

**Exploring How English Teachers Accommodate Students' Learning Style in the 21st Century: A Survey**

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**Abstract**

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The aim of this descriptive qualitative research is to explore how English teachers accommodate students' learning styles in 21st century, to find out students' learning style and how English teachers' accommodate it based on students' perspective. The procedure applied in this qualitative research are data collection, data presentation, conclusion drawing and verification. The data collection techniques used were questionnaire, interview and observation. There are still few researchers who examine on how English teachers accommodate students' learning style based on students' perspective. As final note, teachers need to recognize their students' different learning styles and prepare the appropriate methods to deliver the subject matters. In addition, learning style is the way a person takes in, understands, expresses and remembers information. As a result, teaching and learning process will be very interactive and effective by recognizing students' different learning style and the way to accommodate it appropriately.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The 21st century is challenging era for all people around the world. It forces everyone to keep up with every changes that the era brings. The changes touches every aspect of life include education, it makes all education elements should think hard and be innovative to live in this era

because every changing has its new cases and conditions. One of the vital elements in education is teacher since the role of her is highly important in preparing the future students. Teachers, for their learning process should prepare not only the material but also the best teaching to maximize students' performances. Before discussing about

how teachers prepare their both material and teaching, they should give the overview about 21st skills and abilities to prepare them for successful learning, living and working. Based on this phenomenon, teachers are required to be prepared to face the educational challenges of the 21st century and be responsive. Teachers should accommodate this phenomenon by interacting with some data on 21st century learning. English teachers, in particular, have vital roles as they teach English subjects that are really relevant to 21st century education. It because the 21st century requires several skills to use English to a high standard (Handayani, 2017).

The 21st century requires students to have communication, collaboration, creative and critical thinking, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, leadership, initiative, productivity, flexibility, and social skills (Awla, 2014, p. 242). In another words, the most important skills to have in the 21st Century are critical thinking, communication, collaboration, then creative and innovative (Ontario, 2016, p.12). It means that 21st skills which everyone should have including students are based on 4C skills above. Based on this 21st skill qualification, teachers are required to be prepared to face the educational challenges of the 21st century and be responsive. One of the challenges which teachers should face is their improvement in teaching, especially teaching English, in this case. The improvement of teaching has strong relation with the way they deliver the material or teaching method, this can be different each day. The way teachers deliver the material hopefully can be along with the way their students observe the information or knowledge, because by fitting the two, it can maximize the students to understand the material which has been delivered. The way students gain the information absolutely differ each other, the differences among it called as learning style. Based on Neil Fleming theory, there are four learning styles which can be the bridge to get to 4C skills mastery which everyone required to have in the 21st century if everybody knows her types of learning styles.

For that reasons, there is no doubt that both learners and teachers are very important component in the educational cycle. Both of them have strong relation in reaching qualified 21st skills. Gaining knowledge on students' learning styles can be very helpful for both teachers and learners. Involving learners in the active process of learning requires identifying and understanding learners learning styles and teachers teaching styles. EFL teachers should consider the students' learning styles and their own teaching styles which show their favored learning styles. Without this knowledge, clashes would affect students' learning potential and their attitudes toward learning. Both the teachers and students should be aware of their styles and try to harmonize them. The two can either be matched or mismatched.

Learning styles are, simply put, various approaches or ways of learning. They involve educating methods, particular to an individual that are presumed to allow that individual to learn best. Two major hypotheses about learning styles:

All students have their own learning styles and learning strengths and weaknesses.

A mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration and demotivation (Kara, 2019, p. 4).

Teachers should assess the learning styles of their students and adapt their classroom methods to best fit each student's learning style. It is vital to study the relationship between them. Nowadays, many studies have been conducted on match and mismatch of learning styles and teaching styles. Most of them refer to matching the two as having a positive impact on the students' performance and indicate the opposite for mismatching. However, mismatches between the two mostly because teachers does not investigate what their students' opinion on how they teach based on their students' different learning style. The purpose of this study is to present some arguments on this issue and finally investigate how teachers really accommodate several students' learning styles.

## METHOD

The research method used is qualitative with phenomenology studies. This research uses qualitative methods because researchers do not analyse statistically but through questionnaires, interviews and observations. A qualitative method is often used to explore the what, how and why of systems and human behavior and what governs these behaviors (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017 p. 141). This research method is needed to explore this phenomenon from the perspective of distance education students (Creswell, 2012, p. 16).

There are six steps used in this research. They are identifying the research topic, reviewing the research literature, selecting participants, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and reporting research and evaluating it. Data sources in this study were obtained from students and teachers as participants. The research was conducted in class VIII junior high school. The instruments used are close-ended questionnaires, interviews and observation. The researcher collected data by giving students questionnaire lists, interviewing students and teachers, and observing teaching and learning process to triangulate it. The researcher used Miles and Huberman data analysis which are data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al, 2014).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From closed-ended questionnaire, it was found that there are nine visual learners, nineteen auditory learners, fourteen read/write learners and eighteen kinesthetic learners. Furthermore, from interview conducted with students and teachers, found that there are several methods students perceive important to implement based on their different learning style which are using visual instruments or tools like pictures, symbols, videos or something their eyes can see, group discussion, using presentation, lecturing method,

using writing task, using reading activity, doing fieldtrip, doing demonstration, doing role play, watching video to see the real action, doing physical activities and using English conversation. However, there is a slight gap between learning styles and the way teachers accommodate it, which is some teachers did not apply the appropriate method. Thus, the result from each research questions' finding can be described bellows:

## THE TYPES OF STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES PREFERENCE IN THE ENGLISH LEARNING PROCESS

From the questionnaire results related to learning styles, there are nine students categorized as visual learners, which means that they tend to learn through seeing, so tools like diagrams, flowcharts, pictures and symbols can be key to understanding new concepts. Symbols can be key to understanding new concepts (Hawkar, 2014). The result above was taken from fifteen questionnaire which were divided to 60 students. Those nine students prefer learn through their visual sense. The next is auditory learning style, those who have this kind of learning style preference will be learning depends on hearing and speaking as the primary style of learning. Auditory learners must be able to hear what is being said in order to understand and may have difficulty with instructions that are written (Fleming, 22009). From fifteen questionnaire results, it was found that there are nineteen visual learners.

The third learning style is read/write, this type of learners prefer learn by something written like textbooks, readings explanations and other text forms (Jessen, Aron, 2019, p.6). The next description about this learning style came from Neil Fleming (2001) in (Gholami, Reza. 2012, p.3) describes that those people who have such learning type like to learn by text like essay, textbooks, definitions, readings and taking notes. From questionnaire results related to this learning style, it can be summarized that there are fourteen students who have this kind of learning style. The last learning style is kinesthetic, it can be described as the learners who need to use their

gross motor skills like her whole body. She may walk around while reading or talking to other people or she might take a part in games where she can get to activate her whole body (Fatimah, Ayu Dewi, 2017, p.6). Another one stated that kinesthetic learners are they who tend to learn best through movement. They process information best when moving their bodies. They like to move their hands and respond to sounds and music through physical movements such playing or juggling objects (Moussa, M Nahla, 2014, p.21). From fifteen questionnaire results, it was found that there are eighteen kinesthetic learners.

#### **HOW ENGLISH TEACHERS ACCOMMODATE STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

This section shows what methods and ways English teachers teach their students who have different learning style preference. The following explanation based on Neil Fleming learning style which have four types, visual, auditory, read/write and kinesthetic. There are four ways to teach these four students' learning style preference, they are using visual instruments, using auditory activities, using read/write activities and using kinesthetic activities, and each method will be explained in the next following description.

##### **a. Using Visual Instruments for Visual Learners**

Visual instruments refers to anything that can be seen, in this discussion are symbol, picture, photo, video and demonstration method. In this discussion, visual instruments refer to using symbols, pictures, photos, demonstrations and videos in the learning process. Visual learners are they who learn through visual sense like using symbol in the learning process, symbols can serve as visual cues to help visual learners organize and structure information effectively. For instance, using different symbols to represent main ideas, supporting details, or relationships between concepts can assist visual learners in comprehending and recalling information more easily (Chae, Jung, & Lee, 2018). Another study conducted by Smith and Johnson (2018) stated

that the use of symbols in instruction can enhance the understanding of visual learners. They found that symbols representing concepts help students create strong visual associations. From those two theories, the researcher gave a question related to this to two English teachers who teach eight graders "Do you insert symbols when you deliver English material? If yes, How? If no, Why?"

The first teacher answered that "Yes, if it is needed. When I explain the material to my students, I sometimes using symbol like smile, star or other symbols." Meanwhile, the second English teacher answered that "No, I don't, because it is not necessary for them." The first English teacher's answer strengthen by observation conducted by the researcher on February 25th, 2023, the teacher using symbol when she wrote the important point from the material she has explained earlier, she is using loves rather than using number when she is writing the main point from the lesson. The second English teacher's answer proves that she does not use symbol in the learning process. It means, she does not fulfill this way in accommodating her visual learners. It is also confirmed by the observation result, this English teacher explained the material, then write the main points of it in the form of words without any symbol or number.

The next method for visual learners is using pictures, research conducted by Johnson and Smith (2019) has shown that the use of images in teaching can assist visual learners in better understanding and retaining information. Relevant images related to the subject matter strengthen visual understanding and facilitate the formation of mental representations of the concepts being learned. From explanation above, the researcher interviewed two English teachers with the same question "Do you use picture when you deliver English material? If yes, How? If no, Why?." The first English teacher answered "Yes, when I deliver the material to them, I often use picture because it make them understand better and more interesting too." The answer is also in line with the observation result showing that the first English teacher really used picture in the learning process, she showed her students picture

when she explain the material to them. Meanwhile, the second English teacher answered “Yes, because by using pictures, my students can understand the material well.” But, the observation result showed the contrary, the second English teacher did not use picture in the learning process, she only explained the material without showing her students picture or something that her students can see. In fact, her answer and observation result does not support each other. As a result, the first English teacher used pictures as her way to deliver the material and the second English teacher did not.

The next method for visual learners is using photo in the learning process, Brown and Davis (2020) found that photos provided visual stimuli, sparked imagination, and supported visual learners in making connections between visual representations and language expressions. From explanation above, it can be concluded that visual learners need photo when they learn something because it ease them to understand the material well. To know whether English teachers using this in the learning process or not, the researcher interviewed two English teachers with this question “Do you use photo when you deliver English material? If yes, How? If no, Why?” This question firstly answered by the first English teacher, she said Yes, it happened occasionally. When it is necessary, I will use photo to deliver the material, it will make much more realistic.” This is also strengthen by the observation result showed that this English teacher did not use photo in the learning process. She only explain use picture and symbol at that time without other instruments, probably she did not need it at that time. The answer above is in line with the second English teacher’s answer “Sometimes, it depends on what will be the material about. But, it almost never.” This answer is also supported by the observation result shown that this English teacher did not use photo in the learning process. At that time, she only explained the material about “asking and giving information. It can be concluded that both English teachers did not use photo when they delivered the subject matter.

The next is using video in the learning process, Johnson and Smith (2021) found that incorporating instructional videos with clear models and demonstrations improved visual learners' speaking fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Videos provided visual and auditory models of proper pronunciation and intonation, assisting visual learners in mimicking and internalizing language patterns (Johnson & Smith, 2021). From explanation above, it can be summarized that video can improve visual learner’ understanding in English learning process, because they can see the real action, the authentic English. To support it, the researcher gave one same question to two English teachers, which is “Do you often show your students an English video to ease them understand the material? If yes, How? If no, Why?” It firstly answered by the first English teacher, she said “Sometimes, if it is necessary, for example to teach dialogue or to teach narrative text.” This answer is supported by observation result that show this English teacher use video to make her students understand the material well, it happened when she showed a video about the way to ask and give information to someone. It is also in line with the second English teacher’s answer “Yes, sometimes. It aims to make my students understand the material.” This answer is confirmed by the observation result showed this English teacher showed her students a video after explaining the material. She gave her students the example from a video that talks about asking and giving information. In conclusion, both English teacher used video as their media to deliver the material.

The last method for visual learners is demonstration, Martinez and Johnson (2019) found, demonstrated that the inclusion of demonstrations significantly improved visual learners' ability to understand spoken English, grasp contextual cues, and extract meaning from oral communication. From those explanation above, it indicates that demonstration can be used as visual learners’ method in English learning process because it can ease visual learners to understand the material well, show them visual and contextual meaning and it also improve their

speaking skills. This argument brings the researcher to do interview with two English teacher, the question is “Do you use demonstration activity in English learning process? If yes, How? If no, Why?” This question firstly answered by the first English teacher, she said “Yes, by demonstration, students can easily practice speaking, for example teaching procedure text.” Then, the second English teacher answered “Sometimes, depends on what material that will be studied.” Both English teachers’ answers are supported by observation result showed that both English teacher used demonstration method to give the example of conversation about asking and giving information, she use it after explaining the material. It can be concluded that the first English teacher used demonstration as her method in English learning process frequently since the observation result validates her answer. Meanwhile, the second English teacher used this method occasionally based on what the English material will be about. It validate from both interview and observation result.

#### b. Using Auditory Activities in the Learning Process

Auditory activities refers to all activities that can be used by teacher to teach auditory learners, in this context are group discussion, presentation task and lecturing method. Group discussion facilitated auditory learners’ understanding of complex texts, promoted active listening, and nurtured analytical thinking and interpretation of English language content. Group discussions provided auditory learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue, exchange ideas, and deepen their comprehension of the subject matter (Wilson & Thompson, 2020). From explanation above, it indicates that group discussion can be the way English teachers used to teach auditory learners, because it helps students to listen ideas from different perspectives, enhance their speaking skills and understand the complex idea from different people. This argument brings the researcher to do interview with two English teacher, the question the researcher gave was “Do you implement group discussion in English

learning process? If yes, How? If no, Why”. This question firstly answered by the first English teacher, she said that “Yes, I usually divided them into six or eight groups, so they can collaborate and share their idea to each other.” Then, the second English teacher said “Yes, after explaining the material, I divided them into groups for discussing what I have already delivered earlier.” Those answers above are validated by the observation result showed that the first English teacher used this method before practicing the material. Firstly, the teacher explained the subject to her students, then they were used to do discussion in groups to talk about the material which has been explained earlier. Meanwhile, the second English teacher used this method after explaining the material about the way to ask and give information.

The next method is using presentation task in learning process, Adams and Johnson (2019) found that assigning presentation tasks significantly improved auditory learners’ oral communication skills, speaking fluency, and confidence in English. Presentation tasks offered auditory learners’ opportunities to practice speaking in a structured environment, receive constructive feedback, and enhance their overall language proficiency. Those two researched revealed that presentation task gives auditory learners chance to practice their English speaking skill so they can improve their language proficiency, then it also enhance their active listening process. By this explanation, it brings researcher to do interview with two English teachers, the question is “Do you give your students presentation task? If yes, How? If no, Why?”. The question above is firstly answered by the first English teacher, she said that “Yes, after discussion, I usually asked the students from each group to present materials and followed by question and answer section.” The answer indicates that she used group discussion method in English learning process, because she often divided her students into groups to present the material, then it ends with asking and answering sections. This answer validated by the observation result showed that this English teacher really make their students to groups and

each group supposed to discuss the material then present it. After that they are required to answer the questions from their own friends. Meanwhile, the second English teacher answered “Yes, sometimes, when it comes to procedure text, I usually asked the students to do presentation.” it implies that this teacher only uses presentation task occasionally, it means she does not always used this method in learning process because she said that she only used it when she needed. This answer validated by the observation result showed that this English teacher did not use presentation task in English learning process because she only explained the material by herself, then the students were asked to discuss but they do not present it.

The last one is using lecturing method in the learning process, Hernandez and Martinez (2021) research indicated that well-paced and structured lectures, supplemented by visual aids and interactive activities, significantly improved auditory learners' ability to comprehend spoken English and enhance their pronunciation accuracy. Lectures provided auditory learners with repeated exposure to authentic spoken language and opportunities to practice and refine their pronunciation skills. From explanations above, it indicates that lecturing method can be way to deliver English material to auditory learners because by using that method, the students can enhance their spoken English and improve their pronunciation skills. However, the structured lecturing method significantly can improve auditory learners' ability to understand complex language and engage them to think critically. To confirm this arguments, the researcher gave a same question to two English teachers, the question is “Do you still use lecturing way to deliver English material? If yes, How? If no, Why?” The question above is firstly answered by the first English teachers, she said that “Yes, it is the method that frequently I used to explain the material, the rest is only addition method to support this method.” Then, the second English teacher answered “Yes, of course, although various methods I found, it never be able to erase this method.” Both answers are validated by observation result showed that both

English teachers used lecturing way in delivering English material to her students.

#### c. Using Read/Write Activities in the Learning Process

This read/write activity refers to any activities which can support read/write learner to learn better in English teaching and learning process. In this context, it refers to reading activity and writing activity. Anderson and Johnson (2017) found that incorporating extensive reading tasks, such as reading comprehension exercises, literature circles, and book discussions, significantly improved read/write learners' reading comprehension skills, vocabulary knowledge, and overall language proficiency. From explanation above, it indicates that reading activity can be used for teaching read/write learners because it can enhance their reading comprehension skills, enrich their English vocabularies and other language proficiencies. It also can be used to apply critical reading activities and analyze and understand written text, develop coherent written responses, and enhance their overall writing proficiency. From this explanation, it implies that giving read/write written activities is needed to improve students' writing proficiencies. Those explanations bring the researcher to interview two English teachers with a same question related to it, the question is “Do you often give your students reading activity task? If yes, How? If no, Why?”

The question above firstly answered by the first English teacher, she answered that “Yes, of course, because we have many genre type of texts like descriptive, narrative, recount and others. So I gave them reading task to increase their understanding in reading text.” Then, the second English teacher answered “Yes, of course, sometimes I ask some students to read out loud, in order to improve their pronunciation.” Both answers are clarified by the observation result showed that the first English teacher applied reading activity task in English teaching and learning process. This teacher asked her students to read the dialogue about asking and giving information, they are asked to read each dialogue interchangeably. Meanwhile, the second English

teacher asked her students to read the dialogue about asking and giving information out loud, she used this activity after explaining the material about it and it happened occasionally.

The last one is writing activity, the research of Thompson and Davis (2019) indicated that involving read/write learners in analytical writing tasks, such as argumentative essays and literature analyses, significantly improved their language proficiency, critical thinking abilities, and textual comprehension. From the explanations above, it indicates that writing task is very useful for read/write learners because they can analyze and evaluate information, construct coherent arguments, and deepen their understanding of English texts. It is also needed to encourage them in practicing their grammar in writing English text. To emphasize this arguments, the researcher did interview with two English teachers, she gave them a same question, which is “Do you often give your students writing task? If yes, How? If no, Why?”

The question above is firstly answered by the first English teachers, she said that “Yes, I sometimes asked the students to write down their idea based on picture I showed them.” Then, it is also answered by the second English teacher “Yes, sometime, I use it as evaluation like giving them homework they should write down.” Those answers above are supported by the observation result showed that the first English teacher used this method in English learning process, it used when she instructed her students to discuss about the material, after that she is required to make writing dialogue related to ask and give information. Meanwhile, the second English teacher used this method to make students’ improve their English writing ability in their own home, and it used frequently.

#### d. Using Kinesthetic Activities in the Learning Process

Kinesthetic activities refer to any activities that can be used for kinesthetic learners to learn English material easily. In this context they are doing fieldtrip, doing demonstration, doing role play, watching video to see the real action, doing physical activities and doing

English conversation. Doing fieldtrip activities provided kinesthetic learners with opportunities to practice language in authentic contexts and develop their communicative skills (Davis & Thompson, 2020). From the explanation above, it indicates that doing field trip like visiting some places such as museums and cultural sites provide kinesthetic learners with real-world contexts to apply language skills and fostered their experiential learning. Then, other fieldtrip activities like role plays, simulations and language games in real-world settings provided kinesthetic learners with opportunities to practice language in authentic contexts and develop their communicative skills. From this explanations, the researcher wanted to confirm it by interview two English teachers with a same question related to fieldtrip activity. The question is “Do you sometimes have a fieldtrip with your students to give them authentic material? If yes, How? If no, Why?”

This question is firstly answered by the first English teacher, she said “Yes, we have English outdoor program once a year to motivate students by visiting interesting place.” Meanwhile, the second English teacher answered “No, never, we only study in the class.” Both answers are validated by the observation result showed that both teachers only have this activity once a year at study tour which held by school specially for second graders, they visit cultural sites like Borobudur and Prambanan temples, then after going back from this field trip, students are required to submit a report about their personal feelings when they are doing fieldtrip. As a result, the first teacher does not consider that doing fieldtrip activities can be studying at somewhere at the schools like yard or other places, meanwhile the second teacher seems like does not understand what fieldtrip mean and which activities include in it.

#### CONCLUSION

The rapid global changes due to modern education make it important for teachers to improve their teaching methods and apart to the needs. English teachers are required to have their method to accommodate their students’ different learning style which are using pictures, photo, symbol, watching video, doing demonstration for

their visual learners. Then, for their auditory learners can be using group discussions, presentation tasks and using structured lecturing method. Furthermore, using writing tasks and reading activities can be used to accommodate read/write learners. The last one is for kinesthetic learners, English teachers can use fieldtrip, demonstration, role play, watching video to see authentic action, doing physical activities and doing English conversation to accommodate them. Based on the questionnaire result, from 57 students, nine students are visual, nineteen students are auditory, fourteen students are read/write and eighteen students are kinesthetic. Furthermore, several method that students perceive important to have as English teachers to accommodate their learning style preferences are, firstly for visual learners there are using pictures, videos, symbols and using their own drawing. Secondly, for auditory learners are using group discussion, reading out loud and note taking after explanation activities. Third, for read/write learners are using writing task like taking notes of important parts and reading activity like looking for the important information. The last one is kinesthetic learners are using demonstration, presentation, role play and singing activity.

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