

# Didactic strategies and the learning styles in an English class as a second language (esl class)

Orley Benedicto Reyes Meza<sup>1</sup>, María Victoria Andrade Torres<sup>2</sup>, Francisca Margarita Avila Rosales<sup>3</sup>, Luis Leonardo Moreira Mejía<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract---**The objective of the work is to analyze the learning styles that are put into practice by the students and their relevance during the process of teaching English as a second language. In the Raymundo Aveiga Educational Unit of the municipality of Chone, province of Manabí, Ecuador, difficulties have been confronted with the learning of English, estimating that more than a methodological problem, they may be given in the methodological relationship between the learning styles that they put into practice the students and the teaching strategies applied by the teachers. The research is of a qualitative type, with a multimethodical, interpretive and naturalistic approach, aiming to make an approach to the problems derived from the application by the students of the learning styles of English as a second language and the imprint of the appropriate teaching strategies in each case attending to the natural environment. The biographical-narrative method was used to produce an approach to the world of the personal meanings of each student. A narrative perspective was adopted as a way of constructing reality using interview and real-time observation of a class with didactic planning, where the four learning styles were revealed. A bibliographic review was carried out in order to delve into the topic related to didactic strategies and learning styles, for which the Desh Research research method was applied. The basic techniques applied correspond to observation, interviews and surveys, for which the Honey & Alonzo questionnaire for Learning Styles CHAEA was used. The work tries to demonstrate that the learning styles and the didactic strategies in an ESL class are the result of a dynamic that develops abilities and skills in English taking into account the individual differences of the students.

**Keywords---** teaching English as a second language; didactic strategies; learning styles.

## I. Introduction

It is known that currently around 1.5 billion people in the world speak English, of which only 375 million is the mother tongue (Fernández, 2020), with a marked international preference for learning the language. On the other hand, each individual shows a different way of inferring and developing knowledge, which translates as a particular style of learning. For this reason, in any circumstance that the teaching process takes place and not only in the educational context, there is an interest in understanding the way each person does it (Beltran, 2015); (Rodríguez & Chamorro, 2017).

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<sup>1</sup> Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador

<sup>2</sup> Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador

<sup>3</sup> Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador

<sup>4</sup> Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador

The motivations for learning English as a second language are very varied, either due to the desire to learn a new culture, the attraction to language, continuing with post-graduate studies, obligation or simply to achieve greater competitiveness in the labor market, but more Beyond all debate, it is fair to recognize that the study of the English language is highly promoted worldwide (Guillen, 2015). It can be said that English is the most common language used in the academic world and in the lines of technological development, so, from an educational point of view, it is important to analyze how people learn English and what are the factors that influence such learning (Genç, & Bada, 2010 ).

According to (Alonso, Gallego & Honey, 1994, p. 48) "learning styles are identified by those cognitive, affective and physiological traits, which serve as relatively stable indicators of how students perceive, interact and respond to their learning environments "; and although there are different classifications, for the work the classification of (Honey & Mumford (1986was adopted.a); (Honey & Mumford (1986b), who established a classification that names learning styles in four categories: active, reflective), theoretical and pragmatic. It is necessary to highlight that people's learning style is influenced by different factors, whether personal, social, cultural, biological and psychological (Henao, Ramírez & Ramírez, 2006), which can make classification difficult without previous analysis. Some authors (Etxeberria, 1997) posed that "in the field of linguistics the carrying outthis analysis is critical because the language as such is related to different forms of human activity."

If considers that Psychopedagogy recognizes the importance of language and studies its connection with mental and social processes, it is necessary to take into account the relative cognitive development I swim with learning the language. In this context, educational institutions play an important role for the development of the mother tongue, such as the acquisition of a second language. However, the educational role is not only limited to teaching, but also to how to make learning more effective through the analysis of styles and the selection of strategies to achieve better results. In recent years, several researchers have dabbled in the subject studied: In Spain (García, 2011); In Chile (Díaz & Jansson, 2011); In Colombia (Cabral, Oliveros, Mejía, 2014); In Bolivia (Guillen, 2015); In Mexico (Ricoy, & Álvarez-Pérez, 2016) and; In the city of Cartagena (Rodríguez & Chamorro, 2017), among others.

In the Raymundo Aveiga Educational Unit located in the Chone municipality, in the province of Manabí in Ecuador, the project entitled Learning Styles is developed, which serves as the basis for carrying out the work. The work aims to demonstrate that the didactic strategies sustained in the exercise of learning styles in the teaching of English as a second language, are the result of an educational dynamic that develops abilities and skills based on considering individual differences, recognizing the style of each student, so that personalized learning is stimulated, seeking to promote motivation, interest in learning and academic performance.

## **II. Materials and Methods**

Qualitative research, with a multi-methodological, interpretive and naturalistic approach, allowing an approach to the problems derived from the application by students of learning styles of English as a second language and the imprint of appropriate teaching strategies in English. Each case attending to the natural environment, giving interpretative meaning to the phenomena based on the meanings that people give them. The work has tried to lay the foundations on a broad interpretative sensitivity, postmodern and critical, under a conception that emerges from the positivist human experience and more closely humanistic and naturalistic (Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista, 2010).

The biographical-narrative method was used to produce an approach to the world of the personal meanings of each student, in order to reveal the meaning of the individual and collective attributes that take place during the application of learning styles in an ESL class. A narrative perspective was adopted as a way of constructing reality using an interview and real-time observation of a teaching exercise with didactic planning, where the four learning styles were revealed, in addition, annotations were made in notebooks on opinions of students after class. (Huchim, Reyes, 2013); (Delgado, 2018).

With the aim of deepening the methodological aspect, a socialization of the learning styles and their characteristics was carried out with the students. Classes-workshops were held to train teachers in didactic planning with learning styles. An academic meeting with teachers in the English area was established to highlight the four learning styles. The planning and methodological execution by the teacher was observed. Finally, the information was processed with the corresponding calculations and estimates.

For the theoretical argumentation of the studied subject, a bibliographic review of books, articles, manuals, laws, regulations, institutional reports and other documents that offered reliable information in the interest of deepening the subject related to didactic strategies and learning styles, was carried out. For this, the Desh Research method was applied (Joanna Hofman & Sutherland, 2018), which involved the use of existing data, which was collected, analyzed and summarized to increase the overall effectiveness of the research, produce critical analyzes and reach precise conclusions on the subject studied. The basic techniques applied correspond to observation, interviews and surveys. For the development of the observation, the corresponding guide was prepared, which was used to approach the methodology used by the teacher during an English class in the practical use of didactic strategies. For the interviews with the teachers, a guide of topics related to the didactic strategies to teach the subject of English as a second language was intentionally prepared (Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista, 2010).

For the surveys, the Honey & Alonzo questionnaire for Learning Styles CHAEA was applied, which classifies them as: active, reflective, theoretical and pragmatic to explore different learning styles (Alonso, Gallego, & Honey, 1999). The Honey-Alonso CHAEA Learning Styles Questionnaire (Alonso, Gallego, & Honey, 1994) can be applied to students in a maximum time of 15-20 minutes. It is structured with 80 questions, 20 for each category (active, reflective, theoretical and pragmatic). Each question must be marked with a positive sign (+) if the respondent agrees with what is stated in the question or a negative sign (-) when the opposite occurs. Additionally, the styles are classified with a scale as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. CHAEA Learning Styles trendScore

Style	scale				
	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high
Active	0-6	7-8	9-12	13-14	15-20
Reflective	0-10	11-13	14-17	18-19	20
Theoretical	0-6	7-9	10-13	14-15	16-20

Pragmatic            0-8            9-10            11-13            14-15            16 -20

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Source: own elaboration based on the information reflected in: (Alonso, Gallego, & Honey, 1994)

The population for the study is estimated at 101 students who receive the subject of English as a second language in the Raymundo Aveiga Educational Unit of Chone municipality, Manabí province in Ecuador. Equation 1, published by Elsevier México (García-García, Reding-Bernal, López-Alvarenga, 2013) was used to define the sample. This publication states that the sample has 95% reliability and 5% margin of error.

$$n = \frac{(Z^2)(P)(Q)(N)}{(Z^2)(P)(Q) + (N)(e^2)} \quad (1)$$

$$n = 50$$

Where:

N → Population or universe = 101

n → Sample size = 50

Z → Confidence level = 1.96

P → Probability of occurrence = 0.5

Q → Probability of no occurrence = 0.5

e → Acceptable limit of the sampling error = 0.01

### III. Analysis and discussion of the results

In the international space, several authors have ventured into the analysis of didactic strategies and learning styles in teaching English as second language.

#### Background and justification of the research

At the Pontifical University of Salamanca, Spain in 2011, a research was carried out with the aim of analyzing the specific strategies used by the students to solve the various tasks, identifying two types of motivation (instrumental and integrative) and its relationship with the use of strategies, examining the selection of learning styles between the single and combined preference, as well as its link with the use of different strategies, where the existence of differences according to gender was defined, both in the use of strategies and in the selection of learning styles (García, 2011).

In the results of the work carried out at the University of Salamanca, it was evident that the use of metacognitive strategies followed by affective ones predominated; students combined instrumental and integrative motivation in a compensated way; it could not be verified that there was a combination of styles; most opted for a unique style with a predominance of analytic; the existence of a link between the use of certain strategies with certain

styles and; It was confirmed that those of the female sex used more learning strategies than those of the male sex, preferring the analytical style, while those of the male sex were inclined towards the global style (García, 2011).

Also in 2011 in Chile a project was carried out aimed at unveiling the need to know the perceptions of teachers and students, on the use of technology as a didactic tool in the process of teaching and learning English, it is corroborated that English as Foreign language constitutes a fundamental axis for obtaining greater opportunities in the academic and labor market (Díaz, & Jansson, 2011). In the Colombian university of San Buenaventura in 2014, a project was developed that proposed to deepen the knowledge of the learning styles of the students of the Degree in Modern Languages. The results indicated a predominance of the active, sensitive, visual and sequential styles, compared to the reflexive, intuitive, verbal and global styles. In relation to academic performance, it was found that it was higher in students who had a higher dose of second trend styles (reflexive, intuitive, verbal and global), on the other hand, the quantitative grades do not reflect a very wide difference between the levels qualitatively rated as: good, fair and low, for whose description the teachers were more demanding than the grades or grades reflect. The work suggests that the need to promote a better balance between the two bipolar categories of learning styles should be oriented, in addition to reviewing the criteria and forms of evaluation (Cabrales, Oliveros, Mejía, 2014).

In 2015, a study was conducted in Bolivia with the aim of identifying the trend of learning styles used by students of the Bolivian American Center in the city of Sucre-Bolivia who study English as a second language, where among other things they analyzed the relationship between the learning style used and gender, age, educational level and the time in which people study the language. The results of the work revealed a slight tendency towards the reflective style, but in general a homogeneous domain of the four styles was detected. A slight correlation was also found between gender and pragmatic style, between age and reflective style; as well as between the degree of instruction and the active and reflective learning styles. Concluding that it was necessary to carry out not only an initial analysis, but also a periodic follow-up to the learning styles evaluation process, either through available tools or adapted to the context (Guillen, 2015).

In 2016, a project was developed in Mexico to study the dynamics associated with the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language in the basic education of young people and adults. It was possible to verify that the pedagogical strategies used in the teaching of English were associated with traditional methodologies that emphasized the development of routine didactic activities supported in the official language, with the inclusion of a limited variety of didactic resources, as well as a reduced use of school infrastructure (Ricoy, & Álvarez-Pérez, 2016).

In 2017, at the Olga González Arraut Educational Institution in the city of Cartagena, a project was developed that was versed in the design of English teaching strategies and learning styles. The research analyzes the problems related to the teaching of a foreign language according to the learning styles in a primary school, specifically, presenting the results through a descriptive methodology, where both the strategies used by teachers and the characteristics of the different styles in the students (Rodríguez & Chamorro, 2017). Other authors comment on the application of a methodology for teaching English as a second or foreign language, in which the teacher in the learning process has the role of creating didactic material according to student trends, actively chaining the performance that must Having the latter, as the generating agent of the creation of new knowledge, for which the interaction of the teacher and the student plays an important role, in order to create a nexus of knowledge and in this sense the apprentice exploits communication skills in any means (García-Ros & Pérez-González, 1998); (Reyes, Ávila, & Alcívar, 2019).

### **Learning styles, Concept and content**

According to some of the pioneers in the study of the subject, the conceptual definition of learning styles can be summarized as: those cognitive, affective and physiological traits, which constitute relatively stable indicators of the way in which students perceive, they interact and respond to their learning environments (Keefe, 1988).

Other authors have managed to establish a kind of taxonomy that manages to classify learning styles into four categories (Alonso, Gallego & Honey, 1994). Figure 1 graphically shows the four categories in which learning styles are classified.

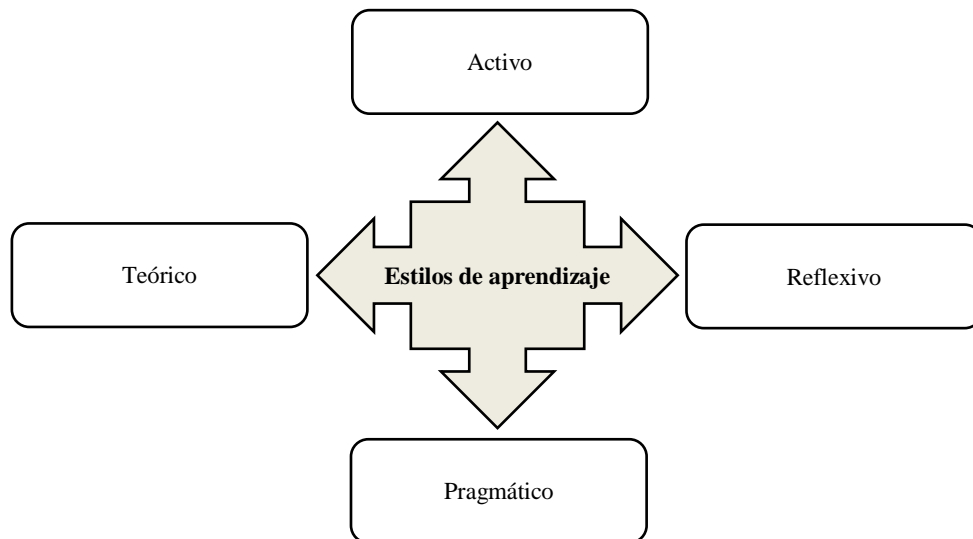


Figure 1. Learning styles

Source: own elaboration based on information from: (Alonso, Gallego & Honey, 1994)

In the case of the active learning style it corresponds to those people who get involved with others and undertake activities with encouragement and enthusiasm. They are characterized by being open-minded students, full of activity and willing to try new things, they show spontaneity, creativity, spirit to undertake innovations, willing to take risks, idea generators, conversationalists, leaders, volunteers, fun, competitive and eager to learn by solving problems (Norato, 2017). Those who manifest the reflective style are students who prefer to consider the experiences of others and observe them from different perspectives; they usually collect data by analyzing them carefully before reaching a conclusion, they are characterized by being prudent, observers par excellence who assess all possible alternatives before making any move, listen to others and do not act until they are sure of the situation, are weighted, patients, inquisitors, receptive, analytical, careful, predictors of alternatives, data loggers, researchers, assimilators, distant, prudent and detailed (Guillen, 2015).

Students who are characterized by a theoretical learning style prefer to adapt and integrate observations within logical and complex theories, manifesting preferential tendencies towards the approach of problems vertically staggered by logical stages, generally tend to seek perfection integrating the made in coherent theories, they prefer the analysis with a synthetic approach, they like to go to the depth of thought when it comes to establishing principles, theories and models, they develop logical thinking, rationality and objectivity fleeing from the subjective and the ambiguous,

manifesting tendencies to methodical work, logical, objective, critical, structured, disciplined, systematic processes, search for hypotheses, through the systematic exercise of rationality and firmly structured criteria (Vértiz, Cardoso & Bobadilla, 2015). Students who are inclined to the pragmatic learning style, show a tendency to the practical application of ideas, discovering the positive aspect of novel ideas taking advantage of the first opportunity to put experimentation into practice, usually act quickly and confidently to develop ideas and projects that are attractive to you, are patient, get involved in situations that lead you to make a decision or solve a problem, are practical, direct, effective, realistic, determined, problem solvers, capable of applying what you have learned and manifesting a trend towards action planning (Montaluisa, Salas-Jaramillo, & Garcés-Cobos, 2018). Table 2 shows a summary of the favorable and unfavorable characteristics for learning each style.

Table 2. Characteristics of Learning Styles

Style	Question you want to answer	Learn better when	They have difficulty learning when
Active	How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They are assigned an activity that represents a challenge.</li> <li>▪ They carry out short activities with immediate results.</li> <li>▪ There is emotion, drama and crisis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They take a passive role.</li> <li>▪ They have to assimilate, analyze and interpret data.</li> <li>▪ They have to work alone.</li> <li>▪ They are forced to become the center of attention.</li> </ul>
Thoughtful	Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They adopt positions of observer.</li> <li>▪ They can offer observations and analyze the situation.</li> <li>▪ They can think before they act.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They are forced to become the center of attention.</li> <li>▪ You are rushed from one activity to another.</li> <li>▪ Act without planning ahead.</li> </ul>
Theoretical	What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They work from theories, models, systems with ideas and concepts that represent a challenge.</li> <li>▪ They have the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They work with activities that involve ambiguity and uncertainty.</li> <li>▪ Emotions and are</li> </ul>

		opportunity to ask and inquire.	emphasized feelings.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They have to act without a theoretical foundation.</li> </ul>
Pragmatic	What if?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They work with activities that link theory and practice.</li> <li>▪ See others do something.</li> <li>▪ They have the possibility to immediately put into practice what they have learned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What they learn is not related to their immediate needs.</li> <li>▪ Work with activities that have no apparent purpose.</li> <li>▪ What they do is not related to reality.</li> </ul>

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Source: Own elaboration based on information offered by: (Alonso, Gallego & Honey, 1994)

Learning style is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon that is directly determined by personal, social, cultural, biological and psychological factors (Henaó, Ramírez & Ramírez, 2006), so its classification is complex and requires prior analysis in all cases. Some authors (Etxeberria, 1997) suggest that, in the field of linguistics, the analysis of the learning styles that students possess is key, since language is associated with different modalities of human activity.

Educational institutions play a determining role for learning the mother tongue, in the same way as in the teaching of a second language, so the educational role can not only be limited to teaching, but also to how to make the language more effective. Learning through the analysis of styles and the selection of strategies to achieve the best results (Feng & Iriarte, 2013). In order to evaluate the learning styles put into practice by the students, the Honey & Alonzo (Alonso, Gallego, & Honey, 1999) questionnaire for Learning Styles CHAEA was applied, where it was possible to classify the students in the four styles: (active, reflective, theoretical and pragmatic) considering the scale.

The analysis of the results of the survey allowed verifying that the students are studying the levels corresponding to the Baccalaureate, ranging in age from 16 to 19 years old, of which 26 correspond to the female sex for 52% and 24 are of the sex male for 48%. Table 3 presents the statistical data obtained on the learning styles trend of the total of students who learn English as a second language in the Raymundo Aveiga Educational Unit of the municipality of Chone, province of Manabí, Ecuador.

Table 3. Summary of trends in learning styles by scale

Style	Very low		Low		Moderate		High		Very high		Total	
	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%



Active	2	4	6	12	21	42	10	20	11	22	50	100
Reflective	12	24	14	28	19	38	4	8	1	2	50	100
Theoretical	1	2	3	6	20	40	12	24	14	28	50	100
Pragmatic	3	6	4	8	18	36	15	30	10	20	50	100

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey

By analyzing the data reflected in Table 3, it can be verified that there is a moderate trend in the four learning styles, being slightly higher in the active style, followed by the theoretical, reflective and pragmatic learning styles, respectively, which shows that there is a relative balance of all of them. Table 4 shows the data related to the frequencies obtained by the learning styles that achieved the highest score, as well as a summary of those that showed more than one style.

Table 4. Frequencies by learning styles Learning

styles	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid
Active	9	18	22
Reflective	11	22	29
Unique style Theoretical	11	22	28
Pragmatic	8	16	21
Total	39	78	100
More than one style	11	22	
Total	50	100	

Summary of those that show more than one style

Styles	Fr equencey	Pe rcentage
Reflective / actic	5	10
Active / Pragmatic	1	2

Reflective / Theoretical	1	2
Reflective / Pragmatic	2	4
Active / Theoretical / Pragmatic	2	4
Total	11	22

Source: Own elaboration based on survey results

When analyzing the results shown in Table 4, it can be seen that there is a homogeneous distribution in terms of the prevalence of the learning style used by students, with a slight inclination towards reflective and theoretical styles, followed by the active and pragmatic styles respectively. It is important to note that in 22% of students more than one learning style is combined, where the reflective / active is highlighted. Figure 2 shows the graphic behavior of the results of the correlational study on the behavior of learning styles from the angle of the gender study.

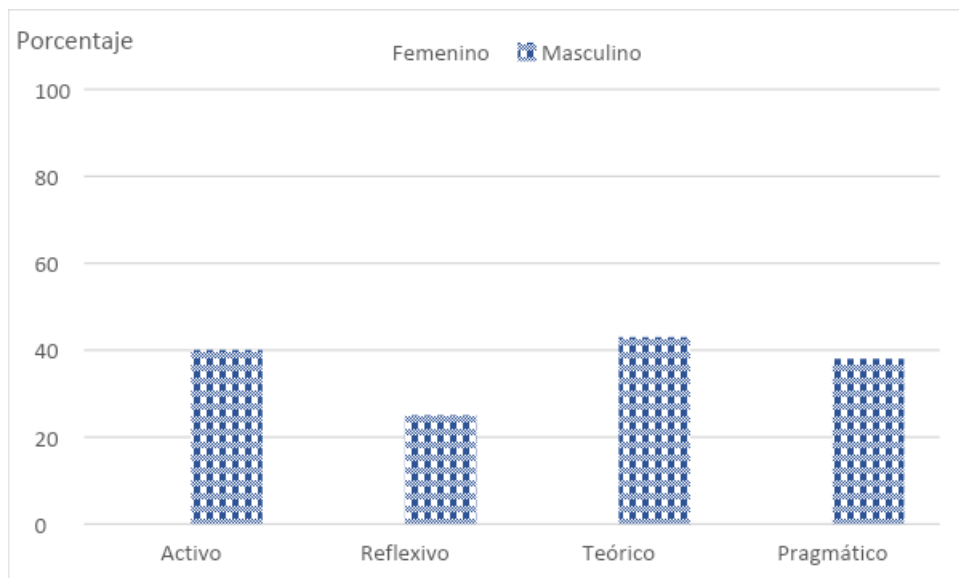


Figure 2. Correlational study from the angle of the gender study

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey

The analysis of the data reflected in Figure 2 shows that there is a greater inclination in the female in the reflective style, with a tendency towards the pragmatic style, followed by the active and theoretical one. In male students, the theoretical style predominates with a tendency towards the active style, followed by the pragmatic and reflective styles.

As a partial synthesis, it can be pointed out that the general results of the study show that students who study English as a second language at the Raymundo Aveiga Educational Unit in the municipality of Chone, have a slight inclination for reflective and theoretical styles, followed of the active and pragmatic style, which is related to the results found by (Guillen, 2015). However, it is fair to recognize that when the individual analysis of the frequency of the

styles was carried out, it was possible to identify that there is a relatively balanced trend of the four learning styles, being able to conclude that the general results are desirable since a balance between the styles is necessary for meaningful learning (Catalán, Lobos & Ortiz, 2012); (Reyes, Andrade, Ávila, & Alcívar, 2019). In the work, it is possible to observe a difference between the predominance of the learning styles used in relation to gender, corroborating the results obtained in the project carried out by (García, 2011), at the same time that it contradicts the statements of (López & Silva, 2009) that do not find a variation between these factors.

#### IV. Conclusions

Didactic strategies based on learning styles in an ESL class are the result of a dynamic that develops skills and abilities in English, based on individual differences, because by recognizing the style of each student in a class, it favors that they can learn in their own way and rhythm, so it favors their performance. When working with learning styles orientation, students are motivated to learn and everyone participates in the learning process, thus achieving a meaningful process of teaching the English language as a second language.

The identification of a particular style in a certain time and space by a student should not be considered as a definitive and unalterable result, since practice indicates that it can change due to different factors depending on the maturity that the student is acquiring in the process teacher, product of the discovery of more advanced ways of learning, improving their cognitive process and other factors, recommending periodic evaluations to compensate for the variables and obtain reliable results. Without this evaluation and monitoring, the validity and reliability of the results can be questioned.

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