Reframing A Self-Organized Learning Environment (SOLE) to Accommodate Indonesian EFL Students’ Learning Loss

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Abstract. In the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown, students have faced heightened learning loss, attributed to factors such as inadequate learning methods, restricted access to education, decreased instructional time, and emotional stressors. Particularly affected is English language learning, prompting the need for effective remedies. This study proposes the implementation of new Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs) as a strategic response to mitigate learning setbacks, especially in post-pandemic contexts. Employing a systematic review of relevant literature and employing established methodologies for position paper composition, this research undertakes a comprehensive analysis of SOLEs’ effectiveness in nurturing students who experienced learning loss. Divided into three focal areas, the study explores the evolving new role of teachers within SOLEs, the integration of SOLEs in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, and the utilization of digital applications to enhance language-focused SOLE practices. Through this multifaceted analysis, the study aims to offer innovative insights and actionable recommendations for addressing learning loss and fostering resilient educational strategies in the aftermath of the pandemic. The results of this study contribute valuable knowledge to the ongoing discourse on educational recovery, with implications for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders invested in creating adaptive and effective learning environments.

INTRODUCTION

These teenagers were born two decades ago and are very familiar with and proficient in operating digital technology. Prensky (2001) mentions the generation that
grows and develops with this technology as ‘Digital Natives’. Characteristic of student-to-language teaching nowadays, Arnove (2020) argued that the language teaching-learning framework has been shifting to the need-based and technology-guided framework as the face-to-face learning paradigm is being shifted to the online and distance learning paradigm.

Next, as the students’ characters are the social entity, Contipelli & Picciau (2020) added that current teaching and learning focuses on the facilitation and evaluation system of students' values and needs, which are to be systemized based on the performance analysis of the students. Along with those arguments, the presence and development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enable the possibility to carry out learning activities during the Post-pandemic Covid-19 easier.

The 'Post pandemic' term was understood as the situation following the outbreak of Covid-19. This situation, not unexpectedly, led to a wide range of forecasts about what will occur and what should be done (Rhodes et al., 2020; Sumanto, 2021). In the education sector, due to the lockdown in the first phase of Covid-19, more than 1.60 billion students were affected, from pre-primary to higher education, trapped at home for months.

Therefore, with the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the educational sector has faced some challenges as the students have been stranded at home, have online design teaching-learning programs, and have examinations at all levels in many countries, (Sadewo, 2021).

One issue that emerged in the post-pandemic era is students' learning loss. Learning loss is defined as when someone misses school and does not get the most out of the learning process. Thus, learning loss affects the cognitive quality of the people who will graduate during the Covid-19 pandemic or might be in post-pandemic. Yarrow & Afkar (2021) argued that Indonesian learning loss is the result of school closures, where the latest data estimates until June 2021 showed that the loss of students' PISA reading scores 25 points about 0.9 years of learning-adjusted schooling.

According to research findings from the adoption of the online learning design, the possibility of learning loss or a decrease in learning capabilities appears to be a new scourge in the education sector, both during and post the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in border regions that experience unequal access to technology. Therefore, it is necessary to take and apply mitigation measures.

With the help of technology, the authors would like to offer a promising pathway through which to engage 21st-century and digital natives learners, namely the Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs). SOLE is one example of a technique to improve learning environments by using technology. Sugata Mitra originally designed his
experiments known as "The Hole in the Wall", which took place in India between 1999 and 2004 and refers to placing computers for children's free use. A SOLE is a learning environment in which students self-organize into groups of four or more and are given a computer with Internet access. The teacher's role is to facilitate an answer to a conceptually essential and challenging question that would be difficult or impossible to answer without the use of the Internet.

Several countries have applied SOLE in their EFL language classroom contexts. In the Oman context, for example, the SOLE practice was performed and gave positive benefits to its EFL adult students, particularly students' motivation and autonomous learning English language (Al Zakwani & Walker-Gleaves, 2019a). Similarly, years of experimental research in India found that SOLEs successfully increase students' cognitive achievement.

In Indonesia, the implementation of Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs) is gaining momentum, particularly within the context of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) initiative. This educational reform program, introduced in 2020, aims to foster student-centered learning, digital literacy, and innovative pedagogies. SOLEs are seen as a means to achieve these goals by empowering students to take control of their own learning through self-directed inquiry and collaboration. Various schools and educational institutions across Indonesia have been exploring the integration of SOLEs into their teaching practices. Educators are experimenting with different approaches to implementing SOLEs, such as incorporating them into existing curriculum frameworks or setting up dedicated SOLE labs within schools (Al Zakwani & Walker-Gleaves, 2019b; Asmawati et al., 2021; Suciati, 2021).

Additionally, the use of digital technology is playing a significant role in the implementation of SOLEs in Indonesia. With the increasing availability of digital devices and internet connectivity, students have greater access to online resources and tools for conducting research, collaborating with peers, and presenting their findings.

However, challenges remain in fully realizing the potential of SOLEs in the Indonesian context. These include issues related to infrastructure and technology access, teacher training and support, curriculum alignment, and cultural factors.

Therefore, efforts are being made to address these challenges through many ways policy reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, and other stakeholders. To fill the gaps particularly on policy reformed, this study aims to position what needs to be improved Indonesian SOLE practices within the context of students learn.
LITERATURE REVIEW

A Model of SOLE

SOLE is a learning strategy designed to help educators encourage students to be curious from within themselves by organizing student-driven learning. The components contained in student-driven learning are curious, cooperative, self-organized, engaged, social, and facilitated by encouragement (Mitra et al., 2005). The learning environment at the SOLE is distinguished by its "lack of adult intervention" and by its "openness and flexibility" (Mitra et al., 2005).

Since there may not be set learning objectives, SOLE sessions have been proven to offer environments where spontaneous creativity and learning can occur, which consists of three stages of activity that each student must carry out. The teacher is only in charge of providing triggers in the form of questions related to the material to be discussed. The next activity depends on the student's creativity in answering the question.

Distinctive Features of SOLE

There are three syntax activity stages in SOLE: questioning, investigation, and review. First, The Questions stage includes providing questions that can generate feelings want to know of the students about the material being taught. The question made can reduce more questions back to the material being taught. The approximate time to spend in this stage is 5 minutes. Second, in The Investigation stage, students form a small group. Students in groups collaborate and use one internet tool to find answers to questions given earlier. If the internet network is limited, students can take advantage of textbooks and the environment around them as objects of observation and investigation. This stage will finish in 30-45 minutes. Third, Review each group to present their findings on the questions given (for 10-20 minutes). In teaching 21st skills in students’ context, SOLEs have been translated into several learning activities.

Furthermore, as an e-learning model, SOLE has several advantages, especially to the teachers: a) improve skills in asking inquiry questions (big question); b) have a deeper understanding of the interests of students; c) foster curiosity in students' self-learning; d) feel a connection at the same level with students; e) expand understanding of how much learners can learn with own ability; and f) sharing in the discovery process of students through reinforcement of the learning environment (Dolan et al., 2013).

Throughout the practice of SOLE, there are advantages related to students, which are proposed by Ati (2021); they are: a) empowered to control their learning experience independently; b) improve reading comprehension, attitude, language, creativity, and
solving skills problem; c) increase computer literacy; d) improve study habits lifetime; e) develop memory recall ability; f) strengthening interpersonal and presentation skills; g) improve expertise in integrating knowledge; h) develop a sense of trust in teachers and adults in general; and i) to be more motivated to learn the differences (Mitra, 2013).

Through the SOLE model, students can be directed to learn and understand something materials independently with technological literacy and ready to communicate it to others. Finally, SOLE can encourage students to have curiosity within themselves (an innate sense of wonder) by carrying out student-based learning (student-driven learning). The components contained in student-driven learning are tasted curious, cooperative, organized, alone, included, social, and facilitated by encouraging adults (Mitra, 2015).

**An EFL SOLE Model**

EFL Students have more opportunities to use the target language in the EFL context as part of cooperative learning activities that deepen and improve language use, with immediate and helpful feedback from the teacher. For instance, the goal of a writing class is to help students improve their ability to communicate their ideas in coherent, understandable reports in a classroom setting. Several experimental research was performed as example model to facilitate an EFL learner's motivation to master English language skills. One of the frameworks of SOLEs in teaching English is proposed by Al Zakwani & Walker-Gleaves (2019).

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![Figure 1 SOLEs model activities](image-url)
It was not so different from the original SOLEs. In the first segment, the English teachers put big questions in front of the class based on the class topic. Each lesson's topic was selected from the same syllabus level students used. For each course, the researchers came up with broad questions that addressed the entire subject.

In the context of SOLE, "big questions" are topics that do not have clear-cut answers and require students to collaborate, argue, seek, synthesize, and evaluate the information they find online. Big questions are uniquely employed in a SOLE since they encourage investigation, discussion, and critical thought.

The next activity was investigating the questions, where the students in the group tried to find the answers to the "big questions". They are free to open up the computer or any internet device so that they can create their answers. This phase allows the students to learn both intensive and extensive reading. Besides reading skills, the students can communicate orally or written with their friends in English to make group findings on the questions during the investigations.

The last is when the EFL students are allowed to present the result. They might have a different opinion since the big questions open up one and more right answers. EFL students try to present the group findings. All members of the classroom also review the result of the finding. They are free to talk, write, to navigate their ideas in English.

The **EFL Students Learning Loss**

English foreign language learning loss refers to the decline or regression in students' proficiency and competence in the English language, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language. As Donnelly, R., & Patrinos, H. A. (2021) pointed out that this phenomenon occurs after Covid-19 outbreak due to various factors such as interruptions in language instruction, limited exposure to authentic language use, lack of practice opportunities, and challenges in maintaining language skills outside formal learning environments.

English foreign language learning loss encompasses both linguistic and communicative aspects. Linguistically, it involves a decrease in vocabulary retention, grammatical accuracy, and language fluency. Communicatively, it manifests as reduced ability to comprehend spoken and written English, express ideas coherently, and engage in meaningful interaction in English-speaking settings (Chen, J., & Krieger, N. 2022). There are several dimensions that learning loss of language learning has, as follows (Astika, Y., & Zaim, M, 2022; Zaim, M., et.al., 2023; Tracy, N., 2023):
a. Vocabulary Acquisition: Learning loss in English as a foreign language often leads to declines in vocabulary knowledge and usage, resulting in limited lexical breadth and depth.

b. Grammar and Syntax: Students may experience setbacks in grammar and syntax, exhibiting errors in sentence structure, tense usage, agreement, and other grammatical features.

c. Language Fluency: Learning loss can impede students' language fluency, affecting their ability to speak and write English with ease, spontaneity, and naturalness.

d. Reading Comprehension: Students may struggle with reading comprehension, facing difficulties in understanding written texts, extracting key information, and making inferences in English.

e. Listening Skills: Learning loss may result in decreased proficiency in listening comprehension, hindering students' ability to understand spoken English, follow instructions, and engage in oral communication.

f. Writing Proficiency: Students may exhibit declines in writing proficiency, producing texts with limited coherence, cohesion, and accuracy in English.

g. Speaking Skills: Learning loss can impact students' speaking skills, leading to hesitancy, inaccuracies, and limited ability to express ideas and opinions orally in English.

Addressing English foreign language learning loss requires targeted interventions that focus on vocabulary development, grammar instruction, language practice, authentic communication tasks, and immersive language experiences. By understanding the dimensions of learning loss in English as a foreign language, educators can design effective teaching strategies and curriculum adaptations to support students' language learning and proficiency development, fostering their success in English language acquisition and communication.

Current Study in Indonesia Context

Indonesia is the context of the current study. Indonesia's Ministry of Education (MOE) has total control over the educational system because it has the authority to establish national educational curricula for all K–12 and higher institutions. The MOE recently realized that new curricula called as 'Merdeka Curricula' policy, (Dimmera et al, 2022).

The new policy, in which a sort of autonomous freedom is granted to the campus, is the program policy for the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom Learning) program. as the response
to the former curricula where teacher-led and used the "teaching to test" methodology, which did not fulfil people's demands and national needs in the 21st century. These modifications emphasize student-centred learning and support CL as an active learning strategy.

However, based on an analysis of numerous empirical kinds of research conducted in Indonesian schools, not all schools have not met what 'Merdeka' means by the Indonesian MOE (Abidah et al., 2020). The finding observation study of the teachers' teaching style of English teachers is still teachers-centred; expert style, formal authority style, entertainment style, quizzes style, and little facilitator style (Hardatinur, n.d. 2019).

METHOD

This review article functions akin to a position paper, aiming to present a debatable standpoint on an issue, resembling a discourse or debate. In conducting this study, the researchers implemented a rigorous methodology aimed at thoroughly examining the re-conceptualization of Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs) as a viable solution to combatting students' learning loss in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Central to the approach was a meticulous literature review, where the researchers systematically combed through existing research, theoretical underpinnings, and empirical studies pertaining to SOLEs. The data analysis was guided by thematic scrutiny, allowing for the identification of salient themes, discernment of patterns, and extraction of findings crucial to the argumentation. Throughout the inquiry, the researchers remained vigilant in critically assessing the evidence and information amassed, meticulously weighing factors such as reliability, validity, and potential biases.

The article follows a method suggested by Abidah et al. (2020) for writing position papers and also includes ideas from Suprapto et al. (2017) on systematic review. It outlines five main steps: (1) picking a topic, (2) doing initial research, (3) questioning assumptions, (4) collecting evidence, and (5) making an outline, based on Fleming's (2019) recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter elaborates on three fundamental ideas for rethinking the current SOLEs in the Indonesian curriculum to meet the implied and explicit demands of students, teachers, and other interested parties in a post-pandemic learning loss. The analysis of three
view points: The New role of EFL teachers in SOLE’s, Designing the new SOLEs for EFL Students, and Game-based Language SOLEs to Tackle Language Learning Loss.

The New role of EFL teachers in SOLE’s

For some EFL teachers, experiencing SOLE’s classroom must be confusing for the roles they need to stand up in the teaching processes. Confusion may be the teacher's immediate reaction. There is a natural urge to solve issues for students rather than observing, reflecting, and initiating "gentle and deliberate teacher interventions."

The notion of implicit interventions was supported by Pengelley's (2014) opinion that teachers must step back in wonder and observe as learning takes place." The teacher must let students make mistakes. These errors can encourage the class to take more ownership of their behaviour when later discussed with them and presented without bias.

Being a good "teacher" in SOLEs presents challenges because teachers must work to minimize "visible" teaching techniques in order to avoid appearing to accomplish less of what a "good teacher" is supposed to do. The teacher must be ready to respond to student inquiries in a way that sparks fresh learning possibilities for the students. It might be challenging to recognize and respond to these moments at first. However, persistence can result in creative student-led solutions for 'nagging' and recurring issues, such as fighting over who gets to use the laptops first.

The mentioned roles of teachers align with the concept of 'Personalized instruction' and ‘learner-centred teaching’ (Bernacki et al., 2021; Drexler, 2010). Since students now have access to all knowledge, the days of spoon-feeding are over. Given that students have different personalities, goals, aspirations, demands, etc., it is preferable to give them customized teachings. Giving students the freedom to make their own decisions enhances their intrinsic drive and encourages independent learning.

In English, the teacher can give the students the freedom to speak up and write up on the topic the teacher posed in English. The EFL teacher also could give the students autonomy in the way students investigate and review based on the student's preferences. For example, students can observe the 'big question' by watching a video, listening to podcasts, or observing the issue.

Designing the new SOLEs for EFL Students

To design a particular group’s educational concept, it is essential to know the parameters of the group itself. Therefore, the in this section, the first thing to discuss is EFL characteristics.
In the context of TEFL classrooms, it differs significantly from Mitra's hole-in-the-wall (HITW) experiments, upon which the ideas of SOLE are based, as well as from mainstream education classes. Several ideas which make the EFL classroom unique are:

- EFL classes are time-poor: students need more access to instruction regarding class frequency and total hours of study.
- EFL students are not isolated by their very presence in the classroom.
- Most TEFL students are enrolled by their parents and have a certain level of educational affluence.
- In TEFL, the subject matter is also the instructional medium. Information-access-dependent activities in English can present challenges for learning outcomes. (Pengelley, 2014)

Moreover, the online design classroom of EFL also should as the parameter of SOLE's implementation. Therefore, to prepare the SOLEs to teach English as a foreign language, several previous studies (Al Zakwani & Walker-Gleaves, 2019; Dolan et al., 2013; Pengelley, 2014; Wong, 2010) in SOLEs in ELT context are synthesized in this paper.

**Step 1:**

Using English as the medium for all SOLE's activities. English as a medium of learning processes would give the EFL students more input and exposure to English. The more the students are used to listening, speaking, writing, and reading in English, the more they can improve their English skills.

**Step 2:**

Ask questions related to the material that students will learn. For instance, if they will learn about the exposition text, the teacher should provide 'big questions' that generate students to argue on a particular topic. It is followed by the material being taught is the meaning, purpose, benefits, elements, types, and structure of the review text.

**Step 3:**

Organize students; students are grouped to carry out the investigation assignment on the big questions. The students can choose and change the group themselves at any time.

**Step 4:**

Student exploration and investigation. Students explore according to their knowledge by using the available facilities and infrastructure and communicating with friends in their groups. The ratio of computers available in this activity is at least 1:4.
**Step 5:**

Monitoring; monitoring student results and allowing students to discuss with their groups before carrying out presentations.

**Step 6:**

Presentation of exploration and investigation results; students take turns carrying out presentations in groups by sending the results of group work on the WhatsApp Group. They can share it in front of the class if it is an offline class. The student results can be in the form of PPT, PDF or Padlet.

**Step 7:**

Evaluate the presentation's results; students can respond to other group presentations regarding the review text both from structure and language, then conclude.

**Game-based Language SOLEs to Tackle Language Learning Loss**

Introducing an online game-based supporting app tailored for Language Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs) represents a novel strategy in combating learning loss among Indonesian English foreign language learners. By amalgamating the core principles of SOLEs with the captivating and interactive elements of online gaming, this innovative tool promises to revolutionize the learning experience. Let's delve into how such an app can effectively address learning loss among Indonesian EFL learners.

Through gamified language learning, the app breathes new life into the process of acquiring English proficiency. By incorporating game elements such as challenges, rewards, levels, and leaderboards, learners are immersed in an engaging and enjoyable environment. This not only fosters motivation but also encourages perseverance and enthusiasm in language acquisition.

Furthermore, the app offers a diverse array of interactive language activities, catering to various learning styles and preferences. From vocabulary quizzes to grammar exercises and language immersion games, learners are provided with ample opportunities to develop their language skills in a stimulating and interactive manner.

One of the app's key strengths lies in its ability to expose learners to authentic language use. Through simulated real-world scenarios, role-playing activities, and virtual cultural experiences, learners engage with authentic language materials and cultural content. This not only enhances their communicative competence but also fosters cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills.

Moreover, the app employs adaptive learning algorithms and learner analytics to personalize the learning experience for each individual learner. By analyzing performance,
tracking progress, and identifying learning needs, the app tailors learning pathways, content recommendations, and feedback to optimize outcomes and address specific areas of learning loss.

Collaborative features within the app further enhance the learning experience by facilitating social interaction and peer collaboration. Multiplayer games, team challenges, and language exchange forums connect learners with peers, mentors, and language experts, creating a supportive learning community where learners can practice language skills, receive feedback, and collaborate on language projects.

Lastly, the app seamlessly integrates with the Merdeka Belajar educational initiative in Indonesia, aligning with its emphasis on student-centered learning, digital literacy, and innovative pedagogies. By leveraging its gamified approach, educators can effectively engage Indonesian EFL learners, promote self-directed learning, and enhance language proficiency in alignment with national educational goals.

In the context Indonesian schools, characteristics that using technology as educational aids is not something new. Many schools and language classes have initiated the application of technological assistance, such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, and many others, in their teaching-learning process. However, some schools are still aromatizing the old concepts and printed media, so they need to be encouraged by the new fresh thing.

The design can motivate and support students to transform learning loss into learning gain, especially in SOLE’s ‘investigation’ step. The term ‘gamification’ for teaching using SOLEs is one of the promising ways.

The idea of ‘gamification’ was first proposed by Pelling (2011). It means that teachers employ game design principles in a learning environment. Usually, the aim is to increase learning engagement. The author listed several interactive programs in the following section, as the authors believed they could be integrated with SOLEs.

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Simulators are thought to be the game mode with the most instructional potential out of all those that are accessible. In addition, these programs have proven helpful for students because learning in a pleasant atmosphere improves memory of the contents taught in the classroom. There is consensus among researchers (Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Saienko & Shevchenko, 2020) that playing online language games helps language learners.

The authors believe that inclusive technology use is essential to be elaborated. In SOLE's context, this game can be applied in investigation and review activities where some students can collaborate to play the proposed games.

**CONCLUSION**

The need to mitigate the pandemic-related student learning losses increased after the covid-19 phenomena affected the Indonesian educational sector. In this paper, the author suggests one of the potential learning designs called SOLEs or Self-Organized Learning Environments (Mitra, 2005). As a design, SOLEs have their syntax: Questioning, Investigating and Reviewing. In the discussion section, the author proposed practical key ideas for practising SOLEs for adjusting the Indonesian EFL classroom characteristic.

There are three fundamental ideas that proposed in this this paper for rethinking the current implementation of Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs) in the Indonesian curriculum, particularly in response to the learning loss exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These guidelines aim to meet the implicit and explicit demands of students, teachers, and other stakeholders by providing practical strategies to enhance SOLEs.

The first idea focuses on the new role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in SOLEs. This shift requires teachers to adopt a more facilitative approach, allowing students to take ownership of their learning process while the teacher observes, reflects, and intervenes only when necessary. This approach aligns with the concepts of personalized instruction and learner-centered teaching, empowering students to make
decisions and fostering intrinsic motivation.

The second idea delves into designing SOLEs specifically for EFL students, considering their unique characteristics and needs. EFL classrooms differ significantly from traditional education settings and require tailored approaches to maximize learning outcomes. Steps such as using English as the medium of instruction, posing thought-provoking questions, organizing collaborative investigations, and providing opportunities for student presentations are key elements in designing effective SOLEs for EFL students.

The third idea explores the integration of game-based supporting apps into SOLEs to tackle language learning loss among Indonesian EFL learners. By leveraging the engaging and interactive nature of online gaming, these apps offer a dynamic platform for language learning, fostering motivation, collaboration, and authentic language use. The gamification of learning activities enhances student engagement and retention of language content, making learning more enjoyable and effective.

Inclusive technology use is essential in SOLEs, particularly in investigation and review activities where students can collaborate to play educational games. Simulators have shown promise in enhancing instructional potential and improving students' memory of language content. By integrating game-based supporting apps into SOLEs, educators can create a stimulating learning environment that addresses learning loss and promotes language proficiency among Indonesian EFL learners.

In summary, reimagining SOLEs with a focus on the new role of teachers, tailored design for EFL students, and integration of game-based supporting apps holds promise in revitalizing language education in Indonesia and mitigating the impact of learning loss on students' language proficiency and academic success.

These findings contribute insight that can be implemented in the following SOLE classroom in English learning. The findings also strengthen and support the learning activities during the covid 19 pandemic banning all academic activities operated as usual. This model can be used in learning activities, especially English lessons.

Since students have so much free time at home and more accessible access to gadgets and information, this opportunity can be used to instruct them to master material before the actual class via zoom, Google Meet, or other applications. The implementation of SOLEs classroom inevitably offers sufficient time for learning material.

This model helps the learning process. Furthermore, English subject needs much time to practice. The advantages of SOLEs classrooms trigger English learning gain. The suggestions for the next researcher are to engage more year coverage to gain more complex findings and analysis. On the other hand, more moderator variables must be investigated to
complete the analysis results. The moderator variables may vary from the need of each researcher.

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