Debunking the Notion of Nativization in the Pronunciation Variation at Segmental level among Non-Native ESL Teachers in Sabah, Malaysia

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Abstract: Pronunciation errors made by non–native speakers of the English language according to Swan and Smith (1987) should not be considered as random attempts to produce unfamiliar sounds and words but instead as a reflection of the segmental and supra segmental features of their native languages. For this reason, it is necessary for the English language teachers to be more aware of how the mother tongue of the non – native English speakers can have influence on the English pronunciation. The purpose of this research is to look into the issue of pronunciation variation among English language teachers of Kadazan ethnic background in the area of Tuaran and Tamparuli in Sabah, Malaysia. This research is qualitative in nature using ethnographic case study method. LeCompte and Schensel (1999) have detailed appropriate times to use ethnographic methods. They suggest the use of ethnography "when the problem is clear, but its causes are not well understood" (p30-31). Following this advice, we used components of ethnography to investigate the possible factors that lead to phonological variations in the consonant that develops as a result of student/teacher interactions. Therefore, in this study, researchers will focus on the ESL teachers of Kadazan ethnic who formed the dominant ethnic group in the state in Sabah.   Furthermore, the availability of coded sound system of the Kadazandusun language lends itself well for ease of comparison. The data obtained in the research was analyzed using the contrastive analysis method. Here, the actual utterances were compared to the intended utterances to determine the specific consonant sounds that differ in both the utterances. The findings of this research proved that the L1 does have certain influence in the pronunciation of the English language. The consonantal features that are absent in the respondents' L1 seem to be substituted with other sounds that are almost similar to the target sound.

Keywords: Nativization in Pronunciation, Non-Native ESL

Introduction

The acquisition of the English language pronunciation has never been an easy skill to master. In fact only a small number of people have ever been able to achieve a native – like pronunciation or better known today as the Received Pronunciation (RP) or Standard English Pronunciation. The fact that native speakers of the English language are able to recognized foreign accents within non – native English speakers such as Malaysian accent, French accent, Spanish accent or Chinese accent proves that there are differences in the English spoken by native and non–native speakers. This could possibly be due to the differences in the sound patterns as well as the structure of the non – native speakers' native language that indirectly influence the speech production of their second language (L2).   Avery and Ehrlich (1992) supports this by saying that foreign accents produce by speakers of second languages is determined to a large extent by the speakers' native language. Therefore, pronunciation errors made by non–native speakers of the English language according to Swan and Smith (1987)   should not be considered as random attempts to produce unfamiliar sounds and words but instead as a reflection of the segmental and supra segmental features of their native languages. For this reason, it is necessary for the English language teachers to be more aware of how the mother tongue of the non – native English speakers can have influence on the English pronunciation. In order to understand pronunciation difficulties that are caused by phonological transfer, it is important that the differences between the English language and the first language of the non–native English speakers be compared and studied.

The learning or acquisition of the Standard English pronunciation among the non–native speakers is a recent issue that has been discussed and debated among linguists and educationist in light of second language acquisition. In most cases, majority agreed that to be able to pronounce and speak like a native English speaker is something that is too far for any non – native speaker to achieve. A lot of explanations had been presented to explain this phenomenon such as biological factors, personality of the English language learners, socio-cultural factors, mother tongue influence, as well as pedagogical factors.

Although, some of the explanations presented were sometimes argued and rejected as being not relevant to the learning or

acquiring the standard English pronunciation, one seem to always stand out among the rest and is always touched on when talking about pronunciation or foreign accent in English – the mother tongue influence. The mother tongue or speakers' L1 is said to be the most influential factor in determining the success rate of achieving a native – like or Standard English language pronunciation.

Linguists claim that the more similarities that the L1 has with English, the more likely it is that the speaker will be able to speak like a native speaker of English. However, if there are a lot differences between the two languages, achieving Standard English pronunciation will be more difficult if not impossible. Due to this reason, most English language teachers feel that to teach pronunciation is a waste of effort since it is not achievable. Furthermore, they too seem to be having the same problem as their students and therefore, lack the confidence to teach the Standard English pronunciation.

The more relevant question at this point is how the L1 of the speakers of English affects the English language pronunciation that even those who are involve in the education business as English language teachers are not free from using another variation of English pronunciation when communicating or while teaching in the English language classrooms.

Background of Study

The issues raised and discussed over the years with regards to the use of RP had always created controversies among English language linguists and educationists. Known purists and perfectionists such as Daniel Jones (1948) and Prator (1968) had supported arguments in favour of the British native model or RP. Whilst, Abercrombie (1956, 1965), Kachru (1979) and Mary Tay(1982) had opposed the so called RP model. They believed in a more realistic approach towards acceptable English pronunciation and suggested that an indigenous model should be accepted. Paroo Nihalani (1988) who is also one of those who are against RP claims that RP as a 'normative model' limits itself to the consideration of communicative intentions to the speakers only. She argued in favour of the communicative model that measures the success of communication by how transactions between speakers are negotiated. RP is what is described as a 'one-way' communicative model which fails to consider the hearer or listener as an active participant of the communication process. After all, it is up to the hearer or listener either to accept the speech as successful or reject it as more or less inappropriate (Nihalani,P. 1988). Basically, it means that non–RP pronunciation is and should be accepted if the listener is able to comprehend or understand the message that the speaker is trying to get across. Looking at the English language, it is obvious that there are not many differences between the Standard English or RP to the non – RP English being spoken by non – native speakers in terms of morphology, syntax and grammar are concerned. Most differences however, are very significant and distinguishable when they come to the segmental level of the language especially in the area of phonology. In light of this problem, Nihalani (1988) contradicts herself by saying, 'ideally speaking, the non-native speakers should aim at British Received Pronunciation (BRP), because the standard of the correct usage of the language, whether it is phonology or grammar, is the correct usage prevalent among the educated native speakers".

The other important issue with regard to spoken language is the question of intelligibility (Halliday, 1964). It is common knowledge that there are many varieties of the English language being spoken by the native speakers of the language. For example, there are American English, British English, Australian English, Scottish English and many more. However, these native speakers tend to understand each other regardless of what variety they use. It is as if they are on the same frequency even though they each use a different model of English language pronunciation. Obviously, there exist some common features within the many varieties of English spoken by native speakers which contribute towards facilitating to their mutual intelligibility (Nihalani, 1988).

Sadly, this is not true when it comes to non–native speakers of English. The features shared by native speakers tend to be absent among non–native speakers of English which would affect the level of intelligibility. Tay (1982), Bansal (1966) in Nihalani (1988) had identified that non–native varieties deviate at the segmental level. Their researches concentrated mostly on how a non–native accent deviates from a particular native accent such as Singaporean English and RP, Taiwanese English and American English and even, Fijian English and Australian English. This is most probably the most important aspect that needs to be considered. It is not the question of whether or not the use of RP is acceptable, or the marking of identity as mentioned by Tay and Gupta (1983), Richards (1979) and Wong (1987) among others, but the question of intelligibility which could bring about confusion and misunderstanding among speakers of English either between native and non–native, or non–native and non–native. Brown (1988) after studying the English in Malaysia and Singapore (EMS) identified four types of distinguishable differences, or variation from the RP.

Research Method

This research is qualitative in nature using ethnographic case study method. LeCompte and Schensel (1999) have detailed appropriate times to use ethnographic methods. They suggest the use of ethnography "when the problem is clear, but its causes are not well understood" (p30-31). Following this advice, We used components of ethnography to investigate the possible factors that lead to phonological variations in the consonant that develops as a result of student/teacher interactions. It is important to see student/teacher relationships ethnographically to properly understand how such variations complicates/eases intelligibility of the standard English pronunciation for ethnic Kadazan ESL teacher from the teachers' own perspectives. We will use several of the

ethnographic methods as suggested by LeCompte and Schensel (1999): face to face interaction with participants, presentation of accurate reflections of the participants' perspective and behavior, and explanations of how people think, believe, and behave. The particular phonological components in my study are at segmental level. In my study, the dynamics of the researcher/participant relationship are unique. Trust was established (and is on-going) between the researchers and the participants prior to the study. Ratcliff (1994) asserts that ethnography emphasizes the reconstruction or re-creation of peoples' behavior from their own perspective. The participants' point of view is extended through generalized questions that, through the course of the research, narrow and become more specific. My study, although not as lengthy, is typical of ethnographic studies, and ethnographic in the sense that it, too, will begin the telling of general stories that eventually narrow in on specific teacher oral production data from the classroom interactions as well as from the individual interviews. Likewise, this study is ethnographic in nature due to the use of ethnographic assumptions in the interview style and in the data analysis. Spradley (1979) remarks that ethnography means "learning from other people" (p.3) The interviews and audio recording of classroom interactions, and data analysis resulting from this study do just that; the researchers are themselves, and the goal is to illustrate, in a meaningful way, the phonetic articulations of Kadazan ESL teachers in a Kadazan community school. Bogdan and Bilken (1982) define ethnography as, "thick description" (p.36), and state the following: Ethnography, then, is "thick description". What the ethnographer is faced with when culture is examined from [the emic] outsider's perspective is a series of interpretations of life, common-sense understandings, which are complex and difficult to separate from each other. The ethnographer's goals are to share in the meaning that the cultural participants take for granted and then to depict new understandings for the reader and for outsiders (p.36). LeCompte and Schensel (1999) note several similarities in case study and ethnography. The similarities include: performing research on phenomena in the setting in which it occurs, investigating what is "really" going on under the surface of appearances, and intense time commitments. Additionally, both ethnographies and case studies gather data through face-to-face interactions, participant observation, and in-depth interviews (LeCompte&Schensel, 1999; Ratcliff, 1994; Bogdan&Bilken, 1982).

Research Procedure

  The basic procedures involved in conducting the research are *planning*, *identifying population and sampling, conduct*, *transcribe*, *recheck*, *analyse* and *interpret.*

The following describe briefly the procedure of the research.

(a) Planning
This is most probably the most important stage in any research as this is where the researchers start by identifying the area of study, research issues, as well as the objectives and research questions. The area of the study will focus on the English pronunciation variation by the English language teachers of Kadazan ethnic group in Sabah. This would be the focus of the study and researchers decided to carry out this research to have a better understanding of the phenomenon. The next step would be to identify the target population and deciding the data gathering techniques. Subsequently, reading and investigations on the related topics were done to obtain relevant literature review regarding the topic and the area of study.

(b) Identifying Study Sample
 Identifying the population would not be much of a problem as it had already been identified in the planning stage. However, selecting appropriate study samples might prove to be a bit tricky. Sampling is a major concern in any research "…one cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything" (Miles &Huberman (1984: 36). Since qualitative research does not stress on the specific or minimum number of samples, and considering the nature of the research, researchers have outlined a few criteria that the samples must have;

- be a Kadazan
- be an English language teacher
- be able to speak English fluently

Therefore following the tenets of theoretical sampling (Lincoln &Guba, 1985) the sample in this study was chosen from the schools located in Kadazan ethnic majority i.e. Tuaran and Tamparuli. ESL teachers eligible to participate will be those teachers who met the above criteria mentioned above available at the time of the study.

(c)   Conducting the study
 Upon gaining approval from the school, researchers carried out the study on the selected, identified and introduced samples. In conducting the study, two types of instruments were selected which are (1) interviews and (2) classroom audio recordings. The data collected from these 2 instruments were triangulated and crosschecked in order to get a more accurate and valid finding. The procedure for the classroom lesson audio-recording was carried out the teachers, themselves (upon their requests) after receiving instructions on the required instruction. These recordings were later crosscheck with the teachers' concerned using stimulated technique.

 (d)   Transcribe
This is most probably the most gruesome process of the entire research procedures. After all the recordings were done, they have to go through a process before they could be analysed. The detail transcribing procedure that researchers went through are as follows:
(i) Listen to the entire audio recording first.
(ii) Listen again and transcribe to English orthography
(iii) Go back again to fill in the gap or missing words that researchers could not understand the first time around

(iv) Listen again and crosschecking it with the teachers to make sure that it is correct

(v) Verify by listening and checking the transcription one last time using the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English for reference on the phonetic transcription of the word.

(e) Recheck

After the transcribing process is done, researchers went to meet with all the 10 respondents again bringing along the recorded audio tape and the transcribe text. The researchers then asked the respondents to verify the orthography transcription by listening to the tape while checking the transcribed text. The respondents were told to make any necessary corrections if they found any transcribing errors by the researchers. This is to ensure that the transcription done by the researchers are accurate to ensure validity.

(f) Analyze

After the transcription process, the researchers started analyzing the data by listening to the recording again while checking the transcription. Identify any words that the researchers felt that are not accurately pronounced (constantly comparing the consonantal chart of English and Kadazandusun consonant sound chart-refer appendix). Listen to the exact pronunciation given in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English CD supplied with the dictionary.

(c) Compare the pronunciation on the CD and that of the samples.

(d) Write down the words that had been identified as not accurately pronounced by the samples.

(e) Copy the correct phonetic transcription of the word from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English in the intended utterance column.

(f) Transcribe the actual utterance of the samples in phonetics in the actual utterance column.

(g) Identify the consonant sound variations between the intended and actual utterances.

The last step would be to calculate all the consonant sounds variation into percentages so that a more accurate reading of the data collected can be achieved. This is an effort by the researchers to frame patterns to help in the explanation building analysis (Yin, 1994).

(g) Interpret

After all the appropriate data had been analysed, interpretations were done with the intention to explain the phenomenon of English pronunciation variation among the English language teacher of Kadazan ethnic background.

Contrastive Analysis Method

The Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a method that is used to explain the similarities or differences between the first and the second language. This method started with C. C. Fries in 1945 but history tends to disregard him as the one who discovered the CA because Fries did not gave a detail explanation to what the contrastive analysis is (Selinker, 1992). Instead, the credit is given to Robert Lado who succeeded in making CA explicit by stating that L1 plays a very important role in the acquisition or learning of L2. Selinker (1992) stressed that the use of CA is relevant when examining language transfer although a revised version of the CA that fits the situation is needed.

There are six assumptions that the CA was based on as summarized by Gass and Selinker (1993). Firstly, they claimed that the CA is based on a language theory that claims language is habit and that language learning involves the establishment of a new set of habits. Secondly, it is said that the major source of errors in the production and/or reception of a second language is the native language, and that one can account for errors by considering the differences between the L1 and the L2. Due to this, it is said that the greater the differences between L1 and L2, the more errors that will occur. With this, Gass and Selikker (1993) continue by saying that what one has to do in learning a second language is to learn the differences. The similarities can be safely ignored as no new learning is involved. In other words, what is dissimilar between two languages is what must be learned. Finally, they conclude by saying that the difficulty and ease in learning a second language are determined by the differences and similarities between the two languages in contrast.

In carrying out the CA, Gass and Selinker's (1993) mention that two languages could be compared. There are also several guidelines that researchers have to adhere to. They are the basic elements in the procedure of CA. They are;

1. *Description* of the two languages
2. S*election* of certain areas or items of the two languages for detailed comparison
3. *Comparison*, i.e. the identification of areas of difference and similarity;
4. *Prediction*, i.e. determining which areas are likely to cause errors; and
5. *Testing* the predictions.

In the field of phonology, Selinker (1992) mentions that Lado (1957) suggested "at least three checks" should be provided when comparing each phoneme. The most important three checks are:

1. Does the L1 have a phonetically similar phoneme?
2. Are the variants of the phonemes similar in both languages?
3. Are the phonemes and their variants similarly distributed?

When it comes to phonology, it seems that the learners' L1 plays an important role that affects their production of speech in the L2. Ellis (1994: 316) states that "there is a widespread recognition that transfer is more pronounced at the level of the sound system than at the level of syntax." The example cited from Akmajian (1995) shows how the L1 can affect the intelligibility of the L2. Therefore, the list of problems resulting from the comparison of the foreign language with the native language must be considered as a list of hypothetical problems until final validation is achieved by

checking it against the actual speech of students (Gass&Selinker, 1993). Due to this, many believed that the CA failed to explain the reasons for second language learners' errors. However, no matter what the arguments are, it cannot be denied that language transfer does occur, and many recent studies support the view that L1 does have an impact on L2. This issue is of interest to language teachers and educational researchers such as Selinker (1992: 171) who states that "knowledge of the native language plays an extensive role in second language acquisition (SLA); evidence presented in studies reported they strongly support this view, which can now be stated as SLA fact." There is "no theory of L2 acquisition that ignores the learner's prior linguistic knowledge that can be considered complete" (Ellis 1994: 300). However, language transfer is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by just one theory. It is "indeed a real and central phenomenon that must be considered in any full account of the second language process" (Gass&Selinker 1993: 7). Even though it has been criticized and condemned for its inadequacy to forecast the transfers (Whitman & Jackson, 1972) that speakers of second language make due to interference from the mother tongue language, it cannot be denied that such interferences does exist (Brown, 1994) and can be used to explain some of the difficulties face by speakers in the skill of pronunciation. In this circumstance, the contrastive analysis has the potential to explain speakers' pronunciation variations rather than predicting the types of errors than speakers might make when speaking the English language.

However, in a multicultural and multiethnic country such as Malaysia, it is impossible to do contrastive analysis on all the mother tongues that exist and identify the pronunciation variations that they might bring while speaking English. The best thing that can be done is to take one step at a time and start with analyzing the first language (L1) of the largest ethnic group in a particular area or state. Therefore, in this study, researchers will focus on the ESL teachers of Kadazan ethnic who formed the dominant ethnic group in the state in Sabah. Furthermore, the availability of coded sound system of the Kadazandusun language lends itself well for ease of comparison. The data obtained in the research was analyzed using the contrastive analysis method. Here, the actual utterances were compared to the intended utterances to determine the specific consonant sounds that differ in both the utterances. The same word uttered by each respondent that brought about the same variation was regarded as one word and listed as one variation. On the other hand, when the word was uttered differently from the previous actual utterance, it was regarded as another word and a different variation. The intended utterance was based on the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English which comes with a CD that includes the standard pronunciation. This is the benchmark that the researcher had set as the standard English pronunciation codification.

The analysis of the data went through five stages as follows:
(i)   Data collected from the interviews were analysed as single case.

(ii)   Data collected from the classroom lesson recordings were analysed as single case/within case.
(iii)   Analysis of data from the interview and the classroom audio recording were combined/cross case.

Tables and charts were used to give a clearer picture of the consonant phoneme variation. The total or number of consonants phoneme variation was illustrated in term of percentages.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data from the instruments in this study revealed that the five most common consonant sounds that brought about variations among the English language teachers from the Kadazan ethnic background are the sounds;

(i)   / ð / (replaced with /d/ or /t/)
(ii)   / θ / (replaced with /t/)
(iii)   / v / (replaced with /f/ or /b/)
(iv)   / ∫ / (replaced with /s/)
(v)   / z / (replaced with /s/)

Consonant sounds omission or reduction was also found especially at word final position. Consonant sounds omission from consonant clusters was also be found at word initial and word final position. However, their number is small compared to the occurrences of omission at word final position.

Variation from the standard sounds

It can be seen that there are nine standard English consonant sounds that brought about variations by all the ten respondents. The data from the interviews show that the highest occurrence of sound variation came from the sound /ð/ at 24.08 % followed by the sound /θ/ at 16.34 %. Third highest is the sound /v/ at 10.75 % followed with /t/ at 9.46%. Next is the /∫ / sound at 6.88 % while the /d/ and /z/ sounds are both at 6.45 % each, followed with the /t∫ / sound at 5.16 %. Variation from the /k/ sound came at 4.3 % whereas the /dʒ/ sound is at 3.44 %. The /s/ sound on the other hand brought about 2.15 % in variation while /g/ and /r/ are both at 1.29%. /ʒ/ and /n/ are both at 0.86 %. The lowest sound variation came from the sound /l/ at 0.43 %. These can be summed up as below:

- /ð/ sound at a frequency of 56 times (24.08 %)
- /θ/ sound at a frequency of 38 times (16.34 %)
- /v/ sound at a frequency of 25 times (10.75 %)
- /t/ sound at a frequency of 22 times (9.46 %)
- /∫/ sound at a frequency of 16 times (6.88 %)
- /d/ sound at a frequency of 15 times (6.45 %)
- /z/ sound at a frequency of 15 times (6.45 %)
- /t∫/ sound at a frequency of 12 times (5.16 %)
- /k/ sound at a frequency of 10 times (4.3 %)

Accordingly, the data from classroom audio recording showed a total number of 250 variations from intended sound from a total number of 210 words was recorded. The data from the

classroom audio recordings show that the highest occurrence of sound variation came from the sound /ð/ at 19.2 % followed by the sound /θ/ at 16 %. Third highest is the sound /ʃ/ at 14 % followed with /v/ at 12 %. Next is the /z/ sound at 10.4 % while the /t/ sound is at 7.2 %. This is followed by the /tʃ/ sound at 5.6 %. Variation from the /d/ sound came at 4 % whereas the /dʒ/, /k/ and /j/ sounds are at 2.4 %. The /ʒ/ sound on the other hand brought about 1.6 % in variation while /f/ and /s/ both at 0.8 %. The lowest sound variation came from the sounds /g/ and /ŋ/ at 0.4 %. These can be summed up as below:

- /ð/ sound at a frequency of 48 times (19.20 %)
- /θ/ sound at a frequency of 40 times (16.00 %)
- /ʃ/ sound at a frequency of 35 times (14.00 %)
- /v/ sound at a frequency of 30 times (12.00 %)
- /t/ sound at a frequency of 18 times (7.20 %)
- /z/ sound at a frequency of 26 times (6.50 %)
- /tʃ/ sound at a frequency of 14 times (5.60 %)

Combining the finding from the interviews and the classroom audio recordings, there are a total number of 484 consonant sound variations from the intended sound by the respondents. All this variations came about from a total of 405 words from all the respondents. However, some of the words occurred more than once as they are uttered by different respondents.

The most number of occurrence or the highest percentage came from the sound / ð / with 104 occurrences (21.52 %). This is followed by the sound / θ / with 78 occurrences (16.15 %), the sound / v / with 55 occurrences (11.40 %), the sound / ʃ / with 51 occurrences (10.56 %) and lastly from the sound / z / with 41 occurrences (8.5 %) as can be observed in figure 1 below.
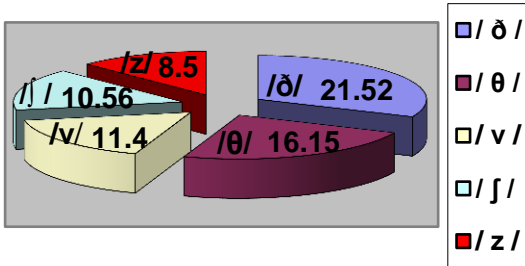

Figure 1. Five Highest Percentages of Consonant Sound Variations from Intended Sound

Substitution and Replacement Strategy Used by the Kadazan English Language Teachers

The Kadazan English language teachers used sounds that are available in their L1 consonant phoneme chart to substitute or replace the sounds that could not be articulated as a strategy to overcome their difficulty in the pronunciation of English. They would use other sounds that are available in their consonant sound inventory that are almost similar to the target

sounds. However, since the places of articulation of the actual sounds used are different from the target sound, variations from the intended sound are heard.

Discussion

The study showed that five consonantal sounds seem to be most difficulties in articulating by the respondents, followed by the strategies used by them to overcome their pronunciation difficulties. The five major consonantal sounds that the respondents from English language teachers of Kadazan ethnic background have problems in articulating from the intended sounds are:

- /ð/ the voiced interdental fricative sound
- /θ/ the voiceless interdental fricative sound
- /v/ the voiced labiodental fricative sound
- / ʃ / the voiceless palato-alveolar fricative sound
- /z/ the voiced alveolar fricative sound

The finding shows that apart from having difficulty in articulating the five above sounds, the sound category that all ten respondents were unable to articulate are from the *fricative* sounds category which all five sounds fall under. Although the Kadazandusun or the respondents L1 does contain the fricative sound component in their consonant chart, it is not as rich as the fricative sounds that exist in its English counterpart. For instance, the Kadazan language only has two sounds in its fricative component which are /s/ and /h/ (Miller, 1993). The English consonant chart on the other hand has nine sounds which are /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /ʃ /, as well as /ʒ/, plus the two that already exist in the Kadazandusun consonant chart. Although the consonant chart presented in the Kadazandusun − Malay − English Dictionary showed that there are four fricative sounds in the Kadazandusun language with the inclusion of the /v/ and /z/, the finding of the research proved that the chart provided by Miller (1993) is more accurate as all the ten respondents had difficulty in articulating the /v/ and /z/ sounds. It could therefore be said that their L1 consonant sound inventory (Kadazandusun language) does not contain such a wide variety of consonants as the English language.

In sum, the reason for the occurrence of variations from this five sounds is mainly because those sounds are of non − existence in the respondents L1 sound system.

This phenomenon was reported by Brown (1988) to exist in EMS English and can be classified under the *systemic* differences. It is definite here that the respondents' L1 lacks certain consonant sounds required by the standard pronunciation of the English language. Therefore, when or while speaking the target language or English, the respondents resorted to adapting certain sounds available in the Kadazandusun language to make up for the differences. In the next section, researchers will be discussing on the substitution and replacement strategy used by the teachers.

There are implications that can come about due to the pronunciation variations by the Kadazan English language teachers. For instance, as Brown (1988) mentioned, misspelling may result from it. These teachers pronunciation may be understood wrongly by their students when they narrate instructions or even when they utter certain words in a spelling test or quiz. As the Kadazan English language has most difficulty in articulation the /ð/, /θ/, /v/, /ʃ/ and /z/ sounds, words that contains these sounds may be heard and spelt wrongly by their students.

Some examples that researchers can illustrates are words such as *those, they, though, that, thank, thin, three, very* and *leave*. All these words can easily be understood and spelt by the students as *dose, day, dough, dead, tank, tin, tree, berry* and *leaf*. This will definitely affect the teaching and learning process, as well as the intelligibility level in the classroom.

This can be considered as hearing the minimal pairs of the words uttered by the teachers. This is due to the fact that most words in English have its own minimal pairs or different words that are close in the manner and place of articulation. These words can easily be misunderstood. When certain sounds in the words are wrongly articulated, the word can easily be heard as a different word as described earlier. Brown (1988) and Roach (1994) examples of the /ð/ with the /d/, and /θ/ with the /t/ confliction are similar to what was shown by the respondents. A clear comparison can be observed in table 1 and 2:

Table 1. The /ð/ and /d/ Confliction

/ð/	/d/
This	Disk
There	Dare
These	D's
They	Day
Those	Dose
Though	Dough
That	Dead

Table 2. The /θ/ and / t/ Confliction

/θ/	/t/
Thank	Tank
Thin	Tin
Thick	Tick
Thought	Tought
Theme	Team

In general, the pronunciation variations by the Kadazan English language teachers can bring about confusion and even lost of intelligibility on the part of the students and listeners. This may result in the speech of the Kadazan English language teachers being misunderstood or ambiguously interpreted (Brown, 1988) by listeners of a different ethnic background. Here, researchers would like to provide an anecdotal example from researchers' own experience when talking to a Kadazan English language teacher who was with his daughter in regard to the word 'six'. When researchers asked the age of his daughter, he replied convincingly, *"She's 'sick'"*. This surprised the researchers as that was not the question asked and the daughter can be seen running around in the shopping complex. So researchers replied back, "W*ow, she looks like she is very healthy"*, only to be replied by the teacher, *"Yes, she is"*. Researchers then replied by saying, *"but you said she's sick"*. Only then that the Kadazan English language teacher explained in a complete sentence, *"No, I said she is 'sick' years old"*. Only then did the researchers understood that he was saying that his daughter is *'six'* and not *'sick'* as the researchers had understood earlier although it was still pronounced as *'sick'*. Situations like this can be very awkward as well as embarrassing at times and that was one of the times.

The issue that researchers are trying to relate here is that the English language teachers can be considered as the most proficient people there is in English and also role models or standard bearer of the language. As role models, they will be used as reference and imitated by their students as well as the society in terms of pronunciation. Therefore, the pronunciation variation that the respondents used may or will eventually be mimicked by others and sooner or later, the use of standard English language pronunciation in Sabah will eventually decreased as more and more people will be influence by the Kadazan English language teachers pronunciation of English.

Conclusion

The importance of Standard English pronunciation is something that cannot be taken lightly. As teachers of the language, they must realize that they are regarded as role models for their students as well as society at large and must therefore present themselves as not only those who are proficient in reading and writing, but also as those who are able to speak using the standard English pronunciation.

The findings of this research proved that the L1 does have certain influence in the pronunciation of the English language. The consonantal features that are absent in the respondents' L1 seem to be substituted with other sounds that are almost similar to the target sound. Apart from that, the syllable type differences between the L1 and L2 are also an important factor that brought about pronunciation variation among the Kadazan English language teachers. Although the pronunciation variation is caused by the interference or negative transfer of their native language sound system, the Kadazan English language teachers should try to find ways to

overcome the problem so that their problematic pronunciation variation would not be passed on to the next generation.

The notion of nativization or the marking of identity mentioned by Tay (1978) and Tongue (1974) that suggest speakers deliberately choose to speak English with their L1 accent can be debunked. This is because the idea implies that speakers can speak English using standard English pronunciation but instead, consciously choose to use non – standard English pronunciation that is a reflection of their L1. However, the findings of the research shows that the respondents were unable to articulate certain sounds that are not in their L1 consonant inventory, and not that they purposely do so to maintain their cultural identity.

As teachers of the English language, they must try to find ways to overcome their pronunciation variation since there are implications that can come about from it. Some of the recommendations provided may be useful for the teachers involved or even the English teachers in general as pronunciation is something that almost all non – native English speakers has difficulty in a certain degree.

Lastly, further research should be carried out to:

1.   study the effect of allophonic variations on the articulation of English consonant and vowel phonemes at word level.
2.   examine the vowels variation used by the Kadazan English language teachers in their actual utterance as opposed to the intended utterance.
3.   look at the suprasegmental level English language pronunciation and do a contrastive analysis on the pitch, stress, intonation and rhythm of the standard English with the Kadazan English pronunciation.

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Appendix

a. The English Language Consonant Sounds System

The English language consonant phonemes inventory has altogether 24 consonant sounds as can be observed in the table 2.1.

Table 3. English Consonant Phonemes Chart (Source: Roach 1996)

		Bila-Bial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Manner of Articulation		*Place of Articulation*							
	Stops	p b			t d			k g	
	Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
	Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
	Nasal	M			n			ŋ	
	Lateral				l				
	Approximant	W				r	j		

Table 4. Consonant Sound Frequency of Occurrence (Source: Gimson, 1980:217)

/n/	7.58 %	/k/	3.09 %	/ŋ/	1.15 %
/t/	6.42 %	/w/	2.81 %	/g/	1.05 %
/d/	5.14 %	/z/	2.46 %	/ʃ/	0.96 %
/s/	4.81 %	/v/	2.00 %	/j/	0.88 %
/l/	3.66 %	/b/	1.97 %	/dʒ/	0.60 %
/ð/	3.56 %	/f/	1.79 %	/tʃ/	0.41 %
/r/	3.51 %	/p/	1.78 %	/θ/	0.37 %
/m/	5.22 %	/h/	1.46 %	/ʒ/	0.10 %

c. The Kadazandusun Consonant Sounds System

Table 5. Kadazandusun Consonant Sound Chart (Source: KadazanDusun – Malay – English dictionary)

	Labial	*Alveolar*	*Velar*	*Glottal*
Stops Voiceless	p	t	k	ʔ
Voiced (soft) implosive	b	d		
Voiced (soft) implosive	**b**	**d**	g	
Voiced (hard) non-implosive	m	n	ŋ	
Fricatives voiceless		s	h	
voiced	v	z		
Lateral		l		

Table 6. Kadazandusun Consonant Sound Chart 2 (Miller,1993) (Source: Sabah Museum Monograph 1993 vol. 4:2)

	Bilabial	*Alveolar*	*Velar*	*Glottal*
Voiceless (plosive)	P	t	k	ʔ
Voiced (plosive)	b	d	g	
Fricative		s		h
Nasal	m	n	ŋ	
Lateral		l		

Table 7. Kadazandusun Alphabets

a	B	D	g	i	j	k	l	m	n	ŋ
o	P	R	s	t	u	v	w	y	z	