The research presented in this thesis is on the lexicon of some Kenyan learners of English as a Second Language. The learners' lexicon is analyzed for the grammar patterns of English synonymous nouns and synonymous verbs. The lexicon is also analyzed for lexical strategies. Findings are then used to infer second language lexical pedagogy. The four main objectives of this research are: to determine the grammar patterns for synonymous verbs and nouns; to identify and analyze any inappropriateness in the grammar patterns for the synonymous lexical items; to identify and explain the lexical strategies the learners employ in the use of synonymous lexical items; and to infer the pedagogic implications for the teaching of English lexis to Second Language learners of English. The research respondents are Kenyan secondary school students from a purposive sample. These respondents used a sample of synonymous verbs and nouns to construct sentences. They also did an exercise in which they underlined the same verbs and nouns for appropriate usage. The data collected was studied and analyzed for grammar patterns and for the strategies the respondents employed in their use of the synonymous lexical items.

Pattern grammar is used to analyze the lexicon of the second language learners of English. Two types of grammar patterns were identified for both the synonymous verbs and synonymous nouns namely: cognitive synonymy patterns and congruent synonymy patterns. In the cognitive synonymy patterns, the lexical items are used interchangeably without a change in the semantic load expressed or the syntactic slot that they occupy. In the congruent synonymy patterns, the lexical items are interchangeable but with a change in the syntactic slot though not in the semantic load expressed. The analysis also revealed appropriate and inappropriate grammar patterns for the synonymous nouns and verbs, which are marked by syntactic and semantic features.

The strategies the learners employ in the use of English lexical items are analyzed using learning strategy theories. The data reveal four categories of lexical strategies. These are, strategies for discovering word meaning; strategies for consolidating the meaning of a word once it has been learned; conceptual strategies; and linguistic strategies.

From the analyses of the research data, the following observations were made on the nature and extent of the respondents' knowledge of English lexical items. The learners' lexicon implies a lack of or inadequacy of lexical knowledge that is prerequisite for the use of synonymous lexical items. Related to this lack or inadequacy of lexical information, is the inference that the learners lack an understanding of the lexical information or that the learners fail to make use of the information. In relation to the norms for lexical use, this research found that some of the English lexical items have a shift in meaning. The shift is evident in the use of the English lexical item in a grammar pattern that is different from that of the native speakers' English. Another finding is that there is a correlation between the way the learners acquired the lexical information on the English lexical items and the way they use the items.

The analyses of the grammar patterns and the lexical strategies identified in this research have revealed that second language vocabulary teaching in Kenyan secondary schools could be enhanced by varied methods of lexical presentation. For instance, lexical strategies could be incorporated into the language teaching methodology to enable the learners build and consolidate their second language lexicon. The teaching of synonymous items, for example, should take into account the fact that learners are likely to over generalize the synonymy. Such over generalization in some context could lead to inappropriate
grammar patterns. The research findings also reveal a need for lexical expansion so that the lexical norms can account for meanings that are determined by the second language learning context.