
Reading Comprehension Skills and Lexical Knowledge among Second-Year High School Learners of English as a Foreign Language in Azogues

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ABSTRACT

Developing reading comprehension is not easy, but it is essential to foreign language learning. Therefore, researching the elements underlying this process is important in the educational field. This study examined the reading comprehension skills and lexical knowledge of second-year high school learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) at a private school in Azogues at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year. A quantitative, non-experimental research explored the relationship between these variables. Ninety students participated, selected through convenience, and two achievement tests were administered: one measuring reading comprehension (skimming for gist, scanning for details, inferential reading, and understanding text logic and structure), and another assessing lexical knowledge (lexicon in context, functional vocabulary, lexical sets, and word-definition correspondence). Both instruments adapted from Cambridge and British Council and validated by experts. Descriptive statistics indicated that students performed best in inferential reading, while understanding text logic and structure was challenging. Regarding lexical knowledge, learners demonstrated strong performance in lexical sets but faced difficulties in using vocabulary in context and applying functional vocabulary. Inferential and descriptive analyses were conducted using JAMOVI. Since the normality test showed non-normal distribution, a Spearman correlation was applied. Results revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between reading comprehension and lexical knowledge ($r = 0.711$, $p < .001$). This suggests that students with richer lexical knowledge tend to achieve higher levels of reading comprehension. These findings highlight the importance of explicit lexicon instruction to support reading development. Further research with larger and more diverse samples is recommended.

Keywords: correlation, EFL learners, lexical knowledge, reading comprehension

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Habilidades de Comprensión Lectora y Conocimiento Léxico en Estudiantes de Segundo Año de Bachillerato de inglés Como Lengua Extranjera en Azogues

RESUMEN

Desarrollar comprensión lectora no es fácil, pero si esencial al aprender otro idioma. Por esto, es importante estudiar los elementos subyacentes de este proceso. Este estudio examina habilidades de comprensión lectora y conocimiento léxico de los estudiantes de segundo año de bachillerato de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en una institución educativa privada de Azogues, al inicio del año escolar 2025-2026. Su enfoque cuantitativo y diseño no experimental exploraron la relación entre variables. Participaron 90 estudiantes seleccionados mediante muestreo por conveniencia. Para la recolección de datos se aplicaron dos pruebas: comprensión lectora (lectura global, lectura para detalles, lectura inferencial y comprensión de la lógica y estructura textual), y conocimiento léxico (uso del léxico en contexto, vocabulario funcional, campos léxicos y correspondencia palabra-definición). Ambos instrumentos adaptados de Cambridge y British Council y validados por expertos. Las estadísticas descriptivas mostraron que los estudiantes obtuvieron mejores resultados en lectura inferencial, y puntajes bajos en la comprensión de la lógica y estructura del texto. En cuanto al conocimiento de vocabulario, destacaron en campos léxicos, pero evidenciaron dificultades en el uso contextual de palabras y en el manejo del léxico funcional. Los datos no siguieron una distribución normal y se aplicó la correlación de Spearman. Los resultados mostraron una correlación positiva, fuerte y estadísticamente significativa entre variables ($r = 0.711$, $p < .001$), lo que sugiere que un mayor dominio del léxico favorece una mejor lectura. Estos hallazgos resaltan la importancia del vocabulario para la comprensión lectora. Se recomienda ampliar futuras investigaciones a muestras más diversas

Palabras clave: conocimiento de léxico, correlación, comprensión lectora, estudiantes EFL

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INTRODUCTION

The ideal profile of a second-year high school student in a private school includes strong reading comprehension and rich lexicon. The relationship between these two elements is crucial because vocabulary knowledge is the foundation for understanding complex texts, infer meaning, make connections, and develop strong comprehension skills. Vocabulary functions as a cognitive mediator between the reader and the text by allowing the integration of prior knowledge with new information to decode symbols and build coherent mental representations of meaning.

However, what is happening among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners? Al- Jarrah and Ismail (2018) explain that students underestimate developing reading comprehension skills. The authors argue that this problem is linked to insufficient lexical knowledge, which might impede proper reading comprehension.

This area is not new in research, Dong et al. (2020) analyzed 89 studies in China, finding a correlation between these two variables. Similarly, Romero-Contreras (2021) found that lexicon is a predictor of reading comprehension. Therefore, there is a correlation, that exist because lexicon provides building blocks for meaning and support for inference-making, which facilitates reading comprehension (Dong et al., 2020, Romero- Contreras et al., 2021).

Indeed, these studies have provided valuable insights for the present research. Nonetheless, important gaps should be considered for further exploration. For example, there is a lack of studies focused on lexical knowledge and reading comprehension in private education. By exploring them, some differences might be identified regarding availability of resources or instructional quality. Additionally, although similar studies have been conducted in Ecuador, they have taken place in large cities like Quito, leaving smaller ones like Azogues absent in the literature.

Therefore, the findings of previous studies cannot be fully generalized to the Ecuadorian private-school sector due to differences in institutional resources and practices, highlighting the need for more localized and context-specific research.

Ultimately, understanding the relationship between lexical knowledge and reading comprehension supports evidence-based improvements in learning outcomes. All these might be valuable for teachers, students, researchers, and even parents. As Royeras and Sumayo (2024) suggest, teachers should be well-informed in order to motivate learners to engage in reading and lexical development. Learners, must engage themselves in reading activities and lexical videos through their technological devices (Royeras & Sumayo, 2024). Additionally, these authors highlight the role of parents' support throughout this process. Finally, researchers conducting correlational studies will find it interesting and adaptable to other school levels.

Addressing these gaps, the present study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the reading comprehension skills and lexical knowledge among second-year high school EFL learners at a private school in Azogues? To explore it fully, this question is broken down into three specific sub-questions: How do these EFL students perform in reading comprehension tasks? What is their lexical knowledge at a private school in Azogues? How does their lexical knowledge relate to their reading comprehension skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature explored for this study provides information on reading comprehension skills and lexical knowledge, highlighting their significance in the EFL context.

Reading

Reading is defined as a process that includes recognition of words, fluency, motivation, and accuracy (Leipzig, 2001). The author affirms that “reading is the motivated and fluent coordination of word recognition and comprehension” (Leipzig, 2001, p.4). Regarding reading

comprehension, it involves actively engaging with a text, extracting key information, and constructing meaning from it (Snow, 2002, as cited in Butterfuss et al., 2020). If a text is read without being understood, the reading skill is not properly developed.

Now, understanding the mental processes behind reading comprehension provides insights into the specific abilities that learners develop as a result of these processes.

Skimming for Gist

Skimming, according to Pakpahan (2023), involves rapidly scanning a text to get its central message without focusing on every word. While gist, on the other hand, refers to the general idea of the passage, often expressed in a complete sentence (Pakpahan, 2023). Although skimming, at first, might seem for lazy readers, it has great value even for proficient ones.

Scanning for Specific Details

In contrast to skimming, scanning allows readers to process up to 1500 words per minute while searching for specific pieces of information (Pakpahan, 2023). As the author defines it, “Scanning is reading quickly to search for specific information” (Pakpahan, 2023, p. 4), or in simpler terms, reading at glance. In educational settings, students may use scanning to find specific details needed to complete a task efficiently. **Inferential Reading**

Reading may appear easy, especially since a text can be revised multiple times. However, understanding information that is not explicitly presented requires a more advanced ability: inference. Nadalini et al. (2025) explain that making inferences in reading entails drawing logical conclusions based on implicit information.

Understanding Text Logic and Structure

To achieve effective reading comprehension, a text must follow a coherent structure and logical sequence. Tüchler and Cain (2025) expose that while readers process a text, they decode meaning while encoding spatial location of key terms or entire sections. The way information is organized contributes in supporting spatial working memory (Tüchler & Cain, 2025).

Lexical Knowledge

A word is the basic unit of a language that carries meaning, and the sum of all the words in a language is known as its lexicon or vocabulary (Kodirova, 2023). As individuals may understand how vocabulary functions as a natural part of growing up. Once a learner domains lexical knowledge, higher-level language abilities establish a base for continuous language learning.

Use Lexicon in Context

While vocabulary can be taught in isolation including simply definitions, learners demonstrate mastery when being able to use words in authentic situations. Li (2022) highlights that understanding and applying vocabulary in meaningful contexts enhances learners' ability to communicate effectively. Additionally, when students engage with vocabulary in natural settings, they become more competent language users.

Knowledge of Functional Vocabulary

Börjars (2020) conceptualizes functional vocabulary as compact words, such as “the”, “of”, “she”, that contribute to sentence structure. According to the author, they have universal functions, which means that, no matter the language, functional lexicon shape syntax in predictable ways (Börjars, 2020). In simpler terms, word groups like auxiliaries, prepositions, conjunctions, and pronouns follow patterns that contribute to build grammatical structure.

Lexical Sets

On the other hand, another crucial aspect to consider when learning lexicon is the relationship among vocabulary words. Nguyet (2021) refers to these connections as lexical sets. She explains that lexical sets consist of groups of words that are semantically related, that is, they share a common meaning or concept. Understanding and learning these is vital since it facilitates vocabulary acquisition by creating mental connections among words.

Word-Definition Correspondence

Although the term “definition” is familiar to language learners, it is surprisingly difficult to find on an article. It suggests the need for further exploration. Pham et al. (2023) emphasize that, for most people, a word’s definition is simply what it says in the dictionary. Therefore, even when the concept of the word definition is not common in the research field, its accessibility makes it important to know and differentiate definitions for effective language learning.

In summary, the literature shows a generally positive correlation between lexical knowledge and reading comprehension, especially when learners receive explicit vocabulary instruction. Furthermore, a high knowledge of lexicon can support comprehension, not only of literal meaning but also of implicit ideas. It is possible to develop inferential reading skills and gain a deeper understanding of the text.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study responded to a quantitative approach. Ahmadin (2022) explains that this approach focuses on using structured instruments, such as tests or surveys, to collect numerical data that can be analyzed statistically. In this research, numerical data was collected through two achievement tests, and their scores served to determine whether there was a correlation between developing reading comprehension and having rich lexical knowledge. The quantitative approach allowed for objective measurement to identify a possible relation

between the two variables.

The design of this study was cross-sectional since data was collected at a single point in time, at the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year, rather than tracking modifications or correlations over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Additionally, the study used a non-experimental correlational design. Non-experimental means that the researcher did not manipulate any variables or assigned participants to different groups or conditions, but instead observed and analyzed them in their natural state. The correlational approach, on the other hand, was useful to describe existing conditions and explore how reading comprehension was associated with lexical knowledge. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the non-experimental design is commonly used in correlational studies within education to explore the relationship between variables.

The study took place in a private K 12 school in the center of Azogues, Cañar, Ecuador, at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year. Upon obtaining institutional authorization, the research was carried out using the school's infrastructure, which provided the necessary conditions for the administration of the tests. While the initial groups consisted of approximately 30 students per classroom, the final sample size was restricted to the learners whose representatives provided formal informed consent.

Therefore, the study targeted the total population of second-year high school students at the selected school. From this group, a final sample of 90 participants was established, excluding those who did not obtain parental consent. The inclusion criteria required participants to be enrolled in the second year of high school having achieved the B1 English level according to the standards established by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2019).

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling design was used since the researcher served as the

teacher of all groups at this academic level (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This sample size of 90 is statistically adequate to ensure enough power for the planned correlational analyses (Kang, 2021).

Data Collection Sources and Techniques

The present research work employed the testing method; which is particularly effective for measuring and evaluating language proficiency in broad scales. As Rashid and Sipahi (2021) explain, this method was ideal as the instruments were quantitative and could handle large samples. Consequently, it facilitated the examination of relationships between variables while allowing drawing generalizable and reliable conclusions.

The study used two achievement tests as its primary instruments to gather the quantitative data. It allowed the researcher to identify students' reading comprehension skills and measure their lexical knowledge to explore a possible correlation between these two variables.

The reading comprehension test consisted of 4 questions with 5 items each, designed to evaluate skimming for gist, scanning for specific details, inferential reading, and understanding text logic and structure. The lexical knowledge test included 4 questions with 6, 8, 6, and 5 items, respectively, aimed at assessing lexicon use in context, knowledge of functional vocabulary, lexical sets, and word-definition correspondence. As previously mentioned, the researcher, who evaluated students, was also their teacher. This person had already introduced the concepts of skimming, scanning, inference, text logic, contextualized lexicon, functional vocabulary, lexical sets, and definitions. Students had already completed activities based on those concepts and had received tips on how to perform better on those kinds of exercises. Both were based on Cambridge exams and The British Council lexical activities.

The data collected contributed to achieve the research objective regarding examining the correlation between the variables.

Even though both tests were adapted from established Cambridge and British Council assessments, they underwent significant modifications to suit the local context. These adjustments ensured the instruments remained consistent with the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). they had a lot of modifications. For instance, the extension of the reading texts was carefully reduced to also reduce the number of comprehension items in each question. Some terminology was replaced with more familiar words trying to make the tests easier. The structure of the lexical test was modified, and the vocabulary words were organized into charts to make it more visually friendly. Consequently, five experts, who had experience in educational research, had to validate them after these changes. They focused on content validity, which refers to ensuring that the items cover the construct intended to be measured (Kalkbrenner, 2021). The author explains that this process is important in order to get reliable results. The validation process was also evaluated using the Aiken's V test, getting scores of 1 over 1 in the reading instrument and 0.8 out of 1 in the lexicon one. Therefore, some recommendations were followed to improve the second instrument and ensure the validity of both tests.

Following the validation of the instruments, the reliability of both tests was assessed with the JAMOVI software, using Cronbach's Alpha (α). This coefficient measures reliability in different fields like the educational, social, and behavioral (Ravinder & Saraswathi, 2020). The results showed a Cronbach's α of 0.734 for the reading comprehension test, which means its items had an acceptable level of consistency as tis value exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.70. On the other hand, the Cronbach's α for the lexicon test was 0.450 indicating a low-item correlation.

Despite the reliability limitations, it does not mean there is a lack of correlation, but the findings related to lexical knowledge must be interpreted with extreme caution throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Considering the nature of the study, the researcher used inferential and descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data. The findings were presented through tables and charts generated with JAMOVİ to facilitate the interpretation of the scores of the achievement tests. This analysis allowed the researcher to discover the connection between reading comprehension and lexical knowledge.

Descriptive statistics were essential to show the general performance of participants in both tests through the mean, median, and standard deviation values. On the other hand, inferential statistics directly focused on the relationship between reading comprehension and lexicon and determined whether this correlation was statistically significant. Specifically, the relationship was analyzed using the Spearman correlation coefficient because data did not have a normal distribution.

Akoglu (2018) proposed the following guidelines to interpret correlation, and these were essential in the data analysis process:

Table 1

Pearson Correlation Value		Descriptive Interpretation
+ 1	- 1	Very Strong
+ 0.9	- 0.9	Strong
+ 0.8	- 0.8	Strong
+ 0.7	- 0.7	Strong
+ 0.6	- 0.6	Moderate
+ 0.5	- 0.5	Moderate
+ 0.4	- 0.4	Moderate
+ 0.3	- 0.3	Weak
+ 0.2	- 0.2	Weak
+ 0.1	- 0.1	Weak
0	0	Zero

Source: (Akoglu, 2018)

Procedure

As the researcher was the teacher of all the participants, they were given specific instructions to be part of the data collection process. Everything started with an informed consent. If

parents let learners participate, they could take both tests, if not, they had to accomplish another task related to the English subject. Also, the teacher explained the objective of the project, which had nothing to do with the students' academic progress. The same instructions were given in the four classrooms where the researcher teaches.

The day of the test, approximately 90 out of 125 students handed the consents signed by their representatives and took the tests while their classmates completed a grammar activity. As this process was authorized by the principal of the school, it was conducted during class time. As a result, participants were given 30 minutes for each test; however, if one learner finished the first test in less time, this person was given the second test immediately.

At the end, 180 tests were collected as instruments of data, 90 for reading comprehension and 90 for lexical knowledge.

RESULTS

Objective 1: To assess reading comprehension skills.

Table 2. Test. Central measures of tendency of students' reading comprehension skills.

	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Reading for Gist (2.5 points)	90	1.44	0.755	0.00	2.50
Reading for Specific Details (2.5 points)	90	1.67	0.526	0.00	2.50
Inferential Reading (2.5 points)	90	1.83	0.868	0.00	2.50
Understand Text Logic and Structure (2.5 points)	90	1.27	0.825	0.00	2.50
Total (10/10)	90	6.22	2.251	1.00	9.50

Source: authors' own elaboration

Table 1 presents the scores obtained by 90 students in a reading comprehension test, which focused on "reading for gist", "reading for specific detail", "inferential reading", and "understand text logic and structure".

From the four dimensions evaluated, learners got the highest score in inferential reading, with a mean of 1.83, and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.868. This SD indicates that there was a

variation among scores even though it was moderated. In other words, while some students performed better at reading between the lines and understanding implied ideas, other showed weaker inferential skills. Also, they got 1.44 in reading for gist showing a moderate performance in identifying the general idea of a text. The variation in scores across dimensions does not necessarily indicate low overall proficiency, it actually reflects the natural dispersion of individual skill levels within the classroom. They also demonstrated a good ability to locate precise information with a score of 1.67 in reading for specific details. Furthermore, this last had less variability than the other dimensions with a SD of 0.526, so learners performed very similar on this component. It seems that the most difficult for them was to understand text logic and structure since they got the lowest mean (1.27). This indicates difficulties in recognizing how ideas are organized.

Moreover, all the dimensions had something in common and that was the minimum range of 0 points. At least one student got the lowest score of all and was unable to answer any item correctly. All this data reveals that students' strengths were mostly in inferential reading and their weaknesses in text logic and structure. Nevertheless, the wide range of scores across dimensions suggest that there were still learners struggling in different aspects of reading comprehension. Consequently, instructional strategies are needed, especially in teaching text structure.

Objective 2: To evaluate lexical knowledge.

Table 2. Test. Central measures of tendency of students' lexical knowledge.

	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Use Lexicon in Context (2.4 points)	90	1.30	0.595	0.000	2.40
Functional Vocabulary (3.2 points)	90	1.49	1.139	0.000	3.20
Lexical Sets (2.4 points)	90	2.27	0.261	1.200	2.40
Word-Definition Correspondence (2 points)	90	1.47	0.475	0.400	2.40
Total (10/10)	90	6.57	1.746	3.200	9.60

Source: authors' own elaboration

On the other hand, Table 2 shows the 90 students' scores in a test focused on lexical knowledge, specifically on "use lexicon in context", "functional vocabulary", "lexical sets", and "word-definition correspondence".

In this test, students' abilities were stronger in lexical sets with a mean of 2.27, the highest of all. Additionally, it had the lowest SD (0.261), which means that learners were good at identifying lexical sets, and they actually performed very similar. Even the minimum number was 1.200/2.400; exactly the half of the total score. Then, word- definition correspondence with a mean of 1.47 very close to functional vocabulary with a mean of 1.49. Nonetheless, their SD were very different. The first got 0.475 and the last 1.139; while students demonstrated similar performance to associate a word with its definition, their abilities to use functional words were very different among them. It can be said that while some students did a great job, others had poor results. Finally, the lowest mean was for the use of lexicon in context with a moderate SD of 0.595. In this component, the minimum score was 0, but some learners got the highest grade as well. All this mean that learners were stronger at recognizing lexical sets, but experienced challenges in using vocabulary appropriately in context and functional application of words.

Also, the variability in score highlights the differences in vocabulary knowledge and usage

among the group. Therefore, to support a more balanced development of lexical competence some instructional strategies should be suggested. For example: contextualized practice, exercises in words usage, and reinforcement of functional vocabulary.

Objective 3: To associate reading comprehension skills and lexical knowledge.

Table 3. Normality test Shapiro Wilk – Reading comprehension skills and lexical knowledge.

Shapiro-Wilk					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	W	p
READING	90	1	9.5	0.942	<.001
LEXICON	90	3.2	9.6	0.945	<.001

Source: authors' own elaboration

After explaining the results obtained in the “reading comprehension” and the “lexical knowledge” tests, Table 3 shows the outcome of the Shapiro Wilk test used to assess the normality of data. The results for both tests (<.001) showed that the distribution of data was not normal. Consequently, the non-parametric Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient was selected for the analysis. This test is particularly appropriate for non-normal distributions as it assesses monotonic relationships – determining whether the variables change together in a consistent direction. Based on this statistical framework, the relationship between variables was evaluated according to the following hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no relationship between students’ “reading comprehension skills” and students’ “lexical knowledge”.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a relationship between students’ “reading comprehension skills” and students’ “lexical knowledge”.

Table 4. Spearman's correlation between “reading comprehension skills” and students’ “lexical knowledge”.

READING	LEXICON
READING	—
LEXICON	0.711*** —

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. **Source:** authors' own elaboration

The Spearman correlation coefficient between reading comprehension and lexical knowledge was $r: 0.711$, which was moderate, positive, and statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. This indicates that learners who performed better in lexical knowledge also tended to achieve higher scores in reading skills. As a result, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The importance of developing strong reading comprehension skills and a solid vocabulary knowledge is unquestionable. In this study, the relationship between these two variables was examined using a quantitative, non-experimental research design to determine if lexical knowledge contributed to learners' reading comprehension. All of this was based on the question: What are the reading comprehension skills and lexical knowledge among second-year high school learners of English as a foreign language at a private school in Azogues at the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year? And sub-questions: How do second-year high school EFL students at a private institution in Azogues perform in reading comprehension tasks? What is the lexical knowledge among EFL learners in the second year of high school at a private school in Azogues? How does lexical knowledge relate to the reading comprehension skills of second-year EFL learners at a private school? It is necessary to highlight that the reading comprehension skill has already been studied in relation with lexical knowledge.

Yurko and Protsenko (2020), for instance, consider that understanding vocabulary in context

is key for developing strong comprehension skills. Romero-Contreras et al, (2021) support this idea by studying lexical knowledge as a predictor of effective reading comprehension. Similarly, Herrera (2022) explored how implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction impact lexical learning, and how it influences reading comprehension. He discovered that explicit instruction allowed his students to learn more vocabulary in five months than in two years of implicit teaching. Dong et al. (2020), for their part, found a substantial correlation between both variables, especially among secondary school students. Manihuruk (2020) also stated that a rich lexical knowledge allows learners to have a good performance in reading comprehension tasks. Finally, and contrarily to what the previous studies have stated, Anji et al. (2025) found that the correlation between lexical ability and reading is non-significant in some contexts. In summary, the literature shows a generally positive correlation between lexical knowledge and reading comprehension, especially when learners receive explicit vocabulary instruction.

In this specific context, in Azogues, among second-year high school students, there is also a positive correlation between these two variables. In fact, the relationship is really strong among students of a private school who are between 15 and 16 years old. Therefore, this strong relationship, $r: 0.711$ suggest that lexical knowledge may be a key predictor of reading comprehension success. This finding highlights the role of lexical knowledge and the need of fostering vocabulary development to enhance students' reading proficiency.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider that the study included only people of two age groups, 15 and 16 years old. It does not reflect younger or older students' proficiency. Moreover, external factors as motivation, prior knowledge, reading habits, or socio-economic background were not controlled, which might influence the results. These factors should be considered in future research to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the

association between lexicon and reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine reading comprehension skills and lexical knowledge among second-year high school learners of English as a foreign language at a private school in Azogues at the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year. This study has found out that generally second-year high school students performed best in inferential reading while understanding text logic and structure was the most challenging skill for them. Their performance in reading for specific details was also strong, whereas reading for gist was moderate. Regarding lexical knowledge, learners demonstrated high competence in lexical sets, and moderate performance in word-definition correspondence and functional vocabulary, while using lexicon in context proved to be the most difficult. With these analyses, the study revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between lexical knowledge and reading comprehension. All this implies that lexical knowledge plays a crucial role in supporting reading comprehension among second-year high school EFL learners. Teachers should emphasize explicit vocabulary instruction and activities that develop word knowledge and contextual usage. In this way, learners would improve their ability to understand texts, make inferences, and grasp implied meanings. It results significant since the study provides empirical evidence of the relationship between variables in a specific EFL context, offering practical guidance for teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers.

Despite, the important insights, the study has some limitations such as the restricted sample, limited to a single private school in Azogues. Also, the data were collected at one point in time not paying attention to how learners' skills might develop over time. Future research should therefore include larger samples with more diverse participants or adopt longitudinal designs

to examine how lexicon and reading comprehension evolve across academic years. Furthermore, the development and validation of reliable instruments of data collection should be prioritized.

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