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Students' and parents' attitude towards the SEE English test

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study that explored students' and their parents' attitudes towards the fairness and accuracy of the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) English test- a high stakes test in the Nepalese context. It is most probably the first empirical study that has extensively explored this area. The data generated through a longitudinal survey among 247 SEE candidates and semi-structured interviews with six students and their parents in both the pre-test and post-test contexts indicates that students had mostly positive attitudes towards the test fairness and its accuracy in the pre-test context but mostly negative attitudes in the post-test context. However, parents had mostly negative attitudes towards the test in both contexts. Both students and their parents raised questions regarding the accuracy and fairness of the listening and speaking test in the post-test context. Having collected both the qualitative and quantitative data, this study has gained a comprehensive picture of the complexity of the test impacts within the Nepalese educational context, as perceived by students and their parents. The implications of the study have also been highlighted.

Key words: *Attitudes, test accuracy, test fairness, pre-test context, post-test context*

Introduction

Students' views provide evidence for construct validity in a test development process (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Kim, 2016). Indeed, investigating students' views and trust towards their tests may be crucial to "informing educators how to enhance student learning and ease any doubts and fears students may have in relation to tests. These doubts and fears could lead to lackluster test performance" (Chu, Guo, & Leighton, 2014, p.168). However, students have tended to be researched less compared to other stakeholders, such as teachers, in previous test impact studies (Cheng, Andrews, & Yu, 2010; Rogers, Barblett, & Robinson, 2016). Similar is the case with parents - one of the primary stakeholders of a test; "the stakeholders who have received the least attention are parents" (Rogers, et al., 2016, p.329). Furthermore, studies that have linked both students' and their parents' perceptions are almost non-existent (Cheng, et al., 2010).

The research reported in this paper investigated students' and their parents'

attitudes towards the fairness and accuracy of the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) English test in Nepal where English is taught as a foreign language. The SEE is a national level examination conducted at the end of 10-year school level education. The SEE serves several functions such as measuring students' language skills, a gateway to higher secondary education, and a basic license for most jobs in Nepal (Dawadi, 2018; Dawadi & Shrestha, 2018). Its scores decide which course a student can study in higher secondary level, suggesting that success in this examination widens students' prospects for students' self-development.

It is also worth mentioning that school education in Nepal, after a number of experiments, has now come to a critical turning point where it has 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. However, almost no research has explored students' and their parents' attitudes towards the SEE English test. It is in this context this research is being carried out because any given test needs research tailor-made to find out whether the test is of a good quality and its impacts on its stake holders (Shih, 2007).

This study mainly aims to reflect on the quality of the SEE English test in terms of its fairness and accuracy as perceived by students and their parents. A second potential contribution is to add more evidence to the existing literature regarding stakeholders' perceptions towards a high-stakes test. In terms of its application, the research reported here can contribute to designing a more effective test and better inform the concerned authorities about the SEE students' and their parents' views towards the quality of the English test.

Theoretical background to the study

The term attitude has been defined as a "tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain thing such as an idea, object, person or situation" (Rasti, 2009, p. 111). 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 likable-dislikable" (Ajzen, 2001, p. 28) and it predisposes a person to act in a certain way, though the relation between attitude 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, but negative affect, such as fear of failure, can weaken positive attitudes (Chu et al., 2014).

It has also been argued that "attitudes and other affective variables are as important as aptitude for language achievement" (Ata, 2015, p.490). 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. Therefore, it is widely claimed that language ability is not the only thing that affects test-takers' performance on a test; test performance is affected by a wide range of affective factors (e.g. Amiryousefi & Tavakoli, 2014; Lumley & O'Sullivan, 2005). Additionally, it can be assumed that parents' attitudes towards a test

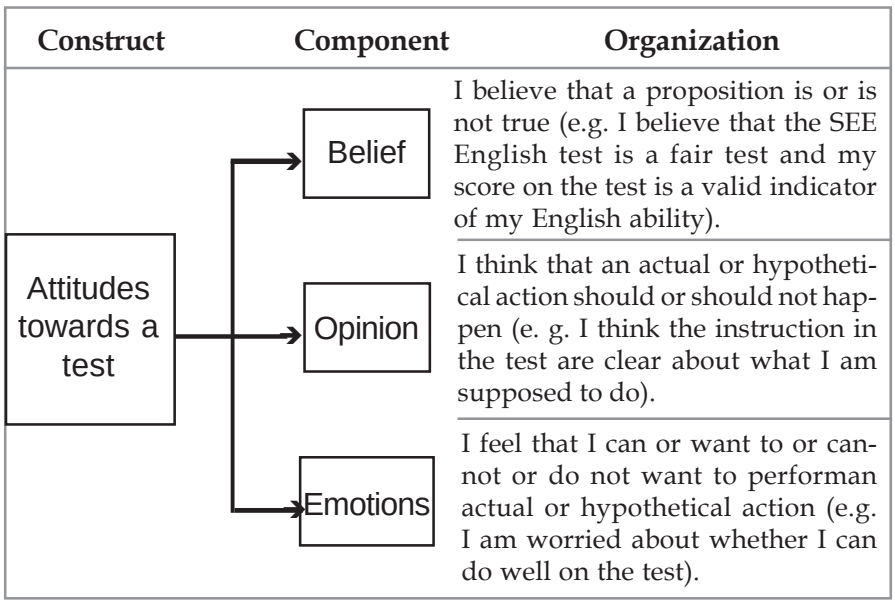
might affect the nature of their support to their children for the test preparation and having parents involved is beneficial for learning English as a foreign language (He, Gou, & Chang, 2014).

However, despite this widely recognized importance of students' and parents' attitudes for learning the target language, "there is no evidence that it is adequately investigated in the field of language testing" (Fan, 2014, p.1). 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). Additionally, the construct of attitude has been operationalized in manifold ways in previous studies (e.g. Baker, 1992; Chu et al., 2014; Fan & Ji, 2014; Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004; Murray et al., 2012; Rasti, 2009).

However, the current study follows Murray et al. (2012) as the authors link attitude to language testing context, but not only to language learning context as done by most other studies. Having looked into test candidates' attitudes towards the Professional English Assessment for Teachers in Australia, the authors view that attitudes involve three components: beliefs (that a proposition is or is not true), opinions (that an actual or hypothetical action should or should not happen) and emotion" (p.582). The authors further argue that there may be interrelationship between these components. For instance, a belief that a test is unfair can lead to frustration, which can reinforce an opinion that learning the language and taking the test will be useless. Thus, the current study conceptualizes attitudes as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The conceptualization of attitudes in this study



(Source: Fan, 2014; Murray et al., 2012)

Second, stake holders' attitude 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 sounds unscientific and irrelevant for most quantitative researchers as it is based on subjective judgements that people make. Therefore, face validity does not receive due attention from researchers. However, Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995) highlight the importance of face validity when they argue that if test-takers find their test to be face valid, "they are more likely to perform to the best of their ability on that test and to respond appropriately to items" (p. 173). Karelitz (2013) states that face validity can affect test-takers' motivation to prepare for and do well on a language test.

Students' performance on a test may also depend on the test fairness, a hotly debated topic in the testing literature. Test fairness refers to impartialities and an absence of favoritism and prejudice. It refers to the condition in which students' skills are accurately measured and scores have the same consequences to different population groups (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 has equitable treatment of all the test-takers both in the learning and testing process. Equality of outcome can be generally expected only when there is genuine equality of learning opportunity and genuine equity of treatment in 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). Therefore, a critical observation is needed to ensure fairness in the testing process.

Empirical background to the study

There is a substantial body of research into students' attitudes towards a high-stakes second language (L2) test. For instance, Cheng and Deluca (2011) explored university level students' perspectives on high-stakes EFL writing tests. The students reported some instances of both systematic (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 including some other factors such as 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 the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (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 memorize answers. The test-takers of Versant English Test (a test developed by Pearson) in Fan's (2014) study also reported positive attitudes towards the test, believing that the test largely reflected their spoken English ability.

Similarly, previous studies on parental attitudes have produced mixed results. There are a number of studies which report that parents have negative attitudes towards high-stakes tests. There have also been some petitions and protests against high-stakes tests for young children, particularly in the USA and UK. Previous research found that 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 accountability of high-stakes testing practices. They suspected the integrity of those tests as they thought that scores did not match their children's learning achievement. 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 for failure on the test indicated that many parents had negative perceptions of the TAKS. Many parents viewed that TAKS was not a fair measure of student achievement for their child or other children.

However, some other studies have reported that parents hold positive attitudes towards high-stakes tests. For instance, a survey by an Australian market research company (Newspoll commissioned by the Whitlam Institute) with Australian parents indicated that the majority, though not an overwhelming majority (56 %), of parents were in favor of the NAPLAN (Newspoll, 2013). The parents considered the test results to be useful and they did not seem to believe that the test has a negative impact on their children. Congruent with these findings, parents in the USA in Mulvenon, Stegman and Ritter's (2005) and Osburn, Stegman, Suitt, and Ritter's (2004) study also seemed to hold positive attitudes towards high-stakes tests. Most of the parents in both studies reported that standardized testing is important for their children.

In the case of the SEE English test, very little research has explored the area; only two studies (Bhattrai, 2014; Khaniya, 1990) have explored students' attitudes towards the examination. However, Bhattrai's (2014) focus was on the overall examination, while Khaniya (1990) focused only on the post-test impacts of the English test. More importantly, there is almost no research that has explored parents' attitudes towards the test. It is, therefore, important to directly assess how students and their parents feel about the test quality in terms of its fairness and accuracy. So, this study aims to explore students' and parents' attitudes towards the test.

Methodology

This study featured a mixed method design with a longitudinal survey and case studies. The participants in the study included secondary level students (N=247) studying at Grade 10 in public schools in Nepal and their parents (N=6). The number of parents was limited to six as the study had only six case studies. It should be noted that considering the low literacy rate among the parents from where the data was collected for this study, survey was limited to students. Among the six parents, three were with high education (at least SEE/SLC qualification) and the rest with low education (unable to read and write). This means, the case study students were purposively selected for this study.

The students had been learning English as a foreign language for a minimum of 10 years and their age ranged between 14 and 16 years old. All of them were Nepali native speakers and studying in six public schools in a countryside of Nepal. During the first phase of the data collection for this study, they were studying at Grade 10 and preparing for the SEE. However, during the second phase of the study, they had already started to study at Grade 11.

The first questionnaire survey (i.e. the pre-test survey) was carried out with 247 10th Graders in Nepal about six weeks before the conduction of the SEE and the second survey (i.e. the post-test survey) with 226 11th Graders (but the same students) about two months after the SEE results publication. Additionally, six case study students were asked to record oral diaries once a week intermittently for three months: first during the usual classes (i.e. in the fifth month of their academic year), second during the test preparation (i.e. in the ninth month of the academic year) and third around the SEE result publication. Thus, each student recorded 12 diaries.

Furthermore, all the case study students along with their parents (one parent each) were interviewed twice: six weeks before the SEE and two months after the SEE result publication. Considering the English language proficiency of the participants, only the Nepali language was used for the data collection. However, it should be noted that the report presented here is just a part of a research project that explored broad aspects of the test impacts. Thus, the findings presented in this study were emerged mainly through interviews and surveys.

Findings and discussions

Before presenting the findings, it is worth pointing out that each case study student and parent is represented with the alphabets 'S' and 'P' respectively, followed by a number 1 to 6 to ensure confidentiality in this research. 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. Similarly, in order to indicate pre-test and post-test interviews, the codes 'PreInt' and 'PostInt' respectively have been used. Thus, if a quote from S1's pre-test interview is drawn, it is indicated as S1-PreInt, and a quote from post-test interview as S1-PostInt.

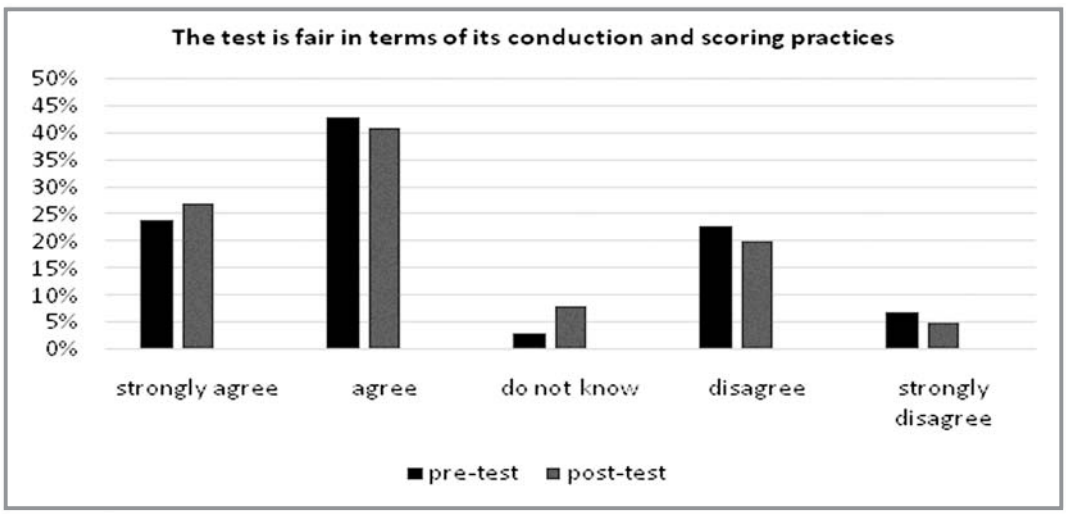
Students' and parents' attitudes towards the test fairness

As this study aimed to explore both the pre-test and post-test attitudes towards the test fairness, the same question was included in both the questionnaires.

> *Last year, there was a news about the carelessness of some examiners while checking answer sheets. One of our senior sisters in our school was also telling us that she got lower grades than she expected (*S2-PreInt).

Figure 2 summarizes students' responses suggesting that the majority of students in both the pre-test and post-test contexts had a belief that the test was fair. However, a substantial number of students in both the contexts seemed suspicious about the test fairness.

Figure 2: Test fairness in terms of its scoring practice (N=247pre-test, 226post-test)



The findings were partially supported 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.*" (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). However, S2 did not seem to believe that the test would be fair:

When they were interviewed after the test, four of the students still had a trust on the fairness of the writing test: "*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 students did not think that the written test was fair although they had a trust on its fairness in the pre-test context:

Some of the students who were very weak also did well on the test. So, they might have either cheated in the examination or there might have been some mistakes when checking their answer sheets. So, the test was not as fair as I had expected (S3-PostInt).

Similarly, all the case study students (except S2) raised doubts in the fairness of the test. They reported, during the speaking test, "*All of us did not have to speak, yet we all got the same score*" (S4-PostInt); "*All of us in the room were asked the same question*" (S3-PostInt); "W*e did not have to take any speaking test. Our teacher sent scores based on our class performance*" (S6-PostInt).

The findings further indicated that the SEE English test was used as a disciplinary tool to impose certain behaviors on students or to maintain classroom discipline. The following excerpts clarifies the argument:

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

Similar findings also emerged from parents' interviews. However, the findings were mixed. The pre-test interviews indicated that half of the parents had a trust on the test fairness: "T*here won't 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*" (P1-PreInt). However, the remaining parents were suspicious about the test fairness:

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

In the post-test context, four parents had positive attitudes towards the written test: "*I think, the test was conducted very well. I did not hear anything wrong about the test*" (P1-PostInt). However, two of them raised concerns about the test fairness such as, "*the test was not conducted well*" (P2-PostInt), and "T*he exam center was loose and students cheated*" (P3-PostInt).

With regard to the speaking test, all the three parents with high education were suspicious about its fairness: "Th*e test was not conducted well and all the students obtained either A or A+ Grade on the test*" (P1-PostInt); "*My son did not have to take the speaking test*" (P3-PostInt).

However, the parents with low education had very little knowledge about the test. They 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). So, this suggested that they lacked the knowledge of the test structure and format.

To reiterate, having analysed both the qualitative and quantitative data, this study provides a comprehensive picture on students' and parents' attitudes towards the test accuracy and fairness. Indeed, qualitative findings strengthened quantitative results, and vice versa, in this study. 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.

The findings indicated that both the 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 try their best to become more effective learners.

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).

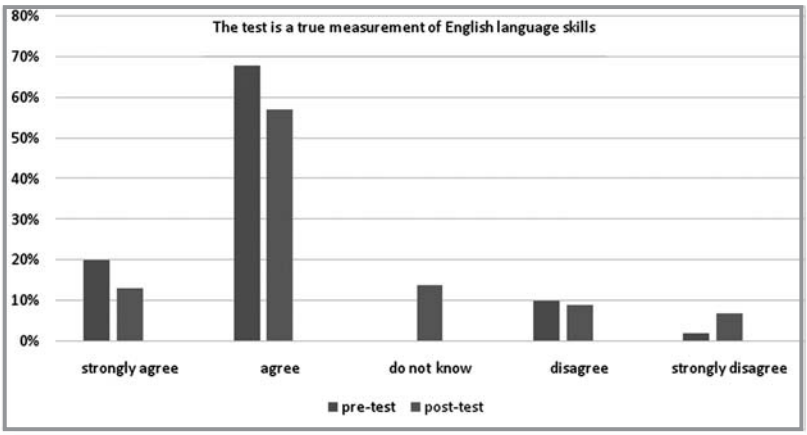
Furthermore, as indicated by previous studies (Dawadi, 2019; Desforges, et al., 1994; Mulvenon et al., 2005; Scott, 2007), this study suggests that parents (particularly the parents with low education) had little knowledge about their children's test. As Dawadi (2019) rightly points out, most public schools in Nepal do not have formal policies for communicating test process and test results to parents. Consequently, there is a lack of good knowledge of the test structure and formalities amongst many parents. Therefore, it is highly important that the test designers and secondary schools in Nepal pay attention to this issue to enhance the face validity of the SEE test.

This study raises serious questions regarding the fairness of the SEE English test. Therefore, it is highly important that the test designers pay attention to this issue and work for the betterment of the test.

Students and parents' attitudes towards the test accuracy

Another area of exploration in this study included students' and their parents' attitudes towards the test accuracy. The survey results have been summarized in Figure 3. 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 3: The test is a true measurement of English language skills (N= 247pre-test/226post-test)



However, these quantitative results were not confirmed 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).

Conversely, 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, whereas the students with positive attitudes in the pre-test context appeared with negative attitudes in the post-test context. Thus, all the 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" (S1-PostInt); "The written test measured our skills but I do not know about our speaking test" (S6-PostInt). However, some students attributed their performance to their own efforts: "I could not get good grade on the writing test but I do not blame other people. I think, I should have worked harder for the test" (S2-PostInt).

The findings emerged through the parent interviews indicate that parents had mostly negative attitudes towards the test. 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, only three parents (the parents with high education) commented on the test accuracy. Among them, two parents (P1, P3) during the pre-test interviews expressed their suspicions about the test accuracy: "The test just focuses on memorization (P3-PreInt); "Children at this age are really amazing but the test measures only their limited knowledge" (P1-PreInt). P6, on the contrary, 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" (P6-PreInt).

When the parents were interviewed after the test, P1 and P6 somehow believed that the written test could accurately measure the language skills but they did not trust on the speaking test: "Although the written test was properly conducted, I saw a problem with the speaking test" (P6-PostInt).

However, P3 had a belief that neither the speaking test nor the writing test could accurately measure students' language skills. "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 Grades" (P3-PostInt).

To sum up, triangulation of the findings indicate that students considered the test to be an accurate measure of their language skills in the pre-test context, but they did not seem to have a trust on the test accuracy in the post-test context. With regard to parents' attitudes, parents with high education had mostly negative attitudes in both the pre-test and post-test context but the parents with low education could not comment on the test accuracy.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study, in general, indicate that the test, particularly the speaking test, was not a fair and an accurate measure of the language skills. This might raise a question on the face validity and reliability of the SEE English test.

The findings are consistent with 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 found that the speaking test was not properly conducted in school. In her study, the teachers argued,

> *The test does not reflect students' real levels in English and also cannot discriminate well among students as almost all students get full marks in the speaking test. The schools send scores without testing their students. So, some students, who cannot utter even a single sentence in English, are also very likely to get full marks in the speaking test, which is not fair at all (p.142).*

There were contradictions between the qualitative and quantitative findings regarding students' post-test attitudes towards the test accuracy. One of the main reasons behind the contradiction could be: the survey students might have simply considered the writing 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 writing test. It was also found that the students had more trust on the writing test than on the speaking test.

The post-test interviews also indicated 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. Similar findings were reported by Takagi (2010) about the Japanese EFL learners' attitudes to their high-stakes tests.

Implications of the study

The findings indicate that the test somehow lost its face validity and reliability in the post-test context as both

the students and their parents did not think that the test accurately measured the skills. Additionally, both students and their parents reported some random biases during the test such as loose invigilation, cheating, and carelessness in checking answer sheets. Therefore, it seems highly important that efforts are made to ensure the test fairness and it accurately measures what it intends to measure. For this, the test must be based on sound theoretical principles of communicative competence which guide the Grade 10 curriculum.

Additionally, the test designers should make explicit of what exactly the students are expected to have achieved and the test items should be designed in accordance with the purpose of teaching and learning English to ensure the test accuracy. There are also some indications that more attention is needed during the conduction of the test and checking answer sheets in order to make the test more reliable and valid.

It is also worth pointing out that parents, particularly the parents with low education, had little knowledge about the test and its process. However, parental support to their children can be more effective when parents have clear, specific and targeted information from schools (Cheng et al., 2010; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011). Thus, schools should make some provisions for giving more information to parents about the SEE. Schools have to use different policies and strategies to make parents aware of the assessment practices. For instance, schools can organise some meetings, workshops and focus group discussions to inform parents more about the process. For this, teachers also should be trained on how to work with parents whose backgrounds are very different to their own. Furthermore, as most students in Nepal have low proficiency in English (Dawadi, 2016), it is important to develop positive attitudes towards learning English and the English test so that students might be encouraged them to learn English more effectively.

The study raises a serious question regarding the authority given to schools to run the speaking test. It seems as if there is a competition among schools to send as high scores as possible rather than making their students as proficient as possible. It is shameful to report here that some of the schools do not even run any speaking test and send as high scores as possible for all the students. The students reported a clear gap between the scores on speaking and writing test. Thus, the authority given to schools for the conduction of the speaking test has been misused by schools. Teachers should understand that the main reason of giving such authority to them is to involve them in the testing process.

However, it is unfortunate that most teachers or schools do not seem to understand this aspect. Therefore, the government needs to reconsider the provision of such kind of practical examination or take a step further to make schools more responsible in conducting the test. For this, more training needs to be conducted to make teachers aware of the values and goals of such practical tests and to enable teachers to run such tests more effectively.

Limitations of the study

The study has revealed interesting findings regarding the SEE English test fairness and accuracy as perceived by students and their parents. However, the results of this study should be treated with caution and future investigation should try to overcome the limitations of this study. To be more specific, the study has two major limitations. The first limitation of the study concerns its sample size. This means, it was limited to 247 students and six parents in Nepal. Therefore, generalisation of the findings is limited by this constraint.

The second limitation of this study methodological in nature. This study was limited to the data collected from students and their parents. The findings could have been more comprehensive if schools or EFL teachers were included in the study.

This study, however, is one of the few test impact studies that has explored students' and their parents' attitudes towards a high-stakes test over an extended period of time.

Recommendations for future research

Though this study was mainly interested in how students and their parents perceive the SEE English test in terms of its fairness and accuracy, it would have been definitely helpful to know about teachers' views, particularly about the conduction of the speaking test. Had the data from teachers been obtained, it might have helped to clarify several ambiguities, which emerged from the data in this study, and that would lead more comprehensive picture. An implication of this argument is that methodological triangulation in test impact research like this is crucial. It is hoped that future research takes care of such issues and includes methodological triangulation to create more comprehensive picture of the test impacts.

More evidence is required on how parents from different geographical locations (including city areas) or from different professions (such as doctors, engineers, lawyers etc.) perceive the SEE English test.

Additionally, as a large number of students go to private schools in Nepal, this study does not represent the voices of those students and their parents. Thus, it is recommended that future research includes more students and parents from different social strata.

'While reviewing literature for this study, it was found that almost all the previous test impact studies (excluding Loumbourd, 2014) observed only the pre-test attitudes. However, this study has revealed that test-takers' and their parents' attitudes towards a test does not remain constant. Therefore, it sounds important that people's attitudes towards a test is examined in both the pre-test and post-test context before making any claims or decisions regarding the quality of the test. Thus, it is recommended that future research also continues exploring both the pre-test and post-test attitudes.

Conclusion

The data generated through multiple sources in this study indicate that the SEE students had mostly positive attitudes towards the test in the pre-test context but negative attitudes in the post-test context. However, the parents had mostly negatively attitudes towards the test in both the pre-test and post-test contexts. Both students and their parents raised questions about the fairness and accuracy of the test, particularly about the speaking test, in the post-test context. Having collected both students' and their parents' views about the SEE, this study has investigated into the areas which are not fully explored and has provided solid research evidence to explain why some changes are needed in the existing testing practice in Nepal.

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