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Applying a Multisensory Approach to Teaching

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Research Question

What are the effects of teachers adapting their teaching style to their students' learning style?

Literature

- "Learning styles are a result of hereditary equipment, past experience, and the demands of the present environment combining to produce individual orientations to a variety of learning modes" (Kolb, 1985, p. 2).
- Students prefer an active learning environment, which may be difficult with traditional-style instruction (D'Albro, 1983).
- Yazicilar (2006) found that the implementation of learning styles shows an increase in student success.
- According to Kyprianidou (2011), students learn best when they are in their comfort zone.

Methodology

- My study consisted of 17 fourth-grade students in a suburban, low-income school (8 girls, 9 boys).
- The data I analyzed were: field notes, student anecdotal records, student feedback, and student work samples.
- To analyze my data, I used Ryan and Bernard's (2003) themed techniques, where I looked for repetition, linguistic connectors, theory-related materials, and missing data.

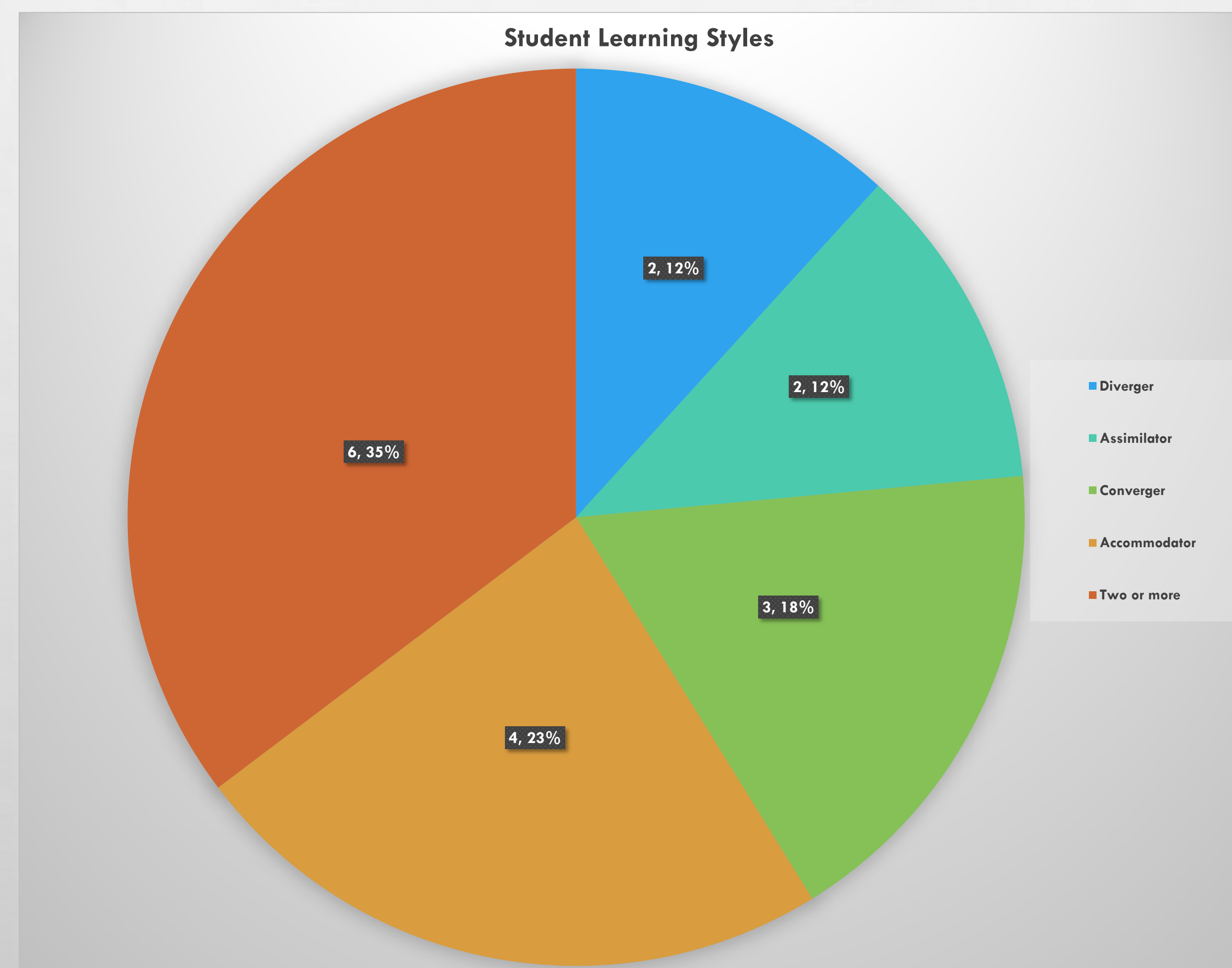


Figure 1: Students' learning styles varied. Most of my students identified with two or more learning styles, and all of my students identified with at least one learning style.

Results and Data Analysis

- Field notes showed that there were four types of learning styles in my classroom: diverger, assimilator, converger, and accommodator.
- Diverger learners learned best when I incorporated music or illustrations into lessons.
- Assimilator learners learned best when I allowed them to think abstractly. They also thrived in open-ended questioning.
- Converger learners learned best when I allowed opportunities for independent work.
- Accommodator learners learned best when they were able to experiment with ideas or resources.
- Only 1 of my students preferred traditional-style assessments, which was discovered through student feedback.

Conclusion

- Findings show that a learning-style instructional approach shows improvement in student achievement and motivation.
- In the future, educators should structure lesson plans and assessments around their students' learning styles.
- Teachers should be teaching students, not subjects. Every student is different, so teaching styles should also differ.