

Young Language Learners' Attitudes Towards Writing in English: The Case of First and Second Graders

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Abstract: Writing is an important skill, often neglected at the beginning of formal L2 learning due to the perception that it might be difficult or interfere with acquiring L1 literacy skills. However, there are benefits to teaching writing early on, such as raising awareness of the English spelling system, which is particularly important given its specificities. Another advantage is related to children's willingness to write in English and the positive influence that writing in L2 seems to have on developing early L1 literacy skills. Studies investigating young language learners' (YLLs) attitudes to writing in English at an early age are very scarce. The present study aims to gain insight into the attitudes of Croatian YLLs in the first two years of primary school (aged 6-9) towards writing in English and to compare the motivation of the first and second graders. For that purpose, 69 Croatian YLLs completed a survey. The results suggest that young learners are motivated to write in English, especially in the first grade. However, there are indications that motivation might falter later on, which means that attention is needed to maintain the YLLs' enthusiasm for writing, minimize the negative aspects of writing, and ensure long-term success.

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Çocuk dil öğrenenler
Tutum
Yazma
Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce
Motivasyon

Çocuk Dil Öğrenenlerin İngilizce Yazmaya Yönelik Tutumları: Birinci ve İkinci Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Örneği

Özet: Yazma, genellikle ikinci dil öğreniminin başlangıcında ihmal edilen ancak oldukça önemli bir beceridir. Bunun başlıca nedeni, yazmanın zor olduğu algısı ya da birinci dilde okuryazarlık becerilerinin edinimini olumsuz etkileyebileceği düşüncesidir. Fakat erken yaşta yazma öğretiminin çeşitli faydaları bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan biri, özellikle İngilizce yazım sisteminin kendine özgü yapısı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu sisteme yönelik farkındalığın artırılmasıdır. Bir diğer avantaj ise, çocukların İngilizce yazmaya istekli olmaları ve yabancı dilde yazmanın erken yaşta ana dilde okuryazarlık becerilerinin gelişimi üzerinde olumlu bir etkisinin olduğu yönündeki bulgulardır. Erken yaşta İngilizce yazmaya yönelik çocuk dil öğrenenlerin tutumlarını inceleyen çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu çalışma, ilkokulun ilk iki yılında (6-9 yaş aralığında) öğrenim gören Hırvat çocukların İngilizce yazmaya yönelik tutumlarını anlamayı ve birinci ve ikinci sınıf öğrencilerinin motivasyonlarını karşılaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, 69 Hırvat öğrencinin katıldığı bir anket kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, özellikle birinci sınıf düzeyinde, çocukların İngilizce yazmaya karşı motive olduklarını göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, motivasyonun ilerleyen yıllarda azalabileceğine dair bazı göstergeler bulunmaktadır. Bu durum, çocukların yazmaya yönelik ilgisini sürdürebilmek, yazmanın olumsuz yönlerini en aza indirmek ve uzun vadeli başarıyı sağlamak için özel bir dikkat gösterilmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

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1. Introduction

Interest in learning foreign languages, English in particular, at an early age has been tremendously intensified in many countries (Ferjan Ramírez & Kuhl, 2020; García Mayo, 2017), most probably due to its many empirically proven benefits and positive impacts on children (Kurniasih, 2011; Nikolov, 2009). In addition, the strong advocacy of early foreign language learning (FLL), as pointed out by Vickov and Jakupčević (2022), is also a consequence of the omnipresent process of globalization, which imposes multilingualism, especially the mastery of English as a means of global communication, as one of the conditions for successful functioning in the multicultural world of today. Motivation is the key to successful learning, but some of the most important advantages of early FLL are related to young language learners' (YLLs, learners aged approximately 7-13) psychological and social characteristics. Children are very motivated and interested in learning a foreign language, which they often perceive as a new code to express something (Dunn, 1993; Sironić-Bonefačić, 1999). Furthermore, they seem to be very open to other cultures and languages (Edelenbos & de Jong, 2004), they have, in principle, no language anxiety and are less inhibited than older learners (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1999; Pinter, 2017). One of the main arguments for starting early is that younger children have more positive attitudes toward FLL in a classroom setting and are more motivated (Edelenbos et al., 2006; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2012).

Knowledge about YLLs' positive attitudes towards FLL is incredibly encouraging in developing writing skills, which are considered one of the most complex language skills to master. Writing is, in general, one of the most essential skills for school students, and yet, due to its multi-layered nature, it poses significant challenges to foreign language learners (FLLs), and especially to young English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) learners (Bai et al., 2020; Lee & Wong, 2014). In order to become able to cope with the very demanding task of producing a well-structured, coherent text in English, at the initial stages of developing EFL writing skills, YLLs need to master no less demanding subskills related to handwriting, spelling, knowledge of vocabulary, mastery of punctuation, capitalization, and grammar. This is particularly difficult when young learners' native language differs significantly from English (Non-Indo-European languages). YLLs' poor performance in EFL writing is a globally identified issue (Bai, 2018; Bai et al., 2020; Harris & Graham, 2016), with many studies reporting that writing is one of the most challenging areas in the EFL learning process and that it needs improvement in primary schools (e.g., Abd El Samad, 2016; Al-Saleem, 2014; Dessoiff, 2008;). However, despite EFL writing being daunting for YLLs, they seem to have positive attitudes towards this productive language skill (Dunn, 1993; Frazier Tsai, 2013; Serra, 2014; Vickov, 2006). Research into EFL writing in a young learner context has been scarce (Trüb, 2022), particularly in investigating EFL writing motivation with YLLs (Shen et al., 2020). Finally, a review of the literature has shown that research findings on EFL writing motivation with YLLs at the very initial stages of formal EFL learning, more precisely, in the first and second grades of primary school, are almost non-existent (in Croatia and many other European countries, English is taught from the first grade of primary school) (Birch et al., 2023).

The present study aims to narrow the research gap by exploring the first- and second-graders' attitudes toward initial EFL writing and testing whether this component of YLLs' intrinsic motivation (Fisher, 1990) changes across the first two years of EFL learning. Given the complexity of writing itself and many challenging areas in the process of developing EFL writing skills, on the one hand, and primary school learners' underdeveloped academic

performance in EFL writing, on the other, there is a crucial need to investigate and understand YLLs' attitudes towards writing in English during their earliest stages of EFL learning. Insights into their EFL writing motivation and its possible changes across the grade levels would not only contribute to the scant literature on early EFL writing motivation research but also enhance our understanding of when, how, and what interventions should be introduced during early stages of learning, in order to improve their writing performance and to create a long-lasting impact on YLLs' future learning and achievements (Bai et al., 2020). This also seems important regarding primary EFL research findings indicating a decreasing pattern of writing motivation as learners moved to higher grade levels (e.g., Pajares et al., 2007; Pajares & Valiante, 1999).

2. Background

2.1. Developing EFL writing skills from the First Grade

Writing has been recognized as one of the most essential skills for the learners' overall academic achievement. However, at the same time, it has been considered an intimidating school subject for learners globally as it requires a high level of motivation and systematic, long-term practice, especially for L2 learners (Shen et al., 2020). Within the EFL context as well, the complex, multifaceted nature of writing makes it one of the most challenging skills to master, because of which it has attracted much attention among researchers, but mainly in college contexts (Geng et al., 2021; Üstünbas, 2023). Little is known about writing in primary and secondary school settings. In contrast, the area where research is most lacking is the development of EFL writing skills at the initial stage of learning, i.e., with YLLs aged 6-7 (first graders). In addition, extant studies report that EFL writing skills are often neglected when teaching YLLs (Linse, 2005). This is a surprise, considering that writing is the most complex and demanding skill to master as it involves generating, organizing, and translating ideas into a coherent and understandable text (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). From the point of view of developing initial EFL literacy skills, YLLs also have to cope with the complexity of English spelling (discrepancies between the sounds and letters) as well as vocabulary and grammatical structures, which requires a lot of hard work and patience from YLLs, but also their systematic and regular education in the field (Srinivas Rao, 2017, 2019; Jashari & Dagarin Fojkar, 2019).

The significant lack of research on developing EFL writing skills at school start is caused, most probably, by the following circumstances. Though widespread as an obligatory school subject from the very beginning of primary school both in Europe and worldwide, there are still many countries, at the global level, whose educational systems postpone instruction on EFL to later stages. For example, in Turkey, instruction in EFL starts in the second grade (Arikan, 2017); in Hungary, children typically start learning English at the age of 9 (Birch et al., 2023); and in Japan, English is compulsory from the 3rd or 4th grade (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology - Japan, 2018). This implies that researchers have limited and insufficient information about the context of EFL writing with this learner population. Along with the issue of data availability, there are also some practical difficulties and ethical considerations related to collecting data from YLLs. In order to conduct research with young learners, the usual procedure calls for obtaining permission for data collection first from a school principal and teachers, who then help researchers to obtain written consent from parents (e.g., Bai & Guo, 2018) followed by very often, either written or oral consent from the learners themselves, as was the case with the present study. Another difficulty is that YLLs are not cognitively mature (Lee, 2016). Their cognitive, memory,

communicative, and social faculties are still developing (Bell, 2007), which imposes a challenging task on the researchers concerning designing adequate, age-sensitive, and appropriate research instruments and procedures.

Furthermore, when EFL is introduced from an early school age, the EFL classroom practice seems to be under the influence of two opposite schools of thought. This perception was first elaborated by Vickov (2006) within the framework of the Croatian educational system. As this is, to our best knowledge, the only study that thoroughly tackles the area at the theoretical and empirical level and presents the framework for our study, we will refer to it in greater detail. According to the author, the main difference between the abovementioned two schools of thought lies in their perception of the most appropriate age to develop EFL writing skills. While the first one advocates the idea of postponing the introduction of writing to later stages of EFL learning, primarily due to possible interference with the mother tongue (Fröhlich-Ward, 1991; Sekelj, 2011), the other recommends starting developing writing skills as soon as possible, i.e., from the very beginning of EFL learning (Ananthia, 2017; Clarke, 2009; Dunn, 1993; Paul, 2007). It should be noted that although both approaches use, more or less, the same age expressions, like “early school age” (used by many Croatian researchers, e.g., Kruhan, 1999; Mađarić, 1996; Vilke, 1991) or “young school children/young learners” (e.g., Scott & Ytreberg, 2004; Slattery & Willis, 2001), they both avoid specifying an age limit as the beginning of introducing writing. However, both schools of thought refer to the period between 6-7 to 12 years, except for authors like Spanou and Zafiri (2019), who associate “young learners” with learners not older than 15 years.

Among the researchers who argue in favor of starting writing in English at the initial stages of learning, relatively few tackle the issue of introducing EFL writing at 6 or 7, i.e., in the first grade of primary school. According to Vickov (2006), several arguments support the development of writing skills from the beginning of formal schooling. The first one is related to Vygotsky's research findings from 1977, according to which a child, to start developing writing skills in a foreign language, does not necessarily need to go through the developmental stages of the written language in the mother tongue or the developmental stages of the oral language in the foreign language. A child is ready to write as soon as his or her ability to memorize has reached a level at which the child can memorize the names of the letters of the alphabet when the attention span has developed to the point that the child can concentrate for a while on something that does not interest him/her and when cognition has matured enough to comprehend the relationship between written symbols and sounds which these stand for (Vygotsky, 1977, p. 229). Nowadays, this statement broadly applies to preschoolers as well, and, as experienced by Croatian first-grade teachers, many children aged 6 or 7 have already mastered the basics of reading and writing in their mother tongue by the time they enter the first grade. Secondly, children of this age can simultaneously learn two different writing systems, which can be even less confusing than sequential learning. This was experienced in Eastern Africa, where six- and seven-year-olds simultaneously learn to read and write in English and Devanagari or Urdu (Perren, 1972). The third argument relates to the differences within the phoneme-grapheme framework between certain languages, such as Croatian and English. As reported by Mađarić (1996) and Kruhan (1999), Croatian EFL learners are inclined to create orthographic misperceptions of English words if they are not exposed to systematic instruction in the non-phonetic spelling of the English language from the very beginning of EFL learning. It appears rather difficult for them to relate the non-phonetic graphic representation of the English words to the phonological picture of the Croatian orthography, according to which learners inevitably tend to create perceptions of

English written words. Experience has shown that once orthographic misperceptions have been formed, correcting them at a later stage of learning seems hard.

There is another argument for introducing writing skills from the first grade of primary school related to language transfer. Vickov's study (2006) and research on 61 Mexican first-graders conducted by Lindahl and Sayer (2018) show that writing skills can be transferred from a mother tongue to a foreign language and vice versa. The results of both studies suggest that the first graders who started developing writing skills from the beginning of EFL instruction scored better in writing dictations in their mother tongue than the participants who had no instruction in EFL. The authors concluded that developing writing skills from the beginning of EFL learning also enabled first graders to develop their graphomotor skills and the ability to observe and understand writing rules in their mother tongue and English. A further argument supporting writing in EFL from the initial stage of learning relies on Dunn's (1993) statement that young children seem to be fascinated by secret languages and codes and are, therefore, very interested in writing in English, which they take as another code. Writing also ensures written "proof" of development for the child and his/her parents and may create motivating satisfaction. In addition, Bae and Lee (2012) reported that a systematic and longitudinal focus on developing writing skills from the beginning of EFL learning brings positive results, which is particularly important in phoneme awareness and letter-sound knowledge.

2.2. YLLs' Attitudes towards EFL Writing

As already stated in the introductory section, little is known about young EFL learners' writing skills, with research on their motivation and attitudes to EFL writing being particularly scarce (Boo et al., 2015). While learning English as a foreign language, YLLs can simultaneously be influenced by many different motivational factors, affecting their engagement and dedication to learning the language. In this respect, Shen et al. (2020) point to the importance of motivational constructs, including self-efficacy, interest, goal orientation, task value, and attitudes, which seem to play a significant motivational role for children aged 6 to 14 (Jiao, 2024). While Fenyvesi (2020) points to attitudes as to feelings toward the foreign language, the learning situation, and the speakers of the foreign language, Gardner (1985, p. 9, as cited in Inostroza et al., 2024) defined attitudes in L2 learning as "evaluative reactions to some referent or attitude object inferred from individuals' beliefs or opinions about the referent." Mihaljević Djigunović (2012) refers to attitudes as one of the individual learner differences that influence learning behavior and achievements and change over time. In a study conducted in a Spanish EFL setting, Muñoz (2017) tracked 14 Spanish 6-year-old EFL learners over 10 years to explore the variability of motivation and attitudes. Although she found that the development of the YLLs' motivation for EFL learning did not generally decrease, their intrinsic motivation (apart from their needs, wants, values, and beliefs, it also includes their attitudes) was higher at the beginning of data collection and gradually decreased in favor of extrinsic motivation (more instrumental motives to learn English like gaining a particular reward related to some economic advantages, work status and the like). Learners' attitudes are further identified as internal motivations that influence their actions towards learning and their perception of the learning process (Alizadeh, 2016). Discussing various types of motivational factors that are important for primary school learners within the EFL context, such as gender, curiosity, autonomy, enjoyment, and mastery motivation, Jiao (2024) differentiates between three types of learners' attitudes. The first one refers to YLLs' attitude towards the English language community. When positive, this attitude increases their participation and dedication towards learning English as they

want to understand the culture of the English language community and live like the community. The second type of attitude relates to YLLs' attitudes towards their teacher, while the third one refers to their classmates. These positive attitudes make the learners love and enjoy EFL learning. Similar findings were reported by Nikolov (1999), who found that the most important motivating factors for children between 6 and 14 years of age included positive attitudes toward the teacher, the learning context, and intrinsically motivating activities, tasks, and materials. In her study, YLLs with a supportive teacher and engaging classroom activities, tasks, and materials were motivated to learn an L2. Wallace and Leong (2020) point out that apart from YLLs' attitudes towards L2 learning and their perceptions of the learning context, there is another motivational factor that is of primary importance for younger EFL learners, and that is social support provided not only by teachers but also by parents and peers.

There is a relatively small body of research on attitudes of young EFL learners aged 6 to 8, i.e., of children at their first developmental stage (according to the YLL motivation research framework developed by Mihaljević Djigunović and Nikolov (2019)). The extant studies, whose participants are first- to third-grade learners, mainly explore YLLs' attitudes about motivation and the impact of specific motivational factors, such as the type of classroom activities, teachers, parents, and textbooks, upon YLLs' motivation for EFL learning and EFL proficiency (e.g., Asmali, 2017; Demirbulak & Zeyrek, 2022; Fenyvesi, 2020; Fenyvesi et al., 2020; Kopinska & Azkarai, 2020; Owen & Thomas, 2019). In sum, the findings of the stated studies confirm that YLLs of this particular age span feel highly motivated to learn and to continue learning English, enjoy real-life situations, variation, and differentiation in English lessons (e.g., carousel-style lessons), have positive attitudes to their peers as well as towards English, with preferences for learning through singing and playing (e.g., gaming and watching YouTube videos in English). In addition, parents' expectations, teachers' expectations, and textbooks have been proven to impact YLLs' motivation positively.

As was pointed out earlier, there is a severe lack of empirical studies investigating YLLs' attitudes toward EFL writing, particularly concerning the context of first and second-graders. In line with the abovementioned findings, the available literature reports that YLLs are interested in writing in English (Dunn, 1993; Frazier Tsai, 2013; Serra, 2014; Vickov, 2006). It was already in 1973 that Elbow (as cited in Shourafa, 2012) pointed out that, at a general level, children who want to write need to write before they want to read. Similarly, Halliday (1973) states that children are not interested in what a language is but in what can be done with it. According to Pinter (2017), the YLLs' interest and enthusiasm towards developing writing and reading skills at the beginning of EFL learning justifies the introduction of the two language skills at an early age. Referring to her teaching experience, Serra (2014) has noticed that YLLs often enjoy the beginning stages of writing when learning letters or characters. She informs that literate YLLs are very willing to work at tracing letters and words and are eager to learn how to print their names, the names of their family members, pets, toys, and classroom objects. Serra emphasizes that this interest in writing should be maintained as YLLs continue to develop their English writing skills. A similar experience confirming first- and second-graders' positive attitudes toward initial EFL writing skills was reported by Vickov and Jakupčević (2022), who conducted a study with 30 primary English teachers. Analyzing the teachers' responses collected through a questionnaire suggests that YLLs like EFL writing exercises such as copying and writing short sentences about themselves and their surroundings. In addition, learners of that age seem to feel very positive about writing in English when play and competition are involved. The findings of Vickov's

study (2006), which concentrated on first graders, confirm their positive attitudes towards writing in English, with the vast majority of the included learners even preferring writing in English to writing in Croatian, their mother tongue. The most frequent reason for preferring writing in English is to be found in, as pupils themselves put it, “strange” letters, like w, y, and x, which do not exist in Croatian. In further explaining their attitude, the first graders mentioned “strange” words, some claiming English words to be fun and engaging because they are “different, strange, shorter” and have double letters. Vickov concludes that given the complexity and high demands posed by writing skills, YLLs’ positive attitudes towards writing in English should be duly recognized and carefully cultivated and stimulated in the process of EFL learning.

3. The Present Study

Taking into account the scarcity of research into the attitudes and motivation of YLLs in the area of writing in English as an L2, especially in the Croatian context, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Croatian YLLs to writing in English in the first two years of primary school (age 7-9)?
2. Are there any differences in YLLs’ attitudes toward EFL writing concerning the grade level?

3.1. Study context

In Croatia, formal primary school education starts at 6 or 7, with a foreign language, predominantly English, introduced in the first grade. In the first four years, EFL is taught in two 45-minute weekly lessons. The teachers have to hold an EFL teaching degree, and they are mostly L1 Croatian speakers. The curriculum guides the English program (Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2019), and materials used in class are chosen from a list approved by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education. The curriculum foresees the gradual introduction of writing from the first grade, with activities focused mainly on tracing and copying single words. By the end of the first grade, learners are expected to be able to copy the letters of the English alphabet (especially *q*, *w*, *x*, and *y*, which are not part of the Croatian alphabet) as well as isolated vocabulary items related to topics listed in the Curriculum. By the end of second grade, learners are expected to be able to copy isolated words but also short and straightforward sentences primarily related to their everyday lives and surroundings.

3.2. Methodology

This study employs an exploratory qualitative research design with elements of a mixed-methods approach, combining group interviews (for first graders) and a semi-structured questionnaire (for second graders). The choice of methods follows child-centered research principles and recommendations for research with young learners (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017), emphasizing the importance of interactive, flexible, and child-friendly techniques, ensuring that data collection is ethical and age-appropriate.

3.2.1. Participants

The participants in the study were 69 L1 Croatian young language learners aged 6-9, 41 in the first grade and 28 in the second grade of primary school (Table 1). A convenience sampling method was used, as access to the classroom was granted through an existing

collaboration with the teacher. The same teacher taught all the participants. Given the small-scale and exploratory nature of the study, as well as ethical considerations related to working with young children, demographic details such as gender and exact ages were not collected, as they were not deemed relevant to the research focus. The teacher was an L1-Croatian speaker with a degree in Teacher Education, complemented by a module on teaching English to young learners. As the study was conducted in the last week of school (June 2024), the learners in the first grade had been learning English for one school year (approximately 70 lessons), and those in the second grade for two school years (approximately 140 lessons).

Table 1.

Information about the participants

Grade	First grade	Second grade
No. of participants	41	28
Age	7/8	8/9

3.2.2. Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

The study received approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Split (the authors' affiliation). Permission was obtained from the school principal and teacher, and the parents gave informed consent. The researchers informed the children in detail about the purpose of the study and explained to them that their participation was completely voluntary. All YLLs who participated in the study were asked for their oral consent.

The instrument used in the present study, a survey consisting of 9 questions (Table 2), was adapted from Vickov (2006), with minor changes. Due to the differences between the two groups of participants in terms of age and school experience, the instrument was applied as group interviews with first graders and a written semi-structured questionnaire with second graders. Croatian was used as the language of communication throughout the study. After receiving all the approvals needed, the survey was administered in both forms to two pilot groups of five randomly selected students from each grade. According to their feedback, no adjustments to the original survey were needed.

The survey consisted of 7 closed-ended questions. The participants had to choose between two possible answers and three open-ended questions, one of which was a follow-up to the closed-ended question number 9. The first two questions aimed to determine the pupils' attitude towards writing in English and their preference for writing in their L1 and English. This was followed by two open-ended questions to shed further light on the source of their (de)motivation. Questions 5 – 7 focused on their preference for the most salient skills and activities in the YLL classroom (speaking, singing) compared to writing in English. Questions 8 and 9 aimed to further determine the intensity of their motivation for EFL writing, both in and out of the classroom.

Interviews with first-graders were conducted during the participants' regular English lessons. The learners who agreed to participate were taken to the adjacent room in groups of four, with each interview session lasting for about 8 minutes. Both authors were in the room; one conducted the interview, and the other took notes. After a question was asked, the participants were encouraged to answer individually and to elaborate during interviews to minimize misinterpretation. The interview was conducted in a relaxed atmosphere to ensure

that the participants were unhindered in providing spontaneous and truthful answers and to take advantage of the interview format, in which the researchers could ask the participants to explain or elaborate on their answers.

The second-grade participants were given a semi-structured questionnaire during their regular English language lessons. One of the authors read each question out loud, one question at a time, provided additional explanations, if needed, and allowed time for the learners to write down their responses, waiting for all the participants to be ready for the next question. In the end, the children were told they could take more time to complete their answers or add any other comments. The advantage of the questionnaire was that the participants could respond independently and not be influenced by their peers.

In terms of establishing validity and reliability, particularly in the process of data collection, the strategy of triangulation was employed, i.e., the study maintained consistency in question content across two different sampling groups as well as two different measurement instruments. This allowed the information obtained to be corroborated from multiple angles, enhancing the credibility of the interpretations and reducing the impact of potential biases from a single method or data source (Ahmed, 2024). Besides that, before administering the questionnaire and the interview, a pilot study was conducted to confirm their clarity. Finally, care was taken to restrict the amount of information shared with the respondents to make sure that the research was not biased with preconceived notions of the respondents.

3.2.3. Data Analysis

The interviews with first-graders were transcribed, and the transcripts were subsequently reviewed for accuracy. Next, the responses from the closed-ended questions in both the interviews and questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts) to identify patterns in students' attitudes toward writing. Open-ended responses were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the data analysis process, elements of consensus coding (Hemphill & Richards, 2018) were used. Two researchers independently coded all the transcripts and answers to open-ended questions and met weekly to compare results on a one-to-one basis, with minor disagreements being reconciled at the end of the coding process.

4. Results and Discussion

The following section presents the results and discussion of the study in line with the two research questions. The first part focuses on Croatian young language learners' (YLLs) attitudes toward writing in English in the first and second grades, then examines differences between the attitudes of first and second-grade learners.

4.1. Attitudes of Croatian YLLs Toward Writing in English in the First and Second Grades

4.1.1. First-grade learners

The first-grade learners' responses to closed-ended questions are presented in Table 2. When asked if they liked writing in English (question 1), an overwhelming majority of the first graders (90%) responded positively, which reaffirms the results of Vickov's study (2006), which pointed to YLLs' interest in writing. However, just over half of the participants (56%) preferred writing in Croatian to writing in English, unlike the first graders in Vickov's study,

where 76.67% of the respondents stated they preferred writing in English. Though the results of the two studies differ in this respect, it can be observed that the participants did not express an extremely prevailing preference for writing in Croatian, even though it is their mother tongue to which they had been exposed much earlier and to a much larger extent than to English. We believe this supports the YLLs' positive attitudes towards EFL writing. Apart from that, the first graders from Vickov's study attended English classes in small groups (up to ten learners per group) in a private foreign language school, with the teaching process organized in a more relaxed and familiar atmosphere. Given the class size, it can be assumed that the pupils had a close relationship with their English teacher, who had enough time to systematically practice writing and dedicate more attention to each child's progress and needs. It seems plausible to expect that such a classroom situation might have intensified young learners' positive attitudes towards EFL writing.

Table 2.

Responses of the first-grade respondents to closed-ended survey questions

Questions	Answers	No. of resp.	%
1. Do you like writing in English?	Yes	37	90
	No	4	10
2. Do you prefer writing in English or Croatian?	English	18	44
	Croatian	23	56
5. Do you prefer writing or speaking in English?	writing	10	24
	speaking	31	76
6. Do you prefer writing or singing in English?	writing	14	34
	singing	27	66
7. Do you prefer writing or speaking in Croatian?	writing	15	41
	speaking	26	59
8. Would you like to write more or less in English?	more	21	51
	less	20	49
9. Except for homework, do you write in English at home?	yes	30	73
	no	11	27

To shed more light on their attitudes, the YLLs were asked to elaborate on what they liked about writing in English (Question 3, Table 2). The responses provided by the first graders can be grouped into several categories. The first category relates to the differences between writing in English and Croatian. More specifically, the answers were focused on the four letters in the English alphabet that are absent from the Croatian alphabet – *q*, *x*, *y*, and *w*, as well as on the non-phonetic spelling of the English language, which is, as already mentioned, in contrast to the one-to-one grapheme-phoneme correspondence in Croatian. The letters *q*, *x*, *y*, and *w* were perceived mainly as a positive aspect of writing in English, with almost half of the participants (20 out of 41) identifying these letters as a reason for liking writing in English. Some participants gave more specific answers, expressing their preference for one or more of these four letters, while others offered further explanations, as in examples 1-3 below.

Example 1: Some words like 'six' are shorter because of the 'x.'

Example 2: 'Y' because there are many words with 'y'.

Example 3: 'Y' because you write it like 'V' and 'I.'

Along with some general statements, where the participants described words in English as "different" or "strange," several of the first-graders also provided specific reasons linked to the differences in spelling or the specificities of the English spelling system (Examples 4-6).

By doing so, they showed an ability to think analytically about spelling and to compare it to their L1.

Example 4: I like 'pas' and 'dog' – it is entirely different in English but has the same number of letters. (note – *pas* means 'dog' in Croatian)

Example 5: I like 'pig' because you write it like you read it.

Example 6: I like 'orange' because it is spelled 'orange' and 'car' because it is also a Croatian word, but it means something else. (note - *car* means 'emperor' in Croatian)

The fact that many of the first graders listed the differences between their L1 and English as a motivational factor stems most likely from their curiosity as one of the strongest motivators for children their age. These results are in line with Vickov's (2006) and Serra's (2014) observations that YLLs tend to enjoy the beginning stages of writing, especially learning the "strange" letters and characters that do not exist in their mother tongue. The finding related to YLLs perceiving the differences between the two spelling systems also aligns with the law of conscious awareness formulated by Claparède (Vygotsky, 1997, as cited in Vickov & Jakupčević, 2022). Claparède demonstrated that a conscious awareness of similarity appears later in the child than a conscious awareness of difference. This trait of the child's perception ability is critical in the process of FL learning as it enables YLLs a faster and easier adjustment to and acquisition of all the items in a foreign language that are different from the ones in their mother tongue. This ability is crucial for learning, as it enables children to adapt more quickly and efficiently to everything in a foreign language that visibly deviates from their mother tongue. However, in contrast to Vickov (2006), where the children were not asked what they disliked about writing, it is interesting to note that the first graders also listed the differences between the two languages as a negative aspect of writing, which will be elaborated on later.

The second category of responses to the question of what the participants liked about writing in English relates to the usefulness of writing for learning English, with nine first graders providing relevant responses. These children mentioned the benefits of writing as a tool for remembering words more quickly or efficiently (Examples 7-12). Research has found that writing by hand activates a wide range of interconnected brain regions responsible for movement, vision, sensory processing, and memory, forming connections crucial for memory formation and for encoding new information (Van der Weel & Van der Meer, 2023), which some of the first graders in our study seem to understand intuitively.

Example 7: It's easier to remember when I write.

Example 8: You learn more through writing.

Example 9: It will be easier to remember words for next year.

Example 10: The more you write, the more you learn.

Example 11: By writing, I learn and find out more things.

Example 12: We learn more quickly when we write.

The third group of answers is related to specific words the learners enjoy writing. Some of the first graders named topics, such as toys, animals, vehicles, and colors, with one child stating: *I like writing words for things I like*. Several participants provided specific examples related to liking what the words represented, finding specific words easy to write, having learned something well, or simply finding a topic interesting (Examples 13-18). These examples speak of the importance of affective factors in learning and the need to provide the YLLs with opportunities to use language to talk or write about things that interest them. These responses, particularly example 17, also provide evidence for Halliday's statement

(1973) that children are not interested in what language is but in what can be done with it. Similarly, Cameron (2001) points out that children must write purposefully.

Example 13: I like writing 'balloon' and 'plane' because it's easy.

Example 14: 'Cat' because it's easy to write and I like cats.

Example 15: I like writing colors and numbers because I've learned that well.

Example 16: I like writing 'teddy bear' because my little brother loves teddy bears.

Example 17: I like writing 'birthday' and 'present' so that I can surprise someone.

Example 18: 'Fish' because it's nice and fun to watch – I like fish.

Finally, several topics were mentioned only by a few of the first graders, such as specific classroom activities connected to writing, with two participants listing writing a word and drawing what it represented. Furthermore, two first-graders named reasons connected to travel, while one first-grader noted that speaking is more important for traveling than writing.

In the next open-ended question (question 4), learners were asked what they disliked about writing in English. Their answers are presented in two broad categories. As described above, the differences between English and Croatian were mainly perceived as a source of motivation; however, some learners also saw them as a reason for not enjoying writing in English. Specifically, four first-grade participants explicitly mentioned the letters *q*, *w*, *x*, and *y* as a source of difficulty or confusion, e.g., *Q can be confusing to write*. The participants (16 of the first graders) mentioned the English spelling system as a reason for not liking writing, particularly mentioning issues connected to remembering the correct spelling, especially regarding longer words (Examples 19-23). These responses may serve as a warning sign, as they indicate that the YLLs' enthusiasm might wane when it comes to more challenging aspects of the English writing system, for example, in writing longer words, particularly those including letters that do not exist in YLLs' L1. This seems to be supported by the textbook used by the YLLs in this study, as it is only towards the end of the first grade that the children are introduced to longer words such as those mentioned in the examples below – *crocodile*, *elephant*.

Example 19: It's written differently, so it's hard to remember.

Example 20: I don't like long words like 'crocodile.'

Example 21: It's confusing – they write some words backward.

Example 22: I don't like writing 'elephant' because I get confused in the middle.

Example 23: I don't like long words – the first letters are easy, but then it gets harder.

However, considering that almost half of the participants, as already stated, identified the letters *q*, *w*, *x*, and *y* as a motivational factor in their positive attitude toward EFL writing, it can be assumed that the main reason some YLLs dislike writing in English is related to the spelling system in general. This should not come as a surprise considering how different the Croatian and English spelling systems are, which is most strongly manifested in long, polysyllabic words.

In questions 5-7, which are related to YLLs' preference for different language skills and activities in English, most first graders reported they preferred speaking to writing in both English (76%) and Croatian (59%). They also preferred singing songs to writing in English (66%). The results for these two questions are in line with Vickov (2006), where the first graders also showed a preference for oral activities, while learners in Asmali's (2017) also rated playing games, repeating words, and singing as an activity that they enjoy more than writing. This is not surprising for several reasons. Firstly, there is a much greater emphasis

on oral skills in language lessons with YLLs, which is also reflected in the Croatian curriculum for English, so the learners are probably more used to activities related to speaking and singing. Secondly, speaking is the skill the YLLs are most familiar with in their mother tongue. Thirdly, as explained earlier, writing is the most demanding skill to acquire in both the L1 and the foreign language. Writing requires high concentration and engagement, which is probably why children prefer oral activities in both English and Croatian. Finally, as curiosity, playfulness, imagination, the need for movement, and self-affirmation are some of the essential components of children's psychology, the contemporary EFL teaching methodology supports speaking, singing, and playing didactic games as the most frequent forms of teaching in early EFL learning (Vickov, 2006). Children aged six and seven enjoy classes based on playing, singing, and dramatization associated with real-life situations (Sironić- Bonefačić, 1999). However, although teachers recognize the importance of games in the EFL classroom, they often do not use them frequently due to issues such as curriculum constraints (Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011), which should be addressed in future teaching practices.

In question 8, the YLLs were asked if they would like to write more or less in English, and just over half (51%) of the first graders said they wanted to write more. In other words, first graders seem to be almost equally divided between the two options, with a slight majority still opting for doing more writing, which can be considered another sign of their positive attitude towards EFL writing.

In the final question, the participants were asked whether they did any writing in English outside of school unrelated to homework set by the teacher. The vast majority of the first graders (73%) reported doing writing in English at home, with 15 of the participants mentioning the *Izumi* learning platform. This Croatian platform contains digital activities and additional materials accompanying the textbook series used in class, which learners, like our participants, can access for free. Along with being encouraged to use the platform by the teacher and their parents, the first graders reported that they found it fun and liked practicing independently. Other activities that were mentioned were sending messages in English (to friends or parents), practicing on their own or with parents (*I take a piece of paper and write, and then my mum checks it*), using devices like mobile phones or laptops, with one first grader even mentioning using a dictionary to copy words. The stated findings seem to support the YLLs' positive attitudes towards EFL writing, emphasizing the creative use of language associated with their scope of interest and the element of fun.

4.1.2. Second- grade learners

The second-grade learners' responses to closed-ended survey questions are presented in Table 3. A large proportion of the second-grade participants (82%) responded positively to whether they liked writing in English (question 1, Table 3), with a percentage only slightly lower than the corresponding one in the first grade. However, most (71%) of the second graders preferred writing in Croatian to writing in English (question 2). This high percentage might stem from the fact that by the end of the second grade, the learners are expected to have mastered the basic writing skills in L1 while developing writing skills in English progresses much more slowly. This is unsurprising as the children have far more opportunities to write in L1 both at school, where all other subjects are taught in Croatian and require L1 writing skills, and outside school. In addition, developing initial writing skills in Croatian is less demanding than in English, primarily due to the phonetic principle that is almost consistently implemented in Croatian orthography. When writing in Croatian,

learners can almost always rely on the familiar auditory image of words and transfer it into its written form.

Table 3.

Responses of the second-grade learners to closed-ended survey questions

Questions	Answers	No. of resp.	%
1. Do you like writing in English?	Yes	23	82
	No	5	18
2. Do you prefer writing in English or Croatian?	English	8	29
	Croatian	20	71
5. Do you prefer writing or speaking in English?	writing	6	21
	speaking	22	79
6. Do you prefer writing or singing in English?	writing	12	43
	singing	16	57
7. Do you prefer writing or speaking in Croatian?	writing	12	43
	speaking	16	57
8. Would you like to write more or less in English?	more	6	21
	less	22	79
9. Except for homework, do you write in English at home?	yes	16	57
	no	12	43

In the following question (question 3, Table 3), the learners were allowed to specify what they liked about writing in English. Several of the participants provided brief responses, such as “everything” (3 participants) or “nothing” (2 participants). Similar to the first graders, some of the YLLs in the second grade also mentioned enjoying the “strange” and “different” spelling system (8 out of the 28 respondents), with some specific examples below (Examples 24-26).

Example 24: Writing strange words is fun.

Example 25: I like that the letters are strange and the words unusual.

Example 26: I like writing English letters in cursive.

Over a third of the second graders (11 participants) also reported liking to use language to talk or write about things that interest them or that they find easy, naming topics that they like writing about, such as numbers, colors, or animals, or activities, such as playing games. Several participants provided more specific responses (Examples 27-29).

Example 27: I like writing everything about vehicles in English.

Example 28: I like talking about myself.

Example 29: I like it when we write in the notebook or play games.

Finally, several answers linked the second graders' positive attitudes towards writing with a more general love of learning, like in Examples 30-32.

Example 30: I like learning new things.

Example 31: I like learning new words.

Example 32: I like that it's another language.

The second graders were much less outspoken when asked what they disliked about writing in English (question 4, Table 3). Five participants generally complained that some words are “long,” “difficult,” or “strange” (Examples 33-34).

Example 33: I don't like that some words are too hard to write.

Example 34: I don't like anything that's difficult.

Furthermore, several of the second graders mentioned topics (such as weather or food) that they did not like writing about without additional explanation. Three subjects complained that writing is boring or that too much writing is done, while five mentioned not liking specific activities, such as tests and worksheets.

When asked to compare their preference for different language skills and activities in English (questions 5 and 6), just like the first graders, the majority of the second graders reported a preference for speaking over writing in English (79%) and Croatian (57%). Over half of the second-grade learners (57%) preferred singing songs over writing in English. These results, similar to those of the first graders, will be compared in greater detail in the following section.

In answer to question 8, the vast majority (79%) of the second graders said they wanted to write less in English. This high percentage is worrying, as it speaks of the decreasing enthusiasm for EFL writing in the second grade. The finding also contrasts their positive attitude towards writing in English, as expressed in their responses to question 1. This can be interpreted in light of their comments on what they disliked about writing, which some learners described as boring, difficult, and tiring. However, considering their previous responses that indicate an overall positive attitude towards EFL writing, we believe that the real reason why the majority of the second graders would like to write less in English is related, generally, to increasingly complex school tasks and obligations as well as to increasingly demanding language activities in the area of developing EFL writing skills. As a matter of fact, in the second grade, learners are supposed to master writing short sentences, which, apart from spelling and knowledge of vocabulary, also implies mastery of punctuation, capitalization, and specific grammatical categories. Croatian and English differ significantly in some of the stated language aspects, particularly in spelling and capitalization, which presents significant difficulty for many young learners. This requires more practice, which means more engagement, effort, and concentration.

Finally, just over half of the second graders (57%) responded that they wrote at home in English. Some of the learners in this group mentioned using the *Izzj* platform, but they also listed a wider range of activities that included writing in English at home. Several activities using electronic gadgets were mentioned - using laptops and mobile phones, chatting with other players in video games, programming, and browsing the internet. As many as three learners listed writing poems in English; one said they wrote about themselves in English, and one mentioned writing letters. This finding confirms YLLs' willingness and readiness to use written English creatively and for practical purposes.

4.2. Differences in YLLs' Attitudes Toward EFL Writing by Grade

The results for the two groups of learners will be compared to answer the second research question. While most of the participants in first and second grade (90% vs. 82%) reported that they liked writing in English, the proportion of the participants who expressed a positive attitude towards writing in English in the second grade is slightly smaller. This is further emphasized when the answers to the second question are observed. While just over half of the first graders preferred writing in English to Croatian, almost three-quarters of the second graders preferred writing in Croatian. As we mentioned, one reason for this might lie in the fact that second graders are already reasonably skilled writers in their L1, which may be why they find it more enjoyable than writing in English.

On the other hand, for the first graders, writing in both languages is a relative novelty, evidenced by the almost equal number of our first-grade participants who declared their preference for writing in Croatian or English. However, this result could also indicate that the enthusiasm for writing in English experienced a drop in the second grade. While writing in the English classroom in the first grade is focused primarily on short words, in the second grade, learners are expected to write whole sentences, which is physically and mentally more exerting. Also, by the end of the second grade, they have learned a wide variety of vocabulary items, so there is much more they are expected to be familiar with when it comes to writing in English, which may affect their enthusiasm. In any case, these results can serve as a warning, pointing to a need to pay more attention to maintaining the children's positive attitudes towards writing in English.

A closer look at what the two groups of learners specifically liked and disliked shows some variation among them. For example, the differences between Croatian and English were mentioned as positive and negative factors in both groups; however, this category of responses was much more prevalent among the first graders. The most likely reason for this lies in the novelty of the English language writing system for younger learners. While some of the first graders described writing (especially longer) English words as "confusing" or "difficult," the majority saw these differences as something fun and challenging. In the second grade, only a few learners mentioned that they liked or disliked writing "strange" words, which indicates that the differences between the two languages are less of a source of motivation for older learners. However, they seem to remain a source of demotivation, with several second graders complaining about "difficult" and "long" words. This means that special attention should be placed on maintaining their interest in the differences between L1 and English as a motivating factor and mitigating the potential adverse effects. Another source of difficulty for the younger group seems to stem from the physical aspect of writing, which is linked to their physical readiness for writing, and it was not mentioned by the learners in the second grade. Thus, teachers need to pay attention to how much writing is done in class so that it does not become a burden for children who are only beginning to write. Although the second graders did not complain specifically about writing being physically demanding, the majority did state that they wanted to write less, and this might also be linked to the fact that writing does imply a certain level of physical exertion, as mentioned earlier.

In both groups of learners, especially first graders, their interests and preferences seem important in stimulating their motivation to write in English. This is evident from the list of topics they mentioned when asked what they liked or disliked about writing. The learners' interests seem to be an unchanging motivational factor between the first and second grades, which makes them especially important as a possible tool for teachers. All learners, especially young children, enjoy talking and writing about themselves, about things that interest them and that pertain to their experiences and environment (Kurniasih, 2011).

The two groups were comparable in enjoying other activities more than writing, which was not surprising, as writing is considered to be the most difficult among the language skills, given the number of sub-skills that the learners are required to master and the conscious effort needed for its development (Bai et al., 2020; Shin & Crandall, 2014). However, seeing their preference for singing fall in the second grade was interesting. The authors' experience in the classroom indicates that the second-graders are already beginning to perceive themselves as more serious. They sometimes believe singing is an activity for younger

children, which may also be caused by the fact that the songs in the textbooks for YLLs are usually of the playful variety the children may associate with their earlier years.

Another interesting difference between the groups was that the first graders reported wanting to do more writing, while most of the second graders stated that they wanted to write less. This is unsurprising as less writing is done at the end of the first grade than a year later when the learners are already much more skilled writers in their L1 and L2. While the focus in the first grade is mostly on writing (copying) individual words, in the second grade, the learners are expected to write (copy) whole sentences, which is physically more demanding and requires more sustained attention and practice.

Finally, a more significant proportion of the first graders than the second graders responded that they wrote in English at home, which also indicates a drop in the level of enthusiasm for writing in English in the older group of learners. Both groups listed similar activities, such as using electronic devices, playing video games, or practicing with parents. Interestingly, only one second-grader mentioned the Izzi platform, which was very popular among the first-graders. However, the second-grade participants mentioned a wider variety of activities, such as writing poetry, writing letters, or programming, which may speak of their more extensive experience. Although the difference between the two groups is only one year of formal education, we can presume that they generally become more mature and experienced in studying and learning in a formal setting in that one year. Extramural learning of EFL has been recognized as a prevailing trend among YLLs, and teachers should strive to link the children's language learning activities outside the classroom (e.g., gaming) to what happens in the classroom, which includes encouraging those YLLs who do not engage in these activities (Sylvén & Sundquist, 2012).

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore first- and second-grade learners' attitudes toward writing in English and to determine whether any differences occurred in their attitudes concerning the grade level. Our results show that YLLs largely harbor a positive attitude towards EFL writing. This is evidenced not only in their overwhelmingly positive responses to the initial question related to their general attitude towards writing in English but also in their enthusiasm for practicing writing at home, especially in the first grade. The first graders also demonstrated that, despite their young age, some recognize the benefits of writing for learning, citing specific examples of how writing can be helpful. The willingness they expressed for writing in English at home presents, we believe, an opportunity that should be maximized, given the difficulty of writing as a skill and the potential benefits YLLs can reap from additional practice and from using English for their interests and activities of their choice. Children should be encouraged to write at home by focusing their attention on the possible uses for writing in English, which some of the participants in our study were already aware of, for example, as part of video games or other apps adapted to the age groups. In other words, practitioners must strive to show YLLs that writing can be enjoyable and valuable and that they can use it for real-life activities within their areas of interest.

Another important result pertains to the differences between the learners' L1 and English, which were seen as both motivating and demotivating, especially among the younger learners. This means that special attention needs to be directed into maintaining the children's enthusiasm for what is strange, new, and challenging in writing in the English language, as well as minimizing the difficulties that come with this new way of writing. The latter is

significant in areas where L1 interference might be expected. As the children in both groups preferred speaking and singing over writing, teachers must look for ways to make writing fun and not “boring,” as some second graders described. Given the complexity and high demands posed by writing, it appears to be crucial that YLLs’ initial positive attitudes towards EFL writing should be duly recognized and stimulated in the process of EFL learning. Their writing motivation at the beginning of EFL education should not be jeopardized by overly demanding exercises and tasks or too strict evaluation. Teachers should also be aware that YLLs can quickly get tired and bored if writing practice lasts too long or is too frequent. Keeping this in mind, the physical aspect of writing is another dimension that EFL teachers should be aware of. YLLs, especially the first graders, are still mastering graphomotor and orthographic skills, a prerequisite for developing writing skills.

Apart from the valuable finding suggesting overall positive attitudes towards EFL writing at both grade levels, our study has detected a slight decline in the YLLs’ interest in EFL writing at the end of the second grade. Considering the results of previous research indicating that YLLs’ motivation and attitudes towards FL learning often decrease as years go by (Dörnyei et al., 2006; Henry, 2009), our study may have identified a turning point at which such a change happens in the area of writing skills. As already emphasized, this finding should be taken as a warning to teachers who need to plan EFL writing with YLLs in great detail and be capable of arousing their curiosity to maintain their initial positive attitudes. Finally, the study findings could serve as a valuable contribution to encouraging the introduction of EFL writing from the first grade of primary school, which has, as elaborated earlier, manifold benefits for YLLs.

The findings of this study suggest several key pedagogical implications for various stakeholders in the field of English language teaching for young learners. Teachers must design and use engaging, age-appropriate writing activities that foster motivation, ensuring that writing is integrated with other language skills. Teacher education programs should emphasize strategies to enhance motivation and create supportive classroom environments for writing. Additionally, professional development in fostering positive attitudes toward writing is crucial. According to the findings related to the advantages of developing EFL writing skills from an early age (from the first grade of primary school), teachers might benefit from education programs that would provide systematic training in the field. Policymakers can play a role by ensuring that writing is adequately represented in curricula, funding teacher training, and promoting inclusive pedagogical practices that cater to diverse learner needs. Course and material designers should focus on creating materials that are both engaging and age-appropriate, incorporating interactive tasks and opportunities for peer collaboration to enhance motivation. Overall, fostering a positive attitude toward writing from the early stages of language learning is essential for supporting young learners’ long-term language development.

The main limitation of the current study lies in its small sample, which is restricted to children taught by one EFL teacher, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, as the data rely on students’ self-reports, there is a risk of bias, as learners may not always accurately convey their true attitudes or experiences. Another limitation is the absence of classroom observations, which prevents insight into how learners’ attitudes toward writing in English manifest in actual classroom interactions. Future studies should address these limitations by including larger and more diverse participant groups from different contexts and taught by various teachers. Incorporating observational data could provide a more nuanced understanding of how students engage with writing tasks in real classroom settings.

Additionally, longitudinal research could track how motivation for writing in EFL evolves as learners progress through different grades, helping to identify factors that influence changes in motivation over time. Finally, it would be valuable to explore the impact of different instructional methods and teacher-student dynamics on young learners' attitudes toward writing in English, including the potential of modern technologies and audiovisual materials, which have been shown to enhance vocabulary acquisition with young learners (Yangin Ersanli, 2023) and could play a role in boosting writing motivation and engagement.

Ethical Issues

The authors confirm that ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia (Approval Date: 17/5/2024).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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