الترقيم الدولي الموحد للطباعة 2735-5209 الترقيم الدولي الموحد الإلكتروني 2805-2455

Using a Peer-Scaffolding ESP Program to Improve Agricultural Secondary Students' Paragraph Writing Skills

Prof. Dr. Mohamed Abdel-Wahid Ali
Professor of Curricula and TEFL Methodology, Faculty of Education, New Valley University

Dr. Hanan Hassan Eid Waer
Associate Professor of Curricula & TEFL Methodology, Faculty of Education-New Valley University

Ashgan Esmael Ahmed Esmael
I.P.S. New Valley Principal

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استخدام برنامج لغة إنجليزية لأغراض خاصة قائم على السقالات بالأقران لتنمية مهارات كتابة الفقرة لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية الزراعية

المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى تعرف فاعلية استخدام برنامج لغة انجليزية قائم على السقالات بالأقران لتنمية مهارات كتابة الفقرة لدى طلاب الصف الثاني الزراعي بمدرسة الخارجة الثانوية الزراعية بمحافظة الوادي الجديد. واستخدم الباحث المنهج شبه التجريبي (التصميم القائم على المجموعة الواحدة). وبلغ عدد أفراد مجموعة البحث (24) طالبًا بالصف الثاني الثانوي الزراعي؛ ولغرض الدراسة قام الباحث بإعداد اختبار مهارات كتابة الفقرة. وجاءت النتائج موضحة فاعلية استخدام طريقة السقالات بالأقران في تحسين مهارات كتابة الفقرة لدى طلاب مجموعة البحث.

الكلمات الدالة: لغة إنجليزية لأغراض خاصة، السقالات بالأقران، مهارات كتابة الفقرة

Using a Peer-Scaffolding ESP Program to Improve Agricultural Secondary Students' Paragraph Writing Skills

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of using a peer scaffolding ESP program to improve agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills. The researcher used a quasi-experimental research design (a one-group design). The participants of the study were twenty-four girls from El-Kharga Agricultural Secondary School, New Valley Governorate. The researcher used paragraph-writing skills per posttest. The results of the study showed that using the peer-scaffolding ESP program proved to be effective in improving agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills.

Keywords: ESP, peer scaffolding, paragraph writing skills

Introduction

Writing is an important skill in our lives. Ideas become evident when they are written. In writing, people record their ideas, attitudes, interests, beliefs, and education. Individuals write down their thoughts and ideas, and ideas become visible in written words. Sentences carry meanings as well. Through written messages, individuals display their deepest thoughts. Writing can provide insights into cultural backgrounds, personal preferences, learning progress, and academic achievements. Writing is therefore a necessary means and an essential life skill.

There are several viewpoints on writing: a product skill or a complex process. Richard and Renandya (2005: 5-8) mentioned that "writing is not simply putting down a word after a word to shape a sentence or thinking of one sentence alongside the other to make a passage, but it is a remarkable product skill." They added that the trouble lies in producing and arranging thoughts and in deciphering these thoughts in EFL writing into useful and coherent content. Writing is a complex process through which a writer can produce a meaningful text. That text has many shapes: it may be a sentence, a paragraph, an essay, or a story.

English writing is a difficult activity for EFL learners. To write a good sentence, EFL learners need to learn writing sub-skills like spelling, handwriting, punctuation, word usage, and grammar. They must make use of their vocabulary and know how to use grammar in making sentences and paragraphs. They should write topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences to make a perfect paragraph. Langan (2007: 10) mentioned that "in writing, any idea that you advance must be supported with specific reasons or details." So, writing is a difficult activity for EFL learners in terms of using sub-skills and dealing with supporting ideas.

For ESP students, writing is complex as they need to use specific terms. "Specific" in ESP refers to the specific goals or objectives for writing. A learner approaches writing English for specific purposes through a course that is already relevant to specific needs. ESP Writing improves what the learners are writing and enables them to use the English they know to learn even more English. Basturkmen (2014:18) mentioned that in ESP, "language is learned not for its own sake or for the sake of gaining a general education, but to smooth the path to entry or greater linguistic efficiency in academic, professional, or workplace environments." Thus, ESP writing is normally goal-directed.

Literature Review

Writing

Writing is a documentation style through which someone can transmit his experiences in life. Jozsef (2001:5) mentioned that "writing is among the most complex human activities. It involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and experience with subjects." As a result, Olshtain (2001:207–217) stated that writing is a process of documenting ideas and life experiences. It is considered a social activity through which someone can communicate different messages to different readers.

Writing, in general, is a difficult skill for EFL students as it encompasses different sub-skills. They need to encode ideas, thoughts, experiences, and opinions. It is not easy to make ideas readable. To express what is in mind and make it an assimilated message is too hard. A written message should be presented clearly, and this is too hard to control. A written message should be well-expressed to be understood. According to Hasbolahh (2010:1), "writing is said to be a difficult skill to master and to be an effective writer." Thus, writing is a very difficult skill for EFL learners.

Writing is a mental product. It uses different high-speed processes. It includes thinking, planning, organizing, generating ideas, editing, drafting, revising, and publishing. To think of a general point, plan and generate your ideas, organize them in a logical order, prewrite and draft thoughts, revise the product, and publish it, is a great mental effort. It leads to creativity. Therefore, it develops abilities in the mind. It was stated by Richard and Renandya (2002:303) that "the difficulty of writing lies not only in generating ideas and organizing ideas but also in translating these ideas into readable text." It requires various sub-skills. Writing involves various aspects. It is related to grammar, word order, and vocabulary. Other aspects, like misspellings and bad punctuation, are part of writing difficulties. So, EFL learners in agricultural schools practice paragraph writing difficulties.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is used in many fields. It is a serious requirement in specific learning situations. It is needed by doctors or engineers. It is used in hotel-land tourism,

financial affairs, computer science, and agriculture. Each field has its own specific register. The register that is used in a specific learning situation is related to the learners' future studies or their future profession. The register of words varies according to their specific course. For example, legal people use terms such as the case, the accused, and the prosecution. Agricultural people use terms such as agronomy and poultry. Each field requires its own register, syllabus, and profession.

ESP is an English Language Teaching (ELT) branch. ESP has some specific qualities and features. It meets the specific needs of the learners. It is designed for professional work situations. It is generally used for advanced students. It is likely to be designed for adult learners at the secondary school level. is used according to the learners' needs and learning purposes. Esimaje (2012:24) demonstrated that "ESP is the language used for a utilitarian purpose, whether occupational, vocational, academic, or professional."

ESP is used in many fields, such as medicine, computer science, and agriculture. Each field has its own specific register. For example, the agriculture field uses terms such as agronomy and poultry. Thus, each field requires a specific register. Esimaje (2012:24) demonstrated that "ESP is the language used for a utilitarian purpose, whether occupational, vocational, academic, or professional." In ESP, English should not be presented as a subject or body of facts to be learned or as a mechanical skill or habit to be developed. Rather, English should be presented in an authentic context with ways for teaching language that learners will need to perform in their specialty fields. Learners' needs are of central importance when designing language activities in ESP. To sum up, ESP is tailored to the learners' needs and learning purposes.

Scaffolding and its theoretical bases

One recommended strategy that can help ESP students learn and write English is scaffolding. Scaffolding involves setting up "temporary supports, provided by capable people, that permit learners to participate in the complex process before they can do so unassisted" (Edigar, 2001:166). According to Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, scaffolding is "temporarily provided, and it is gradually removed bit by bit as the learners become more competent independently." (Sukyadi and Hasanah, 2013:5). Scaffolding is to give instructional support to students temporarily, which leads to skill gain and enables independent problems. It is gradually withdrawn due to the student's need for support.

Scaffolding helps decrease the zone of proximal development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, ZPD is "the distance between what children can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent assistance" (Raymond, 2000:176). So, ZPD is the distance between what students can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to accomplish with competent help. Thus, scaffolding is the instructional support that helps students achieve goals that they cannot accomplish on their own. Scaffolding can also help them improve their performance and reach an advanced level with teachers' or peers' assistance. Moreover, scaffolding can help learners overcome some specific problems and solve these problems to build new useful knowledge.

Peer Scaffolding and previous studies

There are three types of scaffolding: one-to-one scaffolding, peer scaffolding, and computer-based scaffolding. Peer scaffolding refers to the provision of scaffolding support by peers, and it leverages the strength of the number of peers in classrooms (Davin & Donato,

2013:5-22). But it can also involve older children providing scaffolding support to younger students. For example, students with strong English-speaking abilities can use questioning and prompting to help English as a New Language students improve their English-speaking abilities (Angelova, Gunawardena, & Volk, 2006:173–190).

It is unlikely that peer scaffolding would be sufficient as a sole source of scaffolding support, as similarly, abled peers do not have the content or pedagogical expertise to be able to engage in the dynamic assessment and customization that is characteristic of one-to-one scaffolding (Belland, 2014). Furthermore, when peer scaffolding providers are at the same grade and ability level as the peer scaffolding receivers, one may question the capacity for strong scaffolding interactions. However, research on the influence of the content expertise of tutors on learning outcomes in problem-based learning is often contradictory (Albanese, 2004:918–920). A recent meta-analysis indicated that student learning decreases as tutor expertise increases (Leary, Walker, Shelton, & Fitt, 2013:40–66).

Peer-scaffolding is a human temporary support. It is not permanent, and its stages can be mediated. It is used to enhance the student's cognitive and skillful development. It is suitable for students who suffer from their weaknesses. It meets the students' needs. So, the researcher adopted a suggested peer-scaffolding ESP program to develop agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills.

There are different studies related to peer scaffolding. Abune (2019) aimed to investigate the effect of peer scaffolding on students' grammar proficiency development. The participants were 102 grade 11 students in 2 classes at Tillili Preparatory and General Secondary School. The researcher used a pre-posttest quasi-experimental design. The findings revealed that using peer scaffolding instruction showed greater improvement in grammar proficiency. Hanjani (2019) aimed to investigate the effect of peer scaffolding on improving paragraph writing skills. The participants were 32 EFL university students in Iran. The researcher used pre- and post-writing tests. The results revealed the positive effect of peer scaffolding on the development of EFL paragraph writing. Piamsai (2020) to investigate the effect of scaffolding teaching in an academic writing class. This study focused on academic writing in the Thai context and involved non-proficient EFL students. The participants in the study were 20 second-year economics students at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand. The researcher used the pre-posttest. The results showed a significant improvement in the post-test scores in all aspects of writing competence, i.e., task completion, organization, lexical variety, structural variety, and accuracy.

Chairinkam & Yawiloeng (2021) investigated peer scaffolding to develop paragraph writing through three steps of the writing process. The participants were ten English major students at the University of Phayao. They were classified into five expert EFL learners and five novice EFL learners. The researcher used a pre-posttest. The results showed that both expert and novice learners were able to be scaffolders for their peers. Hashem (2021) aimed to investigate the effect of using scaffolding to develop EFL essay writing. The participants were forty students in the first-year secondary stage. The researcher used a pre- and post-eessay writing test. The results revealed the positive effect of scaffolding on developing EFL essay writing. Popoola (2121) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using scaffolding strategies to improve writing skills. The researcher used a questionnaire and an essay-writing pre-posttest to collect data. The participants were twenty-eight secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. The results showed that scaffolding improved students's writing skills.

Context of the problem

Through the researcher's work as an English language teacher at Elkharga Agricultural Secondary School, she observed students' poor writing performance in English paragraph writing in the agricultural field. To obtain more information about the status, the researcher visited another school (Paris Agricultural Secondary School) and held meetings with the other five English teachers and two English inspectors. The results of those meetings revealed a decline in English paragraph writing and a weakness in the acquisition of vocabulary skills in the English language.

To determine this problem, the researcher conducted a pilot study. The pilot study was a test that consisted of two questions: a) the students were invited to write a paragraph of six sentences, and b) to choose the correct item that was related to agricultural vocabulary. That test was presented to thirty students in the milk and food science section.

According to the pilot study, most students got low scores. It revealed that they had difficulty identifying the proper lexical terms and some writing skills, such as not writing a concluding sentence.

Statement of the study

Second-year agricultural secondary school students were found to be poor at writing and paragraph writing in the agricultural field. Therefore, the researcher suggested using a peer scaffolding ESP program to develop agricultural secondary school students' paragraph writing skills.

Significance of the study

The study is expected to be significant for:

Students: 2nd-year students of Elkharga Agricultural Secondary School are expected to benefit from the present study to improve paragraph writing skills.

Teachers: The ESP teachers for agriculture are expected to benefit from the present study by using a peer-scaffolding ESP program to improve agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills.

Course designers: The ESP course designers are expected to benefit from the present study by implementing a peer-scaffolding ESP program to improve their paragraph writing skills.

Aim of the study

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of using a peer-scaffolding ESP program to improve agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills. That could be divided into sub-aims:

to investigate the effect of using a peer scaffolding ESP program on improving 2nd-year secondary stage students' paragraph writing organization skills:

Writing topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences

to investigate the effect of using a peer scaffolding ESP program on improving 2nd-year secondary stage students' paragraph writing skills:

Using lexical terms, writing meaningful sentences, using word order, using tenses, using additive cohesive ties, and using sequencing cohesive ties.

Questions of the study

The study will answer the following questions:

What is the effect of using a peer-scaffolding ESP program to improve agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills?
This main question could be divided into sub-questions:
What is the effect of using a peer-scaffolding ESP program on improving 2nd-year secondary stage students' paragraph writing organization skills?
What is the effect of using a peer-scaffolding ESP program on improving 2nd-year secondary school' students' paragraph writing skills?

Hypotheses of the study

There would be statistically significant differences between the participants' pre- and post-test' mean scores on improving students' paragraph writing organization skills: writing topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences.

There would be statistically significant differences between the participants' pre- and post-test 'mean scores on improving 2nd-year secondary stage' students' paragraph writing skills: using lexical terms, writing meaningful sentences, using word order, using tenses, using additive cohesive ties, and using sequencing cohesive ties.

Delimitations of the study

The study was limited to:
-Twenty-four 2nd-year agricultural secondary school students at Elkharga Agricultural Secondary School participated in the study.
-The study was applied in the first term of the scholastic year 2023-2024.
-The study was applied in Elkharga Agricultural Secondary School, Elkharga-Elwady Elgadid.
-The content of the ESP program was limited to three units with eighteen lessons about paragraph writing skills.

Definitions of terms of the study

- English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Basterkmen (2006:18) defined ESP as "language is learned not for its own sake or for picking up a general training, yet to smooth the way to section or more noteworthy phonetic proficiency in scholarly, expert, or working environment conditions." The researcher defines ESP as using the English language to build up students's knowledge in the sense that agricultural field students' use of English is in response to their needs to use agricultural terms and writing skills.

- Peer-scaffolding

Sukyadi and Hasanah (2013:5) defined scaffolding as "temporarily provided, and it is gradually removed bit by bit as the learners become more competent independently."
Belland (2014: 2) defined peer scaffolding as "support provided by peers and guided by a scaffolding framework that allows students to meaningfully participate in and gain skill at a task that they could not complete unaided.".

- Paragraph writing

The researcher defines paragraph writing as writing a series of coherent, meaningful sentences (5–6) dealing with one topic using agricultural terms.

- **Instrument of the study**
- A paragraph writing skills pre-posttest for second-year agricultural secondary school students.

Design of the study

-The present study adopted the quasi-experimental design of one pre- and post-study group.

Variables of the study

The study had two variables:

The independent variable is the peer-scaffolding strategy.

The dependent group is the paragraph writing skills relevant to the second-year secondary stage students.

Participants of the study

The total number of students who participated in the study (2023-2024) was 24 female students in their 2nd year at Elkharga Agricultural Secondary School, New Valley Governorate. They were from sixteen to seventeen years old. They have studied English for 11 years. They were assigned to only one pre-posttest group.

Procedures of the study

The present study followed the following procedures:

1. Surveying literature and previous studies related to scaffolding ESP writing.
2. Preparing a list of writing skills and consulting a few experts to select the appropriate ones.
3. Doing content analysis of the students and workbooks
4. Designing the test and test specification and submitting them to the jury members to identify their validity
5. Designing the program and submitting it to the jury members
6.Piloting the test to calculate the time of the test
7. Administering the writing skills test to the study group to identify the students' real standards concerning the identified writing skills.
8.Teaching a peer-scaffolding ESP program
9. Post-administering of the writing skills test to the group to investigate the effect of the peer-scaffolding ESP program in improving the writing skills.
10. Analyzing the results of the per-post administrations of the test statistically using SPSS.
11. Interpreting the results and discussing them.
12. Providing conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions

Results

The first hypothesis stated that "there would be a statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq .05$) between the study group's mean scores of the pre-post testing (favoring the post-testing) of the paragraph organization skills.". To validate this hypothesis, paired sample statistics were used. The following table indicates the results.

Table 1 deals with means, standard deviation, t-value, Cohen's d, and the difference between mean scores obtained by the study groups' pre-post testing on the paragraph organization skills test.

The paragraph organization skills	The test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T value	Sig.	Cohen's d
Topic Sentences	Pretest	24	3.00	1.103	12.112	0.05	5.047
	Post-test	24	6.96	1.042			
Supporting sentences	Pretest	24	.29	.464	9.063	0.05	3.776
	Post-test	24	1.54	.509			
Concluding sentences	Pretest	24	2.67	1.129	12.027	0.05	5.011
	Post-test	24	7.29	1.197			

The paragraph organization skills	Pretest	24	5.96	1.829	16.702	0.05	6.959
	Post-test	24	15.79	1.817			

This table shows that the study group did better in the post-administration of the paragraph organization skills test as a whole and its sub-skills (topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, and total paragraph organization skills) than in the pre-administration. Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there are statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) between the mean scores of the pre- and post-test of the paragraph organization skills test in favor of the post-administration, where the value of t was, respectively (12.112, 9.063, 12.027, 16.702). This value is statistically significant at 0.05. The effect sizes were measured according to Cohen's d, respectively (5.047, 3.776, 5.011, and 6.959). These values indicate a great influence.

Figure 1 shows the differences between the means of the pre- and post-scores of the paragraph organization skills test.

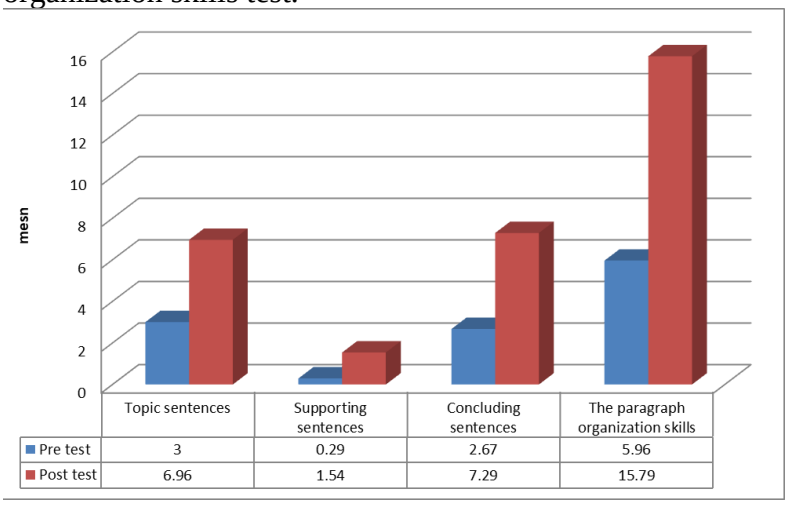


Figure (1): Differences between the average scores of the study groups in the Post-test - administration of the paragraph organization skills test

The second hypothesis stated that "there would be a statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq .05$) between the study group's mean scores of the pre-post testing (favoring the post-testing) of the paragraph writing skills.“. To validate this hypothesis, paired sample statistics were used. Table (2) indicates the results.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation, t-value, and Cohen's d and the Difference between Mean Scores obtained by the Study Groups' Pre-Post Testing on the Paragraph Writing Skills Test.

Paragraph writing skills	The test	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T value	Sig.	Cohen's d
Lexical terms	Pretest	24	8.33	1.579	13.475	0.05	5.615
	Post test	24	18.33	3.358			
Meaningful Sentences	Pretest	24	8.92	1.139	13.418	0.05	5.591
	Post test	24	16.00	2.303			
Word order	Pretest	24	8.67	.917	14.209	0.05	5.920
	Post-test	24	17.50	2.919			
Tenses	Pretest	24	8.71	1.706	13.113	0.05	5.464
	Post-test	24	16.96	2.545			

Sequencing cohesive ties	Pretest	24	7.96	1.122	15.240	0.05	6.350
	Post-test	24	14.29	1.654			
Additive cohesive ties	Pretest	24	7.50	.722	16.462	0.05	6.859
	Post test	24	14.29	1.756			

Table (2) shows that the study group did better in the post-administration of the paragraph organization skills test as a whole and its sub-skills (lexical terms, meaningful sentences, word order, word order, tenses, sequencing cohesive ties, additive cohesive ties, and total paragraph writing skills) than in the pre-administration. Thus, the first hypothesis was accepted. According to this result, the second hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there are statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) in each dimension and the scale as a whole between the mean scores of the pre- and post-test of the paragraph writing skills test in favor of the post-administration, where the value of t was, respectively (13.475, 13.418, 14.209, 13.113, 15.240, 16.462). All of this value is statistically significant at the significance level of 0.05).The effect sizes were measured according to Cohen's criterion, respectively (5.615, 5.591, 5.920, 5.464, 6.350, and 6.859). These values indicate a great influence.

Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of using a peer-scaffolding ESP program to improve agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills. Students who were enrolled in the agricultural secondary stage. Students' writing skills were identified through a paragraph writing test that aimed to identify participants' mastery of paragraph organization and paragraph writing skills. Throughout the study, students used a peer scaffolding ESP program in the paragraph writing process.

The results showed the effect of the peer-scaffolding ESP program on students' paragraph writing. The focus was to teach students the paragraph writing skills they needed. The peer scaffolding program helped students develop paragraph organization skills such as writing a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. It also helped them in writing meaningful sentences and using tenses, lexical terms, word order, sequencing cohesive ties, and additive cohesive ties.

The findings of the current study support Hanjani's (2019) study, which reported positive effects of collective peer scaffolding on the self-revision and writing progress of novice EFL students. The findings also go with the findings of Hashem (2021), who showed the positive effects of a strategy based on scaffolding on the development of EFL writing in secondary students.

Thus, the current study confirmed the positive effect of using the peer-scaffolding ESP program in developing participants' paragraph writing skills.

Conclusion:

The results of the present study indicated the effect of using the peer-scaffolding ESP program on improving agricultural secondary-stage students' paragraph writing skills. To conclude, a peer-scaffolding ESP program provided a learning milieu that helped participants be more engaged in the writing process. It reinforced their paragraph organization skills and paragraph writing skills.

Recommendations:

In light of the results of the present study, a few recommendations could be drawn:

1. The 2nd year agricultural secondary school students at Elkharga Agricultural Secondary School need more support in their paragraph organization skills to improve their supporting sentences in their writing.
2. They need more support in their paragraph writing skills to improve the use of lexical terms in their writing.
3. They need more support in their paragraph writing skills to improve their ability to write meaningful sentences in their writing.
4. They need more support in their paragraph writing skills to improve their use of tenses in their writing.

Suggestions for further research

1. Using a one-to-one scaffolding ESP program to improve paragraph organization skills.
2. Using a one-to-one scaffolding ESP program to improve functional writing skills.

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