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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Orchestrating Vocabulary Engagement in Secondary EFL Classrooms: Teacher Mediation in English-Subtitled Video Lessons**

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**| ABSTRACT**

The growing use of audiovisual resources in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has encouraged teachers to incorporate videos with English subtitles into everyday instruction. Although earlier studies suggest that subtitles may support vocabulary development, most have treated subtitles primarily as a form of input enhancement and evaluated their effects mainly through post-test outcomes. Far less attention has been paid to the classroom work through which teachers make subtitled input instructionally useful. In real lessons, subtitles do not operate as self-contained learning tools; their value depends on how teachers focus attention, support meaning-making, and create opportunities for subsequent language use. This study explores teacher mediation in subtitle-based vocabulary work in three Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms. The dataset comprised six classroom observations, learner interviews (n = 9), one teacher interview, and learner reflection forms (n = 60). Using thematic analysis, the study examined how teachers shaped learners' encounters with vocabulary across pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing stages. Four recurring mediation practices were identified. Teachers first signalled which lexical items were worth attending to before the video began. They then guided learners' interpretation of unfamiliar words through questioning and contextual discussion. After viewing, they designed tasks that required students to revisit and use target vocabulary in new utterances. They also managed lesson timing by deciding when to pause the video and when to preserve viewing continuity. The study shows that vocabulary learning in subtitled video lessons is not produced by textual support alone. Rather, it emerges through classroom orchestration, in which teacher mediation plays a key role in shaping attention, interpretation, and reuse. The findings contribute to work on multimodal language teaching by clarifying the instructional conditions under which subtitles become productive resources for vocabulary development.

**| KEYWORDS**

Teacher mediation; subtitled video; vocabulary development; multimodal pedagogy; EFL classrooms; classroom discourse

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### **1. Introduction**

Audiovisual resources are now widely used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching contexts, largely because digital platforms have made classroom video easier to access and integrate into lessons. Teachers frequently use video to expose learners to authentic speech, support listening, and introduce vocabulary in context. In many classrooms, these materials are accompanied by English subtitles, which present written language alongside sound and image. Because subtitles make spoken words visually available, they are often assumed to support vocabulary learning by increasing the noticeability of lexical forms and by linking oral and written input.

A substantial body of research has explored the relationship between subtitles and second language (L2) learning. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies have regularly shown that learners who watch captioned or subtitled videos tend to outperform

those who watch unsubtitled video on measures such as vocabulary recognition and recall. These results are commonly explained in terms of input enhancement: when linguistic forms are made more perceptually prominent, learners are more likely to attend to them and build form–meaning connections.

Even so, much of this work has prioritised measurable outcomes over instructional process. In many studies, participants view video individually in controlled settings, and learning is assessed through immediate or delayed tests. Such designs are useful for establishing potential effects, but they say less about what happens when subtitled video is used in ordinary classrooms. In actual lessons, learners are not processing subtitles in isolation. They are also following speech, interpreting images, responding to tasks, and working within teacher-led activity.

This matters because vocabulary learning in classrooms is shaped not only by textual support but also by pedagogy. Learners may see unfamiliar words in subtitles without fully understanding them, or they may focus on overall comprehension rather than lexical detail. Teachers therefore play an important role in determining whether vocabulary in subtitles remains background support or becomes a sustained object of classroom work. Through task framing, questioning, explanation, feedback, and follow-up activities, teachers can influence what learners attend to, how they interpret lexical items, and whether they later reuse them. From this perspective, subtitled video lessons can be understood as multimodal instructional events in which learning opportunities are jointly shaped by materials, participants, and classroom organisation. Subtitles are only one semiotic resource within this environment. Their pedagogical contribution depends on how they are embedded in lesson design and classroom discourse. Teachers may pre-select target expressions, interrupt a video to clarify meaning, or ask students to reuse vocabulary after viewing. Such practices can turn subtitles from mere comprehension support into resources for deliberate vocabulary work. Despite the expanding classroom use of English-subtitled video, relatively little research has examined how teachers mediate learners' engagement with vocabulary in this setting. Most studies still treat subtitles as a property of input rather than as a resource activated through teaching. As a result, the pedagogical processes through which learners are guided to notice, interpret, and revisit vocabulary in subtitled lessons remain insufficiently understood.

The present study addresses this gap by examining teacher mediation in English-subtitled video lessons in Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms. Rather than asking whether subtitles support vocabulary learning in general, it investigates how teachers organise classroom activity around vocabulary appearing in subtitled input. Drawing on classroom observations, learner interviews, a teacher interview, and learner reflections, the study explores how teachers direct attention, support interpretation, and create post-viewing opportunities for vocabulary work.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do teachers frame and direct learners' attention during English-subtitled video lessons in EFL classrooms?
2. What mediation practices do teachers use to support learners' interpretation of vocabulary encountered in subtitled input?
3. How do teachers create post-viewing opportunities for learners to revisit and reuse vocabulary encountered in subtitled input?

By foregrounding teacher mediation, the study contributes to a more classroom-based account of subtitle use in language teaching. It shows how the instructional value of subtitles depends on pedagogical action rather than textual support alone.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Subtitles and Vocabulary Learning in Second Language Research**

The use of subtitles and captions in second language (L2) learning has received considerable attention over the past two decades. With the increasing availability of digital audiovisual materials, subtitles have become a common pedagogical tool for supporting comprehension and vocabulary learning in both formal and informal learning environments. In language education research, subtitles are generally understood as written representations of spoken language that accompany audiovisual content, allowing learners to process auditory and textual input simultaneously.

A substantial body of empirical research suggests that subtitle-supported viewing can facilitate vocabulary learning. Studies conducted in controlled experimental settings often report that learners exposed to captioned or subtitled videos demonstrate higher vocabulary recognition and recall than those who view videos without textual support. Peters and Webb (2018), for example, found that captioned viewing enhanced incidental vocabulary learning, particularly when learners encountered lexical items repeatedly in audiovisual input. Similarly, Montero Perez (2022) synthesised a wide range of subtitle research and concluded that subtitles can positively influence vocabulary acquisition by strengthening form–meaning connections and increasing opportunities for lexical noticing.

These findings are often interpreted through the framework of input enhancement. According to this perspective, making linguistic features more perceptually salient increases the likelihood that learners will notice them and incorporate them into their developing interlanguage systems. Subtitles, by providing orthographic representations of spoken words, can increase the perceptual visibility of lexical forms and support learners' mapping of form and meaning. In this sense, subtitles function as a form of textual enhancement that complements auditory input.

However, much of this research has been conducted under laboratory conditions that differ substantially from authentic classroom environments. In many studies, learners watch videos individually without interruption, interaction, or teacher

guidance. Vocabulary learning is then measured through post-test assessments that capture recognition or recall of lexical items encountered during viewing. While such designs provide valuable evidence regarding the potential benefits of subtitles, they offer limited insight into how vocabulary engagement unfolds in instructional settings where learners interact with peers and respond to teacher mediation.

Furthermore, quantitative outcome measures often reveal little about the processes through which learners attend to, interpret, and consolidate vocabulary during subtitle-supported viewing. Learners may recognise words in post-tests without necessarily engaging deeply with their meanings during the learning process. As a result, there has been growing recognition of the need for classroom-based research that examines subtitle-supported learning as a situated phenomenon shaped by interactional and pedagogical factors rather than as a purely input-driven effect.

## **2.2 Attention and Multimodal Processing in Audiovisual Learning**

Understanding how learners engage with subtitle-supported input requires consideration of the cognitive demands associated with multimodal learning environments. When learners watch subtitled videos, they must coordinate attention across multiple channels of information, including spoken language, written subtitles, and visual imagery. Processing these channels simultaneously requires the allocation of limited attentional resources.

Research in second language acquisition has long emphasised the importance of attention in language learning. The noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990, 2001) proposes that conscious awareness of linguistic forms in input is a necessary condition for acquisition. From this perspective, subtitles may facilitate vocabulary learning by increasing the likelihood that learners notice lexical items while watching audiovisual materials. By presenting written forms alongside spoken language, subtitles can draw learners' attention to lexical items that might otherwise be missed in rapid speech.

However, attention is inherently selective and constrained by cognitive processing capacity. Learners cannot attend equally to all aspects of input at the same time, particularly in multimodal environments where multiple information streams compete for cognitive resources. Godfroid (2016) argues that attention in language learning is dynamic and context-dependent, influenced by task demands, learner goals, and processing limitations.

Cognitive theories of multimedia learning also highlight the challenges associated with processing multimodal input. Mayer's (2020) cognitive theory of multimedia learning suggests that learners process information through separate auditory and visual channels, each with limited capacity. When learners watch subtitled videos, they must divide attention between listening to speech and reading subtitles while simultaneously interpreting visual context. This may create competition between channels, potentially increasing cognitive load.

As a result, the presence of subtitles does not automatically guarantee deeper processing of vocabulary. Learners may prioritise reading subtitles for comprehension purposes rather than attending specifically to unfamiliar lexical items. In some cases, learners may rely heavily on subtitles to understand the overall message of the video while paying less attention to the spoken language itself. This suggests that subtitles function not only as input enhancements but also as resources whose use depends on learners' attentional strategies and instructional context.

While cognitive research provides valuable insights into attentional constraints in subtitle-supported viewing, it often focuses on individual processing mechanisms rather than on the social and pedagogical contexts in which learning occurs. In classroom environments, learners' attention is influenced not only by cognitive factors but also by teacher guidance, task design, and patterns of classroom interaction.

## **2.3 Teacher Mediation in Classroom Language Learning**

In classroom-based language learning, teachers play a central role in shaping how learners engage with instructional input. Rather than simply presenting linguistic material, teachers organise learning opportunities by structuring tasks, directing attention, and guiding interpretation through classroom interaction. These practices can be understood as forms of teacher mediation that influence how learners notice and process language during instructional activities.

The concept of mediation originates in sociocultural theories of learning, which emphasise the role of social interaction and cultural tools in cognitive development. Within this framework, learning is not viewed as an individual process of internal information processing alone but as an activity mediated by interaction with others and by the use of symbolic tools such as language. Teachers act as mediators who help learners engage with linguistic input and develop understanding through guided participation in classroom tasks.

In language classrooms, mediation often occurs through teacher talk. Classroom discourse research has shown that teachers frequently guide learners' attention to particular linguistic features through questioning, explanation, and feedback. Walsh (2011) describes how teachers create opportunities for language learning by shaping interactional patterns that encourage learners to notice and explore linguistic forms. For example, teachers may pause instructional input to highlight unfamiliar vocabulary, prompt learners to explain meanings, or ask questions that encourage learners to interpret language within context.

Such practices can support deeper engagement with vocabulary by transforming input into objects of classroom discussion and analysis. Instead of encountering lexical items passively, learners are encouraged to articulate interpretations, compare

meanings, and apply vocabulary in communicative tasks. Through these processes, teacher mediation can extend learners' engagement with vocabulary beyond initial exposure.

Ecological perspectives on language learning further emphasise the role of classroom interaction in shaping learning opportunities. From this perspective, classrooms are dynamic activity systems in which learning emerges through interactions between participants, tools, and tasks. Teachers structure these interactions by organising lesson stages, designing activities, and managing classroom discourse. In the context of subtitle-supported video lessons, teacher mediation may influence how learners allocate attention to subtitles, how they interpret lexical items encountered during viewing, and how they consolidate vocabulary after the video ends.

Despite the recognised importance of teacher mediation in classroom learning, relatively few studies have examined how teachers guide learners' engagement with subtitled audiovisual input. Most subtitle research focuses on the cognitive effects of captions or subtitles rather than on the pedagogical practices that accompany their use in instructional contexts. As a result, the interactional processes through which teachers transform subtitled input into learning opportunities remain insufficiently explored.

#### **2.4 Multimodal Pedagogy and Classroom Use of Audiovisual Materials**

Recent developments in multimodal pedagogy have highlighted the importance of considering how different modes of communication interact in language learning environments. Multimodal instructional materials combine visual, auditory, and textual elements that learners must interpret simultaneously. Videos with subtitles represent a particularly complex form of multimodal input, as they integrate spoken language, written text, and visual context within a single learning resource.

In classroom contexts, the pedagogical value of multimodal materials depends not only on their design but also on how teachers integrate them into instructional sequences. Teachers may use pre-viewing activities to activate background knowledge, guide learners' attention during viewing through targeted questions, and organise post-viewing tasks that encourage reflection and language use. These instructional stages can shape how learners interpret and engage with the multimodal information presented in audiovisual materials.

In subtitle-supported lessons, for example, teachers may direct learners to focus on particular expressions that appear in subtitles, pause videos to clarify meanings, or design follow-up activities that require learners to use vocabulary encountered during viewing. Such practices illustrate how subtitles can become pedagogically meaningful when embedded within structured classroom activities.

Multimodal pedagogy therefore emphasises the importance of instructional orchestration. Rather than assuming that exposure to multimodal input automatically leads to learning, this perspective highlights the role of teaching practices in guiding learners' interaction with different modes of communication. Teachers must balance the need to maintain the flow of audiovisual materials with opportunities for discussion, clarification, and practice.

Examining how teachers manage this balance is particularly important in subtitle-supported lessons, where the timing of instructional intervention may influence learners' engagement with vocabulary. Pausing videos too frequently may disrupt comprehension, while uninterrupted viewing may limit opportunities for lexical exploration. Understanding how teachers navigate these instructional decisions can provide valuable insights into how multimodal resources are effectively used in classroom language teaching.

#### **2.5 Research Gap**

Taken together, prior studies suggest that subtitles can support vocabulary development by making spoken language more accessible and by strengthening links between form and meaning. However, most of this work has approached subtitles as an input condition and has evaluated their effects mainly through test-based outcomes. Much less is known about what teachers actually do when subtitled video is used in classroom instruction.

In real lessons, subtitles are interpreted through pedagogy. Teachers decide which expressions deserve attention, when discussion should interrupt viewing, and how vocabulary from the video is taken up in later classroom activity. These decisions may shape whether learners simply follow the content of a video or engage more deliberately with the vocabulary it contains.

There is therefore a need for classroom-based inquiry that examines subtitle use as an instructional practice rather than only as an input variable. By analysing how teachers organise attention, support interpretation, and extend vocabulary work after viewing, such research can deepen understanding of how subtitled video functions in everyday language teaching. The present study responds to this need by investigating teacher mediation in English-subtitled video lessons in Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case design to examine how teachers mediated vocabulary work during English-subtitled video lessons. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the aim was to understand instructional practices and interactional processes as they unfolded in naturally occurring classroom activity, rather than to measure vocabulary gains

numerically. The study focused in particular on how teachers directed attention, supported meaning-making, and organised follow-up work around vocabulary encountered in subtitled video.

A multiple-case design allowed the analysis to capture patterned forms of mediation across three classrooms while preserving sensitivity to local classroom dynamics. Each class was treated as a bounded case in which teacher actions, learner responses, and lesson organisation could be examined in relation to one another. Comparing these cases made it possible to identify recurring mediation practices as well as differences in how they were enacted.

### 3.2 Research Context

The study was conducted in a public upper-secondary school in Vietnam where English is taught as a compulsory subject within the national curriculum. English instruction at this level emphasises vocabulary development as an important component of reading comprehension and examination preparation. Class sizes are typically large, and lessons often combine teacher explanation with task-based activities.

In recent years, the integration of multimedia resources has become increasingly common in English language teaching in Vietnamese secondary schools. Teachers frequently use short videos to introduce thematic topics, illustrate authentic language use, and support listening comprehension. Many of these videos include English subtitles, which provide written representations of spoken dialogue.

Within this context, subtitle-supported videos function as instructional tools embedded within teacher-led lessons rather than as independent learning resources. Teachers typically introduce the video topic, guide learners' attention during viewing, and organise post-viewing activities that encourage discussion and language practice. This instructional structure provides opportunities to observe how teacher mediation shapes learners' engagement with vocabulary encountered in subtitled audiovisual input.

### 3.3 Participants

Three Grade 11 classes participated in the study: Class 11A6, Class 11A7, and Class 11A15. Approximately 150 students were enrolled across the three classes, although detailed analysis focused on interactional episodes observed during the six recorded lessons and on interview data from nine focal learners. Students were aged between 16 and 17 years and had studied English as a foreign language for several years as part of the national curriculum.

All three classes were taught by the same experienced English teacher, who had more than ten years of teaching experience. The teacher regularly incorporated videos with English subtitles into lessons to support listening comprehension and vocabulary learning. Using the same teacher across all cases allowed the study to examine mediation practices under relatively consistent pedagogical conditions while still observing variation in classroom interaction and learner participation.

Participation in interviews and reflection activities was voluntary. Students were informed about the purpose of the research and provided consent before participating. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Data were collected across six subtitle-supported lessons observed in the three focal classrooms. Each lesson followed a typical instructional sequence consisting of three stages: pre-viewing preparation, video viewing, and post-viewing discussion or activities. The total observation time amounted to approximately five hours of classroom instruction.

Multiple sources of qualitative data were collected in order to capture both observable classroom interaction and participants' perspectives on the learning process. These included classroom observations, learner interviews, a teacher interview, learner reflection forms, and researcher field notes.

#### Classroom Observations

Classroom observations formed the primary source of data for analysing teacher mediation practices. During each lesson, detailed observation notes were taken to document instructional actions and classroom interaction. Particular attention was given to moments when teachers directed learners' attention to vocabulary, paused videos to clarify expressions, prompted discussion about lexical meanings, or organised follow-up tasks related to vocabulary encountered in the video.

Observation notes were organised according to lesson stages to facilitate later analysis of how teacher mediation unfolded before, during, and after video viewing. This structure made it possible to examine how instructional decisions influenced learners' engagement with vocabulary at different points in the lesson.

#### Learner Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine students across the three classrooms. The interviews explored learners' experiences of watching subtitled videos in class, including how they processed subtitles, how they interpreted unfamiliar vocabulary, and how classroom activities influenced their understanding of lexical items.

Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese in order to allow students to express their thoughts comfortably and in detail. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Recordings were later transcribed and translated into English for analysis.

### **Teacher Interview**

A semi-structured interview was also conducted with the teacher to gain insight into instructional decisions related to the use of subtitled videos. The interview explored the teacher's goals in using subtitles, strategies for guiding learners' attention during video viewing, and perceptions of how students respond to subtitle-supported materials.

The teacher interview provided contextual information that helped interpret observation data and clarify the pedagogical intentions underlying classroom practices.

### **Learner Reflection Forms**

To complement observation and interview data, learner reflection forms were collected from students after selected lessons. These reflections invited students to describe how they processed subtitles, which vocabulary items they remembered from the video, and what classroom activities helped them understand or remember new words.

In total, 60 reflection responses were collected. These responses provided additional insight into learners' perspectives on vocabulary engagement during subtitle-supported lessons.

### **Reflexive Field Notes**

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher maintained reflexive field notes documenting impressions, emerging interpretations, and methodological decisions. These notes supported the development of analytic insights during later stages of data analysis.

## **3.5 Data Analysis**

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was chosen because it allows researchers to identify patterns across qualitative datasets while remaining flexible in relation to theoretical frameworks.

The analysis proceeded through several stages. First, transcripts from interviews and reflection responses were read repeatedly alongside classroom observation notes to develop familiarity with the data. During this stage, preliminary analytic memos were written to record initial observations about teacher mediation practices.

Second, segments of data were coded according to instructional actions related to vocabulary engagement. Codes focused particularly on teacher practices that shaped learners' attention and interpretation, such as highlighting vocabulary, asking clarification questions, prompting explanation, and organising post-viewing tasks.

Third, related codes were grouped into broader categories representing different forms of teacher mediation. These categories captured recurring instructional patterns observed across the three classrooms.

Fourth, categories were further refined into higher-level themes that described how teachers orchestrated vocabulary engagement during subtitle-supported lessons. These themes represented pedagogical functions rather than isolated classroom behaviours.

Finally, patterns were compared across the three classrooms to identify similarities and differences in how mediation practices were enacted. This cross-case comparison enabled the analysis to distinguish between context-specific practices and more general patterns of teacher mediation.

## **3.6 Trustworthiness**

Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. First, methodological triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple data sources, including observations, interviews, and learner reflections. The convergence of evidence across these sources strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Second, an audit trail was maintained throughout the research process. Coding decisions, theme development, and analytic interpretations were documented in order to ensure transparency in the analytic process.

Finally, reflexive journaling was used to acknowledge the researcher's role in interpreting classroom interaction. Reflective notes helped monitor potential biases and supported careful consideration of alternative interpretations during analysis.

## **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted in accordance with standard ethical guidelines for classroom-based research. Participation in interviews and reflection activities was voluntary. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and consent was obtained prior to data collection. Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and excerpts to ensure anonymity, and identifying information about the school and participants was removed from the dataset.

#### 4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the study by showing how teacher mediation shaped vocabulary work during English-subtitled video lessons. Analysis of classroom observations, learner interviews, and reflection data identified four recurring mediation practices: (1) signalling what was worth attending to, (2) guiding interpretive talk around unfamiliar vocabulary, (3) extending vocabulary work through post-viewing tasks, and (4) regulating lesson timing during video-based instruction.

Across the three focal classrooms (11A6, 11A7, and 11A15), subtitles did not function as stand-alone learning tools. Their usefulness depended on how teachers directed learners toward particular lexical items, built opportunities for discussion, and linked subtitle-based input to later classroom activity.

##### 4.1 Framing What Counts as Worth Noticing

Across all three classrooms, teacher mediation began before the video was played. During the pre-viewing stage, the teacher frequently introduced selected lexical items expected to appear in the subtitles and instructed students to pay attention to them during viewing. This framing established an instructional focus that signalled which expressions were likely to become important in subsequent discussion.

In one lesson about natural disasters observed in Class 11A15, the teacher wrote several expressions on the board before starting the video, including *evacuation*, *rescue team*, and *emergency shelter*. Students were told that these expressions would appear in the subtitles and that they should try to identify them during viewing.

Teacher: "These words will appear in the video. When you see them in the subtitles, think about what they mean."

(Obs-11A15-L3-PV-Trans)

Observation notes indicated that students' behaviour during viewing reflected this instructional framing. When the word *evacuation* appeared in the subtitle line, several students in the middle rows of Class 11A15 immediately looked down at their notebooks and underlined the word.

Three students underline the word "evacuation" immediately after it appears in the subtitle line. One student whispers the word while writing it in her notebook.

(Obs-11A15-L3-V-09:18–09:24)

A similar pattern was observed in Class 11A6. During viewing, one student briefly tapped her partner's notebook and pointed at the word *rescue team* in the subtitle line before continuing to watch the video.

Student A points at the phrase "rescue team" on the screen and whispers something to her partner before returning attention to the video.

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

Learner reflections also confirmed the influence of teacher framing on attentional priorities. One student explained:

"When the teacher writes some words on the board before the video, I try to find them in the subtitles."

(Ref-11A15-L3-ItemC2-Trans)

Interestingly, vocabulary that was not highlighted during the pre-viewing stage was rarely recorded by students, even when it appeared clearly in the subtitles. In Class 11A7, several unfamiliar words appeared during a video segment, yet students did not appear to react to them unless they had been previously mentioned by the teacher.

These observations suggest that subtitles alone did not determine which lexical items attracted learners' attention. Instead, teacher mediation played a key role in establishing a lexical agenda that guided what students perceived as instructionally relevant vocabulary during viewing.

##### 4.2 Prompting Interpretive Work Around Subtitled Vocabulary

Teacher mediation continued during post-viewing discussion through classroom dialogue that encouraged learners to interpret vocabulary encountered in subtitles. Although students were able to read subtitle lines during viewing, they were not always certain about the meanings of unfamiliar expressions. Teachers therefore prompted learners to explain vocabulary and justify their interpretations using contextual information from the video.

In one lesson observed in Class 11A6, the teacher initiated discussion about the word *evacuation* after the video segment ended.

Teacher: "Why do you think they are evacuating? What in the video shows that?"

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

One student responded that evacuation meant "people leaving their houses." The teacher then asked a follow-up question:

Teacher: "Leaving because of what? What danger did you see in the video?"

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

Another student replied that the people were leaving because the water was rising quickly. Through this exchange, the meaning of *evacuation* was gradually clarified through reference to events depicted in the video.

Similar interactional patterns were observed in Class 11A7. During discussion of the expression *emergency shelter*, the teacher asked students to explain where the people in the video were going after leaving their homes.

Teacher: "Where do they go after leaving their houses?"

Student: "To a safe place."

Teacher: "Yes. And what do we call that safe place?"

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

Through these prompts, the teacher encouraged students to connect lexical items with the visual context of the video rather than relying solely on direct translation.

Learner interviews confirmed that such discussions helped clarify meanings that remained uncertain during viewing.

"Sometimes I read the subtitle but I don't understand the word completely. When the teacher asks about it, we discuss it and understand better."

(IntL-11A6-Lr03-Trans)

These interpretive exchanges often involved multiple students contributing explanations or examples. In several instances, students proposed tentative interpretations that were refined through additional teacher questioning or peer responses.

This pattern suggests that subtitles served as an initial textual representation of vocabulary, but teacher-led dialogue transformed these representations into shared objects of classroom interpretation.

### **4.3 Recontextualising Vocabulary Through Post-Viewing Tasks**

Teacher mediation also extended beyond discussion through structured post-viewing activities that required students to reuse vocabulary encountered in subtitles. In all three classrooms, students were asked to summarise video content or describe events using selected lexical items introduced earlier in the lesson.

For example, in Class 11A7 students worked in pairs to explain the situation shown in the video using the expressions *rescue team* and *emergency shelter*. During this activity, several students referred back to subtitle lines displayed on the screen.

Two students glance at the subtitle line on the screen and discuss how to use the phrase "rescue team" in their explanation.

(Obs-11A7-L5-PV-09:06–09:12)

When students presented their responses, the teacher provided feedback and occasionally reformulated their sentences.

Student: "The rescue team help people go to shelter."

Teacher reformulation: "The rescue team helps people reach a safe shelter."

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

These reformulations demonstrated how the teacher guided learners toward more accurate lexical usage.

In Class 11A6, students were asked to summarise the events of the video using vocabulary recorded in their notebooks.

Observation notes indicated that several students looked back at the subtitle lines while preparing their summaries.

Students refer to their notes and glance at the screen while preparing explanations. One student traces the word "evacuation" with her finger before speaking.

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

Learner reflections suggested that these tasks helped reinforce vocabulary encountered during viewing.

"When we use the words again after the video, it helps me remember them."

(Ref-11A7-L5-ItemD1-Trans)

These findings indicate that post-viewing tasks created opportunities for learners to revisit lexical items encountered in subtitles and incorporate them into communicative language use.

### **4.4 Managing Pedagogical Timing During Video-Based Instruction**

A final dimension of teacher mediation involved managing the timing of instructional intervention during subtitle-supported lessons. Teachers needed to balance uninterrupted viewing for comprehension with pauses that allowed vocabulary discussion.

Observation data showed that the teacher occasionally paused the video immediately after unfamiliar expressions appeared in subtitles.

Teacher pauses the video immediately after the word "evacuation" appears and asks students what they think it means.

(Obs-11A6-L3-V-09:21)

However, the teacher did not pause the video every time unfamiliar vocabulary appeared. In Class 11A7, several expressions appeared in the subtitles without interruption, and discussion occurred later during the post-viewing stage.

Video continues without interruption despite unfamiliar vocabulary appearing in subtitles. Teacher addresses the expression during later discussion.

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

Learner interviews indicated that this balance between uninterrupted viewing and discussion helped maintain engagement.

"If the teacher stops the video too often, it is hard to follow the story. But sometimes stopping helps us understand the words."

(IntL-11A7-Lr04-Trans)

Teachers therefore appeared to make strategic decisions about when to intervene during video viewing. Pauses were typically used when lexical items were central to understanding the narrative or when students showed visible signs of confusion.

These observations suggest that teacher mediation in subtitle-supported lessons involves managing the temporal organisation of classroom interaction. Instructional timing influences how learners distribute attention between following the storyline and exploring unfamiliar vocabulary.

#### 4.5 Cross-Case Synthesis

Across the three classrooms, teacher mediation organised vocabulary work across the lesson sequence. Before viewing, teachers indicated which words or expressions warranted attention. During and after viewing, they used questioning to help learners interpret unfamiliar items in relation to the unfolding video context. Post-viewing activities then required learners to return to selected vocabulary and use it in explanation or summary, while strategically timed pauses created moments for clarification without fully disrupting narrative flow.

Taken together, these patterns show that subtitles did not by themselves produce sustained vocabulary engagement. Rather, vocabulary became workable in classroom terms when teachers integrated subtitle-based input into a broader sequence of instructional moves. The learning potential of subtitles therefore lay not only in textual visibility but also in the pedagogy built around them.

### 5. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the central role of teacher mediation in shaping how learners engaged with vocabulary during English-subtitled video lessons. While subtitles provided visible textual representations of spoken language, the analysis suggests that lexical engagement did not arise automatically from subtitle exposure. Instead, vocabulary became pedagogically meaningful through instructional practices that organised learners' attention, guided interpretation, and extended lexical work beyond the moment of viewing. These findings contribute to research on subtitle-supported learning by demonstrating how teachers transform subtitled audiovisual input into structured opportunities for vocabulary engagement within classroom interaction.

#### 5.1 Teacher Framing and the Organisation of Attention

One of the clearest patterns emerging from the data concerns the role of teacher framing in directing learners' attention toward particular lexical items. Across the three classrooms, teachers frequently introduced key expressions before the video began and instructed students to look for them during viewing. Observation evidence showed that this framing influenced learners' behaviour during subtitle viewing. When previously introduced expressions appeared in the subtitles, students were more likely to underline them, record them in notebooks, or draw peers' attention to them.

This pattern suggests that teacher mediation helped organise attentional priorities within a multimodal input environment. Subtitle-supported videos present learners with several simultaneous sources of information: spoken language, written subtitle text, and visual imagery. Research on attention in second language acquisition suggests that learners cannot attend equally to all aspects of input because processing capacity is limited (Godfroid, 2016). In such contexts, instructional cues may help learners determine which elements of input deserve particular attention.

The classroom observations illustrate how teacher framing functioned as such an attentional cue. By identifying vocabulary in advance, the teacher effectively established a lexical agenda for the lesson. Students' actions—such as underlining subtitle words or pointing them out to peers—indicate that learners interpreted these expressions as instructionally significant. In contrast, unfamiliar words that were not highlighted during the pre-viewing stage were often ignored, even when they appeared clearly in subtitle lines.

These findings resonate with ecological perspectives on classroom learning, which emphasise that learning opportunities emerge through interaction between participants, tools, and tasks (van Lier, 2004). Subtitles increased the perceptual visibility of lexical forms, but teachers shaped how learners engaged with those forms by framing them as objects of instructional attention. In this sense, teacher mediation complemented the perceptual salience created by subtitles by directing learners' attention toward vocabulary considered relevant for the lesson.

#### 5.2 Classroom Dialogue and Interpretive Meaning-Making

A second key finding concerns the role of teacher-led dialogue in supporting the interpretation of vocabulary encountered in subtitles. Although students could read subtitle lines during viewing, observation and interview data indicated that learners were not always confident about the meanings of unfamiliar words. Teachers therefore prompted learners to explain and justify interpretations during post-viewing discussion.

The classroom interaction sequences analysed in the findings demonstrate how teacher questioning encouraged contextual reasoning. Rather than immediately translating unfamiliar expressions, teachers frequently asked learners to explain how the events in the video helped clarify lexical meaning. For example, when discussing the word *evacuation*, students were prompted to identify the danger shown in the video that caused people to leave their homes. Through this process, lexical meaning emerged through reference to narrative context rather than through isolated translation.

Such interactional patterns reflect the role of teacher talk in creating opportunities for language learning through classroom discourse. Walsh (2011) argues that teachers can facilitate language development by structuring interaction in ways that encourage learners to explore linguistic forms and meanings. In the observed lessons, teacher prompts created spaces for collaborative interpretation in which students proposed explanations, refined them through dialogue, and linked lexical items to visual events depicted in the video.

Importantly, these exchanges often involved multiple learners contributing partial interpretations that were gradually clarified through teacher guidance. In this sense, subtitles acted as triggers for classroom dialogue rather than as self-sufficient explanations of vocabulary meaning. The interpretive work surrounding subtitled vocabulary therefore occurred within the social context of classroom interaction.

This finding suggests that subtitles do not simply deliver lexical information to learners. Instead, they introduce lexical items that become objects of collective interpretation during teacher-guided discussion. The process of explaining vocabulary in relation to visual context appears to deepen learners' understanding by linking lexical forms with meaningful situational cues.

### **5.3 Extending Vocabulary Engagement Through Post-Viewing Tasks**

The findings also highlight the importance of post-viewing activities in extending learners' engagement with vocabulary beyond the moment of subtitle exposure. Across the three classrooms, teachers designed tasks that required students to revisit lexical items encountered during the video and incorporate them into spoken or written explanations.

Observation evidence showed that students frequently referred back to subtitle lines or notebook entries when completing these tasks. In some cases, students pointed to subtitle phrases while discussing how to use them in summaries or explanations. Teacher feedback during these activities further supported lexical development by reformulating student responses and demonstrating more accurate or contextually appropriate language use.

These findings suggest that lexical engagement continued after the video ended through structured communicative tasks. Rather than remaining confined to the viewing stage, vocabulary became integrated into subsequent classroom interaction. Learners were required to retrieve lexical forms and apply them to describe events or explain situations depicted in the video.

Such activities appear to play an important role in strengthening form–meaning connections. Research on vocabulary learning suggests that active use of lexical items can promote deeper processing and retention compared with passive exposure alone. In the observed lessons, post-viewing tasks provided opportunities for learners to transform lexical recognition into communicative use.

From an instructional perspective, these findings highlight the importance of sequencing in subtitle-supported lessons. Subtitles provided initial exposure to lexical forms during viewing, but teacher-designed tasks created opportunities for learners to revisit and apply those forms in meaningful contexts. This sequence illustrates how teacher mediation can extend lexical engagement across multiple stages of classroom activity.

### **5.4 Pedagogical Timing and the Management of Multimodal Input**

A further dimension of teacher mediation concerned the timing of instructional interventions during video viewing. Teachers needed to balance two instructional priorities: maintaining the continuity of the video narrative and creating opportunities for vocabulary exploration. The observation data showed that teachers made strategic decisions about when to pause the video and when to allow uninterrupted viewing.

In some cases, the video was paused immediately after an unfamiliar lexical item appeared in the subtitles, allowing the teacher to initiate brief discussion. In other cases, the teacher allowed the video to continue and addressed vocabulary later during the post-viewing stage. Learner interviews suggested that this balance was important for maintaining engagement with the narrative while still allowing attention to vocabulary.

These findings illustrate the complexity of managing multimodal materials in classroom instruction. Videos with subtitles present information that unfolds continuously over time. Teachers must therefore decide when to intervene without disrupting learners' ability to follow the storyline. Excessive interruption may fragment comprehension, whereas uninterrupted viewing may limit opportunities for lexical exploration.

Teacher mediation in subtitle-supported lessons therefore involves managing the temporal organisation of classroom interaction. Strategic pauses create moments in which lexical items can be examined more closely, while uninterrupted viewing maintains narrative coherence. The ability to coordinate these instructional decisions represents an important dimension of pedagogical expertise when working with multimodal learning materials.

### **5.5 Reconceptualising Subtitle-Supported Vocabulary Learning**

Taken together, the findings suggest that vocabulary learning in subtitled video lessons is better understood as a classroom-organised process than as a direct outcome of textual support alone. Subtitles made lexical items available to learners, but teacher action shaped whether these items became objects of sustained attention, interpretation, and use.

Teacher mediation operated through a linked set of practices: signalling target vocabulary before viewing, guiding discussion around word meaning, designing tasks that required reuse, and controlling the timing of intervention during the video. Through these practices, subtitles were woven into an instructional sequence rather than left to function independently.

This perspective challenges the idea that subtitles are inherently effective vocabulary tools. Instead, it positions them as pedagogical resources whose value depends on how they are mobilised within classroom discourse and lesson design. By focusing on teacher mediation, the study offers a more classroom-sensitive account of subtitle use and underscores the importance of pedagogy in multimodal language teaching.

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigated how teacher mediation shaped vocabulary work during English-subtitled video lessons in secondary EFL classrooms. Using classroom observations, learner interviews, a teacher interview, and learner reflections from three Grade 11 classes, the analysis examined how teachers organised learners' encounters with vocabulary across different stages of lesson activity.

The findings show that subtitles alone did not ensure sustained engagement with vocabulary. Instead, teachers played a central role in making subtitle-based input instructionally productive. They signalled target vocabulary before viewing, used discussion to support interpretation, designed follow-up tasks that required reuse, and controlled the timing of pauses and explanation during video viewing. Through these practices, vocabulary from the subtitles was carried forward into wider classroom work.

The study therefore argues that the value of subtitles in classroom vocabulary learning lies not simply in making words visible, but in how teachers build pedagogical activity around them. Subtitles provide access to lexical forms, but teacher mediation helps turn that access into attention, understanding, and use.

By centring teacher mediation, this study contributes to research on multimodal pedagogy and classroom discourse in EFL settings. It also suggests that future studies should look more closely at how different teaching designs shape learners' interaction with subtitled audiovisual materials across a wider range of contexts.

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