

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Learning styles for the development of speaking skills among young adults

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**Abstract:** Teaching English as a foreign language has become difficult when adequate communication between teachers and students is not achieved. It is important for teachers to have a firm understanding of how their students learn in order to determine what teaching methods or strategies to use in their classrooms. Should be a process of building knowledge and language skills so that learners develop their language competencies and learning abilities through different learning styles. Therefore, the main objective of the study is focused on analyzing the learning styles to improve the speaking skills of the students of second semester of the bachelor's degree in Tourism at the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo-Sede Orellana. The methodology that was used includes a bibliographic review, semi-structured interviews as well as a method called expert judgment. The results indicated that the students at the university had no knowledge of learning styles, leading to the development of a lesson plan to improve students' oral fluency. Technological advances are very important in the educational field, allowing the development of each student's learning style.

**Keywords:** Learning styles; skills; lesson plan; foreign language; oral fluency.

## 1. Introduction

The learning style describes the path that a person habitually follows to respond to a learning task and is related to the way in which he/she structures the contents to be learned, forms and uses concepts, interprets information, solves problems and selects the preferred means of representation [1,2]. Thus, when a person wants to learn, he/she uses his/her own method or set off strategies for this purpose, these preferences to use a certain way of learning are known as learning style [3,4]. This style can be



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defined as the way in which a person perceives, processes, integrates, and remembers information. It can vary according to what is to be learned and it is the result of multiple factors such as: motivation to learn, the individual's cultural background, expectations, age, gender, educational level, among others [5,6].

Learning styles are the set of psychological characteristics, cognitive, affective and physiological traits that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive interactions and respond to their learning environments [2,5,7]. Cognitive traits are related to how learners structure content, form and use concepts, interpret information, solve problems, and select means of representation. Their affective traits are linked to the motivations and expectations that influence learning, and the physiological traits consider the biotype and biorhythm of the person. These styles in general are the particular way a subject has to perceive, process and retain information [8,9]. Each person develops and uses a mixture of learning styles throughout his/her life, according to the circumstances of learning; usually one style is privileged underutilizing others, however, true learning or significant learning is achieved when the student learns to use in a combined and balanced way the different learning styles. It is important to emphasize that there are no pure styles; all people have the possibility of using different learning styles, although one of them is usually the predominant and most frequently used.

To optimize the acquisition of knowledge in the classroom, teachers must adapt their teaching style to the learning style of their students, considering that students will have a better academic performance when they receive information adapted to their learning style [6]. Knowing the learning style of the students will allow the teacher to recognize the learning characteristics of the school group and with this information the teacher will be able to establish the mechanisms for the achievement of significant learning and therefore the improvement of school achievement [5,8,10].

The growing concern for improving the teaching and learning process has led several researchers to explore area such as learning styles[11]. Different explanations and definitions of these styles have been given over the years; however, most agree that they are predominant internal characteristics that influence the ways in which people perceive, remember and think[12]. Over time, the interest of the cognitive linguist to find the ideal method to make the teaching and learning of the English language fast and effective has been highlighted, which has resulted in the implementation of different methodological proposals as a result of advances in didactics, linguistics, psychology and other disciplines[13,14].

Currently there is a great variety of methods and theories about learning styles that attempt to provide a theoretical framework that clarifies the behavior of students in the classroom and how this is related to school achievement, in order to design didactic alternatives that allow teachers to make their work in the classroom more efficient [15,16]. In this sense, learning is more effective when the teaching method of the teacher is in accordance with the learning style of the students, the teacher as responsible for the achievement of significant learning in the classroom should promote the use of didactic strategies and techniques that involve the use of all sensory channels to capture information, as well as all styles to use it [17,18].

The process of learning a foreign language is not linear or cumulative, in the sense of only providing information and knowledge of any particular language; on the contrary, it is a process of building knowledge and linguistic skills that allow the student to develop learning through the internalization, assimilation, accommodation, integration, use and application of a second language in different contexts according to the real needs of the learner.[19–21]. A key point for satisfactory results in the classroom is that higher education professors must be very clear about how the learning process is generated, identifying particular ways for students have to understand a subject, thus, support to motivate them with various activities that facilitate the complex learning process and thus support them in the organization and fixation of knowledge in the long term, increasing their school performance[22,23].

Ecuadorian education is in a period of stagnation and backwardness with respect to other countries. The main cause is considered to be the lack of updating of teachers on topics that contribute to cover the new needs required by society, correcting, changing, adapting and focusing on the different learning styles[24]. Hence, the purpose of the research was to substantiate how learning styles help to improve the students' speaking skills. Also, it was possible to determine which learning styles students trust the most, and then a lesson plan was elaborated to contribute to the teaching of English as a foreign language. Finally, the results of this research were socialized. Different methodologies were used for the development of this research.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Study area

This study was carried out at Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo–Sede Orellana, with students of the bachelor's degree in Tourism. ESPOCH is located in Puerto Francisco de Orellana (Figure 1), province of Orellana, actively contributing to the academic and social development of the Province of Orellana and Zone 2 (Napo, Orellana, Pichincha) of the country. There are 350 students enrolled in this career. However, the headquarters offer undergraduate degrees such as: Environmental Engineering, Agronomy, Animal Science, and Information Technology, these academic offerings meet the needs of economic and social development of the region. In order to reach the purpose of this study the second semester of the Tourism course was considered as population which consists of 16 students among male and female learners.

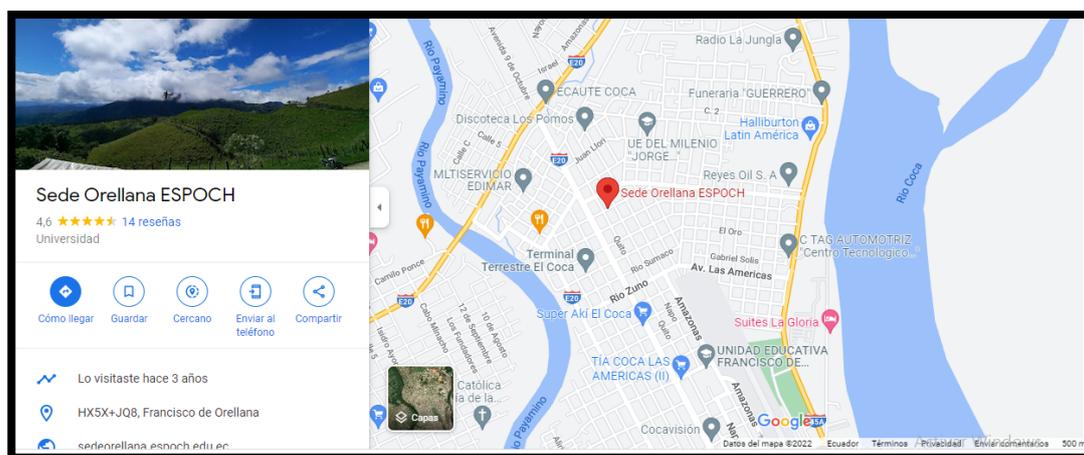


Figure 1. Study area.

## 2.2 Methodology

The methodology used in this research employed a set of techniques that responded to each objective. The methodology was divided into four sections. In the first section, theoretical terms of how learning styles could improve fluency in English were investigated bibliographically. The second section focused on determining which learning styles ESPOCH students rely on. In the third section, a lesson plan was designed to improve students' speaking skills. Finally, the results of the present study and the use of the lesson plans were socialized.

To carry out the first section, a search for scientific information was conducted in reliable databases for works published in the last ten years. During the search, filters, and parameters (Table 1) were applied to search for the scope of the years and key words (learning styles + foreign language + students), in English and Spanish to refine the final results.

**Table 1.** Methodological process for the literature review.

Subject	Key words	Period	Science Direct / Scopus / Web of Science
Learning styles for the development of speaking skills among young adults.	(Learning styles + foreign language + students)	2012–2022	14 [5,11–23]
Description of documents under analysis			
No.	Title		
1	The Relationship Between Multiple Intelligences and Teaching Style BT – New Perspectives on Individual Differences in Language Learning and Teaching. <a href="https://n9.cl/mj8cz">https://n9.cl/mj8cz</a>		
2	La importancia de los estilos de aprendizaje en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera. <a href="https://n9.cl/j4uhw">https://n9.cl/j4uhw</a>		
3	Estilos de enseñanza y estilos de aprendizaje en educación superior: Análisis de las preferencias de estudiantes de Pedagogía en Inglés en tres universidades chilenas. <a href="https://n9.cl/6ug1v">https://n9.cl/6ug1v</a>		
4	Fundamentos de un sistema didáctico del inglés con fines específicos centrado en los estilos de aprendizaje. <a href="https://n9.cl/giy9k">https://n9.cl/giy9k</a>		
5	El papel de los estilos de aprendizaje en la personalización de la enseñanza de Inglés para Fines Específicos. <a href="https://n9.cl/v4glw">https://n9.cl/v4glw</a>		
6	Effect of a Workplace Vocal Health Promotion Program and Working Conditions on Voice Functioning of College <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2021.05.016">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2021.05.016</a>		
7	The Impact of Learning Style Preferences on Foreign Language Achievement: A Case Study of Iranian EFL Students <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815002189">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815002189</a>		
8	Factors that influence the university's inclusive educational processes: perceptions of university professors. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06853">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06853</a>		
9	The Relationship between EFL Learners' Learning Styles and their L2 Achievement <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813000621">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813000621</a>		
10	Diagnóstico de los estilos de aprendizaje de los alumnos y profesores de las carreras de Pedagogía en Inglés y Educación Diferencial. <a href="https://doi.org/10.55777/rea.v5i9.949">https://doi.org/10.55777/rea.v5i9.949</a>		
11	Estilos de aprendizaje y su relación con el rendimiento académico en el área del idioma extranjero-inglés en los estudiantes del cuarto grado de secundaria de la Institución Educativa pre Universitaria <a href="https://n9.cl/vobn9">https://n9.cl/vobn9</a>		
12	La estimulación del aprendizaje del inglés con el empleo del software educativo en la Secundaria Básica a partir de la atención a los estilos de aprendizaje. <a href="http://repositorio.uho.edu.cu/jspui/handle/uho/2513">http://repositorio.uho.edu.cu/jspui/handle/uho/2513</a>		
13	Estilos de aprendizaje en alumnos de primaria. <a href="https://n9.cl/jm1n0">https://n9.cl/jm1n0</a>		
14	Influencia de los estilos de aprendizaje en el rendimiento académico del idioma inglés de los estudiantes del Centro de Idiomas de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Humanas y Tecnologías de la Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo. <a href="https://n9.cl/lay9e">https://n9.cl/lay9e</a>		

In the second section, the researchers determined which learning styles higher education student's trust on. In order to respond to this objective, it is important to know the opinions of the participants in the study, i.e., the students. For this reason, a visit was made to the students of the second semester of the tourism career of the Faculty of Natural Resources, Orellana Campus of the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH). During the visits to the university, semi-structured interviews were conducted, that is, a bank of open-ended questions was prepared (Table 2) so as not to limit the response of the students interviewed, facilitating the flow of the process. The interviews were conducted in February 2022, period belonging to the second academic period 2021-2022, the interview was carried out with all students well as their English teachers. **To focus the work approach** to maintain the work approach according to the daily reality of teaching-learning process, a first approach was established in the classroom and the research objectives were explained. On the day of the interview there were 16 students and one teacher. The present study, being of a descriptive qualitative nature, did not include statistics. The description of the information obtained from the interviews and its analysis is presented in the results section.

**Table 2.** Questions set to learn what learning styles students rely on to improve verbal fluency in English.

Participant	Questions
Tourism undergraduate students at ESPOCH Orellana campus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.-At what level do you consider your verbal fluency in English to be? And how often do you use it in your daily life?</li> <li>2.-What technological resources do you use in the academic environment?</li> <li>3.-What resources do you consider necessary to improve your speaking skills?</li> <li>4.-What do you prefer: reading, speaking, writing or listening in English? Why?</li> <li>5.-Do you think your English teacher uses appropriate strategies to strengthen your oral fluency skills? Please explain your answer</li> <li>6.-What aspects of English do you think you need to practice more to improve your fluency?</li> <li>7.-Do you participate in extracurricular activities?</li> </ol>

In the third section, a lesson plan was developed, which can be updated or modified by teachers with other learning styles that they believe are necessary for teaching a foreign language. To elaborate the lesson plan, a method known as expert judgment was used, which consists of the elaboration of a worktable (Table 3), formed by professors and experts who have a broad knowledge of most effective learning styles to improve the students' speaking skills, facilitating the elaboration of instructions, taking into account the different criteria of the experts according to their experience.

**Table 3.** Experts selected to develop the strategies.

Name	Profesión	Relationship with the area
Lucy Pazmiño	Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics for English Language Learning	EFL Profesor
Elsa Basantes	Master's Degree in Foreign Languages with a Major in English.	EFL Profesor
Ana Solis	Bachelor's degree in Science Education in English Specialization	EFL Profesor / Researcher
Marcelo Guerra	Bachelor's Degree in teaching English as a Foreign Language.	EFL Profesor / Researcher

Finally, the results obtained from the present study were socialized. In addition, the use of the lesson plan applying learning styles to improve the students' speaking skills was established. In order to fulfill this objective, the zoom platform was used, planning three webinar sessions, that is, three meetings were held with specific formative objectives.

### 3. Results

The results are presented below in response to each objective of the study. First, a theoretical foundation is provided on how learning styles would improve students' speaking skills. Second, the main learning styles were determined through semi-structured interviews. Third, a lesson plan was designed to contribute to the improvement of ESPOCH students' oral fluency. Finally, the results of the present research were socialized with the students and professors at the university.

#### 3.1. How Learning Styles Help Improve English

Learning style refers to individual's inclinations or preferences and can be considered a cognitive, affective and psychophysiological trait that is a relatively stable indicator of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment.[25]. People's learning styles are determined by the way they internalize their general environment and, because internalization is not only cognitive, different domains (physical, emotional and cognitive) can be incorporated into learning styles[26].

On the other hand, it is mentioned that learning styles correspond to theoretical models, which serve as explanatory horizons to the extent that they can establish a more or less significant association between the performance of a subject and a learning style[27]. These styles are characterized by a set of learning strategies that correlate with the cognitive dimensions of each individual; therefore, the teaching of a foreign language such as English in higher education should enhance the linguistic skills of the language and, therefore, teachers in bilingual institutions should handle different learning styles that help shape, understand and discover different techniques that help improve student performance[28,29].

In addition, learning styles help to assess the stability and consistency in people's behavior when interacting and displaying information. Knowing the type of learning style with which the learner feels comfortable, helps to enhance intelligence, because it forms an environment of trust and confidence[30]. It is important to highlight that learning style is not the same as learning ability, but rather a preferred learning hobby or method of learning related to skills. Bridging valuable information for the selection and distribution of resources, spaces and instructional times, i.e., an environment conducive to learning[19]. Not everyone learns in the same way, each individual has different learning styles based on their background and personalities[31].

Oral skills are undoubtedly more difficult than the others due to the factors involved, since it is not only necessary to think about what is going to be said, but also how it is going to be said and, in addition, it must be said in a very short time[32]. Therefore, the main learning styles are identified. Nowadays, technology plays a fundamental role, since it has allowed foreign language learning to be more interactive and dynamic[33]. However, these new teaching methods pose a new type of challenge for both teachers and students, the latter of whom must develop new learning strategies, consciously voluntary, and more purposeful decisions, to make effective use of the new tools, have access to and can learn more effectively[34,35].

Students need to use different ways to work on vocabulary and grammar rules, as well as other aspects related to the language in order to communicate through it[36]. Learning a language based on one of the different learning styles requires the learner to develop ways to make the best use of

them. Blended learning can be defined as a teaching modality that mixes in person's teaching with non-face-to-face technology[5,26].

### 3.2. Learning styles that students trust.

Learning styles act as explanatory horizons in the sense that they can establish a higher or lower estimate of a subject's performance with respect to a learning style[12]. These styles are characterized by a set of learning strategies that correlate with the cognitive aspects of each individual; therefore, the teaching of English and communication in higher education needs to reinforce the linguistic skills of the language and therefore, subject teachers need to deal with different learning styles that help to: shape, understand, know and explore different ways of thinking and learning performance of students[25,28].

The students interviewed stated that they were not aware of the existence of learning styles defined and categorized by authors. However, they responded that the way they feel most comfortable learning or improving their oral fluency is by listening to songs or watching movies subtitled in English. In addition, they stated that, since it is an effective strategy, they consider it as a hobby, thus being easier to put it into practice. They also expressed that, they do not consider that their level of English is appropriate to engage in a conversation with a native speaker, they feel that the techniques used by their teachers are not effective and this is reflected in the students' performance. It is important to understand that students cannot be divided into two or more learning categories. For example, in visual learners and auditory learners; that is, you should not pigeonhole people or offer them only one way or style of learning, since everyone is capable of learning in different styles, it must be clear that they always excel in one.

On the other hand, students' participation in extracurricular activities to improve oral fluency is considered important. However, there is a lack of students' initiative; it is believed that they limit themselves to learning outside the classroom, either because of shyness, lack of time or little interest in learning a new language. Nowadays, learning English is important not only because it is the most recognized language in the world, but also because it facilitates access to better job opportunities, to expand knowledge, to know new cultures and to understand scientific information on the Internet and books.

Finally, at the end of the interviews, the lack of student's knowledge about learning styles was verified, giving a plus to the elaboration of a lesson plan. Although, the purpose of knowing which learning styles the students trust on was to elaborate the lesson plan with which they feel comfortable and interact without self-consciousness, thus achieving oral fluency in the classroom. However, it was possible to detect other shortcomings from both teachers and students.

### 3.3. Lesson plan

The lesson plan that was developed was considered a guide for the professor to update or modify when it is necessary to incorporate another learning style to improve oral fluency[37]. The plan describes the learning objectives, how the activity will be delivered, and the rubric for grading student performance. Regardless of the learning style used, it is important to guide the learning process by providing a clear outline to follow while teaching[38]. While lesson plans may vary slightly, there are common elements that make up each one[39]. The components come together to create the overall quality of a complete lesson plan. This, in turn, will determine how effectively class time is used and if the learning goals are achieved. Having lessons planned, ensures that all time spent in class is meaningful, i.e., the teacher and students will definitely know what to do in the classroom[40].

The development of an effective lesson plan requires the identification of the appropriate components needed to teach English as a foreign language. Therefore, in the previous section, interviews provided insight into the opinions and needs of the students. In developing a lesson plan, the overall goal should be to motivate students to learn and retain what they are being taught. The lesson plan is presented below:

Table 5. Lesson plan.

LESSON PLAN #1			
Subject/Course:	English	Week of classes:	2
Topic:	Preparation of a podcast to improve oral fluency		
Level:	A2	Lesson duration:	10 min per group
Lesson title:	Podcast		
<b>Lesson objectives:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stimulate the use and production of Podcasts for the development of listening comprehension and oral expression skills.</li> <li>▪ Relate the information you hear to your reality.</li> <li>▪ Measure oral fluency.</li> <li>▪ Learn new vocabulary.</li> <li>▪ Encourage teamwork.</li> <li>▪ Develop technological skills.</li> </ul>			
<b>Summary of Tasks/Actions:</b>			
Once the week 2 class is over, an introduction about the preparation of the podcast is given. Afterwards, groups of three students are formed and students are allowed to choose the topic of their choice to record the podcast so that they feel more comfortable.			
<b>Materials/Equipment:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cell phone</li> <li>▪ Microphone or headphones</li> <li>▪ Editing Software</li> <li>▪ Computer</li> </ul>			
<b>Take home tasks:</b>			
One of the ways to exercise students' ears is to do small monologue-level productions. You can repeat phrases you have learned aloud and practice in front of a mirror and record yourself so you can hear how your pronunciation and intonation are (optional).			
<b>Assignment week 2:</b> Record a podcast narrating the activities the student did last week.			
<b>Rubric</b>			
Presentation:		15%	
Subject Difficulty:		15%	
Pronunciation/Fluency:		50%	
Response to teacher questions:		20%	
LESSON PLAN #2			
Subject/Course:	English	Week of classes:	3
Topic:	Description of zoo animals		
Level:	A2	Lesson duration:	2 hours
Lesson title:	Visit to the zoo		
<b>Lesson objectives:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formulate questions at different levels to activate participation and retention through listening.</li> <li>▪ Learn to use connectors to describe an animal, thing, person or object.</li> <li>▪ Know the importance of animals to the natural environment.</li> <li>▪ Interpret information.</li> <li>▪ Discover new vocabulary.</li> </ul>			

<b>Summary of Tasks/Actions:</b>	
The student is informed one week in advance about the trip to the city zoo. The meeting point and maximum waiting time are coordinated. Once at the zoo, the entrance is made, explaining and describing each animal on the site. Students should always pay attention, take notes and ask questions if they do not understand.	
<b>Materials/Equipment:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cell phone</li> <li>▪ Camera</li> <li>▪ Notebook</li> <li>▪ Pencil</li> <li>▪ Comfortable clothes</li> <li>▪ Cap</li> <li>▪ Water</li> </ul>	
<b>Take home tasks:</b>	
<b>Assignment week 3:</b> Make a video describing the site or place you visited over the weekend, in which your family members who are fluent in English can participate to conduct a short interview.	
<b>Rubric</b>	
<b>Presentation:</b>	25%
<b>Subject Difficulty:</b>	30%
<b>Pronunciation/Fluency:</b>	45%

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is a fundamental aid in language teaching and it is growing day by day as it has been incorporated into education in many parts of the world[41]. Having technological equipment such as computers and the Internet as teaching tools available to teachers of languages such as English is very important today.[42]. Indeed, first, it requires a change in the traditional classroom design; on the other hand, it allows students to gain autonomy and independence in their learning process[43]. Therefore, the podcast was used as a resource to improve fluency. Through the creation of podcasts, students not only improve their linguistic competence, also they acquire training in the use of ICT.

The lessons described in the table above were validated by a group of experts in the field, reaching the conclusion that students prefer teachers to teach their classes in a dynamic way. Dynamic teaching creates a trusting environment and makes student participation flow naturally. Students feel more confident and lose the fear of making mistakes or mispronouncing a word. For this reason, lessons of this type were included in the plan; however, the teachers can conduct dynamic classes or outings over the course, because class time is extremely short, and it is not possible to cover a whole topic.

### 3.4. Socialization of the research

The results of the current study were socialized with the students of the tourism career and English professors of ESPOCH-Orellana. The socialization was developed in three sessions (Table 6), the main objective of the webinar was to inform the participants of the results of the research with the purpose of applying them to the teaching of English, contributing to the improvement of the speaking skills of the students at the university. In order to meet the expectations of the webinar, the following objectives were described for each session.

**Table 6.** Webinar sessions.

Sessions	Objectives
1	Explain the importance of learning styles in improving English speaking skills.
2	Mention the main learning styles that the interviewed students rely on.
3	To teach the lesson plan that will improve students' speaking skills and fluency.

In the first session, the importance of learning styles to improve the oral fluency of English learners was addressed. The session lasted one hour and was purely theoretical. As a result of the first webinar, there was students' astonishment because they were not aware that different learning styles could be applied depending on the preference and ease of learning of the students. At the end of the first session, students were asked what style they would like their teachers to apply in their classes, stating that they would like their classes to be more dynamic, encouraging the use of technological applications and other didactic methods such as: presentations using infographics, karaoke, among others. On the other hand, the second session lasted 45 minutes, exposing the main learning styles in which the students of the tourism career trust on. As the students had little knowledge of the existence of learning styles, the session was used to clarify.

Finally, in the last session, the guide with activities to improve the learning of English in the students of the tourism career of ESPOCH was taught, the guide presented was short but concise, the activities were dynamic to generate interest in students and make learning a fun and participatory activity. The last webinar was directed more to teachers so that they can apply the different activities. By observing that there is an easy and fun way to teach their students to improve their speaking and listening skills in English, the teachers committed to apply the guide in their classes. On the other hand, the students mentioned that they would get involved in extracurricular activities, so that they can improve their English-speaking level and doubts about the subject.

#### 4. Conclusion

Students' learning styles depend on how they approach their shared environment, and since internalization is not only cognitive in nature, but of different domains (physical, emotional and cognitive), which can be links to adapt learning styles. These styles are characterized by a set of learning strategies adapted to the cognitive parameters of each learner; therefore, the teaching of foreign languages such as English in higher education institutions should reinforce the linguistic skills of a given language. That is, English teachers must manage different learning styles to help identify, understand, and learn different ways to help students progress.

Technological advances have made language learning more interactive and dynamic. Learning a language based on a blended learning environment requires learners to develop ways to make the most of it. On the other hand, student's participation in extracurricular activities is said to be important for improving fluency. However, there are opinions that learning outside the classroom is limited by students' psychological apprehension and, lack of time or interest in learning a new foreign language. Nowadays, learning English is important not only because it is the most recognized language in the world, but also because it allows learners to get a better job, expand their knowledge, learn about different cultures and languages, a new culture, among others. This research was a literature review study, so the main limitation was the lack of previous research studies. In this study, different databases have been reviewed to understand and comprehend the problem of this research, so it is concluded that further research on the subject is necessary.

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