

**THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN LINGUISTICS IN
LANGUAGE LEARNING PRACTICE: A STUDY OF LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY
AT SMP SEMEN TONASA 2**

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ABSTRACT

Modern linguistics has developed not only as an empirical discipline but also as a field rooted in the philosophy of language. This study examines how the philosophical foundations of modern linguistics are reflected in English language learning practices at SMP Semen Tonasa 2. Drawing on the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Noam Chomsky, the research employs a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis. The findings show that classroom practices implicitly reflect three major dimensions of modern linguistics: structural, functional, and cognitive. Structural aspects appear in grammar-focused activities, functional aspects in communicative interactions, and cognitive aspects in language processing and production. However, the explicit integration of philosophical language concepts into teaching remains limited. Therefore, the study highlights the need for a more reflective pedagogical approach that incorporates philosophical insights to enhance language awareness, critical thinking, and the effectiveness of English language learning.

Keywords: philosophy of language, modern linguistics, EFL, language teaching, case study

ABSTRAK

Linguistik modern berkembang bukan hanya sebagai disiplin empiris, tetapi juga sebagai bidang yang berakar pada filosofi bahasa. Studi ini meneliti bagaimana dasar-dasar filosofis linguistik modern tercermin dalam praktik pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di SMP Semen Tonasa 2. Dengan mengacu pada teori Ferdinand de Saussure, Ludwig Wittgenstein, dan Noam Chomsky, penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara dengan guru, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa praktik di kelas secara implisit mencerminkan tiga dimensi utama linguistik modern: struktural, fungsional, dan kognitif. Aspek struktural terlihat dalam kegiatan yang berfokus pada tata bahasa, aspek fungsional dalam interaksi komunikatif, dan aspek kognitif dalam pemrosesan serta produksi bahasa. Namun, integrasi eksplisit konsep bahasa filosofis ke dalam pengajaran masih terbatas. Jadi, penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pendekatan pedagogis yang lebih reflektif yang memasukkan wawasan filosofis untuk meningkatkan kesadaran bahasa, berpikir kritis, dan efektivitas pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: Filsafat bahasa, linguistik modern, EFL, pengajaran bahasa, studi kasus

A. Introduction

Language plays a central role in human cognition, communication, and the construction of social reality. In modern linguistics, language is no longer viewed simply as a system of rules, but rather as a complex phenomenon involving structure, meaning, use, and cognition. However, the theoretical foundations underlying these various perspectives are firmly rooted in the philosophy of language.

The philosophy of language addresses fundamental questions about the nature of meaning, the relationship between language and reality, and the role of language in shaping human thought. Early analytical philosophers such as Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell laid the foundations for this study by examining meaning from the perspectives of logic and reference. Subsequently, Ludwig Wittgenstein shifted the focus to the use of language in social contexts, arguing that meaning is not fixed but emerges from the use of language in everyday life. Meanwhile, Ferdinand de Saussure introduced a structuralist view that views language as a system of signs, which has had a significant

influence on the development of modern linguistics.

Furthermore, Noam Chomsky revolutionized linguistic theory by emphasizing the cognitive and innate aspects of language through the concept of Universal Grammar. His thinking marked a shift from a behaviorist approach to a mentalist understanding of language, highlighting the role of the human mind in language competence. Furthermore, the pragmatic theory developed by J. L. Austin and John Searle suggests that language is used not only to convey information but also to perform actions. Thus, the scope of linguistic analysis broadens to encompass real-life communication.

Despite this rich theoretical development, language teaching practice—especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)—often focuses more on practical skills such as grammar mastery, vocabulary acquisition, and communicative competence without explicitly acknowledging their underlying philosophical foundations. This creates a gap between theory and practice, where teachers may apply principles derived from

philosophical theories without a clear conceptual understanding of them.

At SMP Semen Tonasa 2, English learning reflects a combination of structural, communicative, and cognitive approaches. Teachers use grammar-based instruction combined with interactive speaking activities and comprehension-focused tasks. Although these practices align with key theories in modern linguistics, the extent to which they are influenced by the philosophy of language remains unclear.

Therefore, this research is crucial to explore how the philosophical foundations of language are reflected in classroom learning practices. By examining the implicit presence of philosophical concepts in the learning and teaching process, this research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical linguistics and pedagogical practice. Ultimately, this research is expected to raise awareness of the importance of the philosophy of language, thus contributing to more reflective, effective, and theoretically grounded language teaching.

B. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative case study design to explore how the philosophical foundations of language are reflected in classroom learning practices. A qualitative case study approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth investigation of complex phenomena in real-life contexts, particularly to understand how abstract philosophical concepts are implicitly applied in language teaching.

The research was conducted at SMP Semen Tonasa 2, a junior high school in Indonesia that offers English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction.

The participants in this study consisted of:

- a. One English teacher as the primary subject who carried out the learning practices.
- b. Eighth-grade students as participants in classroom learning interactions.

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique because they were directly involved in the learning process relevant to the research objectives.

To obtain comprehensive data, this study employed three main techniques:

1. Class Observation

Classroom observations were conducted to examine actual learning practices. Researchers used a non-participant observation method with a focus on:

- a. The learning strategies used by teachers.
- b. Language use in the learning process.
- c. Interaction patterns between teachers and students.

Field notes were used to document various phenomena observed during the learning process.

2. Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with English teachers to explore:

- a. Their beliefs and learning strategies.
- b. Their understanding of language and meaning.
- c. Their awareness of linguistic theories.

The flexible interview format allowed researchers to obtain in-depth answers while remaining focused on the research objectives.

3. Document Analysis

Relevant learning documents were analyzed, including:

- a. Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP).
- b. Learning materials.
- c. Student Worksheets (LKPD).

This analysis aimed to identify how linguistic and philosophical concepts were integrated into the learning design.

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes the following three stages:

a. Data Reduction

This stage is carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis.

b. Data Display

The reduced data is then arranged in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or thematic categories to facilitate the process of interpreting and understanding the data.

c. Conclusion, Drawing and Verification

At this stage, researchers interpret the data to identify emerging patterns, relationships, and themes. The conclusions drawn are then

continuously verified to ensure the validity of the research findings.

C. Research Results and Discussion

The research results show that English instruction at Semen Tonasa 2 Junior High School places significant emphasis on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary mastery. Teachers frequently employ explicit grammar instruction, including explanations of tenses, sentence structure, and word formation. Furthermore, repetition (drilling) exercises are used to reinforce student understanding.

This practice reflects Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist perspective, which views language as a system of interconnected signs. The focus on linguistic form, rules, and patterns aligns with the idea that meaning emerges through the relationships between elements within a language system.

From a learning perspective, this approach helps students develop a basic understanding of language structure. However, an overemphasis on form can reduce students' opportunities to use language communicatively if not balanced with meaning-oriented activities.

Tabel 1. Hasil Observasi Praktik Pembelajaran Bahasa

No	Aktivitas yang Diamati	Deskripsi	Dimensi Linguistik	Landasan Filosofis
1	Penjelasan Tata Bahasa	Guru menjelaskan Simple Present Tense menggunakan rumus dan contoh	Struktural	Ferdinand de Saussure
2	Latihan Drilling	Siswa mengulangi pola kalimat secara lisan	Struktural	Ferdinand de Saussure
3	Bermain Peran (Role Play)	Siswa berlatih dialog secara berpasangan	Fungsional	Ludwig Wittgenstein
4	Diskusi Kelompok	Siswa mendiskusikan aktivitas sehari-hari dalam Bahasa Inggris	Fungsional	Ludwig Wittgenstein
5	Koreksi Kesalahan	Siswa mengidentifikasi dan memperbaiki kalimat yang salah	Kognitif	Noam Chomsky
6	Penyusunan Kalimat	Siswa membuat kalimat berdasarkan petunjuk yang diberikan	Kognitif	Noam Chomsky
7	Mengemukakan Pendapat	Siswa menyatakan persetujuan atau ketidaksetujuan dalam	Pragmatik	

*Bahasa
Inggris*

Observational data show that learning practices integrate various linguistic dimensions. Structural activities dominate the early stages of learning, while functional and cognitive activities emerge more frequently during the practice and application stages.

To provide a clearer picture of the trends in the approaches used, the frequency of each linguistic dimension is summarized below.

Tabel 2. Frekuensi Dimensi Linguistik dalam Aktivitas Pembelajaran

Dimensi Linguistik	Frekuensi	Persentase
<i>Struktural</i>	8	40%
<i>Fungsional</i>	6	30%
<i>Kognitif</i>	4	20%
<i>Pragmatik</i>	2	10%
Total	20	100%

The structural approach is the most dominant in learning. This indicates that grammar instruction remains the primary focus. However, the presence of functional and cognitive elements indicates efforts towards a more balanced learning environment.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' understanding of language and the teaching practices they employ.

Tabel 3. Kutipan Wawancara dan Analisis Tematik

No	Kutipan Wawancara	Tema	Interpretasi Filosofis
1	"Saya biasanya memulai dengan tata bahasa agar siswa memahami struktur terlebih dahulu."	<i>Fokus pada bentuk</i>	<i>Strukturalisme (Saussure)</i>
2	"Siswa perlu berlatih berbicara dalam situasi nyata."	<i>Komunikasi</i>	<i>Makna sebagai penggunaan (Wittgenstein)</i>
3	"Saya ingin siswa memahami pola, bukan hanya menghafal."	<i>Pembelajaran kognitif</i>	<i>Tata bahasa mental (Chomsky)</i>
4	"Saya mengikuti kurikulum dan menyesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa."	<i>Pendekatan praktis</i>	<i>Penggunaan teori secara implisit</i>
5	"Saya tidak terlalu memahami filsafat, tetapi saya mencoba"	<i>Kurangnya kesadaran teoretis</i>	<i>Kesenjangan antara teori dan</i>

N o	Kutipan Wawancara	Tema	Interpreta si Filosofis
	<i>berbagai metode."</i>		

Analysis of the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), teaching materials, and student worksheets shows that modern linguistic elements have been integrated into the learning design.

Tabel 4. Analisis RPP

Komponen	Temuan	Dimensi Linguistik
Tujuan Pembelajaran	Fokus pada tata bahasa dan komunikasi	Struktural dan Fungsional
Aktivitas Pembelajaran	Kombinasi Penjelasan dan praktik	Campuran
Penilaian	Menekankan ketepatan dan kelancara	Struktural dan pragmatik

In addition to structure-focused instruction, research has found that teachers also employ communicative activities such as role-playing, dialogues, and situational conversations. These activities encourage students to use language in real-life contexts, particularly in speaking skills.

This finding reflects Ludwig Wittgenstein's view that meaning is determined by the use of language in

specific social contexts. The concept of language games is evident in classroom interactions where students use language in simulated everyday life situations.

Research shows that students are more active and engaged in these activities. Their communicative competence also develops when language is taught as a functional communication tool, rather than simply a static system of rules.

Research also shows that teachers encourage students to understand language patterns rather than simply memorize rules. Activities such as sentence construction, error correction, and guided discovery learning are used to develop students' internal linguistic competence.

This approach aligns with Noam Chomsky's cognitive perspective, particularly regarding the distinction between competence and performance. The emphasis on internalizing grammatical rules reflects the idea that language learning involves mental processes and innate human capacities.

Students demonstrated the ability to apply learned structures to new contexts, indicating the development of a deeper linguistic

understanding beyond mere memorization.

Although not explicitly stated in the lesson plan, elements of pragmatic competence were found in classroom interactions. Students used language to perform various functions, such as asking for help, apologizing, and expressing opinions.

This finding aligns with the speech act theory developed by J. L. Austin and John Searle, which asserts that language is a form of social action. The presence of these elements indicates that students have been introduced to functional language use beyond mere grammatical structure.

Although various philosophical perspectives are implicitly present in teaching practices, research finds that teachers do not consciously refer to or apply these theoretical frameworks in the learning process.

Interview results indicate that teaching practices are based more on the curriculum and teaching experience than on an understanding of the philosophy of language. This situation suggests that modern linguistic theory does influence teaching practices, but its application remains intuitive rather than reflective.

The results indicate that English learning at Semen Tonasa 2 Middle School reflects a multidimensional model of modern linguistics, consisting of:

- a. Structural Dimension (Saussure) → focuses on grammar and language systems.
- b. Functional Dimension (Wittgenstein) → focuses on meaning in use.
- c. Cognitive Dimension (Chomsky) → focuses on mental processes in language learning.
- d. Pragmatic Dimension (Austin and Searle) → focuses on language as a social action.

These four dimensions do not stand alone but interact with each other in learning practices. However, the lack of an explicit philosophical foundation limits the opportunity to develop a more integrated and reflective learning approach.

The integration of structural, functional, and cognitive elements in language learning reflects the development of modern linguistics as a multidisciplinary field. The findings of this study support the view that effective language learning requires a balance between language form, meaning, and use.

However, the lack of explicit engagement with philosophical foundations indicates a gap between theory and practice. Teachers who understand the philosophical underpinnings of their methods tend to be more reflective in their teaching and better able to adapt learning strategies to the needs of their students and diverse learning contexts.

Therefore, integrating the philosophy of language into teacher education and training programs can increase pedagogical awareness and improve the quality of language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning.

Observation data, interviews, and document analysis consistently indicate that English learning at Semen Tonasa 2 Junior High School reflects a hybrid model of modern linguistics. The dominance of structural activities aligns with a traditional grammar-based approach, while communicative tasks reflect functional and pragmatic theories.

Interestingly, teachers demonstrate an intuitive understanding of key linguistic principles without directly referring to

the underlying philosophical theories. This finding strengthens the argument that philosophical foundations are often implicitly embedded in pedagogical practice.

However, limited awareness of these foundations can limit deeper pedagogical reflection. Therefore, integrating philosophical insights into teacher education has the potential to increase learning effectiveness while strengthening the coherence between theory and practice.

D. Conclusion

This study aims to examine how the philosophical foundations of modern linguistics are reflected in English language learning practices at Semen Tonasa 2 Junior High School. The results indicate that classroom learning practices implicitly reflect various key perspectives in modern linguistics, namely the structural, functional, cognitive, and pragmatic dimensions.

The structural dimension is evident through an emphasis on teaching grammar, sentence patterns, and vocabulary mastery, which aligns with Ferdinand de Saussure's view of language as a system of signs. The functional dimension is reflected in

communicative activities such as dialogue, role-playing, and group discussions, which support Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea that meaning emerges through the use of language in social contexts. The cognitive dimension is evident in activities that encourage students to understand language patterns and develop internal linguistic competence, as proposed by Noam Chomsky. Meanwhile, the pragmatic dimension is evident in the use of language for social actions, such as expressing opinions, asking for help, and interacting communicatively.

Although these various philosophical perspectives are present in learning practices, this study found that teachers have not explicitly linked learning strategies to the underlying philosophical theories of language. Teaching practices are based more on curriculum demands and teaching experience than on in-depth theoretical awareness.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that English language learning at Semen Tonasa 2 Middle School reflects a modern, multidimensional linguistic model. However, a more explicit integration of the philosophy of language into

teacher education and professional development is needed to enhance pedagogical reflection, strengthen the link between theory and practice, and support more effective, critical, and meaningful language learning.

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