Valley International Journals
Open Access Journal

The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention
Volume 3 issue 9 2016 page no. 2680-2691 ISSN: 2349-2031
Available Online At: http://valleyinternational.net/index.php/our-jou/theijsshi

The Influence Of Age On Lexical Acquisition In Olutachoni As A First Language

Dr. Lucy K.L Mandillah[1] ,Dr. Daniel Orwenjo[2] ,Dr. Maina Njiri[3]

[1]Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology,P.O. Box, 190-50100,Kakamega-Kenya.
Research interests: African languages, language and gender, Sociolinguistics and semantics.

[2]The Technical University of Kenya, P.O. Box,52428-00200Nairobi-Kenya.
Research interests: First language acquisition of African languages, language use in politics, language endangerement and documentation, Sociolinguistics.

[3]Kenyatta University, P.O. Box, 43844-00100, Nairobi-Kenya.
Research interests:Acquisition of first language, acquisition of second languages, Grammar in English.

Field of Study: Linguistics

ABSTRACT: The issue of age and language acquisition has preoccupied scholars since time immemorial. The present study seeks to shed light on the issue of first language acquisition and lexical borrowing among the 2-7 year old children acquiring Olutachoni. The study investigates and establishes the correlation between the age of the children and the degree of lexical borrowing. The study identifies lexical importation and lexical invention as the main strategies of lexical borrowing that the children employ during language acquisition. Data is collected from children in mixed and single language family set ups. The study adopts the ethnographic approach to collect and record utterances. A contrastive and comparative analysis of the cases of lexical borrowing in relation to age is done. The results are presented through frequency tables and diagrams followed with explanations. The findings reveal that the age of the children has an influence on the production of lexical borrowing during LI acquisition.

Keywords: Age, First language, Lexical borrowing, lexical importation, lexical invention.

1.0 Introduction

Language acquisition is the process by which humans get the capacity to perceive, produce and use words to understand and communicate (Crawford 1995). This process entails mastery of the full range of grammatical and communicative competence and is influenced by both biology and socialization (Saunders 2000). Age has been considered as an important factor in the whole acquisition process by researchers in child language acquisition. Such researches include that of Cenoz (2009); Paradis (2004); Makeni (2007); Nyamasyo (1985); Pinker (1994) and Orwenjo (2009). Lenneberg (1967) argues that the ability and propensity to acquire linguistic structures is inherently biologically linked to the age of the child. The aim of the above studies on age and child language acquisition was to test Lenneberg's claim about the influence between the age of a child and the language acquisition process. For example, Nyamasyo (1985) studied the syntactic structure in the grammar of a four year old child. Her subject had a multilingual background (Luo, Kikamba, English and Kiswahili). Nyamasyo tested the assumption that by the age of five children had mastered the syntax of their L1, an assumption which was found to be true.

Similarly, Orwenjo's study reveals that there is a strong positive correlation between the age of the

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

child and the production of lexical innovations. The trends for deverbal nouns for example, indicate a steady rise in the rate of innovations such that the 3 and 4 year olds, declining for the five year olds and again shooting up for the 6 year olds. This paper explores the effect of the age of a child in relation to the production of lexical borrowing during first language acquisition. Lexical borrowing is discussed in relation to lexical importation and lexical invention as the main strategies employed by children during the acquisition process.

Age in reference to language acquisition can be viewed from two points of view: age of acquisition and age at acquisition. "Age of acquisition" refers to a period beyond which effects of increasing age are not manifested in the acquisition profile. "Age at acquisition" on the other hand, is used to refer to the age at which a child or a group of children acquire specific linguistic units and structures. In the current paper, reference to age does not include any of these two notions because what is being investigated is the process of lexical importation and lexical invention; the strategies employed by children to acquire language. Therefore, the term "age" in the current study is used to mean the age at which the child employs the strategies of lexical importation and lexical invention during the acquisition of *Olutachoni* as a first language.

Most studies consider lexical importation and lexical inventions as communication strategies that decrease in their use as learners become more proficient in the L2 (Navés 2005; Poulisse and Bongaerts 1994; Ringbom 2001). For example, in the analysis of borrowings and lexical inventions produced by learners from grade 5 to grade 12, Navés (2005) shows that learners at higher grades use fewer borrowings and lexical inventions, though the differences are only statistically significant in the case of borrowings. Navés, Celaya and Torras (2004) also found that borrowings decreased over time (from 200 hours of instruction to 726 hours) in different groups of regular learners in each study, but that lexical inventions increased.

1.1 Theoretical Issues

The study is guided by the unitary language system hypothesis (Paradis 2004). The hypothesis postulates that a child exposed to more than two languages is apparently unable to separate his or her two languages in linguistic situations. This is based on a long and intensive debate in the literature on the simultaneous acquisition of two languages concerning whether the mind of the young bilingual child contains one language system or two different language systems (Genesee 1989; De Houwer 1990). The above hypothesis helps to explain cases of lexical borrowing as a result of the child's failure to differentiate between the two or more input languages. This can be interpreted to reflect a belief that children's brains are essentially monolingual and therefore they treat early input in two languages as if it were a single underlying language system to a gradual separation of the two linguistic systems as the children advance in age (Genesee, Nicoladis and Paradis 1995).

According to the current study, lexical borrowing is a highly functional communication skill that is socially learned and conditioned. The hypothesis explains cases of lexical borrowing as a result of failure to differentiate between the two or more input languages which is a sign of language learning. The initial state of the developing bilingual child is essentially monolingual. In the context of this hypothesis, the presence and use of lexical borrowing among the children is explained in terms of the child being able to differentiate between the two input languages as he/she advances in age. With regard to the 'one-system-or-two' debate, the advantage to the current study is that it provides the study with a theoretical framework in which the bilingual and monolingual language faculties are defined in the same terms. According to Mac Swan (2000), the grammatical processes

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

and operations in both bilingual and monolingual speech must be accounted for in the same terms.

1.2 Methodology

The study was conducted in Ndivisi Division of Bungoma East Sub-County within Bungoma County. This area was suitable for the study because the dominant language for the inhabitants is *Olutachoni*. The sample population comprised of twelve children aged between 2-7 years, all living Ndivisi Division at the time of data collection. All the 12 subjects were acquiring *Olutachoni* as their first language. At each age, two children were chosen. One was from a mixed language family set-up and the other was from a single language family set-up. Although *Olutachoni* is the language of the entire community, the study did not rule out the existence of other languages like English and Kiswahili. This was because, Kiswahili being both a national and official language, and English the official language, there is a high chance of the children getting exposed to these other languages either at home through their parents or at school through peers, teachers and the media. The age bracket of 2 to 7 years was suitable for the study because the critical period for language acquisition is normally the ages between 2 years and puberty (Brandenburg, 1979).

The children were identified through the social network approach from twelve homes. The researcher ensured that all the children selected for the study had more or less similar characteristics in terms of their home background and sibling position. The home background was determined by the parents' level of education, occupation and income. The respondents whose parents had a low level of education (standard eight and below), had unstable employment or not employed at all with a relatively low income status were purposively sampled. This was based on the findings by Chambers (1995) that the degree of education, income and career of speakers bring about variations in terms of language use. The children were divided into two cohorts composed of 6 children differentiated in terms of age and the language family set up. This information is presented in the table 1.0 below:

Table.1:0 Age, Mother's Native Language and Number of Recordings

	Age (Years and Month)	Language family set up	Number of Recordings
S1	02 Yrs 5 months	Mixed	02
S2	02 Yrs, 8 months	Single	02
S3	3 Yrs, 8 months	Mixed	02
S4	3 Yrs, 7 months	Single	02
S5	4 Yrs, 3 months	Mixed	02
S6	4 Yrs, 4months	Single	02
S7	5 Yrs, 8 months	Mixed	02
S8	5 Yrs, 6 months	Single	02
S9	6 Yrs, 0 months	Mixed	02
S10	6 Yrs, 4 months	Single	02
S11	7 Yrs, 4 months	Mixed	02
S12	7 Yrs, 5 months	Single	02

From table 1.0, subjects 1(S1) to Subject 12 (S12) are acquiring *Olutachon*i as their first language (their father's native language). Subjects 2 (S2), 4 (S4), 6 (S6), 8 (S 8), 10 (S10) and 12 (S12) have had natural exposure to *Olutachoni* from their fathers, mothers, school and the rest of the linguistic environment. Thus, *Olutachoni* is equally the native language of their mothers. On the contrary, subjects 1 (S1), 3 (S3), 5 (S5), 7 (S7), 9 (S9) and

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

11 (S 11) have been exposed to *Olutachoni* (father's native language) and the language of the environment and *Olubukusu* (mother's native language). It was established that those who are school going are exposed mostly to *Olutachoni* in class and playground. They received formal instruction in *Olutachoni* as per the Kenya's language policy (The Constitution of Kenya 2010).

The process of data collection involved observing, listening, audio-recording and taking notes as the children named the objects and the body parts they had been presented to in their naturalistic environments. The approach suited the present study due to its flexibility and responsiveness to the unexpected situations that could emerge in the course of data collection. The audio-taped data that formed the basis for analysis consisted of 10-15 minutes of speech recorded in the children's homes every three days over a period of two months. By the end of two months, the researcher had recorded at least two sessions for each child. A total of 50 utterances per child were sampled for analysis giving a total of 600 utterances to be analyzed for cases of lexical borrowing. For the cases of school going subjects (pre-primary), all recordings were done at home. The study relied heavily on the questioning technique of elicitation. Pinker (1994) says that children aged 2-6 years are able to produce and respond effectively to questions from adults and peers.

The objects, people and the parts of the body to be named were nouns from five semantic fields: domestic animals (dog, cow, hen, goat, sheep, cock, fish, cat, chick and calf), household appliances and utensils (cooking stick, water pot, cup, spoon, sufuria, knife, plate, chair, door and house), people and body parts (grandmother, mouth, hands, hair, tongue, stomach, ears, head, nose and chest), foodstuff (maize, flour, bananas, potatoes, beans, water, egg, vegetables, millet and milk), Environment and clothing (walking stick, bird dress, shoes, rope, snake, short-trouser, bicycle, tree and basket). A total corpus of about 600 words was gathered from the 12 children from the five semantic fields. O' Grady (2001) reports that noun-like words make up the single largest class in the child's early vocabulary, with verb-and adjective-like words being the next most frequent category types. Furthermore, Children seem to focus most on words within their linguistic environment in the early stages of language acquisition.

The study employed a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative data presentation and analysis. The qualitative analysis involved the identification and description of instances of lexical borrowing in both the single and the mixed language family set ups. The data was transcribed, translated into English and categorized into cases of lexical importation and lexical invention. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the age of the children and the degree of lexical borrowing. The findings were presented in the form of frequency tables, percentages and figures followed with a brief explanation.

1.3 Age and Lexical Importation

This section explores how the age of the child affects the production of lexical importation. Lanstyák's (2006) defines lexical importation as the direct transference of meaning and form of a lexeme from the donor to the recipient language. Cenoz (2009) on the other hand defines lexical importation as the transfer of a word from a donor language to a recipient language as a result of contact between the speakers of the two languages. According to Cenoz, this is one of the most common types of interaction between languages. According to this study, lexical importation means the speakers' introducing source-language (SL) lexical items when using the target language (TL).The results of the effect of the age of the child and the production of lexical importation are presented in table 1.1 bel

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

Table 1.2: The Effect of Age on Lexical Importation

Subject	Age	Cases of Lexical importation in mixed language (N)	%	Cases of Lexical importation in single language (N)	%
S1	2,5	27	23.7	0	0
S2	2,8	0		0	0
S3	3,7	23	20.2	0	0
S4	3,8	0	0	0	0
S5	4,3	18	15.8	0	0
S6	4,4	0		1	6.7
S7	5,6	17	14.9	0	0
S8	5,8	0		2	13.3
S9	6,0	16	14.0	0	0
S10	6,4	0	0	3	20
S11	7,4	13	11.4	0	0
S12	7,5	0	0	9	60
Total		**114**	**100**	**15**	**100**

For clarity purpose, the results in table 1.1 are also graphically presented in figure 1.0 below:

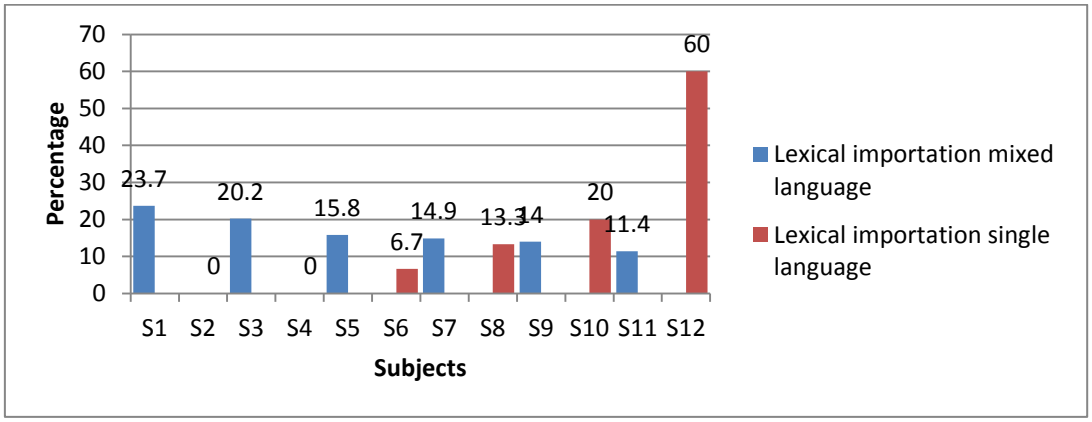

Figure 1.0: The Effect of Age on Lexical Importation

From table 1.1 and figure 1.0, the trend for the degree of lexical importation reduces between the ages of two and seven years in a mixed-language family set up. S1 who is aged 2,5 years produces 27 (23.7%) lexical importations, S3 aged 3,7 produces 23 (20.2), S5 aged 4,3 produces 18 (15.8%), S7 aged 5,6 produces 17 (14.9%), S9 aged 6,0 produces 16(14.0%) and S11 aged 7,4 produces 13 (11.4%) lexical importations respectively. The trend indicates a steady reduction in the rate of lexical importation with the rise in the age of the children. This trend can be explained within the framework of the unitary language system hypothesis by Paradis (1995) which hypothesizes that those children acquiring more than one language at the same time pass from undifferentiated language system to a gradual separation of two linguistic systems which is shown through an increasing competence in the target languages as the children advance in age.

This means that, as the children advance in age, their brain mechanism allow them to construct two separate language systems for each language and therefore reduce the cases of lexical importation. Halgunseth (2009) also observes that when the children reach the age of 6 years in simultane-

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

ous language acquisition, they are able to distinguish between the two languages and at this point, they begin to favour one language over the other. These results are in agreement with Celaya and Torras (2001); Williams and Hammarberg (1998) and Genesee (2006) among others. Genesee (2006), for example, argues in her study that bilingual first language learners from mixed-language families go through an initial monolingual stage where the two languages are not differentiated as observed through cases of lexical borrowing, but eventually the cases reduce as the learner becomes more proficient in the target language. Celaya and Torras (2001); Williams and Hammarberg (1998) find out that lexical borrowings is a characteristic of learners at early stages of acquisition, and that lexical borrowing tend to decrease among learners with higher levels of language competence, an observation that is also revealed in the current study.

On the contrary, in the single language family set up, the study has found out that the degree of lexical importation continues to increase between the ages of four and seven years. From table 1.1 and figure 1.0 above, S2 and S4 aged 2, 8 and 3, 8 years respectively do not produce any forms of lexical importation. On the contrary, S6 aged 4, 4 produces 1 (6.7) case, S8 aged 5, 8 produces 2 (13.3%), S10 aged 6, 4 produces 3 (20%), and S12 aged 7, 5 produces the bulk of lexical importation of 9 (60.0%) cases. The trend among the four subjects indicates a steady rise in the rate of lexical importation with the increase in the age of the children. The trend is the same for the first two age groups, then becomes almost constant for the ages of 4,4 ; 5,8 and 6,4 then it shoots up for age 7,5.

This trend can be explained in terms of the kind of input the children from the single language family set up are exposed to. Most of their input is from Kiswahili apart from *Olutachoni,* which is the target language. English and Kiswahili are state-recognized official languages in Kenya. The Constitution of Kenya (2010). Due to this recognition, Kiswahili is acquired as a second language among a majority of Kenyans. Based on this, a majority of Kenyans, even in the rural areas, speak Kiswahili as a national language which implies that as the children advance in age, they borrow lexical items from the most available language, in this case, Kiswahili, perhaps for social identity.

Further analysis on age and lexical importation involves testing the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the age of the child and the production of lexical importation. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient analysis which is a statistical tool for testing the correlation between two variables that have been ranked was carried out to establish the relationship and to test if the relationship was significant. The results are presented in table 1.2 below:

Table 1.2: Correlation Between Age and Lexical Importation

		Age of the respondents	Lexical Importation
Age of the respondents	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient	1	-.744
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022*
	N	12	9
Lexical Importation	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient	-.744	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022*	
	N	9	9

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

The results reveal that there is a strong negative (-.774) correlation between the age of the children and the rate of lexical importation. The relationship was found to be significant at 0.05 significance level. The negative correlation (-.774) implies that the rate of lexical importation decreases with an increase in the age of the children. The significance of 0.05 indicates that there exists a significant correlation between age increase and decrease in lexical importation. Therefore, the study hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the age of the child and the rate of the production of lexical importation is proved.

In a related study conducted by Orwenjo (2009), it was found out that children resort to lexical innovations as a "stop-gap" measure to cope with lexical gaps that are hindrances to smooth communication. The current study adopts the same interpretation for cases of lexical importation among the children. Lexical importation is a measure that the child uses to cope with lexical gaps that are hindrances to smooth communication. This implies that as soon as such lexical gaps are filled up with the target language lexical entries in the mental lexicon, then cases of lexical importation reduces or simply disappears from the child's mental lexicon. This scenario explains why there is a decline in the amounts of lexical importation across the age profile. The theoretical predictions of the unitary language system hypothesis by Paradis (1995) are in agreement with the above observation. It is assumed that young learners are unable to distinguish between the two languages and thus they mix their languages because they lack vocabulary in one or both languages to express themselves entirely in each language. The younger children resort to lexical importation as a strategy to use to fill the lexical gap when faced with a situation that requires him/her to talk about concepts which she/he does not have the right words from the target language.

According to Tomasello (2003) such children derive input primarily from adult utterances within their linguistic environment, and that based on such input, the children formulate hypotheses about how the target language operates and uses further input to test and accept or reject the hypotheses. Nonetheless, it is the linguistic environment which stimulates these processes and provides the material on which they operate. These results are in agreement with those of Nyamasyo (1985). Nyamasyo (1985) studied the syntactic structure in the grammar of a four year old child. Her subject had a multilingual background (Luo, Kikamba, English and Kiswahili). She tested the assumption that there was a relationship between the age of the child and the acquisition of syntax. She found out that by the age of five children had mastered the syntax of their L1 which was found to be true that there was a relationship between the two variables.

The results of the present study with regard to the relationship between the age of the child and the rate of lexical importation are also in agreement with the results of Navés (2005). Navés analyzed lexical importation produced by learners from grade 5 to grade 12. Results showed that learners at higher grades use fewer borrowings and lexical inventions, with statistically significant differences between the variables under study. According to the study, this suggested that school grade had an influence on transfer as far as the use of borrowing was concerned.

1.4 Age and Lexical Invention

Lexical invention according to Muysken (1997), Dewaele (1998), Fuller, (1999) and Ringbom, (2001) involves hybrid blends formed between the source language and the target language free and bound morphemes. Lexical invention is considered in this study as words which are morpho-phonologically adapted to the target language but which do not exist in either of the languages. Although there are many different types of lexical invention (Dawaele 1998), the most frequent ones that draw from source language are those that involve the formation of hybrid lexical items that

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

consist of morphemes from the source language and the target language that do not exist in either of the languages (De Angelis and Selinker 2001) This section presents data on the effect of the age of the children and the production of lexical invention in both the mixed and single language family set ups. The findings are presented in table 1.3 and figure 1.1 below:

Table 1.3: The Effect of Age on Lexical Invention.

Subject	Age	Lexical invention in the mixed language (N)	%	Lexical invention in the single language (N)	%
S1	2,5	18	19.1	0	0
S2	2,8	0	0	10	20.4
S3	3,7	18	19.1	0	0
S4	3,8	0	0	10	20.4
S5	4,3	17	18.0	0	0
S6	4,4	0	0	9	18.4
S7	5,6	15	16.0	0	0
S8	5,8	0	0	8	16.3
S9	6,0	14	14.9	0	0
S10	6,4	0	0	7	14.3
S11	7,4	12	12.8	0	0
S12	7,5	0	0	5	10.2
Total		**94**	**100**	**49**	**100**

The results in table 1.3 above are also graphically presented in figure 1.1 below for clarity:

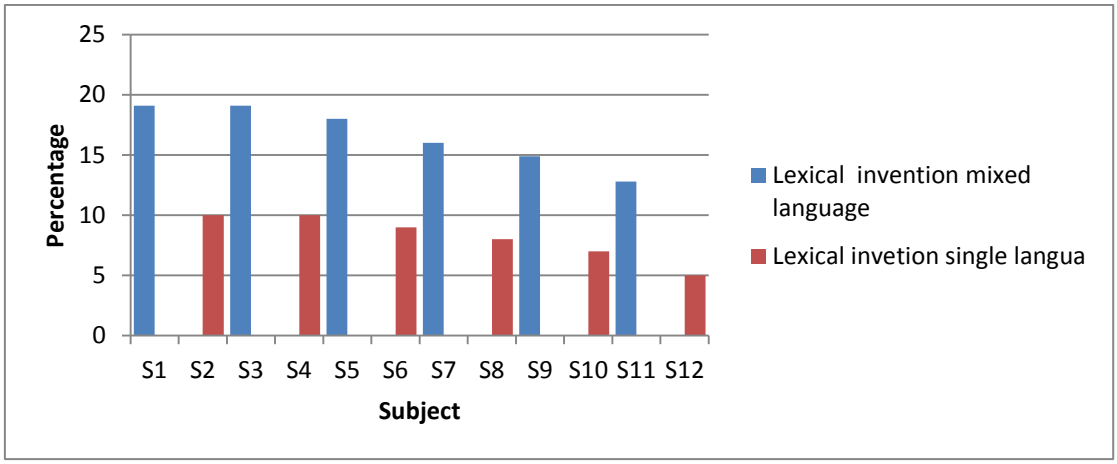

Figure 1.1: The Effect of Age on Lexical Invention.

The trend from the above graph indicates that the degree of lexical invention continues to reduce between the ages of two and seven years in both mixed and single language family set ups. In the mixed language family set up for example, S1 and S3 aged 2,5 and 3,7 respectively both produce 18 (19.1%) lexical inventions, S5 aged 4,3 produces 17 (18.0%), S7 aged 5,6 produces 15 (16.0%), S9 aged 6,0 produces 14(14.9%) and S11 aged 7,4 produces the least 12 (12.8%) cases of lexical invention. From the single language family set up, the data show that S2 and S4 who are aged 2,8 and 3,8 years respectively produce the same number of lexical invention, thus 10 (20.4). On the other hand, S6 aged 4, 4 produces 9 (18.4) cases, S8 aged 5, 8 produces 8 (16.3%), S10 aged

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

6, 4 produces 7 (14.3%), and S12 aged 7, 5 produce the least of lexical invention of 5 (10.2%). The trend indicates a decrease in the rate of the use of lexical invention with the rise in the age of the children. This suggests that age has an influence on the production of lexical invention as far as LI is concerned.

As mentioned in the previous sections, the high mixing rates during the earliest stages of language development is evidence of the child's general inability to differentiate between the two languages, and the progressive decrease in language mixing is evidence for the child's ability to control the languages separately as the linguistic competence increases. This observation could also mean that, as the age increases, the children come closer to adult forms by the amount of lexical invention gradually declining as the children grow up and ultimately disappearing on full acquisition. The above data confirms previous studies conducted by Dewaele (1998) and Naves (2005) where instances of lexical inventions decreased as proficiency in the language increased. Dewaele (1998) investigated the phenomenon of cross linguistic influence in the context of non target-like lexemes ('lexical inventions'). The study was conducted among the advanced oral French interlanguage of 39 Dutch LI speakers, 32 of whom had French as an L2 and English as an L3. The lexemes which were analyzed in the oral French interlanguage (IL) were morpho-phonologically adapted to the target language (TL) but were never used by native speakers. The use of the non-target lexemes reduced as the learners advanced in age.

The findings are in agreement with some African studies on language acquisition like the studies by Orwenjo (2009) and Makeni (2007). Makeni (2007), for example, reports that the age of the child affects the acquisition of concordial morphemes among the children acquiring *Lukhayo* as their L1. According to his study, the production of concordial morphemes in L1 acquisition reduces as the children advance in age due to their advanced competence in *Lukhayo*. Similarly, Orwenjo's study reveals that there is a strong positive correlation between the age of the child and the production of lexical innovations. The trends for deverbal nouns for example, indicate a steady rise in the rate of innovations. The significance of the relationship between the age of the child and the production of lexical invention is also conducted by use of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient analysis. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, a statistical test that is used to establish the correlations between two variables that have been ranked. The results are presented in table 1.4 below:

Table 1.4: Correlations Between Age and Lexical Invention

		Age of the respondents	Lexical Invention
Age of the respondents	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient	1	-.233
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.466
	N	12	12
Lexical Invention	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient	-.233	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.466	
	N	12	12

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

The negative correlation -.233 indicates a weak negative or opposing relationship that exists between the age of the respondents and the production of lexical invention. According to Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient test that was performed the weak correlation was not significant at 0.05 significance level because .466 is above 0.05. This means that the weak correlation was simply by chance. These results are contrary to the study hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the age of the children and the production of lexical invention.

However, the findings that there is a relationship between age and the rate of lexical invention are in line with the results of several other studies that have dealt with the relationship between age and language acquisition. Such studies include those of Celaya and Ruiz; (2001), Naves (2005); Ringbom (1987); Redlinger and Park; Williams and Hammarberg (1998) and Jarvis (2000). The studies have put forward the claim that there is a relation between the age of the child and the degree of language mixing in acquisition. For instance, Williams and Hammarberg (1998) puts forward in his study that L1 influence decreases as experience with the language and proficiency in terms of age increase. Williams and Hammarberg's findings revealed that the performance of beginner learners showed more instances of lexical invention than those of more advanced learners.

Redlinger and Park (1980) in their study on language mixing report a high mixing rate of languages during the earliest stages of language development. They interpreted this observation as evidence for the child's general inability to differentiate between the two languages, and the progressive decrease in language mixing as evidence for the child's ability to control the languages separately as the linguistic competence increased. Their study supports the notion that the infant in a bilingual environment passes from an undifferentiated language system to a gradual separation of the two linguistic systems just like in the present study. Gender is another variable that has been of much interest to language acquisition studies. In the next section, the findings of the present study with regard to the effect and the correlation between gender and the production of lexical importation and lexical invention are presented and discussed.

1.5 Conclusion

The study has revealed that children of all ages acquiring *Olutachoni* as a first language engage in two lexical borrowing strategies: lexical importation and lexical invention in striving to fill the lexical gap within their mental lexicon. This occurs when they fail to retrieve the appropriate word during language acquisition. The two strategies are employed by children from both the single and the mixed language family set ups although at varying degrees. The main conclusion is that the age of the children determines the production of lexical importation and lexical invention during child language acquisition.

From the study, the nature of lexical importation and lexical invention is constrained and determined by the age of the children. From the results, there was a significant correlation between the age of the children and the production of lexical importation and lexical invention from the two language family set ups. The results indicated that younger children from age 2 displayed higher rates of lexical importation and lexical invention as compared to older children. We can interpret the high rates of lexical importation and lexical invention during the earliest stages of language development as evidence for the child's general inability to differentiate between the two languages, and the progressive decrease in language mixing as evidence for the child's ability to control the languages separately as the linguistic competence increase. This finding is in line with the unitary language system hypothesis by Paradis (2004) where it is argued that young learners are unable to distinguish between the two languages

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

and thus they mix their languages simply because they lack vocabulary in one or both languages to express themselves entirely in each language.

REFERENCES

Becky, R. 1942.

A Study of Certain Factors Related to Retardation of Speech. *Journal of Speech Disorders, 7, 223-49.*

Bradenburg, G. 1979.

"The Language of a Three Year Old Child."*Pedagogy Seminary 22:89-120*

Celaya, M.L. and Torras M.R. 2001.

L1 influence and EFL vocabulary. Do children rely more on L1 than adult learners?
Proceedings of the XXV AEDEAN Conference. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Celaya, M.L., and Y. Ruiz de Zarobe 2001.

CLIL, Age, and L1 influence. *Paper presented at the XXXII AEDEAN Conference, Palma de Mallorca, November, 13–15, 2001.*

Cenoz, J. 2009.

The Successive Effect of Bilingualism on Third Language Acquisition. A Review. *International Journal of Bilingualism, 7,* 71-87. *Challenges and directions for future research* (pp. 158-182). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Chambers, J.K. 1995.

Sociolinguistic Theory. Oxford Blackwell. (1980) Sociolinguistic Dialectology. In
Dennis R.Preston (Ed).American Dialect Research.
Philadelphia:Benjamins.133-166.

Crawford, J. 1995.

Seven hypotheses on language loss: Causes and cures. In G. Cantoni (Ed.)

De Angelis, G. and Selinker, L. (2001).

Interlanguage Transfer and Competing Linguistic Systems in the Multilingual Mind. In Cenoz et al, (Eds) (2001c), pp. 42-58

De Houwer, A. 1995.

Bilingual language acquisition. In Paul Fletcher and Brian

Dewaele, J.M. 1998.

Lexical inventions: French interlanguage as L2 versus L3. *Applied Linguistics, 19,* 471-90.

Fuller, J. Keyfetz 1999.

*Natural and Monitored Sequences by Adult Learners of English as a Second Language.*Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University.

Genesee, F. 2006 .

Rethinking Bilingual Acquisition. In J.M. deWaele (Ed.) *Bilingualism.*

Genesee, F. Paradis J. and Nicoladis, L. 1995.

The Nature of the Bilingual Child's Lexicon.

Halgunseth, L. C. 2009.

How Children Learn a Second Language. In A. Umaña-Taylor, Classroom Diversity and Academic Success, an Online Special Edition. Retrieved from
http://www.education.com/reference/article/how-children-learn-second-language/

Lanstyák, I. 2006.

Nyelvből nyelvbe. Tanulmányok a szókölcsönzésről, kódváltásról és fordításról [From language to language: Essays on lexical borrowing, code switching and translation]. Pozsony: Kalligram.

Lanvers, U. 2001.

Language alternation in infant bilinguals: A Developmental Approach to Code Switching. *International Journal of Bilingualism, 5,* 437-464.

Lenneberg 1967.

Biological Foundations of Language. New York: Wiley Press.

Levi, N. 1980.

The Syntax and Semantics of Complex Nominals New York.Academic Press

MacWhinney B. 1999.
The CHILDES project: tools for analyzing talk. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Makeni, B. 2007.

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15

Acquisition of Concordial Morphemes by Lukhayo Speaking Pre-school Children Aged Between 3 and 5 Years. Unpublished M.A Dissertation: Kenyatta University.

Navés, T. 2005.

Language Dominance and Language awareness in Bilingual School Learners of EFL. Paper presented at the International Conference of the Association of Language Awareness. Universitat de Lleida.49.

Nyamasyo E. A. 1985.

*Acquisition of Syntax by a Four Year Old Child.*Unpublished M.A Thesis.University of Nairobi.

O'Grady 2005.

William. *How children learn language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University press Print.

Orwenjo, D.O. 2009.

Lexical Innovations in Child Language Acquisition: Evidence from Dholuo. Published PhD Thesis Peter. Lang: Frankfurt Main.

Paradis, M. 2004.

A Neurolinguistic Theory of Bilingualism Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Phillips, V. 1993.

A look at learner strategy use and ESL proficiency.*CATESOL Journal*, 57–67.

Pinker, S. 1994.

The Language Instinct. London: Penguin Books.

Poulisse, N and T Bongaerts 1994.

'First language use m second language production ' *Applied Linguistics* 15 36-57

Redlinger and Park 1980.

"Language Mixing in Young Bilingual Children, *Journal of Child Language,* (7), 337-52

The New Constitution of Kenya 2010.

Nairobi. Government Printers.

Ringbom, H. 2001.

"Lexical Transfer in L3 Production". In J. Cenoz (ed.) *Cross-Linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition: Psycholinguistic Perspectives*. Hufeisen and U. Jessner. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 59-68.

Saunders, G. 2000.

Bilingual Children: Guidance for the Family. England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Tomasello, M. 2003.

"Do Young Children have Adult Syntactic Competence?"*Cognition*, 74, 209-253.

Williams, S. and Hammarberg, B. 1998.

Language Switches in L3 Production: Implications or a Polyglot Speaking Model. *Applied Linguistics, 19*, 295-333.

DOI: 10.18535/ijsshi/v3i9.15