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A STUDY OF LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CLASSICAL AND MODERN STRUCTURALISM: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGAUGE TEACHING METHODS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implications of classical structuralism, as proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1959), and modern structuralism/post-structuralism, as introduced by Jacques Derrida (1978), for English language teaching (ELT). Saussure (1959) conception of language as a system of arbitrary signs provides a fundamental structural foundation for understanding grammar and linguistics form. in contrast, Derrida (1978) notion of deconstruction emphasizes the fluidity, instability, and contextual dependency of meaning. using a qualitative descriptive approach, this research analyses contemporary literature to explore how these two philosophy framework can be meaningfully integrated into English language pedagogy. findings indicate that structuralism remains essential for building foundational linguistics competence, while deconstructions foster critical thinking, interpretive awareness, and reflective literacy. integrating these framework results in a more holistic and balanced approach to ELT. this research contributes to strengthening theoretical grounding in language pedagogy, particularly within the context of modern curricula such as Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka.

Keywords: *Structuralism, Structuralism Modern, post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Philosophy of Language, ELT.*

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INTRODUCTION

Language, as both a social and cognitive phenomenon, plays a central role in how individuals understand the world, interpret meaning, and communicate ideas.

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In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), understanding how language operates—both structurally and interpretively—is essential for developing effective pedagogical approaches. This study focuses on examining two major philosophical frameworks in linguistics: Saussure (1959)'s classical structuralism and Derrida (1978)'s modern structuralism/post-structuralism, and exploring how these theories can be integrated to strengthen English language teaching. The research specifically investigates how structural understanding of language can be balanced with critical interpretive skills to meet the demands of contemporary ELT.

The importance of this research emerges from a growing gap between what students learn in traditional language classrooms and the competencies required in modern communication. In many EFL contexts, including Indonesia, English instruction has historically relied on structural approaches—prioritizing grammar, phonology, and sentence patterns as the basis for language mastery. While this approach provides students with linguistic accuracy, it often neglects deeper interpretive skills such as critical thinking, contextual text analysis, and meaning negotiation. As curriculum reforms such as Kurikulum Merdeka demand students to read reflectively, interpret texts critically, and understand multiple layers of meaning, teachers increasingly struggle to adapt due to a lack of theoretical grounding that connects linguistic structure with interpretive competence. This research becomes necessary because the integration of structuralism and deconstruction offers a theoretical solution to bridge this pedagogical gap.

The academic and social contexts further reinforce the need for this study. Socially, the digital age has transformed language into a highly dynamic and multimodal system in which meaning constantly shifts depending on context, culture, and medium. Students today interact with texts that are fluid, multilayered, and open to various interpretations—conditions that align more closely with Derrida (1978)'s notion of meaning instability than with purely structural views. Academically, existing literature shows that although Saussure (1959) and Derrida (1978) remain

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influential in linguistic and philosophical studies, their theories are rarely examined together within the context of ELT. Most prior research either focuses on structural linguistics or on deconstructive literary analysis, resulting in a lack of studies that directly connect these theories to English language pedagogy.

Thus, this research emerges from the intersection of pedagogical needs, philosophical relevance, and social change. It aims to provide a clearer theoretical foundation for teachers and researchers by explaining how classical structuralism and modern structuralism can be meaningfully combined to enrich English language teaching. By grounding the study in both social realities and literature gaps, the introduction establishes the significance of the research and prepares the reader to understand why this philosophical exploration is essential for ELT today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The philosophical foundation of this study is rooted in Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism (1959), which positions language as a system of signs formed through relational structures. Saussure argues that meaning emerges from the differences between linguistic units rather than their inherent properties. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), this view supports instructional practices that prioritize grammar, phonology, and syntactic patterns as essential components in building learners' linguistic accuracy. Recent scholarship, such as the analyses by Culler (2018), affirms that Saussure's structuralism principles continue to shape modern linguistic theory, particularly in understanding how learners internalize grammatical systems.

However, structuralism alone does not fully account for the dynamic and interpretive dimensions of language, especially in today's communicative landscape. Jacques Derrida's modern structuralism, or post-structuralism, introduced through his concept of deconstruction (1978), critiques the idea of fixed meaning. Derrida argues that meaning is always shifting, deferred, and dependent on context. This

theoretical stance has gained renewed interest in contemporary education, particularly in fields concerned with textual interpretation and critical literacy. Peters (2019) demonstrates that deconstruction equips learners with tools to interrogate dominant meanings and uncover alternative interpretations, a skill increasingly needed in the digital age.

In recent years, scholars have explored how deconstruction can enhance ELT by encouraging learners to critically engage with texts. Reynolds (2021) highlights that Derrida's notion of instability aligns with the needs of modern literacy, where students must navigate diverse, multimodal texts. Similarly, Costa (2022) emphasizes that the openness of meaning enables learners to approach reading tasks with deeper analytical awareness, improving their capacity for interpretive reasoning. These studies collectively suggest that post-structuralist perspectives provide valuable contributions to ELT, particularly in promoting reflective and critical reading practices.

Despite their differing orientations, structuralism and post-structuralism have recently been examined together as complementary frameworks rather than opposing ones. Scholars such as Jones (2019) argue that structural accuracy and interpretive flexibility form two essential dimensions of communicative competence. Mahmood (2021) further asserts that ELT curricula must integrate both grammatical mastery and critical literacy to prepare learners for complex communicative demands. This dual emphasis aligns with broader educational trends that prioritize higher order thinking, making the integration of Saussure (1959) and Derrida (1978) increasingly relevant.

Within the Indonesian context, the need for such integrative approaches becomes even more pronounced. Traditional English instruction remains heavily grammar focused, reflecting a long-standing structuralism orientation. While this approach strengthens linguistic foundation, it often limits students' interpretive and analytical engagement with texts. Recent local studies, such as Yusuf and Rahman

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(2023), show that teachers face challenges transitioning toward Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes critical thinking, reflective literacy, and contextual interpretation. Ali (2024) also highlights that philosophical theories of language are essential for reorienting ELT practices in Indonesia toward more holistic and analytical learning outcomes.

Taken together, contemporary literature reveals a significant gap: although both structuralism and deconstruction are widely discussed in linguistic and philosophical studies, few works explore their combined pedagogical implications for ELT. Existing studies often treat them separately, resulting in a lack of comprehensive frameworks that integrate structure-based learning with interpretive pedagogy. This research addresses that gap by examining how the complementary strengths of Saussure (1959) and Derrida (1978) can be unified to enrich English language teaching. The literature therefore establishes the theoretical and practical relevance of integrating classical and modern perspectives to support a more holistic approach to language education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design, a method commonly used to examine philosophical, conceptual, and pedagogical issues in language education. A qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate because the goal of this research is not to measure variables, but to understand and interpret how classical structuralism by Saussure (1959) and modern structuralism or post-structuralism by Derrida (1978) can be integrated into English Language Teaching (ELT). Qualitative description allows the researcher to explore concepts in depth and present findings in a clear, structured narrative suitable for theoretical analysis.

In collecting data, this study relies on documentary and literature-based analysis, which includes reviewing books, journal articles, and contemporary research

published within the last decade (2014–2024). The inclusion of recent studies ensures that the analysis reflects the current academic landscape. Works such as Culler (2018), Peters (2019), Mahmood (2021), Reynolds (2021), and Olsson (2022) provide updated perspectives on structuralism, deconstruction, and their relevance in modern ELT. These sources complement the foundational theories of Saussure (1959) and Derrida (1978), enabling a balanced understanding between classical concepts and recent academic developments.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method widely recognized in qualitative research for identifying recurring patterns and themes. Braun and Clarke (2016) highlight thematic analysis as an effective approach for organizing conceptual data, especially in studies that do not involve field observations or participant interviews. In this research, thematic analysis was used to categorize ideas into themes such as structural linguistic principles, deconstructive meaning-making, critical literacy, and pedagogical integration. This analytical technique supports the systematic interpretation of philosophical concepts and their implications for ELT.

To enhance credibility, the study incorporates source triangulation, comparing classical theoretical works with modern scholarly interpretations. This approach aligns with qualitative methodological standards that emphasize validation through cross-referencing multiple sources. By grounding the analysis in both foundational and contemporary literature, the methodological framework remains academically rigorous, theoretically coherent, and relevant to today's educational context.

FINDINGS

1. Applications of Saussure (1959) Structuralism in English Language Teaching

The findings show that Saussure's (1959) structuralism remains a foundational pillar in English Language Teaching, particularly in contexts where linguistic accuracy

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and form-based instruction are prioritized. Structuralism positions language as a system governed by relationships among signs, and this view directly influences instructional approaches that emphasize grammar, syntax, morphology, and phonology. The analysis of teaching materials and existing literature reveals that many ELT practices still adopt structuralism principles especially in teaching sentence patterns, mastering grammatical rules, and understanding linguistic categories. These structural elements form the backbone of language proficiency for learners who are at the foundational and intermediate levels. Additionally, contemporary studies such as Olsson (2022) and Culler (2018) demonstrate that structuralism approaches continue to support the systematic acquisition of language rules, reinforcing their relevance in modern classrooms despite pedagogical shifts toward communicative and critical approaches.

2. Applications of Derrida (1978) Deconstruction in English Language Teaching

The analysis also indicates that Derrida's (1978) deconstruction has increasingly informed ELT practices, particularly in the domains of reading comprehension, literature teaching, and discourse analysis. While structuralism focuses on fixed linguistic patterns, deconstruction emphasizes the fluidity and multiplicity of meaning. This perspective encourages learners to question established interpretations, analyze hidden assumptions within texts, and explore alternative meanings. Findings show that this approach fosters deeper critical thinking skills and reflective reading abilities, both of which are essential competencies in 21st-century education. Recent studies—such as Peters (2019), Reynolds (2021), and Costa (2022)—affirm that deconstructive pedagogy enhances students' interpretive awareness, enabling them to navigate complex texts and multimodal materials commonly encountered in digital communication environments. In practice, teachers who adopt deconstructive methods guide learners to examine contradictions, ambiguities, and contextual influences within texts, thus cultivating more independent and analytically engaged readers.

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3. Integrations of Saussure Structuralism and Derrida Deconstruction in ELT

The findings further reveal that integrating classical structuralism and modern deconstruction provides a balanced and comprehensive framework for ELT. Structuralism offers the foundational linguistic structure necessary for accurate language use, while deconstruction contributes the interpretive flexibility needed for complex textual engagement. This combined approach allows learners to first understand how language systems operate, and subsequently examine how meaning shifts depending on context, intention, and textual structure. Research such as Jones (2019) and Mahmood (2021) supports the idea that a dual-theoretical model strengthens both linguistic competence and critical literacy, which are vital in addressing contemporary educational demands. Within the Indonesian context, this integration also aligns with the objectives of Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes critical thinking, contextual interpretation, and reflective learning.

Beyond these core findings, the study highlights several important implications for ELT. First, effective implementation of both structuralism and deconstruction requires teachers to be theoretically informed and pedagogically adaptable. While structuralist instruction provides essential scaffolding for learner competence, deconstructive approaches enrich classroom discourse by encouraging exploration, interpretation, and meaning-making. Second, the findings underscore a significant academic gap: although both theories are foundational in linguistic philosophy, their pedagogical integration remains underdeveloped in ELT research. This study contributes by offering a conceptual bridge that connects technical language understanding with critical interpretation. Finally, the integration of these theories supports the development of learners who are not only linguistically proficient but also capable of engaging critically with texts—an essential skill for navigating the complexities of modern communication and globalized information environments.

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DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that classical structuralism and modern structuralism/post structuralism each provide significant yet distinct contributions to English Language Teaching (ELT). A deeper examination shows that Saussure (1959)'s structuralism continues to shape pedagogical practices that emphasize linguistic precision, systematic learning, and mastery of language rules. This is crucial because accurate control of grammar, phonology, and syntactic patterning remains a central component of communicative competence. Learners who lack structural grounding frequently struggle to express meaning clearly, which underscores why structuralism approaches continue to appear in ELT syllabi, textbooks, and instructional routines. The persistence of structuralism in current ELT literature, such as in the works of Olsson (2022) and Culler (2018), demonstrates its enduring relevance in supporting foundational linguistic development.

In contrast, the role of deconstruction highlights the evolving demands of literacy in the 21st century. Derrida (1978)'s emphasis on the instability of meaning provides a theoretical basis for encouraging learners to think critically, engage reflectively, and recognize that texts can hold multiple interpretations. This is particularly important in today's multimodal, digital society where learners frequently encounter texts that challenge traditional notions of meaning. The findings align with Peters (2019), Reynolds (2021), and Costa (2022), who argue that deconstruction enhances learners' ability to navigate ambiguity, analyze textual contradictions, and understand meaning as shaped by cultural context. Such skills are increasingly necessary as ELT shifts beyond structural accuracy toward interpretative depth and higher order cognitive engagement.

Taken together, these results indicate that the greatest pedagogical potential emerges not from choosing one theoretical approach over the other, but from integrating both perspectives into a unified model of teaching. Structural competence

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provides learners with the linguistic tools necessary for clarity and coherence, while deconstructive competence empowers them to analyze, question, and reinterpret meaning. This dual theory approach supports the development of both linguistic proficiency and critical literacy, aligning with the goals of modern curricula including Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka which prioritize analytical thinking and contextual understanding. The integration of Saussure (1959) and Derrida (1978) establishes a more holistic vision of ELT that reflects how language functions both as a rule based system and as a dynamic process of meaning making.

Despite this potential, the effective implementation of an integrated structuralist–deconstructive pedagogy presents several challenges. Teachers must navigate the tension between ensuring linguistic accuracy and promoting interpretive freedom. Learners require a solid structural foundation before they can meaningfully engage with deconstructive tasks, which means that the sequencing of learning activities becomes critical. Additionally, teacher readiness plays a major role; educators who are unfamiliar with philosophical theories of language may find it difficult to incorporate concepts such as signifier–signified relationships, meaning deferral, or textual ambiguity into practical classroom activities. This aligns with the concerns raised by Yusuf and Rahman (2023), who note that many teachers in Indonesia struggle with shifting toward more reflective and interpretive teaching practices.

The broader implications of these findings emphasize that integrating classical structuralism and deconstruction enriches learners' understanding of language, preparing them to navigate increasingly complex communicative situations. Rather than limiting ELT to mechanical rule based instruction, this integration supports an instructional paradigm that values both structure and interpretation. In doing so, it empowers students to become not only accurate users of English but also critical, reflective, and contextually aware communicators. These insights highlight the theoretical and practical relevance of this study, underscoring the need for continued

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research that explores how philosophical theories of language can inform pedagogical innovation in English language teaching.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant theoretical and pedagogical value of integrating classical structuralism, as articulated by Saussure (1959), with modern structuralism and post-structuralism, as developed by Derrida (1978), within English Language Teaching (ELT). Saussure (1959)'s structuralism provides the essential linguistic foundation needed for learners to develop accuracy in grammar, phonology, and syntactic organization. This structural foundation remains indispensable in contemporary ELT, as it equips learners with the fundamental tools necessary to construct coherent and meaningful utterances. Without such structural competence, learners often struggle to communicate clearly or interpret linguistic patterns effectively.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that structural mastery alone is insufficient for the demands of modern communication. Derrida (1978)'s perspective on the fluidity and instability of meaning introduces an essential critical dimension to ELT, encouraging learners to understand language not only as a structured system but also as a dynamic interpretive process. Through deconstruction, learners become aware of ambiguity, cultural influence, and contextual variation in meaning-making. This aligns with the growing emphasis on critical literacy in contemporary curricula, particularly in Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, which encourages learners to analyze texts reflectively and interpretively rather than merely reproducing information.

The synthesis of these theoretical frameworks offers a powerful model for holistic language education. Integrating structuralism and deconstructive approaches enables teachers to cultivate learners who are both linguistically proficient and critically aware. Structuralism prepares learners to use language with accuracy and

consistency, while deconstruction invites them to question, interpret, and construct meaning in deeper and more flexible ways. This dual competency is essential in the 21st century, where communication is increasingly multimodal, context-dependent, and saturated with diverse perspectives.

However, the integration of these theories also presents challenges. Teachers must carefully scaffold instruction to ensure that structural competence is developed before introducing interpretive complexity. Educators also require adequate theoretical knowledge to implement deconstructive practices effectively. Therefore, professional development, curriculum support, and deeper engagement with linguistic philosophy are needed to fully realize the potential of this integrative approach.

Overall, this study concludes that combining classical structuralism and modern deconstruction provides a comprehensive and theoretically grounded foundation for improving ELT. By bridging linguistic structure with critical interpretation, teachers can cultivate learners who are not only accurate users of English but also reflective, analytical, and contextually responsive communicators. Future studies are encouraged to explore practical classroom strategies, empirical applications, and curriculum models that operationalize this integration to further enhance English language teaching in diverse educational contexts.

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