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SLANG EXPRESSIONS IN ZOOTOPIA: Insights For EFL Vocabulary Learning A Qualitative Analysis for Indonesian EFL Classrooms

Alifah Setiyawati*, Abdul Ngafif, Zulia Chasanah
Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo, Indonesia
**Email Korespondensi: alifahsetiyawati3@gmail.com*

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Abstract: *Vocabulary development plays an important role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it supports learners' ability to understand and produce meaningful communication. However, classroom practices still rely heavily on textbook-based materials and provide limited exposure to authentic spoken English. Informal language features such as slang expressions are often overlooked in vocabulary instruction, although they frequently appear in daily communication. This study investigated slang expressions in the animated movie Zootopia and explored their potential contribution to EFL vocabulary learning. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using documentation and note-taking techniques based on the movie script and subtitles to ensure contextual accuracy. The data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis to identify and classify slang expressions according to their linguistic forms, communicative functions, and contextual meanings. The findings revealed 30 slang expressions categorized into reduced forms, informal lexical slang, idiomatic expressions, and address terms. Informal lexical slang and reduced forms were the most dominant categories, showing the frequent use of conversational language in the movie. In addition, these expressions reflected pragmatic and sociolinguistic meanings that supported learners' understanding of authentic spoken English. The study suggests that animated movies can serve as effective media for contextual vocabulary learning by providing authentic exposure to natural spoken English and supporting learners' awareness of natural language use in EFL classrooms.*

Keywords: *Slang Expressions, Animated Movies, EFL Vocabulary Learning, Authentic Materials*

Abstrak: Pengembangan kosakata memiliki peran penting dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) karena mendukung kemampuan peserta didik dalam memahami dan menghasilkan komunikasi yang bermakna. Namun, praktik pembelajaran di kelas masih sangat bergantung pada materi berbasis buku teks dan memberikan paparan yang terbatas terhadap bahasa Inggris lisan yang autentik. Unsur bahasa informal seperti ungkapan slang sering kali diabaikan dalam pembelajaran kosakata, meskipun sering muncul dalam komunikasi sehari-hari. Penelitian ini mengkaji ungkapan slang dalam film animasi Zootopia dan mengeksplorasi potensi kontribusinya terhadap pembelajaran kosakata EFL. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik dokumentasi dan pencatatan berdasarkan naskah film serta subtitle untuk memastikan ketepatan konteks. Data dianalisis melalui analisis isi kualitatif untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan ungkapan slang berdasarkan bentuk linguistik, fungsi komunikatif, dan makna kontekstualnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan 30 ungkapan slang yang dikategorikan ke dalam bentuk singkatan, slang leksikal informal, ekspresi idiomatik, dan istilah sapaan. Slang leksikal informal dan bentuk singkatan menjadi kategori yang paling dominan, yang menunjukkan tingginya penggunaan bahasa percakapan dalam film tersebut. Selain itu, ungkapan-ungkapan ini mencerminkan makna pragmatik dan sosiolinguistik yang mendukung pemahaman peserta didik terhadap bahasa Inggris lisan yang autentik. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa film animasi dapat berfungsi sebagai media yang efektif untuk pembelajaran kosakata secara kontekstual dengan memberikan paparan autentik terhadap bahasa Inggris lisan alami serta mendukung kesadaran peserta didik terhadap penggunaan bahasa alami dalam kelas EFL.

Kata Kunci: Ungkapan Slang, Film Animasi, Pembelajaran Kosakata EFL, Materi Autentik

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary knowledge has been shown to be significantly associated with learners' reading comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Lee & Drajati, 2020). In many EFL settings, students' exposure to English outside the classroom remains limited, making vocabulary development largely dependent on instructional materials and teaching strategies implemented by teachers (Hasan, 2024). Research on audiovisual input further demonstrates that although learners can acquire vocabulary incidentally through viewing, such learning is influenced by factors such as frequency of occurrence and prior vocabulary knowledge (Peters & Webb, 2018). Consequently, learners may not successfully acquire low-frequency lexical items or unfamiliar words encountered in authentic input (Peters & Webb, 2018). This perspective is supported by Bipasha (2025), who emphasizes that vocabulary learning becomes more effective when learners are exposed to meaningful and communicative language use rather than isolated forms.

In classroom practice, vocabulary instruction frequently relies on textbooks as primary learning resources. However, research indicates that some ESL/EFL textbooks may not fully reflect authentic conversational patterns found in real-life interaction (Li & Chen, 2025). Learning needs analysis highlights the importance of aligning teaching materials with learners' contextual needs to promote meaningful learning outcomes (Fitri et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies in Indonesian EFL settings demonstrate that appropriate instructional media can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition and learning engagement (Anggraeni et al., 2021). However, many classrooms still provide limited opportunities for students to engage with authentic and contextualized language input, despite evidence that such exposure can support incidental vocabulary learning (Nguyen & Boers, 2019). This suggests that the integration of authentic materials remains a crucial aspect in improving vocabulary instruction.

Recent developments in educational technology have encouraged the integration of digital media into language instruction. Albiladi & Alshareef (2019) and Hasan (2024) found that technology-enhanced learning environments support instructional effectiveness by combining face-to-face interaction with digital resources. The successful implementation of digital materials in EFL classrooms is also influenced by teachers' technological pedagogical competence, particularly in selecting and utilizing appropriate media (Valtonen et al., 2019). These findings indicate that effective integration of digital tools requires both pedagogical consideration and contextual relevance.

Among various digital media, video-based materials have received considerable attention in EFL instruction (Montero Perez et al., 2018). Audiovisual content provides visual cues and contextual support that facilitate comprehension and vocabulary retention (Montero Perez et al., 2018; Peters & Webb, 2018). Learners' positive perceptions toward narrative and video-based learning further indicate that audiovisual media contribute to meaningful language development (Shafira et al., 2025). Similarly, online video platforms have been shown to create authentic learning environments that support vocabulary development and learner engagement (Kabooha & Elyas, 2018). In addition, previous studies highlight that audiovisual materials, particularly movies, reflect real-life language use and provide exposure to natural interaction patterns in English (Shafira et al., 2025; Wijayanti & Chasanah, 2021).

One widely utilized form of audiovisual media in EFL classrooms is English movies. Movies present language in meaningful contexts and expose learners to diverse language styles used in natural interaction (Kabooha & Elyas, 2018). Previous studies have also analysed linguistic features

in movie dialogue and their pedagogical application in English teaching (Wijayanti & Chasanah, 2021). Previous studies have shown that audiovisual materials support vocabulary acquisition by enabling learners to infer meaning through contextual and visual cues (Montero Perez et al., 2018; Peters & Webb, 2018). As authentic materials, movies offer learners exposure to both formal and informal language varieties. Furthermore, previous studies examining language style in the *Gretel and Hansel* movie demonstrate that movie dialogue reflects variation in language use depending on context and interaction, reinforcing the role of movies as authentic linguistic input.

A prominent linguistic feature found in movie dialogues is slang. Slang consists of informal lexical expressions commonly used in everyday interaction and spoken communication (Erawanto & Parthama, 2020). Studies have shown that slang frequently appears in movie scripts and reflects features of natural spoken language (Erawanto & Parthama, 2020; Lelono & Sumardiono, 2024; Situmorang & Herman, 2021). In addition, language style varies depending on social context, participants, and communicative purposes, where informal expressions frequently emerge in everyday communication (Lee & Drajati, 2020). However, despite its presence in authentic media, slang expressions remain underrepresented in formal vocabulary instruction, which tends to prioritize standardized lexical items (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020).

Although previous research has examined technology integration, video-based learning, and movie use in EFL contexts, limited attention has been given to the systematic pedagogical exploration of slang expressions as vocabulary resources. Authentic audiovisual input has been shown to facilitate contextualized and incidental vocabulary learning (Peters & Webb, 2018), yet studies focusing specifically on slang in animated movies for EFL vocabulary instruction remain scarce. This indicates a research gap that needs further exploration, particularly in understanding how informal language contributes to vocabulary development.

To address this gap, the present study goes beyond merely identifying and classifying slang expressions by proposing a pedagogically-oriented analytical framework for EFL vocabulary learning. This study integrates the analysis of slang expressions with three key dimensions of language learning, namely contextual meaning construction, pragmatic awareness, and sociolinguistic competence. While previous studies by Erawanto and Parthama (2020), Lelono and Sumardiono (2024), and Situmorang and Herman (2021) primarily focused on describing the forms and meanings of slang, this study positions slang as a functional linguistic resource that supports communicative competence in EFL contexts.

Furthermore, this research introduces a context-based categorization model in which slang expressions are not only analyzed in terms of their linguistic forms, but also interpreted based on their communicative functions in interaction. This approach contributes to bridging the gap between linguistic analysis and pedagogical application, which remains underexplored in prior research.

Authentic audiovisual exposure has been shown to support incidental vocabulary learning through meaningful listening and viewing experiences (Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016). Building on this perspective, the purpose of this research is to analyse slang expressions found in the animated movie *Zootopia* and to examine their potential contribution to EFL vocabulary learning. Specifically, this research identifies the types of slang expressions used in the movie and explores their pedagogical relevance as authentic vocabulary input for EFL learners.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design proposed by Doyle et al. (2020) to analyze slang expressions in the animated movie *Zootopia* and to examine their pedagogical relevance for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) vocabulary learning. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because the study focuses on interpreting linguistic phenomena in natural communicative contexts without manipulating variables. This approach allows the researcher to explore language use as it occurs naturally in authentic interaction. The utterances in the movie dialogues that contain slang expressions were analyzed using the official movie script and subtitle files to ensure transcription accuracy and contextual consistency. These textual sources functioned as primary documents to support the systematic identification and classification of slang expressions. Data were collected through documentation and systematic note-taking techniques. The movie was viewed repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline, character interactions, and situational context of each dialogue. Through repeated viewing, the researcher was able to ensure accurate identification of slang expressions and their contextual meanings. Slang expressions were identified based on predefined criteria, including: (1) informal lexical usage, (2) non-standard or conversational forms, (3) context-dependent meanings that differ from literal definitions, and (4) expressions commonly associated with spoken interaction. These criteria were used to ensure that the selected data accurately represent informal language use in authentic communication.

A total of 30 slang expressions were identified and selected as the research data. Each expression was recorded in a classification matrix containing the dialogue excerpt, speaker, contextual situation, preliminary meaning interpretation, and slang category. This systematic documentation allowed for consistent organization and facilitated further analysis. The selection emphasized expressions that clearly represented informal spoken language and demonstrated communicative function within the dialogue. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, a method that enables systematic categorization and interpretation of textual data in descriptive qualitative research (Bengtsson, 2016). The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, data reduction was carried out by selecting utterances that met the established criteria of slang expressions. Second, the selected expressions were categorized into conceptual groups such as reduced forms, informal lexical slang, idiomatic expressions, and address terms. Third, each expression was interpreted contextually by examining its pragmatic function, emotional tone, and interactional purpose within the scene. This step ensured that the analysis captured both linguistic form and communicative meaning.

Beyond linguistic classification, a pedagogical analysis was conducted to examine the relevance of the identified slang expressions for EFL vocabulary learning. The analysis focused on how slang expressions may support authentic exposure, contextual meaning inference, and learners' awareness of informal spoken English in classroom settings. This aspect connects the linguistic findings with practical implications for language teaching. To ensure trustworthiness, credibility strategies were applied in accordance with qualitative research standards (Nowell et al., 2017). Triangulation was conducted by cross-checking subtitle versions, official scripts, and contextual interpretation through repeated viewing (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This procedure aimed to maintain consistency in classification and reduce subjective bias in data interpretation. In addition, careful documentation and systematic procedures were implemented to ensure transparency and reliability throughout the research process. Through these procedures, the study ensures analytical

rigor and provides a reliable basis for examining slang expressions as authentic vocabulary resources in EFL instruction. In addition, the systematic analysis conducted in this study ensures that each slang expression is interpreted within its appropriate contextual framework, allowing for a more accurate understanding of its communicative function. Such an approach also strengthens the validity of the findings by providing a clear connection between linguistic features and their pedagogical relevance in EFL learning contexts. Furthermore, the use of structured analytical procedures supports the consistency of the data interpretation process and enhances the overall credibility of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified a total of 30 slang expressions in the animated movie *Zootopia*. These expressions were systematically categorized into four groups based on their linguistic form and communicative function, consistent with previous studies on slang in movie dialogues (Erawanto & Parthama, 2020; Situmorang & Herman, 2021). The distribution of these categories indicates that slang in animated movie dialogues appears in varied forms and serves multiple pragmatic purposes. This variation reflects how language is used dynamically in authentic communication, depending on context, interaction, and speaker intention. This initial classification provides an overview of the types of slang identified before further analysis is presented. It also serves as a basis for the detailed discussion of each category in the following sections.

Table 1. Types of Slang Expressions in Zootopia

Category	Examples	Frequency
Reduced Forms	*Gonna, wanna, gotta, kinda, lemme, gimme, ain't, outta*	8
Informal Lexical Slang	*Heck, busted, chill, rookie, hotshot, dude, trash, crap, sucks*	9
Idiomatic Slang	*Big deal, no biggie, freak out, hit the streets, get real, hang on, knock it off*	7
Address Terms	*Buddy, pal, sweetheart, dumb bunny, guys, kid*	6
Total	-	30

As presented in Table 1, informal lexical slang (9 items) and reduced forms (8 items) were the most frequent categories. This finding indicates that conversational language variation dominates character interaction in the movie. The high occurrence of these categories suggests that the dialogue reflects everyday spoken English rather than formal scripted language. Such dominance of informal forms highlights the potential of animated movies to expose learners to natural communicative patterns that are often absent from textbook-based materials. This finding is in line with Bipasha (2025), who emphasizes that vocabulary learning becomes more effective when learners are exposed to contextualized and communicative language input.

Reduced Forms

Reduced forms including *gonna*, *wanna*, and *gotta* were frequently used in the dialogue. These forms reflect phonological reduction commonly found in natural spoken English and are used in casual interaction to convey meaning efficiently in real-time communication. Their presence shows that animated movies contain spoken grammar variation that is rarely emphasized in textbook-based instruction.

While previous studies highlight the role of audiovisual materials in supporting vocabulary acquisition through contextualized input (Montero Perez et al., 2018; Peters & Webb, 2018), limited attention has been given to reduced spoken forms as part of vocabulary learning. The present findings indicate that reduced forms appear naturally in movie dialogue and may serve as an important component of authentic language exposure. This finding also supports previous research showing that language variation in real communication is shaped by interactional context and communicative purposes (Lee & Drajati, 2020).

Informal Lexical Slang

Informal lexical items such as *heck, busted,* and *chill* were used to express emotion, humor, and interpersonal stance. These expressions function beyond literal meaning and contribute to the tone of interaction. This finding aligns with studies on non-literal language in media texts, which emphasize the importance of contextual interpretation in understanding meaning (Krisnisa et al., 2025). In contrast to traditional vocabulary instruction that focuses on standardized lexical items, slang expressions demonstrate how vocabulary carries pragmatic and emotional meaning in real communication. This indicates that learners need to develop not only lexical knowledge but also pragmatic awareness in order to use language appropriately in different contexts. In line with this, previous studies highlight that language style varies depending on communicative purpose and social interaction, reinforcing the importance of informal language exposure in EFL learning. Furthermore, exposure to slang expressions can help learners interpret speakers' attitudes, emotions, and interpersonal intentions more accurately in authentic communication. Through contextualized audiovisual input, learners are also encouraged to develop sociolinguistic sensitivity, which is essential for understanding how language choices reflect social relationships and situational appropriateness.

Idiomatic Slang Expressions

Idiomatic expressions such as *big deal* and *no biggie* require contextual inference to understand their intended meaning. These expressions cannot be interpreted word-by-word, highlighting the importance of situational cues in comprehension. In the movie dialogue, these expressions appeared in conversational exchanges between characters and were used in response to specific situations. Previous research has emphasized authentic audiovisual input as a key factor in incidental vocabulary acquisition (Peters & Webb, 2018). The present findings extend this perspective by showing that idiomatic slang in animated movies provides opportunities for incidental vocabulary learning through audiovisual support. Furthermore, previous studies also indicate that movie dialogue reflects contextual language use that supports meaning construction in real-life communication, particularly when learners are exposed to multimodal input.

Address Terms and Social Meaning

Address terms such as *buddy*, *pal*, and *sweetheart* were used to indicate social relationships and character positioning. In certain contexts, these terms conveyed sarcasm or power dynamics. Earlier research often categorizes slang as informal vocabulary without discussing its sociolinguistic function. However, the findings of this study demonstrate that slang expressions also construct character identity and interpersonal meaning. These address terms function not only as lexical choices but also as markers of solidarity, distance, or authority depending on situational context. This reinforces the role of movies as sources of pragmatic language exposure in EFL

contexts, particularly in helping learners interpret tone, intention, and interpersonal stance in spoken interaction. This perspective is also supported by previous studies that emphasize the role of contextual and interactional language use in developing communicative competence.

Discussion

Overall, the findings demonstrate that slang expressions in *Zootopia* occur in varied linguistic forms and fulfil multiple communicative functions. The dominance of reduced forms and informal lexical slang indicates that conversational language variation plays a central role in character interaction. In particular, the frequent use of reduced forms such as *gonna*, *wanna*, and *gotta* reflects phonological reduction and grammatical compression, which are characteristic features of natural spoken English. These forms illustrate how authentic spoken language often diverges from standardized written structures, highlighting a gap between classroom-based instruction and real-life language use.

From a second language acquisition (SLA) perspective, exposure to such reduced forms is crucial, as learners are often unfamiliar with naturally occurring spoken variations, which may lead to difficulties in listening comprehension. As argued by Peters & Webb (2018), incidental vocabulary learning from audiovisual input depends heavily on learners' ability to process authentic language forms. Therefore, reduced forms should not be treated merely as informal deviations, but as systematic features of spoken English that require pedagogical attention. In this regard, the presence of reduced forms in animated movies provides learners with opportunities to encounter naturally occurring speech patterns that are rarely emphasized in formal instruction.

In addition to reduced forms, informal lexical slang such as *heck*, *busted*, and *chill* demonstrate how vocabulary is used to express emotion, evaluation, and interpersonal stance. These expressions are highly context-dependent and often carry meanings that extend beyond their literal definitions. This suggests that vocabulary learning should involve not only the acquisition of word meaning, but also an understanding of how language is used to convey attitudes and social meaning in interaction. Such findings support the view that vocabulary knowledge is closely linked to pragmatic competence.

Similarly, idiomatic slang expressions such as *no biggie* and *get real* highlight the importance of contextual inference in language comprehension. These expressions cannot be interpreted through word-by-word translation, requiring learners to rely on situational context and prior knowledge. This reinforces the role of audiovisual input in supporting incidental learning, as visual and contextual cues help learners construct meaning more effectively. In this sense, animated movies provide a rich learning environment where learners can develop inferencing skills alongside vocabulary knowledge.

Furthermore, address terms such as *buddy*, *pal*, and *sweetheart* illustrate the sociolinguistic dimension of language use. These expressions function not only as forms of address, but also as markers of social relationships, power dynamics, and speaker intention. Depending on the context, they may signal friendliness, sarcasm, or authority. These findings highlight that understanding vocabulary also involves interpreting interpersonal meaning, which is an essential component of communicative competence.

Compared to previous studies that primarily focused on identifying and describing slang forms (Erawanto & Parthama, 2020; Lelono & Sumardiono, 2024; Situmorang & Herman, 2021), this study extends the discussion by positioning slang expressions as resources for developing communicative competence, particularly in relation to contextual, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic

language use. In this sense, slang can be viewed as a bridge between linguistic knowledge and real-life language use, enabling learners to interpret meaning beyond literal definitions and to engage more effectively in authentic communication.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of integrating pragmatic and sociolinguistic dimensions into vocabulary instruction. Traditional vocabulary teaching often emphasizes form-meaning mapping, with limited attention to contextual use and interactional meaning (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). However, the present study shows that slang expressions inherently involve emotional tone, interpersonal stance, and situational appropriateness. This suggests that vocabulary learning should move beyond isolated lexical items toward a more comprehensive understanding of language as a tool for communication.

In relation to pedagogy, the findings support the use of audiovisual materials, particularly animated movies, as effective resources for exposing learners to authentic language use. Audiovisual input provides contextual and visual support that facilitates meaning construction and enhances learners' engagement (Montero Perez et al., 2018; Peters & Webb, 2018). More importantly, it allows learners to observe how language functions in interaction, including how speakers express attitudes, manage relationships, and respond to different communicative situations.

Rather than viewing slang merely as informal vocabulary, this study emphasizes its role as a meaningful component of communicative competence that integrates linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural knowledge. Therefore, incorporating slang expressions into EFL instruction can contribute to a more holistic approach to vocabulary learning, where learners develop not only lexical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in context. This perspective reinforces the importance of incorporating authentic and context-rich language input in EFL instruction to better prepare learners for real-life communication.

Although this study does not empirically test classroom implementation, it provides pedagogical insights by demonstrating how slang expressions in animated movies can function as authentic vocabulary resources. Through contextual exposure, pragmatic interpretation, and sociolinguistic awareness, learners can develop a more comprehensive understanding of real-life English communication.

Pedagogical Implications for EFL Vocabulary Teaching

To strengthen the connection between the findings and their pedagogical relevance, this study proposes a structured instructional model for integrating slang expressions into EFL vocabulary learning. This model is grounded in research on audiovisual input and incidental vocabulary acquisition (Montero Perez et al., 2018; Peters & Webb, 2018), which emphasize the importance of contextualized exposure and meaningful interaction in language learning.

The proposed instructional model consists of three stages:

1. **Exposure Stage (Noticing and Awareness)**
   In this stage, learners are exposed to selected movie clips containing slang expressions with subtitles. The aim is to help learners notice unfamiliar expressions and observe how they are used in authentic communicative contexts. Audiovisual input provides visual and contextual support that facilitates comprehension and enhances learners' attention to language use.
2. **Meaning Construction Stage (Guided Interpretation)**
   Learners analyze the meaning of slang expressions through guided questions and teacher scaffolding. This stage focuses on interpreting meaning based on context, speaker intention, emotional tone, and interactional situation. Through this process, learners develop not only

semantic understanding but also pragmatic awareness of how language is used in real communication.

3. **Production Stage (Contextual Use)**
   In the final stage, learners are encouraged to use slang expressions in communicative activities such as role-play, dialogue reconstruction, or situational conversation tasks. This stage aims to develop learners' ability to use informal expressions appropriately and to enhance their communicative competence in real-life contexts.

Although this study does not empirically test the implementation of this instructional model in classroom settings, it provides a research-informed pedagogical framework that can be applied and further examined in future studies. This contribution helps bridge the gap between linguistic analysis and practical teaching application in EFL contexts. Furthermore, this finding suggests that treating slang merely as informal vocabulary is insufficient, as it neglects its role in conveying contextual and interactional meaning in real communication.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the slang expressions found in the animated movie Zootopia represent various forms of informal language that reflect authentic spoken interaction in everyday communication. Through qualitative analysis, this study identified 30 slang expressions, which were classified into four categories, namely reduced forms, informal lexical slang, idiomatic expressions, and address terms. The findings indicate that slang expressions demonstrate linguistic variation and carry not only lexical meanings, but also pragmatic and sociolinguistic meanings that help convey speakers' intentions and interpersonal meanings in specific contexts. In relation to EFL vocabulary learning, this study reveals that slang expressions in animated movies have pedagogical relevance as authentic vocabulary input, as they can support learners in expanding vocabulary knowledge, understanding contextual language use, and developing communicative competence.

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