
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

From Noticing to Reuse: Tracing Vocabulary Learning Trajectories in English-Subtitled EFL Classrooms

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| ABSTRACT

The use of videos with English subtitles has become increasingly common in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Previous studies have demonstrated that subtitles can support vocabulary learning by making lexical forms more perceptually available. However, most research has examined subtitle effects primarily through post-test outcomes rather than through the classroom processes by which learners encounter, interpret, and later reuse vocabulary during instruction. Consequently, less is known about how vocabulary engagement unfolds over time within subtitle-supported classroom instruction. This qualitative classroom-based study investigates vocabulary learning trajectories during English-subtitled video lessons in three Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms. Drawing on qualitative data from six classroom observations, learner interviews (n = 9), a teacher interview, and learner reflection forms (n = 60), the study traces how learners' engagement with vocabulary developed across different stages of the lesson. Using thematic analysis, the study identifies recurring patterns in how learners noticed lexical items in subtitles, interpreted their meanings through classroom interaction, and later reused them in post-viewing activities. The findings reveal that vocabulary learning in subtitled video lessons unfolded through a trajectory consisting of three interconnected stages: noticing, interpretive engagement, and reuse. Subtitles increased the visibility of lexical forms, but noticing alone rarely led to sustained engagement. Instead, classroom dialogue and teacher prompts supported meaning construction, while post-viewing tasks created opportunities for learners to retrieve and apply vocabulary in communicative contexts. The study argues that vocabulary development in subtitle-supported classrooms emerges through a temporally distributed learning trajectory rather than through exposure alone. By tracing how vocabulary moves from initial noticing to later reuse, the study contributes to research on multimodal input and classroom-based vocabulary learning. It also highlights the importance of instructional sequencing in turning subtitle exposure into usable lexical knowledge.

| KEYWORDS

Vocabulary learning trajectories; subtitled video; noticing; multimodal learning; EFL classrooms; classroom interaction

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1. Introduction

Audiovisual materials are increasingly integrated into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms as digital technologies make video resources readily available for instructional use. Teachers frequently use videos to expose learners to authentic language, illustrate contextualised communication, and support listening comprehension. In many classrooms, these materials include English subtitles, which present written text alongside spoken dialogue and visual imagery. Because subtitles make spoken language visually accessible, they are often assumed to facilitate vocabulary learning by increasing the perceptual salience of lexical forms.

A substantial body of research has examined the role of subtitles in second language learning. Experimental studies have frequently shown that learners who watch captioned or subtitled videos demonstrate higher vocabulary recognition and recall than learners

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who watch videos without textual support. These findings are commonly interpreted through the concept of input enhancement, which proposes that making linguistic forms more perceptually noticeable increases the likelihood that learners will attend to them. Subtitles therefore appear to provide additional access to lexical forms during audiovisual processing.

Despite this evidence, most subtitle research has focused primarily on learning outcomes measured through post-tests. Such studies are useful for identifying potential benefits of subtitles, but they reveal less about how vocabulary learning unfolds during classroom instruction. In real lessons, learners do not encounter subtitles in isolation. Instead, they process spoken language, written subtitles, visual imagery, and classroom interaction simultaneously. Vocabulary engagement therefore develops within a complex multimodal environment shaped by both cognitive and pedagogical factors.

Understanding vocabulary learning in such environments requires attention to learning processes rather than solely to outcomes. When learners encounter unfamiliar words in subtitles, several stages may occur before those words become part of their usable vocabulary, forming a trajectory through which vocabulary engagement develops over time. Learners may first notice lexical forms in subtitle text, then attempt to interpret their meanings using contextual cues or classroom discussion, and finally reuse these words during later communicative activities.

However, relatively little research has examined how such trajectories emerge in classroom contexts where subtitles are embedded within teacher-led instruction. In many subtitle studies, learners watch videos individually without classroom interaction or pedagogical mediation. Yet in actual lessons, teachers guide learners' attention, prompt discussion, and design follow-up tasks that influence how vocabulary is processed and reused.

Examining vocabulary learning trajectories within subtitle-supported classrooms can therefore provide a deeper understanding of how lexical engagement develops across lesson stages. Rather than treating vocabulary learning as an immediate result of subtitle exposure, such an approach emphasises how learning unfolds through sequences of noticing, interpretation, and later use.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating vocabulary learning trajectories during English-subtitled video lessons in Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms. Drawing on classroom observations, learner interviews, a teacher interview, and learner reflections, the study traces how learners encountered, interpreted, and reused vocabulary across different stages of instruction. To address this gap, the study adopts a qualitative classroom-based design that makes it possible to examine vocabulary engagement as a temporally unfolding process rather than as a test outcome alone.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do learners initially notice vocabulary appearing in English subtitles during classroom video lessons?
2. How do learners interpret and negotiate the meanings of unfamiliar lexical items during classroom interaction?
3. How do learners reuse vocabulary encountered in subtitles during post-viewing classroom activities?

By tracing vocabulary engagement from noticing to reuse, the study contributes to a process-oriented understanding of vocabulary learning in multimodal classroom environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Audiovisual Input and Vocabulary Learning

Audiovisual materials have become an important component of contemporary language teaching as digital technologies allow teachers to integrate authentic video resources into classroom instruction. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, videos are frequently used to provide exposure to natural speech, illustrate contextualised communication, and introduce vocabulary within meaningful situations. Compared with traditional text-based materials, audiovisual input combines spoken language, visual imagery, and contextual cues, potentially supporting learners' comprehension and lexical development.

Research in second language acquisition has long suggested that vocabulary learning can occur incidentally when learners are exposed to meaningful input. Nation (2013) argues that repeated encounters with lexical items in context can gradually strengthen form-meaning connections. Audiovisual materials may provide particularly rich contexts for such encounters because visual information can support comprehension when linguistic input is difficult. Learners may therefore infer word meanings from situational cues, actions, or visual narratives presented in videos.

Empirical studies examining audiovisual input have shown that watching videos in a second language can contribute to vocabulary acquisition. Peters and Webb (2018), for example, demonstrated that learners who watched television programs in English acquired new vocabulary incidentally, particularly when words occurred repeatedly. Similarly, studies on captioned or subtitled viewing suggest that audiovisual materials can enhance both comprehension and vocabulary learning.

However, the mechanisms through which vocabulary learning occurs during audiovisual exposure remain complex. Unlike reading, where learners can control the pace of input, video provides language in a continuous stream that may challenge learners' processing capacity. As a result, the effectiveness of audiovisual materials for vocabulary learning depends not only on the input itself but also on how learners allocate attention and interpret linguistic information within the multimodal environment.

2.2 Subtitles as Multimodal Learning Support

One feature that has received significant attention in audiovisual language learning research is the use of subtitles or captions. Subtitles provide written representations of spoken dialogue that appear on the screen simultaneously with audio and visual information. Because subtitles make lexical forms visually accessible, they may help learners identify unfamiliar words that would otherwise be difficult to perceive in rapid speech.

Numerous studies have investigated the effects of subtitles on second language learning. Vanderplank (2016) argues that subtitles support comprehension by providing additional linguistic input through the written modality. When learners can read and hear language simultaneously, they may form stronger connections between spoken and written forms. Subtitles can therefore function as a form of multimodal input enhancement that facilitates language processing.

Experimental studies have often reported positive effects of subtitles on vocabulary learning. Peters and Webb (2018) found that captioned television viewing promoted incidental vocabulary acquisition, particularly when learners encountered words multiple times. Previous studies have examined the role of captions in supporting comprehension and vocabulary learning in audiovisual environments (Montero Perez et al., 2014; Rodgers & Webb, 2017; Sydorenko, 2010; Winke et al., 2010). Montero Perez (2022) also showed that subtitles can support lexical development by increasing opportunities for noticing unfamiliar words.

Despite these findings, subtitles do not automatically guarantee vocabulary learning. Learners may focus primarily on overall comprehension rather than on individual lexical items, especially when videos contain complex visual narratives. In some cases, learners rely heavily on subtitle text for understanding the general message without paying close attention to specific vocabulary forms.

These observations suggest that subtitles function not simply as static textual supports but as components of a broader multimodal learning environment. Their effectiveness depends on how learners interact with them and how instructional activities direct attention toward lexical information.

2.3 Attention and the Noticing Hypothesis

The role of attention in language learning has been widely discussed within second language acquisition research. Schmidt's (1990, 2001) noticing hypothesis proposes that learners must consciously notice linguistic forms in input before acquisition can occur. According to this perspective, attention acts as a gateway that allows specific elements of input to enter learners' developing linguistic systems.

Subtitles may facilitate noticing by increasing the perceptual salience of lexical forms. When learners watch videos with subtitles, written words appear simultaneously with spoken language, potentially drawing attention to lexical items that might otherwise go unnoticed. In this sense, subtitles may increase the likelihood that learners notice unfamiliar vocabulary during audiovisual exposure.

However, attention in language learning is selective and limited. Godfroid (2016) emphasises that learners cannot process all aspects of input simultaneously because attentional resources are constrained. In multimodal environments such as subtitled video viewing, learners must coordinate attention across spoken language, written text, and visual imagery. As a result, learners may prioritise certain sources of information while ignoring others.

Cognitive theories of multimedia learning also highlight the challenges associated with processing multiple information channels simultaneously. Mayer (2020) suggests that learners process visual and auditory information through separate channels with limited capacity. When learners read subtitles while listening to speech and interpreting images, cognitive load may increase. This may lead learners to focus primarily on understanding the narrative rather than analysing individual lexical items.

These insights indicate that noticing vocabulary in subtitles is not guaranteed simply by the presence of textual input. Instead, noticing is influenced by learners' attentional strategies, task demands, and instructional context.

2.4 Classroom Interaction and Vocabulary Development

While cognitive theories emphasise individual processing mechanisms, language learning in classrooms also occurs through social interaction. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is mediated through interaction with teachers, peers, and cultural tools such as language itself (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Classroom discourse therefore plays a crucial role in shaping how learners interpret and use linguistic input.

Teachers often guide learners' attention to particular language forms through questioning, explanation, and feedback. Walsh (2011) describes how classroom interaction can create opportunities for language learning by encouraging learners to notice and explore linguistic features. Through dialogue, teachers may prompt learners to explain meanings, clarify misunderstandings, and apply vocabulary in communicative tasks.

In subtitle-supported lessons, classroom interaction may play an important role in transforming lexical items encountered in subtitles into objects of discussion and analysis. Learners may initially notice unfamiliar words while watching the video, but their understanding of these words often develops through subsequent classroom talk.

Peer interaction may also support vocabulary learning. When learners discuss unfamiliar expressions with classmates, they may negotiate meaning, compare interpretations, and build shared understanding. Such collaborative processes can deepen lexical engagement beyond initial exposure.

These interactional dynamics suggest that vocabulary learning in subtitle-supported classrooms emerges through a combination of multimodal input and classroom discourse.

2.5 Vocabulary Learning Trajectories

Recent research on vocabulary development emphasises that lexical knowledge grows gradually rather than appearing instantly after exposure. Nation (2013) notes that learners typically require multiple encounters with a word before it becomes part of their usable vocabulary. Each encounter may strengthen different aspects of lexical knowledge, such as form recognition, meaning, or contextual usage.

Within classroom contexts, vocabulary learning may therefore follow a trajectory across different stages of instructional activity. Learners may first notice unfamiliar lexical forms during input exposure, then attempt to interpret their meanings through contextual cues or classroom discussion, and later reuse these words in speaking or writing tasks.

Understanding such trajectories can provide deeper insight into how vocabulary learning unfolds over time. Rather than focusing solely on learning outcomes measured through tests, examining trajectories allows researchers to trace how learners interact with lexical items across different stages of classroom activity. A trajectory perspective is especially useful in subtitle-supported lessons because the same lexical item may be encountered first as written input, then as an object of discussion, and later as a resource for communicative production.

2.6 Research Gap

Taken together, previous research suggests that subtitles can support vocabulary learning by making lexical forms more visible and by strengthening connections between spoken and written language. However, most subtitle studies have focused on learning outcomes rather than on the processes through which vocabulary engagement develops during classroom instruction.

In particular, relatively little research has examined how vocabulary moves from initial noticing in subtitles to later communicative use in classroom activities. Understanding this process requires examining how learners encounter lexical items during video viewing, how they interpret meanings through classroom interaction, and how they later reuse these words during instructional tasks.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating vocabulary learning trajectories in English-subtitled EFL classrooms. By tracing how vocabulary engagement develops from noticing to reuse across lesson stages, the study provides a process-oriented perspective on subtitle-supported vocabulary learning.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative classroom-based research design to investigate vocabulary learning trajectories during English-subtitled video lessons. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study aimed to examine how learners engaged with vocabulary across different stages of classroom activity rather than measuring vocabulary gains quantitatively.

The analysis focused on tracing how lexical items moved through different phases of classroom engagement, from initial noticing in subtitle text to interpretation through classroom interaction and eventual reuse during post-viewing activities.

A multiple-case design was employed in order to examine patterns across three classrooms while preserving the contextual characteristics of each instructional setting.

3.2 Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in a public upper-secondary school in Vietnam where English is taught as a compulsory subject within the national curriculum.

Three Grade 11 classes participated in the study: Class 11A6, Class 11A7, and Class 11A15. Approximately 150 students were enrolled across the three classes. Students were aged between 16 and 17 years old and had studied English as a foreign language for several years.

All three classes were taught by the same English teacher, who had over ten years of teaching experience. The teacher regularly incorporated English-subtitled videos into lessons to support listening comprehension and vocabulary learning.

Using the same teacher across cases allowed the study to examine how vocabulary learning trajectories developed under relatively consistent instructional conditions.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected from multiple sources in order to capture both classroom interaction and participants' perspectives on the learning process.

The dataset included:

| Data source | Description | Quantity |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Classroom observations | English-subtitled video lessons | 6 |
| Observation hours | Total classroom observation | ~5 hours |
| Learner interviews | Semi-structured | 9 |
| Teacher interview | Semi-structured | 1 |
| Learner reflection forms | Open-ended responses | 60 |

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations constituted the primary data source for examining vocabulary engagement during subtitled lessons. Detailed field notes were taken during each lesson to document learner attention to subtitles, classroom discussion about vocabulary, teacher prompts and explanations, and post-viewing activities involving vocabulary reuse.

Learner Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine students selected from the three classrooms. The interviews explored learners' experiences of watching subtitled videos, including how they noticed unfamiliar words and how classroom activities helped them understand vocabulary.

Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to allow participants to express their ideas comfortably. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed and translated into English.

Teacher Interview

A semi-structured interview with the teacher provided insight into the pedagogical rationale behind the use of subtitled videos. The interview focused on instructional goals, strategies for guiding attention to vocabulary, and perceptions of learners' engagement with subtitles.

Learner Reflection Forms

Reflection forms were distributed after selected lessons. Students were asked to describe vocabulary they noticed during the video, how they understood new words, and whether classroom discussion or tasks helped them remember vocabulary.

These reflections were used not as stand-alone evidence of learning gains, but as retrospective accounts of how learners perceived their own vocabulary engagement across lesson stages.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The analysis proceeded through five stages. First, observation notes, interview transcripts, and reflection responses were read repeatedly for familiarisation. Second, segments of data were coded for vocabulary-related engagement, including noticing, interpretation, and reuse. Third, codes were grouped into broader categories representing stages of vocabulary engagement. Categories were refined into overarching themes representing stages of vocabulary engagement. Finally, patterns were compared across the three classrooms to identify similarities and differences.

Although the trajectory model was analytically presented as noticing, interpretation, and reuse, the thematic analysis also attended to cross-classroom variation in how learners moved between these stages.

3.5 Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to enhance the credibility of the findings.

First, data triangulation was achieved by combining observations, interviews, and reflection data. Convergence across these sources strengthened the validity of interpretations. Second, an audit trail was maintained throughout the analytic process, documenting coding decisions and theme development. Finally, researcher reflexivity was addressed through reflective field notes that recorded analytic insights and potential biases during data interpretation.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in interviews and reflection activities was voluntary. Students were informed about the purpose of the study, and all identifying information was removed from transcripts and field notes. Pseudonyms or anonymised labels were used throughout the analysis to protect participants' identities. Classroom data were used solely for research purposes.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the study by tracing how vocabulary engagement developed across stages of subtitle-supported instruction. Analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and learner reflections identified four recurring patterns: (1) noticing lexical items in subtitle text, (2) interpreting vocabulary through classroom interaction, (3) reusing vocabulary in post-viewing tasks, and (4) cross-classroom variation in the trajectory from noticing to reuse.

4.1 Noticing Vocabulary in Subtitles

Learners first encountered new lexical items when reading subtitle lines during video viewing. Observation notes indicated that students frequently focused on subtitle text while following the narrative.

For example:

Students look closely at subtitle lines while watching the video. One student writes the word *evacuation* in her notebook immediately after it appears on the screen.

(Obs-11A15-L3-V-09:18–09:24)

A similar pattern appeared in another lesson when a target item reoccurred in the subtitle line:

A student in the front row briefly points at the subtitle phrase *rescue team* and then copies it into the margin of her notebook while continuing to watch the screen.

(Obs-11A6-L3-V-Fieldnote)

In Class 11A7, noticing was sometimes visible through whispered peer exchanges rather than note-taking:

Two students quietly repeat the word *shelter* after it appears in the subtitle and then return their attention to the screen without interrupting the viewing flow.

(Obs-11A7-L2-V-Fieldnote)

Learner reflections suggested that subtitles made unfamiliar vocabulary easier to identify.

“When I read the subtitles, I can see the word clearly even if I don’t hear it well.”

(Ref-11A7-L3-ItemC1-Trans)

Another learner similarly noted:

“If the teacher does not stop the video, I can still catch the new word by reading it in the subtitle.”

(Ref-11A15-L3-ItemB4-Trans)

However, not all vocabulary appearing in subtitles attracted equal attention. Students were more likely to notice words that had been previously highlighted by the teacher or that appeared repeatedly in the video. In this sense, noticing was selective rather than automatic. Some lexical items were visually available in the subtitles but did not become salient enough to attract learner attention.

Observation data also suggested that learners sometimes treated subtitles as a support for overall comprehension rather than as a source of vocabulary learning. In several instances, students continued reading subtitle lines fluently without making any visible note of unfamiliar words. This indicates that textual availability alone did not guarantee lexical uptake at the noticing stage.

These observations suggest that subtitles increased the visibility of lexical forms but did not automatically guarantee noticing.

4.2 Interpreting Vocabulary Through Classroom Interaction

After viewing, learners frequently discussed unfamiliar words during teacher-led classroom dialogue. Teachers prompted students to explain meanings using contextual information from the video.

For example:

Teacher: “Why are they evacuating in the video?”

Student: “Because the water is rising.”

Teacher: “Yes, so *evacuation* means leaving the place because it is dangerous.”

(Obs-11A6-L4-PV-Trans)

Learner interviews confirmed that such discussions helped clarify meanings.

“When the teacher asks about the word, we think about the situation in the video and understand it better.”

(IntL-11A6-Lr03-Trans)

In another episode, the teacher guided learners to infer meaning from the visual context rather than supplying a direct translation:

Teacher: “Where do the people go after they leave their homes?”

Student: “To a safe place.”

Teacher: “Yes. So why is it called an *emergency shelter*?”

(Obs-11A7-L5-PV-Trans)

Through these exchanges, vocabulary encountered in subtitles became objects of collaborative interpretation within classroom interaction. Rather than being understood immediately during viewing, lexical items were often interpreted retrospectively through discussion that connected the word to actions, events, and visual cues in the video.

Peer participation also played a supporting role in some cases. When students responded to teacher questions, other learners occasionally added examples or reformulated meanings in simpler terms. This suggests that interpretation was not always individual, but sometimes jointly constructed through classroom talk.

The evidence therefore indicates that classroom interaction served as a bridge between initial noticing and fuller lexical understanding.

4.3 Reusing Vocabulary in Post-Viewing Activities

Vocabulary engagement continued during post-viewing activities in which learners summarised video content or explained events using target expressions.

For example:

Two students refer to the subtitle line while discussing how to use the phrase *rescue team* in their explanation.
(Obs-11A7-L5-PV-09:06–09:12)

Learner reflections also indicated that reuse helped strengthen memory.

“When we use the word again in speaking, it is easier to remember.”
(Ref-11A7-L5-ItemD1-Trans)

Another reflection pointed to the same pattern:

“I remember the word more when I have to say it again after the video.”
(Ref-11A6-L4-ItemC3-Trans)

Observation data further showed that reuse often involved reformulating vocabulary into new utterances rather than simply repeating subtitle text:

A student begins her summary with “The *rescue team* came to help the families,” pauses briefly, and then looks back at her notes before continuing.
(Obs-11A7-L5-PV-Fieldnote)

In Class 11A6, reuse also appeared in teacher-guided sentence production:

Teacher: “Can you use *evacuation* in a sentence about the video?”
Student: “The evacuation happened because the flood was dangerous.”
(Obs-11A6-L4-PV-Trans)

These activities required learners to retrieve lexical items encountered during viewing and apply them in communicative contexts. Reuse therefore represented more than repetition; it involved recontextualising vocabulary for a new classroom purpose. Instead of merely recognising a word in subtitle text, learners had to incorporate it into speech, explanation, or summary.

In some cases, teacher feedback further shaped this stage of the trajectory. When students used vocabulary imprecisely, the teacher reformulated their answers or prompted clearer wording. This suggests that reuse was also a site of refinement, where lexical items became more stabilised through guided production.

These findings indicate that post-viewing activities helped transform subtitle-based exposure into more active vocabulary use.

4.4 Vocabulary Learning Trajectories

Across the three classrooms, vocabulary engagement followed a recurring trajectory:

1. Noticing lexical items in subtitles
2. Interpreting meanings through classroom dialogue
3. Reusing vocabulary in post-viewing activities

This trajectory illustrates how vocabulary learning developed across lesson stages rather than occurring immediately during subtitle exposure. The trajectory was not strictly linear in every case, but it provided a stable pattern across the dataset. Some learners moved quickly from noticing to reuse, while others required more extensive interpretive support before they could use the vocabulary productively.

The findings therefore suggest that vocabulary learning in subtitled classrooms should be understood as temporally distributed classroom work rather than as a direct effect of visual exposure alone.

Figure 1 presents the trajectory model emerging from the data.

Figure 1. Vocabulary Learning Trajectory in English-Subtitled EFL Lessons

Subtitle exposure
↓
Lexical noticing
↓
Interpretive engagement
↓
Pedagogical reuse
↓
Emerging vocabulary consolidation

4.5 Cross-Classroom Variation

Although the three-stage trajectory was observed across all classrooms, differences emerged in how learners moved between stages.

In Class 11A6, vocabulary discussion often occurred immediately after viewing, with several students contributing interpretations during teacher-led dialogue. In Class 11A7, learners tended to focus more on comprehension during viewing and discussed vocabulary later during post-viewing activities. In Class 11A15, teacher prompts frequently directed learners' attention to specific lexical items before the video began.

These differences suggest that vocabulary learning trajectories were shaped not only by subtitle exposure but also by classroom interaction patterns and instructional design. The same subtitle input did not produce identical engagement patterns across classes; instead, the trajectory from noticing to reuse was mediated by how classroom activity was organised.

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that vocabulary learning in subtitle-supported classrooms unfolds through a temporally distributed trajectory. Subtitles increase the perceptual availability of lexical forms, but noticing alone rarely leads to sustained vocabulary development.

Instead, classroom interaction plays a crucial role in transforming noticed vocabulary into meaningful learning opportunities. Teacher questioning and peer discussion support the interpretation of unfamiliar lexical items by linking them to contextual cues from the video. This supports sociocultural perspectives on learning, according to which meaning is not only processed individually but also constructed through mediated classroom interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Post-viewing activities further extend vocabulary engagement by requiring learners to reuse lexical items in communicative tasks. Such reuse promotes deeper processing and helps integrate lexical items into learners' developing vocabulary knowledge. From this perspective, reuse is not merely an outcome stage, but a pedagogical mechanism through which lexical items become more available for future use.

These findings highlight the importance of examining vocabulary learning as a process that develops across multiple stages of classroom activity. Rather than treating subtitle exposure as a direct cause of vocabulary acquisition, the study shows how learning emerges through a sequence of noticing, interpretation, and reuse.

5.1 A Trajectory Perspective on Subtitle-Supported Vocabulary Learning

One of the main contributions of this study is its proposal that subtitle-supported vocabulary learning is best understood as a trajectory rather than as a one-time event. In many previous studies, subtitles have been treated as an input condition whose effects are assessed through immediate or delayed vocabulary tests. The present findings suggest a different perspective: lexical engagement develops across lesson stages and is shaped by the interactional opportunities available to learners.

This trajectory begins with noticing lexical forms in subtitle text, continues through interpretive work during classroom dialogue, and extends into reuse during post-viewing activities. Each stage contributes differently to vocabulary development. Noticing makes lexical items available, interpretation helps establish meaning, and reuse supports active retrieval and contextualised application.

By adopting a trajectory lens, the study adds to subtitle research by showing that vocabulary learning in classrooms is not simply what happens when learners see words on the screen. Rather, it is a sequence of classroom events through which words become increasingly meaningful and usable.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The findings suggest that teachers should not assume that subtitles alone will generate vocabulary learning. Instead, subtitles are most useful when embedded within lesson sequences that create opportunities for noticing, discussion, and reuse. Teachers may therefore strengthen vocabulary engagement by highlighting target items before viewing, using post-viewing questions to support interpretation, and designing follow-up activities that require learners to use newly encountered words.

This implies that the pedagogical value of subtitles lies not only in making language visible, but in enabling structured vocabulary work across the lesson.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated vocabulary learning trajectories during English-subtitled video lessons in secondary EFL classrooms. Drawing on classroom observations, interviews, and learner reflections, the study traced how learners engaged with vocabulary across different stages of instruction.

The findings indicate that vocabulary learning in subtitle-supported classrooms develops through a trajectory consisting of noticing lexical items in subtitles, interpreting their meanings through classroom interaction, and reusing them in post-viewing activities. Subtitles provide initial access to lexical forms, but sustained vocabulary engagement emerges through classroom discourse and pedagogical tasks.

By examining vocabulary learning as a process unfolding across lesson stages, the study contributes to research on multimodal language learning and classroom-based vocabulary development. More specifically, it shows that lexical learning in subtitled classrooms is shaped by how input is taken up, discussed, and reapplied within instructional activity.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted in three classrooms within a single institutional setting and involved one teacher. The findings therefore provide analytic depth rather than broad generalisability. Future research could investigate whether similar vocabulary learning trajectories emerge in other educational contexts, with different age groups, or under different subtitle conditions. Comparative studies may also explore how alternative lesson designs influence movement from noticing to reuse.

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