

# Learning English in and out School: Pupil's Attitudes

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SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

Lucija Trgovac

LEARNING ENGLISH IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL: PUPILS'  
ATTITUDES

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Mentorica rada:

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## **Sažetak**

Širenjem utjecaja engleskoga jezika diljem svijeta u zadnjih pet stoljeća, razvila se potreba i potražnja za dodatnom naobrazbom. Mnogi odrasli, ali i djeca, upisuju škole stranih jezika kako bi usavršili svoje znanje i tako stekli kompetencije za komunikaciju s ljudima iz drugih dijelova svijeta. Razvojem škola stranih jezika i povećanjem broja učenika koji ih pohađaju, dolazi se do pitanja: „Utječe li učenje engleskoga jezika u školi stranih jezika na stavove učenika prema predmetu Engleski jezik u nižim razredima osnovne škole?“ Istraživanje za ovaj diplomski rad provelo se kako bi se našao odgovor na postavljeno pitanje. Istraživanje je provedeno u jednoj osnovnoj školi u Zagrebu. Uspoređeni su stavovi prema školskome predmetu Engleski jezik u učenika koji pohađaju škole stranih jezika te onih koji nemaju takvu izvanškolsku aktivnost. Rezultati ovoga rada pomoći će učiteljima, roditeljima, odgojiteljima te svima onima koji sudjeluju u obrazovanju djece, u svrhu poboljšanja i razvoja nastavnoga procesa. Stavovi i mišljenja učenika koji pohađaju škole stranih jezika mogli bi pomoći učiteljima engleskoga jezika u školama prilikom prilagodbe nastavnih sadržaja njihovome znanju. Drugim riječima, cilj je svakome učeniku omogućiti da napreduje u engleskome jeziku u školi, bez obzira na njihovu razinu znanja.

Ključne riječi: učenje engleskoga jezika u Hrvatskoj, engleski jezik izvan nastave, motivacija za učenje, stavovi učenika prema engleskome jeziku, Jean Piaget

## **Abstract**

By the spread of English language across the world in the last five centuries, the need and demand for additional studying developed. A lot of adults, but also children, enroll into foreign language schools to improve their knowledge and acquire competences to communicate with people from other parts of the world. Developing foreign language schools and increasing the number of students who attend them, generates the question: “Does learning English in a language school affect pupils’ attitudes towards English in lower grades of primary school?” The research for this master’s thesis was conducted to find the answer to the question. The research was implemented in a primary school in the city of Zagreb. The attitudes towards learning English in school was compared among pupils who take English lessons in language schools and the ones who do not. The results of this research will help teachers, parents, educators, and other people working in children education, with the goal of improvement and development of the learning process. Attitudes and opinions of pupils who attend language schools could help English teachers in

schools while adjusting teaching contents to their knowledge. In other words, the goal is to ensure that every pupil prospers in English in school, regardless of their level of knowledge.

Key words: learning English in Croatia, English as an extracurricular activity, motivation for learning, pupils' attitudes towards learning English, Jean Piaget

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## **1) Introduction**

Studying English as a foreign language has never been easy for Croatians. There are many grammatical structures, rules, spelling challenges, and pronunciations which do not exist in the Croatian language. What is even more challenging is teaching English as a foreign language to young children. Children not only need to acquire curricular content that educational institutions have proposed, but they need to acquire it while having fun. Many people claim that it is the only job that teachers have – to teach children. In other words, it seems like an effortless task. However, it is not always easy to find time and space for creativity and fun in class while striving to achieve learning objectives.

The new curriculum brought a lot of changes – the lessons are now based on aims and outcomes. To be specific, teachers are asked to create their lessons however they want to, but their pupils need to achieve the set outcomes at the end of a school year. This does not mean that the educational system is flawless at the moment. For example, many schools lack teaching materials and aids. Also, there are many children in one classroom, and it is extremely arduous to devote themselves to everyone equally. Furthermore, not all teachers are educated enough to teach that way. As an example, a teacher who graduated from university 15 years ago will find it much more challenging to adapt to the new system than a teacher who graduated a few years ago. To put it in another way, it needs to be understood that education and pupils' needs change rapidly. Therefore, teachers need to adapt and create lessons according to the pupils' interests and needs.

Whenever future teachers are asked to express their opinion on the Croatian educational system, most of them say that something is not right. However, when they are asked to elaborate and give examples of good practice, only a few of them know what to say. What everyone is sure about is that something needs to be improved, but until problems are not recognized and named, there is no hope that something will change. Those changes need to start with the future teachers undergoing their higher education training. Their creativity, innovation, and willingness to explore and learn must be the starting point. Hopefully, this master's thesis is a step towards improving lessons of English in primary schools in Croatia.



The idea for this master's thesis was formed while working as a special education assistant. There were a lot of children who attended a language school regularly, and they seemed to be bored during English lessons in their primary school. At that moment, a question appeared: "Does learning English in a language school affect pupils' attitudes towards English in lower grades of primary school?" The goal is to see whether children who study English as an extracurricular activity have different attitudes towards English in school.

## **2) English as an extracurricular activity**

English as a lingua franca has existed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the British started to colonize parts of Asia and Africa. It is a phenomenon in which speakers, whose native language is not English, use the English language to communicate with each other (Jenkins & Baker, 2020). Even though it started in Asia and Africa, that does not mean it stopped there: "...it is only during the past thirty years that ELF has spread to the rest of the world, seen a dramatic rise in its number of users, and attained its current global status." (Jenkins & Baker, 2020) Considering this, it is not surprising that numerous children all over the world attend English language schools as an extracurricular activity. It is not any different in Croatia. There are so many language schools only in the capital (Zagreb) that hardly anyone can name all of them.

Some language schools, apart from having lessons at their institutions' locations, offer lessons on state schools' premises. In that way, they make learning English as an extracurricular activity more approachable for a broader group of pupils. Most pupils take lessons once or twice a week during school year. They are usually organized in groups of 15 or less pupils, which makes learning more efficient and pupil oriented. Puževski (1988) explains it in the following way: regular lessons in state schools cannot achieve all tasks and goals that extracurricular activities can. However, extracurricular activities should be intricately connected to what is learned in school, with the goal of extending their knowledge. This can result in developing pupils' skills and interests.

For example, "Sova", which is one of the most famous language schools in the Novi Zagreb district, offers "Sova junior" courses which contain 70 lessons. The maximum number of pupils within each of their course groups is 14. Their work follows European standards and The Council of Europe's levels of proficiency (Sova language institution editors, n.d.). According to the majority of pupils attending language schools in Zagreb, their unique approach makes learning

English more interesting and fun. Their practice usually includes games, rhymes, chants, plays, and much more. In other words, it is much different than the traditional approach, which is still a part of the Croatian educational system.

### **3) Motivation for learning**

It is common that students vary in level of motivation to learn about divergent topics. Every person in this world is different and, consequently, interested in diverse activities and subjects. Ryan and Deci (2000) describe what motivation is: “To be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated.” However, those who share a great level of motivation for learning, might not share the source of motivation. There are two basic types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.

#### *a) Intrinsic motivation*

Intrinsic motivation, as its name explains, comes from the inside. People who are intrinsically motivated to do something, do it because they want to, not because they are asked to. In other words, they feel the need to do it for their satisfaction. An intrinsically motivated person does not expect to be noticed or honored for fulfilling their tasks: “When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards.” (ibid.) For example, a class of students can learn about wild animals in school. At the end of the lesson, they get homework. They might need to do research on a wild animal and make a poster. The students who are intrinsically motivated will do the homework fast and in detail because they are interested in the matter. Many of them will explore the subject additionally and do more than it is asked – some students may draw a wild animal, while some can add interesting facts or decorate the poster with related motifs.

#### *b) Extrinsic motivation*

Extrinsic motivation, on the contrary, comes from the outside. Extrinsically motivated people are the ones who do certain tasks to either get a reward, or not to get punished for not doing it. Unfortunately, this type of motivation is more inherent not only in education, but in life generally: “Although intrinsic motivation is clearly an important type of motivation, most of the activities people do are not, strictly speaking, intrinsically motivated.” (ibid.) For example, pupils in Croatia are often extrinsically motivated by grades. The Croatian educational system is still

based on numerical grading, which often leads to situations in which pupils learn only to get the best grades, not to acquire knowledge for future. Ryan & Deci (2000) prove that it is not any different in other countries by stating that children, at the end of early childhood, stop being intrinsically motivated because of their society's demands and roles. They require putting children in "molds" that would suit their society's norms. Also, in schools, it is almost impossible for pupils to be intrinsically motivated when their grades decide how they will continue their education.

*c) Motivation for learning a foreign/second language*

Motivation for learning a foreign or a second language is known as one of the crucial factors which determine learners' success. There is a saying: "Hard work beats talent if talent does not work hard." Specifically, someone who has a predisposition for languages, but lacks in motivation and, consequently, does not work hard enough, will not gain much from their predisposition. Dörnyei (1998) confirms it by stating: "Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals." What is even more important is that motivation pushes learners to do well, even when learning a language becomes extremely challenging (ibid.)

Mihaljević Djigunović (1996) researched learners' motivation as a source of variance in attitudes, effort, and achievement. There was a total of 340 pupils involved in the research. When it comes to their motivation for learning English, Mihaljević Djigunović discovered that the learners with high affective motivation evaluated their English classes more eminently – they said that they found it more useful and interesting. What is more, the same author determined that the intrinsically motivated pupils put more effort in learning English, enjoyed their lessons more, and thought of their teacher as someone who was competent enough to do the job. However, it is interesting that those pupils did not do better in English. To be precise, the intrinsically motivated pupils did not get higher grades in English than the ones who were not intrinsically motivated. Also, the ones who were intrinsically motivated did not perceive their teacher better than the ones intrinsically unmotivated. Moreover, the intrinsically unmotivated pupils did not find their English lessons more difficult. Finally, the pupils with high pragmatic-communicative motivation from the same research tried to put more effort into learning, showed a greater desire to learn English, got better grades, and found their lessons easier and more fun (ibid.)

In another research, Karlak and Šimić (2016) investigated motivation of lower primary pupils for learning English and German. There were 100 pupils involved in the research. The results show that the majority wants to achieve a higher level of communicative competence in English than in German. The authors claim that this result affects the pupils' motivation for learning, which was also proved by the same study. Nonetheless, what needs to be taken into consideration is that most of the pupils were more exposed to English than German. In numbers, this means that the pupils were exposed to English approximately two and a half hours a day, and to German "only" an hour a day (ibid.) This can be attributed to the already mentioned fact that English became a *lingua franca* in the last 500 years.

#### **4) Sequence of language learning skills**

There are four basic skills in language learning: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They can be categorized as receptive and productive language skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills because learners receive pieces of information, whereas speaking and writing are productive skills because learners produce words, sentences, etc. and send information that way. It is important to know the order of these skills to teach pupils appropriately.

##### *a) Teaching listening*

Listening is the first skill that a learner needs to acquire while learning a foreign or a second language. Raphael Ahmed (2015) explains that it is not unusual that listening comes first because it occupies almost half of the time that adults spend while communicating. It is not any different with children. Listening is crucial while studying a language, especially at a young age, because a learner needs to hear how to pronounce sounds, connect words, create expressions and sentences, and much more. To put it another way, everything is based on listening – if a learner has not been hearing someone speaking the target language, they cannot be expected to use that language on their own. Also, all other skills are based on listening. As Ahmed (2015) stresses, many teachers underestimate the importance of listening even though learners often claim that listening is one of the most challenging of all skills in English. There are many activities which can be used to teach listening skills. For example, a teacher can prepare flashcards with pictures of target vocabulary. Then, they can pronounce target vocabulary items while pupils point at corresponding flashcards. This activity is great for the beginning of learning a language because it does not require production, only understanding.

### *b) Teaching speaking*

Speaking is the second skill, and it is expected to be acquired after listening. It is not any less important than listening. Just like adults, pupils use speaking when trying to solve problems, speculating, sharing ideas, making decisions, and reflecting on what is important. (Ulyatt, 2017) Even though speaking is a productive skill, it is crucial that pupils also develop their listening skills so they can learn by imitating their teacher. One of the problems which teachers face is that children often come to school without fully acquired speaking skills in their native language, according to their age. There are lots of songs, stories, chants, word plays, etc. which can help pupils develop those skills. For example, while learning to sing or to tell stories, children acquire necessary speaking skills without noticing it. It also makes their learning experience more enjoyable and amusing. When it comes to pupils' conversational skills, they can practice them with the help of roleplay. For example, a pair of pupils can simulate buying groceries where one pupil is a buyer, and the other one is a seller. By doing it, they practice sentence structuring, vocabulary items, intonation, and other speaking skills. The teacher's task in this activity would be listening, guiding, and correcting if necessary.

### *c) Teaching reading*

Reading is the third skill, and it comes after acquiring speaking skills. It is a skill which is immensely challenging to teach, especially in a foreign or a second language. Children come to school mostly without any reading skills in their mother tongue. Taking into consideration that they need to learn how to read in their native language first, it is not surprising that it comes so late in the order of skills. Andrea Heath (2021) describes teaching reading skills as “complex and highly skilled professional activity”. What can ease the experience for pupils is reading aloud. Of course, reading aloud again needs to start with a teacher. Pupils cannot develop reading skills if they have never heard anyone reading in the target language. What also can help is reading the same text numerous times. The goal of that activity is to encourage practicing fluency. Furthermore, younger students can try to visualize the stories they read and then describe them to their teacher. Thus, they are practicing reading comprehension, creativity, and imagination (ibid.) It is also useful to teach children how to read texts with unknown words – it is not important to understand every word in a text, but it is important to understand the context. An idea for practicing is that a teacher prepares texts with words pupils do not know. Then, the pupils' task would be to try reading the text and understanding it as best as they can. After reading the text, they can retell it and show the targeted

reading skill. These are just a few out of many examples of tasks with the goal to practice reading. What is the most important is to constantly encourage pupils and to give them realistic tasks – challenging, but possible to do at their age.

#### *d) Teaching writing*

Writing is the last skill in the sequence of basic skills in learning a language. It is an exceedingly complex skill to acquire, which is why it is the last skill. As Arnold & Anderson (2015) say, writing skills are acquired when a learner is able to write on their own and is given numerous opportunities to practice the skill. However, giving opportunities does not mean giving the same task every time. On the contrary, this is the main reason why many children do not like writing. Instead of copying and rewriting, writing tasks should be innovative and creative. Pupils need to have chances to show what they can do. This can be accomplished by giving them personalized writing tasks. For example, they can write about their lives, their family, hobbies, etc. Likewise, it would be useful that they write various types of texts – songs, rhymes, and stories, accompanied by more frequent writing styles – letters and short essays. Arnold and Anderson (2015) also suggest writing in pairs. Their idea is to make pupils help each other by “thought-showering, making notes, planning, revising, etc.” Additionally, they suggest writing from another perspective – not writing about their experiences, but about experiences of people who surround them, or even their pets. Just like with other skills, the number of ideas is infinite. The teachers’ main task is to stay open-minded, accept their pupils’ interests, and adapt learning styles to their age and knowledge.

### **5) Piaget's thoughts on language acquisition**

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist and philosopher, was one of the most prominent scientists who researched children’s cognitive development and its connection with language acquisition. His theory on language development is based on an opinion that children do not think the same way as adults (Vickers, n.d.) According to Jean Piaget, all children have “an already existing schema” which is then assimilated and accommodated (Course Hero Web Site). Assimilation is a process that includes fitting new information into people’s schemas or ideas, which changes their environment. On the contrary, accommodation is a process of changing one’s schema or idea to adjust to the new environment. Piaget believed that children cannot acquire languages without a developed schema (Course Hero Web Site). This theory is opposed to Chomsky’s theory, according to which children are born with innate ability to learn languages. Piaget denies it by claiming that

“children’s language reflects the development of their logical thinking and reasoning skills in "periods" or stages, with each period having a specific name and age reference.” (Vickers, n.d.) There are four stages: the sensorimotor stage (from birth to age two), the preoperational stage (age 2 to 7), the concrete operational stage (age 7 to 11), and the formal operational stage (age 11 and beyond).

*a) The sensorimotor stage (birth to age 2)*

In Piaget’s theory, the sensorimotor stage comes first, and it is characterized with exploring the world with all senses: touching new and unfamiliar objects, manipulating objects, looking and listening to what is happening in their surroundings, and chewing and biting (Thompson, 2018). These actions enable children to understand the world around them. This stage is also known for “object permanence”, which means that, even though children do not see an object at the moment, but have seen it before, still know it exists. This occurs at the end of this stage, and it represents a major achievement for children (ibid.) When it comes to language in this stage, children are not able to use language skillfully because they are still beginning to learn it. However, not being able to talk does not mean that children cannot communicate. Piaget came up with a few tests that proved the opposite. For example, when he would hide children’s toys under their blanket, older infants in this stage would look for them. On the other hand, younger infants did not show interest in searching for them. Thompson (2018) explains it this way: ““Something” motivates the search by the older infant even without the benefit of much language, and that “something” is presumed to be a permanent concept or representation of the object.’

*b) The preoperational stage (age 2 to 7)*

The preoperational stage comes immediately after the sensorimotor change – Piaget insists that these stages always happen in the same order. In this stage, children like using symbols instead of words, images, and ideas (Lally & Valentine-French, 2017). Therefore, they like dramatic plays – they use their body to imitate objects they need for playing. For example, a child can use a stick as a sword or their arms as wings of an airplane. Children start using language during this stage, but they cannot understand adults fully and manipulate all information (ibid.) This stage is very important because children gain knowledge about their knowledge (metacognition) (Thompson, 2018). They are extremely egocentric and find it hard to understand situations from another point

of view. However, considering that metacognition is a very useful skill for children's self-evaluation and advancement, it is beneficial to let them engage in dramatic play (ibid.)

*c) The concrete operational stage (age 7 to 11)*

The transfer from the previous to this stage can be delicate for teachers because some children enroll into school while being in the preoperational stage, whereas other children enroll into school when already transferred to the concrete operational stage. Entering this stage means starting to see logic in a child's thought processes and classification of objects according to their similarities and differences (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998). What is more, children can focus on different features of the objects they are investigating at the same time. For example, they can sort objects by color and size at the same time. Also, there is a feature of reversibility – a child understands that e.g. "Dell" is their parent's laptop, and that their parent's laptop is "Dell". A very well-known Piaget's experiment with dispensing liquids in differently shaped containers proves that children in this stage also understand the quantity permanence. The children who entered this phase will never say that a taller and narrower container has more liquid than the one which is shorter and wider (if the same amount of liquid was put in both containers).

*d) The formal operational stage (age 11 and beyond)*

The formal operational stage is the last stage in Piaget's cognitive theory. Logical and abstract thinking is starting to be developed in this stage (Thompson, 2018). By having pupils read, teachers stimulate them to enrich their vocabulary and understand metaphors, sound pictures, comparison, and other formulaic expressions. Writing, on the other hand, gives them a chance to be creative and to use the words and the expressions they have learned at this stage. Hypothetical reasoning also appears in this stage. This means that teachers can think of a hypothetical situation and ask their pupils to respond to the given problem. For example, they can be asked the question: "What would people do if all water in the world was salted?" To answer this question, children need to use hypothetical reasoning – they need to gather all their ideas and think of an answer by combining them. Being in this stage means coming close to adults while thinking. However, as Thompson (2018) emphasizes, not all adults go through this phase successfully. To be precise, the author says that the last stage is crucial for solving various scientific problems and conducting experiments. Considering that not all people have a chance or are interested in those, it is not



surprising that some people never achieve this stage. This means that they do not use formal thinking all the time (or not at all).

## **6) Learning English in Croatia**

Like in many countries all over the world, English is the most dominant language taught as a foreign language in schools. There are numerous debates and discussions on when children are emotionally and cognitively ready to start learning a foreign language. Avram Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, political activist, writer, and lecturer, believed that all people are born with an innate ability to acquire foreign languages. His arguments included all languages sharing similar elements (recursion), learning language effortlessly and with no need of external stimuli, and learning all languages in the same order (first sounds, then words, and, finally, sentences) (Joy, 2019). However, many linguists did not agree with these. One of the main arguments is that not all languages are recursive. That means that not all languages share similar pronunciations, grammatical structures, and more (ibid.) For example, pronunciations in English and Croatian do not share almost anything in common. More precisely, the phonemes /w/, /θ/, /ð/, and /ŋ/ do not exist in Croatian. That means that the Croatian learners of English need to acquire new sounds to be able to speak English fluently, which is sometimes challenging if their teacher is not a native English speaker. Those sounds are formed uniquely, and they acquire specific tongue, teeth, and lips positioning. What is also interesting that English has 26 letters, but 44 phonemes, whereas Croatian has both 30 letters and phonemes. This means that every letter in the Croatian alphabet sounds specific, no matter which letters it is combined with. This is not the case in English, where a letter can sound different depending on its position in words, but also on other letters in front and behind it. For example, words “camera” and “change” both start with a letter “c”, but the word “camera” starts with the phoneme /k/ and the word “change” starts with the phoneme /tʃ/. Moreover, despite the letter “c” being positioned the same way in the words “character” and “change”, they sound different. To be exact, the word “character” starts with the phoneme /k/, and the word “change” with the phoneme /tʃ/.

### *a) Bringing English to the Croatian schools – a project from 1973*

Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović and Mirjana Vilke started a pilot project in 1973 in which they wanted to give children in primary schools a chance to become successful in English from a young age: “The ultimate aim of starting the work on this project was a vision of future native

speakers of Croatian who could use one of the widespread languages of western civilization in their life and work.” (Vilke, 2015) Apart from English, they included three more languages in the project: French, German, and Italian. The target group were children at the age of six and seven. Vilke (2015) explains: “The pragmatic idea behind the undertaking was – why not use the period of human life when the child has plenty of good will and time, when the daily chores and duties are not pressing and when the child is at its best to acquire certain aspects of language performance.” The participants in this project had five lessons of a foreign language a week in the first and the second grade and four lessons a week in the third and the fourth grade. The number of pupils within classes were significantly decreased in comparison with regular state school classes—there were 12 to 15 pupils per class (ibid.)

After four years of the project, the researchers concluded that children above six years of age are capable enough to learn foreign languages in school if teaching methods are adapted to their psychomotor and intellectual skills (Vilke, 2015). This means including songs, rhymes, chants, total physical response, etc. into everyday lessons. Total physical response is a language teaching method created by Dr. James Asher, a psychology professor at San Jose State University, in 1960s. It is based on “language-body conversations”. Just like parents make their children respond physically to requests (e.g. when saying “Give me the toy.”), teachers can also say a word or a phrase, demonstrate it, and make pupils repeat after them. That way pupils learn new words and phrases easier, but also have fun while learning (British Council, n.d.). “Simon says” is a game that is often played during English lessons in Croatian schools. The game is played in a way that the teacher says a command. If the command is given by Simon, pupils need to do it. If the teacher does not mention Simon, they need to stay in the same position prior to the command. For example, when the teacher says: “Jump!”, the pupils are not allowed to jump. But, when the teacher says: “Simon says: ‘Jump!’”, the pupils must jump. There are many variations of this game, but the main goal is to make pupils learn words and phrases in action and learn from others.

There is a saying that children are like sponges – they soak in knowledge at an incredible speed. Therefore, as Vilke (2015) confirms, mass media are to help teachers in teaching and children in acquiring a foreign language. Integrating English into other subjects from the primary curriculum is also recommended: “Integration into the primary curriculum will be part of a natural process. Some subjects such as maths, drawing, physical training, etc., lend themselves ideally to

a start in a different language.” (ibid.) David Marsh and Do Coyle came up with the term CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning. It stands for a type of approach in which teachers use a second language to teach both language and context. Coyle, Hood & Marsh call it “a dual-focused education approach” because pupils acquire new concepts while also acquiring a second language. For example, if pupils need to learn addition, the teacher can teach them addition in English. This helps pupils revise numbers in English while learning how to add. While teaching this way, it is important not to focus only on language, and not only on context. Even though emphasis can sometimes be greater on one than another, this approach is “an innovative fusion of both.” (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010)

The sequence of skills in learning a foreign language is encouraged to remain the same – first listening, then speaking, reading, and finally writing. To sum up, the main objective of learning English in school should be created in the following way: “...to make the child accept it as an alternative medium of communication through a natural and enjoyable process.” (ibid.) To achieve this, it is crucial to train future teachers to be creative, innovative, patient, and understanding. Every child is different and has needs which affect their learning. Having divergent pupils means coming up with new techniques of teaching every day to fulfill their interests, but also to enable them to be at their best.

*b) English as a foreign language in schools today*

Even though the mentioned project showed enviable results, not all suggestions were accepted and integrated into the Croatian education. Thus, learning a foreign language from the first grade became mandatory in the first years of 2000s. To explain how major this change was, it is enough to mention that the most famous newspapers in Croatia published articles dedicated to the subject. One of them was titled: “A foreign language into the first grades” (Večernji list, 2002) It is the same today – pupils learn English or another foreign language from the first grade of primary school. However, as it was mentioned, not everything changed to ideal. Pupils in the first four grades have two lessons of English per week, which is a lot less than the project found to be affective. What is more, classes all over Croatia have around 20 to 25 pupils, which is too many for one teacher to satisfy all of their pupils’ needs and to be dedicated to each one of them. The exceptions are rural areas which have a small number of inhabitants, but those schools usually have more grades combined in one class, and it makes it extremely challenging for the teacher to teach

different matters at the same time. All in all, it is not doubted that some aspects of second language teaching are improved, but many others need to be adjusted too. As long as the society and their needs develop, there is a demand to keep up. In that manner, English language taking over the world means that children need to acquire it as soon as possible to be able to function within the society. It is crucial for making connections all over the world, becoming more competitive in the labor market, developing intellectual skills and habits, and much more.

## **7) Fun in class**

Everyone can notice that educational system all over the world changed rapidly in the last few decades. This makes it extremely demanding to create an immaculate educational system and adapt to the coming challenges. The desperate need for change was described by Chalkiadaki (2009):

“...the school, apart from being a place preparing the adults of tomorrow, is also a place where the students spend twelve and the teachers thirty-five years of their lives; unfortunately, these years are years of weariness, stress and boredom rather than years of fun, pleasure and creativity for both sets of people.”

An environment which induces weariness, stress, boredom and associated negative emotions necessarily means that pupils will not enjoy the learning process. Creating such an environment for learners, means that they do not enjoy the process of learning and create adverse feelings towards the process and education in general. Such knowledge is almost always forgotten after taking the exam a pupil studied for. In other words, there is no further interest in the subject. This could be changed by bringing interesting and age-appropriate activities into classrooms. The first type of activities that comes to mind when children are mentioned are games. Playing games is one of their innate interests. While playing, they develop creativity and learn easily. Even as they get older, they still like playing board games, video games, and more. To put it in another way, playing is always fun and it would be logical to use it while educating (Đurić, 2009). This was shown in a study conducted by Slaunich in 2011. It was carried out among 262 pupils and 28 teachers in Italy. When asked if games helped them understand lessons better, 30% of the pupils answered “Always.”, 61% answered “Sometimes.”, and only 8% answered “Never.” It can be seen that not every pupil likes playing games while learning, but most of them do. Also, not all pupils find it useful all the time, which means that bringing games into lessons does not have to be forced every

day and in every lesson. On the contrary, the teachers need to recognize when their pupils need a change, and then use games to make the lesson dynamic and fun. The teachers in the research said the following: 31% think that games can always be used as an efficient didactic instrument, 69% think that they can be used sometimes, and none of them thinks that it is never efficient. The author points out at the similarity of the percentages in the research (Slaunich, 2011). This means that both pupils and teachers understand the importance of games in learning, but also do not want games to take over the whole process. It also shows that the teachers understand the needs of their pupils well – they are aware of their pupils' interests.

### **8) Emotions in learning**

Emotions have a major role in the process of learning. Pupils experience various emotions while being in school, but also while learning and taking exams (Burić, 2008). This means that school environment represents a great number of opportunities to undergo numerous emotional situations, which can affect the learning process (ibid.) For example, if a pupil goes through negative emotions while learning something new, it is obvious that they will not be as focused on the matter as they would be while feeling happy and satisfied. This usually results in pupils having substandard results on tests, dictations, oral exams, and other types of checking their knowledge. Not only their mood can influence their learning – having a teacher who explains and teaches everything the same way every time might not suit everyone. Instead of encouraging children to learn by heart, teachers can be creative in many ways – using realia, pictures, games, riddles, puzzles, rhymes, chants etc. However, some teachers always decide to stick to the traditional way. What happens is that some pupils are not as interested in the matter as they could be if it was presented differently. Someone can say that there is no need to pay attention to it – all children get bored in school. However, Dumančić (2018) explains the problem in detail: each person faces different body processes when experiencing certain emotions. For example, when a pupil feels bored during a lesson, they start thinking about when the lesson will end rather than focusing on what is being taught. So, being bored in class means that the bored pupils ask for anything else to do apart from studying the discussed matter. In that case, the teaching loses its importance – pupils cannot learn anything. Nonetheless, not only pupils go through negative emotions during lessons. Dumančić (2018) implemented research on boredom among 39 English teachers in Croatia. The results show that the teaching content (especially grammar) evokes most boredom while teaching.

The teachers explained that whenever their pupils feel like the matter is challenging, they choose not to try learning it at all. This makes it extremely challenging for teachers, as they need to teach something that most of their class does not want to listen to. Apart from teaching content, the teachers mentioned subject matter – lessons are often “repetitive, unimaginative, and outdated.” (ibid.) Moreover, boredom among teachers appeared when their pupils lacked in interest and did not want to be involved in the lessons. The next category was tasks and activities – the teachers would get bored when faced with “repetitive tasks, undemanding tasks, and other types of activities, such as reading exercises, translating sentences or workbook exercises that students do on their own.” (ibid.) Student assessment was also mentioned – taking tests and grading students. Teaching aids and materials caused boredom among the teachers as well. The most of them appealed against a lack of multimedia and low-quality textbooks. When a teacher has no quality materials to teach with, it is hard to be interesting enough for pupils every lesson. The last thing mentioned was teaching methods. The teachers claimed that their pupils did not like frontal teaching and writing in their workbooks (ibid.) Even though it is not desirable for these methods to be the most frequent while teaching, they are inevitable when there is a need to explain or practice the matter. This research leads to a question: “If teachers get bored while teaching, how can pupils enjoy the lessons Education needs to develop constantly and all over the world. This includes educating teachers, obtaining necessary materials, bringing modern technology into schools, and much more. Everything that changes, needs to lead towards one goal – to teach children in an interesting and fun way. Only then they can learn with joy.

This master thesis is based on pupils’ emotions and attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. Its goal is to see whether their knowledge affects emotions they experience during English lessons. More specifically, the interest in the research was based on an assumption that pupils, who study English as an extracurricular activity, will create negative emotions towards English lessons in school because of being bored.

## **9) Language learning anxiety**

Language learning anxiety appears when learners of a foreign or a second language face fears, nervousness, and low self-esteem. This results in having troubles with acquiring knowledge that would normally be obtained much faster and easier. In other words, language learning anxiety is one of the main factors to influence performance in learning a foreign or a second language. Apart

from learners' personality and attitudes towards the language they are learning, their teacher's attitude and teaching strategies also affect the learning process (Hu & Wang, 2014).

It is also important to mention that Mihaljević Djigunović and her colleagues created an instrument for measuring language learning anxiety in 2004. It was created to measure language learning anxiety among Croatian students who study English as a foreign language. The instrument includes a questionnaire composed of 24 questions, and it is proven to be accurate (Puškar, 2010).

## **10) Methodology**

### *a) Purpose of the research*

There is a rapid growth of children enrolling into language schools. Despite the fact that learning a foreign language became mandatory from the first grade in Croatia, some pupils' parents want their children to become fluent as soon as possible. Considering that classes in schools are overloaded with pupils which, consequently, disables teachers to focus on every pupil individually, language schools sometimes represent an ideal opportunity for faster and higher-quality language acquisition. Those children who study a foreign language as an extracurricular activity often achieve better results in school because they have already learned the curricular content that is being taught. The main purpose of this research is to see if, and if yes how much, learning English in language school affects lower primary pupils' attitudes towards English lessons in schools. To put it differently, the researcher wants to examine the participants' feelings about the process of learning English in school and see whether they depend on attending a language school.

This research is intended for all future and already employed teachers, pupils and their parents, special needs educators, and everyone else interested in the subject and working with children. Its results should help all of them in creating a higher quality education for pupils enrolled into language schools. In other words, the main goal is to ensure the best possible program for language learning in schools, which includes individualization, interesting and challenging learning process, but also pupils' and teachers' satisfaction. Even though the research is based on the English language, its results could help in understanding the connection between learning a foreign language in language schools and learning the language in lower primary education.

### *b) Aim and hypotheses*

The aim of this research was to discover and name the feelings that lower primary pupils enrolled in language schools had about learning the same language within state school program. As it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, the pupils involved in language schools usually go through curricular content much earlier than other pupils in state schools. This is why it was expected that those pupils would find state school's program dull and too slow. What is more, it was believed that they would not be thrilled about helping other pupils because of finding it exhausting and unnecessary. This does not mean that their personality includes selfishness or sanctimoniousness, but rather feeling worn-out because of going through the same content multiple times. However, it is possible that those pupils would not face language learning anxiety because of their level of knowledge. In other words, those pupils could be less likely to be afraid of answering questions, doing tests, and communicating with their English teachers. Lastly, it was anticipated that the participants who learn English as an extracurricular activity were to give more constructive suggestions for improving the language learning process in schools.

### *c) Participants*

Grade	Participants					
1	PLS1	P1	PLS2	P2	PLS3	-
2	PLS4	PLS5	P3	P4	P5	PLS6
3	P6	PLS7	PLS8	PLS9	P7	P8
4	P9	P10	PLS10	PLS11	P11	PLS12

Table 1 – Participants involved in the research: P – participants not attending a language school, PLS – participants attending a language school

The target group of the participants in this research includes lower primary pupils who started learning English in state schools from the first grade. 23 pupils participated in the study from the first to the fourth grade, aged six to ten years. There were five pupils from the first grade and six pupils from the second, the third and the fourth grade. However, not all participants who were the same age were in the same classes. There were participants from three first classes, one second class, one third class, and two fourth classes. There were 19 girls and four boys. The



research was supposed to include 24 participants, but one participant did not feel comfortable being interviewed, so the interview with them got cancelled. 12 participants attended language school at the moment of the research, whereas 11 other participants learned English only in their school. Those participants who did not attend language schools were a part of the control group. All participants attended the same state school, located in the city of Zagreb. The participants who attended language schools came from three different language schools that are also located in Zagreb. Nine of the participants attended language school lessons twice a week, and three of the participants attended language school lessons once a week. It is important to mention that not all participants had the same language teacher in the state school. The participants' knowledge of English was not tested because the research focused on their attitudes and feelings rather than on their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and other aspects of English language knowledge. Also, the research was conducted in Croatian to enable the participants to express themselves fully. All pupils had some knowledge of English. This does not exclude the first graders because the research was conducted during the second semester of the school year. This means that they already got in contact with English and started using it at least two days a week for 45 minutes. (Table 1)

#### *d) Instruments and materials*

The instruments and the materials required for this research include questions for the semi-structured interview (Appendix). The principal's and parents' consents were collected prior to the interviews. The participants' assents were given in the beginning of each interview individually. The interviews were audio recorded. Asking for oral consent from the participants is crucial not only to make them feel important, but also to let them know that they are the final ones who decide whether they are being interviewed or not. Every participant is also given a chance to withdraw their consent at any moment. The consent can be withdrawn by the participants' parents and the principal too. Except this being an ethical stance one needs to always take, the reason for this lies in wanting the participants to be as relaxed as possible to get representative results.

The researcher chose a semi-structured interview as the instrument of the research to enable the participants to be descriptive and to be able to ask them additional questions or explain what is unclear. Some participants might need to be offered different options to answer some of the questions in the interview. Also, interviewing the participants gives the researcher a chance to approach every participant individually, to explain why the research is being conducted, to give

each participant an opportunity to ask what they are interested in, and to thank every participant for help in conducting the research.

The interview comprised 16 questions, three of which were closed-ended (e.g. “What grade are you in?”) and 13 of which are open-ended (e.g. “How do you feel when you answer your teacher’s questions correctly?”) Each participant was interviewed for five to ten minutes, depending on the participants’ willingness to answer questions and describe their attitudes and opinions. At the beginning of each interview, a participant is was asked if they attended a language school or not. If they did, they were asked how often they attended the language school. The rest of the questions were focused on English lessons in their state school and their teachers of English in the state school. There were a few key elements on which the questions were based: attitudes towards English lessons in the state school (e.g. “What do you think about the subject “English” in school?”), the types of feelings pupils go through during English lessons (e.g. “What do you feel like when you answer the teacher’s question correctly?”), facing language learning anxiety (e.g. “Do you experience stage fright before exams?”), and pupils’ ideas on how to improve English lessons (e.g. “If you could change something within your English lessons in school, would you change anything? If yes, why?”) The general idea of asking these questions in interviews was to see whether children who attended language schools had different views on the subject (and if yes, how much) than children who learned English only in school.

#### *e) Research procedure*

The interviews were implemented during the second semester, in March and April. The participants came to the interviews individually. Each interview started by the researcher’s introduction in which she would say something about herself, the aim and purpose of the research study, and she would explain the participants’ rights. Every participant was asked to consent orally to have their answers audio recorded and was given the instruction that they could end the interview at any point if they felt uncomfortable. As it was mentioned before, only one participant withdrew and did not want to be interviewed. It was also crucial for them to know that nobody except the researcher and themselves will not hear or read their answers under their name. The participants were given a chance to ask anything they were interested in prior to their interview. They got the same chance after the interview too. During the interviews, the researcher led a conversation with each participant. The conversation was induced with the help of the prepared questions, but the

researcher asked additional questions when needed, explained what was unclear, and let the participants to talk more about certain questions if they showed the interest. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked each participant to describe English lessons in school using three words. Some of the participants found it too difficult to come up with three words only, so the researcher offered a few options, which was not planned while creating the interview questions. Also, a few participants did not understand a question or two, so the researcher reformulated those questions for them. The atmosphere during the interviews was relaxed – the researcher made sure that the participants were as comfortable as possible and helped them shape their thoughts and feelings if necessary. All participants that completed the interview (23 out of 24) said that the experience was positive and that they would do it again. After interviewing all the participants, the researcher analyzed their answers. The results will be shown in the next paragraph.

## **11) Results and discussion**

The researcher interviewed 23 pupils from the first to the fourth grade. 12 participants are involved in a language school (PLS) – they study English as an extracurricular activity. To be more specific, three of those participants study English within a language school once a week, and nine of them twice a week. Those pupils learn English in three different language schools, all located in the city of Zagreb. The rest of the participants (P) learn English only in school.

### *a) Attitudes and feelings towards studying English within the state school program*

When it comes to the attitudes and feelings towards learning English in school among the first graders, the research showed that two Ps and only one PLS see it as fun and useful. The other two participants (PLSs) claim that the state school program is dull and uninteresting. The reason for this lies in possessing a greater level of knowledge in English. While describing the favorite and the least favorite activities while learning English, there are no specific answers that separate the pupils learning English as an extracurricular activity and the ones who do not. For example, P1 and PLS3 say that they like all activities they take part in during their English lessons. PLS2 and P2 express their dissatisfaction with the amount of writing during lessons. So, to conclude, the first-grade participants involved in language schools find English lessons in school a bit uninteresting, but they do not name specific activities that they find disappointing.

The results are not much different in the second grade either. Just like it is the case in the first grade, the second-grade participants who study and do not study English in a language school

do not show differences in their attitudes and feelings towards English in school. Two pupils who attend language schools say that English in school is tedious. They explained that they would like to learn more each lesson because they are not as challenging as they would like them to be. One more pupil who does not attend a language school expressed the same feelings. This would usually show that there are not any major differences between the pupils who attend language schools and the ones who do not, but it is important to mention that the pupil who expressed these feelings (similar to the ones from the pupils who attend language schools) takes private lessons of English at home. Therefore, it could affect the results' accuracy. The other participants describe it as enjoyable and fun. To sum up, the second graders who attend language schools or learn English with a private tutor want the process of learning English in school to be more dynamic and faster. The other pupils like their English lessons as they are.

The results show that the third-grade participants are much different than the second-grade participants when expressing attitudes towards learning English in school. This could be explained by Piaget's theory of language acquisition. According to his theory, the third graders entered the concrete operational stage. In this stage, they can focus on different features at the same time, which could make English lessons more challenging and, consequently, more enjoyable. For example, an English teacher can now ask pupils to describe objects in their room while paying attention to different characteristics (colors, shapes, and their purpose). This was not the case in the previous stage, where pupils could focus at one feature at the time. This also means that they can express their feelings and attitudes more precisely in English (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998). As a result, all participants express positive feelings and attitudes towards learning English in school. What is interesting is that both PLS8 and P7 mention getting stamps for doing tasks correctly as their favorite part of the process of learning English. It is a type of reward used by many teachers to motivate their pupils. At the beginning of a school year, a teacher can explain for which tasks done well they could get stamps in their notebooks. Then, during the school year, it is expected that the pupils will give their best to get the reward. However, not all participants perceive it that way. For example, PLS8 mentions that getting stamps can be frustrating: "The teacher is sometimes so-so because some pupils write slowly but know a lot. She often gives stamps for being fast at doing tasks, and sometimes I do not get them because I am not the fastest. Then I become sad." This shows that the right stimuli can encourage pupils a lot, but teachers need to be careful to give everyone the same chance to receive the awards. P6 and P8 do not appreciate the amount of writing

they need to do, which was the case with some participants from the first and the second grades too. All in all, the research showed that the third graders have more positive feelings and attitudes towards learning English in school than the first graders and the second graders in general. However, some of them share negative thoughts about the amount of writing during the process. When it comes to the differences between the pupils who take English lessons as an extracurricular activity and the ones who do not, there are not any differences in their perceptions of English lessons in school. They all enjoy them and describe them as entertaining.

Just like the third graders, all participants from the fourth grade perceive learning English in school as pleasant. However, PL11 mentions that, even though they like learning English in school, they know a lot already. Therefore, they find it much easier to achieve the best possible results. To put it in another way, the pupil finds the learning process not demanding enough. What makes the fourth graders different from other participants is that three pupils (PLS10, PLS11, P11) like writing tasks. The rest of the pupils, however, do not prefer it (P9, P10, PLS12). Three fourth-grade participants mention playing games (P9, PLS12) and learning new expressions (P10) as something they enjoy the most. One participant (P9), who is the only one in the research to mention it, says that the worst thing for them in English is getting a bad grade. So, even though there are not any major differences between the participants who study English as an extracurricular activity and the ones who do not, there is a slight difference between the fourth graders' and other participants' preferences of activities.

It is well known that attitude towards a language greatly affects its acquisition. To be precise, there is a major difference between people who have intrinsic motivation to learn a language and the ones who are motivated by extrinsic motivation. As it was mentioned in this thesis, the ones who are intrinsically motivated to learn, will learn with joy and yearn for more. Therefore, it is important that pupils create positive feelings towards English. The results of this research show that approximately half of the pupils do not entirely enjoy the learning process. They mostly mention not being satisfied with the subject's difficulty and methods by stating that English lessons in school are often less challenging than they would want them to be. This occurs more often among the participants who are enrolled into language schools. Herwiana and Laili (2019) did similar research among students in Indonesia. They found out that 79% of the students involved

in the research are fully contented with the teaching techniques, which is a lot more than in this research (approximately 45%).

*b) Helping other pupils and receiving help*

When asked about helping other pupils, the first-grade participants showed barely any differences in attitude, depending on whether they attended a language school or not. To be precise, all participants said that they loved helping others. Only one participant (PLS1) claims they do not like helping others all the time: “I am happy when I help, but not all the time. Sometimes I feel so-so because I cannot play while helping others.” Even though the researcher expected this answer to be the most common among pupils who attend a language school, this was not the case. The researcher assumed that the pupils, who study English in a language school, would get annoyed when being asked for help because they already knew the matter very well. This was important to examine to see whether knowledge motivated pupils to help or gave them the feeling of satisfaction when they were one of a few that knew how to answer a question, which resulted in not wanting to help others. One participant (P2), who studies English only in school, has the same attitude as PLS1 – described helping as not always exciting. All other participants express happiness and feeling good while helping. The participants were asked if they needed help during the lessons in school, and if they did, how they felt about it. The results show that all first-grade pupils involved in the research study do not give much thought to receiving help, they treat it this as a usual part of their education.

The second graders in the research are not much different. One participant who studies English in a language school (PLS6) says that they feel nice and happy while helping. On the other hand, they also claim that if they are asked to help too often, it becomes exhausting. This happens because they already went through the matter multiple times (in a language school and in the state school), so they find it monotonous. One pupil (P5) surprised the researcher much when answering the same question. They answered in the following way: “Why would I help?” This was not one of the expected answers, but it confirms that the pupils’ attitude towards helping others depends on their personality, rather than knowledge and attending a language school. Just like the first-grade participants, the second-grade participants also do not overthink receiving help. In other words, they do not find getting help as something embarrassing. The researcher thought this could be the

case with the participants enrolled into language schools (feeling ashamed because they were supposed to know it when learning it in a language school).

The third graders' answers are a little bit specific. For example, a participant (P6), who is not involved in a language school, mentions feeling odd when needing help. The researcher got the feeling that they were embarrassed when not knowing how to answer a question or solve a task. Because they were the only one who answered that way, it can be perceived as a part of the pupil's personality. Considering that hypothetical reasoning (what could happen if they ask for help – being afraid of getting punished) comes during the last Piaget's stage, it can be possible that this participant has advanced cognitive development. One more participant (PLS7) expressed negative feelings connected to receiving help: "Sometimes I do not hear what we need to do because of the noise. Then I need to ask the teacher or a friend. It frustrates me." Despite this problem not being connected to knowledge, but to the class's behavior, the pupil feels unhappy when not being able to do something on their own and having to ask someone else for help. The rest of the participants do not show negative feelings towards getting help – it is nothing out of the ordinary for them. Helping others awakes positive feelings among the third graders, too. Only one participant (PLS9) states that they sometimes do not feel like helping but do it anyway to make their friends happy. Again, having only one participant who declares it that way does not mean that it represents the whole group of participants attending a language school.

Finally, the fourth graders also have a few specific answers. For example, while answering the question about getting help, one participant (PLS10) mentions feeling ashamed when not knowing how to answer a question or solve a task. This pupil also might have developed their cognitive skills early, just like the participant from the third grade. The same participant claims that they do not feel special while helping others: "I feel just normal." Other pupils assert that they are not bothered when asking for help and receiving it. Also, all fourth graders involved in the research claim that they feel delightful and proud of themselves when they help a friend. One of them (P10) says: "I always help my friends, but also my teacher if she needs something. I feel very happy, like I have my friends close to my heart." This is the only participant in the whole research who mentions helping both their friends and their teacher. All in all, the fourth graders, despite having a few different answers than others, did not show any differences between the ones attending a

language school and the ones who study English only in school. Generally, they all love helping and are not ashamed to ask for help.

Having looked at how prepared pupils are to help or receive help, the researcher concluded that there are no differences between the participants who take English lessons in language schools and the ones who do not. Even though most of them like helping others and feel happy when they do so, there are a few participants who sometimes get bored or irritated when being asked to help. These results are similar to the results of the research conducted by Car, Kolak, and Markić in 2014. Their goal was to see how different attitudes pupils would have, depending on the type of school they attend (a multicultural school or a regular state school). The results showed that pupils both in multicultural schools and in regular state schools love cooperating and helping each other. It is similar to this master's thesis' research, which showed that pupils mostly like helping each other, not depending on whether they attend a language school or not.

#### *c) Facing language learning anxiety*

The participants in this research were asked if they liked volunteering to answer their teacher's question. They were also asked how they felt if they answered a question correctly and incorrectly. What is more, they were asked if they were anxious before taking an exam. All these questions were asked to see whether pupils faced language learning anxiety and, if yes, to what extent.

When it comes to the first-grade participants, there are no signs of language learning anxiety. Neither the pupils who attend a language school nor the ones who do not felt scared or disturbed during English lessons in the state school. This could be the case because in the first-grade pupils mostly play games, sing songs, recite chants and rhymes, etc. In other words, they create positive relationship with English lessons – no grades, challenging exams, etc. What is more, the sequence of skills starts with listening and speaking, which are not as challenging as writing and reading. Those two skills are not being graded in the first grade in English. For example, only one participant (PLS1) said that they felt anxious before taking an exam. However, they did not describe it as intense. Most of the first-grade participants also claimed that they liked raising their hands and volunteering to answer when the teacher asked questions. For example, PL1 and P2 liked doing it to show how much they knew and P1 declared that answering questions was fun. On the other hand, one participant (PLS2) perceived it differently: "I do not like answering questions.



When I write or say something wrong, I need to correct it and I do not like doing it.” It is interesting that this participant attends a language school and, at the same time, does not like being called out by their teacher to answer her questions. This is opposed to the researcher’s expectation, according to which it is expected that pupils who learn English as an extracurricular activity will not “find easy way out”. Despite this answer a sign that the pupil is not intrinsically motivated for learning a language, this cannot be analyzed as language learning anxiety – the pupil does not show fear of answering questions, they simply do not like doing it. When asked about the feelings they faced after answering the teacher’s question correctly, the first graders mostly said that they felt proud of themselves (P1, P2) and happy (PLS2, PLS3). But one participant (PLS1) admits that they feel shy in the same situation. The reason for this lies in not wanting to dazzle other pupils. It was appealing to see that the participants were not afraid of making mistakes. All of them asserted that they felt usual about making mistakes – they just moved on and tried to do it better next time. As it can be seen, there are not any differences between the first-grade participants who study English as an extracurricular activity and the ones who do not in this segment.

Facing fear before taking exams is much more present within the second-grade participants. This could be the result of them starting to take more challenging exams than in the first grade. They are asked to write (spell) and read now for grades, which was not the case in the first grade. This could mean that they developed anxiety under the pressure of the school program. What may surprise is that all pupils in the second grade, who study English in a language school (PLS4, PLS5, PLS6), face anxiety before taking exams. At the same time, the rest of the second graders face no fears connected to taking exams. The researcher’s assumption is that the participants who attended a language school wanted to achieve the best possible results, which gave them fear of failing themselves. Answering the teacher’s questions is one of the most favorite parts of English among the second graders – they all seemed to like it. Some of them enjoyed it because they wanted to show what they had learned (PLS4, P3), some did it to impress their teacher (PLS5, P4), and some found it bizarre not to answer questions they knew how to answer (PLS6, P5). On the other side, they faced very different emotions when they answered a question incorrectly. To be exact, two participants (PLS4, PLS6) felt unbothered one participant felt ashamed when their friends teased them about it (PLS5), another participant (P4) felt “a bit sad”, and one of them (P5) felt “a bit confused”. It is important to mention that P5 attended private lessons and possessed a great range of knowledge. Consequently, they were confused when they made a mistake. The last remaining

participant (P3) said: “I feel best when I answer a question incorrectly. This means the teacher will not call me out anymore.” The same participant announced feeling happy about answering questions correctly, so it is likely that they liked to answer questions, but only when they wanted to do so. These results showed that the pupils who attended a language school faced language learning anxiety more often than other pupils. This was opposite of the expected. It is possible to be happening because of their expectations to do the best every time. It is not sure who puts that pressure on them, but what is sure is that it may affect their performance.

The third graders’ answers are also specific – four out of six participants feel anxiety or stage fright before taking exams. Two of those participants attended a language school (PLS7, PLS8) and two of them did not (P7, P8). P7 emphasized that they faced stage fright only before oral exams – written exams are where they felt more comfortable. They all claimed that they liked answering the teacher’s questions because they felt nice about it and wanted to show what they knew. Answering questions correctly is what makes them happy (P6, PLS7, PLS9, P8) and proud of themselves (P7, P8). One participant (PLS8) also mentioned feeling brave. Answering questions incorrectly awakes various emotions in them: some feel unbothered and move on (PLS9, P7, P8), some feel odd because answering incorrectly surprises them (P6), and some feel embarrassed (PLS8). However, one pupil (PLS6) said that they did not even try raising their hand and answering a question if they were not sure they knew the correct answer. Even though half of the third-grade participant expressed feeling unbothered about making mistakes, the pupils who attended language schools felt a bit more tense about it. In other words, they did not let themselves to do something wrong, which was the case with the second graders, too. This means that they were not willing to risk their “reputation” by trying to offer a solution to a problem that is put in front of them. This is something that needs to be encouraged more by their English teacher.

Lastly, the fourth graders who learned English as an extracurricular activity did not feel anxiety at all. The reason for this could be that the fourth graders are slowly ending the concrete operational stage and are getting ready to enter formal operational stage (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998). This means that they got used to hypothetical reasoning and do not overthink answering incorrectly anymore. To be precise, when they knew the answer to a question, they would try to do it right. If they did not do it right, they did not make a great deal out of it but tried to do it better next time. What is more, the pupils who attended language schools had more opportunities to be

involved in English lessons, so they got used to treating mistakes as nothing major. However, two participants (P9, P10) who study English only in school claimed that they were sometimes scared before taking exams. They described it in a way that they faced fear only when they knew they had not studied enough. Just like the second and the third graders, all fourth graders like to volunteer to answer the teacher's questions. Apart from showing what they know and getting high grades, there are different reasons for it, too. As an example, one participant (P10) said that they liked pronouncing words and phrases in English. Another participant (P9) stated that, even though they liked answering the teacher's questions, they also liked giving opportunities to other pupils. When the fourth graders answered correctly, they usually felt happy (P9, PLS11, P11, PLS12) and proud of themselves (P9, PLS12). Still, some of them did not share the same opinion. For instance, PLS10 felt completely unbothered – they did not see it as something extraordinary. It is because they got used to it. The same pupil mentioned feeling bizarre when answering a question incorrectly because they expected themselves to be able not to make mistakes. P10 referred to themselves as shy when giving the correct answer. They said that they were trying to feel less shy but did not always succeed. Apart from PLS10, who was not used to making mistakes, PLS12 also admitted that they got angry at themselves for answering a question incorrectly. Again, even though this attitude depends on pupils' personalities, the teachers' task is to ensure that their pupils know it is acceptable to make mistakes because they can only learn from them. The rest of the fourth-grade participants said that they did not worry about making mistakes much because they knew they will learn the required material and do better next time. To sum up, there is nothing significant that separates the participants who attend a language school and the ones who do not. However, there are a few examples that might lead to concluding that pupils who attended language schools experienced less language learning anxiety.

After summing up all results in this variable, it can be noticed that some pupils truly face language learning anxiety before stressful situations. It was discovered that this was mostly affected by the pupils' expectations, intrinsic motivation, and personality, rather than their foreign language school enrollment. So, it can be concluded that pupils who learn English only in school do not experience language learning anxiety more often, which is opposite of the researcher's expectance. Very similar results were found during the research conducted by Mihaljević Djigunović et al. in 2004. They researched the level of anxiety during the process of learning English among Croatian pupils. Also, their goal was to discover the sources of language learning anxiety. They described it

as following: “Our study has confirmed that fear of foreign language is influenced by other forms of anxiety, specifically fear of evaluation and mistakes, and fear caused by negative self-perception.” (ibid., p. 123) The pupils involved in the present research study also expressed those feelings – being afraid of getting a low grade, feeling unhappy and disappointed with themselves, not wanting to make mistakes.

*d) Pupils’ suggestions for improving the process of learning English in schools*

At the end of the interview, each participant was invited to give suggestions for what should be improved to make English lessons in school more interesting, but at the same time challenging enough. Their suggestions are listed below.

Two out of five first graders did not give any suggestions for improvement – they said that they liked their English lessons as they are. The other three answers were quite different. For example, PLS1 wanted to change everything except watching cartoons – they did not want to draw, listen to the teacher speaking, or revise what they had learned. They said it was because the teacher always called out the ones who possessed less knowledge, but never them. The solution for this might be creating additional work sheets for those who had learned the materials prior to the lesson. PLS2 also suggested less drawing, but also less writing. They explained that they saw it as uninteresting. Instead, they expressed their wish to communicate more. Additionally, they would like the teacher to speak English all the time. Many authors wrote about the usage of mother tongue during foreign language lessons. For example, Willis (1996) suggested that mother tongue should not be banned from foreign language lessons completely. She mentioned a research study, which had been implemented in Turkey among secondary school pupils. Their mother tongue was completely banned from the lessons. It resulted in shorter and unnatural interactions. What is more, as she emphasizes, shy pupils gave up after a short amount of time because they could not keep up with the rest of the class. This is a proof that over usage of a foreign language can result in burnout. Therefore, it is useful to use mother tongue occasionally, especially when pupils do not understand something after rephrasing a few times. P2 stated that they wanted to have English lessons every day and learn something new every lesson. To put it all together, both the first graders and who attended language schools and the ones who did not wish to have more communicative situations and less drawing, more complex learning content, and the teacher to speak English during the whole

lessons. Even though one pupil who attended a language school did not offer any suggestions, the rest (PLSs) gave constructive ideas, and showed they know what they want and need.

The second graders' suggestions were a bit different – two out of three participants studying English as an extracurricular activity did not offer any advice on how to improve English lessons in school. The third participant (PLS6) wished to do more challenging tasks. All participants who learned English only in school gave their ideas. P3 wanted to draw and write less but talk more. P4 also agreed that they needed to talk more. So, just like some of the answers in the first grade suggested, it would be useful to have more communicative situations during lessons. In other words, those pupils suggested communicative approach to learning a foreign language. This approach is based on the idea that a language can be acquired successfully through simulating real-life communicative situations. In other words, this approach means that communicative situations are more important than language structures. Also, it is learner-centered, which means that the learning process becomes more personalized and enjoyable (Azimova, 2019).

The last participant in the second grade (P5) suggested the following teaching structure: “I would like us to have one lesson of learning something new and one lesson of revising it. What we do now is too much – we revise the same content for two weeks.” To sum up, the second graders wanted to make the learning process more dynamic and challenging, which was very similar to the first graders' ideas. What they wanted to do less is writing and drawing. The participants who study English only in school, and attend the second grade, gave more constructive ideas and spent more time to describe what they wanted. This is opposite of the researcher's expectations – that the pupils who attended language schools would offer more suggestions.

The third graders' suggestions were not much different from the second graders' ideas. Generally, half of third graders were satisfied with their program of learning. The rest said that they wanted to write less and play more games. There are not any specific suggestions that could separate the ones who study English additionally in a language school from the ones who do not. Precisely, three participants, two of whom attended a language school, did not offer any suggestions because they liked the lessons as they were. P6 said that they did not want to write as much as they usually do but read more instead. They also claimed that the lessons were not challenging enough. P8 agreed with P6 about less writing – they thought that they were overloaded with it. PLS8 offered the most extensive answer and suggested something that none of other

participants did – they want to have English lessons at school only once a week. This may be the result of attending a language school and having too many English lessons per week. The same participant said that they wanted to play games more often: “Sometimes the teacher promises to play a game, but we end up not having enough time to play it. It makes me sad.” Even though this answer needs to be taken carefully, as the teachers have only 45 minutes two times a week, it shows how a pupil who attends so many lessons of English in a week needs to make a break from time to time and play games to refresh their mind.

Finally, the fourth graders did not differ much from the rest of the participants. For instance, three participants did not suggest anything because they think English lessons were the best as they are. Two of the three pupils were the ones involved in language schools. Other fourth graders said the following: P9 wanted to change the number of things they learn; they wanted to learn more within each lesson, PLS10 expressed the need to write less and to play more games, P11 said that they wanted to remove workbooks because they thought they did too many tasks in them. As it can be noticed, the fourth graders gave the least ideas, which is unusual because they are the oldest and are able to express their opinion skillfully. As Piaget states, the pupils their age think more and more logically and organize their thoughts better (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998). Therefore, it was expected that they would offer more ideas to improve English lessons in school. This may be so due to the fact that they learn much more than the younger pupils, which makes it more challenging for them. To sum up, there are not any answers that separate the participants involved in language schools from the rest.

Cergol (2022) did research on emotions that her students face during English lessons at university. When it comes to their satisfaction, 631 out of 747 participants associate interest in learning English (or lack thereof with their more or less positive experience of the learning process. This includes the professor’s role and the way they approach their students (ibid.) The results in this master’s thesis are not much different. The changes they want to impose are mostly connected to the learning process and the contents they go through. As an example, many participants say that they would like the lessons to be more challenging and dynamic. Additionally, a few participants mention the changes connected to their teacher. They are connected to the promises their teacher makes and does not fulfill them, but also to their teacher’s lack of usage of English language while speaking. It is important to mention that these suggestions came from both the pupils who attend

language schools and the ones who do not. This is opposite of the researcher's expectation that the pupils who study English as an extracurricular activity will offer more constructive suggestions on how to improve the lessons to be more dynamic and fun.

## **12) Conclusion**

Conducting this master's thesis' research confirmed that the Croatian educational system is not suitable for everyone. To put it differently, there are segments that could be improved in order to ensure that every pupil has a high-quality language learning process. Precisely, many participants, especially the ones who learn English as an extracurricular activity, claim that the process itself is too slow and dull. This results in pupils not being interested in the subject matter and, consequently, losing interest in learning English.

The expected difference between the participants who take English lessons in language schools and the ones who study English only in the state school was only partially found. Their attitudes, opinions, suggestions, and experiences are quite similar. What is more, the pupils who study English as an extracurricular activity, despite thinking that the learning process is not dynamic enough, did not show a greater amount of will to suggest changes for it. However, the research showed that there are minor differences depending on the pupils' age. For example, the older participants (the third and the fourth grade) generally seem to enjoy English lessons in school more.

Despite having a small number of participants, the research resulted in many ideas for improving English lessons suggested by pupils. They include taking English lessons every day, incorporating more communicative situations and less writing tasks, covering a greater amount of content, and much more. However, if these changes were to take into consideration, there is a need to be careful not to overload pupils. Some of them expressed feeling language learning anxiety and burnout.

A good start of the change would be to go back to the project started by Mihaljević Djigunović and Vilke in 1973. Their ideas and methods resulted in satisfied pupils and teachers, a greater amount of knowledge, and a stable base to work on. Despite this project occurred almost 50 years ago, some ideas could still be transferred to today's education. This is a sign that something needs to be changed. As an example, classes in Zagreb are mostly arranged in a way that each class has between 20 and 25 pupils, which is much more than Mihaljević Djigunović and

Vilke suggested (12 to 15 per class). Having classes with less pupils means that teachers can individualize content more precisely. What is more, the number of English lessons per week in the lower grades is two. Later, in higher grades, it climbs up to three. In my opinion, younger children should have more chances to learn English. To be more precise, if I were to decide how many English lessons pupils would have per week, it would be at least four. Even though this seems overwhelming, there is a saying that young children are like sponges – they soak in knowledge much faster than adults. Thus, we need to give them more chances to learn and acquire a foreign language, but other school subjects too.



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## 14) Appendix

a) *The written appeal for the principal of the school the research is conducted in*

### Zamolba ravnateljici

Poštovana ravnateljice,

s obzirom na uspješnu suradnju s Vašom školom u obliku stručno-pedagoške prakse tijekom mogega studiranja, obraćam Vam se s molbom za sudjelovanje u istraživanju, u svrhu pisanja diplomskoga rada.

Naime, planiram napraviti istraživanje na temu: *Učenje engleskoga jezika u školi i izvan nje: stavovi učenika*. Cilj navedenoga istraživanja bio bi ispitati koliko pohađanje škole stranih jezika (u ovome slučaju engleskoga jezika) utječe na stavove učenika prema predmetu *Engleski jezik* u školi. Istraživanje bih provela s učenicima od prvoga do četvrtoga razreda. Vjerujem da bi rezultati istraživanja mogli pomoći Vašim nastavnicima i učenicima za unaprjeđenje nastavnoga procesa.

Za potrebe istraživanja bih, u ožujku ove godine, provela intervju s 12 učenika od prvoga do četvrtoga razreda koji pohađaju školu stranih jezika te s 12 učenika koji ne pohađaju istu. Intervju se može uklopiti u uobičajene nastavne aktivnosti te bi se tako minimalno poremetila učenička svakodnevnica. Prije samih intervjuja, pripremila bih dokument pisanoga pristanka za roditelje djece koja će sudjelovati u istraživanju. Također, zatražila bih usmeni pristanak samih sudionika.

Rezultati istraživanja bili bi korišteni isključivo u svrhu diplomskoga rada te se imena škole i učenika ne bi spominjali. Odnosno, svi podatci bili bi anonimizirani. Isto tako, podatci bi bili spremjeni na osobnome računalu sa zaštićenom lozinkom. Nitko osim mene ne bi imao pristup tim podatcima. Nakon pet godina čuvanja, podatci bi bili uništeni.

Posljednje što bih htjela naglasiti jest da sudionici mogu odustati od sudjelovanja u bilo kojemu trenutku bez posljedica. Dakle, ako bilo koji sudionik pokaže neugodu prilikom provođenja intervjuja, isto će se odmah prekinuti. Vaše eventualno odobrenje i odobrenje roditelja također se može povući u bilo kojemu trenutku.

S obzirom na navedeno, molim Vas da mi dopustite provođenje navedenoga istraživanja u Vašoj školi. Unaprijed zahvaljujem na Vašem vremenu.

S poštovanjem,  
Lucija Trgovac

*b) The appeal and the written consent for each parent of the pupils involved in the research*

Zamolba roditeljima

Poštovani roditelji,

moje ime je Lucija Trgovac i studentica sam 5. godine Učiteljskoga fakulteta s engleskim jezikom Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. Provodim istraživanje na temu: *Učenje engleskoga jezika u školi i izvan nje: stavovi učenika*. Cilj navedenoga istraživanja bio bi ispitati koliko pohađanje škole stranih jezika (u ovome slučaju engleskoga jezika) utječe na stavove učenika prema predmetu *Engleski jezik* u školi. Istraživanje bih provela s učenicima od prvoga do četvrtoga razreda. Vjerujem da bi rezultati istraživanja mogli pomoći nastavnicima i učenicima za unaprjeđenje nastavnoga procesa.

Za potrebe istraživanja bih, u ožujku ove godine, provela intervju s 12 učenika od prvoga do četvrtoga razreda koji pohađaju školu stranih jezika te s 12 učenika koji ne pohađaju istu. Svaki intervju trajao bi maksimalno 10 minuta.

Rezultati istraživanja bili bi korišteni isključivo u svrhu diplomskoga rada te se imena škole i Vašeg djeteta ne bi spominjali. Odnosno, svi podatci bili bi anonimizirani. Isto tako, podatci bi bili spremljeni na osobnome računalu sa zaštićenom lozinkom. Nitko osim mene ne bi imao pristup tim podatcima. Nakon pet godina čuvanja, podatci bi bili uništeni.

Posljednje što bih htjela naglasiti jest da sudionici mogu odustati od sudjelovanja u bilo kojemu trenutku bez posljedica. Dakle, ako bilo koji sudionik pokaže neugodu prilikom provođenja intervjua, isto će se odmah prekinuti. Vaše eventualno odobrenje i odobrenje ravnateljice također se može povući u bilo kojemu trenutku.

Ako imate bilo kakvih pitanja, molim Vas da se ne ustručavate kontaktirati me.

Unaprijed se zahvaljujem na Vašem vremenu.

S poštovanjem,

Lucija Trgovac

Suglasnost roditelja

Ja, \_\_\_\_\_ suglasan/na sam  
(ime i prezime roditelja)

da moje dijete \_\_\_\_\_  
(ime i prezime učenika, razred učenika)  
sudjeluje u istraživanju

*Učenje engleskoga jezika u školi i izvan nje: stavovi učenika*  
(molim, zaokružite DA ukoliko ste suglasni da dijete sudjeluje  
u istraživanju, a NE ukoliko niste suglasni).

DA

NE

Potpis roditelja

\_\_\_\_\_

Datum

\_\_\_\_\_

c) *The questions for the semi-structured interview*

1. Kako se zoveš?
2. Koji razred pohađaš?
3. Pohađaš li školu stranih jezika? (Koju? Koliko često ideš u tu školu?)
4. Kako ti se dopada predmet *Engleski jezik* u školi?
5. Što najviše voliš raditi na satu engleskoga jezika?
6. Što najmanje voliš raditi na satu engleskoga jezika?
7. Kada radite nešto novo na satu, je li ti to već poznato?
8. Voliš li se javljati na satu? Zašto?
9. Kako se osjećaš kada točno odgovoriš na pitanje učiteljice?
10. Kako se osjećaš kada netočno odgovoriš na pitanje učiteljice?
11. Kako bi opisao svoju učiteljicu engleskoga jezika u školi?
12. Imaš li tremu pred usmeno ispitivanje ili ispit?
13. Trebaš li nekada pomoć na satu? Kako se tada osjećaš? Pomogne li ti netko? Tko?
14. Pomažeš li drugima na satu? Kako se tada osjećaš?
15. Kada bi mogao/la promijeniti nešto na satima engleskoga jezika, bi li promijenio/la što? (Što bi promijenio/la?)
16. Opiši nastavu engleskoga jezika u školi s tri riječi.



## **IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA**

Izjavljujem da sam ja, Lucija Trgovac, studentica integriranoga preddiplomskoga i diplomskoga sveučilišnog studija primarnog obrazovanja s engleskim jezikom na Učiteljskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, samostalno provela aktivnosti istraživanja, istraživanje literature te samostalno napisala diplomski rad na temu: **LEARNING ENGLISH IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL: PUPILS' ATTITUDES.**

Zagreb, rujan 2022.

Lucija Trgovac

Potpis: \_\_\_\_\_