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## COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES USED BY LEARNERS OF ARABIC AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

### INTRODUCTION

Learners of Arabic as a second language face some difficulties not only in writing, but also in communicating effectively in real life situations. Such difficulties, which are well documented in second language acquisition literature, are due to several reasons. Although the main focus in second language acquisition is on the development of the learners' communicative competence, a review of the textbooks available for teaching Arabic as a second language will lead us to conclude that the components of such competence are not all taken into consideration. Secondly, lack of experienced teachers who are qualified in teaching Arabic as a second language could be another reason. I use the term 'unqualified' teachers to refer to those who only have a BA or a Master degree in Arabic language and literature. Such teachers are not equipped with methodologies that are specific to teaching Arabic as a second language. We are not even sure that they are well-trained on teaching Arabic language to its native speakers. However, being a native speaker of Arabic is not enough.

Moreover, nature of Arabic language plays a role in Arabic language learners' deficiencies. One of the major areas of difficulty that non-native speakers of Arabic may encounter is expressing themselves with ease and being understood by their interlocutors. Smadi/Al-Abed Al-Haq (1995: 95) point out:

"One of the most frustrating exercises in learning Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) is the learner's discovery that s/he cannot communicate with ease in actual situations, even after many years of formal instruction in Arabic. In addition, most learners are still unable to write a coherent, well-developed and properly organized piece of discourse and are incapable of manipulating the rhetoric features of Arabic in their academic and nonacademic writing."

One of the major challenges that learners of Arabic encounter is diglossia. Diglossia refers to a language situation in which two varieties of the same language exist side by side (Asher 1994). In the case of Arabic, Classical Arabic (CA) is the variety of language used in the Muslims' Holy book, the Qur'ān. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the variety learned largely through formal instruction and used primarily for written and formal spoken situations. Colloquial varieties of Arabic are used for informal conversation. Bateson (2003: xiii) states:

"The Classical language, which was the vehicle of Islam and of the literature and is the primary written form today, is relatively uniform throughout the Arab world and across the Islamic countries but has never been the ordinary spoken language of the Arabs. Colloquial Arabic is the language of normal conversation, but it varies in ways which reflect all the geographical, social, and religious heterogeneity of the population."

Classical Arabic is the variety used for religious purposes, and is formally taught in schools. Modern Standard Arabic, a simplified form of Classical Arabic, has become the lingua franca of writing, broadcasting, and formal speaking (Asher 1994). This situation presents problems for learners of Arabic. To be fully functional in the language, students must learn two types of Arabic – Classical or Modern Standard Arabic to read, write and speak formally, and one of the many colloquial forms of the language for informal speaking situations.

Morrison (June 2003: Para. 11) mentions the difficulties that a non-native student, Anne Shroeder, faces in learning Arabic as a foreign language:

"Anne Shroeder, a nonnative student of Arabic, said, 'Phonetically it is difficult to learn to produce the sounds correctly. My first year of colloquial I went out of class with a sore throat. Other physical difficulties involve learning to read from right to left, which resulted for me in a need to upgrade my eyeglasses prescription'".

Since Arabic is different from European languages, which are read/written from left to right, this creates a big problem for learners of Arabic. This requires a mental challenge including restructuring their way of thinking because Arabic is read/written from right to left. From a personal communication with the same learner, Anne Shroeder, Morrison (*ibid.*: Para. 12) continues:

"The mental challenge of learning Arabic may be much more fundamental. 'The single most difficult aspect of learning Arabic is the mindset,' noted Anne Shroeder. 'The mode of expressing oneself is so very different, I find, that it requires a restructuring of one's brain to be able to adequately communicate. Every language involves a cultural and mental adjustment to some extent, but the adjustment for Arabic is so much greater than for European languages that even with immersion it takes enormous energy to work with.'"

To overcome the problems encountered, second language learners of Arabic resort to compensatory strategies (CpS). They may paraphrase, use approximation, repeat, restructure their utterances, abandon the current message, avoid the topic, ask for clarification or help, etc.

#### COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES

One of the key issues in second language acquisition known as communication/compensatory strategies started three decades ago. To achieve successful communication in situations where L2 learners are confronted with lexical problems resulting from inadequate command of the language, they resort to communication strategies (CSs). Rabab'ah (2003: 79) points out:

Language learners attempt to solve their communication problems when they lack adequate resources in the target language by resorting to CSs. Most researchers agree that CSs are used to bridge the gap that exists between the non-native speakers' linguistic competence in the target language and their communicative needs.

Communication strategies (CS) have been referred to as communication strategies (Faerch/Kasper 1983), 'communicational strategies' (Varadi 1980), 'communicative strategies' (Corder 1983), 'compensation strategies' (Harding 1983), and 'compensatory strategies' (Poulisse 1990). Moreover, several definitions of communication/compensatory strategies have been proposed in CS literature, but most definitions are based on the concept "problematicity" (Kasper/Kellerman 1997: 2). For example, Tarone (1977: 195) defines them as "conscious communication strategies are used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual's thought". According to Harding (1983: 1), "The domain of compensation strategies must be precisely defined. It is the domain of attempts made by non-native speakers of a language to remedy the disparity that exists between their communicative needs and the linguistic tools at their disposal". Poulisse (1990: 88) suggests, "Compensatory strategies are strategies which a language user employs in order to achieve his intended meaning on becoming aware of problems arising during the planning phase of an utterance due to his own linguistic shortcomings". When L2 speakers lack morphological, lexical, or syntactic knowledge, they plan to solve these problems. This plan leads them to use compensatory/communication strategies.

Faerch/Kasper (1983) place communication strategies in a model of speech production. The model has two phases: a planning phase where the plan is developed, and an execution phase where the plan is executed. During these phases language learners, when faced with a difficulty in conversation, may change their communicative goal and use reduction strategies such as topic avoidance or message abandonment. Or they may face the problem and develop an alternative plan which leads to achievement strategies, such as paraphrase, word coinage, restructuring, repetition and approximation. However, this study is not restricted to achievement strategies, but has also focused on reduction strategies to describe the data collected, which is based on audio-recorded transcripts of conversations between the researcher who is a native speaker of Arabic, and the subjects of the study.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Much of the research that has been conducted on speakers of Arabic as a second language investigated their written discourse (e. g. Smadi/Al-Abed Al-Haq 1995; Suleiman 1991; Stowasser 1981). As far as I know, no research has analysed the oral production of speakers of Arabic as a second language to find out the compensatory strategies used. This study is an attempt to fill this gap found in Arabic language research. The significance of this study lies in its contribution towards improving the quality of teaching Arabic as a foreign language in general and successful communication in Arabic in particular. Compensatory strategies include: paraphrase, approximation, language switch, message avoidance, repeti-

tion, restructuring, retrieval strategies, coinage, clarification request, literal translation, etc. Such strategies have been studied in their context. Therefore, this study attempts to find out and analyse the strategies that speakers of Arabic as a second language use when they encounter a problem while communicating in the target language, Arabic. Since native speakers of seven different languages were included in the sample, this study will also look at differences in the use of such strategies by native speakers of each language.

#### METHOD:

##### Sample:

The data were collected by the mid of second semester of 2005 from eight male subjects from various social, language, and learning backgrounds. The subjects were selected randomly from a class of 18 students studying Arabic as a second language (ASL). The subjects were at the intermediate proficiency level in Arabic Language, and they had been learning Arabic in a formal classroom context in the Arabic Language Institute at King Saud University for two years. They were not living in the university housing; they were grouping in flats according to nationality. The subjects' participation in the study was voluntary. The subjects were willingly interested in participating in the study. From the volunteers, I selected those who speak different languages. Consequently, the sample consisted of 8 learners of Arabic from 8 countries (Russia, Kozovo, Senegal, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Benin and Ethiopia), and speaking 7 different languages (Russian, Albanian, Senegalese, Tajikistani, Urdu, French and Somali). Their age ranged from 20 to 22. The subjects did not receive any information about communication strategies so as not to raise their awareness toward them, which then might affect their choices of strategies. I took permission from the subjects to record the conversation. In order to make the subjects speak naturally without having any barriers, I assured them that the data will only be used for research purposes.

##### Tasks used in the study

Two tasks were used to elicit data from the subjects: an oral interview with the researcher who is a native speaker of Arabic and a role-play task See Appendixes I and II. In the oral interview task, the subjects were asked about their names, nationalities, length of stay and study of Arabic in Saudi Arabia, level of proficiency, problems they encounter in learning Arabic, and how to solve these problems. The conversation took place in the researcher's office. The conversation lasted for about 10–15 minutes with each subject.

It is always claimed that the most naturalistic methods of data collection are oral interviews and conversations. Poulisse (1990) used oral interviews between participants, non-

native speakers of English and a native speaker. The main problem in this data elicitation technique is that "CS use is less likely to be found due to the fact that what the participants might say is less controlled by the experimenters" (Kasper/Kellerman 1997). Wannaruk (2002) also used an oral interview between the students and native English teachers. Green (1995) and Khanji (1996) used conversation tasks in which they asked their subjects to play roles. In such tasks, it is easy to control the speech acts you want your participants to perform.

In order to elicit natural conversations, the subjects were asked, in the second task, to play a role in pairs. They were asked to perform some speech acts in a question/answer form. One of them was asking the questions and the other was answering them. A role-play card was given to the subject playing Role A (Asking questions) in which the speech acts are specified as below:

1. Ask him about what he does at the weekend.
2. Ask him about the job of his father.
3. Ask him about the importance of learning Arabic.
4. Ask him about his plans after completing the Arabic course.
5. Invite him for a cup of tea or coffee.

#### IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

In order to identify the CSs, with the help of a professor of Arabic language in the Department of Arabic, I marked and then labelled relevant parts of the data that contained strategic behaviour. This was done to maximise the dependability (reliability) of our classification. Both of us read the texts at the same time and agreement was reached. Noticeable deviance from native speaker norm in the interlanguage syntax, word choice or discourse pattern is also considered to identify the strategic behaviour. In addition, performance features, such as false starts, pauses, drawls (lengthening the sounds as a time - gaining device), fillers (*ar, am*), repeats, slips of the tongue (lapses and speech errors) and self-repairs may be evidence of a problem in the learner's language proficiency. These features were used as an indication of an existing CpS use. Finally, the strategic utterances were classified for the purpose of data analysis. Moreover, the learners' production was compared with the *optimal meaning* – actual meaning – Varadi (1980). If any differences were observed, their utterance was then classified as CpS strategy use.

#### Results

A total of 172 instances of compensatory strategies were identified in the data from the sample of 8 subjects in both tasks: the interview and the role-play. Table 1 shows the frequency of these strategies starting with the most frequently used type of strategies. Most

widely used strategies included paraphrase 29.4 %, restructuring 22.1 %, retrieval 14 %, and repetition 12.7 %. All the learners resorted to at least one of the above communication strategies. Each strategy identified in this study is discussed individually and illustrated with examples taken from the data. Varadi (1980) used the term *optimal meaning*, and he suggests that second language learners replace the *optimal meaning* – actual meaning with the adjusted meaning – what is actually said when they encounter a difficulty. The optimal meaning for each example of CS use is given, when needed, to see the difference.

STRATEGY TYPE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Message abandonment	18	10.4 %
Paraphrase	51	29 %
Restructuring	38	22.1 %
Retrieval	24	14 %
Repetition	22	12.7 %
Approximation	11	6.3 %
Coinage	4	2.3 %
Clarification request	4	2.3 %
Total	172	100 %

Table 1: Frequency of strategy use for all students in both tasks

### 1. Reduction strategies:

They include topic avoidance and message abandonment. Language learners may reduce their goals in order to avoid the problem that they encounter during conversation. No topic avoidance cases were identified, whereas message abandonment was recorded in the study. The examples are all taken from the performance of the group of learners in the interview and the role-play tasks.

#### Message abandonment

It occurred when the learners began to talk about a concept but were unable to continue due to lack of meaning structure, and stop in mid-utterance. 18 instances were identified in the subjects' performance in both tasks, accounting for 10.4 % of the cases observed. In the following examples taken from the subjects' production, the learners became frustrated in the middle of their utterances, and they were unable to continue and gave up after long pauses. Some of them replaced the message with another one when they realised that they were facing a problem. Long pauses in the learner's production are deemed to be indications that problems are being encountered. For example, the first learner, as shown below, wanted to start his utterance with ...،...،... (tr. If the man wants to master this language,...،...،...). During

the process of transmitting that piece of information, the learner found out that his resources were insufficient to complete the main clause. He was planning to say, "If someone wants to master the language, he must read a lot", but instead, he abandoned the message and moved to another topic .... الكتابة والمطالعة والبحث و كثرة و كثرة ... أه... أه... أه... أه... الاط الاطلاع يعني.... (tr. writing, and writing and searching, and much and much er... er... er... study, I mean .....). The learner even failed in attempting another topic, and he abandoned it due to his limited resources. The same thing happened to the other two learners.

- (1) الانسان اذا اراد ان يتقن هذه اللغة ... أه... أه... الكتابة والمطالعة والبحث و كثرة و كثرة... أه... أه... أه... الاط الاطلاع يعني....  
 (tr. If the man wants to master this language...er...er... writing, and writing and searching, and much and much ...er... er ...er ...study, I mean ..... )  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: If someone wants to master this language, he must read a lot.
- (2) استفدت و لكن ليس كثيرا... الدراسة هنا ... أه... أه... أه... نحن ندرس اللغة الفرنسية هنا في السنة في الاسبوع 5 ايام و اللغة العربية يومين.  
 (tr. I benefited, but not too much ... studying here ... we study French here every year every week five days and Arabic language two days)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: Studying here was very beneficial for me. In my home country, we used to study French five times a week, but we studied Arabic only twice a week.
- (3) يعني هو يقرأ... أه... أه... أه... نحن عندنا كتاب كتاب مكثفة خاص.  
 (tr. It means he reads ...er...er...er... we have a book ... a special intensive book.)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: There is an intensive reading book from which the teacher reads.

## 2. Achievement strategies:

Learners use their linguistic resources and try to manage to achieve their communicative goal. The examples in the following achievement strategies are all taken from the performance of the group of learners in the interview and the role-play tasks.

### Paraphrase

The most widely used strategy was the paraphrase. It was registered when learners produced the same meaning by making use of another linguistic form without keeping its original one. It accounted for 29 % of the strategies used. The following examples of this strategy taken from the corpus are self-explanatory:

- (1) و عندي شوي بالنسبة للاملاء شويه صعب ما استطيع اكتب جيدا بخطيء هذا ال هذا و لكن اكتب خطأ  
 (tr. I have some regarding spelling, little difficult. I cannot write well. He makes mistakes this the this but I write it wrong)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: I have a problem in spelling. I make spelling mistakes when I write.

- (2) و أيضا الذي ارى مستواه اعلى مني احاول التحدث معه و أسئله ان لم اعرف.  
 (tr. and the one whom I see his level higher than me, I try to talk with him and ask him if I don't know)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: I also ask those who are more knowledgeable than me.
- (3) يعني ليس هناك مثل السعودية باستعمال .. أه... و أيضا الكتابة و الممارسة  
 (tr. I mean, there is not like Saudi Arabia in using ... and writing and practice)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: I mean, practicing it like in Saudi Arabia, reading and writing this language.
- (4) و يعمل والدي في قسم هذا في غابة اشجار و لحيوانات وا ...  
 (tr. My father works in a department and this is in a forest of trees and animals and ...)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: My father works in a forest.

### Restructuring

This strategy was the second most used strategy with 30 cases identified out of a total of 172, accounting for 22.1 %. This strategy was used when the learners discovered that they could not complete a local plan which they had already begun realizing and developed an alternative local plan which enabled them to communicate their intended meaning.

In the example “المشكلة ... أه... أه... المشاكل... يعني التعبير الكتابي” (tr. the problem ...er...er... the problems ... I mean writing), the learner used the singular form “المشكلة” (tr. problem), and then he corrected himself to produce the plural form “المشاكل” (tr. problems). The long pause after “المشكلة” is an indication that he had a problem, which he fixed later. More instances of this strategy, which are self-explanatory, are like the following:

- (1) ينبغي علي ان اتحدث اكثر من الطلاب مع الطلاب الاقوياء.  
 (tr. I should speak more from the students ... with the strong students)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: I should speak Arabic with the proficient students.
- (2) و لكن بعد استعمار بعد الاستعمار الفرنسي...  
 (tr. But after colonization, after the French colonization...)  
 OPTIMAL MEANING: But after the French colonization...

### Retrieval strategy

Retrieval was the third most used strategy, accounting for 14 % of the cases observed. In this study, retrieval strategies were registered when learners used fillers and hesitation, such as *āh*, *Na'am*, *Aqsid* (tr. er, yes, I mean). Fillers and hesitation phenomenon are performance features that indicate the existence of a communication problem, and learners

used them to gain time like repeating the words "Na'am, Aqsid, āh" (tr. yes, I mean, er er). Such strategy cases are shown below:

(1)

الباحث: انت تتكلم اللغة الفرنسية الان، اليس كذلك؟

الطالب: نعم... نعم ... و لكن... آه... ما اتقنته جيدا.

RESEARCHER: You speak French now, don't you?

STUDENT: Yes... yes... but ... er I did not master it. (OPTIMAL MEANING: Yes, but I have not mastered it.)

(2) لابد بكثرة ... آه... آه... يعني ار الممارسة يعني... آه... و بكثرة. (2)

(tr. There must be a lot of ... er ...er... I mean er practice. I mean ...er ... and too much)

OPTIMAL MEANING: There must be a lot of practice.

### Repetition

This strategy was registered when learners repeated what they had already said in order to bridge the gap in communication, and to gain time to produce a target language lexical or structural item. The tasks used in the present study yielded 22 instances of repetition, accounting for 12.7 %. Such cases are noted in the following utterances:

(1) بدأت تعلمها في ... في ... بلدي

(tr. I began learning it in ... in ... my country)

OPTIMAL MEANING: I began learning it in my home country.

(2) هم الذين يقودون من الذين من من الذين يشارون بشيرون بالبتنن في الدولة.

(tr. They are leading, from those from from from those who are referred to in the country)

OPTIMAL MEANING: They are all leaders in my country.

(3) والله الكتابة... الكتابة... الكتابة

(tr. God ... writing ... writing)

OPTIMAL MEANING: It's writing.

### Approximation

The use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item was counted as approximation strategy. The tasks of this study yielded 11 cases, accounting for 6.3 % of the total number of instances observed. One of the learners used "المدارس الحرة" and he meant "المدارس الخاصة". The following examples taken from the corpus show the use of approximation strategy, which is underlined:

- (1) لا استطيع ان افتي .. (ضحكة)  
(tr. *I cannot give my legal opinion*)  
OPTIMAL MEANING: *I can't advise.*
- (2) بعد النهاية، بعد ان انتهي الدراسة  
(tr. *In the end, after I finish studying*)  
OPTIMAL MEANING: *After completing the programme.*
- (3) اللغة تحتاج الى ممارسات كثيرة.  
(tr. *Language needs too much practices*)  
OPTIMAL MEANING: *Language needs a lot of practice.*
- (4) لذلك يجب على الامة الاسلامية ان تحفظ عليها.  
(tr. *So, the Islamic nation must memorise it*)  
OPTIMAL MEANING: *We must preserve this language.*

### Word coinage

Coinage was registered when learners found it difficult to recall a certain target language item, and they resorted to the creation of new words to fill the gap. Sometimes these were non-existent words. The strategy accounted for 2.3 % of the cases noted. The following utterances taken from the performance of the subjects are examples of this strategy:

- (1) نعم لحل مشاكلات اصحابك...  
(tr. *Yes. To solve mushakilat your friends.....*) *Mushakilat* does not exist in Arabic.)  
OPTIMAL MEANING: *Yes. To solve my friends problems....*
- (2) اذا انت تدرس ... آه... يعني ... بدون علوم ... آه... نقول آه... Arts ...  
(tr. *if you were studying ...er... I mean... without science ...er... say arts...*)  
OPTIMAL MEANING: *If you are studying in the arts stream, ...*

### Clarification request

Clarification request strategy was registered when the speakers made requests for clarification in order to negotiate meaning so that they could arrive at the intended meaning of the interlocutor. This strategy accounted for 2.3 % of the cases observed. Clarification requests are manifested clearly in the following excerpts:

- (1)  
الباحث: ماذا تنوي ان تعمل بعد اكمال برنامج اللغة العربية؟  
الطالب: بعد التخرج؟  
الباحث: نعم.

RESEARCHER: What are you planning to do after completing the Arabic programme?

STUDENT: After graduation, you mean?

RESEARCHER: Yes.

(2)

طالب (1): ماذا تعمل في نهاية الاسبوع؟

طالب (2): في نهاية الاسبوع؟ يعني في العطلة؟

طالب (1): نعم.

STUDENT (1): What do you do at the weekend?

STUDENT (2): *At the weekend? You mean in the holiday?*

STUDENT (1): *Yes.*

#### COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES BY TASK TYPE AND NATIVE LANGUAGE

Compensatory strategy use was analysed with reference to task type, and native languages spoken by the subjects of the study. There was one learner representing each native language as shown in Tables 2 and 3 below. Two tasks were used to elicit their strategic behaviour: an interview and a role-play.

#### The Interview Task

Table 2 below shows the frequency of occurrence of each type of compensatory strategy in the interview task that was verbalized by speakers of each language.

Country	Ethiopia	Kozovo	Benin	Nepal	Pakistan	Tajikistan	Senegal	Russia	
Native language	Somalia	Albanian	French	Urdu	Urdu	Tajikistani	Senegalese	Russian	
Strategy Type									Total
Paraphrase	4	4	6	6	5	7	7	5	44
Approximation	1	-	1	1	2	-	2	-	7
Message abandonment	4	3	1	3	1	2	1	1	16
Retrieval	-	4	1	3	-	3	10	1	22
Coinage	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	4
Restructuring	3	4	4	4	3	1	9	5	33
Repetition	2	3	-	2	1	4	7	1	20
Clarification request	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Total	14	19	13	19	15	17	36	15	148

Table 2: Frequency & distribution of compensatory strategy use in the interview task according to the individuals' native languages

Table 2 shows that 148 cases of compensatory strategy use were recorded in the data collected from 8 subjects representing 8 countries, speaking 7 different native languages. The most surprising feature is that the frequency of CpSs varied for each individual, according to the individual learners' nationality and native language, though they were at the intermediate level. In looking at the individual learners' strategy use, there was evidence that the Senegalese native speaker used more compensatory strategies than all the speakers of other languages (36) followed by Albanian (19), Urdu native speakers (19) cases. The Senegalese native speaker talked twice as much as any other speaker in the sample. This could be the only justification for his case. Native speaker subjects of French and Somalia used the lowest number of compensatory strategies, 13 and 14 cases, respectively. It was also observed that the native speakers of Russian and Albanian only used clarification request, one case each.

Thus, we may conclude that there are differences between the individual learners according to their native language. I believe that these differences cannot be explained. This finding cannot be compared with any other research because it is the first study conducted on learners of Arabic as a second language.

#### The Role-play task

The compensatory strategy (CpS) cases were analysed in the Role-play task. Table (3) shows the frequency of CpS instances according to the individual learners' native language and home country.

Country	<i>Kozovo &amp; Russia</i>		<i>Senegal &amp; Tajikistan</i>		<i>Nepal &amp; Pakistan</i>		<i>Benin &amp; Ethiopia</i>		Total
Native language	<i>Albanian &amp; Russian</i>		<i>Senegalese &amp; Tajikistani</i>		<i>Urdu &amp; Urdu</i>		<i>French &amp; Somalia</i>		
Strategy Type									
Paraphrase	1	1	1	3	-	1	-	1	8
Approximation	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Message abandonment	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1
Retrieval	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Coinage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Restructuring	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	5
Repetition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Clarification request	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	1	7	2	5	0	2	0	7	24

Table 3: Frequency & distribution of compensatory strategy use in the role-play task according to the individuals' native languages

The immediately noticeable feature of Table 3 is the far limited number of compensatory strategy cases that the role-play task yielded (24). The difference is most probably due to the demands of the interview task, which required a wider and more difficult range of vocabulary items than the role-play task. Another reason for recording the lowest number of cases in the role-play task might be that the speakers limited their talk to the speech acts which they were asked to perform, and they did not use vocabulary items of their own. The listeners also limited their performance to the available linguistic resources.

Paraphrase accounted for 33 % of all the occurrences, whereas message abandonment was observed only once. In performing the speech acts specified in the previous sections, it is an outstanding feature of the table above that the individuals who played Role A to ask the questions, recorded the lowest number of strategy use cases, 5 compared to 19 cases for the Role B speakers who answered the questions.

This finding is consistent with that of Rabab'ah (2001) who found out that the role-play task recorded the lowest number of strategy use, but it contradicts with that of Green (1995) who found out that the role-play task recorded more strategies than the picture description task did. This could be due to the fact that the role-play task used in the present study could be easy and not very demanding as that of Green.

## CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to explore the CpSs used by speakers of Arabic as a second language and how they solve their communication problems while communicating in the target language, Arabic. The study has revealed that they resorted to a wide range of compensatory strategies (CpSs) due to their limited linguistic resources. It also revealed that the use of CpSs varied between individual learners coming from different cultural and educational backgrounds and speaking different native languages. No justification could be offered for such a phenomenon. It was also found that the interview task yielded more CpSs than the role-play task did. These findings are open to challenge because the study is limited to male learners of Arabic as a second language learning Arabic in a native language environment, Saudi Arabia.

The findings of the present study may offer some insights into the nature of compensatory strategies used in Arabic since this area of research has received little or no attention. Syllabus designers should take into consideration the development of the learners' communicative competence in their syllabuses.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Task Questions

الاسئلة التي كانت مدار الحوار مع الطلاب:

The list of questions the researcher used in the interview task:

1. من اية دولة انت؟  
Where are you from?
2. ما هي اللغة الام التي تتكلمها؟  
What is your native language?
3. منذ متى بدأت تعلم اللغة العربية و كيف و أين؟  
When did you start learning Arabic? Where? How?
4. لماذا تتعلم اللغة العربية؟  
Why do you learn Arabic?
5. في اي مستوى انت الان؟  
Which proficiency level are you placed in now?
6. ماذا تدرس في هذا المستوى؟  
What do you study in this course?
7. هل تدرس على نفقتك الخاصة؟  
Do you study at your own expenses?
8. ماذا تنوي أن تعمل بعد الانتهاء من دراسة اللغة العربية؟  
What are you planning to do after graduation?
9. ما هي المشاكل التي تواجهك او تواجه اصدقائك في تعلم اللغة العربية من وجهة نظرك؟  
What are the problems that you or your friends face in learning Arabic from your own perspectives?
10. برايك كيف يمكن التغلب على هذه المشاكل؟  
How can you solve these problems?

## APPENDIX II

## Role-play Task Questions

1. Ask him about what he does at the weekend.

1. اسأل صديقك عما يعمل في نهاية الاسبوع.

2. Ask him about the job of his father.

2. اسأل صديقك عن وظيفة والده

3. Ask him about the importance of learning Arabic.

3. اسأل صديقك عن اهمية اللغة العربية.

4. Ask him about his plans after completing the Arabic course.

4. اسأل صديقك عن خطته المستقبلية .

5. Invite him for a cup of tea or coffee.

5. ادعو صديقك لتناول فنجانا من الشاي او القهوة عندك .

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