pre-test and post-test context?

According to the survey results, the test had a great impact on student motivation to learn English. The majority of surveyed students (79%) were motivated to learn English in the pre-test context. Students' diaries also provided enough evidence that all the students were very much motivated to learn English when the test grew closer, so they made great efforts to learn English during the test preparation. However, student motivation to learn English did not remain constant; more than half of the surveyed students (52%) were discouraged from learning English in the post-test context mainly because of their dissatisfaction with the test quality and test results. Similarly, the diaries recorded after the test conduction indicated that three of the case study students did almost nothing in English during the time suggesting that those students did not have any interest in learning English after they took the test. A few students also reported that there was no effect of the test on their motivation both in the pre-test and post-test context.

9.1.3. Research Question 3: How do students prepare themselves for the SEE English test?

The study observed a huge impact of the test on test preparation. The survey results indicated that memorisation was the most frequently used strategy (M= 4.10) followed by test preparation management (M=4.07) and drilling (M=3.58) whereas the least frequent strategy was LSD (M=2.35) followed by the socio-affective strategy (M=2.52). The quantitative findings were supported by qualitative findings. Students' diaries provided significant evidence that students were memorising answers and practising the test contents throughout the year and there was little evidence to suggest that students used LSD strategies during the test preparation. However, the case study students employed some LSD strategies during the first month of their diary recording (i.e. when they were in the sixth month of their academic year) but the use of the LSD strategies decreased when the test got closer. They heavily used memorisation and drilling during the second month of their diary recording (i.e. about two months before the test).

Students did not prioritise the development of their language skills during the test preparation. Interestingly, more than half of the surveyed students (54%) reported that they started preparing for the test right at the beginning of their academic year. The vast

majority of students (95%) took coaching classes and they (85%) spent more than 100 hours in total, excluding their regular English classes in schools, for the test preparation. They spent a huge amount of money and time for the test preparation but their reading materials were limited to the commercially produced SEE preparation materials, such as *Ten Sets*, *SEE Practice Book*, and *SEE Essay Collection* etc. which suggest that students' main consideration for learning English was not acquiring the knowledge or developing skills to use English in real life situations but to improve their grades on the test.

9.1.4. Research Question 4: Do students and their parents suffer test pressure and anxiety? If yes, what sorts of pressure and anxiety do they suffer?

The findings show that the test had severe effects on students' and their parents' emotional wellbeing. Among the 247 surveyed students, almost all the students (234 students) reported that they were under tremendous pressure to perform well on the test and they also had test related anxiety. There were several reasons that created test anxiety on students, such as loss of social prestige and negative effects on career prospects associated with the poor performance on the test, parents' and teachers' expectations from them and lack of confidence. Similarly, all the six parents had test related anxiety and four of them felt elevated pressure to raise test scores. Both the students and their parents were getting pressure from their school/teachers and also indirectly from their society as they considered that poor performance on the test would diminish their social prestige. However, in comparison to parents, students were more affected as they had high pressure from their parents as well to work hard for the test.

9.1.5. Research Question 5: How do parents involve themselves in preparing their children for the test?

The study observed a very high level of parental involvement in the test preparation; parents adopted any means in order to enable their children to perform well on the test. Parents viewed that preparation for the test is a co-responsibility of teachers, students and parents. Therefore, they supported their children for the test preparation by providing learning conditions at home, collaborating with other people (including their neighbours and relatives), teaching test preparation and test taking strategies, and sharing their own experiences of preparing for the test and/or taking the test. In some cases, they even tended to coerce their children to use certain strategies for learning English and to work very hard for the test without showing due attention to their children's interest and health welfare.

Additionally, parents tended to control their children's non-academic life, such as play time, sleeping hours, and visiting friends and relatives. More importantly, the study observed very rare examples of parents encouraging their children to use language development strategies when the test grew closer. Nevertheless, there were individual differences in the nature of their involvement in the test preparation. For instance, some strategies, such as sharing experiences of preparing for the test and taking the test, guessing important questions for the test and helping them to do homework, were limited to the parents with high education.

9.1.6. Research Question 6: What are the post-test impacts of the test on students' career choices and learning at higher Grade?

It was found that the test supported students for their career development as the test provided them support to study the subject of their choice at Grade 11 and some students also secured a place to study in the higher secondary school/college of their choice but the test did not support students for learning at a higher grade or in higher secondary level. The overwhelming majority of students were not able to understand lectures in English, take part in discussion using English, write long answers in English and answer questions orally in English at Grade 11.

9.2   Reflection on the Findings through the Lens of CLT Framework

The findings of this study indicate that there was a huge impact of the test on students and their parents. Therefore, this section is aimed at using CLT as a framework to illustrate the potential impact of the study in informing critical debates.

In order to make the discussion systematic, the overall findings are discussed below through the four critical perspectives of CLT that Lynch (2001, p.363) puts forward:

Critical perspective characteristic 1:

> *An interest in particular domains such as gender, class, ethnicity, and the ways that language and language-related issues (like all human relations and activities) are interconnected with them* (Lynch, 2001, p.363).

Using this critical perspective, a major focus is given on the nature of the SEE English test on the students preparing for the SEE and their parents. In other words, the major focus

under this critical perspective is on the extent to which Grade 10 students and their parents in Nepal are advantaged or disadvantaged by the SEE English test. The findings indicate that students and their parents were severely affected by the examination.

The findings suggest that the SEE English test is not neutral, but a social process. Besides students, so many other people such as parents, teachers, neighbours, relatives and friends are involved in the test preparation process. In other words, the test affects so many people living in the Nepalese societies but a good aspect is that students get an opportunity to learn through their social interaction with other people in their society.

There are several indications that the test has been used as a gatekeeping instrument for admission to higher secondary level and for some scholarships along with most jobs in the Nepalese market. However, the study raises a question about the primacy of the SEE English test as a single instrument to judge students' English language skills.

The findings of this study further indicate that the SEE English speaking test was used as a powerful disciplinary tool to impose certain behaviours on students or to maintain classroom discipline and such practice seems to discourage students from developing their language skills.

In terms of the assessment of knowledge in the test versus its definition and dictation of knowledge, this study raises a question about whose knowledge the SEE English test is based on as most of the questions in the test were just taken from the textbook that has already been practised in classrooms. Therefore, the SEE English test scores/grades need to be interpreted with care and caution and the testing practice needs to be improved. It is hoped that this study contributes to the improvement of the test.

Critical Perspective Characteristic 2:

> *The notion that our research needs to consider paradigms beyond the dominant (Lynch, 2001, p.363).*

In this study, this critical perspective is addressed through the use of mixed-methods design. An emic (as opposed to etic) perspective was adopted as it would align very nicely with CLT. Both the qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through multiple sources (a longitudinal survey, oral diaries and semi-structured interviews with students and parents) to reflect on the complexities inherent in the assessment practices.

This study challenges the dominant psychometric traditions prevailed in assessment research and sits within the interpretive paradigm. It allows for "different meanings and interpretations rather than a single absolute truth" aimed for in the dominant psychometric traditions (Lynch, 2001, p 363). It followed interpretetivism and respected multiple realities associated with the SEE English test impact in the Nepalese societies.

The SEE English test is an example of the "primacy of the 'test' as assessment instrument" (Lynch, 2001, p 363), which provides no recourse to any other system for interpreting individual student's knowledge and skills in the English language. Students' grades in the SEE are decided only on the basis of their performances on the written test and a speaking test conducted by respective schools. There were significant indications that the test did not ask students to employ their analytic skills and creativity. Therefore, as Moore et al. (2012) argue, "it is virtually impossible (and certainly impractical) to discuss or negotiate multiple interpretations of test scores as would be desirable in a more democratic and non-positivist approach"; the SEE grades "are simply reported as macro-skill achievement and an overall composite score, with virtually no regard to any other humanising or otherwise relevant information about a test-taker's ability in English" (p.60). It is hoped that the NEB will rethink about the use of the test as a sole criterion to test students' skills.

CLT also acknowledges that the knowledge of any tester is incomplete and limited suggesting that there is a need for testers to rely on additional knowledge sources in order to obtain more accurate and valid description and interpretation of knowledge.

Critical perspective characteristic 3:

> *A concern for changing the human and social world, not just describing it: the 'transformative agenda', with the related and motivational concern for social justice and equality (Lynch, 2001, p.363).*

This critical perspective brings a focus on my interest to capture those unheard voices of students and their parents in a remote part of the country, Nepal. The findings of this study indicated that students and parents do not even seem to know that they have the right to raise their voices about the testing practices and they accept the authority of the SEE without asking a question on the test appropriacy. They hardly get an opportunity to express their views about the SEE which means that they have not been exposed to democratic values. Therefore, students and parents in this study were encouraged to

develop a critical view about the SEE administration and its use in Nepal following Lee and Johnston-Wilder's (2013) argument that pupil voice needs to be recognised as an important force for change in secondary school.

The study observed numerous issues associated with the test conduction. For instance, all the students in this study were asked to take the same test but one of the students in this study had a problem with his eye sight that made him very much worried about the test. He also could not get his expected grade on the test. There might be some effects of his poor eyesight on his test performance. It can be assumed that this is just an example. There might be so many other students with similar or different problems, even worse problems that may affect students' performance on the test. There were also some concerns regarding the quality of the examiners and marking criteria. All of these issues are worthy of further exploration.

It was also found that most of the students performed poorly in the written test although they worked hard for the test and also found the test easier than their expectation. Furthermore, this study observed a large gap between the grades students obtained in the speaking and writing test (i.e. most students got A or A+ in the speaking but C or D in the writing test). This issue requires further investigation.

The findings of the study indicate that the testing practice and the SEE curriculum do not match well. Despite the fact that the SEE English curriculum aims to develop students' communicative proficiency, the testing practice has ignored this noble goal and simply encouraged students for memorisation. Therefore, the test remains ineffective in changing ELT practices in the way intended by the test designers and policymakers.

It is also worth pointing out that the test created economic burdens on parents as the schools forced them to send their children to extra tuition classes. Some of the students were even forced to stay in the school accommodation for a minimum of three months before the exam.

Critical perspective characteristic 4:

The requirement that critical applied linguistics be self-reflexive (Lynch, 2001, p.363)

This critical perspective concerns my own role, as a responsible member of the Nepalese society and a testing researcher, to make a critical observation of the assessment practices in Nepal. The current reality is that the Nepalese government spends very little money on educational research and almost no money on test impact research. Very similar to the Cambodian context (Moore, et al., 2012), almost all the Nepalese academics are paid for their teaching hours but they receive almost nothing for their research. Consequently, educational research is still in its infancy in Nepal and the studies that have explored test impact issues in the Nepalese context are scarce. Therefore, I carried out this study as I understand that I should also play an important role to bring changes in the current assessment practices in Nepal. I am also aiming to disseminate the findings of this research among as many people as possible, particularly among the teachers, policy makers and NEB members. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the improvement of the assessment practices in Nepal.

The argument that "academics cherish the right of 'academic freedom' to research what they like and to report their findings, whether favourable or unfavourable to their sponsors" (Moore et al., 2012, p.61) or to the concerned authorities is fully applicable in my case. I have conducted this study according to my own perception of what an impact study should comprise, have made a critical observation of the test impact issues and then reported the findings without any fear.

9.3   Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to the body of existing knowledge in the field of language testing, particularly about the nature of test impacts in an EFL context, in several ways. Firstly, it explored the nature of the impacts of an EFL test in the Nepalese context where there has been very little, if any, research conducted on this issue.

Secondly, although parents and students are the two most important stakeholders of a test, studies that have compared both stakeholders' perceptions of a test quality and the test consequences to them are almost non-existent. Having collected a huge amount of data (through questionnaires, oral diaries and interviews) and then bringing both students' and parents' views together about the test quality and its consequences to them, this study has provided a better understanding of the complex nature of test impacts within the Nepalese educational context, as perceived by students and their parents. The emic nature of this study is one of the main strengths of this study.

Thirdly, this study provides an example of a comprehensive test impact study. Contrary to most previous test impact studies, having explored both the pre-and post-test effects of the test, this study unpacks how the impacts of a test on students and parents change over time and also how stakeholders perceive the same test in different contexts (particularly in the pre-test and post-test context). That is why, this study can be an eye opener for other researchers or testing professionals that a judgement about the quality of a test should be made only after studying both the pre-test and post-test impacts associated with the test. In other words, it highlights the need to study both the pre-test and post-test impacts of a test before making a judgement on its quality. However, unfortunately, most previous test impact studies are limited to pre-test impacts.

Fourth, although there is some research on PI in children's learning in a non-test context, there is very little research on PI in a test context. It is most probably the first research that has explored the nature of PI in EFL test preparation. Consequently, EFL testing community does not know much about the type of support parents can provide to their children for the preparation of a high-stakes EFL test. Therefore, there is potentially a great deal that the EFL professionals can learn from this study about the nature of PI in an EFL test preparation. This is probably the major contribution of this study to the field of language testing.

Finally, it provides a new theoretical framework (see 3.6) for the exploration of test impacts in society. It is hoped that the framework will be useful for future researchers working in this field. This study provides an example to suggest how CLT sheds better lights into the test impact issues in question. Thus, this study contributes to test impact studies drawing on CLT.

9.4   Implications of the Findings

This study was conducted with the goal of exploring the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents both in the pre-test and post-test contexts. The findings derived from this study could have various implications for understanding and improving ELT and assessment practices in Nepal and other low income or under-resourced countries in general, and in the Province Four of Nepal in particular.

Based on its findings, various implications of this study are pointed out for the test designers and policy makers. It is hoped that the findings of this study contribute to the

development and improvement of the SEE English test. Some specific findings of this study can be applied by secondary level English teachers, parents and public schools to improve ELT practices and English language proficiency of secondary level students in Nepal. The findings have implications in several layers; each of which is presented below.

9.4.1   Implications for Schools and Teachers

The study may have pertinent implications for schools and teachers. The findings of this study indicate students' overdependency on memorisation for learning English and there were several indications that they were influenced by the classroom practices. Therefore, there is a need to focus on English language skills in classroom teaching and teachers need to encourage students to develop their English language skills. Indeed, students may also need support in gaining confidence in the use of English skills. The more confident EFL learners become, the more likely that they participate in the learning experiences both in classrooms and outside. However, there might be a need for training or professional development opportunities for teachers to enable them to perform these activities. Professional development becomes more effective when it focuses on deepening teachers' knowledge of the contents they have to teach (Lee & William, 2005).

One of the most frequent strategies that parents employed to support their children was collaboration. However, they did not collaborate much with their teachers, except sending their children to coaching classes run by the school teachers. Since cooperation and collaboration between schools and parents might be more helpful in obtaining better results in students' learning than schools and parents working separately (Goodall, & Vorhaus, 2011), schools should encourage both teachers and parents to collaborate for students' learning.

Another implication concerns parental involvement in the test preparation. Previous research on school improvement and/or school effectiveness consistently shows that parental engagement in educational activities has been one of the major factors in securing higher student achievement; "the more parents are engaged in the education of their children, the more likely their children are to succeed in the education system" (Goodall, & Vorhaus, 2011 p.16). A positive correlation has been found between parental volunteering at school and their children's school achievement (Georgiou, 1999) but this study did not evidence any kind of PI in school activities. Therefore, it is highly important that schools use different parental engagement strategies in order to maximise children's learning. For

instance, they can organise some workshops and focus group discussions to inform parents more about the education system and encourage them to volunteer in some school activities but teachers should be trained on how to work with parents whose backgrounds are very different to their own.

Indeed, parents had little knowledge about the SEE and its process though they considered test preparation to be a co-responsibility of teachers, students and parents. However, parental engagement in test preparation can be more effective when parents have clear, specific and targeted information from schools (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011). Thus, schools should make some provisions for giving more information to parents about the test process.

Another implication of the study is related to teacher-student relationship. Despite the fact that teacher-student relationship plays a crucial role in students' learning, the findings indicate that Nepalese students do not feel comfortable enough to talk to their teachers. Therefore, it is important that schools in Nepal introduce a compatible model to build a strong teacher-students relationship, such as informal meetings and day outing, so that it can mitigate student fear of teachers and ultimately enhance students' learning capability.

The study also indicates that both students and their parents have elevated anxiety related to the test. However, the study did not evidence any attempt made by teachers to mitigate student anxiety. It is worth noting that "while moderate levels of test-related anxiety can actually improve motivation and test performance, an unmanageable amount can have an adverse effect" (Abrams, 2004, p.24). In other words, heightened level of anxiety is likely to hinder the process of learning. So, it can be assumed that the SEE students' poor performance on the test might have also resulted from the high level of anxiety in students. Therefore, it is highly important that effective therapeutic interventions for reducing the adverse effects of the test on students are considered and students are educated on the coping strategies to ameliorate the adverse effects of test anxiety. For this, teachers also might need some training on how to support their students. Teachers should understand that they need to do more than preparing students with the test contents to make students perform to their potential. Furthermore, it is equally important to educate parents as parents are one of the main sources of student anxiety. It is highly important that parents are made aware of their roles so that they allow their children to feel more relaxed at home. For example, parents ensure that there is a proper balance between work and play or rest. Thus, workshops for teachers and parents about their roles to support students could be

beneficial. Additionally, there is a need to increase parents' assessment literacy as they seem to lack good knowledge about the assessment practices.

9.4.2 Implications for Parents and Students

The study may also have some practical implications for parents and students. The findings of the study indicated that parents and students regarded English education as memorisation of grammar rules, vocabulary and some texts rather than as an acquisition of knowledge or a medium to foster creativity in students and develop their skills to use English in a real life context. However, students' dependency on memorisation seems to be rooted in the pedagogical practices in their school as their teachers tended to use memorisation as a key strategy for the test preparation. Hence, teachers' professional development, and parents' awareness about English education seem paramount to changing attitudes and outcomes in English learning or test preparation process. In other words, students need to be encouraged to develop communicative skills in students instead of simply focusing on rote memorisation.

Another implication of the study concerns the test related anxiety and pressure in students. The findings indicated that students experienced test related anxiety throughout the year and they had enormous pressure to perform well on the test. Parents influenced their children in such a way that students considered the SEE to be so important in their life that their whole life would be ruined, if they were unable to perform well on the test. Therefore, parents need to be aware of their roles and should not put unnecessary pressure on their children to perform well on the test. They have to play an important role in moderating stress and pressure on their children.

An additional implication of the study is related to parental control over students' non-academic life. The findings suggested that parents seemed to control their children's non-academic life and coerce them to work hard for the test. The children were not even allowed to have a good sleep for a few months before the SEE. So, it is highly important that parents are aware of the possible consequences of such kind of pressure to their child. Parents should also be aware of the potential benefits that proper rest, exercise and downtime with peers can have on learning. Parents may also need training on how to support their children.

9.4.3 Implications for Testing Researchers

In addition to the several implications for schools/teachers, students and parents, this study has important implications for testing researchers. When reviewing the literature for this study, I could find that quite a few test impact studies have employed CLT principles to reflect on the test impact issues. The use of the CLT principles as a theoretical lens to reflect on the impacts of the SEE has enabled me to produce a comprehensive picture of the test impacts issues. Therefore, testing researchers may consider using CLT as a theoretical lens to explore test impact issues, especially of public tests. Furthermore, testing researchers might be interested in the research methodology used in this study which enabled me to produce a comprehensive picture of the SEE impacts in Nepal by collecting a huge amount of data and bringing different stakeholders' views together. Finally, the finding of the study that neither the students' nor parents' attitudes towards the test nor the test impacts on them remain constant might encourage test impact researchers to carry out a longitudinal study rather than limiting their studies to test preparation phase.

9.4.4 Implications for Policy Makers

The study has practical implications to policy makers as well. The findings of the study indicate that the test had significant influences on English language learning; memorisation was the most frequent strategy used by the SEE students. In language assessment including general education, rote memorisation can be regarded as a negative impact of the test as too much rote memorisation may sometimes lead to the stunting of reasoning power (Wall, 2005). Students' over dependency on memorisation can be seen as a result of the focus of the test on recalling, neglecting the communicative tasks. So, the assessment system needs to be modified and such modifications should discourage recall learning and encourage students to develop their communicative proficiency in English.

Another pertinent implication of the study concerns the authority given to schools to run the speaking test as it leads to very little, if any, teaching of listening and speaking skills at Grade 10. The most serious problem is that schools do not seem to be sincere enough in taking the responsibility of conducting the speaking test. There were several indications that some schools did not score students' performances on the speaking test appropriately and some others did not even run any test. Despite this, almost all the schools awarded as high scores as possible to their students. Indeed, a clear gap could be seen between the scores on the speaking and the writing tests. This practice suggests that the power given to schools has been abused. Therefore, the government needs to take a step further to make

schools more responsible in conducting the test. In other words, robust monitoring procedures would need to be put in place in order to ensure the test quality. There could be four possible solutions. First, some samples of oral assessment from each school are checked by the NEB. Second, the NEB investigates the cases where a big gap between the two tests' scores/grades are seen and find out the reasons behind such gap. If the gap is created because of the teachers' weaknesses in the conduction of the speaking test, both the schools and the teachers need more training for their professional development. This kind of practice might make teachers and schools more responsible for the assessment process. Third, the grades (from the speaking and writing tests) are not aggregated and there is a provision that students have to get a certain grade on both tests in order to be eligible to study at Grade 11; having separate thresholds would also ensure that all skills have equal importance. Fourth, the speaking test is also externally controlled as the MOE, Nepal did when speaking test was introduced to the SLC in the late 1990s. If the test is controlled externally, the test might be more reliable. Additionally, there should be a provision that teachers provide valid reasons or clarifications behind providing full marks (or very high scores) to their students in the speaking test.

The findings of the study suggest a poor alignment between the SEE curriculum goals and the test tasks. In order to bring positive impacts on learning, it is important to create an environment where the SEE curriculum, English teaching methods and the SEE procedures are aligned with each other. So, it is recommended that due attention is paid to this issue. However, in the Nepalese context, "policy-makers who take decisions on the basis of educational assessment data rarely understand the content of the tests or the effects upon learning of changing them" (Baird, et al. 2017, p.340).

Another implication of the study is related to the current ELT practices in the Nepalese secondary schools. Despite the fact that the data in this study was not collected from teachers, students' weekly diaries and interviews indicate that ELT practice in secondary schools is traditional and teachers make almost no attempt to improve students' communicative proficiency. Therefore, more competent and qualified teachers need to be employed by public schools to teach English and the existing teachers need to be trained on using communicative teaching methods as demanded by the secondary level English curriculum.

The results of this study also indicate that the test had more positive washback in the pre-test context than that in the post-test context. Therefore, it would be undue to question the test quality and exam reform as a whole; rather, it is important that efforts are made to work for more extensive positive washback both in pre-test and post-test context. For this, teachers might need more trainings.

Another important implication of the study concerns the evaluative function of the test. Since the test score is used as the sole criterion to judge students' language skills (including the quality of schools and teachers) the test results seem to put pressure on students, teachers and parents to raise the test scores and even schools strive for high SEE scores. Therefore, students' ability to use the English language rather than the test scores should be focused on. Indeed, it is better to follow French practice that students' scores on external high-stakes tests are not used as a way of monitoring schools' standard or quality, rather all aspects of educational provisions including classroom practices, resources and facilities for students and teachers are monitored by the MOE. In addition, some cohort studies are conducted and "samples of students are followed through several years of their schooling, so that long-term trends can be monitored" (Black & William, 2005, p.253). Furthermore, if higher secondary schools and employment agencies in Nepal give priority to students' skills rather than their SEE scores during the admissions at higher secondary level and job selection process, respectively, the current practice of giving priority to test scores than to students' skills might be improved.

Both students and parents in this study did not think that the test accurately measured students' English language skills. This suggests that the test lost its face validity in the post-test context. Therefore, it needs to be ensured that the test accurately measures what it intends to measure and the test must be based on sound theoretical principles of communicative competence which are widely accepted in the field. If the test designers can make explicit of what exactly the students are expected to have achieved and if the test items are in accordance with the purpose of teaching and learning English, it is likely that teachers and students work together towards achieving the skills (Khaniya 1990).

The final implication of the study concerns the test related support to students for developing their English language proficiency. The findings of the study suggest that the SEE did not equip students with the knowledge and skills that are needed for higher secondary education. In other words, the skills tested by the test were not congruent with

the language skills that the SEE passers needed in order to cope with higher secondary education. Therefore, this study raises a serious question about the adequacy of the SEE English for the purpose for which English has been taught in secondary schools. The "examination is in dire need of reforms for positive outcomes" (Shrestha, 2018, p.38).

9.5   Limitations of the Study

The study has revealed interesting findings regarding the impacts of the SEE English test on students and their parents. Nevertheless, the study has five major limitations that need to be acknowledged. The first limitation of the study concerns its sample size as it was limited to 247 students (for the survey) and six parent-student pairs (for the case studies). Hence, it is difficult to generalise the findings of this research to the entire population of SEE students and their parents in Nepal. However, it should be noted that the participants shared important common attributes of the entire population.

The second limitation is pertinent to the frequency of diary recordings. As the students were asked to record their diaries once a week only, they might not have accurately recalled what they learnt in English or how they learnt English during the week. Additionally, the students were asked to record their diaries only for three months. Therefore, this study lacks information about students' learning practices in the rest of the months during that academic year.

Third, the data in this study was collected only from the students studying in public schools but nearly 20% students in Nepal study in private schools; most of which use English as a medium of instruction. That is why, this study does not represent the voices of the students studying in private schools in Nepal; generalization of the findings is limited by this constraint as well. However, there is no reason to suggest that the findings of this study are not generalizable to other students, particularly public school students, across the country.

The fourth limitation of this study is from a methodological point of view. This study was limited to the data collected from students and parents but it would have benefited from additional classroom data collected through observation and teacher interviews. However, this shortcoming was, to some extent, compensated for through students' oral diaries. This study is one of the few test impact studies that has explored the test impacts over an extended period of time and also used both qualitative and quantitative data to study test impact.

The final limitation of the study considers the translation of the data. All the diaries were recorded in Nepali language and also the interviews were conducted in Nepali language but they were translated into English. Despite the fact that I paid due attention to the translations, the process is not without its drawbacks. Nevertheless, a small sub-sample of the translation was translated back to Nepali and the participants were asked to check if there were any gaps and the participants reported no gap. Therefore, I am confident that the translated data faithfully captured the original meanings that the students and parents expressed as a part of this study. Another consideration is the effect of my presence on the case study participants. Two of the participants explicitly mentioned that they were more motivated to learn English because of my presence. All these arguments suggest that the results of this study should be treated with caution and future investigation should try to overcome its limitations.

9.6   Recommendations for Future Research

The study suggests avenues for further research in the field of language testing to expand the findings of the study and also to explore test impact issues in a greater depth. Previous researchers have highlighted the need for multiple research studies in the same test to produce more comprehensive picture of the test impact. For instance, Cheng (2008) argues, "it would be the best use of resources if a group of researchers could work collaboratively and cooperatively to carry out a series of studies around the same test within the same educational context" (p.360). Wall (2012) also highlights that a research study "truly builds on work that has been done previously" (P. 89). In the first instance, what is lacking in this particular context is that this study could not collect and benefit from classroom observation data that would add more insights and make the evidence of the test impact clear. This study could also be extended to a greater number of participants so that the findings could be generalised. Furthermore, it would produce a more comprehensive picture of the test impact operating therein, if the study was extended to other stake-holders of the test including teachers, teacher trainers, policy makers and test designers. However, this study can be utilised as a baseline, and thus provides guidelines to pertinent future studies. Furthermore, as the findings of the study indicate so many problems associated with the SEE, it suggests the need for action research focusing on specific intervention at a local level, aimed at making the current system more effective.

The findings of the study reveal widespread use of memorisation as a strategy for the preparation of the SEE English test. The actual techniques used to memorise grammar

rules, words and texts varied somewhat but it was beyond the scope of this study to make an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of such practices in learning a language. As memorisation has been an accepted part of Nepalese education, it would be of value to carry out a systematic study into its effects on learning a language. Additionally, there could be some sort of relationship between the strategy use and the test performance. So, it is recommended that future studies explore these aspects.

Though this study was mainly interested in how the test affected students and their parents from their own perspective, it would have been definitely helpful to know what the teachers' perspectives were, particularly about their teaching techniques and content focus in the classroom. Had the data from teachers been obtained, it might have helped to clarify several ambiguities that emerged through this data and would lead to a more comprehensive picture of the nature of the test impact. This highlights that methodological triangulation in a test impact study like this is crucial. It is hoped that future research takes care of such issues and includes methodological triangulation to create a more comprehensive picture of the test impacts.

This study recommends the use of diaries in test impact studies as they are very useful to get access to the unobservable factors affecting students' inner experiences (Gosa, 2004). The diaries in this study provided a clear picture of what and how students learnt for the test in three different times of an academic year: usual classroom, nearer the test and after the test. It would have been almost impossible to capture these practices by using other methods of data collection. Therefore, this study highly recommends making use of diaries in future test impact studies. However, careful attention needs to be taken regarding the frequency and length of diary entries; the task should not affect students' learning time.

The study found that students performed poorly despite the fact that they spent a lot of time on test preparation and also got good support from their family members. So, there is a need of further research to explore what factors hinder learning or test performance. One of the possible factors might be high level of test related anxiety and pressure though it needs to be verified.

More evidence is required on how parents from different geographical locations (including city areas), professions (such as doctors, engineers, lawyers etc.) and schools (whose children go to private schools) support their children for the test preparation. This study has also observed individual differences with regard to the test impacts. For instance,

among the six case study students, five of them had pressure from their parents to perform well on the test but very few students reported that their parents did not put any pressure on them. Thus, it is recommended that future research includes more parents from different social strata and also investigates into the effectiveness of coercion vs other forms of PI on student learning.

Additionally, as this study was limited to the students from public schools in a remote part of Nepal, more research is needed to explore how students from private schools and the students from city area perceive the tests and how they prepare themselves for the test.

9.7   Concluding Remarks

The literature on language testing indicates that language assessment has become a more authentic and ethical means to develop creativity and life skills in students. It has become more user-friendly leading to student autonomy. In other words, assessment has moved "from the exclusive domain of assessors into the hands of learners" and old methods and techniques have been replaced by a conception of sustainable assessment which "encompasses the knowledge, skills and predispositions required to underpin lifelong learning activities" (Boud, 2000, p.151). Nevertheless, the SEE still embraces a traditional form of assessment which can neither accommodate all these features, nor test students' language skills comprehensively.

Consequently, students heavily rely on memorisation as the test itself is based on narrow contents and emphasized recall without paying due attention to other cognitive, creative and communicative skills needed to use English in a real life context. In other words, the present nature of the test contents and tasks do not offer students opportunities to show their creativity and communicative proficiency. The test in the present form neither reflects the course objectives nor is it congruent with the tertiary education requirements. It is ridiculous that although a letter grading system has been introduced, the SEE still uses one-off exams and students' performances on those exams are simply converted into grades. Thus, there is a need to reconsider the test design and the testing practice that prevails in Nepal. More specifically, the government should investigate how the test can be revised to make it compatible with the curriculum goal and bring positive impact on its stakeholders. As Giri (2011) points out, examination can be a low cost effective means to educational improvement in a country like Nepal where education is hugely constrained by severe resource limitations. This research provides insights for the assessment reform and also

contributes to the improvement of the ELT practice where English is taught as a foreign language.

To reiterate, the findings of the current study indicate that the SEE has a huge impact (both positive and negative) on students and their parents. One of the major reasons behind the negative social and psychological impacts is that students' performances are compared with peers or other students. However, it is important to understand that learning is not for a competition but for the future preparation. Therefore, an unhealthy competition among the SEE students should be discouraged and the SEE should prepare students for better future. We need to encourage students for self-learning and reduce excessive focus on the test scores in order to support them to meet the challenges in this increasingly complex world. In other words, the SEE should support students for sustainable learning.

It is hoped that the findings of this study have some implications both within and beyond the Nepalese context where English is taught as a foreign or second language and the English language test possesses high-stakes, as SEE does in the Nepalese context.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaires

Appendix 1A: Pre-Test Questionnaire (Main Study)

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom

प्यारा विद्यार्थीहरू

म हाल वेलायतमा रहेको The open University अन्तर्गत PhD Level मा अध्ययनरत छु र मेरो अनुसन्धान SLC को अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको शैक्षिक तथा सामाजिक असरहरूको बारेमा केन्द्रित रहेको छ र यस अध्ययनमा तपाईहरूको अंग्रेजी भाषा सिकाइ प्रति अभिरूचीका साथै SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षा प्रति तपाईहरूको धारणाहरू बुझ्न प्रयास गरेकी छु । तपाईहरूले यस प्रश्नावली मार्फत उपलब्ध गराएको सत्य तथा इमान्दार उत्तर मेरो यस अध्ययनको लागि धेरै महत्वपूर्ण हुनेछ । म तपाईहरूलाई यो कुरा पनि निश्चिन्त गराउन चाहन्छु कि तपाईहरूले दिएको उत्तर अथवा जानकारी सबै गोप्य राखिनेछन् र यस अध्ययनको लागि मात्र प्रयोग गरिनेछ । यस अध्ययनको नतिजाको बारेमा कतै प्रस्तुत गर्दा हरेक व्यक्तिको नाम गोप्य राखिनेछ ।

कृपया ठिक ठाउमा रेजा लगाउनुहोस् अथवा लिखित उत्तर दिनुहोस्

भाग एक : तपाईको बारेमा

१. तपाईको नाम ....

२. तपाईको लिङ्ग

क. महिला   ख. पुरूष   ग. अन्य घ. बताउन चाहान्न

३. तपाईको उमेर

क. १४ देखि १५ वर्ष   ख. १५ देखि १६ वर्ष   ग. १७ देखि १८ वर्ष   घ. १८ वर्षभन्दा माथि

४. तपाईको विद्यालयको नाम र जिल्ला के हो ?

....

५. तपाईको मातृभाषा के हो ?

....

६. तपाईले अंग्रेजी पढ्न थालेको कति वर्ष भयो ?

क. ९ देखि १० वर्ष   ख. ११ देखि १२ वर्ष   ग. १३ वर्षभन्दा माथि

७. तपाई हप्तामा कति वटा अंग्रेजी पिरियड पढ्नुहुन्छ ?

क.४ देखि ५   ख. ६ देखि ७   ग. ८ देखि ९

घ. ९ देखि १०   ङ. १० देखि ११   च. ११ भन्दा माथि

८. तपाईको SEE अंग्रेजी परीक्षामा कुन ग्रेड आउछ जस्तो लाग्छ ?

....

भाग दुई : अंग्रेजी परीक्षा पास गर्न चाहिने क्षमता सम्बन्धी तपाईको बिचार

९. उक्त परीक्षा पास गर्नको लागि तपाईले के गर्नुपर्छ जस्तो लाग्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मैले अंग्रेजी भाषामा कुरा गर्नसक्ने क्षमताको वृद्धि गर्नु पर्छ					
मैले धेरै कुरा कण्ठ पार्नु पर्छ ।					
मैले पहिलेको SEE को परीक्षाको प्रश्नपत्रसँग अभ्यास गर्नु पर्छ ।					
मैले परीक्षा कसरी दिने भन्ने सीप सिक्नु पर्छ ।					
परीक्षा पास गर्ने कुरा मेरो भाग्यमा निर्भर रहन्छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

तपाई SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षालाई कसरी मूल्याङ्कन गर्नुहुन्छ ?

१० तपाई SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षालाई कसरी मूल्याङ्कन गर्नुहुन्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
उक्त परिक्षा राम्रोसंग संचालन हुन्छ र grading पनि सहि तरिकाले गरिन्छ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी भाषा सम्बन्धी कमजोरी अथवा सबल पक्षको प्रस्ट सँग प्रस्तुत गर्दछ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी भाषा सम्बन्धी क्षमताको ठिक सँग मापन गर्दछ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

भागतीन : तपाईको अंग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहना र क्ष्भ को अङ्ग्रेजी परिक्षाको प्रयोग

११. तलका मध्ये कुनै एउटामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

(क)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई अङ्ग्रेजी पढ्न प्रोत्साहन गरेको छ ।

(ख)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई अङ्ग्रेजी पढ्न निरुत्साहित गरेको छ ।

(ग)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मेरो अङ्ग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहनामा कुनै असर पारेको छैन ।

१२.तपाई तलका भनाईहरुसँग कति सहमत अथवा असहमत हुनुहुन्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्‍यो भने यसले मेरो सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा बढाउँछ ।					
उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्‍यो भने मैले उच्च माध्यमिक तहमा मेरो रोजाइको विषय अध्ययन गर्न पाउछु ।					
उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्‍यो भने मैले उच्च माध्यमिक तहमा मेरो रोजाइको स्कुलमा अध्ययन गर्न पाउछु ।					
उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्‍यो भने मैले भविष्यमा राम्रो जागिर भेट्टाउन सक्छु ।					
मेरो कामको रोजाई अनुसार मलाई यस परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्नुपर्ने कुनै आवश्यकता छैन ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

भाग चार : SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षाले तपाईलाई प्रभाव पारेको अन्य असरहरु

१३ तपाईमा SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको कारणले कुनै दबाब परेको छ ? यदि तपाईमा उक्त परीक्षाको कारणले कुनै पनि प्रकारको दबाब परेको छैन भने सीधै प्रश्न नम्बर १४ मा जानुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मलाइ उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्नु पर्छ भन्ने pressure महसुस गरेको छु ।					
मेरो अंग्रेजी पढाउने शिक्षकले उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्नु पर्छ भनेर pressure दिनु भएको छ					
मेरो परिवारबाट मैले उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्नुपर्छ भनेर दवाव दिइएको छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

१४. तपाई उक्त परीक्षको बारेमा चिन्तित हुनुहुन्छ । यदी हुनुहुन्न भने सिधै प्रश्न नम्बर १७ मा जानुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
यो परीक्षाको नतिजाले मेरो आगामी प्रगतीमा प्रभाव पार्छ कि भन्ने चिन्ता लाग्छ					
मेरो परिवारले मैले SEE मा राम्रो गर्छु भन्ने अपेक्षा गरेको छ ।					
मेरो शिक्षकहरुले मैले SEE मा राम्रो गर्छु भन्ने अपेक्षा गर्नु भएको छ ।					
उक्त नतिजाले मेरो सामाजिक प्रतिस्ठामा प्रभाव पार्छ कि भन्ने चिन्ता भएको छ ।					
म परीक्षा लिने कुरामा तेति धेरै सिपालु छैन					
उक्त परीक्षामा म राम्रो गर्न सक्छु जस्तो लाग्दैन ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

१५. तपाईको अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षा सम्बन्धि तपाईको अरु केहि अनुभव अथवा अवधारहणाहरु भएमा तल उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् ।

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....

सहयोगको लागि धन्यवाद ॥

Pre-Test Questionnaire (Main study)

Dear student,

I am exploring various impacts of the SEE English test on its test-takers as a part of my PhD research at The Open University, England. I am very much interested in learning about your opinion towards the SEE English test and your experience with the test. The truthful information you provide would be of great value to my research. Please be assured that the information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for my research purpose. Reporting of any research will be done anonymously and individual feedback will not be identifiable with the contributor.

PART I: About you

Please tick one appropriate answer or provide written answers.

1. Your roll number_____

2. Your gender:

□ Female   □ Male   □ others   □preferred not to state

3. Your age:

 □14 – 15 yrs.   □15-16 yrs.   □17-18 yrs.   □above 18yrs

4. School's name and district: _____

5. What is your mother tongue? _____

6. How long have you been learning English?

□9-10 yrs.   □11-12 yrs.   □12-13 yrs.   □above 13yrs

7. Number of classes you study English at Grade 10 per week:

□4-5   □6 –7   □8-9   □10-11   □more than 11

8. What grade are you expecting to get on the test? _____

Please tick on the right boxes in each of the tables below.

Part I: Your views about the test

9. What do you think you need to do to do well on the test?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
I need to develop communicative skills in English.					
I need to memorise so many answers.					
I need to practise with previous test papers.					
I need to learn test taking skills.					

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
Passing the test is just about a luck.					
If others, please specify here:					

10. How do you judge the SEE English test?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
It is a fair test in terms of its conduction and scoring practices.					
It reflects my strengths and weaknesses clearly.					
It is a true measurement of my English language skills.					
If others, please specify here.					

Part II: Your motivation to learn English and the SEE English test

Q11. Please tick one of the options below:

a. The test motivates me to learn English.

b. The test has discouraged me from learning English.

c. There is not any effect of the test on my motivation to learn English.

Q12. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
Doing well on the test will increase my social respect.					
Doing well on the test will provide me a chance to study the course of my choice in higher secondary education.					
Doing well on the test will provide me a chance to study in the higher secondary school of my choice.					
Doing well on the test will support me to find a good job in future.					
In terms of what I want to do in future, it is not					

important for me to do well on the test.					
If others, please specify here:					

Part IV: Other impacts of the test on you

13. Do you feel any pressure because of the test? If YES, please continue. If No, please go straight to question number 16.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel under a pressure to get good grades on the test.					
I feel pressure from my teachers to get good grades on the test.					
I feel pressure from my parents to get good grades on the test.					
If others, please specify here.					

14. Are you anxious about the test? If YES, please continue. If No, please go straight to question number 17.

The reasons of my anxiety related to the SEE English test are:	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
The test results may affect my career prospects.					
My parents are expecting me to do well on the test.					
My teachers are expecting me to do well on the test.					
The test is associated with my social identity.					
I am not good at taking tests.					
I am not confident of doing well on the test.					
If others, please specify here.					

15. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of the SLC English test? If yes, please state below.

_____
_____
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!

Appendix 1B: Post-Test Questionnaire (main study)

Post-test Questionnaire

प्यारा विद्यार्थीहरू

तपाईहरुलाई सायद यो सम्झना छ कि तपाईहरुले करिव पाँच महिना पहिले मेरो एउटा प्रश्नावली भर्नु भएको थियो । आज फेरी म तपाईहरुलाई यस प्रश्नावली भर्नको लागि विनम्र अनुरोध गर्दछु । कृपया नोट गर्नुहोस् की म विशेषगरी तपाईहरुले चैत्र महिनामा लिनु भएको कक्ष अग्रेजी परीक्षाको बारेमा तपाईहरुको अनुभव जान्न चाहान्छु । तपाईहरूले इमान्दारिता पूर्वक दिनुभएको उत्तरहरु अथवा जानकारी मेरो यस अनुसन्धानको लागि अति महत्वपूर्ण हुनेछ । कृपया म तपाईहरुलाई यति कुरा निश्चित गर्न चाहन्छु कि तपाईहरुले यस प्रश्नावली मार्फत दिनु भएको सबै उत्तरहरु सुरक्षित र गोप्य राखिने छ । उक्त उत्तरहरु मेरो अनुसन्धानको लागि मात्र प्रयोग गरिने छ । यस अनुसन्धानको बारेमा केहि रिपोटहरु अथवा प्रस्तुति गर्दा पनि तपाईहरुको नाम गोप्य राखिने छ ।

भाग एक : तपाईको बारेमा

कृपया तलका प्रश्नहरूको उत्तर लेख्नुहोस्

१. तपाईको नाम...

२. तपाईको विद्यालयको नाम र जिल्ला...

३. तपाईले SEE मा पाएको ग्रेड....................................

४. तपाईको बुबाको शैक्षिक योग्यता ....

५. तपाईको आमाको शैक्षिक योग्यता ....

भाग दुई : SEE को अंग्रेजी विषयको परीक्षाको बारेमा तपाईको धारणा

कृपया तल दिएका प्रत्येक भनाइहरूलाई राम्रोसँग पढ्नुहोस् अनि तपाईलाई कुन ठीक लाग्छ त्यस कोठामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस्

६. तपाई SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षालाई कसरी मूल्याङ्कन गर्नुहुन्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
उक्त परीक्षा राम्रोसंग संचालन भयो र ग्रेडिङ पनि सहि तरिकाले गरियो।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी भाषा सम्बन्धी क्षमतालाई ठिकसँग जाँचेको छ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी भाषा सम्बन्धी कमजोरी अथवा सबल पक्षको प्रस्ट सँग प्रस्तुत गरेको छ।					
प्रश्नहरु राम्रो र प्रष्टसँग लेखिएका थिए ।					
प्रश्नपत्रमा दिइएका Instructions प्रष्ट थिए					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

७. तलका मध्ये कुनै एउटामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

(क)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु मैले सोचेको भन्दा सजिला थिए ।

(ख)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु मैले सोचेको भन्दा असजिला थिए ।

(ग)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु मैले सोचेको जस्तै थिए ।

भाग तीन: तपाईको अंग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहना र क्ष्भ्भ को अङ्ग्रेजी परिक्षाको प्रयोग

८. तलका मध्ये कुनै एउटामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

(क)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई अङ्ग्रेजी पढ्न प्रोत्साहन गरेको छ ।

(ख)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई अङ्ग्रेजी पढ्न निरुत्साहित गरेको छ ।

(ग)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मेरो अङ्ग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहनामा कुनै असर पारेको छैन ।

९.तलका प्रत्येक भनाईहरु प्रति आफ्नो उपयुक्त धारणा व्यक्त गर्नको लागि दिइएका ५ विकल्पहरु मध्ये कुनै एकमा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई कक्षा ११ मा आफुले रोजेको विषय पढ्न सहयोग पुर्‍याएको छ ।					
SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई कक्षा ११ मा आफुले रोजेको विद्यालयमा पढ्न सहयोग पुर्‍याएको छ ।					
SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाइ राम्रो जागिर भेट्टाउन सहयोग पुर्‍याएको छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

१०. उक्त SEE अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाले तपाईलाई कक्षा ११ मा तलको कामहरु गर्नको लागि सहयोग पुर्‍याएको छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
अङ्ग्रीमा भएको Lecture बुभ्नको लागि					
अंग्रेजीमा प्रश्नहरु सोध्न					
अंग्रेजी बोलेर छलफलमा भाग लिन					
अंग्रेजीमा उत्तरहरू भन्न					
अंग्रेजीमा उत्तरहरू लेख्न					
अंग्रेजीमा नोट टिप्न					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

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भाग चार : परीक्षा तयारी सम्बन्धमा

११. तपाईंले SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको लागि कुनै तयारी गर्नुभयो ? यदि गर्नु भएन भने सिधै प्रश्न १७ मा जानुहोस् ।यदि तयारी गर्नुभएको थियो भने तपाईंले उक्त परीक्षाको तयारीको बेलामा तल दिइएको कामहरु गर्नु भयो ? तलको प्रत्येक भनाइको लागि उपयुक्त कोठामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेखिएका किताबहरु पढ्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेख्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा भएका कार्यक्रम र गीतहरु सुन्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अंग्रेजीमा बोल्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेखिएका पत्रपत्रिकाहरु पढ्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा भएका चलचित्रहरु अथवा अन्य कार्यक्रमहरु हेर्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिने खालका कुराहरु संग परिचित हुने गर्थें ।					
मैले गतवर्षहरुमा SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परीक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरुलाई हेरेर महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्नहरुको पहिचान गर्ने गर्थें ।					
प्रश्नहरुको प्रकार र तिनिहरुमा दिइएको अङ्कलाई विश्लेषण गरि कुन प्रश्न कत्तिको महत्वपूर्ण छ भन्ने कुरा पत्ता लगाउने गर्थें ।					
मैले परीक्षा कसरी दिने भन्ने सिपहरु सिक्ने गर्थें					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजी व्याकरणका नियमहरु कण्ठ गर्थें ।					
परिक्षामा सोध्ने खालका प्रश्नहरुको उत्तर कण्ठ गर्थें ।					
मैले परिक्षामा सोधिने खालका शब्दहरुको अर्थ कण्ठ गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेखिएका कुरा छिटो पढ्न सक्ने हुनको लागि अभ्यास गर्थें ।					
मैले गतवर्षहरुमा सोधिएका Essay Topics हरुमा essay लेख्ने अभ्यास गर्थें ।					
मैले गत वर्षहरुमा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु को उत्तर लेख्ने प्रयास गर्थें ।					

मैलै SEE जस्तै खालका अन्य परिक्षाहरुमा सहभागि भए ।				
मैले मेरा अनुभवहरु मेरा साथीहरुलाई बताउने गर्थें ।				
मैलै परिक्षामा कसरी धेरै अङ्क प्राप्त गर्ने भनेर मेरा शिक्षकसँग सल्लाह माग्थें ।				
मैले प्रायजसो म भन्दा senior दाइ दिदीहरुसँग उक्त परिक्षाको बारेमा सल्लाह लिने गर्थें ।				
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :				

१२. तपाईंले SEE को अंग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको तयारीका लागि तलका मध्ये कुनै कक्षाहरु लिनु भयो ? तपाईंले एक भन्दा बढी उपयुक्त विकल्प छनोटगरी रेजा (√) लगाउन सक्नु हुनेछ ।

क. स्कुलको शिक्षकहरुले लिइएको coaching class

ख. स्कुल भन्दा बाहिरका शिक्षकहरुले चलाएका coaching class

ग. प्राइभेट ट्युसन class

घ. मैले कुनै पनि प्रकारको coaching अथवा private tuition class हरु लिएको थिइन ।

१३ तपाईंले SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको तयारी गर्न कहिले सुरू गर्नुभयो ? तलका मध्ये कुनै एउटा विकल्पमा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

(क) परीक्षाको १ देखि २ महिना अगाडिबाट

(ख) परीक्षाको ३ देखि ४ महिना अगाडिबाट

(ग) परीक्षाको ५ देखि ६ महिना अगाडिबाट

(घ) परीक्षाको ७ देखि ८ महिना अगाडिबाट

(ङ) परीक्षाको ९ देखि १० महिना अगाडिबाट

(च) १० कक्षाको सुरुवातबाट नै

१४. तपाईंले कक्षामा अङ्ग्रेजी पढेको समय भन्दा बाहेक अन्दाजि कति घण्टा जति SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी परिक्षाको तयारीमा खर्चनुभयोहोला ।

(क) २० घण्टा जति

(ख) २१ देखि ४० घण्टा जति

(ग) ४१ देखि ६० घण्टा जति

(घ) ६१ देखि ८० घण्टा जति

(ङ) ८१ घण्टा देखि १०० घण्टा जति

(च) १०० घण्टा भन्दा माथि

१५. SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी परिक्षाको तयारीको लागि तपाईलाई तपाईको बुवा, आमा अथवा परिवारको अन्य सदश्यहरुले केहि सहयोगगर्नुभयो ? यदि गर्नुभएन भने सिधै प्रश्न नं. १८ मा जानु होस् । यदि गर्नु भयो भने कस्तो खालको सहयोग र कसरी गर्नुभयो ? कृपया खुलस्त पारेर लेख्नु होस् ।

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१६. तपाईले SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको तयारी गरेको बेला उक्त परिक्षा तयारीका लागि कक्षा १० को अङ्ग्रेजी किताब बाहेक अरु केहि सामग्रीहरु प्रयोग गर्नुभयो ? यदि गर्नु भएन भने प्रश्न नं. १९ मा जानुहोस् । गर्नुभएको भए उक्त सामग्री (किताब) हरु तल उल्लेखगर्नुहोस् ।

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१७. तपाईको अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षा सम्बन्धि तपाईको अरु केहि अनुभव अथवा अवधारहणाहरु भएमा तल उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् ।

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सहयोगको लागि धन्यवाद ।

Post-test questionnaire (main study)

Dear students,

You may remember that you had filled out one of my questionnaires about five months ago. This is another questionnaire you are requested to fill out. Please kindly note that I am interested in learning about your opinion and your experience of the SEE English test that you went through in March, 2017. Your honest and open feedback would be of great value to my research. Please be assured that the information you provide will be kept secure and confidential, and used only for my research purpose. Reporting of any research will be done anonymously and individual feedback will not be identifiable with the contributor.

PART I: About you

Please provide written answers.

1. Your name: _____

2. School's name and district: _____

3. Your grade in the SLC English test_____

4. Your father's education level_____

5. Your mother's education level_____

PART II: Your judgment about the test

Please read the following items carefully and tick (√) the one that suits you best.

6. How do you judge the SEE English test?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
It was a fair test in terms of its conduction and scoring practices.					
It was a true measurement of my English language skills.					
It reflected my strengths and weaknesses clearly.					
The questions were clear and well written.					
The instructions given on the test were clear.					
If others, please specify here:					

7. Please circle one of the options below.

a. The questions in the SEE English test were easier than I expected.

b. The questions in the SEE English test were more difficult than I expected.

c. The questions in the SEE English test were as easy or difficult as I expected

Part III: Your motivation to learn English and the test utility

8. Please tick one of the options below:

a. The test results have motivated me to learn English.

b. The test results have discouraged me from learning English.

c. There is not effects of the test results on my motivation to learn English.

9. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
The test provided me a chance to study the course of my choice at Grade 11.					
The test provided me a chance to study in the higher secondary school of my choice.					
The test supported me to find a good job.					
If others, please specify here:					

10. Has the test supported you to perform the following activities at Grade 11?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
Understand lectures in English					
Ask questions in English					
Take part in discussion using English					
Answer questions orally in English					
Write answers in English					
Take notes in English					
If others, please specify here.					

PART IV: About preparing for the test

11. Did you make any preparation for the SEE English test? If no, please go to question 17, if yes, please continue.

During test preparation,	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
I kept on reading English books.					
I kept on writing in English.					
I kept on listening to programmes or songs in English.					
I kept on speaking in English.					
I kept on reading newspapers and magazines in English.					
I kept on watching movies or programmes in English					
I familiarised myself with the test contents.					
I analysed previous test papers to identify frequently assessed areas.					
I analysed SEE score distribution to judge the relative importance of question types.					
I learnt test taking strategies.					
I memorised rules of English grammar.					
I memorised question answers.					
I memorised word meanings.					
I tried to improve my SEE reading speed.					
I practised composing essays using past SEE essay topics.					
I practised writing answers of the questions from the past SEE papers.					
I took some other similar test.					
I often exchanged my learning experience with classmates or friends.					
I often sought teachers' advice on how to improve test performance.					

I often consulted senior for the test preparation.					
If others, please specify here:					

12. Did you attend the following classes for the preparation of the SEE English test? Please circle all that applies to you.

a. Coaching classes run by school teachers

b. Coaching classes run by other people

c. Private tuition classes

c. I did not attend any coaching or tuition classes

13. When did you start preparation for the SEE English test? Please circle the one that best fits you.

 [ ] 1-2 months before the test

[ ] 3-4 months before the test

[ ] 5-6 months before the test

[ ] 7-8 months before the test

[ ] 9-10 months before the test

[ ] Right from the beginning of the academic year

14. Excluding your regular class hours, how many hours did you approximately spend preparing for the SEE English test in total?

 [ ] 0-20 hours

[ ] 21-40 hours

[ ] 41-60 hours

[ ] 61-80 hours

[ ] 81-100 hours

[ ] More than 100 hours

15. Did your parents or family members support you for the preparation of the SEE English test? If no go to question 18; if yes, please provide as detailed information as you can.

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. During your preparation for the SEE English test, did you go through any kind of test preparation materials/books? If no please go to question 19; if yes, please mention them below.

_____

_____

_____

17. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of the SEE English test? If yes, please state below.

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!!

Pre-Test Questionnaire (Pilot Study)

प्यारा विद्यार्थीहरू

म हाल वेलायतमा रहेको त्जभ यउभल ग्लष्खभचकष्तथ अन्तर्गत एजम्ऺिखभर्ऻ मा अध्ययनरत छु र मेरो अनुसन्धान कम्को अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको शैक्षिक तथा सामाजिक असरहरूको बारेमा केन्द्रित रहेको छ र यस अध्ययनमा तपाईहरूको अंग्रेजी भाषा सिकाइ प्रति अभिरूचीका साथै SEE अंग्रेजी परीक्षा प्रति तपाईहरूको धारणाहरू बुभ्न प्रयास गरेकी छु । तपाईहरूले यस प्रश्नावली मार्फत उपलब्ध गराएको सत्य तथा इमान्दार उत्तर मेरो यस अध्ययनको लागि धेरै महत्वपूर्ण हुनेछ । म तपाईहरूलाई यो कुरा पनि निश्चिन्त गराउन चाहन्छु कि तपाईहरूले दिएको उत्तर अथवा जानकारी सबै गोप्य राखिनेछन् र यस अध्ययनको लागि मात्र प्रयोग गरिनेछ । यस अध्ययनको नतिजाको बारेमा कतै प्रस्तुत गर्दा हरेक व्यक्तिको नाम गोप्य राखिनेछ ।

कृपया ठिक ठाउमा रेजा लगाउनुहोस् अथवा लिखित उत्तर दिनुहोस्
भाग एक : तपाईको बारेमा

१. तपाईको नाम ....

२. तपाईको लिङ्ग

क. महिला   ख. पुरूष   ग. अन्य   घ. बताउन चाहान्न

३. तपाईको उमेर

क. १४ देखि १५ वर्ष   ख. १५ देखि १६ वर्ष   ग. १७ देखि १८ वर्ष   घ. १८ वर्षभन्दा माथि

४. तपाईको विद्यालयको नाम र जिल्ला के हो ?
....

५. तपाईको मातृभाषा के हो ?
....

६. तपाईले अंग्रेजी पढ्न थालेको कति वर्ष भयो ?

क. ९ देखि १० वर्ष   ख. ११ देखि १२ वर्ष   ग. १३ वर्षभन्दा माथि

७. तपाई हप्तामा कति वटा अंग्रेजी पिरियड पढ्नुहुन्छ ?

क.४ देखि ५   ख. ६ देखि ७   ग. ८ देखि ९

घ. ९ देखि १०   ङ. १० देखि ११   च. ११ भन्दा माथि

८. तपाईको SEE अंग्रेजी test मा कुन ग्रेड आउछ जस्तो लाग्छ ?
....

भाग दुई : तपाईको अंग्रेजी पढ्ने चाहना र SEE अंग्रेजी परिक्षा
तलका प्रत्येक भनाईहरु प्रति आफ्नो उपयुक्त धारणा व्यक्त गर्नको लागि दिइएका ५ विकल्पहरु मध्ये कुनै एकमा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

९. मलाई अंग्रेजी पढ्नका लागि निम्न कारणहरूले गर्दा महत्वपूर्ण छ

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
स्वदेश तथा विदेशबाट उच्च शिक्षा हासिल गर्न					
राम्रो जागिर पाउन					
अंग्रेजी पत्रपत्रिका अथवा किताब पढ्न					
अंग्रेजी फिल्महरू हेर्न					
अंग्रेजीमा समाचार अथवा अरू कुनै कार्यक्रम सुन्न					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोसः					

१०. तपाई तलका भनाइहरूसँग कति सहमत अथवा असहमत हुनुहुन्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
उक्त परीक्षाले मलाई अंग्रेजी पढ्न आकर्षण गर्छ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले अंग्रेजी पढ्न हतोत्साहित गर्छ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहनाप्रति कुनै असर पार्दैन ।					
उक्त परिक्षाले मलाई nervous बनाएको छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

११. उक्त परिक्षामा राम्रो गरेँ भने

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मेरो आफ्नो आत्म सम्मान बढाउँछ ।					
मैले उच्च माध्यमिक तहमा मेरो रोजाइको विषय अध्ययन गर्न पाउछु ।					
उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्यो भने मैले उच्च माध्यमिक तहमा मेरो रोजाइको स्कुलमा अध्ययन गर्न पाउछु ।					
मैले राम्रो जागिर भेट्टाउन सक्छु ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

भाग तीन : उक्त परीक्षाको बारेमा तपाईको मुल्याङ्कन

१२. तपाई SEE अंग्रेजी परीक्षालाई कसरी मूल्याङ्कन गर्नुहुन्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
उक्त परीक्षामा ग्रेडिङ सहि तरिकाले गरिन्छ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी भाषा सम्बन्धी क्षमताको ठिक सँग मापन गर्दछ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी भाषा सम्बन्धी कमजोरीलाई प्रस्ट सँग प्रस्तुत गर्दछ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

१३. तपाई तलका भनाई हरूसँग कति सहमत हुनुहुन्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी पढ्ने क्षमता बढाउँछ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी लेख्ने क्षमतालाई बढाउँछ					

उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी सुन्ने क्षमता बढाउँछ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी बोल्ने क्षमता बढाउछ ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजीमा सुनाइ बोलाई साथै पढ्ने र लेख्ने क्षमताको बृद्धि गर्दछ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

भाग चार : अंग्रेजी परीक्षा पास गर्न चाहिने क्षमता

१४. उक्त परीक्षा पास गर्नको लागि तपाईले के गर्नुपर्छ जस्तो लाग्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मैले अंग्रेजी भाषामा सिप विकास गर्नु पर्छ ।					
मैले धेरै कुरा घोक्नु पर्छ ।					
मैले पहिलेको SEE परीक्षाको प्रश्नपत्रसँग अभ्यास गर्नु पर्छ ।					
मैले परीक्षा कसरी दिने भन्ने सीप सिक्नु पर्छ।					
परीक्षा पास गर्ने कुरा मेरो भाग्यमा निर्भर रहन्छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

भाग पाँच : SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षाले तपाईलाई प्रभाव पारेको अन्य असरहरु

१५. तपाईमा SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको कारणले कुनै दबाब परेको छ ? यदि तपाईमा उक्त परीक्षाको कारणले कुनै पनि प्रकारको दबाब परेको छैन भने सीधै प्रश्न नम्बर १६ मा जानुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मेरो विद्यालयले मलाइ उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो ग्रेड ल्याउन पर्छ भनेर दवाव दिएको छ					
मेरो अंग्रेजी पढाउने शिक्षकले उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्नु पर्छ भनेर दवाव दिनु भएको छ					
मेरो परिवारबाट मैले उक्त परीक्षामा राम्रो गर्नुपर्छ भनेर दवाव दिइएको छ					
उक्त परीक्षाको कारणले आजभोली मैले धेरै भन्दा धेरै पढ्न लेख्न परेको छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

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१६. तपाई उक्त परीक्षको बारेमा चिन्तित हुनुहुन्छ । यदी हुनुहुन्न भने सिधै प्रश्न नम्बर १७ मा जानुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मेरो नतिजाको बारेमा मेरो परिवारले के भन्नु होला भन्ने चिन्ता लाग्छ ।					
मेरो नतिजाको बारेमा मेरो शिक्षकहरुले के भन्नु हुन्छ भन्ने चिन्ता लाग्छ ।					
मेरो नतिजाको बारेमा मेरा साथीहरुले केही भन्छन् की भन्ने चिन्ता लाग्छ ।					
यो परीक्षाको नतिजाले आगामी प्रगतीमा प्रभाव पार्छ कि भन्ने चिन्ता लाग्छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्:					

१७. SEEको अंग्रेजी विषयको परीक्षा सम्बन्धी तपाईको अरु केही विचारहरु छ ? यदि छ भने तल उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् ।

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सहयोगको लागि धन्यवाद ॥

Dear student,

I am exploring various impacts of the SLC English test on its test-takers as a part of my PhD research at The Open University, England. I am very much interested in learning about your opinion towards the SLC English test and your experience with the test. The truthful information you provide would be of great value to my research. Please be assured that the information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for my research purpose. Reporting of any research will be done anonymously and individual feedback will not be identifiable with the contributor.

PART I: About you

Please tick one appropriate answer or provide written answers.

1. Your name_____

2. Your gender:

□ Female   □ Male   □ others   □preferred not to state

3. Your age:

 □14 – 15 yrs.   □15-16 yrs.   □17-18 yrs.   □above 18yrs

4. School's name and district: _____

5. What is your mother tongue? _____

6. How long have you been learning English?

□9-10 yrs.   □11-12 yrs.   □12-13 yrs.   □above 13yrs

7. Number of classes you study English at Grade 10 per week:

□4-5   □6 –7   □8-9   □10-11   □more than 11

8. What grade are you expecting to get in the test? _____

Please tick on the right boxes in each of the tables below.

Part II: Your motivation to learn English and the SLC English test

9. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
pursue further education in or out of the country.					
obtain good jobs.					
be able to read English newspapers or books in English.					
be able to watch English movies.					
be able to listen to English news or English programs.					

	If others, please specify here.

10. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	agree	Undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
It has motivated me to work hard.					
It has discouraged me from working hard.					
It does not affect my motivation to learn English.					
It has made me nervous.					
If others, please specify here.					

11. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Doing well on the test will increase my self-esteem.					
Doing well on the test will provide me a chance to study the course of my choice in higher education.					
Doing well on the test will provide me a chance to study in the higher secondary school of my choice.					
Doing well on the test will support me to find a good job in future.					
If others, please specify here:					

Part III: Your judgment about the test

12. How do you judge the SLC English test?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly agree
It is a fair test in terms of how it grades students.					
It is a true measurement of my English language skills.					
It reflects my strengths and weaknesses in English.					
If others, please specify here.					

13. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly agree
The test helps me to develop my reading skills.					
The test helps me to develop my writing skills.					
The test helps me to develop my listening skills.					
The test helps me to develop my speaking skills.					
The test helps me to develop my integrated skills.					
If others, please specify here:					

Part IV: Your perception of what it takes to pass the test

14. What do you think you need to do to pass the test?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly agree
I need to develop my communicative skills in English.					

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly agree
I need to memorise a lot of answers.					
I need to practise with previous test papers.					
I need to learn test taking skills.					
Passing the test is just about a luck.					
If others, please specify here:					

Part IV: Other impacts of the test on you

15. Do you feel any pressure because of the test? If YES, please continue. If No, please go straight to question number 16.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly agree
I feel pressure from my school to get a good grade on the test.					
I feel pressure from my English teacher to get a good grade on the test.					
I feel pressure from my family to get a good grade on the test.					
The test has increased my work load excessively.					
If others, please specify here.					

16. Are you anxious about the test? If YES, please continue. If No, please go straight to question number 17.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly agree
I am anxious about what my parents think about my test results.					
I am anxious about what my teachers think about my test results.					
I am anxious about what my friends think about my test results.					

I am anxious about how my grade will affect my further progress.					
If others, please specify here.					

18. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of the SLC English test? If yes, please state below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

The End

Post-test Questionnaire (Pilot Study)

प्यारा विद्यार्थीहरू

तपाईहरुलाई सायद यो सम्झना छ कि तपाईहरुले करिव पाँच महिना पहिले मेरो एउटा प्रश्नावली भर्नु भएको थियो । आज फेरी म तपाईहरुलाई यस प्रश्नावली भर्नको लागि विनम्र अनुरोध गर्दछु । कृपया नोट गर्नुहोस् की म विशेषगरी तपाईहरुले चैत्र महिनामा लिनु भएको कम्व अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको बारेमा तपाईहरुको अनुभव जान्न चाहान्छु । तपाईहरुले इमान्दारिता पूर्वक दिनुभएको उत्तरहरु अथवा जानकारी मेरो यस अनुसन्धानको लागि अति महत्वपूर्ण हुनेछ । कृपया म तपाईहरुलाई यति कुरा निश्चित गर्न चाहन्छु कि तपाईहरुले यस प्रश्नावली मार्फत दिनु भएको सबै उत्तरहरु सुरक्षित र गोप्य राखिने छ । उक्त उत्तरहरु मेरो अनुसन्धानको लागि मात्र प्रयोग गरिने छ । यस अनुसन्धानको बारेमा केहि रिपोटहरु अथवा प्रस्तुति गर्दा पनि तपाईहरुको नाम गोप्य राखिने छ ।

भाग एक : तपाईको बारेमा

कृपया तलका प्रश्नहरूको उत्तर लेख्नुहोस्

१. तपाईको नाम...

२. तपाईको विद्यालयको नाम र जिल्ला...

३. तपाईले SEE मा पाएको ग्रेड...

४. तपाईको बुबाको शैक्षिक योग्यता ....

५. तपाईको आमाको शैक्षिक योग्यता ....

भाग दुई : SEE को अंग्रेजी विषयको परीक्षाको बारेमा तपाईको धारणा

कृपया तल दिएका प्रत्येक भनाइहरूलाई राम्रोसँग पढ्नुहोस् अनि तपाईलाई कुन ठीक लाग्छ त्यस कोठामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस्।

६. तपाई SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षालाई कसरी मूल्याङ्कन गर्नुहुन्छ ?

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
उक्त परीक्षामा गरिएको ग्रेडिङ सही थियो ।					
उक्त परीक्षाले मेरो अंग्रेजी भाषा सम्बन्धी क्षमतालाई ठिकसँग जाँचेको छ ।					
प्रश्नहरु राम्रो र प्रष्टसँग लेखिएका थिए ।					
प्रश्नपत्रमा दिइएका Instructions प्रष्ट थिए ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

७.   तलका मध्ये कुनै एउटामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

(क)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु मैले सोचेको भन्दा सजिला थिए ।

(ख)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु मैले सोचेको भन्दा असजिला थिए ।

(ग)   SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु मैले सोचेको जस्तै थिए ।

भाग तीनः तपाईको अंग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहना र SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी परिक्षाको प्रयोग

८.तलका प्रत्येक भनाईहरु प्रति आफ्नो उपयुक्त धारणा व्यक्त गर्नको लागि दिइएका ५ विकल्पहरु मध्ये कुनै एकमा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई कक्षा ११ मा आफुले रोजेको विषय पढ्न सहयोग पुऱ्याएको छ ।					
SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई कक्षा ११ मा आफुले रोजेको विद्यालयमा पढ्न सहयोग पुऱ्याएको छ ।					
SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको नतिजाले मलाई राम्रो जागिर भेट्टाउन सहयोग पुऱ्याएको छ ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

९. उक्त SEE अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाले तपाईलाई कक्षा ११ मा तलको कामहरु गर्नको लागि सहयोग पुऱ्याएको छ ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
अङ्ग्रीमा भएको Lecture बुझ्नको लागि					
अंग्रेजीमा प्रश्नहरु सोध्न					
अंग्रेजी बोलेर छलफलमा भाग लिन					
अंग्रेजीमा उत्तरहरू भन्न					
अंग्रेजीमा उत्तरहरू लेख्न					
अंग्रेजीमा नोट लेख्न					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

भाग चार : परीक्षा तयारी सम्बन्धमा

१० तपाईले SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको लागि कुनै तयारी गर्नुभयो ? यदि गर्नु भएन भने सिधै प्रश्न १५ मा जानुहोस् ।यदि तयारी गर्नुभएको थियो भने तपाईले उक्त परीक्षाको तयारीको बेलामा तल दिइएको कामहरु गर्नु भयो ? तलको प्रत्येक भनाइको लागि उपयुक्त कोठामा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

	धेरै सहमत छु	सहमत छु	थाहा छैन	असहमत छु	धेरै असहमत छु
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेखिएका किताबहरु पढ्ने गर्थे ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेखिएका पत्रपत्रिकाहरु पढ्ने गर्थे					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा भएका चलचित्रहरू अथवा अन्य कार्यक्रमहरु हेर्ने गर्थे ।					

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मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा भएका कार्यक्रमहरु सुन्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेख्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षामा सोधिने खालका कुराहरु पढ्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले गतवर्षहरुमा SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परीक्षामा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरुलाई हेरेर महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्नहरुको पहिचान गर्ने गर्थें ।					
प्रश्नहरुको प्रकार र तिनिहरुमा दिइएको अङ्कलाई विश्लेषण गरि कुन प्रश्न कत्तिको महत्वपूर्ण छ भन्ने कुरा पत्ता लगाउने गर्थें ।					
मैले परीक्षा कसरी दिने भन्ने सिपहरु सिक्ने गर्थें ।					
मैले महत्वपूर्ण वाक्यहरु कण्ठ गर्थें ।					
परिक्षामा सोध्ने खालका प्रश्नहरुको उत्तर कण्ठ गर्थें					
मैले परिक्षामा सोधिने खालका Essay हरु कण्ठ गर्थें ।					
मैले अङ्ग्रेजीमा लेखिएका कुरा छिटो पढ्न सक्ने हुनको लागि अभ्यास गर्थें ।					
मैले SEE को परिक्षामा तयारी गर्दा गतवर्षहरुमा सोधिएका Essay Topics हरुमा essay लेख्ने अभ्यास गर्थें ।					
मैले गत वर्षहरुमा सोधिएका प्रश्नहरु को उत्तर लेख्ने प्रयास गर्थें ।					
मैले SEE को mock परिक्षामा सहभागि भए ।					
मैले मेरा अनुभवहरु मेरा साथीहरुलाई बताउने गर्थें ।					
मैले परिक्षामा कसरी धेरै अङ्क प्राप्त गर्ने भनेर मेरा शिक्षकसँग सल्लाह माग्थें ।					
मैले प्रायजसो म भन्दा senior दाइ दिदीहरुसँग उक्त परिक्षाको बारेमा सल्लाह लिने गर्थें ।					
अन्य कुरा भए यहाँ उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् :					

११. तपाईले SEE को अंग्रेजी विषयको परीक्षाको तयारीका लागि तलका मध्ये कुनै कक्षाहरु लिनु भयो ? तपाईले एक भन्दा बढी उपयुक्त विकल्प छनोटगरी रेजा (√) लगाउन सक्नु हुनेछ ।

क. स्कुलको शिक्षकहरुले लिइएको coaching class

ख. स्कुल भन्दा बाहिरका शिक्षकहरुले चलाएका अयबअजष्लन class

ग. प्राइभेट ट्युसन class

घ. मैले कुनै पनि प्रकारको अयबअजष्लन अथवा private tuition class हरु लिएको थिइन ।

१२ . तपाईले SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षाको तयारी गर्न कहिले सुरू गर्नुभयो ? तलका मध्ये कुनै एउटा विकल्पमा रेजा (√) लगाउनुहोस् ।

(क) परीक्षाको देखि २ महिना अगाडिबाट

(ख) परीक्षाको ३ देखि ४ महिना अगाडिबाट

(ग) परीक्षाको ५ देखि ६ महिना अगाडिबाट

(घ) परीक्षाको ७ देखि ८ महिना अगाडिबाट

(ङ) परीक्षाको ९ देखि १० महिना अगाडिबाट

(च) १० कक्षाको सुरुवातबाट नै

१३. तपाईले कक्षामा अङ्ग्रेजी पढेको समय भन्दा बाहेक अन्दाजि कति घण्टा जति SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी परिक्षाको तयारीमा खर्चनुभयोहोला ।

(क) २० घण्टा जति

(ख) २१ देखि ४० घण्टा जति

(ग) ४१ देखि ६० घण्टा जति

(घ) ६१ देखि ८० घण्टा जति

(ङ) ८१ घण्टा देखि १०० घण्टा जति

(च) १०० घण्टा भन्दा माथि ।

१४. SEE को अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको परिक्षा सम्बन्धि तपाईको अरु केहि अनुभव अथवा अवधारहणाहरु भएमा तल उल्लेख गर्नुहोस्।

....

....

....

सहयोगको लागि धन्यवाद ॥

Dear students,

You may remember that you had filled out one of my questionnaires about five months ago. This is another questionnaire you are requested to fill out. Please kindly note that I am interested in learning about your opinion and your experience of the SEE English test that you went through in March, 2017. Your honest and open feedback would be of great value to my research. Please be assured that the information you provide will be kept secure and confidential, and used only for my research purpose. Reporting of any research will be done anonymously and individual feedback will not be identifiable with the contributor.

PART I: About you

Please provide written answers.

1. Your name: _____

2. School's name and district: _____

3. Your grade in the SEE English test_____

4. Your father's education level_____

5. Your mother's education level_____

PART II: Your judgment about the test
Please read the following items carefully and tick (√) the one that suits you best.
6. How do you judge the SEE English test?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly agree
It was a fair test in terms of its grading practice.					
It is a true measurement of my English language skills.					
The questions were clear and well written.					
The instructions given on the test were clear.					
If others, please specify here:					

7. Please circle one of the options below.

a. The questions in the SEE English test were easier than I expected.

b. The questions in the SEE English test were more difficult than I expected.

c. The questions in the SEE English test were as easy or difficult as I expected.

Part III: Your motivation to learn English and the test utility

8. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly agree
The test provided me a chance to study the course of my choice at Grade 11.					
The test provided me a chance to study in the higher secondary school of my choice.					
The test supported me to find a good job.					
If others, please specify here:					

9. Has the test supported you to perform the following activities at Grade 11?

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly agree
Understand lectures in English					
Ask questions in English					
Take part in discussion using English					
Answer questions orally in English					
Write answers in English					
Take notes in English					
If others, please specify here.					

PART IV: About preparing for the Test

10. Did you make any preparation for the SEE English test? If no, please go to question 15, if yes, please continue.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly agree
During test preparation period, I kept on reading English books.					

During test preparation period, I kept on reading Newspapers and/or magazine in English.					
During test preparation period, I kept on watching English movies or programmes in English.					
During test preparation period, I kept on listening to programmes in English.					
During test preparation period, I kept on writing in English.					
During test preparation, I familiarised myself with the test contents.					
During test preparation, I analysed previous test papers to identify frequently assessed areas.					
During test preparation, I analysed SEE score distribution to judge the relative importance of question types.					
During test preparation, I learnt test taking strategies.					
During test preparation, I memorised important sentences.					
During test preparation, I memorised important question-answers that were likely to appear in the test.					
During test preparation, I memorised some essays that were likely to appear in the test.					
During test preparation, I tried to improve my SEE reading speed.					
I practised composing essays using past SEE essay topics.					
I practised writing answers of the questions appeared in the past test					

papers.					
I took some SEE mock tests.					
I often exchanged my learning experience with classmates or friends.					
I often sought teachers' advice on how to improve test performance.					
I often consulted senior students about the test preparation.					
If others, please specify here:					

11. Did you attend the following classes for the preparation of the SEE English test? Please circle all that applies to you.

a. Coaching classes run by school teachers

b. Coaching classes run by other people outside the school

c. Private tuition classes

c. I did not attend any coaching or tuition classes

12. When did you start preparation for the SEE English test? Please circle the one that best fits you.

 [ ] 1-2 months before the test

[ ] 3-4 months before the test

[ ] 5-6 months before the test

[ ] 7-8 months before the test

[ ] 9-10 months before the test

[ ] Right from the beginning of the academic year

13. Excluding your regular class hours, how many hours did you approximately spend preparing for the SEE English test in total?

 [ ] 0-20 hours

[ ] 21-40 hours

[ ] 41-60 hours

[ ] 61-80 hours

[ ] 81-100 hours

[ ] More than 100 hours

14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of the SEE English test? If yes, please state below.

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!!

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Appendix 2A: Student Interview Schedule (Pre-Test)

1. Students' opinion about the importance of English for them
2. Students' experience of learning English at grade 10 (what are they learning, how much time they are spending, how are they learning)
3. Their views about the importance of the SEE English test for them
4. Test impacts on them
   a. Their motivation towards learning English? What are the main reasons for their motivation or demotivation?
   b. What particular skill (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are they focusing on? Why?
5. Their views about the quality of the SEE English test (in terms of test fairness and accuracy in measuring their English language skills)
6. Their knowledge about the grading system (how they are graded in the test)
7. Their views about the SEE English test and their own identity
8. Students' test preparation practices (their views about the test difficulty and test preparation strategies)
9. Test impacts on their psychological domains (any pressure, anxiety, enthusiasm etc.)
10. Parental/ family support to them for the test preparation (
    a. Students' views about the extent to which test result will support them for subject and school selection
11. Anything else you would like to share with me?

The End

Appendix 2B: Parent Interview Schedule (Pre-Test)

1. Parents' opinions about the importance of the English language to their children
2. Parents' views about the importance of the SEE English test to their children
3. Their perceptions about the test quality (in terms of test fairness and accuracy in measuring students' skills)
4. Parents' knowledge about the test (test contents and grading practise in the test)
5. Their views about the test impacts on their children
   a. Their opinion regarding the extent to which the test encourages their children to learn English? Which particular skill
   b. Their knowledge about how their children are learning English
   c. Any effects of grading system on their children
6. Test impacts on parents (any pressure, anxiety, encouragement related to the test)
7. Parental involvement in preparing their children for the test
8. Anything else they would like to share with me?

The End

Appendix 2C: Student Interview Schedule (Post-Test)

1. Students' opinion about the importance of English for them
2. Students' experience of learning English at grade 10 (what are they learning, how much time they are spending, how are they learning)
3. Their views about the importance of the SEE English test for them
4. Test impacts on them
    c. Their motivation towards learning English? What are the main reasons for their motivation or demotivation?
    d. What particular skill (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are they focusing on? Why?
5. Their views about the quality of the SEE English test (in terms of test fairness and accuracy in measuring their English language skills)
6. Their knowledge about the grading system (how they are graded in the test)
7. Their views about the SEE English test and their own identity
8. Students' test preparation practices (their views about the test difficulty and test preparation strategies)
9. Test impacts on their psychological domains (any pressure, anxiety, enthusiasm etc.)
10. Parental/ family support to them for the test preparation (
    b. Students' views about the extent to which test result will support them for subject and school selection
11. Anything else you would like to share with me?

The End

Appendix 2D. Parent Interview Schedule (Post-Test)

1. Parents' experience of supporting their children for the preparation of the test
   a. How did they support their children for the preparation of the test (doing homework, limiting time for going out watching TV or playing etc.)?
2. Test impacts on parents' psychological domains
   a. Their experience of waiting for the test results?
   b. Their experience on the result day
   c. Any sort of anxiety/happiness related to the test results
3. Their perception about the test quality (in terms of test fairness and accurate measurement of students' English skills) and their knowledge about the test (focus on grading practise)
4. Post-test impacts on their children
   a. Impacts of the test results on children's further study and career development (subject and school selection for grade 11, and finding a job if needed). How did they make decisions about the course to study at Grade 11 and the school? Was there any role of the test result?
   b. Anything else they would like to share with me?

Appendix 3: Diary Keeping Guidelines

Guidelines for Diary Keeping (Pre-Test)

कृपया नोट गर्नुहोस् र कि तपाई आफ्नो डायरी रेकर्ड हप्ताको एक पटक शुक्रबार अथवा शनिबार मात्रै गर्नुहुनेछ । तपाईले डायरी रेकर्ड भाद्र १७ वा १८ गते सुरु गर्नुहुनेछ र आफुसँग चारवटा रेकर्डिङ नभए सम्म हप्ताको एकपटक निरन्तर गर्नुहुनेछ । तपाईले रेकर्ड गर्दा तलका प्रश्नहरुको सहयोग लिन सक्नुहुनेछ अनि अन्य कुरा जुन तपाईको अंग्रेजी बिषयको सिकाइ अथवा क्रिक्ष को अंग्रेजी परीक्षासँग संबन्धित छ, त्यसलाई उल्लेख गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ ।

१। गत हप्ता तपाईले अंग्रेजीमा के काम गर्नुभयो ? (जस्तै अंग्रेजीको गृहकार्य , अंग्रेजीमा :यखष्भ हेर्ने काम, अंग्रेजी पत्रिका पढ्ने काम आदी) अनि उक्त कामहरु प्रत्येकमा अन्दाजि कति समय खर्च गर्नुभयो होला ? उक्त कामहरु तपाईले किन गर्नुभयो ?

२. तपाईले अंग्रेजी सिक्ने तरिकामा कुनै परिवर्तन ल्याउनुभयो ? किन र कसरी ?

३. तपाई कुनै प्राइभेट ट्युशन पढ्न जानुभयो ? यदि जानुभयो भने कति घण्टा जानुभयो, कहाँ र किन जानुभयो ?, के कुरा सिक्नुभयो र किन ? यदि जानुभएन भने किन जानुभएन ?

४. तपाईलाई गत हप्ता अंग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहना कत्तिको थियो ? किन होला ?

५. तपाईले तपाईको परिवारको सदस्यहरुबाट अंग्रेजी सिक्नको लागि कुनै सहयोग अथवा असहयोग पाउनुभयो ? यदि पाउनुभयो भने कस्तो खालको र को बाट पाउनुभयो ? अनि तपाईलाई कस्तो अनुभव भयो ?

६. तपाईले SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको लागि तयारी सुरु गर्नुभयो ? यदि शुरु गर्नुभयो भने के गर्नु भयो ? यदि गर्नु भएन भने किन गर्नुभएन ?

Guideline for Diary Keeping (Pre-Results)

कृपया नोट गर्नुहोस् की तपाई आफ्नो डायरी रेकर्ड हप्ताको एक पटक शुक्रबार अथवा शनिबार मात्रै गर्नुहुनेछ । तपाईले रेकर्ड गर्न क्रिक्ष को चभकगति आउनु भन्दा एक हप्ता अगाडि सुरु गर्नुहुनेछ र आफुसँग चारवटा रेकर्डिङ नभए सम्म हप्ताको एकपटक निरन्तर गर्नुहुनेछ । तपाईले रेकर्ड गर्दा तलका प्रश्नहरुको सहयोग लिन सक्नुहुनेछ अनि अन्य कुरा जुन तपाईको अंगेजी बिषयको सिकाइ अथवा SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षासँग संबन्धित छ, त्यसलाई उल्लेख गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ ।

१. SEE को अंग्रेजी विषयको नतिजा आउनुभन्दा एक हप्ता जसो अगाडी तपाईलाई कस्तो अनुभव लागेको थियो ? (कुनै चिन्ता उत्साह राम्रो वा नराम्रो अनुभव)

२.SEE को नतिजा आउनुभन्दा एकहप्ता, जस्तो अगाडि तपाईले अंग्रजीमा कुनै काम गर्नुभयो ? (जस्तै अंग्रेजी ःयखष्भ हेर्ने, अंग्रेजी पत्रिका पढ्ने आदी) यदि उक्तकाम गरेको भए के के गर्नुभयो र कति कति समय गर्नुभयो ? अनि उक्त काम किन गर्नुभयो ?

३. क्रीक्षको नतिजा आउने अघिल्लो हप्तामा तपाईलाई अंग्रेजी सिक्न कत्तिको अभिरुची थियो ? किन ?

४. SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षामा कुन ग्रेड आँउछ जस्तो लागेको थियो ? किन ?

५. तपाईले SEE को नतिजा आउनुभन्दा एक हप्ता अगाडि कुनै भविष्यको योजना बनाउनु भएको थियो ? यदि थियो भने उक्त योजना कस्तो थियो ? उल्लेख गर्नुहोस् ।

Guideline for Diary Keeping (Result Day)

SLC को नतिजा आएको दिनमा तपाईलाई कस्तो भयो र के के गर्नुभयो ? सबैकुरा खुलाउनुहोस् ।

क. तपाईले नतिजा कसरी थाहा पाउनुभयो ? आफूले सोचेको ग्रेड आयो कि आएन ? यदि आएन भने किन आएन होला जस्तो लाग्यो ?

ख. उक्तनतिजाले SEE को अंग्रेजी परीक्षा प्रतिको तपाईको धारणा परिवर्तन भयो कि भएन र किन ?

ग. उक्तनतिजाको बारेमा कस्तो अनुभव गर्नुभयो ? त्यस दिन के काम गर्नुभयो ? कसलाई भेट्नुभयो ? उहाँहरुले के के भन्नुभयो ? कुनै पुरस्कार अथवा सजायँ पनि पाउनुभयो ?

घ. उक्त नतिजाले तपाईको अंग्रजी सिक्ने चाहना प्रति कुनै असर पार्यौ ? किन ?

ङ. तपाईले आफ्नो भावि योजना केही बनाउनुभयो ? यदि बनाउनुभयो भने के बनाउनुभयो ?

Guideline for Diary Keeping (After the SLC Result)

क. SEE को नतिजा भएको करिब तीन हप्ता पछि तपाईले अंग्रेजीमा कुनै काम गर्नुभयो (जस्तै अंग्रेजी Movie हेर्ने, अंग्रेजी पत्रिका पढ्ने, अंग्रेजी गाना सुन्ने आदी) ? यदि गर्नुभयो भने प्रत्येक काम कति समय गर्नुभयो र किन गर्नुभयो ? यदि गर्नुभएन भने किन गर्नुभएन ?

ख. उक्त नतिजाको बारेमा करीव तीन हप्ता पछि के अनुभव गर्नुभयो ? तपाईको भावना कस्तो रह्यो ? कुनै राम्रो वा नराम्रो अनुभव भयो ?

ग. नतिजा आएको करीव तीन हप्ता पछि तपाई कुनै उच्च माध्यमिक विद्यालयमा भर्ना हुनको लागि जानुभयो ? यदि जानु भएको भए कहाँ कहाँ जानुभयो अनि त्यहाँ के के भयो ? तपाईले कस्तो अनुभव गर्नुभयो ?

घ. यदि तपाईले फेरी पनि क्रीक्ष को अंग्रेजी परीक्षा दिनु पर्ने भए तपाईले उक्त परीक्षाको तयारी सुरु गर्नुभयो ? अनि तपाईलाई अंग्रेजी सिक्ने चाहना लागिरहेको थियो कि थिएन ? किन होला ?

Guidelines for diary-keeping (pre-test)

Please note that you are recording your diary once a week (Friday or Saturday). Please start recording on 02 0r 03 September and continue recording until you have four. When you

record each time, please focus on the following questions. But, you could add anything that seems relevant to you connected to the study of English and the English test.

1. What did you do in English at home last week (e.g. homework, watch English movies, read English newspapers, etc.)? How much time did you spend in each of the activities? Why did you do these activities?

2. Did you bring any changes in your English learning strategies? If yes, how and why? If no, why not?

3. Did you have any private tutorial? If yes, where, how many hours, what content and why?

4. How motivated were you to learn English last week? Why?

5. Did you get any kind of support/hindrance from your family members to learn English or to prepare for the test last week? If yes, what kind of support/hindrance? How did you feel?

6. Did you start preparing for the test? If yes, what did you do? If no, why not?

Guidelines for diary-keeping (post-test)

Pre-result (about one week before the test result)

1. How did you feel about the upcoming SLC English test result about one week before the result? (Any anxiety, any good/bad experience?)

2. What did you do in English at home about one week before the result (watch English movies, read English newspapers, etc.)? How much time did you spend in each of the activities? Why did you do these activities?

3. How motivated were you to learn English about one week before the result? Why?

4. What grade were you expecting in the test? Why?

5. Did you make any future plan?

On the result day

1. What happened on the result day? Please mention in detail. You could take help of the following questions.

   a. How did you know your result? Did you get your expected grade? If no, what might be the main reason behind it?

   b. Did the result change your attitude towards the test?

   c. How did you feel? What did you do? Whom did you meet? What did they tell you? Did you receive any reward/punishment?

   d. Did the result affect your motivation to learn English?

   e. Did you make any future plan? If yes, how was it?

The final diary (after the test results)

1. Did you do any activity in English about three weeks after the SEE result (e. g reading English newspapers, watching English movies, listening to English news or songs etc.)? If yes, why, where and how long did you do the activities? If no, why did not you do?

2. How did you feel about the test results after three weeks of the result publication? Any good/bad experience?

3. If you were planning to go to Grade 11, did you visit any higher secondary school to get admission? If yes, where did you go? What happened there? How did you feel?

4. If you were planning to take the test again, did you start preparing for the test? Were you motivated to learn English? Why or why not?

Appendix 4: SEE Question Paper

SEE 2073(2017)

COMPULSORY ENGLISH

Reading and Writing

(Written test)

Candidates are required to give their answer according to the given instructions.

Time: 2 hrs. 15 minutes   Full Marks: 75

1. Read the poem and do the tasks that follow.   5

Where the rainbow ends

There's going to be a place, brother,

Where the world can sing all sorts of songs

And we're going to sing together brother,

You and I, though you're white and I'm not.

It's going to be a sad song, brother

Because we don't know the tune

And it's a difficult tune to learn

But you can learn, brother, you and I.

There's no such tune as a black tune.

There's no such tune as a white tune.

There's only music, brother,

And it's music we're going to sing

Where the rainbow ends

                                              Richard Rime

    A. Find the words from the poem that are the opposite in
       meaning to the following words.   4x0.5=2

      a) Begins   b) apart

      b) None   d) easy

B. Answer the following questions.   3x1=3

    a) Who does the word 'brother' refer to?

    b) Which race does the poet belong?

    c) Why does the poet say, "To learn to sing together is difficult."

2. Read the letter and do the tasks that follow.

Dear Aunt,

I'm very unhappy because my father won't let me go on an outing with three other friends. They are going to a hillside bungalow which my friend's father has rented for a week. We were planning to go there after games practice on Friday, that is, after we had finished our badminton at about 11:30. We planned to spend the whole Friday afternoon there, stay the night and then have the whole of Saturday there as well. I asked my father but he refused to let me go. What he objected to most was my spending the night there. He said I couldn't go there because I was too young to stay away from home for so long. I think he is being unreasonable. What could happen, anyway? He shouldn't worry because my friend's parents will be there too. It isn't as though we will be alone. I think my father is very unfair because when he wants me to do something then I am big enough but when he objects to something then I am too young. When I wanted to join the National Library he couldn't be bothered to take me. He said, 'Can't you go on your on?' You're big enough. You aren't a baby anymore. "But when it comes to things like this weekend away he says, "No. You're too young to stay away from home." Why is he so unfair? I feel so upset, what do you think I should do?

Love Anil

A. Choose the correct alternative from the brackets and fill the blank spaces.
    4x1=4

    a. The bungalow has been rented for.........

        i. two days   ii. One week   iii. A day

    b. Anil's father objected him from going as ....

        i. he was not matured enough to stay away.

        ii. his examination was at hand.

iii. no family member was going with him.

c. Anil is seeking for his .... advice.

 i. Aunt's ii. Father's iii. Friend's father's

d. The letter is addressed to ....

 i. Anil's father ii. Anil's friend iii. Anil's aunt

B. Write 'True' for true and 'False' for false statement. 4x0.5=2

a. They had planned to spend outside on Saturday.

b. Anil thinks that his father is not reasonable.

c. Anil's father helped him to join the National Library.

d. Anil started playing badminton at 11.00 a.m.

C. Answer the following questions.   4x1=4

a. Where was the letter sent from?

b. Why is Anil unhappy?

c. Who are going to a hillside bungalow to spend weekend?

d. Why does Anil think of his father being unfair to him?

3. Read the following text and do the tasks that follow. 10

Ostriches are the largest and heaviest living birds. They are the fastest running birds but cannot fly. Ostriches are normally about 8 feet tall and weigh 105 kg. The feathers of male ostriches are mostly black with white at the end of the wings and in the tail. Females and young males are grayish-brown and white. Their legs are strong and have black feathers. Unlike other birds, they have just two toes on each foot. Their wings are large with a wingspan of over 6 feet but are not used for flight. The feathers, which are soft and fluffy, serve as insulation against the harsh temperature.

Ostriches live on insects, fruits, nuts and small reptiles including plants. They are found only in Africa. Many now live in forests reserves and sanctuaries. These birds are native to the dry savannas of Africa and are well-adapted to desert life. They can tolerate a wide range of temperature. They can go without water for a long time. But they need a gallon and a half a day. So they usually stay near water.

Female ostriches lay their eggs in a single communal nest, a simple pit, 30 to 60 cm deep. The eggs are incubated by the females by day and males by night. The gestation period is about 45 days. The life span of an ostrich is from 30 to 70 years. Their eggs are six to eight inches in length, six inches in diameter and weigh almost 1400 gram, the biggest eggs in the world. Eggshells are so strong that they can support the weight of a 280 pound person. Different kinds of dishes and water bottle are made out of their eggshells.

A. Match the words in column 'A' with their meanings in column 'B'. 4x0.5=2

Column A		Column B	
a.	Reptile	i.	A place of safety or protection
b.	Sanctuary	ii.	A tropical grassland with scattered trees
c.	Savanna	iii.	To brood or raise eggs
d.	incubate	iv.	A cold-blooded vertebrate animals

B. Write 'True' for true and 'False' for false statement.   4x0.5=2

a. Both male and female ostriches are same in colour.

b. Their feathers are used to protect themselves from unpleasant weather.

c. They eat both plants and insects.

d. Ostriches can live for more than eighty years.

C. Answer the following questions.   3x2=6

a. Where can we find ostriches?

b. Why do ostriches stay near water?

c. What are the uses of eggshells of ostriches?

4. Read the advertisement and do the tasks that follow.   15

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">Vacancy Announcement</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">ABC Bank (Nepal) Limited, a rapidly growing National Level Bank currently with its eight (8) branch offices at various locations has further plans to expand its network in and outside the Kathmandu valley.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">We are looking highly motivated and competent Nepalese citizens to act as an efficient Branch Manager for following locations:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Designation</td><td>Education and Experience</td><td>Locations</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Branch Manager</td><td>Minimum Bachelor's degree in Management or Economics from recognized university</td><td rowspan="2">Dang, Butwal, Syangja, Lahan, Birgunj, Dharan, Biratnagar, Damak</td></tr>
<tr><td>At least 3 years' experience in Bank/Financial Institutions preferably as a department head in area of credit, finance and operation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Interested candidates meeting the requirements may apply with your curriculum vitae, experience letter, a recent pp size photograph and a cover letter. Candidates should have good command in computer application and be fluent in both written and spoken English. Your application should reach us on or before Chaitra 10, at GPO Box: 7165, Kathmandu, Nepal.</td></tr>
</table>

A. From the above advertisement, find the words/phrases which have similar meanings to the followings. 4x1=4
  a. extend   b. post
  c. requisite   d. biodata

B. Select correct alternatives to complete the sentences. 3x1=3

  a. ABC Bank has presently......... Branches.
       i. 3   ii. 8   iii. 10
  b. Candidates must have .... in Management or economics.
       i. Plus 2 degree   ii. Intermediate degree   iii. Bachelor's degree
  c. Applications can be ....
       i. emailed   ii. hand-delivered   iii. sent by post

C. Answer the following questions. 4x2=8

  a. What are the essential documents to be submitted with the application?
  b. Write four places where the bank is expanding its branches.
  c. What sort of work experience should the candidates have?
  d. What is the last date of application submission?

5. Complete the following dialogue with the correct expressions from the box given below. 6x1=6

Son: Ah! I cut my finger.

Mother: ....

Son: It's a paper cut.

Mother: Paper cut can be dangerous.

Son: ....

Mother: Paper cut can hurt a lot.

Son: ....

Mother: .... But a hand-aid might not work.

Son: What shall I do, then? ....

Mother: .... Don't use that finger until the cut heals.

Son: Who will do my assignment?

Mother: It will just take a day or two to heal.

Son: Who will do my assignment?

Mother: It will just take a day or two to heal.

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- Get me one of those hand-aids.
- Feels like that. It hurts too.
- It's on the tip of my finger.
- It's on the tip of your index.
- They are in the cabinet in front of you.
- How did you do that?

6. Write a news story from the given clues. 6

Bhaktapur Cancer Hospital ……….. inaugurated by Minister of Health ………….. big mass ……. Financial support from Japan …………. work from 1999 to 2005 ………….. 100 beds ……….. audience. Looked hopeful ………….. wishes from minister.

7. Write an essay on "Use of Computer" in about 200 words. You can use the given clues. 12

Introduction ……….. use of computer ……….. Conclusion.

8. Choose and copy the best answers. (Rewriting is not compulsory) 12x0.5=6

a. I gave him ……….. twenty roses. (a/the/no article)

b. She goes to Pokhara …………… her car. (in/on/at/by)

c. Dogs are supposed to be honest pets, …? (aren't they/ are they/ don't they)

d. Neither praise nor blame ……….. to affect her. (to seem/seems/ seem)

e. Kiran has already finished this work. Haven't you ……….. it yet? (finish/finished/have finished)

f. Bill and Richard ……. friends for many ages. (are being/have been/ are)

g. My teacher asked me what ……. (was my problem/is your problem/my problem was)

h. The active form of 'By whom was it broken?' is ……….. (who is breaking it?/ who broke it?/ was it broken?)

i. Silpa was accused of the theft …….. she was hones. (However/although/despite)

j. Unless you are experienced, you …………… the job. (get/can't get/wouldn't get)

k. Get her ……… what she wants (do/to do/done)

l. The affirmative form of 'There is nobody living now' is …… now. There is anybody living/There is somebody living/ There is nobody living)

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It is important to have …(a)…. (a/an/the) balanced diet ….(b)….. (so that/ in order to/for) stay healthy. A balanced diet consists of protein, carbohydrate and fat.

Proteins are very important …(c)…. (to/in/for) building our bodies. They help us to build new cells as old ones …(d)…. (die/died/dies). Meat and dairy products are major sources of protein but not the only ones.

Nutritionists suggest that ….(e)…. (carbohydrates and fats were important/ carbohydrates and fats are important/ carbohydrates and fats will be important) because they enable us to store energy. We think they are correct …(f)….? (don't we/don't they/ aren't they). Sugar and cereals …(g)….(is/are/were) rich in carbohydrates, fats …(h)….(is found/are found/were found) in vegetable, oil, butter and nuts.

Moreover, our body needs minerals like iron, calcium and vitamins. If people followed nutritionists; advice on diet, they ….(are/will be/would be) able to stay healthy all their lives. Nutritionists get us …(j)…. (think/to think/thought) about our diet seriously.

The End

Appendix 5: Consent Forms

Appendix 5a: Informed Consent (Case study Parents)

Consent form of Parents of Case Study Student

Faculty of Education and Language StudiesThe Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA Tel +44 (0) 1908 274

अध्ययनको विषय: SEE अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको सामाजिक तथा शैक्षिक असरहरु

सहभागिको नाम:...............

मुख्य अनुसन्धानकर्ताको नाम: <u>सरस्वती दवाडी</u>

१. यस अध्ययनमा मेरो बच्चाको सहभागिताको लागि अनुमति दिन चाहन्छु । यसका साथै मलाई यस अध्ययनको बारेमा संपूर्ण जानकारी लिखित साथै मौखिक रुपमा दिइएको कुरा जानकारी गराउन चाहन्छु ।

२. मेरो बच्चाले यस अध्ययनमा दुइपटक (परिक्षा अगाडि र पछाडि) अर्न्तवार्ता दिनुपर्नेछ साथै उनले २ ओटा प्रश्नावलि भर्ने र १२ वटा रेकर्ड गर्नूपर्ने कुरा मलाइ जानकारी छ । मलाई यो कुरा पनि मन्जुर छ कि मेरो बच्चालले उपलब्ध गराएको जानकारी अनुसन्धान कर्ताले यस अध्ययनको लागि प्रयोग गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ ।

३. म यो कुरा अवगत गराउन चाहन्छु कि,

क) मलाई यस अध्ययनको बारेमा र मेरो बच्चाको सहभागिताको बारेमा सम्पूर्ण जानकारी गराइएको छ ।

ख) २०७४-०४-१५ भन्दा अगाडि मेरो बच्चाले यस अध्ययनमा भाग लिन नचाहेको खण्डमा जुनसुकै बेला पनि उसले आफ्नो सहभागिता फिर्ता लिन पाउनेछ र उक्त निर्णयको लागि कुनै पनि तर्क अथवा व्याख्या दिइनु पर्ने छैन । तर उक्त समयपछि भने मेरो बच्चाले आफ्नो सहभागिता फिर्ता लिन पाउने छैन ।

ग) यो अध्ययन अनुसन्धान गर्ने उद्देश्यको लागि संचालित छ ।

घ) मलाई जानकारी गराइएको छ कि मेरो बच्चाले दिएको संपूर्ण जानकारी गोप्य राखिने छ ।

ङ) मलाई यो पनि जानकारी गराइएको छ कि मेरो बच्चाले उपलब्ध गराइएको जानकारी Password भएको Folder मा सुरक्षित राखिने छ र चार वर्षपछि नष्ट गरिने छ ।

छ) यदि आवश्यक परेको खण्डमा मेरो बच्चाले उपलब्ध गराएको जानकारी उसको नाम गोप्य राखि कुनै पनि प्रकाशन अथवा प्रस्तुत गर्नकोलागी प्रयोग गर्न सकिने छ ।

ज) यदि मेरो बच्चाले चाहेको खण्डमा यस अध्ययनको नतिजाको एक प्रति मलाई पनि उपलब्ध गराइने छ ।

मेरो बच्चाको सहभागिताको लागी मेरो मन्जुरी छ ।

अभिभावकको हस्ताक्षर...

मिति: ....

Faculty of Education and Language
Studies

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA

Tel +44 (0) 1908 274 066
www.open.ac.uk

PROJECT TITLE: The impacts of the SEE English test on students and parents in Nepal

Name of participant:

Name of principal investigator(s): Saraswati Dawadi

1. I consent to participate my child in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.

2. I understand that my child's participation will involve filling out two questionnaires, recording their 12 diaries and taking part in two interviews. I agree that the researcher may use the results for the research purpose.

3. I acknowledge that:

    a. I have been well informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of my child's participation;

    b. I have been informed that my child will be free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me before 30 August. After this point data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;

    c. the project is for the purpose of research;

    d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information my child provides will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

    e. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored on a password protected folder on OU server and will be destroyed after four years;

    f. If necessary any data from my child will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;

    g. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

    I consent my child's interview to be audio recorded. □ **yes** □ **no** (please tick)

    I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings   □ **yes**   □ **no** (please tick)

Participant signature: Date:

Contact details: Sarawati Dawadi
The Open University, England
Telephone number: +44 744711775 (England)   +977 9841757120 (Nepal)

Appendix 5b: Informed Consent: Survey Students' Parent

Consent form of Parents of Survey Student

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA

Tel +44 (0) 1908 274 066

अध्ययनको विषय: SEE अंग्रेजी परीक्षाको सामाजिक तथा शैक्षिक असरहरु

सहभागिको नाम:...............

मुख्य अनुसन्धानकर्ताको नाम: <u>सरस्वती दवाडी</u>

१. यस अध्ययनमा मेरो बच्चाको सहभागिताको लागि अनुमति दिन चाहन्छु । यसका साथै मलाई यस अध्ययनको बारेमा संपूर्ण जानकारी लिखित साथै मौखिक रुपमा दिइएको कुरा जानकारी गराउन चाहन्छु ।

२. मेरो बच्चाले यस अध्ययनमा दुइवटा प्रश्नावली भर्नु पर्नेछ । मलाई यो कुरा पनि मन्जुर छ कि मेरो बच्चाले उपलब्ध गराएको जानकारी अनुसन्धान कर्ताले यस अध्ययनको लागि प्रयोग गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ ।

३. म यो कुरा अवगत गराउन चाहन्छु कि,

क) मलाई यस अध्ययनको बारेमा र मेरो बच्चाको सहभागिताको बारेमा सम्पूर्ण जानकारी गराइएको छ ।

ख) २०७४-०४-१५ भन्दा अगाडि मेरो बच्चाले यस अध्ययनमा भाग लिन नचाहेको खण्डमा जुनसुकै बेलापनि उसको सहभागिता फिर्ता लिन पाउनेछ र उक्त निर्णयको लागि कुनै पनि तर्क अथवा व्याख्या दिइनु पर्ने छैन । तर उक्त समयपछि भने मेरो बच्चाले आफ्नो सहभागिता फिर्ता लिन पाउने छैन ।

ग) यो अध्ययन अनुसन्धान गर्ने उद्देश्यको लागि संचालित छ ।

घ) मलाई जानकारी गराइएको छ कि मेरो बच्चाले दिएको संपूर्ण जानकारी गोप्य राखिने छ ।

ङ) मलाई यो पनि जानकारी गराइएको छ कि मेरो बच्चाले उपलब्ध गराएको जानकारी Password भएको Folder मा सुरक्षित राखिने छ र चार वर्षपछि नष्ट गरिने छ ।

छ) यदि आवश्यक परेको खण्डमा मेरो बच्चाले उपलब्ध गराएको जानकारी उस्को नाम गोप्य राखि कुनै पनि प्रकाशन अथवा प्रस्तुत गर्न सकिने छ ।

ज) यदि मेरो बच्चाले चाहेको खण्डमा यस अध्ययनको नतिजाको एक प्रति मलाई पनि उपलब्ध गराइने छ ।

मेरो बच्चाको सहभागिताको लागि मेरो मन्जुरी छ ।

विद्यार्थिको नाम:..

अभिभावकको नाम...

अभिभावकको हस्ताक्षर..

मिति: ....

PROJECT TITLE: The social and educational power of SEE English test

Name of participant:

Name of principal investigator(s): Saraswati Dawadi

1. I consent to participate my child in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.

2. I understand that my child's participation will involve filling out two questionnaires. I agree that the researcher may use the results for the research purpose.

3. I acknowledge that:

   a. I have been well informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of my child's participation;

   b. I have been informed that my child will be free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me before 30 August. After this point data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;

   c. the project is for the purpose of research;

   d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information my child provides will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

   e. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored on a password protected folder on OU server and will be destroyed after four years;

   f. If necessary any data from my child will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;

   g. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

   I consent my child's interview to be audio recorded. □ **yes** □ **no** (please tick)

   I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings   □ **yes**   □ **no** (please tick)

Participant signature: Date:

Contact details: Sarawati Dawadi
The Open University, England
Telephone number: +44 744711775 (England)   +977 9841757120 (Nepal)

Appendix 5c: Consent Form: Students

Consent form of student

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA

Tel +44 (0) 1908 274 066
www.open.ac.uk

अध्ययनको विषय: SEE अंग्रेजी परिक्षाको सामाजिक तथा शैक्षिक असरहरु

तपाई एक विद्यार्थीको हैसियतमा यस अध्ययनमा आफ्नो सहभागिता जनाउने वा नजनाउने भन्ने बारेमा निर्णय लिदै हुनुन्छ । यदि यस पत्रमा तपाईले हस्ताक्षर गर्नुभयो भने, यसको अर्थ यो बुझिन्छ कि तपाईले यस अध्ययनको बारेमा सम्पूर्ण जानकारी पाउनु भएको छ र त्यसको आधारमा तपाईले यस अध्ययनमा भाग लिने निर्णय गर्नु भएको छ।

तपाईले यस अध्ययनको नतिजाको एक प्रति पनि प्राप्त गर्नुहुनेछ ।

विद्यार्थीको हस्ताक्षर ....   मिति ....

अनुसन्धानकर्ताको हस्ताक्षर .... मिति ....

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PROJECT TITLE: The social and educational power of the SLC test

As a student, you are making a decision whether or not to participate in this study.

Your signature indicates that you have read (or been read) the information provided about this research and decided to participate.

You will receive a copy of this consent document.

Signature of child_____   Date_____

Signature of researcher_____   Date_____

Appendix 6: Transcriptions

S4's First Diary recorded on 4 September, 2016

Last week, I spent a couple of hours in learning English. On Sunday, I did my homework because doing my homework regularly helps me to improve my English. I really want to improve my English language skills. On Monday, I practised grammar exercises from the SLC practice book. I think I spent around half an hour doing the exercise. I also listened to an English song, which was about 10 minutes long. On Tuesday, I just did my homework. We were asked to make some tag questions and fill up some gaps using prepositions. I think, I spent about half an hour for the activity. On Wednesday, I did nothing in English at home, as I had to finish my maths homework. On Thursday, I memorised some question answers that our teacher had asked us to read. I thought that the teacher would ask me to tell the answers of those questions in front of my friends, so I memorised the answers of those questions. On Friday, I read a poem from our textbook. On Saturday, I read the poem again and tried to remember the meanings of some difficult words.

I have also started to use new strategies to memorise answers, such as linking system, and morning and night system. These strategies have helped me to remember answers very easily. Before using these strategies, I would always forget answers but now, I can remember answers for a long time. By morning and night system, I mean, I repeat or remember the answers in the evening that I would learn in the morning and vice versa... These strategies have developed my memory power and made me more confident. I am able to memorise even stories and essays with the help of these strategies. I also use PSB system to learn words and their meanings and it has really helped me a lot to improve my English language. I am extremely happy to use the PSB system because it helps me to pronounce difficult words and remember their spellings and meanings.

Last week, I also listened to English songs almost every day and I have collected so many songs in English as I just love listening to them. I also went to tuition classes run by my own teacher in the same school as I thought that those classes would help me to get good scores in the SEE. I started going to tuition classes a few months ago. In those classes, we practise with past SEE questions and also learn English grammar such as direct and indirect speech, articles, prepositions, articles etc.

Last week, I also got a good support from my family for learning English. Both of my parents cannot read and write but they send me to tuition classes and pay money for the classes. They have bought so many books for me, such as Ten Sets, SEE practice book, essay book etc. These books are really useful for me for the preparation of the examination. They also do not ask me to do house hold chores these days; they just ask me

to read and write. I do not even have to help them with their farming. They always encourage me to work hard for the SEE.

 I have already started to prepare myself for the SEE. I understand that the SEE is very important for my future. I think if I can't do well in the examination, my future will be dark. Therefore, I am trying my best to do well in the examination. I am very much interested in learning English these days as I understand that English is very important for me and I also must try to do well on the SEE English test. So, I am trying hard to learn English.