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MIMIC VIDEO: A CINEMATIC METHOD FOR L2 PRONUNCIATION

Donald White, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Jason Chan, Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Peggy Mok, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Peggy Lie, FDBWA Szeto Ho Secondary School

Mimic Video is an experimental L2 teaching method that uses video production and imitation to teach English pronunciation. In early 2015, the course was delivered as a pilot program at a Hong Kong secondary school to L1 Cantonese-L2 English speakers. In the first lesson, students viewed the target video, a three-minute dramatic sequence of native English speakers holding a meeting. For their culminating task, students were required to film, edit, and act in their own sequence that imitated the shots, acting, and dialogue of the target video as closely as possible. The remaining lessons focused on the skills needed to accomplish this task. These included daily focused listening and a cycle of repetitions modeled on Pimsleur's Graduated Interval Recall. To gauge the efficacy of Mimic Video, students were recorded before and after the course. Spectrographic evidence suggests that after taking the course there were significant changes in students' articulation of dark /l/, that is, [ɬ]. Additionally, F0 analysis suggests that some students improved their ability to imitate intonation.

INTRODUCTION

Mimic Video (MV) was a six-week course delivered on Saturday mornings to 33 Form 4 (10th grade) students in Hong Kong early in 2015. The course utilized imitation as a method for teaching both L2 pronunciation and video production simultaneously. To this end, students learned the rudiments of shooting and editing video, and received explicit instruction and daily practice in imitating the accents of native English speakers. The objects of imitation were six native English speakers acting in the "target video," a three-minute drama depicting a mildly dysfunctional staff meeting at a school. This target video contained two aspects of pronunciation that are particularly difficult for Cantonese L1 speakers to grasp, one segmental, and one suprasegmental. The first was syllable-final [ɬ], as exemplified in the second syllable of the word "little". The second was narrow focus, or sentence stress, represented by the italicized word in the following sentence: "You can say *that* again." The participants were recorded before and after the course reading a passage and imitating spoken English sentences, and spectrographic comparisons were then carried out on the relevant utterances. This article will review video production in L2 learning; provide brief theoretical rationales for the MV method; compare the relevant phonologies; describe the methodology and results of the present study; and, finally, discuss the results and the course.

Video Production in L2 Learning

Very soon after the emergence of video technology, researchers understood that it had great pedagogical potential in L2 classrooms (Allan, 1985). Although video viewing quickly became commonplace in educational contexts, there were two reasons that video production was not adopted so readily at that time. First, most teachers did not possess the knowledge required to teach video production effectively, and second, early video technology was expensive, especially in the post-production phase (Dal, 2009).

In the past fifteen years, video technology has become more portable, cheaper, and much more sophisticated, especially in the post-production phase. Video can now be competently edited on the average laptop computer, in contrast to the prohibitively large and expensive machinery of the late 20th century. These advancements have led to an increased use of video in L2 classrooms around the world, and several recent studies have chronicled the effective use of video production in L2 instruction (e.g., Goulah, 2007; McNulty and Lazarevic, 2012).

The Phonological Loop and Graduated Interval Recall

The theoretical rationale for the MV imitation practice schedule combined a psycholinguistic hypothesis and an L2 teaching method. The hypothesis involves the "Phonological Loop," part of Baddeley and Hitch's (1974) model of working memory. The Phonological Loop comprises the phonological store, which allows short-term storage of phonological forms, and the articulatory control process, which is a mental rehearsal mechanism for speech. The Phonological Loop is thought to play an integral role in learning novel phonological forms of new words (Baddeley, Gathercole, & Papagno, 1998). New patterns are held ephemerally in the phonological store, while more permanent records are constructed in permanent memory.

The teaching method is Graduated Interval Recall (GIR), proposed by Pimsleur (1967) as a system for learning L2 vocabulary. GIR is based on a rather straightforward observation: the chance of remembering new information decreases with the passage of time. To strengthen memory, GIR prescribes repetition of new forms interspersed among exponentially increasing intervals. For example, a new L2 word might first be repeated by the learner 5 seconds after her first encounter with it, then 5^2, or 25 seconds later, 5^3 or 125 seconds later, and so on. In essence, this method attempts to preempt the fleeting nature of working memory, and hasten the storage of new words into the permanent lexicon.

Hong Kong English

Space limitations prevent the present paper from offering a full account of transfer effects from the phonology of Cantonese to English (Chan & Li, 2000). Just two of these effects are the focus of the data analyzed below. The first effect is suprasegmental, and derives from the status of Cantonese as tone language. Because every syllable in Cantonese receives a lexical tone, its intonation follows the patterns of other Chinese dialects, classically described as "small ripples riding on large waves" by Chao (1968: 39). These patterns are quite distinct from those of English, and seriously complicate the acquisition of English intonation by Cantonese L1

learners. The second effect is vocalization of [ɬ] (Deterding, Wong & Kirkpatrick, 2008), in which syllabic, or syllable-final /l/ is articulated as [əʊ] or [uː], illustrated in the following example of the English word "little": /lɪtl/ → [lɪtəʊ]. Presumably, Cantonese L1 speakers have difficulty with this segment because it is not part of the Cantonese phonological inventory.

Research Questions

The focus of the study was the speech of the MV students before and after taking the course. There were two research questions:

1. Is there acoustic evidence that students who did daily repetitions of [ɬ] modified their articulation of this segment after the MV course?
2. Does the F0 data of the subjects suggest improvement in the students' ability to imitate native-English intonation?

METHODS

Participants

The target video was written and produced by the first and fourth authors, who are teachers at the school where the course was delivered: FDBWA Szeto Ho Secondary School (SHSS) in Lam Tin, Hong Kong. A total of 33 students were then chosen from the school's fourth form (aged 15 to 16), who were divided into five production teams. Students received five weekly two-hour lessons, taught by the first and second authors. English was the medium of instruction (MOI) for the first two lessons, which introduced the target video, the objective of the course, and taught shooting techniques and vocabulary. During this time, the students decided upon the roles that they would play in their videos. They were also informed that the team who produced the best MV would receive a prize of $200 (HKD) each (around $30 USD).

The MOI for the following two lessons was Cantonese. In these lessons, students became familiar with the lines of the target video, and began the daily repetitions of their lines modeled on the GIR. The durations of the intervals in GIR quickly become outrageously long if too many repetitions are prescribed; therefore, in the interests of time, the nightly homework cycle followed by the students was capped at just five repetitions of a student's lines over the course of an hour. Students listened to recordings of their lines from the target video, then repeated them after five seconds, 25 seconds, two minutes, 10 minutes, and one hour. This repetition cycle was completed twice each night by the students. Additionally, to ensure that the students were actually completing these cycles, they were required to send a recording of a single repetition to their teachers. These recordings were usually made on the students' mobile phones, and were sent via text message.

Data Collection

Two types of data were recorded: a passage read by the students, and imitations of ten spoken sentences. These data were collected before the course began (T1), and again approximately eight weeks later, after the course had finished (T2). All recordings were taken on a Zoom H2 recorder, with digital sampling at 44.1 Hz. Students were given the passage two days before each recording was made, so that they could

familiarize themselves with it. The passage contained ten instances of [ɬ] (see Appendix 2).

The target sentences for imitation were recorded by two native speakers of Canadian English, one male (the first author), and one female (see Appendix 3). The male students imitated the male voice, and the female students the female voice. Students were asked to listen carefully to each sentence twice, and then attempt to imitate it as closely as possible. For each sentence, each student had only one opportunity to record his/her imitation, i.e. even if they were unsatisfied with the first attempt, they were not allowed to record the imitation a second time.

Data Analysis

For the passage reading, individual tokens were extracted in Phon (Rose et. al., 2006) and the [ɬ] portions of the tokens were segmented in Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2014). For various reasons, not all of the students successfully articulated the ten [ɬ] tokens. The final tallies were as follows: 8 students – 10 tokens; 2 students – 9 tokens; 5 students – 8 tokens. The F1 and F2 values of these segments were then measured at the 25% and 75% points of the total durations for each segment. These points were chosen in order to capture the formant dynamics of the segment while minimizing the influence of co-articulation from abutting segments. The mean values for the 25% and 75% were analyzed statistically using a paired-sample comparison of means.

The reason for examining formant dynamics is that these values can capture the tongue movements of [ɬ] compared to those of [əʊ]. Both [ɬ] and [əʊ] involve tongue movement from a central position to a position that is more back, which correlates with a decreasing F2 value. Lip rounding, a characteristic of [əʊ] but not [ɬ], results in an even lower F2. On the other hand, both [ɬ] and [əʊ] tend to involve the tongue raising as it moves back, which results in a lower F1 value. In general, this raising movement is greater in [əʊ] than in [ɬ]. Overall, then, the tongue movement is greater for [əʊ] than for [ɬ]. It was expected, therefore, that [əʊ] would contain greater differences between the 25% and 75% points than [ɬ], both for F1 and F2 values.

In order to test whether there was a correlation between the daily repetitions of [ɬ] and the changes to the students' articulation, the data from two groups of students were compared: the students whose characters had several instances of dark [ɬ] in their lines i.e., Mr. Martin and Mr. Roberts (see Appendix 1); henceforth "[ɬ] repeaters") with those who had none (i.e. Ms. Ambrose and Mr. Owens (see Appendix 1); henceforth "nonrepeaters"). The total number of students we intended to compare, therefore, was 20 (5 teams X 4 characters); however, the actual totals were eight [ɬ] repeaters, and seven non [ɬ] repeaters. There were two reasons for this discrepancy; four students failed to attend one of the recording sessions, and in one case there were problems with the recording that did not allow the data to be used.

For the sentence imitations, the Prosody Pro Praat Script (Xu, 2013) was used to measure F0 values at 10 time-normalized points between the beginning and end of each utterance. The recorded imitations were then analyzed as follows: the eight males who completed the fewest number of repetition recordings (1.625 submissions, SD 1.99) assignments were compared to the eight females who submitted the greatest number of repetition recordings (mean 12 submissions, SD 2.92). On the whole, the

female students were much more faithful completing the repetitions and submitting the recordings. Because the targets for imitation were gender specific, the comparison between the diligent students and the neglectful students (a natural, if somewhat ad hoc control group) was best carried out along gender lines.

It is important to stress that at the time of the PSLLT conference, there had been no statistical analysis carried out for the sentence imitations. The results below compare the F0 contours of one imitation by the male and female groups to their respective targets; however, none of the results are statistically significant. This will be addressed further in the discussion.

RESULTS

The first research question asked whether students who took the course modified their articulation of [ɬ] after the MV course. The results suggest that the answer to this question is affirmative. In the formant comparisons below, there are clear differences between the results of the [ɬ] repeaters and those of the nonrepeaters.

First, in the nonrepeaters group, the formant trajectories at T1 are largely as expected (Figure 1). In every case except for one (Alan) there is a decrease in both F1 and F2. The differences in F2 values are generally greater than the differences in F1 values. At T2, the trajectories are once again in the same decreasing direction for both formants, with the exceptions of Alan (once again), and Crystal, whose F1 value increases slightly. The main point is that for most of the students the differences in F1 and F2 remain large at both T1 and T2, suggesting that tongue movement was the same for these tokens both before and after the MV course.

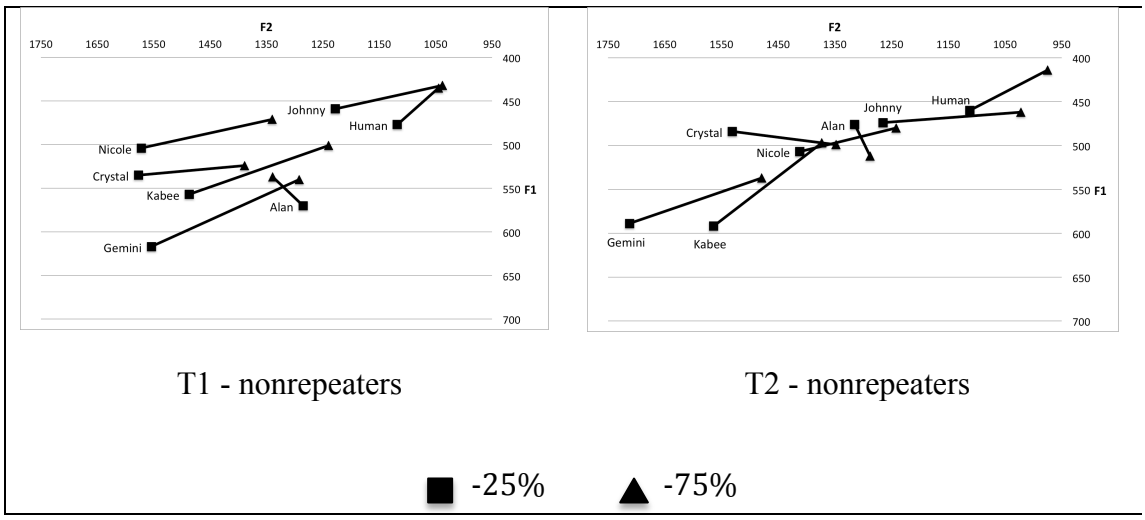

Figure 1. Formant trajectories for [ɬ] tokens in nonrepeaters.

The comparison of means supports these assertions. Tables 1 and 2 show the results from the paired comparisons of means for F1 at T1 and T2. In Table 1, which shows the T1 results, the F1 values at the 25% point are significantly higher than those at the 75% point in four out of seven students (significant p values in bold); and in Table 2, which shows the T2 results, the same four students had significant differences in their F1 values. Similarly, in Table 3, which shows the T1 results, the F2 values at the 25%

point are significantly higher than those at the 75% point in five out of seven students. At T2, there are also five students who have significant differences in F2 (Table 4).

Table 1

T1 Comparison of Means Results for F1 - nonrepeaters

Student	**25% Mean (S.D.)**	**75% Mean (S.D.)**	**(df) t**	**p**
Alan	569.57 (65.02)	537.3661 (66.87)	(7) 1.412	.201
Crystal	535.46 (88.66)	524.15 (55.86)	(9) 0.617	.553
Gemini	616.74 (50.63)	539.97 (46.71)	(9) 4.889	**.001**
Human	476.71 (50.29)	435.34 (20.4)	(7) 2.812	**.026**
Johnny	459.49 (54.77)	431.61 (16.42)	(7) 1.791	.116
Kabee	557.45 (37.77)	500.51 (34.78)	(7) 3.788	**.007**
Nicole	504.2 (83.08)	470.98 (43.84)	(9) 2.283	**.048**

Table 2

T2 Comparison of Means Results for F1 - nonrepeaters

Student	**25% Mean (S.D.)**	**75% Mean (S.D.)**	**(df) t**	**p**
Alan	511.91 (87.82)	475.87 (74.06)	(7) 1.066	.322
Crystal	483.95 (86.99)	498.81 (59.86)	(9) -1.051	.321
Gemini	589.36 (50.75)	536.55 (41.65)	(9) 3.474	**.007**
Human	460.01 (46.7)	413.69 (37.39)	(7) 3.255	**.014**
Johnny	473.94 (42.74)	462.01 (20.91)	(7) 1.103	.306
Kabee	592.42 (91.28)	497.45 (50.88)	(7) 4.42	**.003**
Nicole	507.26 (72.12)	479.55 (59.51)	(9) 2.54	**.032**

Table 3

T1 Comparison of Means Results for F2 - nonrepeaters

Student	25% Mean (S.D.)	75% Mean (S.D.)	(df) t	p
Alan	1284.81 (259.86)	1339.47 (189)	(7) -0.662	.529
Crystal	1576.61 (179.04)	1389.21 (347.07)	(9) 2.28	**.049**
Gemini	1553.66 (255.81)	1292.3 (97.03)	(9) 3.026	**.014**
Human	1117.86 (86.94)	1044.62 (109.97)	(7) 1.718	.13
Johnny	1227.69 (208.4)	1037.53 (151.22)	(7) 4.083	**.005**
Kabee	1487.43 (272.38)	1240.28 (269.25)	(7) 3.768	**.007**
Nicole	1571.91 (206.18)	1339.71 (305.93)	(9) 3.211	**.011**

Table 4

T2 Comparison of Means Results for F2 - nonrepeaters

Student	25% Mean (S.D.)	75% Mean (S.D.)	(df) t	p
Alan	1287.86 (344.25)	1315.12 (294.49)	(7) -0.53	.612
Crystal	1531.02 (261.19)	1347.55 (232.13)	(9) 2.388	**.041**
Gemini	1711.72 (225.05)	1479.15 (209.21)	(9) 2.753	**.022**
Human	1111.54 (73.65)	975.42 (112)	(7) 2.523	**.04**
Johnny	1264.83 (261.62)	1021.92 (134.35)	(8) 3.508	**.008**
Kabee	1563.65 (264.99)	1373.43 (267.13)	(7) 1.694	.134
Nicole	1412.43 (325.44)	1242.66 (261.11)	(9) 4.044	**.003**

In the [ɬ] repeaters, the direction of the formant trajectories is generally as expected (Figure 2). At T1, the F1 and F2 values decrease in every case except for one (the F2 value for Nick). At T2, all the formant trajectories are in the expected direction. Nevertheless, the decreases in F1 and especially F2 are greater at T1 than at T2. In addition, there is much more uniformity in the formant trajectories at T2 than at T1. In the cases of six male students, the values are clustered very closely together in the upper right-hand corner of the chart, and their trajectories are nearly identical in direction. (The reason that Hazel and Michael are outside of this cluster, presumably,

is that the pitch of their voices was higher than the others: Hazel is a female and Michael's voice was still pre-pubescent at the time of the course.)

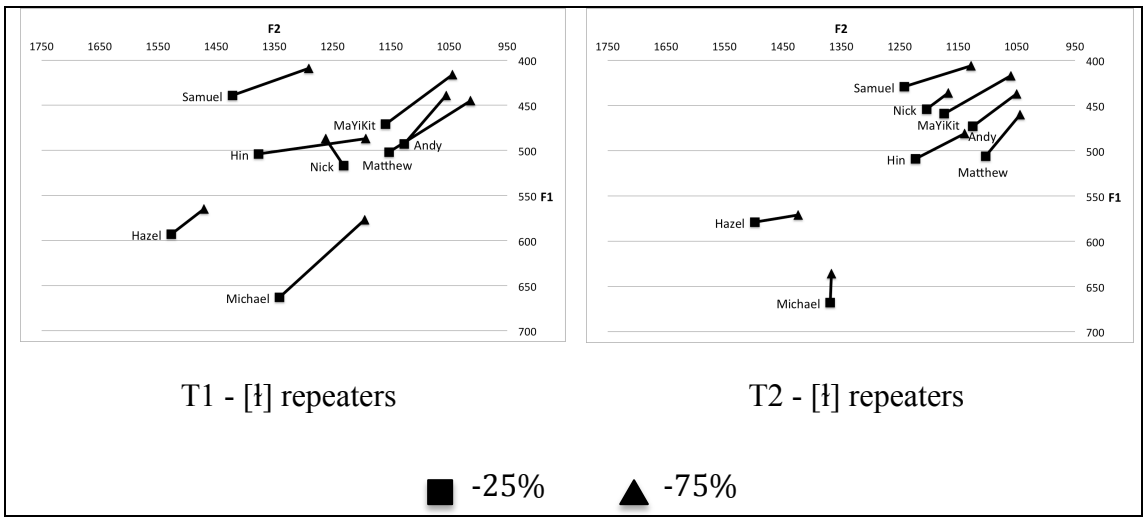

Figure 2. Formant trajectories for [ɬ] tokens in [ɬ] repeaters.

The paired-sample comparison of means for the [ɬ] repeaters further supports a distinction from the results of the nonrepeaters. In Table 5, which shows the T1 results, the F1 is significantly higher at the 25% point than at the 75% point in seven out of eight students; however, in Table 6, which shows the T2 results, just two students have significant differences between these points. Similarly, in Table 7, which shows the F2 results at T1, four out of eight students have significant differences between the 25% point and the 75% point; however, at T2, there is a significant difference in only one student out of eight.

Table 5

T1 Comparison of Means Results for F1 - [ɬ] repeaters

Student	25% Mean (S.D.)	75% Mean (S.D.)	t	p
Andy	492.94 (60.17)	438.83 (46.46)	(8) 4.641	**.002**
Hazel	593.01 (120.34)	565.01 (98.4)	(9) 2.716	**.024**
Hin	504.24 (26.79)	486.96 (19.34)	(7) 1.497	.178
Matthew	502.09 (38.93)	444.8 (29.94)	(9) 6.279	**< .001**
Ma Yi Kit	471.41 (55.23)	415.78 (36.14)	(9) 3.426	**0.008**
Michael	663.21 (64.86)	577.03 (74.22)	(8) 3.404	**0.009**
Nick	517.11 (72.66)	486.98 (64.59)	(9) 2.939	**0.017**
Samuel	438.92 (48.5)	408.64 (24.61)	(9) 2.55	**0.031**

Table 6

T2 Comparison of Means Results for F1 - [ɬ] repeaters

Student	25% Mean (S.D.)	75% Mean (S.D.)	t	p
Andy	473.14 (71.52)	437.41 (40.33)	(8) 1.719	.124
Hazel	579.28 (91.53)	571.47 (99.53)	(9) 1.009	.339
Hin	509.5 (29.8)	481.08 (37.02)	(8) 3.824	**.005**
Matthew	506.25 (52.53)	459.81 (48.01)	(9) 2.586	**.029**
Ma Yi Kit	458.87 (45.64)	416.69 (29.51)	(9) 2.167	.058
Michael	668.27 (57.48)	635.96 (89.79)	(8) 0.791	.452
Nick	453.98 (33.95)	435.77 (40.45)	(9) 1.687	.126
Samuel	429.14 (39.49)	405.94 (27.41)	(9) 2.01	.075

Table 7

T1 Comparison of Means Results for F2 - [ɬ] repeaters

Student	25% Mean (S.D.)	75% Mean (S.D.)	t	p
Andy	1126.97 (154.05)	1055.48 (146.13)	(8) 2.769	**.024**
Hazel	1527.36 (207.09)	1471.06 (140.56)	(9) 1.397	.196
Hin	1377.18 (335.35)	1192.79 (255.58)	(7) 2.237	.06
Matthew	1153.12 (169.69)	1012.8 (136.79)	(9) 3.279	**.01**
Ma Yi Kit	1159.38 (106.58)	1044.49 (99.55)	(9) 2.85	**.019**
Michael	1340.91 (156.25)	1194.86 (221.83)	(8) 2.51	**.036**
Nick	1231.73 (301.02)	1262.21 (235.09)	(9) -0.32	.756
Samuel	1421.9 (243.54)	1290.82 (228.05)	(9) 1.447	.182

Table 8

T2 Comparison of Means Results for F2 - [ɨ] repeaters

Student	25% Mean (S.D.)	75% Mean (S.D.)	t	p
Andy	1124.59 (212.61)	1050.46 (147.05)	(8) 1.800	.110
Hazel	1497.88 (179.05)	1423.95 (189.42)	(9) 1.072	.312
Hin	1223.23 (188.23)	1139.3 (204.9)	(8) 3.236	**.012**
Matthew	1102.85 (110.44)	1043.81 (109.65)	(9) 1.527	.161
Ma Yi Kit	1174.45 (200.37)	1060.24 (162.63)	(9) 1.503	.167
Michael	1368.86 (201.25)	1367.02 (172.43)	(8) 0.027	.979
Nick	1203.56 (213.56)	1167.24 (172.88)	(9) 0.867	.409
Samuel	1242.38 (269.23)	1127.76 (135.03)	(9) 1.79	.107

Because the F0 comparisons of imitations and targets were not analyzed statistically, we will include only one sample of the analysis for purposes of illustration. The figures below show the F0 contours for sentence 1, “I don’t know about you, but *I’m* hungry.” Figure 3 shows the T1 imitations for the 8 boys who were most neglectful in their daily imitation practice; Figure 4 shows their T2 imitations; Figure 5 shows the F0 contour of the imitation target. The target contains an early peak followed by falling intonation, and then a second, smaller peak that corresponds to the focused element, “I’m”. At T1 (Figure 3) the boys generally follow the falling pattern of the first part of the sentence, but none of them have the second peak. At T2, the pattern is generally the same: with the exception of one student, there is no F0 peak in the second part of the sentence.

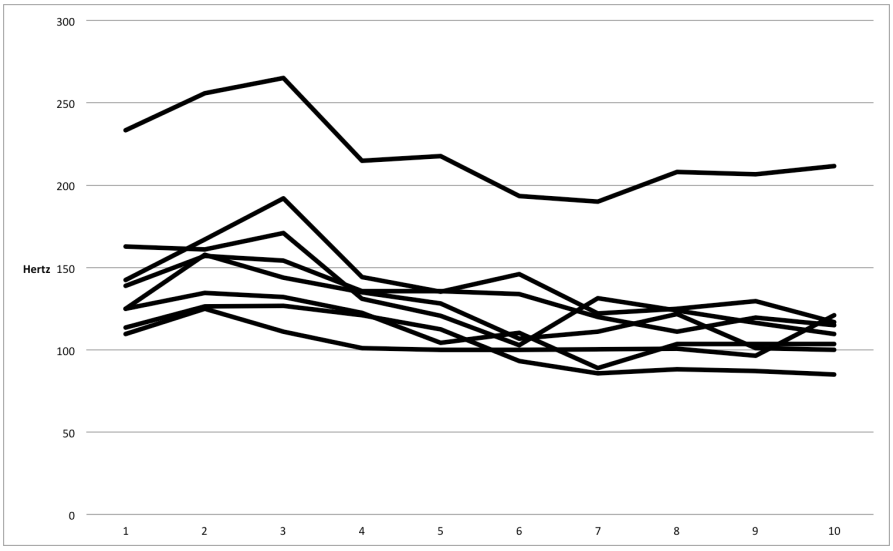

Figure 3. F0 contours for boys' imitations at T1.

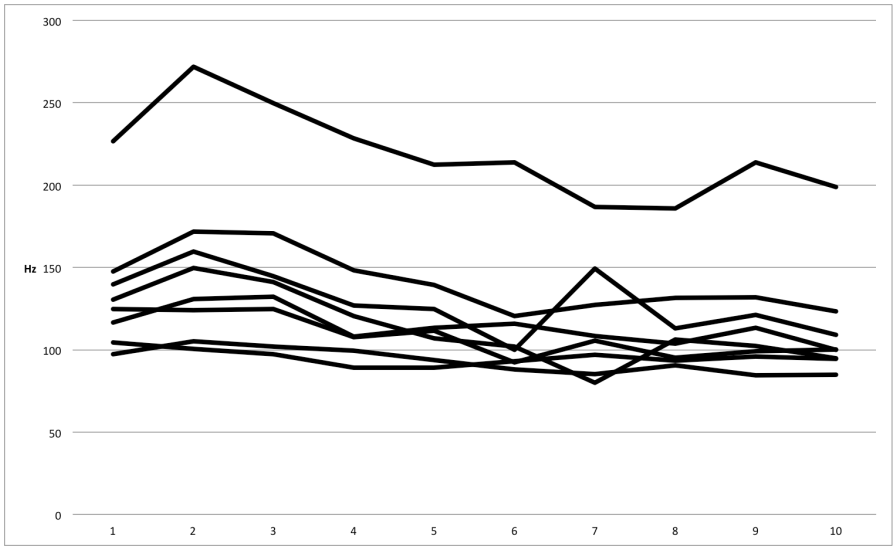

Figure 4. F0 contours for boys' imitations at T2.

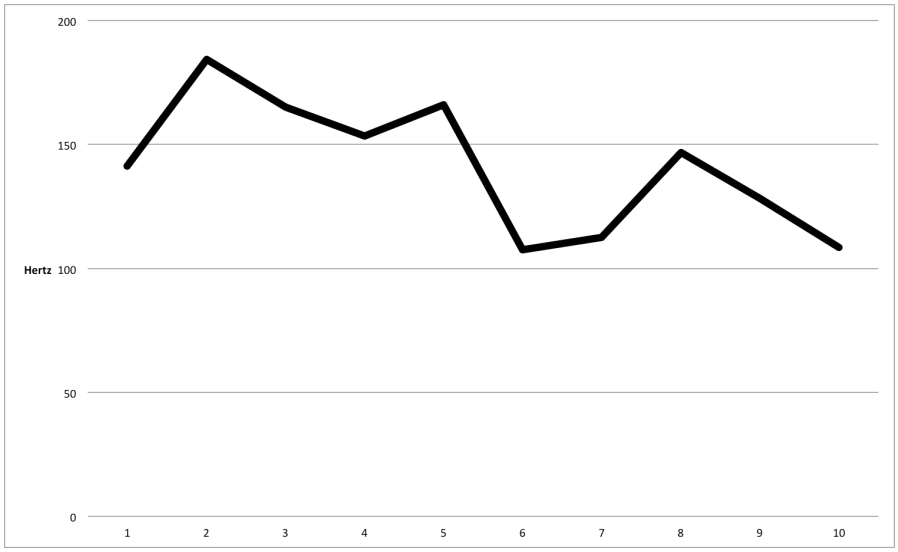

Figure 5. F0 contour for boys' imitation target.

Figures 6 and 7 show the F0 contours for the girls who were most diligent in completing their daily imitation routines. Figure 8 shows their target of imitation. Similar to the boys target, the girls target contains an early peak, followed by falling intonation, and then a smaller peak for the focus near the end of the sentence. At T1 (Figure 6), it is clear that the intonations of the girls were much more variable. Although in most cases the first half of their imitations contained falling intonation, the second half is all over the map. In contrast, the T2 patterns were much more uniform, following the early F0 peak and falling pattern, and a smaller peak in the second half of the sentence.

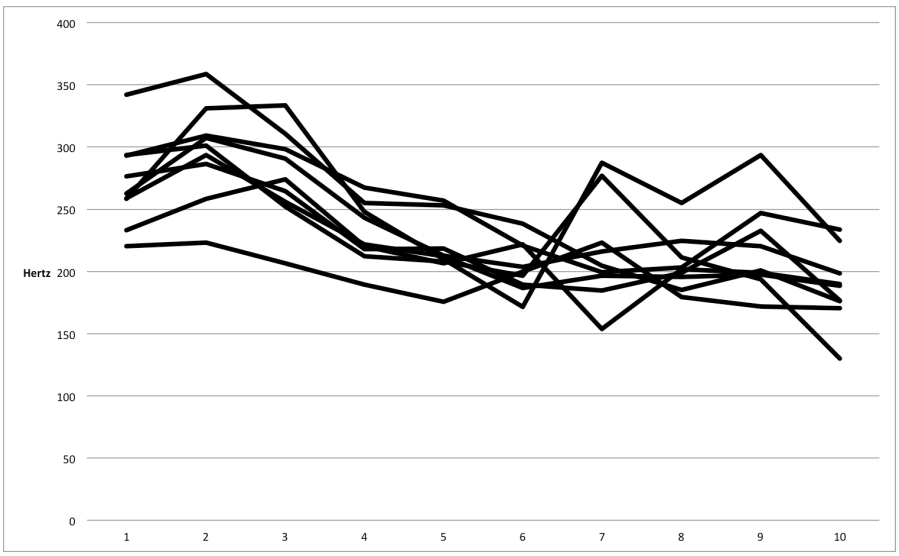

Figure 6. F0 contours for girls' imitations at T1.

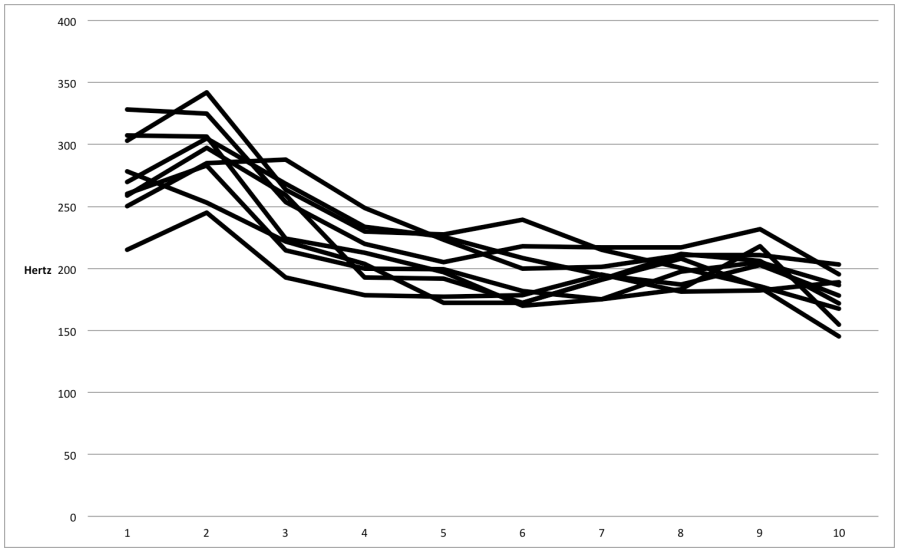

Figure 7. F0 contours for girls' imitations at T2.

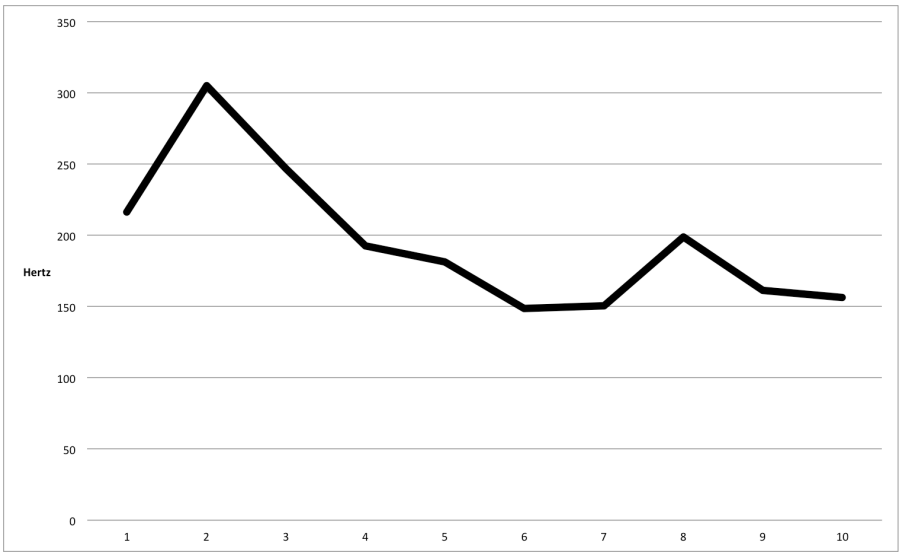

Figure 8. F0 contours for girls' imitations target.

To summarize, students who had [ɬ] in their daily repetitions seemed to significantly modify the formant trajectories of this segment after taking the MV course. Conversely, students who did not have [ɬ] in their daily repetitions displayed no modification. For the F0 imitation data, there is some evidence of improvement among the girls who practiced diligently, but there is no similar evidence among the boys.

DISCUSSION

Several encouraging results suggest that MV is a promising method for teaching L2 pronunciation. On the whole, it is evident that those students who practiced dark [ɬ] obtained a more uniform articulation of this segment with less tongue movement than those who did not. With respect to the overall success of MV, however, it is important

to point out this result is somewhat unsurprising. Any group of students subjected to a month-long regimen of daily imitation and repetition would be likely to modify their articulation to some extent. What sets MV apart from the monotony of garden-variety L2 repetition exercises is the scaffolding provided by the video production task.

This task has several advantages over other incarnations of task-based approaches in Hong Kong classrooms. While language-learning activities are often couched in task-based jargon and structures, the fact is that many of the "tasks" are entirely artificial. In essence, they are traditional classroom activities in disguise, and are task-based only in name. In contrast, MV requires that students complete a task that is real, unique, and interesting. Learning video production techniques allows students to master a skill that is generally not included in Hong Kong syllabuses. Furthermore, repetition, concomitant with most successful L2 learning, was disguised in a competition that the students found interesting. This interest was evident throughout the run of the course, but it was also documented in the survey forms that the students filled out upon its completion. In the survey, all of the participants stated that the course was an enjoyable experience, and all of the students stated that it had helped them to improve their English speaking and listening skills.

As a pilot program, the MV course was concerned with the efficacy of the course with respect to the pronunciation of the participants. Although it is not the focus of the present paper, the integration of this teaching method into a wider L2 curriculum has great potential for many other aspects of L2 learning. It is easy to envision how reading and writing activities could be developed as part of the creative process involved in MV. One possible drawback, however, is that many language teachers may be reluctant to work with technology in which they do not have extensive experience. While this reluctance would be understandable, it should also be stated that the software involved is user friendly and relatively uncomplicated. Additionally, because most teachers have been immersed in motion picture media from birth, they may be surprised to find that the techniques of video production are already somewhat familiar. In this way, knowledge from the hours of movies and television watched throughout their lives can be put to use as a valuable teaching method. In the same way, this latent knowledge can be drawn upon by L2 students as they learn new skills and improve their pronunciation in the process. The main limitation of the present study is that there was no statistical analysis for the imitation data. The authors hope to overcome this limitation some time in the coming months.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Donald White is the Native English Teacher at FDBWA Szeto Ho Secondary school. He received his B.A. in Journalism from Ryerson University, his B.Ed. from the University of Toronto, and an M.A. in Linguistics from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Currently, he is a doctoral candidate in Linguistics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His principal research interest is the effect that length of

residence has on L2 pronunciation. Contact: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sha tin, Hong Kong SAR, (852) 9248 9675, donaldtimothywhite@gmail.com

Mr Jason Chan is a Lecturer of English, Bilingual Studies and Communication at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University Hong Kong Community College. He received his B.A. in Contemporary English Studies from Lingnan University, and his M.A. in Linguistics from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His expertise and research interests lie in the areas of phonetics and phonology of Hong Kong English, trilingual studies, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. In the past, he has worked and published on several research projects: Cantonese-English code-switching and the Hong Kong English accent, consonantal phonology of Hong Kong English, and lexical stress in Hong Kong English. Contact: Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 9 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, (852) 3746 0310, scchan@hkcc-polyu.edu.hk

Peggy Mok is an Associate Professor at the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. She received her MPhil and PhD in Linguistics from the University of Cambridge. Her research interests include experimental phonetics, psycholinguistics and bilingualism. Speech acquisition in different contexts is an important theme in her research. Contact: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sha tin, Hong Kong SAR, (852) 3943 1768, peggymok@cuhk.edu.hk

Peggy Lie is a secondary school English teacher in Hong Kong. She received her first M.A. in Applied Linguistics at Chinese University of Hong Kong, and a second M.A. in English Studies from the University of Hong Kong. It is her vision for all students to appreciate literature, film, and video production when they study English as a second language. Contact: FDBWA Szeto Ho Secondary School, 7 Kai Tin Road, Lam Tin, Hong Kong SAR, (852) 2340 5916, lsw@szetoho.edu.hk

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APPENDIX 1

Script for Target Video

Cast:
Ms. Little - New Zealand – English Panel Chair

Mr. Martin – British - usually tries to promote harmony in the English panel, but also harbours an intense dislike toward certain aspects of North American English pronunciation.

Ms. Ambrose – North American – tends to speak her mind; finds Mr. Martin a bit strange.

Mr. Owens- North American – Friends with Ms. Simpson

Ms. Simpson – British – Friends with Mr. Owens; dislikes Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Roberts – North American - A teacher who is frequently late for meetings.

Five teachers are sitting in a classroom. They are sitting at a table composed of six desks that are normally meant for students. This makeshift table is located at the front and center of the classroom. One of the desks is empty, and the teachers are staring silently and expectantly at each other, with occasional glances at the empty desk. The time is 4:10. Finally, one of them speaks.

MS. LITTLE
So, shall we wait a little longer, or should I begin now?

(The other four teachers look at each other as though reluctant to speak. Ms. Little looks around for an answer and finally focuses on one teacher: Ms. Ambrose)

Ms. Ambrose?

MS. AMBROSE
He was in the computer room **about** 15 minutes ago. He couldn't have gone too far.

MS. LITTLE
Mr. Martin?

MR. MARTIN
I'm sure he'll be here any minute.

MS. SIMPSON
Any minute.

(*Mr. Owens, who is sitting **beside** Ms. Simpson snorts quietly and smiles at Ms. Simpson's comment, which attracts the attention of Ms. Little.)*

MS. LITTLE

Mr. Owens. What do *you* think?

MR. OWENS
What do *I* think? I think… that I should go find him.
I'll be back in two minutes.

(*He gets up to leave, but just as he arrives at the windowed classroom door, Mr. Roberts appears on the other side. Mr. Owens opens the door, smiling.)*

Welcome to the meeting!

MR. ROBERTS
Sorry I'm late

(*He walks past Mr.* ***Owens*** *and repeats his apology to the others.)*

Sorry that I'm a little bit late, everyone.

MR. MARTIN
That's alright.

MS. SIMPSON
Yes, no problem at all. I love sitting around waiting for meetings to start.

MR. ROBERTS
Give me a break.
Like you've never been late for a meeting.

MS. SIMPSON
Like *you're* not late for *every* meeting.

MS. AMBROSE
I don't think you need to be quite so nasty.

MS. SIMPSON
I don't care: he's late every time and I'm sick of it.

MR. OWENS
That makes two of us. Why can't you be on time, Mr. Roberts?

MR. ROBERTS
None of your business.

MS. LITTLE
But it *is my* business. You need to be more punctual.

MR. ROBERTS
I'm sorry Ms. Little.

MR. MARTIN
Little.

MR. ROBERTS
What?

MR. MARTIN
Little. Her name is Ms. Little, not Ms. Liddle.
I'm tired of people mispronouncing her name.

MS. AMBROSE
You mean you're tired of *Americans* mispronouncing it.

MS. SIMPSON
I know *I* am.

MS. LITTLE
Ms. Simpson, I think we've heard quite enough from you.

MR. ROBERTS
You can say *that* again.

MR. MARTIN
Please! This meeting would already be half finished if it weren't for you.

MS. LITTLE
Stop sniping at each other.

MR. MARTIN
Sorry Ms. Little.

MR. ROBERTS
Yes, Ms. Little. I apologize. I promise that it will never happen again.

MS. SIMPSON
I'm sorry too, Ms. Little.

There is a short moment of silence.

MR. OWENS
So… do we all know the proper pronunciation of the Panel Chair's name?

The other teachers snicker a bit, and even the combatants force a smile.

MS. AMBROSE
Perhaps we should get to the first order of business.

MS. LITTLE
Yes, let's begin.

APPENDIX 2

Reading Passage (dark /l/ tokens in bold)

Yesterday, something embarrassing happened to me in my English lesson. My teacher, Mr. Andrews, was talking about a speaking exam question. The question asked whether we thought a dog or a **turtle** would make a better pet for a Hong Kong student. I was a **little** bit tired, and, actually, I thought the question was quite silly. Think about it! Who would ever try to say that a **turtle** was better than a dog? Dogs are so much better.

Anyway, because I was a **little** bit tired, and because the question was silly, I accidentally fell asleep during the lesson. I don't know how long I was asleep, but I woke up suddenly to a loud knocking on my desk. I lifted my head quickly to find Mr. Andrews standing in front of me.

"Good morning!" His voice was very loud.

"Good morning," I said.

"Can you please give me one reason that a **turtle** is more convenient than a dog?"

I turned to look at my friend Steven, but Mr. Andrews knocked on my desk again.

"Don't look at *him*; look at *me*!"

"I'm sorry Mr. Andrews. I think a **turtle** is more convenient because it doesn't make any noise. Dogs are always barking, so they're a **little** more troublesome."

"Wow! You are such a hard-working student."

Mr. Andrews smiled, which made me **smile** too. Suddenly, his **smile** disappeared. "Don't you ever fall asleep in my lesson again! Understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

He walked to the front of the class, and I could feel the whole class staring at me as my face turned red. What a **terrible** day!

APPENDIX 3

Sentences for Imitation

1. I don't know about you, but *I'm* hungry.
2. What are you talking about?
3. Don't even ask.
4. Very funny.
5. Can I get you anything?
6. That was the *best* movie I've ever seen!
7. How are you doing?
8. Would you *please* stop that?
9. I *can't* believe you said that.
10. Thank you very much for your time.