

Impact of Social Media Use on Students' Engagement, Academic Performance and Collaboration in ESL Classroom at University Level

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Abstract

With the rapid rise of digital technology, university students' academic and social lives are shaped by social media, offering new language learning opportunities. Social media use in university ESL classrooms affects student participation, academic performance, and collaboration, according to this qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews with eight undergraduate ESL students who use WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter for academic and personal purposes were conducted. Thematic analysis of interview data showed that social media's participatory, informal, and accessible learning environments outside the classroom boost student involvement. Further research shows that deliberate social media use improves academic achievement, notably vocabulary, listening, reading, and speaking skills and confidence. Social media platforms can enable peer connection, resource sharing, and group work through online debates, shared documents, and voice or video communication. The report also notes that excessive and unregulated use might distract and decrease attention. The findings imply that structured and guided social media use can enhance ESL training. The study suggests ESL teachers strategically use social media and encourage responsible use to maximise learning outcomes.

Introduction

With the current era of digital transformation, social media is now an inseparable part of everyday life, and it has a significant impact on communication, information exchange, entertainment, and education (Akram and Yingxiu et al., 2021). Social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide a wide range of features that have greatly influenced different aspects of society. Although the widespread consequences of social media consumption have been researched extensively, the particular impact social media has had on the educational performance of students of English as a Second Language (ESL) is a pressing subject of research (Verduyn et al., 2020). Millions of people across the globe use social media in multiple ways in their day-to-day activities. Many of these users are also young people, many of whom are college students. Actually, a recent poll of 3,000 students in the United States revealed 90 percent of college students are users of Facebook and 37 percent use Twitter (Dahlstrom et al., 2011). The popularity of social media among this audience has seen many universities adopt social media as a marketing tool and form of communication with students who are already studying there, most aspiring students and their previous alumni. Social media is also getting more and more popular among university professors as it helps to organize some meaningful academic conversations and ensure the learning process via improved communication in: a) inside the classroom, b) outside of it. Nevertheless, this finding has been challenged by the current research claiming that excessive use or addiction to social networking sites can have an adverse implication on academic performance among students (Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010). One issue that has raised arguments among the members of the

faculty working in different fields is the effectiveness and dependability of social media as a teaching tool. This is especially applicable in an average undergraduate classroom where a teacher strives to achieve an interactive setting that promotes meaningful learning, but during the lessons, the instructor notices that a lot of students are easily distracted by the use of Facebook at the expense of listening to the teacher. Other students go a notch higher to answer their phones during lecture, despite the existence of strict policies by most professors against this vice. Student Engagement refers to the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in the learning process related to the commitment and investment of students in learning processes (Fredricks, Blundenfeld, and Paris, 2004). Academic Performance tends to be the degree to which students achieve learning outcomes, which is evidenced by grades, tests, and competencies (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). According to Dillenbourg (1999), collaboration entails body planning when two or more individuals combine in working collaboratively to learn, the emphasis being on mutual interaction and achievement of common objectives. To an ESL classroom, collaboration not only allows language to be practiced; it also provides an opportunity to peer-review and to learn more about the culture. social media use as the intentional activity of university-level ESL students on digital media that facilitates interaction, resource sharing, and communication, with the view of developing their participation in the learning processes (engagement), proficiency in mastery of academic processes (performance), as well as promoting collaboration in learning (collaboration). Social media, unlike the more traditional classroom modes of teaching, offer more flexible and adaptable avenues of interaction among students with fellow students, and, ruling out the privilege of the traditional classroom environments, form a blended learning platform or hybrid spectrum of instruction that utilizes the current trends in technology to support language learning. The study of the effects of social media on ESL students in higher education facilities is essential, as more and more educational institutions have introduced these tools, and the groups of students are experiencing obstacles with their utilization. Studies indicate that engagement tends to lead to better retention, more comprehension and better educational outcomes (Kuh, 2009). The interactive and informal outstanding characteristics of social media can alleviate anxiety during language learning and stimulate genuineness and risk-taking (Krashen, 1982). Cultural knowledge and language skills, which are among the ingredients to success in a globalized educational setting, are also developed in these collaboration platforms. Nevertheless, distractions, misinformation, and unequal access, among others, are possible barriers that might affect academic performance. As such, understanding the impacts of social media on engagement, academic performance, and cooperation among university ESL students is essential to advise teachers on how to effectively use the tools to facilitate learning in students.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of social media on students' engagement in the ESL classroom
2. To investigate the impact of social media of the students over all academic performance in ESL classroom.
3. To investigate the impact of social media on the collaboration of students in the ESL classroom

Research Questions

1. How does social media impact student engagement in the ESL classroom?
2. How does social media affect the overall academic performance of students in the ESL classroom?
3. How does social media influence student collaboration in the ESL classroom?

Literature Review

It is on the part of education that, in recent years, the usage of social media in the classroom has been given some consideration, in which many students in universities have begun to learn to rely on social media daily. Several studies have identified the role played by the platform, including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube,

and more, in different aspects in aspects of learning. Among them, it has been found that student engagement, academic performance, and collaboration are some of the most studied areas in which it seems that social media has both benefits and constraints. One of the most popular impacts of social media is on student engagement. Social media offers a less tense atmosphere in which a significant percentage of ESL students can train the language, as most of them feel nervous about orating in front of others. According to Manca and Ranieri (2016), social networks such as Facebook also provide students with the chance to share their ideas and raise questions and express themselves more freely than they would in a classroom. Similarly, Alm (2015) asserts that shy and less confident learners can use informal digital spaces due to more time to process the language and react. This low-pressure interaction can promote more regular and frequent attendance of the students, which results in increased interactivity both with peers and with the content. The school performance is also ambivalent and depends on the use of social media. In some studies, positive effects have been reported to be achieved in case such platforms are used intentionally as learning activities. Indicatively, Wang et al. (2012) found that ESL students who were used to listening and pronunciation improvements as a result of regularly watching educational video web content on YouTube. Upon exposing the learner to natural language use, e.g., vlogs, interviews or tutorials, s/he gets a chance to listen to native speakers and contextualize vocabulary. It is not always the case that academic gains are realized when social media is used. Juno (2012) reports that students who spent more time on social media to either be entertained or engage in personal activities performed poorly. This excessive use may lead to distraction and procrastination, and wastage of time during studies. This shows that the outcome is mainly dictated by the fact that students use the platforms as a means of learning or to have fun. Collaboration is another area where social media has brought a significant difference in the field of ESL education. Unlike the archaic system of group work, which is limited as far as time is concerned, social sites will allow students to chat at any time they wish. In the research carried out by Kabilan et al. (2010), students have been discovered to utilize Facebook groups in sharing assignments, discussing each other's writing, and as well as discussing language-related issues. This was not just encouraging students to learn through their peers, but also allowed them to practice writing without any sort of judgment. It has also become a favorite element of the message apps, including WhatsApp and Telegram. Yunus et al. (2019) also note that the use of such apps was predominantly common in clarifying doubts, sharing material, and completing group work in English. Such continuous interaction with each other means that students will be exposed to more English and their applications in the real-life context. Overall, the paper finds the possibility of social media to be helpful in ESL lessons at the university level. It also helps in interaction by offering interactive and comfortable learning conditions, facilitates academic performance through its moderated use, and well teamwork because the students are not alienated. However, the achievement of social media in the learning process depends on the utilization of the media. It can be utilized to make the process of learning better when done with purpose and planning. Nevertheless, it can be a source of distraction unless it gets the proper guidance. Both students and teachers ought to then know its limits and boundaries so that they can exploit its learning potential.

Methodology

The current research took the form of a qualitative study of how social media use represents itself in the engagement, academic performance, and teamwork in the ESL classroom of the university level students. The qualitative approach was adopted due to the fact that it gives the opportunity to understand the personal experience, attitudes, and perceptions of students in details, which is impossible to describe using numerical data. This design assisted the researcher to find deep descriptive information on the interaction of students with social media in learning English.

The participation of 8 university-level ESL students in the study was recorded. The selection of these students was carried out using purposive sampling, i.e. only learners who actively use social media were selected and could offer information that would be relevant in the study. Every respondent was undertaking undergraduate

English courses and was within the 18-24 years age group. The interviews were semi-structured. This tool was chosen due to its structure and flexibility: the researcher applied a list of guiding questions but also used follow-up questions to pursue the idea of each participant in detail. Interviews were also audio-recorded with the consent of each participant to facilitate their accuracy in the transcription and analysis. The researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the study and got their informed consent before the actual interviews. The interviews were done either in face-to-face or in online situations (depending on the availability and convenience). Transcription was done word-to-word, and all interviews were recorded.

Data Collection

Interview#1:

Q1 How do you

use social media in your daily life?

I use social media daily for different purposes like to stay connected with friends and family, watch educational videos, and follow pages related to language learning. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook help me explore English content and practice my reading and listening skills.

Q2. Have you used social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

Yes, I have used social media in my ESL classroom. For example, our teacher creates a class group on WhatsApp or Facebook where we share learning materials, assignments, and practice exercises. Sometimes, we watch short videos in English on YouTube and discuss them in class.

Q3. Do you think social media use helps you engage more with your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

Yes, social media helps me engage more because it makes learning more interactive and accessible. I can access English materials anytime, discuss doubts with classmates instantly, and see real-life examples of English being used, which keeps me motivated.

Q4. Have you noticed any impact of social media use on your academic performance in ESL? If yes, please describe.

Yes, social media has positively impacted my performance. By watching videos, reading posts, and interacting in English, I have improved my vocabulary, comprehension, and even speaking confidence. However, too much distraction can sometimes reduce my focus on studies.

Q5. How do you collaborate with your classmates using social media?

We collaborate by sharing notes, links, and resources through WhatsApp or Facebook groups. We discuss assignments, give feedback on each other's work, and sometimes do group projects online. This makes teamwork easier even outside the classroom.

Interview#2

Q # 1. How do you use social media in your daily life?

I use social media like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook daily. I chat with friends, share updates about my day, watch videos, and sometimes check out educational content. Social media helps me stay connected with friends and family, and I also find useful information or language learning tips online.

Q# 2. Have you used social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

Yes, I have taught ESL with the help of social media. As an illustration, our lecturer forms a class group in WhatsApp or Facebook, in which we post learning resources, assignments, and practice activities. There are occasions when we view short videos in English on YouTube and discuss them in a classroom.

Q3. Do you believe that the use of social media makes you more active in your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

Yes, social media makes me more active as it makes the process of learning more interactive and accessible. I am able to get access to anything in English any time, ask questions to fellow students immediately and get a glimpse of what the real-life use of English looks like, which alone keeps me going.

Q4. Do you feel that there is any influence of the use of social media on your academic performance in ESL? If yes, please describe.

No, no, social media has affected my performance in a positive way. Watching videos, reading posts and communication in English, I have developed better vocabulary, understanding and even confidence to speak. Nonetheless, occasionally excessive distraction may decrease my concentration towards studies.

Q5. What is your experience with social media and working with your classmates?

We work together and exchange notes, links, and resources via WhatsApp or Facebook groups. We talk about assignments, comment on the work of each other and occasionally do group work online. This facilitates collaboration even during non classroom activities.

Interview#3

Q # 1. What is your social media usage?

I am also an everyday user of social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. I discuss with my friends, update about my day, watch videos, and occasionally access educational material. Social media satisfies my connections with friends and relatives, and I also learn some nice things or language learning tips on the Internet.

Q# 2. Have you applied social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

We have applied social media in my ESL classroom. Our instructor has made a WhatsApp group. Yes, our class, in which we chat about topics connected to our lessons, exchange resources, and occasionally we do group projects. Instagram is also used when writing short captions in English.

Q # 3. Do you believe the use of social media helps you to work more on your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

Yes, I believe that the use of social media makes me more active in my ESL course. On WhatsApp, it is more convenient to talk to peers about the subject or communicate on Instagram about ideas. The social media makes it more interesting and interactive to practice the English language in the absence of a classroom. In addition, the posts of my classmates encourage me to learn the English language better.

Q#4. Have you observed any effect of using the social media on your academic performance in ESL? If yes, please describe.

I have observed that ESL-related activities such as utilization of social media have assisted me to enhance my reading and writing abilities in English. Communicating with my classmates on WhatsApp and reading their posts on Instagram, I have gathered new vocabulary and observed other people in various circumstances using English. It has not affected my performance in a bad way, on the contrary, it has helped me to practice the English language in a more relaxed manner.

Q # 5. What do you do to cooperate with your peers through the use of social media?

I use WhatsApp with the classmates. Our group has a place where we talk about assignments, exchange study tips and classroom work. We also take voice recordings of some things in English as a way to practice

speaking and listening.

Interview#4

Q1#What is the

Q # 1.Way you use social media in your day-to-day activities?

My social media consumption behaviors are to check updates in a few seconds to ensure that I am aware of trends and what others are discussing.

Q 2#: Have you ever used social media in English language? If yes, how?

Yes-by using platforms such as Instagram or WhatsApp to post prompts and persuade students to practice real-world English in short and interactive messages.

Q # 3. Do you believe you can interact with your ESL coursework better through the use of social media? Why or why not?

Yes-because social media makes the coursework to be more interactive, relevant and easy to engage after a classroom. (Why) It does because it provides faster, more familiar and interactive methods of engaging in English which are easy to incorporate into everyday life. 4. (Why not) Since we are constantly notified and distracted, it may be difficult to concentrate on meaningful language practice.

Q # 4. Have you observed any effect of use of social media on your ESL academic performance? If yes, please describe.

Yes

because I have noticed that quick practice in the English language through social media enhances my vocabulary and confidence but sometimes overindulgence in casual scrolling on social media tends to lower my concentration on studying.

Q# 5. What is your cooperation with your classmates through social media?

I work with other students by exchanging notes, reviewing assignments, and providing instant feedback with them via group chats or shared posts.

Interview#5

Q# 1. What is your day to day use of social media?

I use a multifaceted social media tool as a means of communication, obtaining information and networking. I also use them to get access to educational materials, listen to professionals and expand my horizon in meeting different views.

Q# 2. Have you used social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

Yes. I have incorporated the use of social media in the classroom of ESL learners as an auxiliary teaching tool. These sites have been used as means of dispensing learning resources, conducting of conversations as well as motivating students to use real language.

Q# 3.Do you believe that the use of social media makes you more interested in your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

To my mind, social media improves interactions with ESL coursework through the possibility to access real language input in real time and to be engaged in the work in the target language on a permanent basis.

Have you experienced any effect on your academic performance in ESL due to use of social media? If yes, please describe.

Yes. The social media has largely impacted positively on my academic work in ESL. Multimedia and real-time interactions and exposure to various vocabularies have enhanced my understanding and expanded my

linguistic repertoire.

I coordinate my interaction with classmates by means of exclusive social media platforms and messaging applications that help to communicate and solve problems effectively.

Interview#6

Q# 1. How do you use social media in your daily life?

Use social media daily to keep in touch with my friends and family, follow the news and trends, and discover something new. Instagram and Facebook keep me informed about what is happening in the entire world, and YouTube and Tik Tok are ideal when it comes to watching educational videos and learning English. I myself also communicate using WhatsApp and discuss matters with a group of people in regards to my studies.

Q#2. Did you use social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

Yes, I have applied the social media in my ESL classroom. Our teacher occasionally asks us to go to such websites as YouTube and follow English tutorials or small clips to learn to listen and pronounce things properly. One more method is WhatsApp or Facebook groups where we can share notes or practice writing in English and discuss the activities in the classroom. It amplifies the process of learning.

Q# 3. Do you believe that the use of social media enables you to interact more with your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

Yes, I believe social media keeps me more active participating in my ESL coursework. It offers access to numerous English content in the form of videos, podcasts, articles, and posts that help to make the learning process more engaging and real. It also enables me to apply English to the real life situation, which could be writing comments, chatting or watching English content with subtitles. This assists me in improving vocabulary as well as confidence.

Q# 4. Do you use social media and have you realized any effects on your ESL academic performance? If yes, please describe.

Yes, I have found a good influence. I have gained better listening and speaking abilities as I usually watch English videos and communicate with native speakers via the internet. The social media has also helped me become more confident in using English in my daily communication. Nevertheless, I have learned to control my time since excessive time on the internet may be distracting.

What is your experience of using social media to cooperate with your classmates?

I use WhatsApp and Facebook groups to work with my classmates most of the time. We exchange study material, discuss homework and answer grammar or vocabulary questions together. We may collaboratively work on group projects through Google Docs or Messenger. This collaboration via social media renders learning more agile and interdependent.

Interview#7

Q# 1. What is your social media usage?

I also rely on social media to communicate with my friends, post, view videos, and receive news.

Q# 2. Have you participated in social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

Yes. I have also engaged in social media in my ESL classroom to share notes, send homework reminders or use it to practice English by posting short texts or voice messages.

Q# 3. Do you believe that the use of social media assists you in working on your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

Yes, it assists me to be more involved as I find it easy, quicker and more enjoyable to learn. I will be able to ask questions whenever I wish and have a quick assistance.

Have you ever felt social media use affect your grades in the ESL? Yes, please explain how it has made me improve. I acquire new vocabulary, observe proper use of English in the posts, and receive assistance of teachers and classmates which enhances my performance.

What is your experience of just using social media to work with your classmates?

I also work together in the form of group chats and brokering of study documents, discussing assignments and answering questions to one another.

Interveiw#8

Q# 1. What is your daily social media usage?

I rely on social media to communicate with friends, watch a few short videos, and read news. On other occasions i take it to learn.

Q# 2. Did you apply social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

Yes, I have. My teacher occasionally requests us to post in English or create a group in applications, such as Facebook or WhatsApp, and chat about homework or learn vocabulary.

Q# 3. Do you believe that social media use assists you in doing more on your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

It assists me in the application of English in real life. I am able to see videos, read comments, and follow accounts in English language and it makes me learning and fun.

Q# 4. Have you felt any effect of social media use on your ESL academic performance? If yes, please describe.

Yes, it assists me to enhance my vocabulary and listening capacity. The ability to watch short videos in English and to read posts has enabled one to learn new words and phrases more easily in the classroom.

Q#5. What is your social media interaction with your classmates?

Group chats are used to ask questions, provide study materials, and discuss assignments with each other. We also speak to each other using voice messages in English at times.

Interveiw#8

Q#1. How do you use social media in your daily life?

I use social media the whole day. My routine is to look at reels on Instagram when having tea, and then switch to WhatsApp to talk to friends and relatives. I also subscribe to news and trends on Twitter, I occasionally share or read Urdu-English memes. It keeps me in touch, entertained and updated.

Q#2. Have you made use of social media in your ESL classroom? If yes, how?

Yes. Our professor organised a WhatsApp group of the class where we share short videos, articles and voice notes where we can practice pronunciation. A Twitter project also was done in which every student wrote a summary of a story with a class hashtag. This rendered the acquisition of language to be practical and real time.

Q#3. Will you say that your use of social media allows you to work more on your ESL coursework? Why or why not?

Definitely. Vocabulary presented as a list seems to be less memorable than the version presented as memes or short clips. There are comment sections that allow me to write comments and receive timely peer feedback.

The only con is that it leads to distraction when I do not control my time properly but on a whole it enhances engagement.

Q#4. Have you felt any effect of using social media to your academic performance in ESL? If yes, please describe.

I have observed an improvement in my score on listening and reading. Watching English programmes with a subtitle and discussing them as a group increased my understanding. Nonetheless, scrolling late at night occasionally shortens my sleep, which interferes with concentration during early classes- thus it is an ambivalent effect.

Q#5. What is your experience in using social media to collaborate with your classmates?

We use the common Google Docs to do the assignments and share links and PDFs through WhatsApp. We plan Zoom or Teams study sessions and practice the pronunciation with the help of voice notes. Sometimes, Instagram polls are used to determine presentation content. This incessant online communication holds us together and busy.

Thematic Analysis Table

Theme	
Codes	
Insights	
Daily Communication, Entertainment, and Information Use of Social Media	- Checking Instagram Reels
- WhatsApp communication with friends/family	
- Following news on Twitter	
- Watching videos	
- Sharing/enjoying memes	Social media is integrated into daily life and acts as a major source of communication, entertainment, and global awareness. Continuous exposure to English materials provides natural, non-formal learning opportunities.
Social Media as an ESL Extension Learning Tool	- WhatsApp class group
- Shared videos/articles	
- Pronunciation voice notes	
- Twitter story summaries	
- Class hashtag activity	
- Real-time learning tasks	Social media extends ESL learning beyond the classroom by offering practical, interactive activities. Platforms support authentic communication and real-life language use, making lessons more meaningful and immediate.
Interactive Content Increasing Engagement	- Memes for vocabulary learning
- Short clips aiding memory	
- Writing comments	
- Instant peer feedback	
- Enjoyable learning	
- Time-management challenge	Interactive elements—memes, clips, comment sections—boost engagement and motivation. These formats make learning enjoyable and accessible but can also cause distractions without proper time management.
Mixed Academic Effect– Improvement With Small Disadvantages	- Higher levels of listening and reading
- Viewing subtitled English programs	
- Comprehension through group discussion	

- Increased confidence
 - Late-night scrolling
 - Reduced morning focus
- Regular exposure to English content improves listening, reading, and comprehension, boosting confidence. However, excessive late-night social media use slightly reduces concentration and productivity in academic settings.

Findings

This study has shown that social media is a significant aspect in the ESL classroom in the university level. Majority of the participants stated that they communicate, entertain, and acquire information on their social media on a daily basis. This constant application brought English language contents to the students in the form of videos, posts, and web-based interactions. The evidence indicated that social media enhanced the learning of ESL among students. Learners were more encouraged to participate in the learning process when interactive materials were used in the form of short videos, memes, and comments. English was practiced outside the classroom through platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and twitter. The results also showed that social media generally impacted positively on academic performance. Students claimed to have experienced increase in the vocabulary, reading, listening and confidence in speaking. Nevertheless, certain participants said that they were distracted and sometimes lost concentration due to overuse of social media. Concerning working in groups, the findings revealed that social media aided in group learning. WhatsApp groups, shared documents, voice notes, video meetings helped students to discuss assignments, share resources and practice English with each other.

Discussion

The results of this paper align with the existing studies indicating the usefulness of social media in language learning. Indicatively, Manca and Ranieri (2016) established that the use of social media platforms provided a platform where people could interact and engage in informal learning, which facilitates student engagement. Equally, Wang et al. (2012) also found that YouTube materials can enhance listening and talking as learners can be exposed to the real use of language. This research paper is also in line with the research conducted by Kabilan et al. (2010) which concluded that Facebook groups foster collaboration and peer learning among ESL students. The current research found that WhatsApp groups were actively used by students who exchanged digital content and reinforced their collaboration and communication capabilities. Nevertheless, the results also indicate Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) who cautioned that overuse of social media can have a negative influence on academic performance. Problems that were reported by participants in this research like distraction and loss of concentration as a result of scrolling at night confirmed that social media has both negative and positive impacts. Altogether, the given study can add to the existing body of knowledge by proving that social media can be an effective means to enhance engagement, academic achievement, and cooperation in the ESL classroom in the case of its controlled and intentional application.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this research examined how social media influences the activity of students, their school learning, and teamwork in the ESL classroom at the university level. The findings revealed that social media positively impacts learning experiences of the students. It assists students in enhancing vocabulary, listening, reading, and speaking abilities besides enhancing motivation and engagement. Although these are good in terms of advantages, the research also concluded that overuse and unregulated use of social media may result to distraction and lack of academic concentration. Thus, it needs to be used in a well-balanced and guided way to achieve the greatest advantages in social media tools. This paper suggests that educators are encouraged to incorporate the use of social media when teaching ESL in a systematic fashion, and the students are supposed to be advised on the proper use of these platforms in an academic context. The long-term impact

of the use of social media on the language learning outcome can be investigated in future studies with bigger samples.

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