



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

**SPEAKING ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ORAL  
PERFORMANCE FOR THE KET CERTIFICATION**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages

For the degree of

**LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS**

Presented by

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Octubre, 2019

**“SPEAKING ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ ORAL  
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the requirement for the degree of

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Puebla, México

Octubre, 2019

## **DEDICATORY**

To my parents, Roberto and Hortencia,  
I'm grateful to you for your love and support.

Thanks God for my parents.

To Guile, Andy and Karol,  
because you are my motivation. I love you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would first like to thank my thesis director teacher Rosalba Leticia Olguín Díaz. She was always very enthusiastic to share her knowledge and experience to conduct my research and writing.

I would like to thank the teachers who were involved in the validation for this research: Mtra. Sandra Juárez Pacheco and Mtra. Maria Leticia Temoltzin Espejel. For their valuable comments on this thesis.

I would also like to acknowledge Mtra. Sandra Juárez Pacheco for her motivation, encouragement and commitment with the students in the thesis seminar.

Finally, I must express my profound gratitude to Yan, for providing me with time and continuous support.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

English is a global language. To explain the current status and potential of English as the international language of communication Crystal (2003) defines it as “a language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people. The history of a global language can be traced through the successful expeditions of its soldier/ sailor speakers (p. 9)”. In modern times the effects of colonization are observed when powerful, industrialized countries influence population not only in the economic field but dominating the language of communication.

Globalization is always closely associated with language. Therefore, English as a global language has become the first instance when learning a second language. To support this idea Wilson (2017) states “while globalization is generally regarded as the process of international integration involving businesses or organizations, this interchange of world views, cultures, and ideas has had a dramatic impact on education”.

Nowadays the main objective of learning English, besides to be able of communicating in this globalized world, is to get a certification in order to have a supporting document from a professional institution that recognizes your level of English and lets you be counted as a member of the English speaker population, for this, Annelie Knapp (2009) in her book Handbook of Foreign Language

Communication and Learning writes “ certifications aim to document the general language proficiency of students of English”. So, English certifications have become a very important part in students’ academic development due to globalization, professional requirements, personal growth and so on. Consequently, it is necessary that students show a qualification regarding their skills and knowledge of English no matter their level of English.

That is why this thesis attempts to research about the effect of materials and activities in the preparation of high school students towards the KET exam to get the certification. This research is focused on the impact of valuable materials that support students to improve the oral ability to attain better results in the speaking part of the KET certification.

There is a wide spread of materials and activities which are useful tools because they make students to put into practice and improve their oral ability when learning English and they allow students to apply their knowledge and usage of the language when they interact in regular classes at school. As a consequence, the results in the speaking part of the KET exam are expected to be better.

The aim of the study is to analyze how some materials and activities influence the students’ performance while doing the speaking part of the KET exam. In order to do so, this first chapter presents the rationale of the study where the justification of this study is stated. Later, the significance of the study is considered in a wider framework. Afterwards, the context of the research describes relevant features of data collection and the relationship with other studies already done.

## **1.1 Rationale for the topic selection**

Learning English is an essential need today, Qotrunnada (2019) claims that “English is a vital language to be learned because English is the International language in the world (p.1)”. In other words, learning English has become indispensable in order to obtain a lot of opportunities in different fields (Petruta, 2012). For instance, when trying to get a job, a good proficiency of English language will help to obtain more chances to obtain a job compared to those who do not speak the language.

Learning a foreign language is a difficult task since it is different from the mother tongue in aspects such as grammar, phonology, phonetics and to help in this process teachers use several tools such as books, audios, videos, among others.

According to Sadiku (2015), “developing students’ competencies in reading and writing requires exposing students to gradually challenging reading materials and writing tasks” (p.29) that is to say that learning English in this globalization era has become a necessity for people. In fact, knowing English is more than just speaking, writing, listening and reading since an overseas skills recognition is needed. Lee McKay (1993) affirms that regardless of where people were trained, in order to be certified, “all nonnative speakers of English face some type of evaluation of their English language abilities” (p.59).

Considering that high school students in Mexico are learning English as a foreign language they evidently require an academic certificate to prove that they qualify for a degree program in a specific language, in this case English. KET certification provides students with the attributes to prove they are capable to perform as English users in any competence at this level.

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter English is a global language and therefore Mexican students must be competent and proficient to develop and advance in the academic instruction. Mexico is a close neighbor of an English-speaking country hence learning English increases Mexican students' growth opportunities if they speak English; furthermore, if they certificate the level of English as the outcome of the students' preparation. This is the main reason this study is focused on improving high school students' speaking part results in the KET certification.

## **1.2 Justification**

The need to certify a language comes out as an instrument to measure the learners' abilities regarding their knowledge of the language and how English learners can use the language either in academic or work fields. As stated by Knapp (2009) "we define certification as a formal confirmation of a certain level of proficiency in a foreign language that places an individual in relation to other individuals with regard to this proficiency" (p. 630). This means that to know the level of a language an objective instrument is needed which supports the knowledge and can offer information about the quantity and quality of that knowledge. In other words, a language certificate is a way for students to either qualify to go after degree studies or help them get a professional advantage. With regard to proficiency, the learner's abilities are pointed out in a foreign or second language as well as the students' performance: on the job, for university studies or to belong to a social community.

Proficiency is the end of the process through which students develop skills when learning a language, it is important to highlight the pathway they follow during their

preparation towards the exam. When training for the KET exam students have different kinds of practice to develop and reinforce their abilities. In the classroom, students take part in activities which allow them to get in contact with the language whether writing, reading, listening or speaking, and with the repetition and practice of those activities the students improve their oral skill.

In the educational context, proficiency is the result after keeping in contact with different types of materials and carrying out a series of activities to develop and improve the students' abilities in learning English. This study can be useful to teachers to apply different and practical activities to help students improve the speaking skill of those students who attempt to achieve a KET certification. Even though this study is focused on a specific group of students, it can be applied in some similar groups in future as a reference after knowing the impact of the activities applied during this study, which makes this study relevant.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

Having a KET certification in English offers students a wide range of opportunities since this certification provides the basis for higher qualifications as English users.

To achieve a certification in English, students need to be skillful in the four abilities regarding their level of English based on the Common European Framework Reference for the Language, CEFR. Houser (2011) states about that "the changing role of English includes an increasing need for 'communicative' abilities with the language rather than just knowledge of grammar and vocabulary" (p.47).

In particular, High school students of third grade in a Mexican Private school require helpful tools to achieve the KET certification since this exam evaluates the students' English four abilities organized in three parts: Reading and writing, listening and speaking. Therefore, teachers need to be conscious about the path to follow to be able to train students properly for the requirements needed from the certification.

#### **1.4 Context of the research**

It is important for these students to get a certification due to the advantages that a certificate offers. A KET certification for high school students allows them to reach a higher level of English when they enter university since they have learnt the basis of the language, furthermore, to take their classes in English.

So third-grade high school students who already have knowledge of English need to support their knowledge and skills on a certification even though it is for a basic level. They can show their linguistic background and prove they possess the capabilities to solve problems and apply knowledge on both foreign and familiar contexts.

The participants of this study are twenty students from 17 to 19 years old. They are students of third grade of high school; students are from different groups because in class of English they are divided according to their level of English. The high school is a private and it has few students which allows teachers to give, almost, an individualized class, groups are formed by around 20 people, giving a total of 9 groups, being three for first grade, three for second grade and three for third grade, and the school is for students of middle and high class status. As part of the teaching process, the high school offers students a bilingual program in which they are trained in business management, researching, communication, gastronomy, graphic design,

German, French besides of the common subjects they need to take as part of their academic formation, such as math, English, literature, and so on.

### **1.5 Aim of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to find out the effects of using materials and activities in the development of the speaking skill of students who are being trained to achieve the KET certification. Along the two semesters of the school year a variety of materials and activities support the practice and reinforcement of previous knowledge of the students regarding A1 and A2 levels, so the intention of the study is to see the impact on the students' performance during the KET examination.

### **1.6 Objectives**

- To apply materials to promote speaking skills in high school students.
- To practice speaking with activities that call for previous knowledge
- To identify students' perceptions regarding the speaking activities and materials

### **1.7 Research questions**

- a. Which speaking activities promote the oral ability for a KET certification?
- b. Which materials facilitate the oral ability for a KET certification?
- c. Which perceptions do students have about the speaking activities for the KET certification?

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Globalization, technology, science and the new opportunities of travelling abroad makes it indispensable to learn a new language, and one of the most important around the world is English, Ermoshin (2018) says that knowing a foreign language is something indispensable.

Technology and transport have allowed people to learn a foreign language, to meet people from nationalities, to visit other countries, to learn about other cultures, to work or to study abroad. Considering that people go around the world as tourists; others may run companies or have friends all around the world; these activities evidence that people find a valuable and practical purpose in learning a foreign language.

If the purposes for learning English are traveling overseas, looking for other cultures, socializing with native speakers, working or studying abroad or having a certification; this certainly requires solid English skills that will help you to achieve any of these many purposes.

A language certification can show how skillful you are in a language to carry any of the above purposes. It means that if students have a language certification, they can prove the mastering of the foreign language. For this reason, certifications are important especially for language students in order to continue their academic training either in the country or abroad and to show factual information that supports the quantity and quality of their knowledge on a reliable document. English language

certifications show the students' qualifications when using English, considering the skills to communicate in English not only orally but in reading, in listening, in writing and the knowledge of the language can also grant students international academic growth in foreign countries.

## **2.1 English teaching**

The aim of teaching languages has changed throughout the times. However, the goals have to do with educational purposes, for instance, to increase knowledge and understanding about different cultures or for communication. Moreover, teaching languages considers the particular goal of a certain group of students (Cook, 2016, p.11). In the last years, teaching English as a foreign language has focused on topics regarding the teaching and learning process such as the role of the teacher, the teaching methods and the teaching materials to guarantee successful learning. Teachers may think about activities where students can use vocabulary and structures they have already learnt in previous courses and apply this knowledge to similar situations or even unexpected ones, but in a way which allows learners to think and to use language more creatively, for example Revell (2014) mentions that teachers should pay attention to the “activities designed to give learners a chance to experiment with their new linguistic skills. Activities, in short, bridge the gap between skill-getting in the classroom and skill-using in real life”. Based on Revell's (2014) observation some possible activities to achieve this, could be role plays, forecasts, interviews, discussions, debates, presentations and so on.

Sadiku (2015) states that when a teacher uses activities that have been specially designed to combine the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and

speaking, they provide their students with situations that result in progress and improvement in all areas of language learning.

## **2.2 English Language Certifications**

Based on the definition from the Cambridge dictionary a *certification* is a “proof or a document proving that someone is qualified for a particular job, or that something is of good quality” which makes it important to point out the relevance of an English certification. So, language certifications are the objective and quantitative proof of the students’ knowledge and usage of the language.

Certifying English as a second language or foreign language is the result of an important decision depending on the students’ interests and needs that implies considering the different kinds of certifications they can do, to mention some of the most important ones:

### **a. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)**

TOEFL is an English certificate which aims for academic use and is widely used around the world. The only test form currently offered is an internet-based test (iBT). The grade of the test is equally combined out of four parts: Reading comprehension, Listening Comprehension, Speaking and Written Expression. (Studyportals, 2007)

### **b. Trinity College London**

A Trinity qualification is a valuable asset - it can lead to a place at university, a new job, or even a new life in another country. Trinity College London certificates are used by individuals, employers and

institutions to provide robust evidence of a candidate's achievement at the time of assessment.

**c. International English Language Testing System (IELTS)**

IELTS offers an academic version of their test, especially suited to this user group. Like TOEFL, IELTS is widely recognized in all English-speaking countries as well as for many English-taught programs around the world. Besides, IELTS is also accepted as language proof for certain working permits as well as for immigration. Also, at the IELTS four parts are tested: listening, reading, writing and speaking. (Studyportals, 2007)

**d. Michigan Language Assessment**

The Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE) is a standardized high-intermediate level English as a foreign language (EFL) examination. You can use an ECCE certificate: as evidence of high-intermediate competence in English for personal, public, educational, and occupational purposes, to provide evidence of your level of English to employers and when applying for a job or a promotion, or when conducting business with companies worldwide.

**e. Cambridge English Examinations**

Cambridge English Language Assessment (formerly the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations) is a non-profit organization offering English language certificates for different language levels. The *First*

*Certificate in English* (FCE) for B2 level. The *Certificate in Advanced English* (CAE) is oriented at the quite high C1-C2, *Preliminary English Test* (PET) for B1 and *Key English Test* for A2. The exams evaluate: Reading, Writing, Use of English (Grammar use etc.), Listening and Speaking.

The Cambridge Certificates are mainly used within the UK but they are also accepted in many universities outside of the UK. However, they are not as popular as TOEFL and IELTS certificates. In contrast to many other certificates, the Cambridge certificates do not expire (Studyportals, 2007).

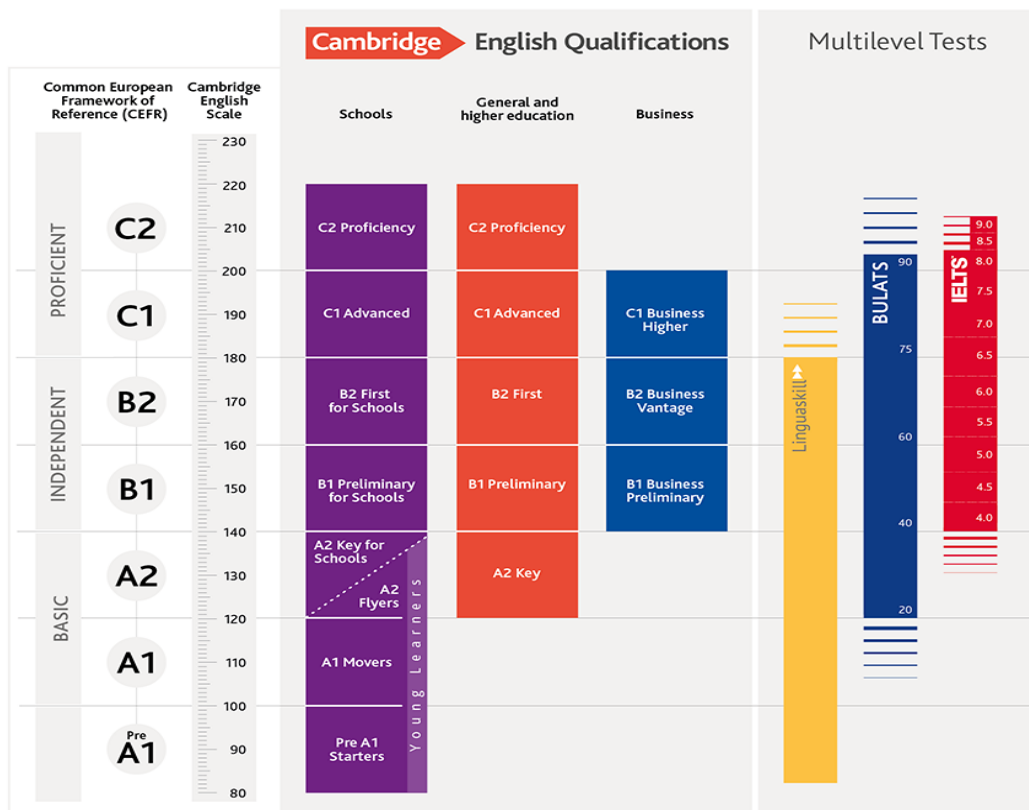
With the given information above it can be said that a certification is a document that gives students an opportunity to show proof of their knowledge of a language. Certifications in English determine students who have a standard of education and enable them to find a place in a higher education institution. Knapp (2009) writes 'there is a need for valid and reliable measures that give objective information about a certain standard and allow for comparisons between individuals' (p. 629) In conclusion, to know the scope of a language an objective instrument is needed and which, in turn, can give information about the quantity and quality of that language's knowledge.

There are different certifications to test learners' knowledge and usage of English based on the competence of the four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Cambridge English Exams provide a path to guarantee the quantity and quality of an individual's language skills. Certifications, no matter their type, focus their language measurement on the Common European Framework of Languages.

## 2.3 The CEFR

The Common European Framework of References for Languages provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners must learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. (Council of Europe, 2001, p.2)

The Common European Framework of Languages is the foundation and support in the teaching and learning a language since is the regulation for all topics related to



developing language for effective communication to meet the real needs of the learners.

### **2.3.1 Key English Test (KET) for schools**

In the last years some universities have started the process of going by offering academic programs which bring students into contact with English so that they can continue their academic growth either having some subjects in English at school or having academic exchanges with foreign universities; that is why KET certification for schools is a valuable alternative to back up high school students. KET is a Cambridge certification which corresponds to an A2 level. KET is the most basic certification which supports students with the elemental requirements of vocabulary and grammar knowledge of English. Furthermore, KET is a certification that shows how students can deal with everyday written and spoken English at a basic level. So, successful students receive a certificate that is accepted by colleges, universities, employers and governments around the world as proof of a learner's language abilities. Taking this exam is also a useful preparation for higher level exams. It is important to mention that Cambridge has two modalities of the exams: *for schools and general*. For school modality means that the content of the exam is based on formal and scholar grammar content what makes students to support their professional development. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL)* is a document which helps teachers, institutes and certification centers to identify the characteristics of a user of the language they want to certify, in this case, English, in the level A2, CEFRL states the next characteristics for the user:

Basic user	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate.
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This general description allows applicants to know the background achievement they have to reach, but especially for teachers to figure out the possible activities they can apply in order to develop the skills of the students that pretend to achieve a KET certification.

## 2.4 Abilities

		A2
UNDERSTANDING	Listening	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment.) I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.
	Reading	I can read very short, simple text. I can find specific, predictable information in very simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters
SPEAKING	Spoken Interaction	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
	Spoken Production	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other peoples, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.
WRITING	Writing	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple I can write a very simple personal letter, for example, thanking someone for something.

The CEFR states a more detailed chart in which describes skill by skill of an A2-user of English.

With this orientations, at the time of teaching, teachers need to keep in mind that the activities must be the most practical ones, which lead students to improve and get confident when using English and demonstrate how skillful they are during a certification in order to be able to say they can really use the language they learnt, as Sadiku (2015) said: "The four skills are the pinnacles of language which will take you to greater heights. They are separate yet bound together with an inseparable bond" (p.1), and teachers know this is a huge challenge because most of the times course books are more focused on practicing reading and writing skills in order to practice the grammar seen in class, some others also include many exercises that reinforce listening but there is a huge gap at the moment of trying to practice the speaking skill and this gives the present project the chance to talk about the speaking skill.

#### **2.4.1 Speaking**

Developing a skill is not a task that can be done in isolation, it implies sometimes a share work or the support of other skills to be improved, however, there are some aspects that should be taken into account in order to let students get confident and achieve the characteristics of an A2 speaker of English inasmuch as speaking it is not to be able of answering questions or just saying words, it is the ability of expressing what you think in any context or with any purpose. Sadiku (2015) says that: "Speaking has many masks- public, friendly or academic contexts are few from the lot. Each context has the same need for the skill. Statistics reveal that when you talk, you use about five syllables per second and there are more than forty different speech sounds". (p. 29-31)

Boonkit (2010) writes “speaking is one of the four macro skills necessary for effective communication in any language, particularly when speakers are not using their mother tongue”. (p. 1) In other words, speaking is the oral ability that allows students to get in contact with other speakers because they can exchange information in a foreign language. That is why today's globalized world requires that the aim of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills. Therefore, learners should take part in oral activities to exchange their thought, experiences, feelings, needs and so on to have interactive communication. So, students learn to speak by interacting (Kayi, 2012).

What Sadiku (2015) states reinforces the need of planning speaking activities in which students can practice different parts of the speech in order to accomplish different purposes when communicating, for example, going shopping, booking a room, a table or a flight, talking about their family and routines and so on, without going so far from the work in class. When teaching speaking, teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. To this, we can find several materials that help teachers to reach the goal and enrich the courses, as Sowntharya, Gomanthi and Muhuntarajan (2014) support: “how to develop students' communicative competence has become a great challenge to English language teachers. Apart from teaching English as a subject, English language teachers are expected to be facilitators of language learning. They should create a conducive climate in which the students can fearlessly exercise the language and acquire communicative competence.” (p. 384-386)

## **2.5 Materials**

Brown (as cited in Matsuda, 2012) defines teaching materials as “any systematic description of the techniques and exercises to be used in classroom teaching” (p.169) that is all kinds of resources and tools which teachers use in class to put students in contact with language in authentic use and develop students’ skills to use language for communication. So, they can be referred as teaching materials and can range from books, workbooks, teachers’ resource books, realia, audio-visuals to podcasts, or the internet.

On the basis of characteristics of the material used in the process of teaching-learning, teaching materials are broadly divided into two classifications (Ratna, 2016, p.4 -5) as mentioned below:

### **1. Projected and non- projected aids**

1.1 Projected refer to those aids where a bright light is passed through a transparent picture by means of a lens and an enlarged picture is thrown on the screen or a white wall.eg: projector, TV/ VCR.

1.2 Non-projected are those aids which do not require projector electricity or projection screen. Such materials can be simple shown, can be hanged or touched.eg: whiteboard, flannel board, magnet board, charts and wall-charts, posters and pictorial material, realia and models.

### **2. Audio, visual and audio-visual materials**

2.1 Audio- aids help in developing the listening skill of a learner. Audio-aids are those aids which can be only listened, such types of aids include: radio, tape recorder, speakers, earphones, headphones.

2.2 Visual-aids require the involvement of learners' visual sense.eg: graphic aids, 3d-aids, display boards and print material.

2.3 Audio-visual aids involve both the listening and viewing faculties. Such aids include television programs, video films, motion pictures, synchronized audio-slide projectors, computers and computers-assisted instructions etc.

Audiovisuals have become really important materials when working in the English class, but also, really useful because in some way they let teachers to give this real part of practicing in class. Asma (2016) wrote that "there is a close relationship between audiovisual aids and teaching learning processes, where a teacher may use it as a technique for a fruitful result. Audio visual aids, materials, media, communication technology, instructional media, learning resources, educational technology and instructional technology are broadly meant the same thing" (p.18).

Even when using audio visuals, teachers also have to take into account some other options that conduct students to practice enough the speaking skill and encourage them to use the language in order to polish their skill and get better.

In short, teaching materials are the resources and tools that language teachers use to provide lots of opportunities for learners to be productive when communicating since these aids represent experiential activities that promote language acquisition and development (Thomlinson, 2008).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter the research methodology is described, providing a detailed description of the context, participants and the research instruments to collect data. The purpose is to guide readers through the process how the results were obtained and the pertinent considerations in the case of reapplying these results in another context.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

The nature of this project is a mixed methods research because it implies the use of qualitative and quantitative data in order to get and analyze information. Qualitative research is a means of exploring, meanwhile quantitative research focuses on experimental methodology. While qualitative research lies on using words, quantitative research pays attention to numbers (Creswell, 2009)

Creswell (2009) states that “experimental research seeks to determine if a specific treatment influences an outcome” (p.11). Based on this quote, in this study a specific group of students is provided a specific treatment where the aim is to determine how they scored on their final certification results. According to Teddle & Tashakkori (2008) the mixed methods research is a profitable combination of both since it provides different ways of collecting and analyzing data. This type of research gives the possibility to work with open and close questions in order to obtain useful information; also, this method of research combines different forms of data analysis

being statistical and textual. Furthermore, this information can be integrated to complement and give reinforcement on the results. So, since mixed methods approach draws attention in both process and outcome this can offer a broader vision of the situation. Mixed methods research has been defined as a kind of study method in which the investigator makes use of qualitative and quantitative techniques, for instance, types of questions, research methods, data collection and analysis, procedures and inferences in a single study.

According to Jason (2006) the research questions lead us to choose the research method that best fits our study in order to find the answer. So, the research questions stated, in chapter one, are:

- a. Which speaking activities promote the oral ability for a KET certification?
- b. Which materials facilitate the oral ability for a KET certification?
- c. Which perceptions do students have about the speaking activities for the KET certification?

Based on Jason's asseveration regarding the correlation between the research questions and the research method, it was determined to apply a mixed methods approach because it is useful to the aim of this study since the purpose is to see the impact of materials in the oral ability in the KET certification. Seeing that this phenomenon has to do with students' experience and lived realities, Jason (2006) claims "mixing methods encourages us to think 'outside the box'" (p. 13) this means investigators should think unconventionally, because this approach makes them open their thinking beyond data and method. Mixed methods approach offers a wide

range of possibilities to explore new aspects and elements of experience in social life, and intersections between these. Mixed methods give a multi-dimensional view, rather than simply qualitative plus quantitative terms. (Jason, 2006, p. 11-12)

The aim of this research is to explore the impact of materials and speaking activities used in class pointing to develop the students' skills towards the KET exam, concentrating on the speaking part that shows the relevance of using the mixed methods processes in this project inasmuch this will

1. Take a specific sample of the participants, which represents a qualitative step.
2. Experiment and analyze the effect of the speaking activities in the students' performance during the KET exam using numerical data, as a quantitative stage.
3. Get qualitative information to explore perceptions, opinions and emotions and feelings from the participants.
4. Carry out a focus group to get some data, being a qualitative instrument.
5. Analyze data with a coding method which is a qualitative procedure.

### **3.2 Context**

The study took place in a private high school where students take English classes every day, ten hours a week. The goal is to develop the four abilities: listening, reading, speaking and writing. In order to train the students for a certification exam in the third year of high school the school offers different certifications in the last year of high school. Each certification is according to the level of English of the students

in third grade so the students can do certification exams such as KET, PET or First Certificate.

### **3.3 Participants**

Twenty high school students who are studying third grade participated. The age of the students ranged from 17 to 19 years old, seven females and 13 males. 19 students are Mexican, and one is from the Dominican Republic. The students come from different courses since the English class is to meet the students' needs according to their level of English requires this mixture. Some of the students have studied English in this school since they were 5 and 12 years old. Some of them just started attending high school.

As part of the bilingual program that they have in this private high school, some of the students are trained in business management, researching, and communication in English as a foreign language and gastronomy. Such subjects open a wide spread of opportunities to bring students closer to English as a language of globalization.

Some of the students have the chance to go abroad to different countries where English is spoken, whether on vacations, to have a temporary work or to practice their English language.

### **3.4 Description of Research Design**

The aim of the English classes of this private high school is to train and prepare students of third year throughout two semesters with the purpose of achieving any of the above-mentioned certifications. In this study, the attention is focused on the

effects of materials and activities in the improvement of the oral ability in the speaking section of the KET exam.

The KET exam is suitable for this group of third year students of previously described since they have the A1 and A2 levels where students can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance regarding language related to very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography and employment. They can also communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Students at this level can ask and answer questions about themselves, also about their immediate environment and every day topics.

### **3.5 Instruments**

In this study, data was collected using qualitative and quantitative techniques, as well as inferences and findings were integrated using both approaches and hence the analysis of the information shows narrative and numeric data. Since a mixed methods approach is used, the process was taken into account as well as the outcome.

The quantitative data is obtained from the examination results achieved by the students in the Cambridge Key English Test, a qualification that shows they can deal with everyday written and spoken English at a basic level. The students did this official certification at the end of the academic year. It lasted 1 hour and 50 minutes approximately considering reading, writing, listening and speaking. This research is just focused on the results of the speaking part of KET.

On the other hand, the qualitative data is collected by means of a focus group with key questions. The twenty students took part of this focus group; however, it should be mentioned that only seven students out of those twenty students answered the questions and took part in the focus group while the others kept just listening. The students were in this focus group two days after doing the KET exam in order to gather their experiences during the examination and also their opinions, reactions and feelings.

### **3.6 Analyzing information**

To get the results for this study data collection is analyzed using quantitative and qualitative procedures. On the one hand, the results obtained as the quantitative data are presented as numerical information obtained from the test scores of the students in the KET certification exam according to the objective band criteria of the CEFRL. On the other hand, the qualitative data presented as the transcript of the focus group is described by coding the students' answers and then categorized into categories and major themes.

Coding is one way of analyzing qualitative data. Basit (2003) explains "coding is one of the significant steps taken during analysis to organize and make sense of textual data. It is an intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing" (p.143) that is, coding is a process that allows researchers to divide, group, reorganize and join the information in order to make it meaningful and it can be divided based on their own thoughts and experiences until getting to a general description of the whole data. The data

in coding can consist of interview transcripts collected from the participants, as in the study, and the coding processes can range from one word to a full paragraph, so each code relies on the researcher's own criteria. To support the idea, Charmaz (cited in Saldana, 2015) describes coding as the "critical link" between data collection and their explanation of meaning.

In the next chapter the results obtained from the KET examination show the effect of the materials and activities in the students' oral skill when doing the certification exam. On the other hand, the students' comments about their experience in the exam show their point of view regarding their training towards the KET certification in the speaking part.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### 4.0 Introduction

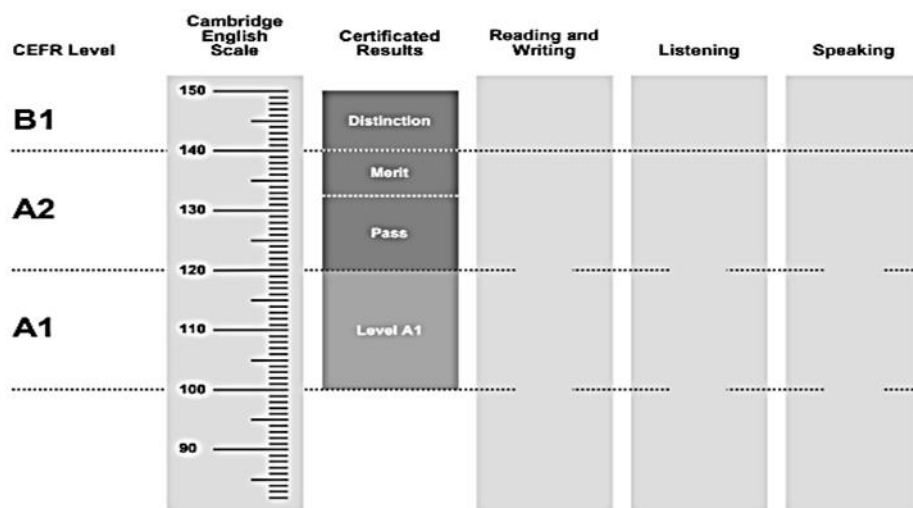
The aim of this study is to know the effects of materials and activities in developing the oral skill in high school students in their preparation to certify English in the KET exam. To achieve the goal of the study a mixed method research is used to analyze the data. In this chapter the results show the quantitative information registered in bar graphs. In addition, the qualitative information shows the results from coding.

#### 4.1 KET Examination Results Regarding the Speaking Part

The scores given by the Cambridge English Scale for KET certification at level A2 in the CEFRL are shown in the following chart:

Cambridge English Scale Score	Grade	CEFR Level
140–150	Pass with Distinction	B1
133–139	Pass with Merit	A2
120–132	Pass	A2
100–119	Level A1	A1

Result	Overall Score	CEFR Level
Z		



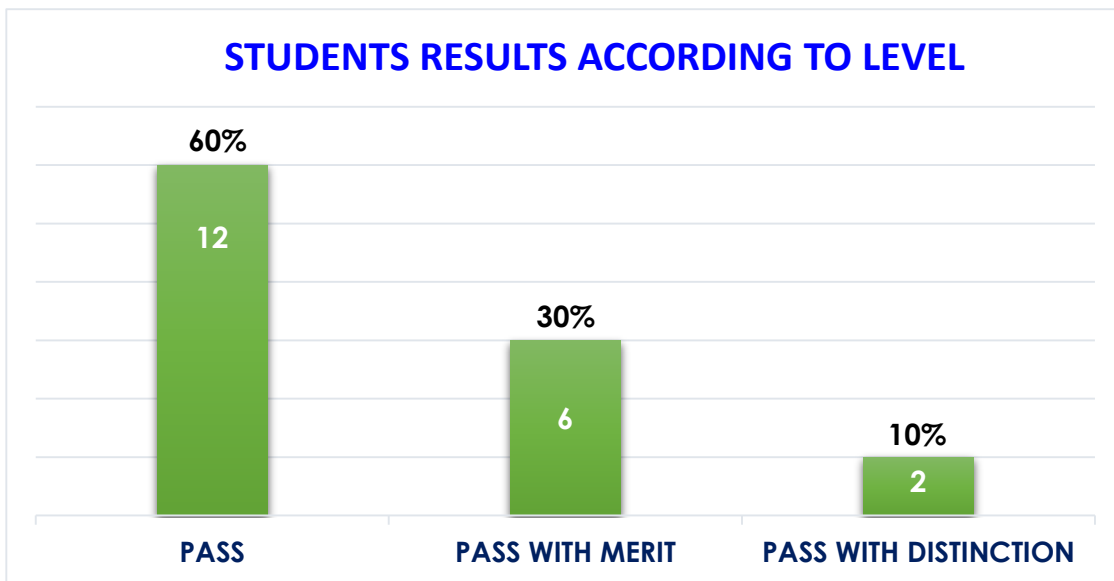
In this project the aim was to see the effect of materials and activities in developing the oral skill in a group of 20 high school students. Students did their certification KET exam and the results are shown below.

STUDENTS' RESULTS ACCORDING TO THE CEFRL			
STUDENT	SCORE	LEVEL	CERTIFICATED RESULT
1	141	B1	PASS WITH DISTINCTION
2	141	B1	PASS WITH DISTINCTION
3	139	A2	PASS WITH MERIT
4	139	A2	PASS WITH MERIT
5	139	A2	PASS WITH MERIT
6	138	A2	PASS WITH MERIT
7	137	A2	PASS WITH MERIT
8	137	A2	PASS WITH MERIT
9	132	A2	PASS
10	131	A2	PASS
11	130	A2	PASS
12	129	A2	PASS
13	128	A2	PASS
14	128	A2	PASS
15	128	A2	PASS
16	127	A2	PASS
17	125	A2	PASS
18	122	A2	PASS
19	120	A2	PASS
20	120	A2	PASS

The quantitative data in chart 1 shows the results after students had the KET exam. It shows each student's score according to the CEFRL based on a total score of 150 marks.

According to the CEFRL which certifies KET with scores from 120 to 150 marks, it is evident that all the 20 students got the KET certification with three different results: pass, pass with merit and pass with distinction.

The following graphic shows the percentages of each category of certificate achieved by the students:



Considering the 20 students as the 100% of the study, each graph shows the percentage of each certification result. The graph shows the number of students and the percentage in each level, based on the number of marks regarding their performance in the speaking part.

Even though the 100% of the students got the KET certificate, they achieved 3 different categories according to the score they reached: the largest percentage is 60% which represents 12 students in level A2 in the category of "Pass" with the score

from 120 to 132; the next percentage is 30% that shows 6 students in level A2 who reached the category of “Pass with merit” with the score from 137 to 139 marks and the 10% stands for 2 students who reached level B1 in the category of “Pass with distinction” with 141 marks.

To have a wider view about the certified KET results of the students, here is the explanation of each category:

“Pass” covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at level A2, it means that the students have an acceptable performance in the level since they are between the most basic and the regular score from 120 to 132 marks.

“Pass” refers that the student has considerable difficulty maintaining simple exchanges and requires additional prompting and support throughout the interactive communication.

“Pass with Merit” indicates the range of good achievement considered between the regular and high range of performance required at level A2 above the range of pass covering the score of 133 to 139 marks. “Pass with merit” refers that the student maintains simple exchanges despite some difficulty and requires prompting and support. Both scores, “Pass with Merit” or “Pass” will be awarded the KET certificate at Level A2.

“Pass with distinction” means that the students show ability beyond A2 Level. They will receive the KET certificate stating that they demonstrated ability at Level B1 reaching the score from 141 to 150. “Pass with distinction” refers that the student maintains simple exchanges and requires very little prompting and support.

To sum up, based on the scale of the CEFRL all the students achieved the KET certification showing how well they can talk about a task, to a partner and to the

examiner and according to the marks and the performance in the speaking part, 18 students reached level A2 and 2 students reached level B1. As a global achievement of the students they can handle communication in everyday situations, despite hesitation.

#### **4.2 Results from the Focus group.**

The information given by the high school students shows the qualitative data of the research, it was obtained through a focus group which was done in the students' mother tongue. The students were asked to choose either English or in Spanish for the focus group and they decided to take part using their mother tongue. The students explained that they would feel more comfortable and would avoid confusion if they listened to the questions and gave their answers in Spanish. The focus group in the students' first language allowed them to express their opinion frankly and spontaneously regarding their experience in the speaking part of the KET exam.

Even though all students of the group were in the focus group, not all of them contributed with their answers or comments, only seven students out of the twenty talked about their experience. This can be explained because these students displayed, most of the time, certain indifference to the activities and the class. Their role was mostly passive, and they felt more comfortable by only listening. The interviewer preferred not to force these participants and they simply remained silent. Some of the data obtained from the participating students' comments is analyzed using categorization and coding.

#### **4.3 Findings**

The findings were obtained through the coding method and as part of the qualitative data they show the students' perceptions about their personal experience during the KET certification exam but especially during the speaking component. In the data analysis there were 3 emergent categories that synthesized the main issues in the students' answers: emotional obstacles, oral activities and speaking materials.

#### **4.3.1 Emotional obstacles**

As a result, from the focus group, the students refer to emotional obstacles as one of the matters of difficulty or conditions during the process of answering the KET exam in the oral ability particularly.

Most of the students' answers point out that there are obstacles of emotional nature that influence their performance in the speaking part of the KET exam so we will start by defining what an obstacle is. In the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary *obstacle* is defined as "something that blocks your way so that movement or progress is prevented or made more difficult", in other words, obstacle is seen by the students as one of the reasons that sets limits to their performance and refrain them from showing a confident demonstration of their oral ability.

In this category participants report their emotional obstacles by referring to different feelings that affect their emotional balance prior and while doing the exam, for instance: anxiety, inhibition, lack of self-confidence, and incompetence are some of the feelings they mention they felt during the speaking test. Those feelings influence the affective side of the students and their performance.

When the students face the situation of being evaluated in the oral ability in the foreign language, they worry about making mistakes and according to Littlewood (2007) this causes them fearful feelings like inhibition or anxiety. If the students experience anxiety during the exam it causes a negative attitude towards the evaluation. Consequently, the students are not self-confident in communicating effectively in the context of evaluation and they do a weak and poor performance.

It is important to consider the relevance of the category of emotional obstacles because it impacts the affective side of the students to a considerable extent causing fear of speaking and as a consequence, this may influence the achievement of the students' required level in the CEFRL. The outcomes regarding this category can be observed in the following quotations:

*“Anxious ...we feel really anxious...we can't avoid feeling that way, and because being nervous we can't concentrate on the exam” (Julio)*

*“I felt nervous, but I felt more nervous in the speaking part” (Andrea)*

*“It is a very important exam and we worry a lot because we could get a low score...that's why we are really nervous because we are apprehensive about not achieving the certification” (Luis)*

*“Even though we had lots of oral practice in the classroom I think it was not enough... and also ...it is not the same speaking in the classroom with our teacher and classmates than speaking to unknown persons in the exam for the certification” (Julio)*

### **4.3.2 Oral activities**

Another category obtained from the data analysis is the one referring to the activities which promote the oral ability, the students talk about their active participation in different activities such as filming videos, doing power point presentations and acting out in role plays. The students say that taking part in these productive activities either individually or in group made them use their knowledge of the language in such a way that it allowed them to apply what they have already learnt in real life situations inside the classroom

Boonkit (2010) writes “speaking is one of the four macro skills necessary for effective communication in any language, particularly when speakers are not using their mother tongue”. (p. 1) In other words, speaking is the ability that allows students to get in contact with other speakers because they can exchange information in a foreign language. Knowing that the KET certification exam includes a speaking part, the aim of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills. Therefore, learners should take part in oral activities to exchange their thought, experiences, feelings, needs and so on to have interactive communication. So, students learn to speak by interacting (Kayi, 2012).

It is important to mention that the participants of the study belong to a social and economic status which allow them to be in contact with English frequently and to put into practice their oral skill since some of them travel to English speaking countries on vacation, in order to have a temporary job or to study university.

The following quotations are evidence of their comments:

*“....and it is helpful to do the activities like filming videos and doing power point presentations talking about different topics because we can talk and use different vocabulary and grammar” (Julio)*

*“I remembered when we did the role play ... I was the doctor and my classmate were the patient...and I also remember when Lucy was the shop attendant and she was selling clothes in the store... and so on!” (Andrea)*

*“It was not really difficult because we have already practiced with our classmates when we did dialogues in debates about different situations and we expressed our point of view....” (Veronica)*

*“All the activities were important and useful for me because in each activity we had the chance to practice and chat with our classmates referring to topics like movies, our interests, vacations and many topics...I feel I did it well” (David)*

#### **4.3.3 Speaking materials**

The last category in the data analysis is about useful materials that promoted the oral skill. Students mention types of materials in this category and their answers are important because they refer to different types of visual materials which are considered productive in developing the speaking ability. Brown (as cited in Matsuda, 2012) defines teaching materials as “any systematic description of the techniques and exercises to be used in classroom teaching” (p.169) that is all kinds of resources and tools which teachers use in class to put students in contact with language in authentic use and develop students’ skills to use language for communication.

Asma (2016) wrote that “there is a close relationship between audiovisual aids and teaching learning processes, where a teacher may use it as a technique for a fruitful result. Audio visual aids, materials, media, communication technology, instructional media, learning resources, educational technology and instructional technology are broadly meant the same thing”. (p.18)

In addition to the regular materials used in class to develop the speaking ability, the students also worked with those materials that would help them to become familiar with the KET exam format in order to train them for the speaking part.

Some of the students’ opinions are shown in the following quotations:

*“...it was easier because in the class we were using the cards with pictures and words and it helped us to remember how to build the questions ...the cards were helpful to get the idea of the task...” (Roberto)*

*“I like when we see the pictures of landscapes, places and people to make descriptions because they make me remember the characteristics and use adjectives” (Lucia)*

*“Playing bingo is good for us because we enjoy playing and we learn vocabulary” (Andrea)*

*“When we see the pictures and words when we play in the class gives more confidence to remember the structures because we have a guide that gives confidence to express and if we have materials, we can relate them with the words and topics” (David).*

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter gives the general results of the research since the purpose was to see the effects of materials in the preparation of the students towards the KET exam aiming to achieve the certification plus exploring the results from their performance in the oral ability.

The analysis shows the quantitative data based on the students' scores according to the CEFRL and the qualitative data from the focus group provides valuable information to be considered for the research.

The students' KET examination results regarding the speaking part show the impact of the materials and the activities done during the course, all the students got the KET certification according to the CEFRL benchmarks because they reached the required score which demonstrates their ability to communicate effectively in different ranges at level A2 and B1.

On the other hand, the focus group provides relevant information about the students' perceptions in the application for the KET exam since it displays 3 main categories that show particular aspects such as those referring to emotional obstacles, oral activities and speaking materials which stand as the salient qualitative outcomes of the research.

The emotional obstacles is the most visible factor that affects the students' performance in the speaking part of the KET exam considering that it has to do with the affective side of the students. The students said to feel nervous because of the importance of the exam and they were not self-confident about their knowledge of

the language. Some of their comments refer to language anxiety considering that they were fearful of speaking in English to unknown people who were evaluating their performance and that this context was really different from the one in the classroom where they interacted with their classmates in a more comfortable environment. When applying for the KET exam, students worried about being asked about topics and vocabulary they were not familiar with. Besides, some students' motivation and interest to get the certification had an impact in their performance.

The oral activities which supported students in developing their speaking skill was also relevant since they were trying to achieve the KET certification. Students pointed out that creating their power point presentation in order to do oral presentations, filming videos, taking part in role plays and debates helped them progress in their speaking since most of the activities created environments where they could practice their language by interacting orally with their classmates more than just writing grammar and vocabulary, which were also useful for them.

Finally, in addition to regular materials like flashcards and pictures which promote the oral skill, the students had the chance to develop this ability by also using the materials with the format for the speaking part in the KET exam having a constant practice in the classroom. This allowed students to get familiar with the pattern of the oral exam conventions by offering them a significant advantage even though when some of them would think that the practice in the class was not sufficient.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The objectives of the study were (1) to know which speaking activities promote the oral ability, (2) to know which materials facilitate the oral ability, and (3) to know the students' perceptions about the speaking activities. The three objectives meant to find out the aspects regarded in the pursuit of achieving the KET certification but most specifically the oral skill. The importance of the study deals with issues that teachers should consider when training students towards the KET certification. These can be the students' emotions, and the didactic sources teachers provide the learners with in the process of achieving a language certification. The study shows that the affective aspects of the students must be considered when preparing them for the exam since their emotions may impulse or limit the students' performance during the KET exam. As a result of the study, the students mentioned they needed to be taught how to manage that emotional side.

Regarding oral activities and speaking materials to train students towards the KET certification, it is necessary that such sources be pertinent in order to guarantee that learners are exposed to contexts in real life which imply significant situations where students can become self-confident in performing the speaking skill.

#### **5.1 Research Contributions**

To talk about the contributions of the research, there are three subject matters to be considered, for instance, the students, the teachers and the school. The three

elements are involved in the achievement of the KET certification since each of them gets benefited from the outcomes of the study.

One of the contributions of the research is in regard to the students' progress as a result of the execution of the activities in developing their speaking ability and the achievement of the KET certification of all of the students who applied the exam. Obtaining a certification in the third grade of high school is the goal of the institution because it supports the students' knowledge of the English language giving an objective evidence of quantity and quality about what students know.

This study may be useful for teachers in the school because it can guide them in the preparation and training the students properly towards the KET exam pointing to an efficient performance in the speaking part of the exam particularly. The results of this investigation will provide teachers with important aspects to consider such as pertinent and useful tools and sources which could promote the language oral skill of the students. In addition, it is important to make teachers aware of the affective factors of the students as a leading factor in the achievement of the KET certification since students are highly influenced by their emotions and perceptions which could affect their performance at the moment of the exam.

As a contribution to the school, this research offers reliable evidence of the commitment of the institution with the community, the students and the parents by granting them with what the goal of the high school is in teaching English: the achievement of a language certification. As a consequence, the KET certification rates and the graduates can suggest the school is a good alternative institution for studying. Therefore, the number of students would increase providing the school

with an economic growth which can be beneficial for implementing training programs for teachers to the benefit of the students' learning.

## **5.2 Limitations of the Study**

Talking about the limitations of the study it should be mentioned the fact that even though there were 20 students in the research only 7 of them took active part in the focus group, this can be as a consequence of the students lack of confidence in their result of the exam or their indifference towards getting the language certification. This is relevant for the study since there is not enough information to explore the effectiveness of the teaching practice in guiding the students towards the certification. In other words there is little scope of the effect of the teaching practice in the classroom for comparing this with the results obtained from the speaking component of the KET examination.

Another of the limitations in the study was the time since it was not enough to meet some students' language needs because of the duration of the course and the interruption of the classes due to school's social activities and sport events where students participated. This worked against some students because they could not be in the classroom to practice and to take part in those meaningful activities which would have contributed to fully develop their oral skill.

Also, there was no diagnostic exam or previous information about the current level of the students before the KET exam so there was no monitoring in order to follow up on the students' progress in the path to the certification exam. This, somewhat, affected the results since there was not a prior score that would allow to compare a

before and after phases. Nevertheless, on a positive note, all the students achieved the KET certification as it was planned.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

As a suggestion for further research, it would be recommended to find out about other current materials and activities that promote the oral skill of the students to provide them with different and various tools and sources that could support learners in their training towards the KET certification exam.

Another recommendation is to monitor the students' progress regularly by applying exams in order to measure the students' development so that teachers can make decisions in their daily teaching practice in the classroom and make accurate changes that improve the students' speaking skill.

It would be also valuable to have more detailed interviews with the students, preferably individually, so that, data can give more trustworthy information about each students' experience along their preparation for the certification exam. An additional instrument could be an electronic questionnaire form for gathering and validating the information from the students.

The results obtained from this research show the pertinence of proposing the inclusion of a certification preparation course and its feasibility to provide the appropriate features that would help students develop their oral skills. Furthermore, a preparation course would promote, indirectly, students' self-confidence because of the constant practice and exposure to the language through the speaking activities to achieve not just the KET certification but any other language exam.

#### **5.4 Reflection**

As a result of this study, I have a different perception now about training the students for the KET exam. Now, I am conscious that preparing adolescents for a certification exam has to do with affective aspects, too. Besides that, training students for a certification must also consider the development of self confidence in each learner and provide them with more communicative strategies and contexts that guarantee students feel confident about their knowledge and continuous improvement. Training for the KET certification exam is more than practicing grammar and vocabulary which will never be enough, but feelings, emotions and perceptions should also be taken into account for the students to be successful in the long run. .

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, in order to prepare the students for the KET certification exam it is highly recommended to familiarize students with the format of the KET exam in order to have students practice with the kind of tasks used in the certification. In addition, the pertinent materials and activities, and the continuous practice provide the students with the indispensable emotional advantage to help them reduce their anxiety and learn to manage it better. It is also advisable to give constant affective and emotional support to the students since it is necessary to develop control in the students' emotions to fulfill the KET exam and get the certification.

English is a global language and it has become the first instance when learning a second language. However, knowing a language is more than just knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Nowadays, globalization has somewhat imposed a change in the role of English by requiring individuals to not only understand the

language but also to redirect efforts to satisfy the needs for communication. For this reason English courses should be planned to develop communicative abilities that encourage students to deal with everyday situations by making use of effective communicative tools.

The KET certification is a valuable alternative for schools to assess high school students' A2 English level; KET is a certification that shows how students can deal with everyday written and spoken English at a basic level. So, successful students receive a certification that is accepted by colleges, universities, employers and governments around the world as proof of a learner's quantity and quality of the students' language abilities.

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## Appendix A

### Mi experiencia en el examen de certificación KET

Escucha las siguientes preguntas y contesta de acuerdo con tu experiencia personal.


1. ¿Cómo te sentiste durante el examen? ¿Por qué?
2. ¿Qué materiales te fueron más útiles para prepararte en la sección de reading and writing?
3. ¿Cómo te sentiste durante la sección de speaking? ¿Por qué?
4. ¿Qué materiales apoyaron tu desempeño en la sección de speaking part 2? ¿Por qué?

## Appendix B

### FRAME AND SAMPLE MATERIAL FOR SPEAKING PART 2

**Candidate B - your answers.**

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Tel: 724 399

**Candidate B – your answers**

**"Lenny Grade"**



Theatre School  
22 High Street

**We'll teach you to act, sing and dance!**

Classes 3 to 5 p.m. Every Saturday

Fee: £35 a month


Visit: [www.theatre.com](http://www.theatre.com)

**Candidate A - your questions.**

**BOOKSHOP**

- ◆ address ?
- ◆ big / small ?
- ◆ closed / Sundays ?
- ◆ sell / travel books ?
- ◆ telephone number ?

**Candidate A – your questions**

**Theatre school** 

- ◆ name / school ?
- ◆ what / learn ?
- ◆ when / classes ?
- ◆ cost ?
- ◆ address ?