RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ON SPEAKING TACTICS EMPLOYED BY STUDENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE COURSES IN TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

This present study focused various speaking tactics employed by students of undergraduate courses in southern part of Tamilnadu. Corpus were collected from five hundred students and analysed for the purpose of understanding students' strategies while speaking in English. The researcher had identified some of the frequently used tactics which are detailed in this paper.

Key words: Strategies, recurrence, fillers, fragments, reconstruction, Mother tongue influence.

Introduction

English is the bread winning rather prestigious language. It penetrates every nook and corner of the world. The necessity of English is enormous. One cannot deny the usages of English Language in India. In the recent years, most of the young parents send their children to English medium schools knowing the importance of English. English is indispensible in the life of Indians. Scrase remarks that "English is recognised as an important global or international language essential for professional employment and significantly, a key component of the cultural capital of middle class Indians" (20). The government also spends lot of money to improve skills of the students in English. All most all the schools in India adopted communicative method of teaching in which they focus speaking skill. The traditional way of testing students' calibre is modified with new methods. They allot marks for oral skills in the public examinations. It pressurises students and teachers to concentrate speaking skill. Many leading multinational companies have set up their business hubs in India. They recruit potential young minds with English fluency. They offer hefty salary. So, most of the students and parents have an eye on English Language in India in particular Tamilnadu.

Speaking English is a cumbersome task for the Tamil medium students in the classroom. They are afraid of speaking in front of the other students and faculty. They feel that they may commit mistakes that would spoil the image of them. Interestingly, boys in the class are much worried about their errors when girls are presented. It shows that they want to maintain superiority but ground reality is different. Both boys and girls have adopted certain strategies to cope with the problems of speaking. Nakatani says that

"communication strategies can be divided in two types: Achievement and compensation strategies. Students use these strategies for coping with speaking problems during communicative tasks" (154). Further, Cohan identified that "the second language learners follow some strategies which include retrieval strategies, rehearsal strategies, cover strategies and communication strategies"(3). Similarly, Cenoz observed some of the strategies of the students such as "self correction, reformulation, repetition" (4). Gallagher points out that "there are three strategies used mostly by students were practicing, revising and repetition (16).

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Objectives

The general objective of the study was to indentify the speaking strategies of the undergraduate students from government, aided and self-financing colleges of southern part of Tamilnadu. This study was also designed for observing various differences between male and female students in using speaking strategies.

2.2. Subjects

The quantum of subjects is five hundred both male female students from ten colleges of southern part of Tamilnadu.

2.3.Instrument

A   Specially designed questionnaire was prepared and circulated among students in order to collect data. The first part is devoted for students' personal details and in the second part, the researcher asked students to speak any topic which they liked. This was enabling the research to collect more dada otherwise they would memorise and repeat some stuff. Speeches of students were recorded and transcribed separately for further analysis.
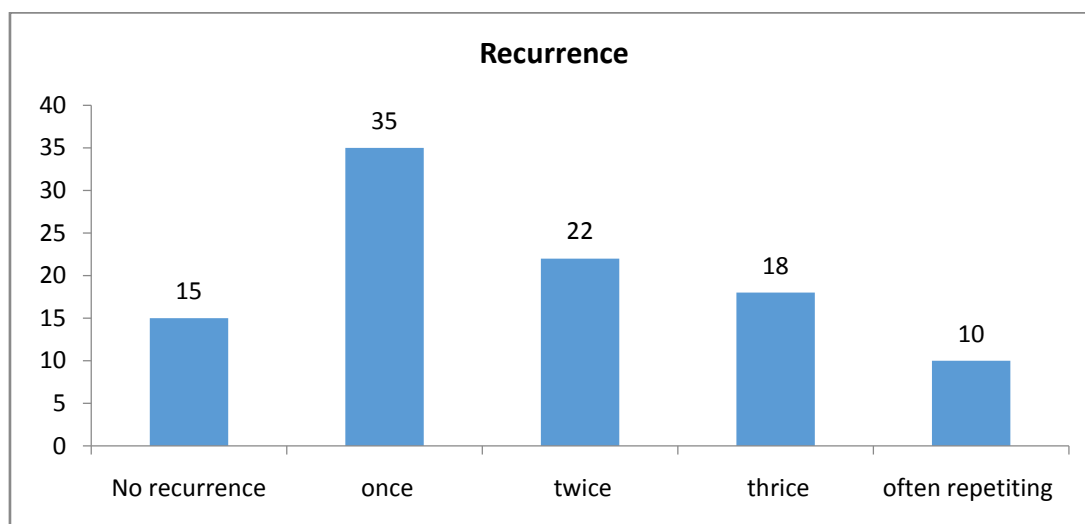
3. Data Analysis and Discussions

The researcher has analysed transcribed data and classified them into various categories. Further, he made quantitative analysis to prove validity of the study. The following are commonly adopted strategies of the students.

3.1. Recurrence

Recurrence is the traditional strategy to memorise certain complex formula and slogans. Later, the same method has been followed by students to reproduce whatever printed in the textbook and also succeeded in written exams. So, they adopt the same method when they speak. Here are some example sentences.

1. *I ...I....I like ...Like to present problems of ...of pollution.
2. * Terrorist are are very very bad ...bad fellows.
3. * Water water is the sources of human life. Water is the source of human life.
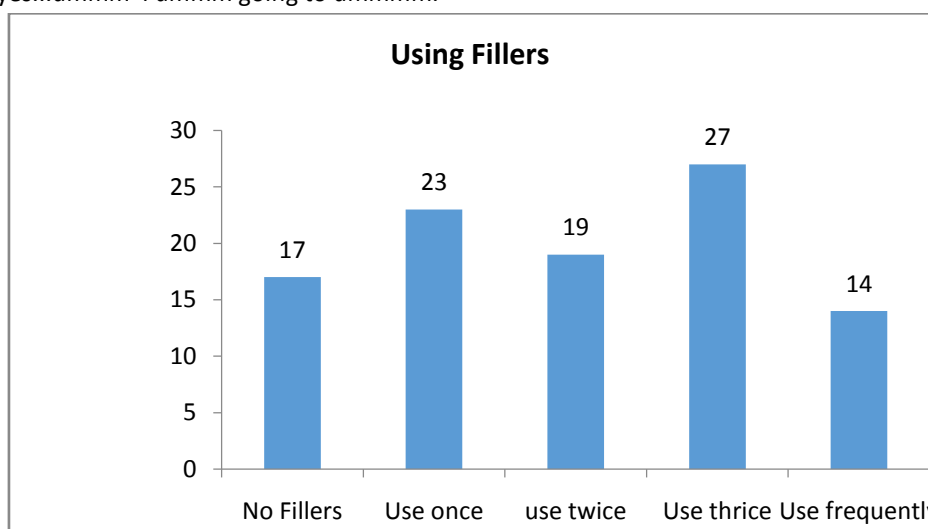

Recurrence

Category	Value
No recurrence	15
once	35
twice	22
thrice	18
often repetiting	10

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The above chat clearly shows that 85% of the students had employed recurrence strategy when they spoke. Only 15% of the students have uttered their views and experiences without repeating certain words, phrases and sentences etc...The rest of the students have unconsciously repeating words, phrases and even sentences in their presentations. The quantum of reoccurrence varies between male and female. The data reveals that the 45 % of the female students have adopted this strategy. The reason would be most of the female students by hearted their lessons in order to score more marks. The same methodology has been employed when they make presentation in the classroom. This strategy spoils the language flow of the students and also creates some kind of irritation among audience.

3.2. Using Fillers/ checking throat

Some of the students have incorporated dummy sounds in order to fill up the gap between two words of their speech. Those sounds are merely fillers which do give any meaning at all. Some students purposefully checking their throat to create time space to construct sentences internally to complete their speech. Here are some examples.

1*mmm first I would like to present *ummmm* the development of cell phone.

2* Our college is *ummm* one of the best institutions in the *(checking throat)* city.

3* Face book (*checking throat)mmmm* helps a lot.

4.*yes...ummm I ummm going to ummmm.

Using Fillers

| Category	Value
No Fillers	17
Use once	23
use twice	19
Use thrice	27
Use frequently	14

The above chart explains that 83% of the students have employed the strategy of filling gap using dummy sounds like ummm, mmmmmmmm, aaamm and word like 'yes, ok, but, so, and, etc..'14% of the students frequently adopted this method to complete their task. The reason could be most of the students contemplate ideas in their mother tongue (L1) and translate into English for which they need some time space to finish the process. To fill up the time space, they use fillers to show that they are in the process of speaking. This is a positive sign of learning.

3.3. Framing new words

Learning proper vocabulary is the difficult task for the second language learners. If they use inappropriate vocabulary it will spoil the meaning of the utterance. In this present study some of the students frame words which are not available in English language. Here are some examples.

1*humanitically speaking that must be done.

 2.*Staffs in my college are nice.

3.* The man *cutted* his fingers.

4.* I bought *lapatopu* yesterday.

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**Framing Non-extsisting words**
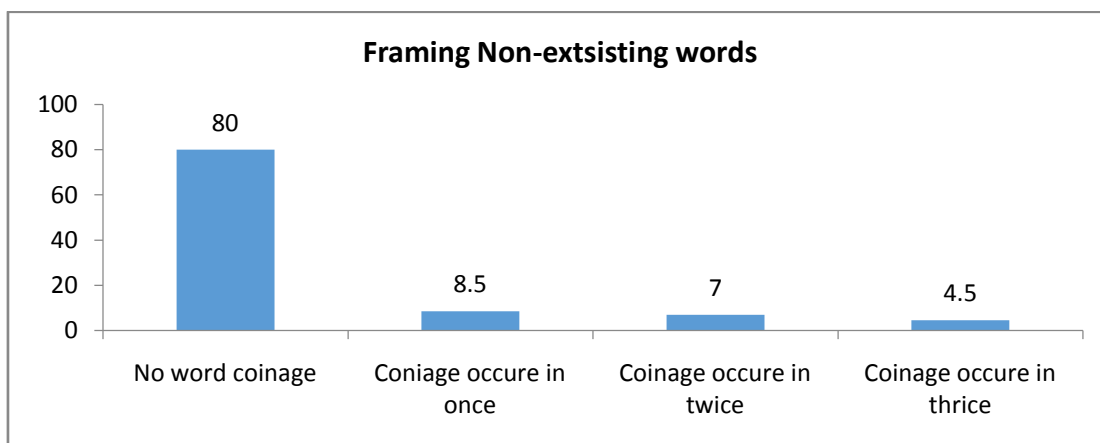
This chart reveals that 80% of the students do not use unavailable words. They utter English words in their presentation. The remaining 20% of the students frame non-existing words. They use do not know the difference between regular and irregular verbs for example they use words like 'cutted, sleeped, writed' etc...Some of the students add extra sound /u /with existing English words for example 'booku(book), notu(note) askedu (asked). A few students add plural markers –s, es and –ies with words which are already plural. The data reveals that 15% of the male students have employed this strategy. The reason would be that the male students are more creative than female. But their creativities sometimes go wrong.

3.4. Fragments

Incomplete sentence is an inevitable feature among second language learners. Due to incompetence, students are not able produce complete sentences. Some of the students produce sentences with abrupt ends. Here are some examples.

1* I go to......I explain....my ....chart.

2.* My college nice ....teacher nice... campus.

3.*if I go to college....
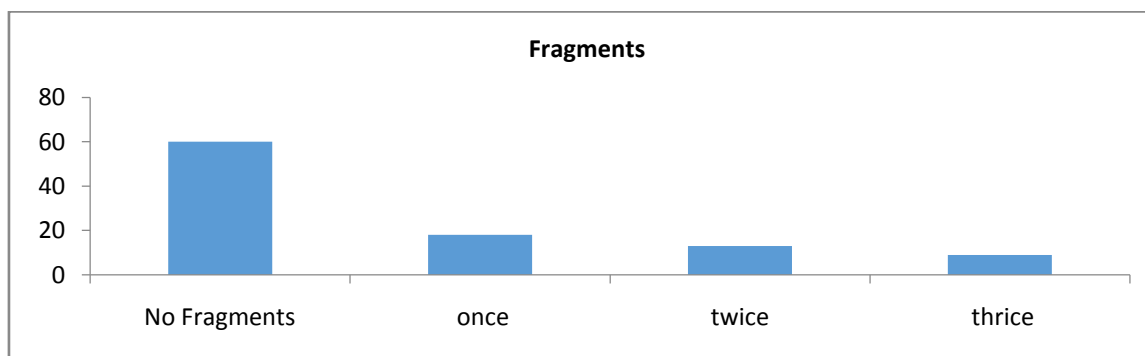
Fragments

Inference

The above chart exhibits that 60% of the students make presentation without fragments. 40% of the students produce fragmented sentences. Among three hundred students 18% produce fragments at once, 13% twice and 9% thrice in their speeches. Students have adopted this strategy due to lack of language competence and anxiety to finish their presentation.
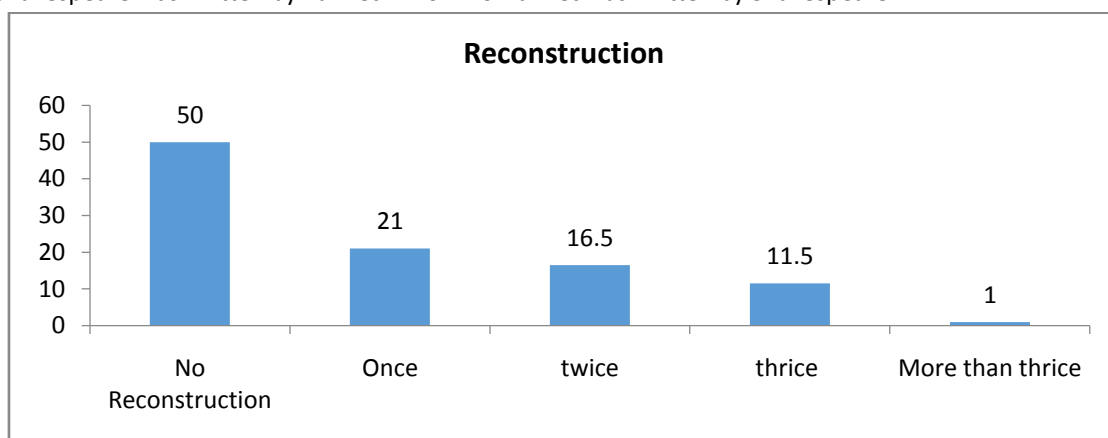
3.5. Reconstruction

Some of the students have applied reconstruction strategy in their speech. They reconstruct sentences when they are not confident about their previous sentences. Sometime it leads incorrect sentence structure. Here are some examples.

1* I has.....sorry I have two cars.

2.*Everyone has.....Everyone have to understand our culture.

3* Shakespeare was written by hamlet ....no ...no Hamlet was written by Shakespeare.

Reconstruction

Inference:

The chart narrates that 50% of students have availed the reconstruction strategy. The remaining half of the students does not employ this strategy. They have much confident to make presentation. Among them, some of the students produce illogical sentences but they do not worry about. They focus fluency of the language accuracy. Students those who availed this strategy bother about their accuracy. Among three hundred students 21% of them have used this strategy once in their speech. 35% of female students have incorporated this strategy. The reason could be that female students are very much conscious about their accuracy rather fluency.
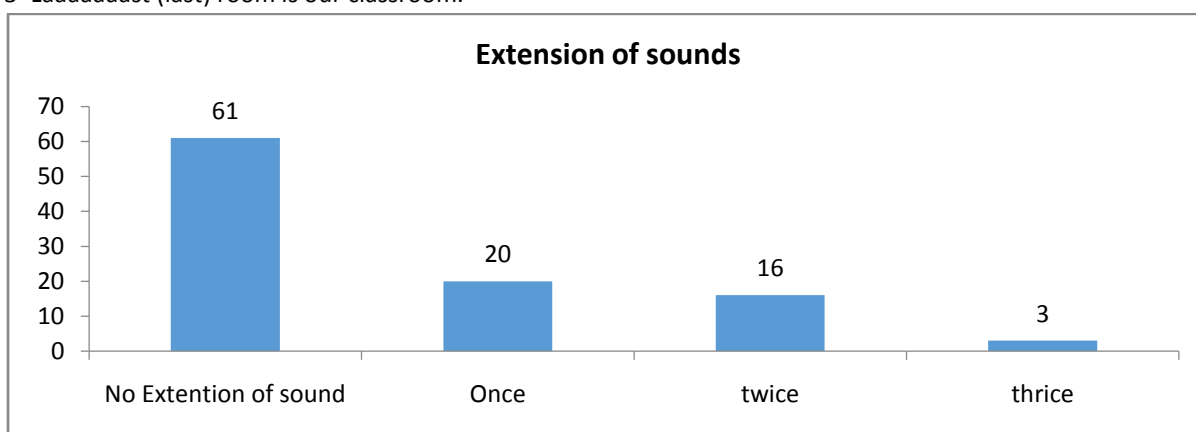
3.6. Extension of sounds

The present study found that some of the students have the habit lengthening sounds of a word which are known as drawling. Here are some examples.

1* Saaar... (sir) I ammm (am) not well. Soooo (so) heeee (he) will present saar (sir)

2*Sheeee (she) isss (is) my friend.

3*Laaaaaaast (last) room is our classroom.

Extension of sounds

The chart revels that the 40% of the students have the habit of lengthening sounds of English. The remaining 60% do follow English sounds correctly. 20% of the students have employed this strategy only once in their speech. This strategy is often used by male students. They extend words to frame next word or phrase to complete their speech. These students have got the influence of their mother tongue (L1) Tamil too. Mostly, they extend vowels because they do not have any obstacles in the oral cavity. This strategy should be avoided otherwise it could spoil the flow of the speech.

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3.7. Whispering

Whispering is profoundly adopted strategy by the students of undergraduate courses. Some of the students tend to low their voice when they are not confident about their language. They try to hide their inability by employing whispering strategy. Here are some examples.

1* The is........... (whispering) of our......... (whispering) nation.

2* Forest.........(whispering)..... green ...revolution....

3.*Leader of the country (whispering).....good (whispering)...........political gain..


Whispering
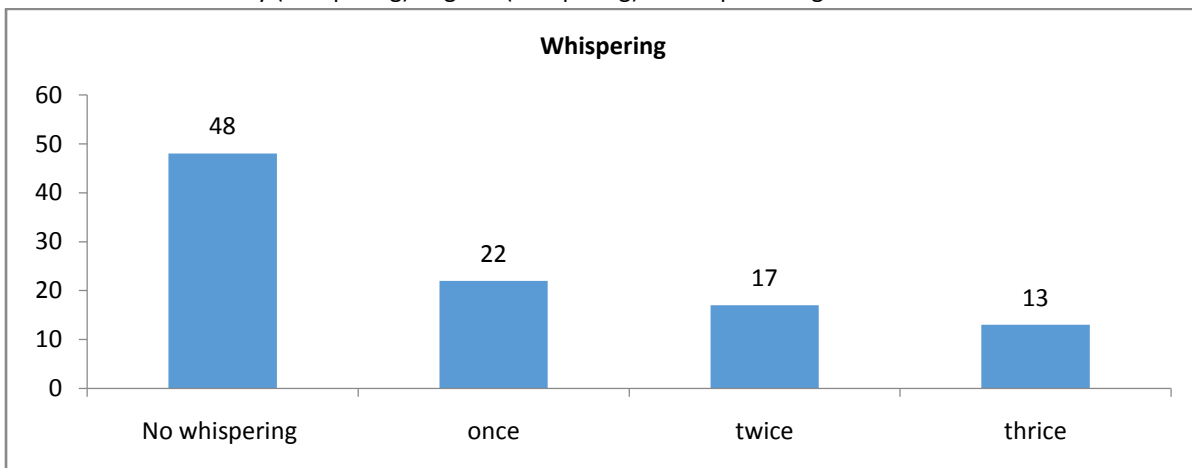
From the chart, it is clearly understood that 52% students have utilised this strategy. It is an easy way to hide their inability of using language.48% students have boldly utter whether it is or wrong. 22% of the students use this strategy once in their speech. This is a very common strategy among students those who make any compulsory presentation. Interestingly, 32% of the male students have adopted this strategy. Most of the male students have some kind of irrational fear to face female students in the class. They thought that if they have committed mistakes that their image would be spoiled so they lowered their voice in order to maintain supremacy. It is a negative learning strategy.

3.8. Seeking Assistance

Some of the students seek assistance from fellow students and even teachers to complete their presentation. They all ways expect some kind of approval from students and teachers through body language. They usually check whether they speak correct English or not by looking at the teacher and their class mates. Here are some examples.

1* The political atmosphere is..... *(Sir shall I talk later?)*...

2* Our country is a good country. India has different culture, language ...*mmm...sir please what is next?*

3* The difference between rural and urban India is... is.. (sir shall I talk once more?)

Seeking Assisatance

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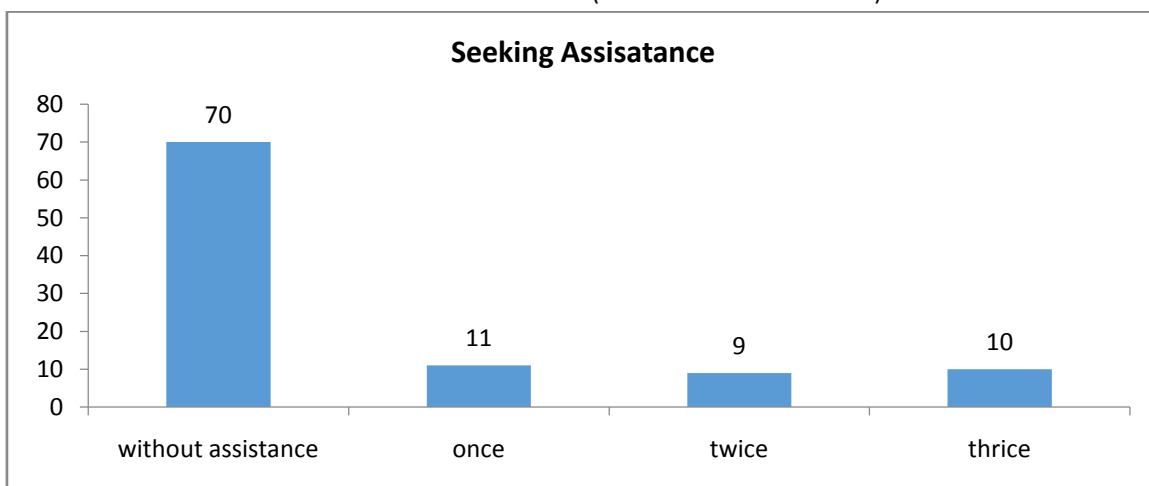
The above chart explains that 70% of the students do expect any help from either teacher or students. The reaming 30% of the students seek assistance for completing their presentation. Some of the students do not know what do speak next so, they hesitantly ask help from the students to complete their presentation. Some students have the habit of continuing their speech even though they do not get favourable reply from students.
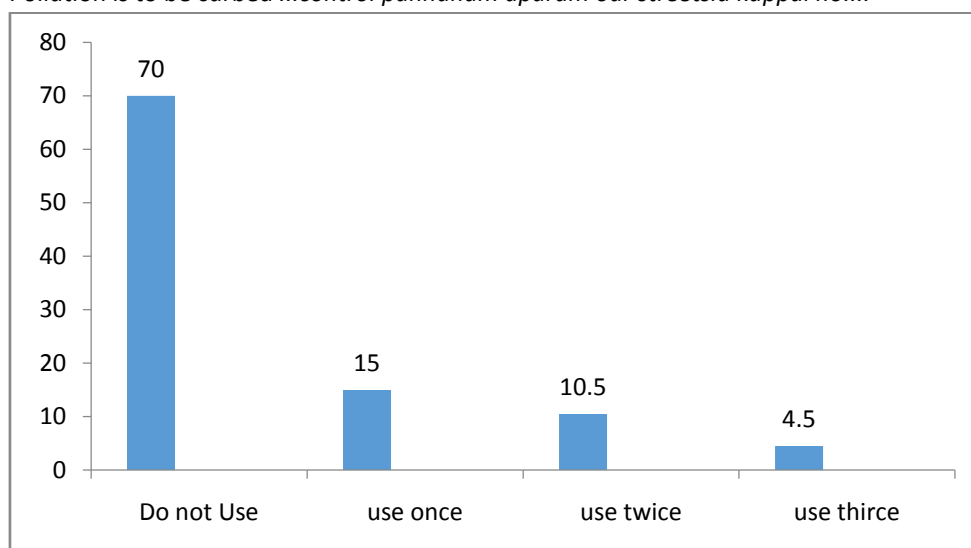
3.9. Using Mother Tongue (MT)

Some of the students use their mother tongue (Tamil) when they speak in English Language. Here are some of the examples.

The college the college.....aiyoo maranthu potchu nan apprama pesuren sir...*

* Computer is the important *important....Saar...nalaikku pesiren alla vidunga ...*

* Pollution is to be curbed *...control pannanum aparam our streetsla kuppai no....*

The chart indicates that 70% of the students do not use their mother tongue while speaking in English. They consciously restricted the influence of Mother Tongue (MT) when they spoke in English. The remaining 30% of the students use some Tamil words when they do remember equivalent words in English. From the study, 15% of the students have incorporated this strategy only once in their speech. 4.5% of the students have adopted this method thrice in their speech. Among 30% of the students, some of them use Tamil words for the entire sentence. Code-mixing is not an advisable strategy for the second language learners.

4. Conclusion

The present study has earmarked to indentify the speaking tactics of the undergraduate students of southern part of Tamilnadu. The collected corpus has carefully scrutinised, processed, categorised and analysed by the researcher.   The following are findings of the present study.

85% of students have adopted recurrence strategy. This is the highest used strategy. Framing new words is the lowest used strategy. 20% of students of the students have availed this strategy. 83% of the students have used fillers in their presentation. It is the next highest utilised strategy by students. Interestingly, 50% of the students have employed reconstruction strategy whereas the remaining 50% did not use this strategy. Strategies like fragments and extension of sounds are equally adopted by students. 70% of the students have not used their mother tongue when they presented their ideas and did not ask any assistance from anybody. The researcher has brought out various speaking tactics employed by students and presented it with statistical evidence. Further research can be made in this area to unearth more tactics and problems in speaking skills.

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