

EFL Test Impacts on Students and Parents: Mixed Method Case Study

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Presentation overview

- Background to the study
- Rationale of the study
- Research questions
- Methodology and data analysis
- Findings

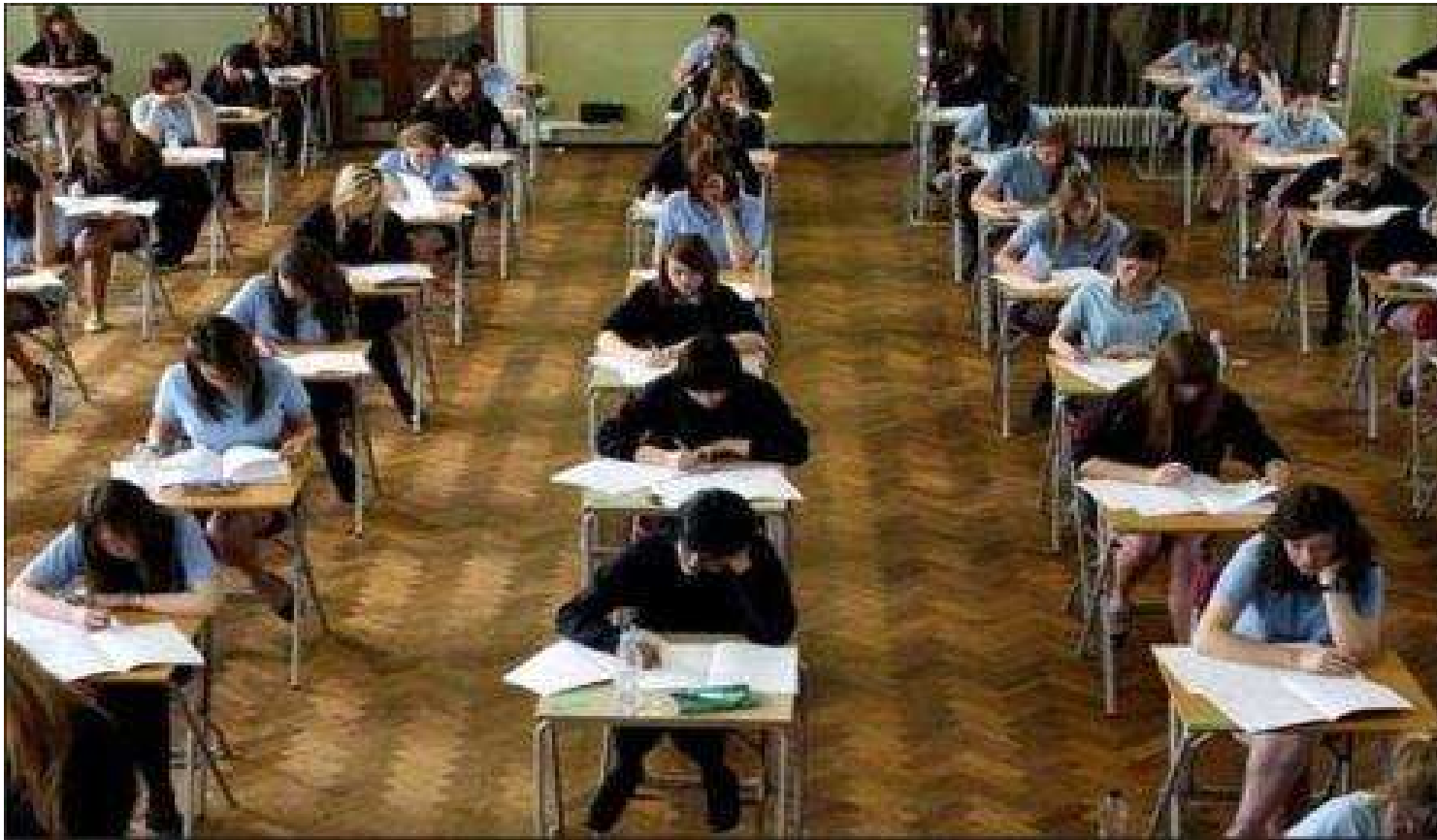
Background to the study

- The study is deeply rooted in an expanded view of construct validity, whereby “the role of testers does not end in the development phase of the language tests they employ. Rather, testers need to follow the uses of these tests and examine issues of utility, relevance, ethics, and interpretation” (Shohamy, 1993, p.1).
- Powerful tools- many educational systems around the world use high-stakes test as a driving force to induce desirable changes in their society (Qi, 2007).
- Language tests are powerful devices as they are likely to dictate many educational decisions. “A single standardized test score independently triggers an automatic admission, promotion, placement or graduation decision” (Madaus, 1990, cited in Shohamy, 1993, p.1).

Previous research

- Students are the highest stake holders but they have tended to be researched less compared with other stakeholders in previous test impact studies (Carless & Lam, 2014; Xiao, Sharpling, & Liu, 2011).
- In spite of the evidence from previous research that parents often play an important role in shaping teaching and learning in schools and that there is a relationship between parental involvement and children's learning (Cheng, Andrews, & Yu, 2010), little attention has been paid to parents in previous test impact studies.
- Actually, “the stakeholders who have received the least attention are parents” (Rogers, Barblett, & Robinson, 2016, p. 329).
- Furthermore, studies that “have linked both stakeholders’ perceptions are non-existent” (Cheng, et al., 2010, p.222).

- **My Research context**
- Secondary education examination (SEE) in Nepal is administered at the end of 10-year school education (15 to 16 years old children).



- The SEE is the sole factor that dictates one's career path as its scores decide which course a student can study in higher education and it works as a basic licence for an official job.
- Very little is known about the impacts of the SEE on its stake-holders.
- If the consequential validity of a high-stakes test is not known, this might have some undesirable consequences for the society at large (Mesick, 1988).
- A language test “without validation research is like a police force without a court system, unfair and dangerous” (McNamara , 2007 p.280).

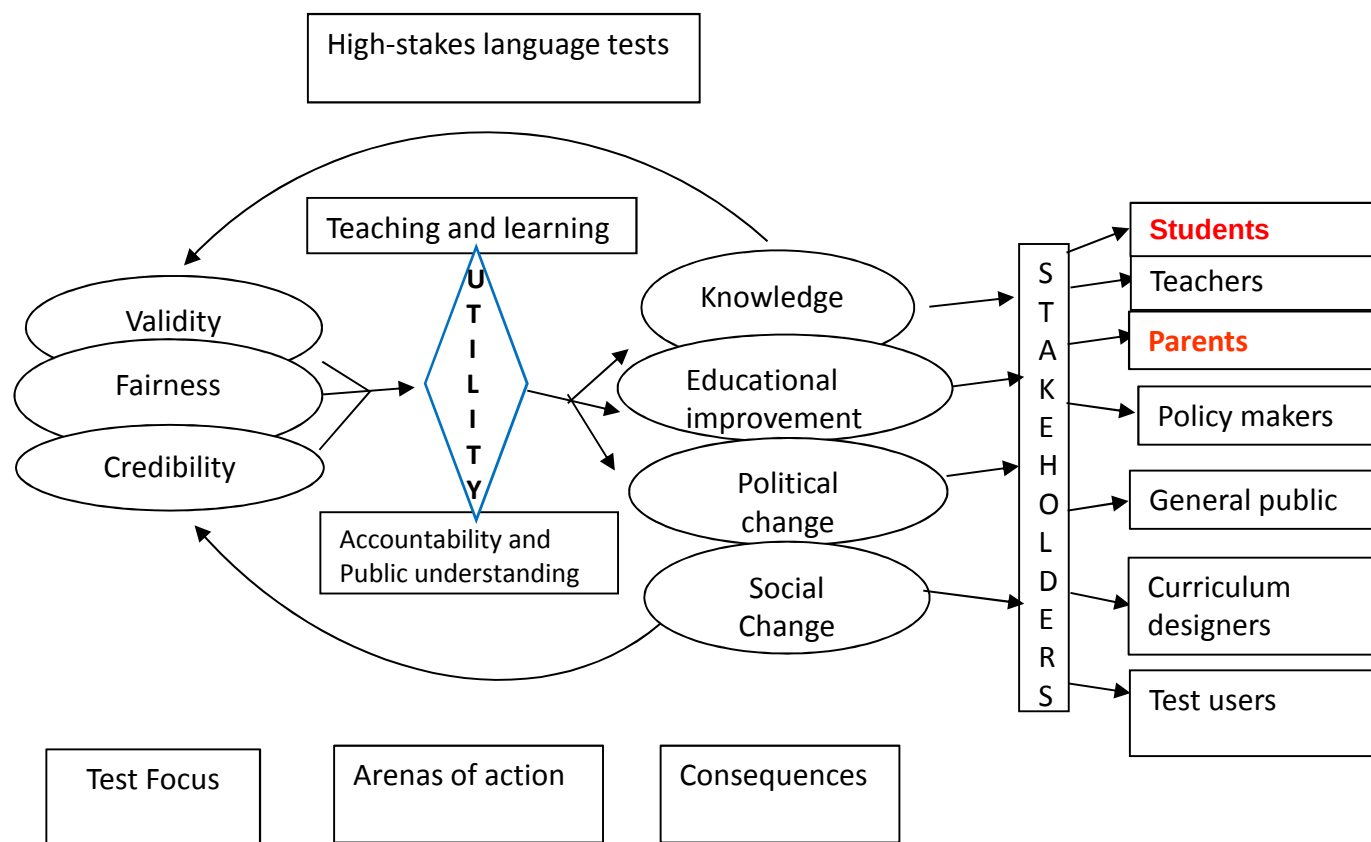
Rationale of the study

- illuminate the consequences of the SEE English test on its stake holders and support for the improvements of the test
- provide a theoretical framework for exploring the nature of test impacts
- main rationale- the least heard voices should be known to the public in order to promote further discussion on how to improve the education system.

Research questions

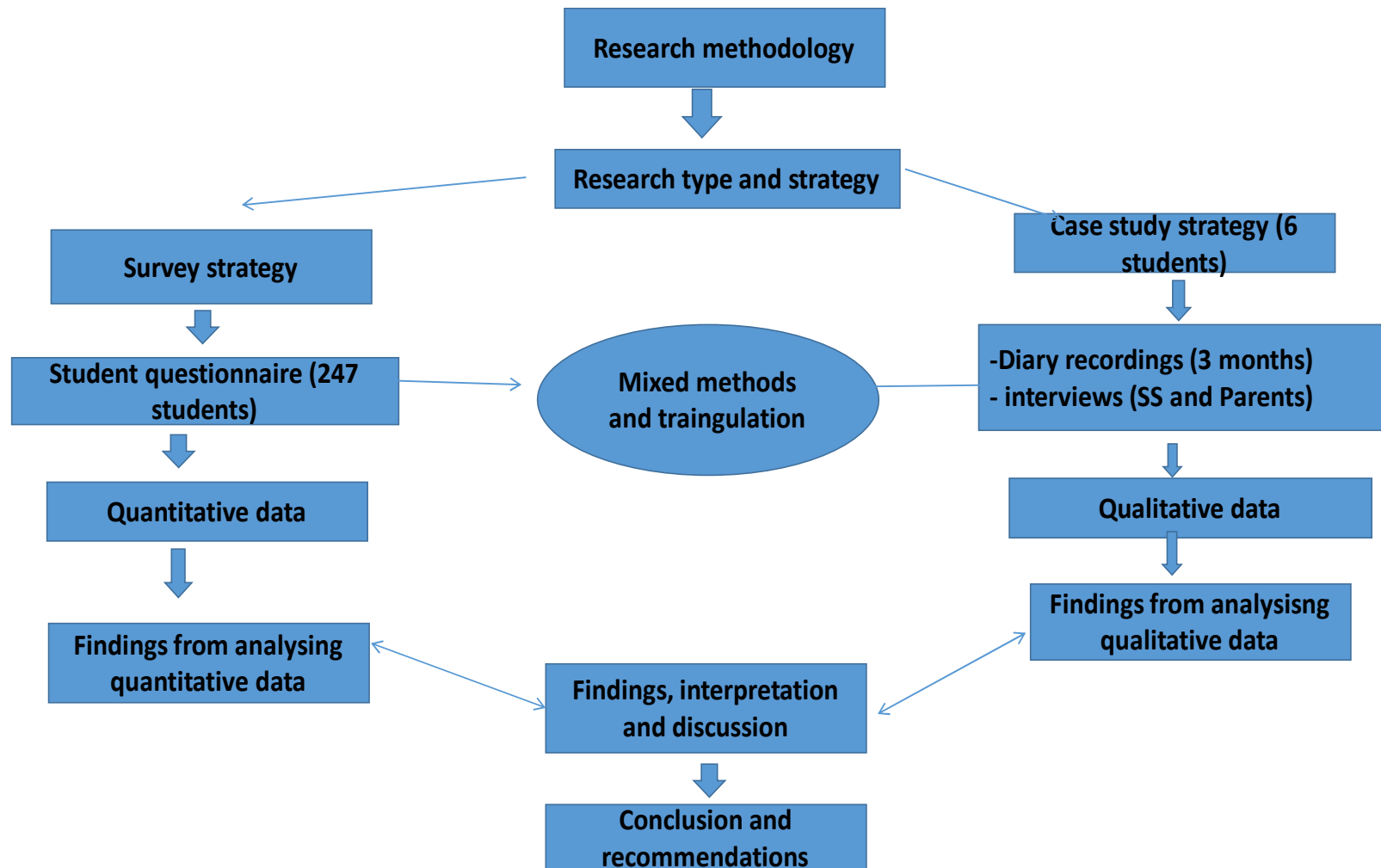
- How do students and parents perceive the SEE English test (pre and post-test perceptions)?
- What are the impacts of the test on students' motivation to learn English (pre-test and post-test motivation) and on test preparation strategies?
- Do students and parents suffer test pressure and anxiety? If yes, what sorts of pressure and anxiety do they suffer?
- How do parents provide test related support to their children?
- To what extent does the test support students to study at Grade 11?

Theoretical framework- sociocultural framework of language testing



Adapted from Gipps (1999)

Research methodology



General characteristics of case study participants

Participants	sex	Age (yrs)	Parents' education	proficiency
Participant A	Female	15	Post graduate degree (both parents)	High achiever
Participant B	Female	16	Both parents cannot read and write	Low achiever
Participant C	Male	15	Father-post-graduate, mother-under graduate	Low achiever
Participant D	Male	15	Both parents cannot read and write	High achiever
Participant E	Female	16	Father simply literate, mother illiterate	Low achiever
Participant F	Male	15	Father- post graduate, mother- undergraduate	High achiever

Diary keeping schedule

Stage	Start	end	Recordings per student	Remarks
First	01-09- 2016	30-09-2016	4	Usual classes
Second	14-01- 2017	12-02-2017	4	Test preparation time
Third	10-06-2017	07-07- 2017	4	Around the test result

(Note: *The academic year began in mid-April,2016 and the test was conducted on 4 March, 2017. Then, the test results were published on 24 June, 2017).*

Research stages and timeline

Phase	stages	timelines	Tasks/activities
Phase I	Pilot stage	28 July to 28 August, 2016	Getting access to the field, selecting case study participants, piloting research tools and training case study participants on how to record diaries
Phase II	Pre-test data collection stage	1 January to 30 February, 2016	Carrying out a survey, interviewing the case study students along with their parents, and collecting students' oral diaries
Phase III	Post-test data collection stage	20 July to 30 August, 2017	tasks fulfilled in this stage were the same as with the phase 2 tasks

Volume of data

- 72 oral weekly diaries (4-10 minutes each) intermittently recorded for three months-
 - 24 diaries during usual classes (fifth month of the academic year)
 - 24 diaries during test preparation (around 6 weeks before the test)
 - 24 diaries around the test results (one just one week before the test, one on the result day, two after the test result)
- 24 interviews (12 before and 12 after the test, 40-55 minutes each)

Research site

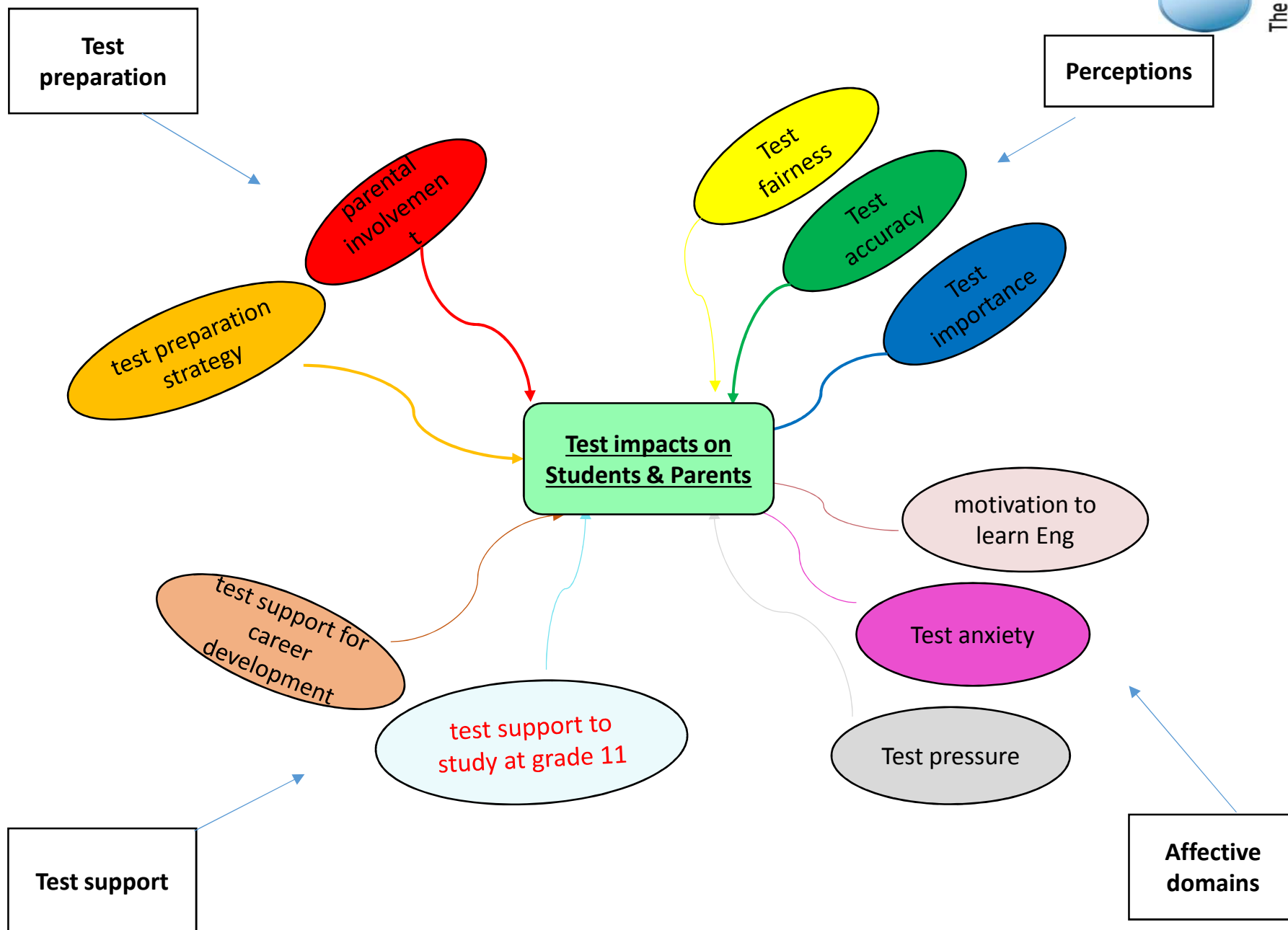
- a remote part in Nepal

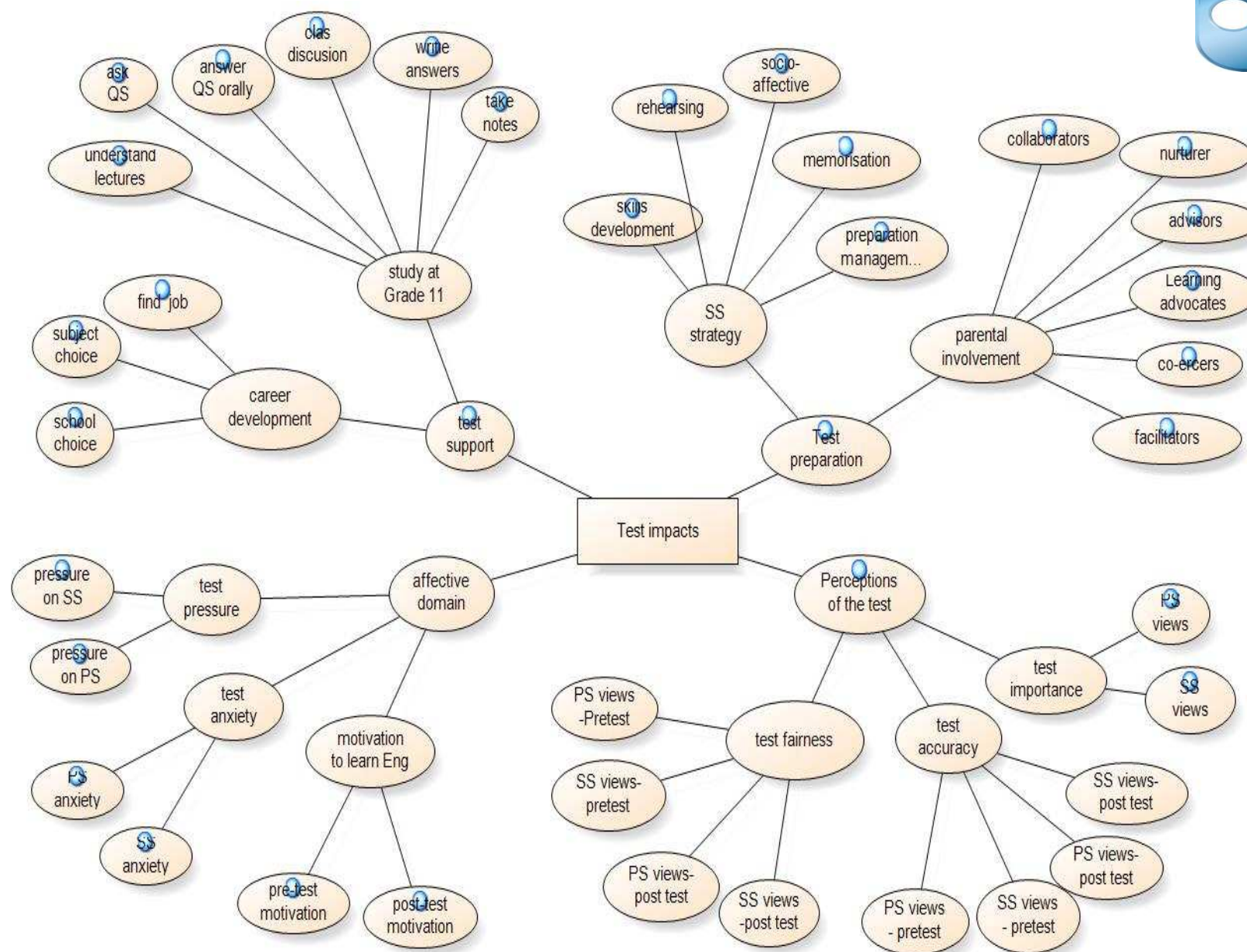


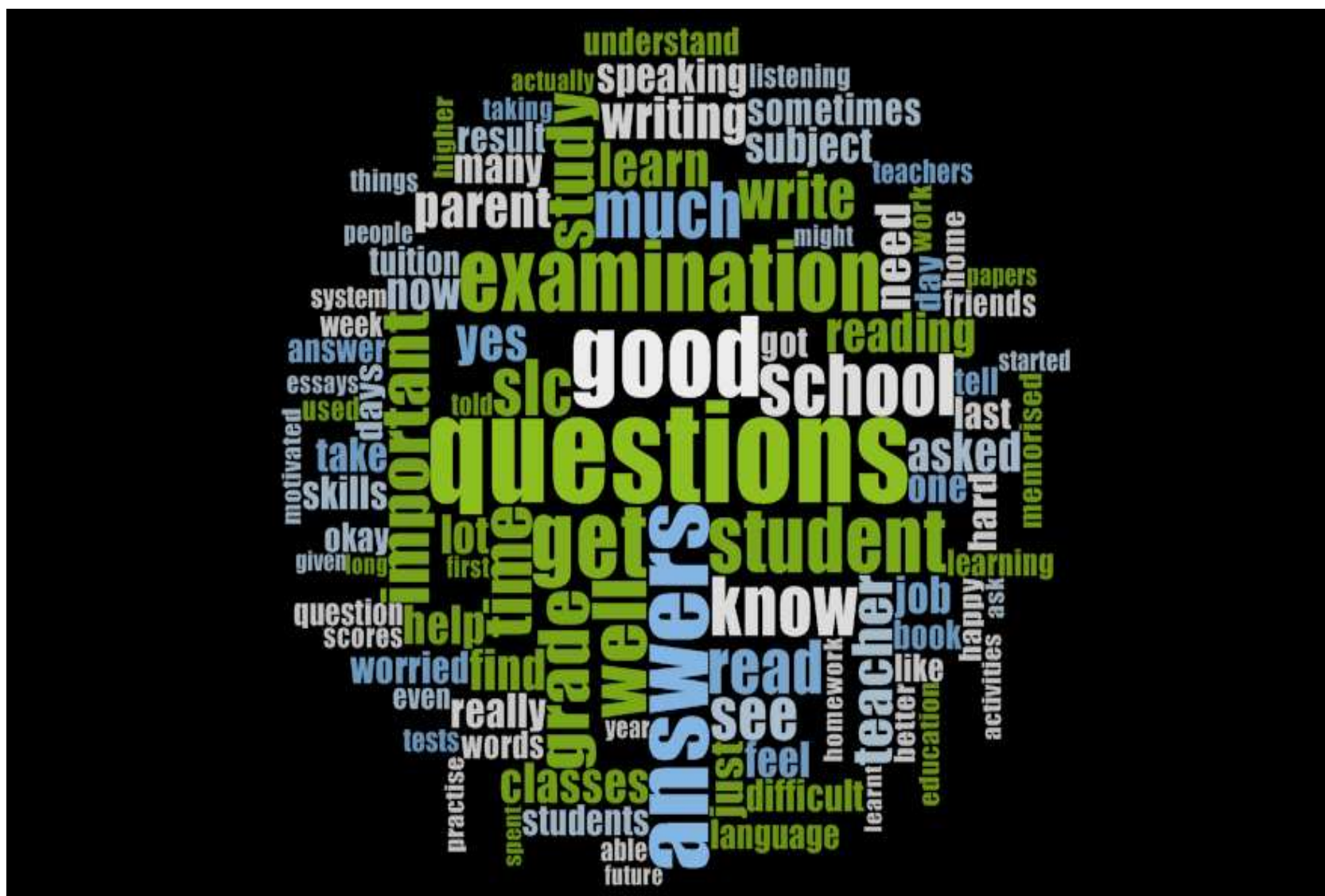
Data analysis

- Quantitative data – **SPSS** version 20
- see the mean scores and standard deviation on each item.
- Run t-tests to make a comparison (structural equation modeling to see the relationship among variables?)
- Qualitative data- **NVivo 10** (Lewins and Silver, 2014)
- **Thematic analysis** - can be incorporated into any epistemological approach and it is flexible (Chamberlain, 2015)
- Constant-comparative method (Braun and Clarke, 2008)
 - a. familiarising myself with the data
 - b. generating initial codes
 - c. searching for themes/creating categories
 - d. reviewing themes
 - e. defining and naming themes

(Analytical process was recursive –moving back and forth through the steps, rather than in a linear process).







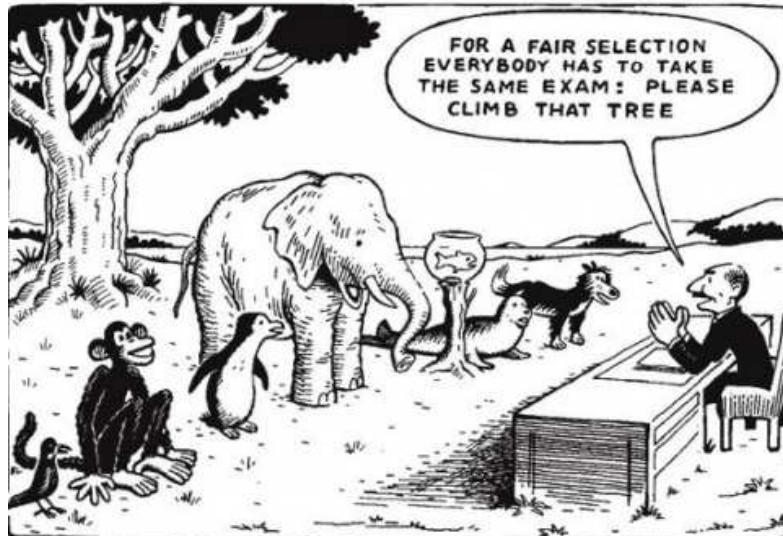
Parents' perceptions of the test



- have positive attitudes towards the test (pre-test)
- trust on test fairness and its quality
- *I trust on its quality. I know that she could not get her expected grade on the test but I do not blame other people. I think it was because of her own weaknesses. May be she had to work harder to get her expected grade. For me, the test has maintained its quality (Parent A).*
- *I think the test was conducted properly. I trust on its quality, though he could not get his expected grade. But I do not trust on the listening and speaking test conducted in their school. I have heard that every student has got either A or A+ on the test. So it's not fair. (Parent C)*

Because of the sickness, she might have forgotten what she had learnt or memorised for the test... Also there might be some problems when checking her answer sheets. They might have checked her answer sheets carelessly. She was telling me that she would get minimum B grade on the test. So, I do not know what the problem is (Parent B).

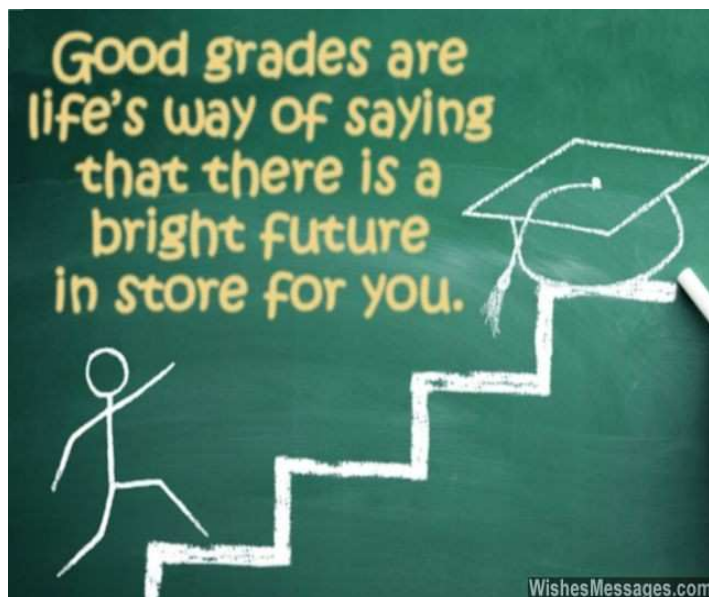
Test pressure and anxiety on parents



- Feel pressure for raising their children's scores on the test (associated with prestige and future career)
- *I am very much worried about her test. Sometimes, I cannot even sleep well (Parent B)*
- *I am very much worried this time as he has some health issues. **Actually, he has been losing his eyesight. Sometimes he cannot read texts properly.** So, I am not sure whether he could get good results (Parent C).*
- *I am really worried about the test result as I think that if she can not do well on the test, it will be a **great shame for me and also her future career will be badly affected** (Parent A)*

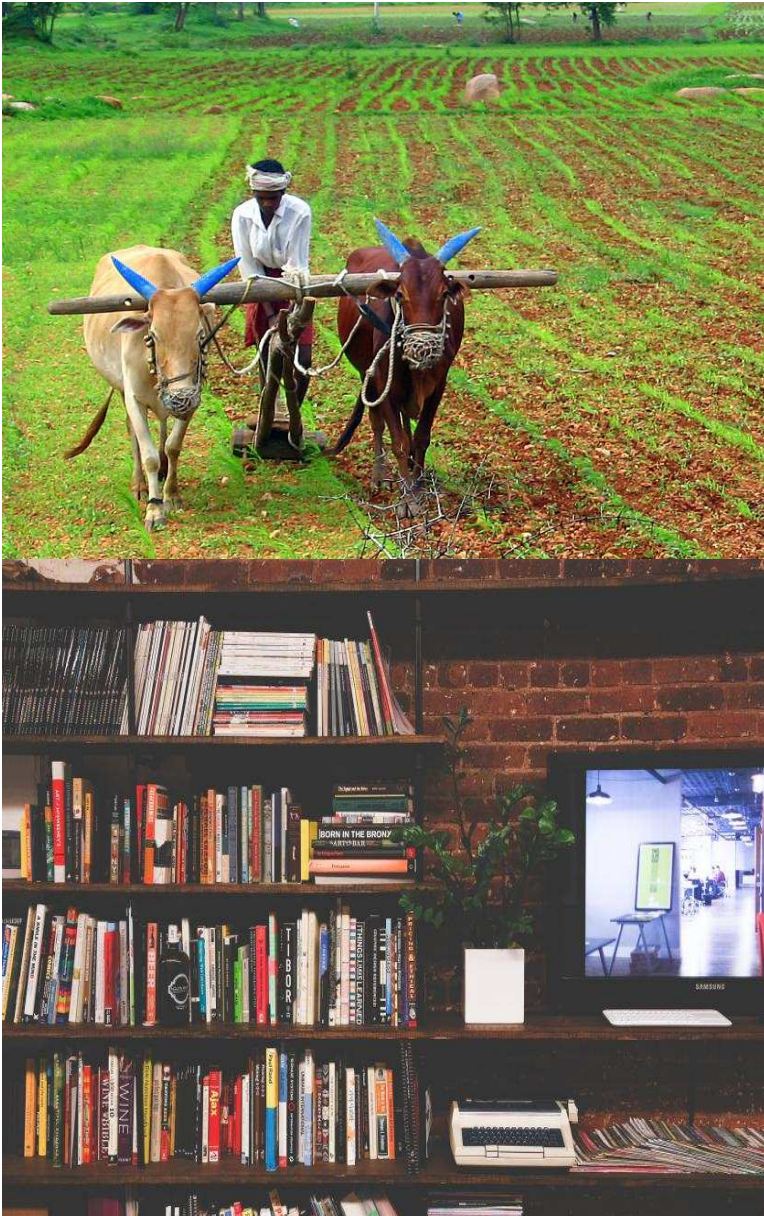


Parental involvement in the test preparation



- **As test preparation advocates-**
- exert profound influences on children's attitudes towards the English language and the English test
- instil positive attitudes towards learning English and taking the test
- *I keep on suggesting him to focus more on English subject... I tell him about the importance of English for his life...I have also told him that the test is very important for him as the test is a gateway to his higher education (Parent C).*
- *I am encouraging him not to be scared of the test. Actually, I am trying my best to make him confident of his own skills (Parent F)*
- *My father always encourages me to work hard for the test. He tells me that the test is very important for me and I need to be well prepared for the test (Student A).*

As test preparation facilitator



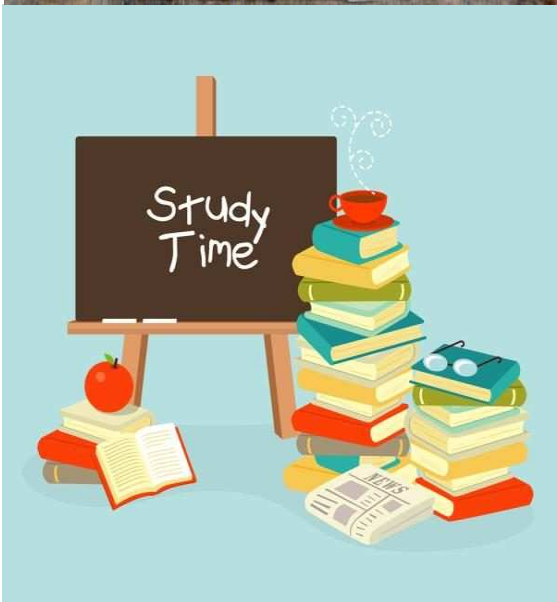
- as active agents in providing learning conditions facilitating their language learning and uses of particular strategies for the test preparation
- *My grand-parents have bought me **so many things necessary for the preparation of the test** such as SEE practice book, SEE model questions, essay book etc. (Student D).*
- *Last year, I had to help my parents a lot for their farming. But this year, my parents have told me that I have to read and write all the time. My mother does not ask me to do any house hold chores. **So, my job is just to read and write** (Student B)*
- *My another son is 11 years old and he loves watching TV but I am asking him to watch TV with a low sound and also not to make noise at home, when his brother is reading (Parent C).*
- *My parents have bought all the necessary things for the test preparation including some DVDs and newspapers written in English (Student A).*

Test preparation collaborators



- One of the most common ways for them to get involved in the test preparation was to finance English tuition classes for their children and taking help from other people.
- All the case study participants and nearly 94.24% students had taken **tuition classes** for the preparation of the test.
- *I founds the essay very difficult to understand. So, I asked my father to help me with the questions. He also could not find the answers. Then, **he told me that he would discuss about this with an English teacher at his school**. Then, in the evening, he told me the answers that made me very happy (Student A).*
- *Last week, I **visited my relative'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 (student E).*
- ***My mother has also requested one of our neighbours**, who is an English teacher in a school, to teach me English (Student B)*

As test preparation advisors



- **Guide their children for the preparation of the test**
- sharing their own experience of preparing for the test and also taking the test (Parent A and Parent C)
- teaching some **language learning, test preparation and test taking strategies** to their children.
- *My mother sometimes asks me to tell her some answers that I have memorised. **She looks at my answers and then i have to tell her the answers** without looking at my notebook. If I cannot tell her the answers correctly, I have to read it again... She has also suggested me to focus more on grammar as it helps me to get good scores on the test (Student A).*
- *I am teaching him some techniques for managing time during the test. I am also **telling him to solve easy questions first**. Additionally, **I am suggesting him to write answers only after reading the questions very carefully** (Parent C).*
- ***I have suggested him not to leave any question on the test. I mean, he has to answer all the questions, although he does not know their answers. I have heard that some examiners may not carefully read the answers and give scores on the basis of the length of the answers**(Parent F).*

Language learning nurturers



- closely involved themselves in their children's learning by being with them
- *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.** It took us around half an hour to find the answers of those questions (Student A).*
- *They have also suggested me to watch English programmes to improve my English. **I sometimes watch English programmes with my father** (Student F).*
- *My mother has **guessed some important questions,** especially essay topics, for the SEE examination. She has guessed the questions based on the collection book. She has asked me to write or collect the answers of those questions. **I will take her help to find the answers of those questions** (Student C).*

As test preparation coercers



- Forcing children to develop certain strategies out of their convictions of test preparation.
- *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 but... (Student C)*
- *I have asked him to memorise some important answers for the test. I know that he can somehow write those answers but he will get better marks with the memorised answers. Actually, when i was preparing for the test, I would also memorise important answers. I think, I would not be able to pass the test if I had not memorised those answers (Parent C)*



Researcher: *She used to go to bed at 2 a.m? What time did she use to get up?*

Parent B: *At 4 a.m. She would read for about 2 hours in the morning and then go to school at 6 a.m. This schedule continued till she finished all the tests... Actually, she started going to bed at 2 a. m four days before the test. Before that, she used to go to bed around 12 a.m and then get up around 5 a.m.*

Researcher: *So, you would just listen to the radio using an ear phone and ask her to read and write?*

Parent B: *Yes, my job was just to make sure that she is reading. I would even spray water on her if I find her dozing, she would wash her face and start reading her book again.*



Thank you very much

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Any query?