ABSTRACT

Agustin, Meli. 2025. *"The Correlation between Students' Prior Knowledge and Students' Speaking skill"*, thesis report of the Department of English Education, FKIP, Jambi University. The first supervisor is Bunga Ayu Wulandari, S.PD., M.EIL., P.HD, and second supervisor is Dr. Reli Handayani, S.S., M.PD

This study investigates the correlation between students' prior knowledge and their speaking skills among eighth-grade students at SMP IT Ahmad Dahlan Jambi. Speaking is a fundamental skill in English learning, and prior knowledge is believed to significantly influence students' ability to express themselves verbally. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 57 students through a questionnaire assessing prior knowledge and a speaking test evaluated based on fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. The findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between students' prior knowledge and their speaking skill ($r = 0.588$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that students with higher prior knowledge tend to perform better in speaking tasks. The results support the theoretical framework suggesting that activated background knowledge facilitates language production. It is concluded that prior knowledge plays a significant role in enhancing speaking ability, though other factors such as motivation and confidence may also contribute. The study recommends integrating prior knowledge activation strategies in English speaking instruction to improve students' oral performance.

Keywords: prior knowledge, speaking skill, correlation, EFL students, background knowledge