THE ACQUISITION OF SOME AMERICAN ENGLISH DURATION PARAMETERS BY NONNATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

By

ANNA MARIE SCHMIDT

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1988
Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE ACQUISITION OF SOME AMERICAN ENGLISH DURATION PARAMETERS BY NONNATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

by

Anna Marie Schmidt

April, 1983

Chairman: Dr. Howard B. Rothman
Speech Department

This study investigated the claim that even superior bilinguals will never achieve authenticity in the phonetic specifications of their second language. Production of VOT for initial bilabial stop consonants, consonant closure duration for final alveolar stop consonants, vowel duration for /i, i/, and relative vowel duration before voiced and voiceless consonants were examined for American English speakers and for three groups of accented to superior bilinguals. The bilinguals included native speakers of Arabic, Korean, Spanish, and Thai.

The nonnative speakers were rated on strength of accent and the best speakers were compared statistically with the native English speakers. The superior speakers were not different from the English speakers on any of the measures except for vowel duration relative to consonant voicing. However, individual speakers seemed to vary widely within the superior group and were more similar to other speakers of their native language than to each other on most of the measures.

-vi-
Comparison of VOT categories indicated that superior bilinguals from all languages were re-labeling categories to achieve authenticity in English. The superior speakers had also acquired a variety of timing options for final consonant closure.