



**International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching**  
**Volume 5, Issue 3, September 2017, p. 422-433**

Received	Reviewed	Published	Doi Number
20.08.2017	03.09.2017	27.09.2017	10.18298/ijlet.2034

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**The Eight Graders Writing Attitude toward Efl Writing in Indonesian Context**

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**ABSTRACT**

The way the students feel about writing may affect how well they accomplish the writing task. To write well and to achieve the maximum performance in writing, the students need to have positive attitude toward it so that they can find solutions and strategies whenever they face writing problems. The purpose of the study is to describe the students' writing attitude toward writing in English and to find out their opinion and feeling toward writing. The present study uses mixed method design, by using survey to get quantitative data and interview to get qualitative data. The instruments used were questionnaires and interview. The data was taken by using systematic random sampling which results in 101 respondents from a state junior high school situated in the rural area of a small town of Pasuruan, East Java, Indonesia. The finding of the research shows that the Eighth Grade Students' writing attitude toward writing in English was positive and in moderate level (82.12%). The students were sufficiently confident about their writing and viewed writing as a fun activity and an enjoyable experience. Although the students' attitude fall in the moderate category, they confessed that they had problems in writing, such as the linguistics problem, and the psychological problem.

**Key Words:** EFL writing, motivation, self-confidence, writing attitude

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## 1. Introduction

English is one of the most used languages in the world. It is used in communication both in oral and written form to share ideas and to connect politically, economically and culturally across nations. Because of its importance, in Indonesia, English becomes a local content subject in elementary school and a compulsory subject for the Junior and Senior High Schools students.

In Indonesian curriculum, the goal of the teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is to enable the students to master the four language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. More specifically, the goal for the Junior High School level students is to enable them to use English for communication both in oral and written form which are used widely in daily communication by focusing on transactional, interpersonal and functional text as well as short and simple texts in descriptive, narrative, and recount form (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). To achieve the goal, the teaching of English in Indonesia, adopts Curriculum 2013 with its scientific approach teaching, and School-based curriculum, known as KTSP (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan*). Although writing is taught to the students, it does not receive much attention from the teachers because it is not tested in the national examination, unlike reading and listening.

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In Indonesian context where English is taught as a foreign language, among other skills, writing becomes the most difficult skill to master (Cahyono, 2009; Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2016). It is all because writing is more than just outputting the accurate sentences and paragraphs (Hedge, 2005). If the students do not have sufficient vocabulary, they would not be able to spill out their thoughts on the paper (Rabab'ah, 2003). Richards and Renandya (2002:303) also state that writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master. To produce a piece of composition, the students need to think of the ideas, the logical relationship between ideas, how the ideas are organized, the language, the choice of words, and the writing elements at the same time. As a result, the students who do not have sufficient competence in English would use their mother tongue to write before translating them into English. Megaiab's study (2014) found out that the students' native language influence the text quality of their composition because of their lack competence in grammar and writing elements. Because of its complexity, many EFL students have negative attitude toward writing because they view writing as "difficult and stressful" (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2016). For Cahyono (2009), the students' view of writing difficulty might lay in their perception on the use of correct grammar and vocabulary when the ideas are translated in the text. Because of the 'demand' on the use of correct grammar, the students' do not have sufficient confidence in themselves to produce a piece of composition.

To write well and to achieve the maximum performance in writing, one needs to have the positive attitude toward it. Fakeye (2010) believes that attitude is one of the most important factors that affect learning writing in foreign language. Because of that, it is extremely important for the teacher to help the students have positive attitude toward their learning. There are some factors that influence attitude toward writing, namely former writing experiences, self-perceptions of one's ability, and the writer's sex (Krawczyk, 2005). He further states that writing attitude can affect the students' writing performance in return. He argues that the students who have positive attitudes towards writing will have motivation to be successful in writing in the foreign language like English. In other words, the student who has a positive attitude towards writing can be a better writer than those who have negative attitude.

In relation to this, researchers have found that there is connection between writing attitude and writing performance. Hashemian & Heidari (2013) found out that the more the students have positive attitude toward writing, the more they are successful in their academic writing. He also found out that the students who have negative attitude toward writing tend to fail in their academic writing performance. Motivation and attitude in learning English is closely related. Hii (2011) conducted a study to find out the relationship between attitude and motivation toward learning English. By using correlational study, the researcher found out the occurrence of significant correlation between motivation, attitude, and achievement, with strong and positive correlation exists between motivation and attitude. McLeod (1991) explains that there are some affective states that might affect the writing process, which include anxiety, attitude, beliefs, emotion, feelings, and motivation. For her, emotion and attitude are different affective states although particular type of attitude may cause emotional and physical response. For example, students' negative attitude toward writing may cause him bad emotion, such as anger and nervousness signed by perspiration.

So far the studies investigating writing attitude in Indonesian EFL context are scarcely found. Some studies, however, can still be tracked and presented. The first one is a study conducted by Pamuji (2015) who investigates the relationship among attitude in learning English, reading comprehension, and writing achievement. The participant of the study were the university level students of English education program in Sriwijaya University Indonesia. The researcher took 254 participants for his study by using purposive sampling technique. The result of his study shows that there is a significant correlation between attitude in learning English, reading comprehension, and writing achievement. Secondly, Ni'mah, Kadarisman, & Suryati (2016) investigates the relationship between writing attitudes and writing apprehension toward learners' writing performance. By using a mixed method design, the research reveals that there is a positive correlation between writing attitude and writing performance. Meanwhile the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance were found to be negatively correlated. The latter means that the lower the students' level of fear in writing, the better their performance in writing in English. The result of the study also shows that the students who had negative attitude toward writing confessed that they had low self confidence in English, had negative opinion that English is difficult, and were their lack of practice in writing. The third study was conducted by Setyowati & Sukmawan (2016). They investigated the EFL students' writing attitude in university level by using a descriptive quantitative design. The result shows that half of the respondents has moderate level writing attitude, and the rest of them have positive attitude toward writing. The finding also reveals that although none of the students fall into the category of negative writing attitude, they still view writing as difficult and stressful. Interestingly, they are eager to find efforts to improve their skill in writing, such as practice more, reading more to get ideas, and do some diary writing.

Although studies have been found to be investigating the connection between writing attitude and writing performance, a gap still can be found. Firstly, previous research was conducted in setting where the participants of the study were the students at university level. The students at university level are assumed to have more experienced in learning English. English as a foreign language in Indonesia is a compulsory subject since secondary level, therefore they have been learning English is approximately eight to nine years. It is assumed that the more they learn English, the more information and knowledge they have in relation to the importance of English in the global world. Thus, it is not surprising if the majority of the university students' attitude toward English in general is good. The students in Junior High school level, on the other hand, are not adequately informed with information about the importance of English for the global life especially in schools situated in a small town in rural areas. Thus, more information about the junior high school level students' writing attitude toward writing in English in EFL context is needed.

Secondly, no research so far is interested in investigating the level of the junior high school students' writing attitude in Indonesian context, as most research was conducted in university level. Investigating the students' writing attitude in junior high school level writing attitude in EFL context is worth doing because the information about the students' attitude toward writing in English would help the teachers to map out the students' psychological aspects which in turn would help the teacher decides and selects the suitable strategy for teaching writing in accordance with the characteristics of the students. This present study is intended to investigate the level of the students' writing attitude toward writing in English and to find out their opinion and feeling toward writing.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Design

This research uses mixed method design in which the main intention is not only to describe the eight graders writing attitude, but also their opinion, feeling and reasons about writing in English. Therefore, the researchers uses survey design and descriptive qualitative study to conduct the research. The population of the study was all students of junior high school located in Winongan regent, a rural area of Pasuruan, a small town in East Java, Indonesia. In Winongan regent, there are three State Junior High Schools, namely State Junior High School 1 Winongan, State Junior High School 2 Winongan, and State Junior High School Gratitunon. Because of the wide area and the location of the schools which are widely apart, the researchers did random sampling to choose the school to conduct the survey. The result of the random sampling technique shows that State Junior High School 1 Winongan was chosen to be the place to take the sample.

In this school, the researchers got the permission to distribute the questioners to the eight grades only. There were six parallel classes in the eight grades with each consist of 36 students in average. Thus, the total population of the eight grades was 220 students. From the total population, the researchers did systematic random sampling to take the sample. The researchers selected only the students who happened to be in the odd number of their classroom attendance lists from all parallel classes. By using systematic random sampling, the researchers got 110 students which means approximately 50% of the total population of the eight graders. Unfortunately, only 101 students filled out the questionnaires while nine of them did not attend the lesson when the data was collected. The students were told that the questionnaires were for research purpose and the result of the questionnaires would not affect their English scores.

### 2.2 Instruments

This study used three instruments to collect the data. The first one is questionnaires, the second one is interview, and the third one is documentation. The questionnaire used in the study was adopted from Podsén (1997) which consist of 20 questionnaire items with 1-5 scale; (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) don't know, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The reliability of the questionnaire 0.737 computed by Cronbach Alpha which means that the questionnaires has high internal consistency (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2016). Because the questionnaires are written in English and the students' English was not sufficient to fully understand the intended meaning of the questionnaires, the researchers decided to translate the questionnaires into *Bahasa Indonesia*. When the students filled out the questionnaires, one of the researchers presented herself in the classroom to provide explanations just in case the students raised any questions. The lowest score in Podsén's (1997) writing attitude questionnaire is 20 while the highest score is 100. She also differentiates the students' writing attitude score into three levels: low (20-39), moderate (40-68), and high (69-100). In analyzing the data, the researchers used some reverse codings because some of the items in questionnaire do not show positif direction. The data from the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively.

After the students filled out the questionnaires, the researchers randomly chose the students to be interviewed. The questions were about the items in the questionnaires. The purpose was to find out about the students' opinions, feelings, and reasons of why they chose particular items in the questionnaires. The researchers taped the students' interview and transcribed them for the analysis. Each data of the interview result was coded by using simple codification technique. The data from the interview was analyzed qualitatively.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

#### 3.1. The Students' Attitude toward Writing in English

The result of the data from the questionnaires shows that the students writing attitude toward writing in English based on Podsén (1997) questionnaires were moderate. This can be seen in figure 1.

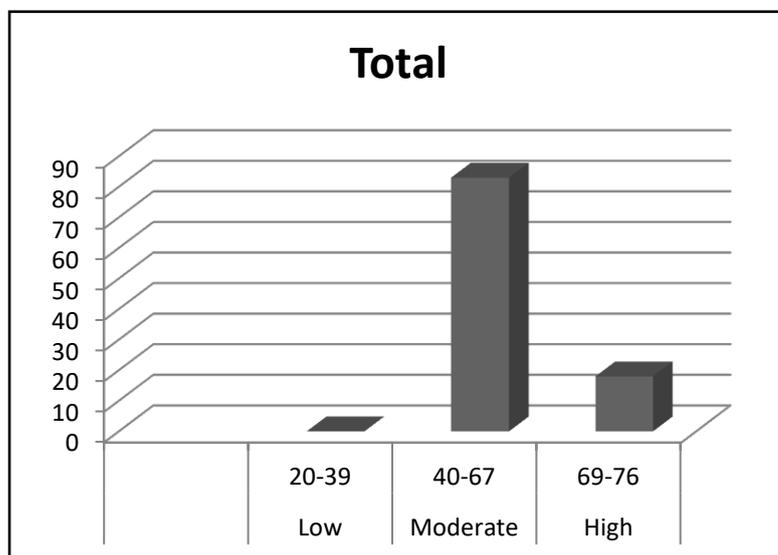


Figure1. The Students' writing attitude level

The data shows that 82% of the students falls in the category of having moderate attitude toward writing in English, while the rest of them falls in the category of high writing attitude level.

##### 3.1.1. Responding to Positive Writing Attitude Items

In the questionnaires, some items show positive attitude toward writing (12 items), while others show negative attitude toward writing (8 items). The result of positive items in the questionnaire is shown in table 1. Table 1 shows that there are 12 items in the questionnaire go to the positive direction, those are item number 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, and 20. The data shows that 74% of the students (A + SA) felt no fear if their writing are evaluated. While 43% of the students (A + SA) are eager to write whenever they have time and chance (item no.3) although 42% of them (NEUTRAL) are not sure.

The number of the students are almost equally divided when they were asked whether they were happy if their compositions were evaluated and published in magazines; 30 % of them (SD + D) dislikes the idea, 35% (Neutral) feels not sure, and the other 35% (A + SA) feel the other way around.

More than half of the students, (66% A + SA) like to write down their ideas and feel confident in their ability to express their ideas in the form of a composition, (59% A + SA).

**Table 1 Positive Writing Attitude Items**

No.	Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Don't Know %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
2	I have no fear of my writing being evaluated	0	9	17	63	11
Percentage of attitude			9%	17%		74%
3	I look forward to writing down my ideas	7	8	42	33	10
Percentage of attitude			15%	42%		43%
7	I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication	15	15	35	23	12
Percentage of attitude			30%	35%		45%
8	I like to write my ideas down	3	18	13	60	6
Percentage of attitude			21%	13%		66%
9	I feel confident in my ability to express ideas in writing	2	16	23	45	14
Percentage of attitude			18%	23%		59%
10	I like to have friends read what I have written	5	24	9	39	23
Percentage of attitude			29%	9%		62%
12	People seem to enjoy what I write	3	9	42	26	20
Percentage of attitude			12%	42%		46%
13	I enjoy writing	5	14	13	48	20
Percentage of attitude			19%	13%		68%
16	I like seeing my thoughts on paper	1	19	19	50	11
Percentage of attitude			20%	19%		61%
17	Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience	1	16	20	44	19
Percentage of attitude			17%	20%		63%
18	It is easy for me to write good letters	6	21	29	38	6
Percentage of attitude			27%	29%		44%
20	Writing is a lot of fun	3	10	9	49	29
Percentage of attitude			13%	9%		78%

Table 1 also shows that More than half of them also feel that they like their friends to read their composition (62 A + SA) and enjoy writing activity (68% A +SA). Although many of them felt not sure whether other people enjoy what they have written (42% Neutral), many of them are confidently sure that others would like to read them (46% A + SA). More than half of the students also feel that discussing writing with their peers is an enjoyable experience (63% A + SA). In sum, the majority of the students feel that writing is an enjoyable experience (78% A + SA).

### 3.1.2. Responding to Negative Writing Attitude Items

Some items in the questionnaire use negative wordings. The responds expected from these items are different from the items which used positive wording. The students were expected to answer 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' to respond to these item. Because of these, the researchers did reverse coding to analyze the negative items.

**Table 2. Negative Writing Attitude Items**

No.	Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Don't Know %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
1	I avoid Writing Whenever possible	40	44	9	7	0
	Percentage of attitude		84%	9%		7%
4	I am afraid of Writing when I know it might be evaluated	10	59	16	7	8
	Percentage of attitude		69%	16%		15%
5	My mind seems to go blank when I start writing	25	39	17	15	4
	Percentage of attitude		64%	17%		19%
6	Expressing my ideas to writing is a waste of time	23	42	19	14	2
	Percentage of attitude		65%	18%		16%
11	I am nervous about my writing	16	31	22	25	6
	Percentage of attitude		47%	22%		31%
14	I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly	8	45	32	12	3
	Percentage of attitude		53%	32%		15%
15	I am not a good writer	7	15	37	36	5

Table 2 shows that most of the students 84% (SD + D) did not avoid writing activity. The majority of them also say that they were not afraid if their writing are evaluated 69% (SD + D). More than half of them 64% (SD + D) seem to have ideas whenever they start writing (64% SD + D) and did not see that writing is a waste of time (65% SD + D). Almost half of the students also seem to be confident enough about their writing (47% SD + D), and have no problem to put down their ideas clearly on the paper (53% SD + D). Despite of their confidence in writing, they do not claim themselves as good writers

(41% SA + A) and many of them feeling not sure about this (37% Neutral). Moreover, almost half of them feel that they could not write as well as other people (47% SA + A).

### 3.2 The Students' Opinion

Some items in the questioners were asked to the students to find out the students' feeling and opinion about writing in English. The questions were asked to the students who answered negatively on items which are supposedly answered positively. The interview was done during break time. To avoid the feeling of nervousness, the researchers conducted the interview in pair or in three. The result of the interview was divided into three; the feeling of becoming a good writer, the feeling of publishing the writing product, and the feeling of comparing their own composition with other people.

Based on the result of the interview, it can be found that some students feel that they are not a good writer in English because they think English is complicated.

*I Think I'm not a good writer in English because I cannot write in English correctly. (Dt2/ St 1)*

*I cannot write the English words correctly. It's so difficult (Dt 2/St2)*

*English is so complicated (Dt 2/St 3)*

*The words in English are difficult (Dt2 / St 4)*

The students also feel not confident and not happy if they were asked to send their composition for evaluation and for publication. Most of them answered that they were afraid if people would judge negatively about their writing and afraid of being humiliated.

*I'm afraid people will laugh at me when they read my writing (Dt 1/ St 5)*

*I'm ashamed with my writing (Dt 1/ St 6)*

*If I publish my writing, I'm afraid of being humiliated (Dt 1/St 7)*

*I don't have any confidence to send my writing for publication because I'm afraid of making mistakes (Dt 1/St 2)*

*I fear of being scolded If I write badly (Dt 1/St 3)*

The data of the interview also reveal the causes why the students feel that their composition in English are not as well as other people. Most of their answers were about the confidence and the difficulty of writing in English.

*I just don't feel confident to write in English. English words are difficult. (Dt 3/St 2)*

*English is confusing. It is easier to write in Bahasa Indonesia (Dt 3/St 8)*

Since the data of the interview reveals similar findings, the researchers decided to stop the data collection by using this instrument after questioning several groups of students.

#### 4. Discussion

For foreign language learners, writing is often considered the most difficult skill to learn. To be able to write well, one needs not only to have adequate knowledge how to put words into sentences, and sentences into a meaningful discourse, but one needs also to have clear motivation why he does it and how to get it done. From the writing model proposed by Flower & Hayes (1981) motivation has its own place. They believe that motivation and affect are special important to writing. Since Writing is a complex task and a time consuming activity, concentration and determination to complete the task are highly required.

Furthermore, as Hidi & Boscolo (2006) also point out, writing is not only about the coordination of cognitive, metacognitive, and linguistics process, but also requires an appropriate level of behavioral and cognitive engagement (Garcia & Fidalgo, 2008). As a part of motivation, attitude becomes one of the most important factors that impact on learning to write in a foreign language (Fakeye, 2010). Furthermore, attitude as an affective motivational state (Anderman & Wolters, 2006) may influence the writing performance (Graham, Berninger, & Fan, 2007). This means that, theoretically speaking, the more positive attitude the students have, the better their writing performance would be. It is all because the students with positive attitude would write more often and face the challenge of difficult task like writing with their best effort (Graham, et al, 2007).

The data suggests that the students who have moderate and positive attitude toward writing viewed writing as an enjoyable experience. They are also willing to share and discuss with others about their writing. They felt confident about their writing and felt that writing in English is a fun activity. They also felt no fear if their composition were assessed by their own teacher. Interestingly, although they view writing positively, when it comes to publication, they felt that they have no confidence to do it. They did not believe in their own ability to write in English because they were afraid that other people who read their writing would mock them. Writing apprehension, or fear in writing, always becomes a problem for the students-writer, especially in EFL context (Al\_Sawalha, Salem, Chow, & Foo, 2012). The data of this study also reveals that the cause of the students fear and anxiety are difficulties in linguistics aspects (grammar and vocabulary), negative comments from peers, and negative feedbacks from teachers. This is in line with the result of the study conducted by Wahyuni & Umam (2017) which shows that linguistics difficulties and negative comments are the two main causes of the students' fear and anxiety to writing in English. These fear and anxiety, if not solved properly, might affect the students' attitude toward writing in English. Research has shown that there is negative correlation between writing anxiety and writing attitude (Yaman, 2014). This means that, the more the students get anxious toward writing, the more negative their attitude would be. Moreover, the students who have high writing apprehension would have low writing confidence (Pajares & Johnson, 1994). Other study also shows that the students who have low writing apprehension tend to have better writing performance (Erkan & Saban, 2011).

Based on the interview results, basically, the students who had positive or negative attitude faced similar problems, the main two problems that the students faced were linguistics elements and self-confidence. These problems are similar to Rahmatunisa's study (2014) who found out that most EFL learners in Indonesia have problems in linguistics aspect, cognitive aspect, and psychological aspect. Some possible solutions are offered to overcome this problem, namely providing positive feedback or

comments for the students, being aware on the focus of the writing instruction, and providing peer feedback. Firstly, the teacher can play a role as a motivator and facilitator through the provision of positive feedback and comments toward the students' writing. Even though the teacher does not provide positive feedback, the teacher could give elaborated comments about the specific aspects the students needed to improve for their revision (Peterson, 2010) which can be done individually through student-teacher conference either in the classroom or outside the classroom. The teacher should also focus only on the problem which is emphasized more during the learning of writing. This can help the students to focus on their major weaknesses so that they can focus on which part of the composition needed to improve and revise (Ismail, Hasan, & Maulan, 2008). If this happens, it might help the students-writer to have positive attitude toward writing, in which later on is expected to grow their confidence and motivation to write.

Secondly, the teacher should be aware of the objective of the writing course, whether writing for fluency or writing for accuracy (Ismail, Hasan, & Maulan, 2008). When the teacher focuses on the fluency, the emphasis would be given more on the quantity of the product without enormous hesitations, pauses and blocks (Casanave, 2004). This means that fluency emphasizes on the flow of ideas and how they are translated on the paper. But if the focus of the instruction is on the accuracy, the emphasis would be on the quality in terms of the grammatical accuracy (Hwang, 2010). It is true when one says that a good writing is indispensable from the proper grammar used in the composition. But, if the teachers concerns with the students' confidence in writing, focusing on the quantity and the flow of ideas seem to be a better way (Hwang, 2010). This is supported by Gray (2004) who states that it is more important for writing teachers to focus more on the ideas and examine what the students are trying to say instead of focusing on the errors the students make. In other words, it is more beneficial to give more knowledge to the students-writer. on how to develop the paragraph, how to organize the ideas, and how to use cohesive devices to form unity and coherence within the essay.

If the students felt negatively about publishing their composition for publication because they fear of the negative comments they might get, they felt differently if the compositions are read by their peers. This finding suggests that peer feedback is important. Research shows that the use of peer feedback makes the students more relax in their learning to write and make them have positive attitude toward writing (Chiramanee & Kulprasit, 2014). When peers give feedback, the students would not feel tense and anxious because they feel that they are standing on the same ground.

## 5. Conclusion

This present study is intended to describe the eight graders' writing attitude toward writing in English. The result of the finding reveals that the students' writing attitude fall in the moderate category which means that the majority of the students have positive attitude toward writing in English as a foreign language. They view writing as an interesting activity and enjoyable experience. They also feel confident about their writing. This confidence feeling, however, does not apply when they were asked to send their writing for publication. They felt no confidence because they were afraid that other people say bad things about their composition, such as scolding them of making mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. The students, who have negative attitude, have problems with their own ability to write. They felt that they are not good writers and cannot write as well as other people. They doubt their own ability because they felt that they had problems with linguistics

elements which hindered them from making a good writing. To help these students have positive attitude toward writing, some solutions are offered, such as providing positive feedback or elaborated comments for the composition through student-teacher conference, focusing the writing instruction on fluency instead of accuracy, and providing peer feedback to help students improve the quality of their composition.

This research however has some weaknesses. Firstly, since this study results in descriptive data, generalization about the finding cannot be made. The results might only applies to subjects who have similar characteristics with this present study. Secondly, further research needs to be conducted to investigate the relationship between the secondary level students' writing attitude and their actual writing performance. Future research also needs to consider the role of self-efficacy in writing, and how it relates to writing attitude and writing performance across gender. The finding of these studies would help researchers and practitioners to have better understanding the nature of writing in EFL context and help the students-writer to achieve their best performance in writing skill.

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