

## **THE EFFECTS AND CORRELATION OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE TOWARDS WRITING PERFORMANCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Writing is a productive skill that is seen as an important ability in foreign language learning. It is not merely a means to communicate ideas and opinion, but ability to write reflects the process of thinking. In addition, writing is also needed in the workplace. There are duties related jobs that need writing such as writing email, writing report, writing business proposals and many more. As a part of language skill, learning to write is also perceived as increasing opportunities in searching for jobs since nowadays many companies require their candidates to master foreign language –especially English- skills such as writing. Thus, it is stated that not developing English ability may lessen opportunities in getting for a job. Referring to the critical role of writing, mainly in duties related job thus the teaching and learning writing requires particular concern. This study aimed at investigating prior knowledge and its contribution towards writing performance. Prior knowledge is one of significant affective factors in language learning which is defined as all knowledge which learners have acquired through their lives. Previous studies have demonstrated that prior knowledge impacted language skills, which is in line with this study. Prior knowledge was found to have strong positive correlation towards writing performance with correlation coefficient 0,305. This study also found that students with medium and high prior knowledge have different writing performance.

**Keywords:** *prior knowledge, vocational education, writing performance*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is one of productive skills that is seen to be vital in foreign language learning (Pratama et al., 2018). It is not merely a means to communicate ideas and opinion, but ability to write reflects the process of thinking. Writing process covers some phases of using knowledge such as declarative knowledge to practice analysing and synthesizing information. In addition, it also requires procedural knowledge which involve decision making about the content of writing. Finally, writing process employs metacognition to evaluate information so writers can make the materials collected work best for writing practices (Khairuddin et al., 2022). Referring to this fact, it is clear that writing is not only used for the aims of communication. It is not only about realizing ideas into text but also mirroring the process of thinking.

Other advantages of writing are not only dealing with communication through text, as it poses more important role as the reflection of personality as well as stimulate thinking skills. As part of thinking skills, writing train individual to develop persuasive and logical arguments. Therefore, it is an important skill both for employment and also for academic purposes (Klimova, 2012).

Writing is said to be one of tough language tasks linguistically and cognitively both for L1 and L2 learners (Renandya et al., 2020)). It is said so since writing covers cognitive processes, as it involves generating ideas, translating ideas into sentence, take care of the correct form, mechanics and / or orthography, and think of the readers and social setting (Isleem, 2012). In terms of communication purposes, writing is a means to convey thought, ideas and facts (Rao & Durga, 2018). (Ngubane, 2020) added that writing plays an important role thus it cannot be ignored. Hence, it can be said that writing functions in two ways. It improves critical thinking skill, and used in communication in any different contexts. Including in workplace. Now writing become one of important requirement for those who want to apply for jobs. The skill is used in almost every part of workplace regarding their functions in terms of communication and other duties related to jobs. Writing report, email and other written documents, presenting results of survey or plans, conducting meetings, having conversations with clients or colleagues are all involve those two skills. For these reasons, writing is considered to be significant and need attention, especially regarding with what factors influence the improvement of the skills.

### **Challenges in teaching writing**

It has been stated previously that writing needs attention since it is challenging. Teaching writing is also challenging

Prior knowledge refers to all the knowledge which readers have acquired through their lives. Some theorists use the term prior knowledge synonymously with world knowledge, background knowledge, memory storage, or experiential background (Biemans and Simons ,1996:151 in (Jukil, 2019). Prior knowledge is also called relevant background knowledge or plain experience. It happens when students make connections to what they have read or learned formerly. Prior knowledge of the learners or also known as the mental schemata is one aspect of language processing which enhances the comprehension in learning a language. Brown (2006) in (Hasan et al., 2018a) stated that prior knowledge is organized in schemata, generalized mental representations of our experience that are available to help us understand new experience(Hasan et al., 2018a).

In Language learning, specifically EFL, prior knowledge has been proven to have correlation and influence towards students' ability. (Hasan et al., 2018a) showed that prior knowledge impacted listening comprehension. The study examined the score of listening and measure students' prior knowledge. The result showed that both prior knowledge and listening comprehension were in 'good' level. (Hasan et al., 2018a) also presented that better prior knowledge correlated with better listening comprehension. Another study conducted by (Hayati Samian & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2012) showed that prior knowledge impacted students' score in listening comprehension. This study treated four groups of students with different information about culture before students were exposed to listening comprehension activity. The result showed that students had better score and understanding after they were given material about culture before involving in listening comprehension activities.

On the other hand, a study conducted by (Suyitno et al., 2019) reported that prior knowledge did not correlate with prospects and learning behavior for BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Learners) students. This study investigated 17 postgraduate students who chose BIPA program. The quantitative data were collected to answer the research problems such as score about prior knowledge, prospects, learning performance and grade point indexes achieved by students. The analysis resulted that those three variables did not impact students' learning achievement for BIPA program. However, this study can be argued with the statement from (Svinicki, 1994) who said that prior knowledge affects how learner perceive new

information. This statement opposes the result of study done by (Suyitno et al., 2019), therefore there perhaps other factors that were not considered in the study.

## **METHOD**

This study used quantitative approach since it was aimed at investigating the correlation and influence of prior knowledge towards students' writing performance. The research was conducted in three study programs which were English for Tourism Industry, English for Business Communication and Professionals and Electronic Engineering. There were 118 participants who took writing test and filled the questionnaire to measure prior knowledge.

There were three instruments employed in this research namely writing test, writing assessment rubric and questionnaire of prior knowledge. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions which were divided based on the four aspects of writing. Questions were developed based on grammar, mechanic, content and vocabulary aspects which ended with statement about students' ability on writing certain type of essay. For writing test, students' performances were tested using TOEIC writing test. The test consisted of 8 items which were graded from writing sentences, respond to a written request and write an opinion essay. After the tests were conducted, the results were assessed based on TOEIC writing rubric. The raters were lecturers who taught writing and have taken TOEIC writing test.

After finishing the data collection, quantitative data analysis was done. T-test and correlation test was the data analysis technique performed in this research.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Category of Prior Knowledge and Writing Performance**

To find out the correlation and effects of prior knowledge towards writing performance, the range of prior knowledge score must be determined. Prior knowledge is divided into three categories as presented in table 1 in the following;

Table 1. The Category of Prior Knowledge

<b>Category of Prior Knowledge</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Range</b>
High	$x \geq 51,66666$
Medium	$28,333 \leq x < 51,66666$
Low	$x < 28,3333$

From table 1. it can be seen that high category of prior knowledge is 51,6, medium category of prior knowledge is 28,3 until 51,6, and low category of prior knowledge is under 28,3. The calculation shows that 16,9 percent students have medium prior knowledge, while 83 percent students have high prior knowledge.

For writing performance level, the score was measured based on TOEIC writing assessment rubric. It is divided into 9 levels with score ranges from 0 to 200. The result of analysis shows that 5,9 percent students were in level 1 and 2, 22 percent students were in level 3, 48 percent students were in level 4, 19 percent students in level 5 and 3,3 percent students were in level 6.

### **The Correlation of Prior Knowledge and Writing Performance**

This part presents the result of correlation between prior knowledge and writing performance. Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient of writing and prior knowledge is 0,305 which is interpreted as positive and strong correlation. The significance value is  $0,005 < 0,001$  which means there is a significance correlation between writing and prior knowledge. It can be concluded that writing and prior knowledge has a strong, positive and significance correlation.

Table 2. Correlation of Prior Knowledge and Writing Performance

Correlations			Writing	Prior-Knowledge
Spearman's rho	Writing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.305**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	118	118
	Prior-Knowledge	Correlation Coefficient	.305**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	118	118

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### The Difference of Prior Knowledge towards Writing Performance

The following table presents the result of descriptive statistics of prior knowledge towards writing performance. Descriptive statistics is used to show mean score of writing performance for each level of prior knowledge.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Prior Knowledge towards Writing  
**Descriptive**

WRITING									
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
RENDAH	1	40.00	.	.	.	.	40	40	
SEDANG	31	65.97	17.861	3.208	59.42	72.52	30	110	
TINGGI	86	78.02	18.865	2.034	73.98	82.07	40	130	
Total	118	74.53	19.467	1.792	70.98	78.08	30	130	

Table 3 presents the result of descriptive analysis on writing performance based on the level of prior knowledge. Students with low prior knowledge get 40 for writing performance. Students with medium prior knowledge get 65,96 for writing performance. Students with high prior knowledge get 78,02 for writing performance. It can be seen that students with low and medium prior knowledge have different score on writing performance.

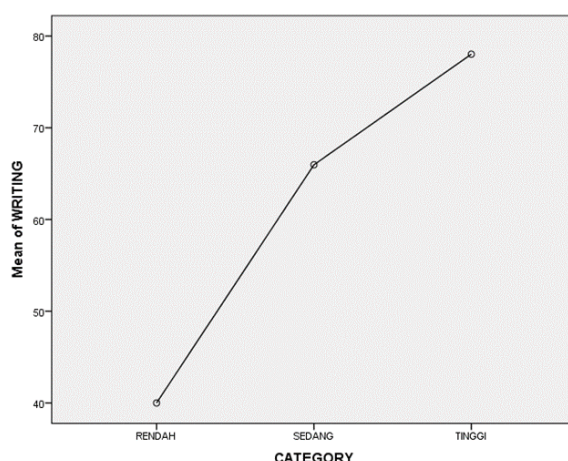
Table 4 The Different of Writing Performance based on Prior Knowledge

ANOVA	
WRITING	

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4514.443	2	2257.222	6.518	.002
Within Groups	39822.921	115	346.286		
Total	44337.364	117			

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in writing performance based on the level/category of prior knowledge which is different from the sig value.  $0.002 < 0.05$ . It indicates that students' prior knowledge influences writing performance.

Figure 1. Graph of Prior Knowledge towards Writing Performance



The graph illustrates the difference on writing performance. Students with medium and high level of prior knowledge demonstrate different performance in writing.

Referring to the result, prior knowledge was found to have strong correlation towards writing performance. The coefficient of correlation was 0,305, which reflects strong and positive correlation. A study administered by (Hasan et al., 2018b) reported that prior knowledge influenced listening and reading comprehension. The study said that students with 'good' prior knowledge also have 'good' listening and reading comprehension. It was also added that prior knowledge had high influence towards students listening and reading. The influence was categorized as significant. Thus, the result of the study is in line with this research. Prior knowledge which is also known as relevant background knowledge or mental schemata is one aspect of language processing that reinforce the comprehension in language learning (Hasan et al., 2018).

Another study conducted by (Diaz, 2017) stated that prior knowledge is one factors that make teaching effective. Prior knowledge completed with other characteristics cause students to have varied response to problems. They also can perceive the world differently. It was added that accurate prior knowledge can affect positively to learning. Therefore, teachers should assess students' prior knowledge before teaching and learning take place. The result of this study demonstrates the positive impact of prior knowledge towards writing, thus in teaching and learning writing, activities that develop prior knowledge should be given in advance.

Even though several studies revealed that prior knowledge do not impact learning achievement, a report written by Thompson (2003) said that prior knowledge had positively contributed to students' achievement. It was added that institution should put prior knowledge as one of their lists that play pivotal role in teaching and learning. The findings of study conducted by Thompson (2003) suggested that the knowledge that was brought by students to



the classroom significantly and positively predict their academic achievement. Thus, it can be concluded that prior knowledge contributed to learning achievement. Davis et al. (2020) added that prior knowledge combined with students' engagement administers educators and teacher to predict students' performance. In the study, it was reported that previous GPA completed with students' engagement model can be an accurate measurement to help teachers have insights towards students' achievement.

## CONCLUSION

### Conclusion

The result of study suggests the pivotal role of prior knowledge in language learning, specifically English. This affective factor can predict students' achievement; thus, educators should consider prior knowledge in teaching strategy implemented. Teachers have to be aware regarding the existence of prior knowledge. It can be concluded that a student with good prior knowledge level have better academic achievement, compare to those who have lower. Therefore, efforts to improve prior knowledge should become educators' focus.

### Suggestion

In reference to the result of study, it is implied that teaching learning process should also rely on affective factors. More research regarding affective factors in language learning must be conducted to add more understanding as well as develop students' learning.

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