

## **LEARNING MANDARIN LANGUAGE IN FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to describe the learning of Mandarin from the perspective of Ferdinand de Saussure's descriptive linguistics in students of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung. The method used by researchers is a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods. The data in this study is in the form of Chinese Language learning in Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung students. Data sources were obtained from students, teachers, and language tutors at Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung. Data collection techniques are carried out by observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis in this study used phenomenological analysis. The results of this study show that Chinese language learning has a positive impact on students. The positive impact is in the form of increasing Chinese language skills and their involvement in active and fun learning. However, some of the problems encountered in learning Chinese in Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung are the introduction to Chinese characters (Hanzi) and how to write them.

**Keywords:** Ferdinand De Saussure; Mandarin Language; Linguistik.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this era of "globalization," the needs of Chinese people are increasing. Therefore, more and more people are learning Mandarin every day. The world's four most commonly spoken languages are Chinese, English, Spanish, and Hindi. There were more than 620 Chinese language schools in Indonesia in 1965 and 1966, but in 1967 political problems forced many schools to close. After the 1998 reform, a new policy upheld the right of Chinese Indonesians to be named and allowed to learn and speak Mandarin and Chinese. Mandarin is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, and the need to speak Mandarin is growing (Littlewood, 1984. Kuntarto, 2017).

Linguistics is the scientific study of language." the language "Mandarin is a dialect of the Chinese Language spoken in the north and southwest of the People's Republic of China (Beaugrande, 2002). Many people in Indonesia, especially young children, do not know Mandarin, and young children are often not taught Mandarin in schools, and their parents cannot teach Mandarin either (Syukri, 2019). Ferdinand de Saussure developed modern linguistics by distinguishing between language and paroles. Lang means an institution, language means human characteristics, and parole means language concretely. Linguistics does not only discuss language but also language in general (Wibawa & Prita Natalia, 2021). Given that Saussure's ideas about language began 100 years ago, there is evidence that Saussure's influence on modern linguistics is not only alive but active. Yet powerful insights like Ferdinand de Saussure's era of cognitive

linguistics in language research like Saussure's are likely to remain influential for decades to come (Amalia, D. R., Sari, N. D. P., Saputra, A. A., & Alfaruq, 2019).

Based on research, there are several academic anxieties and problems that are often encountered in learning Chinese, including low listening and speaking skills; Many Chinese learners struggle to develop listening and speaking skills, even though they have learned grammar and vocabulary well. This skill is very important in communicating in Chinese, so it needs to be emphasized and intensively trained in learning (Wang, 2020); With Vast and complex vocabulary, Chinese has a very broad and complex vocabulary, which can confuse learners, especially those who are not native speakers. In addition, there are many synonyms and variations in Chinese vocabulary that need to be learned in order to master the language well (Xie, 2018); Ineffective learning tactics. Some Chinese learning methods are often considered ineffective by students. For example, teacher-centered teaching, monotonous and uninteresting learning, and lack of practice speaking in Chinese. It is necessary to find more creative and interactive ways of learning to be more effective in helping learners master the Language (Abdurosul et al., 2021); Different language structure, Mandarin has a language structure that is very different from other languages, such as English or Indonesian. These different sentence structures and grammar can make it difficult for learners to learn Chinese and require extra time and effort to understand (Fan, 2019); Difficult pronunciation, Chinese has a pronunciation system that is very different from other languages, and many students have difficulty in pronouncing the sounds in Chinese. It takes intensive practice and good guidance for learners to improve their pronunciation; The challenge in learning Chinese characters, Chinese use Chinese characters that are very different from the alphabet, so it takes more time and effort to learn. In addition, there are many characters that must be memorized, so it requires the right learning strategy to help students master Chinese characters well.

All academic anxieties and problems above require the right approach and learning strategies to be overcome properly. In studying linguistics, one of the leading linguistic figures was Ferdinand de Saussure. Ferdinand de Saussure was a linguist known for his contributions to the development of structural linguistics. The concepts he put forward in his "Course in General Linguistics" (1916) laid the foundation for the development of modern linguistics. One of the important concepts in de Saussure's structural linguistic theory is the distinction between signifier and signified.

According to de Saussure, every language has three main elements: signifier (a perceived form of language), signified (understood concept of language), and referent (the reality of the outside world represented by language). De Saussure argues that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary, meaning that there is no direct relationship between signifier and referent. This means that there is no reason why the word "cat" should represent the concept

of a cat or the word "meow" should represent the sound of a cat. The relationship between signifier and signified is determined by agreement within society.

De Saussure also put forward the concept that language consists of a system of signs and that each sign has opposite values associated with other signs in the system. For example, in English, the word "big" has the opposite meaning of the word "small", and these two words only have a clear meaning when viewed in the context of the English sign system as a whole.

De Saussure's contributions to linguistics include the development of structural approaches in language analysis, emphasizing the relationship between language elements and sign systems. De Saussure's theory became the basis for the development of modern linguistics and influenced many branches of linguistics, such as semiotics and the anthropology of language (de Saussure, 2011).

Mandarin is one of the specialized subjects for high school students in Indonesia. The implementation of Chinese language learning is regulated in the 2016 Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 22 concerning Primary and Secondary Education Process Standards. Linguistics is the study of language. Mandarin is a dialect of Chinese spoken in the north and southwest of the People's Republic of China. Many people in Indonesia, especially young people, do not know Chinese, and young children are often not taught Chinese at school, and their parents cannot teach Chinese either. People still have the perception that Mandarin is a very difficult language to learn. Some students use the wrong methods and strategies in learning Chinese. So the level of difficulty to mastering this language is getting higher and more difficult (Ina et al., 2022).

As in the study entitled "Chinese Language Learning Strategies for Students of Class 2019 of the Chinese Language Education Study Program", the results show that Chinese has its own peculiarities in pronunciation, Chinese or Chinese characters, vocabulary, and grammar. Therefore, learning Chinese as a second language is not exactly the same or is not a copy and paste of learning other foreign languages as a second language (Ina et al., 2022). The research entitled "Chinese Vocabulary Learning Strategy in Chineseskill Learning Applications". The results show that the association strategy is the most suitable strategy to use in the beginner vocabulary learning process. The association strategy in question is to create a relationship between the new vocabulary and the vocabulary order that we already have. One example of the application of association strategies is, for example by using images (Handoko, 2019).

Research with the title "Model Pengembangan Pembelajaran Program Unggulan Bahasa Mandarin Di Sma Walisongo Pecangaan Jepara". It shows that the achievement of Chinese learning outcomes of SMA Walisongo Pecangaan meets the expected target through the three learning models described above, shows that students can memorize vocabulary and expressions as a condition for class improvement. In addition, students are able to read and write and

communicate fluently according to their learning achievement (Turzillo et al., 1994). Research with the title “Motivasi Siswa Sma Terhadap Pelajaran Bahasa Mandarin” shows the result that the majority of students are interested in learning Chinese because they believe that Chinese will be needed for future employment. Despite the difficulties in the learning process, many students consider it a challenge for the sake of fluency in Mandarin and fluent communication with Chinese or Chinese people (Domos, 2018).

Based on the above problems, researchers are interested in studying Mandarin language learning which is associated with Ferdinand De Saussure's descriptive linguistic perspective at Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung. The choice of location is because Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung still uses the lecture method and monotony toward foreign learning. Educators should be able to try other ways of teaching foreign languages, especially Chinese so that students are not bored and bored. The purpose of this study is to develop a discourse on Chinese learning research methodology and to find out the Chinese Language learning from Ferdinand De Saussure's linguistic perspective.

## **METHOD**

The research method used by researchers is qualitative with a Phenomenological approach related to the phenomenon of Mandarin learning in Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung (Dalman et al., 2020; Kusuma & Apriyanto, 2018; Subyantoro & Apriyanto, 2020). Research data in the form of Mandarin language learning in Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung students. The source of research data was obtained from students, teachers, and language tutors of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung. Data collection techniques are carried out by observation, interviews, and documentation. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique uses a phenomenological approach through direct learning for students of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Result***

In learning Chinese with Ferdinand De Saussure's linguistic perspective direct learning model, educators and students usually carry out the following activities as observed by the author.

**Table 1.** Chinese Learning Steps with Direct Learning Models

<b>In Learning Mandarin with a Direct Learning Model</b>	
<b>1</b>	The educator recites 生词, and students imitate.
<b>2</b>	Educators provide opportunities for students to recite 生词, individually or classically.
<b>3</b>	Education provides an example of reading 课文, which students imitate.
<b>4</b>	Education provides the opportunity to read 课文 to students individually or classically..
<b>5</b>	Educators assign students to answer questions and discuss answers to questions classically.
<b>6</b>	The educator explains 语法 to students.
<b>7</b>	Students do the exercises.

The use of the direct learning model (MPL) is not a wrong thing as long as with the model students are able to understand the learning material. The main thing is that the direct learning model is applied according to the characteristics of the learning material, namely in the form of declarative or procedural knowledge. However, as mandated in Permendikbud number 22 of 2016, educators should also apply various learning models, approaches, methods, and techniques, such as mind map methods, cooperative learning approaches, and so on, to present learning materials for reading comprehension, vocabulary, composing sentences, and so on. It is also intended to activate learners in learning Chinese. By being actively involved, the realm of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, which are the scope of the competency achievement indicator (GPA) as conveyed in the 2013 revised 2016 Curriculum, will be achieved as a whole. That is, there will be a balance between the domains of attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

### **Discussion**

Mandarin is one of the six languages spoken by the United Nations and has the most native speakers in the world. In Chinese, the vocabulary you learn is not just a translation, you are expected to learn to read, write and recite the Chinese character "goose" for each word. Important aspects of the Chinese Language are Pinyin, Shengdiao, and Hanzi. All three are Latin ways of reading Chinese characters. The aspect studied is how to read Chinese characters (hanzi) and tones (shengdiao) (Cahyaningtyas et al., 2018).

Shengdiao, in Chinese, must be able to memorize the vocabulary and tone correctly. If it is wrong to pronounce the tone, it will have a different meaning. Swan is a letter that comes directly from China (China), a type of logogram writing used to write Chinese.

Mandarin is the official language of China, one of the four official languages of Singapore, and one of the six official languages of the United Nations. About one-fifth of the world's population uses Chinese as a native speaker. Therefore, Mandarin is the language with the highest

number of native speakers in the world. There are four aspects of language learning that students need to master, namely writing skills, speaking skills, listening skills, and reading skills (Maria, 2017). The goal of language learning is to use language learned orally and in writing. Educators must be able to lead the class so that learning is effective and learning objectives are achieved (Muwaffa, 2021). Therefore, educators must not only provide teaching materials but also must be able to create an interesting and conducive learning environment. Karena language is the most effective form of communication, and speech is a form of language that uses articulation and words to convey meaning, not only through the coordination of muscle groups but also psychomotor skills (Rizki, 2020). This includes not only mechanics but also the ability to give meaning to the sound produced, namely the mental aspect (Rusmanto & Ulfaritha, 2020)(Aryati, 2014).

One of the learning models commonly used by educators of Mandarin subjects is direct learning. Foreign language learning must be done directly, namely by avoiding the use of mother tongue or intermediate language during the learning process (Syahputra, 2014). The goal is to familiarize the brain with the foreign language learned so that the learning and understanding process becomes faster and more effective.

In Direct Learning, teachers act as facilitators of learning and are responsible for preparing a conducive learning environment, choosing the right teaching materials, and directing students in developing language skills. Students are expected to be active in the learning process and make observations on the language examples presented (Arif Muh, 2019). This theory was developed based on the assumption that language is not a set of words or phrases learned separately, but a system consisting of elements that are interrelated and form a complex structure (Akib & Uluelang, 2019). Therefore, teaching should be done systematically with attention to the overall structure of the Language (Jacobs & Michaels, 2007).

In direct learning, students learn by selectively observing, remembering, and imitating the actions of their educators. For example, an educator reads 生词 then imitates students. This learning model is suitable for providing learning materials with low complexity.

The learning syntax is directly carried out by the educator in full. Educators convey goals and prepare students, the activities carried out begin by explaining learning objectives, learning background information, the importance of learning, preparing students to learn; Demonstrate skills (procedural knowledge) or present knowledge (declarative), the activities carried out are educatorsdemonstrating skills correctly or presenting step-by-step information to students of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung; Educators embimbing training, the activities carried out are educatorsplanning and providing training guidance to students of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung; Checking understanding and providing feedback, the activities carried out are

educators checking whether students of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung have succeeded in doing their tasks well, and giving feedback; Providing opportunities for advanced training and application, the activities carried out are educators preparing opportunities to conduct advanced training for students of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung, with special attention to application to more complex situations and daily life.

The results of the application of this method show that learning Chinese at Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung (dialogue skills, reading comprehension, and vocabulary mastery) Chinese has a positive impact on students. The positive impact is in the form of increasing Chinese language skills and their involvement in active and fun learning. In addition, educators understand that Chinese language learning is not only through direct learning modes (MPL) as applied during this study but can also apply various active, creative, and fun learning approaches and methods as an alternative to the presentation of Chinese subject matter.

This is because there are obstacles faced during the research. The method encountered in learning Chinese in Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung is the introduction to Chinese characters (Hanzi) and how to write them. Based on the results of the study, the character of the Chinese letters has basic scribbles and standard scribble writing sequence rules (*bǐshun*), so students still feel unfamiliar with remembering and memorizing them. This is in accordance with Ferdinand De Saussure's linguistic theory perspective that signifier (Chinese letters) is the physical form or sound of a word, while signified (standard *bǐshun* scribble order rules) is the concept or meaning associated with the word. Conventional learning media, such as books, are considered unable to provide lessons on the basics of complete character from Chinese Hanzi. This is because the need for a reading tone in each character cannot be conveyed or exemplified directly by the book. This is in accordance with the linguistic theory of Ferdinand De Saussure's perspective that the relationship between the signifier (Chinese letters) and signified (standard *bǐshun* scribble writing order rules) is arbitrary, meaning that there is no inherent relationship between the physical form or sound of a word and the meaning it represents. The relationship between signifier and signified is determined by agreement or convention within a particular language community. If the speaker mispronounces the tone, then the meaning of the character is different, so multimedia-based learning tools are needed. Multimedia also plays a role in providing an element of fun and avoiding boredom. Because there are many complicated forms of writing *hànzì* Chinese characters and a lack of knowledge on how to write sequences, this is what causes students to often make mistakes in sequencing the Chinese characters *hànzì*. In learning Chinese, it is also necessary to pay attention to competence, performance, indexicality, and participation. Other studies have also concluded that factors that hinder the success of applying the Direct Method in foreign language learning are related to general problems in the application of the Direct Method, such as freedom of speech in unprogrammed situations, mixing foreign languages

and mother tongues, the unpreparedness of teaching staff, and inadequate creation (Arif Muh, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Mandarin language learning at Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung has a positive impact on students. The positive impact is in the form of increasing Chinese language skills and their involvement in active and fun learning. The reason encountered in learning Chinese at Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif NU Lampung is the introduction to Chinese (Hanzi) characters and how to write them. This is because the need for a reading tone in each character cannot be conveyed or exemplified directly by the book. This is in accordance with the linguistic theory of Ferdinand De Saussure's perspective that the relationship between the signifier (Chinese letters) and signified (standard bishun scribble writing order rules) is arbitrary, meaning that there is no inherent relationship between the physical form or sound of a word and the meaning it represents. The relationship between signifier and signified is determined by agreement or convention within a particular language community. If the speaker mispronounces the tone, then the meaning of the character is different, so multimedia-based learning tools are needed.

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