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THE ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE AND THAT OF CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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***Abstract**: The teaching of a second/foreign language has been aimed at encouraging learners to use the target language they are learning in real communication. The objectives of this paper are to explore the roles of mother tongue and that of contrastive analysis in communicative language teaching. Method used in this study is a library research. The findings of the study suggest that using mother tongue helps beginner learners to cope with communication problem, while contrastive analysis helps teachers in choosing topic, in explaining different notions between second language and mother tongue, and helps explaining different notions found in both target language and mother tongue.*

***Keywords**: mother tongue, contrastive analysis, communicative language teaching*

***Abstrak**: Tujuan pengajaran bahasa asing selama ini difokuskan pada kemampuan penggunaan bahasa target untuk berkomunikasi. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengelaborasi peran bahasa ibu dan analisis contrastif dalam pengajarang bahasa asing. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka. Hasil studi ini mengindikasikan bahwa penggunaan bahasa ibu dapan membantu pembelajar bahasa asing tingkat pemula dalam memperlancar komunikasi, sedangkan analisis kontrastif dapan membantu guru dalam pemilihan topic yang tepat, menjelaskan konsep yang berbeda yang terdapat dalam bahasa asingt dan bahasa ibu, dan membantu menjelaskan beberapa perbedaan fungsi expresi bahasa yang terdapat pada bahasa asing dan bahasa ibu.*

***Kata kunci**: bahasa ibu, analisis kontrastif, pengajaran komunikatif*

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the teaching of a second/foreign language (L2) has tended to change its course from what is generally called 'grammatical oriented' to 'communicative oriented'. The reason behind this shift is that the goal of second/foreign language teaching and learning is to prepare the learners to be able to use the language being learnt in real communication. In foreign language teaching situations, more and more foreign language teachers have been encouraged to use communicative teaching approaches and minimize the use of traditional methods such as Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Lingual Method.

In fact, there is no clear definition of the terms 'use' and 'communicative' regarding language teaching. Each method claims that the goal of language teaching is to use the language. It is difficult to find an approach that avoids the use of a language being learnt (Nunan, 1989). However, there are some apparent different features found between traditional language teaching methods and communicative

language teaching methods. The proponents of Communicative language Teaching (CLT) claim that CLT is more direct in promoting the use of language (Littlewood, 1981).

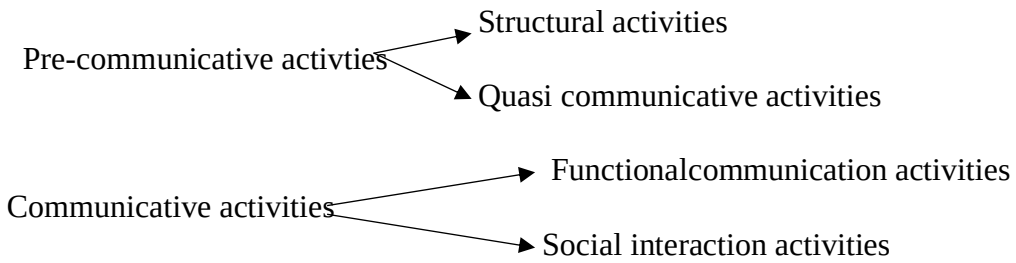
Whatever Communicative Language Teaching might mean, it is perhaps important to discuss aspects that might influence the implementataion of CLT and its success. There might be many aspects that influence the success of CLT implementation. In line with this background, this paper aims to answer the following questions: 1) what is the role of mother tongue in communicative language teaching; 2) what are the contributions of contrastive analysis in communicative language teaching?

B. THE PRINCIPLES OF CLT

There is no rigid definition of the term *communicative* in the sense of language teaching. Within the scope of language teaching, the term *communicative* implies the use of a language being learnt for the purpose of communication. The proponents of CLT have elaborated their 'concepts' of communicative language teaching. Here, I will discuss some of the principles of CLT that some linguists have contributed. Littlewood (1981) for example, suggests that CLT shares two perspectives of language teaching and learning. First, CLT considers language not only in terms of grammar but also in term of its use. Second, the teaching of second/foreign language, then, should consider both *the forms and the use of the target language.* He proposes two stages of activities that can be used to enhance L2 learners in order to be able to use the target language in communication. These two stages are; pre-communicative activities and communicative activities.

In pre-communicative activities learners are introduced to isolated (specific) elements of knowledge or skills that make up communicative ability. In this stage, learners are also given opportunity to practice the language elements and skills being taught. The pre-communicative activities will prepare learners with linguistic systems or linguistic elements that can be used in real communication.

The second stage of communicative activities that Litllewood introduces is the stage of communicative activities. In this stage, the learners have to activate, recall, and integrate the knowledge and skills that they learned during pre-communicative activities. Unlike the previous stage (pre-communicative activities) that focuses on linguistic forms, accuracy, and appropriateness, this stage focuses on the meanings that the forms convey. The communication that learners have to engage in this stage is functional, contextual, and situational. In brief, Littlewoods describes the framework of CLT activities, as follows (p. 86):



This framework suggests that although the goal of CLT is to encourage learners to use the target language in communication, it still allows teachers to teach grammar of the target language through activities such as sentence drills and

dialogues. Besides this simple framework of CLT, Littlewoods also proposes four domains of skills that second/foreign language learners must attain in order to be able to communicate in the target language. These four domains are the achievement of high degree of linguistic competence, the ability to distinguish between forms which they have mastered and their function, the ability to develop skills and strategies for using the target language in concrete communication, and being aware of social meaning of language forms.

Nunan (1989) also suggests that learning a language is more than simply learning the systems or rules of the language. Language, as Nunan argues, is seen as dynamic resource of the creation of meaning. The learning of a language should involve the learning of the form of the language and the learning of how to use it. Similarly, Widdowson (1978) suggests that learning a foreign language comprises two aspects: the usage of the language and the use of the language. The usage of language deals with the forms of the language and the use of language deals with communicative values.

In contrasting between Audio-lingual method and Communicative Language Teaching, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986) try to interpret the differences of the two methods. According to them, there are twenty-two major aspects of differences found between the two methods, some of which are as follows:

Audio-lingual Language Teaching	*Communicative language teaching*
1. Attend to structure and form more than meaning 2. Demands memorization o structure-based dialog 3. Language items are not necessarily contextualized 4. Language learning is learning structure, sounds, or words. 5. Mastery, or “over-learning” is sought. 6. Drilling is a central technique 7. Native-speaker-like pronunciation is sought 8. Grammatical explanation is avoided. 9. Communicative activities only come after a long process of rigid drills and exercise 10. The use of student’s native language is forbidden 11. Translation is forbidden at early levels	1. Meaning is paramount 2. Dialog, if used center around communicative functions and are not normally memorized. 3. Contextualization is a basic premise 4. Language learning is learning to communicate. 5. Effective communication is sought. 6. Drilling may occur, but peripherally. 7. Comprehensible pronunciation is sought. 8. Any device which helps the learners is accepted-varying cording to their age, interest, etc. 9. Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from beginning 10. Judicious use of native accepted where possible. 11. Translation may be used where students’ need or benefit from it (p. 67)

From these distinctive features between the two methods, it is clear that CLT emphasizes the use of the target language as much as possible. The main focus of CLT, according to Finnochiaro and Brumpfit, is the meaning of utterances and not the forms of the language. However, according to this interpretation, CLT allows the explanation of grammar, the use of learners’ native language and the use of translation, as far as they help the learners in communication. Unlike the Audio-lingual method, which claims learning a foreign language as a process of habit

formation and that therefore drills are important, CLT suggests that learning a foreign language is learning to use the target language and the mastery of the target language will improve as the result of its use.

The theory of CLT starts from the concept of language as a means of communication. Richards and Rodgers (1986) characterize CLT as follows:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interacton and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects is functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse. (p. 71).

This concept of CLT also emphasizes the use of language in communication. There are some important features of language that can be drawn from this concept; meaning, communication, function, and interaction. Although different proponents of CLT may have different interpretation of it, it is apparent that all of them agree that the use of the language for communication is the main target of learning a second/foreign language.

C. THE ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE

With the implementation of CLT in many foreign language teaching environments, there is probably an important question that can be raised. This question is: *how can very low level L2 learners communicate (in the sense of speaking) in the target language before they have mastered the systems of the target language or if their mastery of the target language is still very limited?* This question is mainly for teachers who teach low beginners L2 learners. There are two basic possible answers for this question. First, possibly the learners will avoid speaking since they cannot express their ideas because of their mastery limitation of the target language. If this happens, there should be some ways which help the learners prepare to communicate. In this case, the explanation of grammar rules prior to the speaking activities is possibly important. This is because, naturally, a language has sets of rules and the use of the language cannot be separated from its rules.

The second possibility is that the learners will make up their own strategies to cope with their communication and most possibly they will use their mother tongue. They will use their mother tongue rules using the target language vocabulary. Such a strategy, according to Corder (1981), is used by second/foreign language learners as the learners strategy of communication. He says that:

> "…. an interlanguage speaker may, in his attempts to communicate, simply 'borrow' for immediate purposes items or features of his mother tongue (or any other language he knows) without incorporating them into his interlanguage system. 'Successful borrowing', that is when a 'borrowed' item is 'accepted' by the interlocutor as 'well formed' in the target language, may lead to that item being incorporated into the speaker's interlanguage repertoire. This could be regarded as 'learning'." (p. 104).

In this case, the learners' mastery of mother tongue rules function as the resource of communication, at least for temporary use. This strategy is perhaps better than the one that avoids speaking because of the target language mastery limitation. Moreover, Corder argues that the L2 learner's language will be a mixed

or intermediate system between the target language and other languages, most possibly his mother tongue.

Fries (1945) argues that the learner's mother tongue is important in determining how a second/foreign language learners acquires the target language in classroom settings. Learners often use their mother tongue rules to facilitate their learning.

Danesi & Di Pietro (1991) also argue that, in general, the use of general knowledge of language and particularly the knowledge of mother tongue is quite possible. There are some factors that influnce the amount of L1 use by L2 learners. Danesi & Di Pietro mentioned three factors that influnce the use of L1; the age of learners, the stage of L2 learners, and the degree of difference between the target language and the mother tongue. The influence of mother tongue in adult learners will possibly be stronger than that of children. This is perhaps because adult learners have already possesed much of their L1 knowledge, while children have not. The more L2 learners master their L1 knowledge the stronger the influence of their L1 will be.

The stage of L2 learners (the level of learners) can also determine the amount of L1 influence in learning L2. Low level L2 learners will possibly use their L1 more often than high level L2 learners. This is because low level learners have very limited knowledge and skills of the target language. With regard to CLT, it is obvious that low beginner learners will use their L1 very often when they want to try to use the target language. Brown (cited in Danesi & Di Pietro, 1991) argues that in early stages, L2 learners will use the system of their L1 and express it in the target language vocabulary since the L1 knowledge is the only system that they know up on which the learners can draw before they master the system of the target language. The use of mother tongue in learning L2 will diminish in accordance with the level of the learners.

The other factor that might determine the influence of mother tongue in learning a second language is the degree of L1 and L2 differences. It is argued by the proponents of CA that the closer the target language and the mother tongue are, the stronger the influence of the mother tongue will be. Difference means difficulty and difficulty means errors (Danesi & Di Pietro, 1991). Such an argument might be acceptable for the low level learners since they are more likely to use their mother tongue nore often than advanced learners. Therefore if the difference is very significant, the low level learners might commit a lot of errors as the result of negative transfer. However, this argument is still controversial and many critics of CA disagree with this argument.

D. THE ROLE OF CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS IN CLT

Like other language teaching methods, CLT also accommodates the contribution of Contrastive Analysis (CA) in its implementation. In this paper the contribution of CA in CLT will be focused on the material design.

Since CLT focuses on the use of the target language in communication, especially speaking, the contribution of CA in this approach mainly deals with the differences of the contextual uses of both languages (the target language and the mother tongue). In trying to use the target language in communication, L2 learners might not realize the cultural differences between their mother tongue and the target language. They might not know what aspects are acceptable in both languages and what aspects are unacceptable in either their mother tongue or the target language. This could cause L2 learners to produce unacceptable utterances in the target language. L2 learners might produce correct forms of the target language which are

contextually unacceptable. There are two basic rules of language use: rules of use and rules of usage (James, 1980). Rules of use deal with contextual appropriateness aspects while rules of usage deal with grammatical aspects. Second language learners need both rules.

The content of CLT materials should not focus only on grammar of the language being taught but also on the cultural aspects of the language. This is because the use of language cannot be separated from the culture embedded in the language. A language has intrinsic relationships with its culture and the way of using the language is interellated to its culture (Saville-Troike, 1996). This implies that second language learners cannot easily communicate in the target language without mastering, or at least understanding the cultural aspects of the target language. Therefore language teachers should understand the relation between the target language and its cultures.

Lado (1964) also argues that a language is part of the culture of the people who use the language. Therefore, the goal of learning a foreign language, according to him, is to be able to use it and to understand the speech and the writing of the native speaker of the target language. Moreover he says:

"We define the goal in learning a foreign language as the ability to use it, understanding its meanings and connotations in terms of target language and culture, and ability to understand the speech and writing of natives of the target culture in term of their meanings as well as their great ideas and achievements". (p. 25).

In disscusing the use of a language in communication, there should be some parameters to be focused. Or, in other words, what aspects of language can be discussed or can be analyzed?

There are many aspects or components that can be analyzed when person is speaking. Hymes (1974), for example, calls these components as the ethnography of speaking. He identified six categories of speaking ethnography: setting (the time and the place of speaking that determines its forms), participants (addressee, speakers, addressers, and audience), purpose (each speech act has a purpose), key (tone, manner, or spirit in which speech act is performed), topic (what one is talking about), and channel (written vs. spoken and formal vs. informal).

James (1980) also discusses some components of speaking, more specially conversation. He argues that there are three stages of conversation, each of which could be different from language to language. These three components are the opening of conversation, during conversation, and the closing of conversation.

Both in Hymes' ethnography of speaking and in James' components of speaking, it is important for second language learners to notice that there could be contextual differences between the target language and their mother tongue. These differences might deal with contexts, notion, function and so forth.

In order to make my discussion on the contribution of CA and CLT material design a little clear, I would like to discuss some possible areas where the use of the mother tongue and that of the target language might be different, that could be accommodated in CLT syllabus contents as part of CA contribution in this method. These areas are notions, topics, functions, contexts, and politeness. I will, then, discuss these areas in a little detail. I will use English as the target language and Indonesian as the mother tongue. The reason for this is that English is a foreign language I know and Indonesian is my mother tongue. To some extent, the

examples that I will discuss are based on my own experience as both an L2 learner and an EFL teacher.

1. Notions

Notion or, sometimes it is understood as as concept, is often different from culture to culture. Between Indonesian and English, for example, the notion of time is somewhat different, although its division is similar. In Indonesian, the concept of time is approximately as follows; *pagi, siang, petang,* and *malam,* that are equal to *morning, afternoon, evening,* and *night,* respectively. From the meaning of each word; *pagi* means *morning, siang* means *afternoon, etc.*, it is clear that both Indonesian and English have the same concept of time division. However, the similarity of forms between the two languages does not guarantee that Indonesian speaker who learn English will not have problem in using them. In fact, there are contextual differences in their use. For example, in English *11:30 a.m.* is said to be *morning* but in Indonesian this is said to be *siang* (*i.e.* litterally translated as *afternoon*). In English, *noon* starts from twelve o'clock p.m. (*The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of the English Language*). So, in a meeting for example, Indonesian speakers might say *good afternoon* when greeting their meeting members at *11:30 a.m.,* but this in fact does not fit the real use of *afternoon* in English. This is because in Indonesian context, *11:30 a.m.* is considered as *siang* (*afternoon*) while in English the word *afternoon* starts from 12:00 p.m. In Indonesian, the definition of *siang* (*afternoon*) is not quite clear. Indonesian and English also have slight differences in the use of the word *night.* In Indonesian, the word *night* is related to darkness. So, whenever it is getting dark, we can call *that time* as *night*. Usually in English we say *good evening* when we start meeting at dark time (for example at 6:00 p.m., in winter season) and close the meeting with *good night*. So, Indonesian speakers can say *good night* at the beginning of a meeting and can also say *good night* at the end of the meeting. Such differences should be explained to Indonesian speakers who learn English so that they will not use the expression of timeof the target language unacceptably.

Another example of notion differences between Indonesian and Englsih is the notion of *family.* In Indonesian, the term *family* means both *nuclear family* and *extended family (relative).* So the term *family* in Indonesian could mean *wife, husband,* and *children.* It could also mean *wife, husband, children, grand mother, grand father, grand children, nephew, father in law, and so forth.* However, in English the term *family* means just the nuclear family and the extended family is called *relatives.*

2. Topics

Choosing topics is also another consideration in designing CLT material design. This is because topics that are common in target language may not be common in mother tongue context. There are possibly two ways of choosing topics for CLT materials. First, choosing very general topics, such as democracy, human rights, politics, economics, etc., so that learners will be familiar, or choosing (perhaps creating) topics that are closely related to learners own cultures. Indonesian speakers, for example, are not familiar with the term *gun control* since in Indonesia, guns are not allowed to be owned by public community. Guns are given only to authorized officials, such as Army and Police or other Security Officials. That is why there is no gun control program in Indonesia since ordinary people do not have a gun. This situation is different from that in the USA where people are allowed to

have guns. Therefore, a topic such as gun control, although it is common to English speakers, might not be appropriate in Indonesian speakers' situation.

If the materials include some topics about sports, it is also important for the material designer to consider the topics that are suitable for learners. Different places or regions may have different preferences for sports. In the North American regions, some sports like Hokey and Skiing are very popular sports. Therefore such sports are good to be discussed in teaching English as a second language in North America, such as Canada and the USA. However, these topics are not suitable or, at least, less suitable for teaching English in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, since these sports are not played in these countries.

3. Functions

Different cultures may also have different language functions. The differences in language functions may happen in many different events, such as in starting a conversation, in responding to another person's statement, in agreeing and disagreeing, and so forth. English speakers often start conversation by talking about the weather, even if the people engaging in the conversation do not know each other yet. Talking about weather seems to be a kind of common introduction for them. This is probably because weather is very important to every body in most English speaking countries. In these countries, the weather could change suddenly, up and down anytime, especially during winter seasons. In Indonesian context, starting a conversation by talking about the weather is not common. It is strange, although it might be acceptable. Indonesian speakers often start introducing and talking to each other by asking about destination, residence, job, and so forth. So questions such as *where are you going, where do you work, where do you live,* seem to be common to Indonesian cultures if they are going to introduce to each other.

In the case when the conversation participants know each other or if they are friends, Indonesian speakers also have some different cultures with English speakers. An Indonesian speaker may say to his/her friend: *Hi, you are gaining weight* or *Hi there..., you are so fat.* In Indonesian cultures, these expressions imply that the person being spoken to (the addressee) looks healthy and happy. Such expressions are not common among English speaking people.

In closing conversation, there are also some aspects that second language learners have to learn. This is because different languages may have different ways to closing conversation. Laver (cited in James, 1980) identifies six strategies of closing conversation. These strategies are giving reason for terminating the conversation, assessing the quality of the encounter, expressing concern for other person's welfare, reference to future resumption of encounter, reference to a mutual acquaintance, and increasing use of term of direct address. The followings are some examples of both differences and similarities of closing conversation between English speakers and Indonesian speakers.

a. In giving a reason for terminating conversation both language have similar expressions, in general. For example; *Well, I'll really have to get on my way* or *I mustn't keep you any longer, etc.*
b. In assessing the quality of the encounter, both languages have similar expressions; such as *It's been nice talking to you*.

c. In expressing concern for other person's welfare, both languages have some similarities as well as differences. For example, in English it is common to say *take care* in expressing welfare concern, especially if they will leave each other. In Indonesian, the expression take care is only common from older person to younger person but not the vice versa. In English, it is also common to say *have a nice day*, etc., but this expression is not common to Indonesian speakers.
d. In reffering to future resumption of encounter, both languages have similar expressions, such as *see you later, see you next time, etc.*
e. In reffering to a mutual acquaintance, both languages have similar expressions; such as *say hello to Mary, give my regards to Mary, etc*.

All examples described above are parts of languages differences that should be taught or at least should be introduced to second language learners if they are hoped to be able to use the target language correctly and appropriately. Contrastive Analysis should be able to help CLT by identifying the differences and similarities of language use and then incorporating those differences and similarities in course material design.

There is also a different style of accepting offers between Indonesian and English. The following 'dialogue' can show their difference:

Indonesian Context
A: Would you like to have a glass of coffee, Sir?
B: Thank you, I am fasting now.
(This means that the man being offered neither want to have a drink nor accept the offer)
Consider the following:
A: Would you like to have a glass of coffee, Sir?
B: Thank you.
(This means that the person being offered wants to drink or accept the offer)

English Context
A: Would you like to drink a glass of coffee, Sir?
B: Yes, please (Yes), or No, thank you (No)

As can be seen from the dialogue, there is a different way of accepting one's offer between Indonesian speakers and English speakers. It is clear that English speakers are more direct and straight forward in accepting or rejecting an offer. They just say *yes, please* if they accept the offer and say *no, thank you* if they reject the offer. Indonesian speakers, on the contrary, are less direct in accepting or rejecting an offer.

4. Contexts

What is contextually accepted in one language may not be accepted in other languages. In Indonesian, for example, if one says: *I am divorced with my wife since we did not love each other anymore*, the listener (the encounter) usually says: *Oh, I am sorry to hear that* (as an expression of empathy or sympathy). This is because in Indonesian cultures, getting divorced is considered as unhappiness. On the contrary, in English if one says; *I am divorced*, the listener will usually respond:

Oh, I see. Especially if the speaker and the listener are not close friends, the would not say *oh, I am sorry to hear that.*

5. Politeness

Different languages may also have different forms of politeness. In English, for example, politeness is expressed is some ways such as using *the past forms* like *could you lend me some of your book, please?* Instead of *can you lend me some of your books, please?* In Indonesian, the situation is little bit different. Indonesian does not have past tense forms. Indonesian speakers often use 'terms of address' or 'title' to make a polite statement or request such as *Sir, can you lend me some of your books?* However, both Indonesian and English often use indirect questions for politeness requests such as *I wonder if you could tell me the time? I would be very glad if you could help bring this stuff, etc.*

There is also another difference between English and Indonesian in terms of politeness. In Indonesian cultures, students cannot address their professor just by calling his/her first name such *Hi, Mary,* or *Good morning Peter,* and so forth. In Indonesian, addressing other people with their first name is only done by older people to younger people. While in English, it seems alright (acceptable) to do that (especially if the addresser and the addressee know each other very well). In Indonesian, students should address their professor by including terms of address such as *Hello Mr. Peter* or *Good morning Ms. Mary,* etc.

E. CONCLUSION

It might be reasonable to conclude, at least tentatively, that there is a close relationship between CA, the role of mother tongue, and CLT in second/foreign language teaching and learning. Since the practice of teaching second/foreign language has been shifting from a grammatical orientation to a communicative orientation, it is apparent that LT is becoming more and more popular.

The role of mother tongue in CLT is crucial for early learners since learners will use their mother tongue as one of their source communication. This is due to the fact that borrowing mother tongue 'rules' often helps learners top enhance their communication in the target language.

The role of CA in CLT is somewhat different from that of traditional methods. In traditional methods, the contribution of CA is more grammatical aspects in nature while the contribution of CA in CLT is more cultural matters. The contribution of CA in grammatical teaching methods deals with what aspects of grammatical rules between mother tongue and the target language are different so that these aspects will get more attention and more time allocation in the teaching of the target language. The comparison of mother tongue and target language rules help the teacher in his/her teaching. On the other hand, the contribution of CA in CLT deals with cultural differences between mother tongue and the target language. Knowing the cultural differences between mother tongue and the target language will help the learners in using the target language appropriately.

Although CA is not a teaching method, it is perhaps important for EFL/ESL teachers to know it, since it helps them in their teaching. CA could be used as an alternative of teaching strategies that teachers can use whenever it is needed. Of course, the use of CA depends on many situations such as the level of learners and the degree of differences between mother tongue and target language.

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