

ELEVATING ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS VIA SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS): FOCUSING ON INDONESIAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract:

Since writing in English appears to be an issue for EFL learners, particularly in academic settings for undergraduate students, there is a need to identify some ways or methods of teaching that may assist students in improving their writing ability, such as implementing different platforms like Social Networking Sites (SNS) for teaching and learning English writing skills in the hopes that it will help students enhance their proficiency. This research aims to ascertain how SNS are used to improve writing skills in English by examining Indonesian undergraduates' perspectives and their preferences for English writing practice on their SNSs. This study employed a qualitative approach as the research design. The participants of this study were 42 undergraduate students majoring in English education at a private university in Jakarta, Indonesia. The research instruments employed a questionnaire and an interview. The results revealed that the utilization of SNS as a tool for English writing learning is perceived as helpful and beneficial for the development of undergraduate students' English writing skills.

Keywords:

Writing; English; Social Networking Sites; Perceptions



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INTRODUCTION

Among all the language skills, mastering writing skill seems to be the most challenging for EFL learners (Al Mubarak, 2017; Xiao & Chen, 2015). Due to recursive duration in crafting writing artefact, the EFL learners feel writing is a daunting skill (Rahmatunisa, 2014). The EFL learners as undergraduate students are required to proficiently master writing, as one of the essential language skills, to fulfill various academic assignments including essays, summaries, reports for internships, and research projects. As the subject that is examined, the EFL learners must also be able to write good writing, which is defined as having a text with complex syntax and morphology, a wide range of vocabulary, a strong command of conventional forms, and a way to indicate how the texts relate to one another (Harmer, 2007; Nunan, 2015; Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018). Given all of these facts, it should come as no surprise that undergraduate students find English writing to be an intimidating task, especially if they have a limited vocabulary, struggle with basic sentence construction, and have problems with logical reasoning. Since writing

in English appears to be an issue for EFL learners, particularly in academic settings for undergraduate students, there is a need to identify some ways or methods of teaching that may assist students in improving their writing ability.

Now, it is seen that the emergence of the internet, the growth of information, and the rapidly evolving technology culture impact the hierarchy of human demands, including the educational system (Diamandis & Kotler, 2012). Additionally, the availability of online education gives students more flexibility in their studies, as the traditional classroom is no longer the only setting for learning. Significant global developments have occurred recently regarding the growth of the internet, including social networking sites, and the population that utilizes them, both on the quantitative and qualitative levels (Alahmar, 2016). Social Networking Sites (SNS) is one of the social media platforms that link people together through the exchange of information in the form of chat, audio, visual, and other media (Chisenga et al., 2014; Ariantini et al., 2021). Social networking sites include websites and applications that enable people to share information, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and their personal, social, or even educational experiences with other people. Furthermore, they also enable communication amongst a wide range of people all around the world. SNS has now influenced teaching and learning since it is more well-liked than other online learning platforms and allows students to satisfy their curiosity and creativity (Nelson et al., 2017). Ismail (2019) demonstrated that mediating social media in writing class decreasing anxiety and increasing positive vibe in learning. The process of exchanging information, turning in assignments, having discussions, and participating in group activities has been made simpler and easier by the use of social media and SNS as learning tools in the context of EFL, meaning that it has also enhanced language proficiency (Ariantini et al., 2021).

Underpinning ample previous research that concern in writing issues; however, little foci has investigated the perception of SNS along with the writing skill. Hence, his research aims to ascertain how SNS are used to improve writing skills in English by examining undergraduates' perspectives and their preferences for English writing practice on their SNSs. The study's key contribution is the discovery of an alternative venue for instructing and enhancing English writing abilities. This program also attempts to offer a contemporary approach to aid students in developing their English writing skills. Therefore, the current research purpose is to identify a different platform for learning English writing skills in the hopes that it will help students enhance their proficiency.

METHOD

The primary goal of this study is to provide insight into how undergraduate students perceive the use of SNS to sharpen their English writing abilities. Second, the researcher attempted to classify undergraduate students' preferences for SNSs. To get at the analysis's opinions in the case of acquiring the results, qualitative approach was applied. The qualitative research approach is gained by the central phenomenon and delves deeper to the inside of the research (Creswell., 2012). This research collected the data through a close-ended questionnaire and an interview as the instruments. The questions were developed with the aim at collecting different types of data related to demographic information, personal opinions, facts and attitudes, intangible information like feelings, taste, satisfaction, etc in certain tangible scale from respondents.

The participants were 6th-semester, undergraduate students majoring in English education at a private university in Jakarta, Indonesia. There were 42 students that became the sample, which consisted of 8 males and 34 females. The research instruments in this study were a closed-ended questionnaire and an interview. A questionnaire is a technique for data collection that enables non-verbal questions to be asked and written responses to be provided (Margono, 2007). The subjects' opinions on using SNS to develop their writing skills were solicited via the questionnaire. The questionnaire survey was broken up into three sections: Parts A, B, and C. Demographic information was covered in Part A; attitudes toward using SNSs to develop English abilities and preferences for using SNSs to practice English writing were covered in Part B; and the interviews was the main focus of Part C. The first question in Part C asked the respondents to explain their preferences for SNSs. The second asked if it is advantageous to use SNSs for the learning and practice of English writing. The third question asked if SNS use might be advantageous for English writing abilities. Two categorical questions were taken, and 30 items were adapted from previous, relevant research conducted by (Azlan & Yunus, 2020).

Before sharing the questionnaire, the participants had stated their consent, expressing their voluntary involvement in the current research. The lecturer was also aware of that and supported them. The researcher kept the respondents' personal information confidential. After the pilot study was completed, the questionnaires were given out. Data from undergraduate students was gathered through purposive sampling. In order to examine the data, the qualitative statistics were described using percentages and frequencies, which were then integrated with the information gathered from the interviews in order to analyze the data. Following the important goals of this study, the findings and discussions were separated. The results were divided into groups using the themes and study constructs—personal usage perception, academic perception, and functioning. It was then followed by an additional discussion of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1 The structure of the participants for the categories mentioned

Demographic Info	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	8	19
	Female	34	81
Age Group	20- 23	37	88.1
	24- 26	5	11.9
	Length of time using SNSs	1-5 years	9
	5-10 years	20	47.6
	More than 10 years	13	31

Table 1 displays the participants' demographic information, including gender, age group, and the length of time that they use SNS. A total of 34 (81%) females, followed by 8 (19%) males, were involved in the survey. The overall figure for the age range between 20 and 23 years was 37 (88.1%), with subsequent figures of 5 (11.9%) for the age range between 24-26 years old. A total of 20 (47.6%) of the participants have been using SNS for 5–10 years, followed by 13 (31%) for more than 10 years and 9 (21.4%) for 1–5 years. The participants were among the different classes of the same faculty and year.

The findings showed that the 20–23 age group makes up a large portion of students who use SNSs, with 5–10 years being the most common usage duration. This particular

knowledge is consistent with a study by Aziz, Hashim, and Yunus (2019), which discovered that Generation Z users of SNSs make up the majority and have grown up with technology and SNSs. This generation has a "digital bond to the Internet," and social media is now a part of most of their everyday activities. The statistics obtained also revealed that the majority of participants were female. Given that the majority of the participants were female students from the Faculty of English Education, it was not particularly surprising. However, an interesting study by AlShoaibi & Shukri (2017) revealed that male students' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of SNSs in learning English have been more positive than those of women, which is actually quite at odds with the findings of this study overall, which show that the majority of female undergraduate students have a positive perception of the use of SNSs.

Table 2 Frequency of SNS Preferences in Improving English Writing Skill

Social Media	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Facebook	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Facebook	12	26.2	45.2	14.3	2.4
Instagram	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Instagram	2.4	0	40.5	47.6	9.5
Youtube	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Youtube	2.4	9.5	30.95	28.6	30.95
Blogspot	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Blogspot	7.14	9.5	42.86	19.05	23.8
WhatsApp	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is WhatsApp	0	7.14	21.43	61.9	7.14
Telegram	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Telegram	4.8	16.7	50	23.8	7.14
Google+	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Google+	2.4	16.7	33.3	38.1	9.5
Tumblr	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Tumblr	14.3	38.1	35.7	9.52	2.4
Twitter	The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is Twitter	9.5	7.14	19.05	23.9	40.5
Others (The SNS I prefer for my English Writing practice is....)						
Tiktok						7.14
Wattpad						4.8
Linkedin						2.4
Discord						2.4
Snapchat						2.4
Omegle						2.4

Table 2 shows the preferred SNSs for undergraduate students to hone their English writing abilities. The highest score is 40,5%, which is for the item: "The Social Networking Site I prefer for my English writing is Twitter." The result is similar to a study by Ezumah (2013), where they found that 67% of the respondents (342 people) prefer to use Twitter. Meanwhile, by referring to the interview section, a participant mentioned that:

"The reason I strongly agree with Twitter as a SNS that can help me practice my writing skills is because there are many lessons on how to write in English properly and correctly from various learning Twitter accounts." (FA, 7/6/2023: 7:18 AM)
"On Twitter there is also a feature called Thread, from which we can learn how to write well so that the messages from each tweet can be connected to one another so that the main information from the thread created can be conveyed properly to the readers at the end. Apart from that, on Twitter, many people share about daily activities or events in the form of writing or typing instead of sending photos. If we really make use of it, our writing skills can certainly be improved". (FA, 7/6/2023: 7:19 AM)

The second highest score is 30,95%, which is for the item: "The SNS I prefer for my English writing practice is YouTube." The outcome quite matches with one study by Villafuerte and Romero (2017), where the item "the SNS I would use to practice my

English is Youtube” received the highest mean score. By referring to the participants’ perspective, it was said that:

"On YouTube, there is a lot of varied content that can help me find and develop topics and themes when I write." (OM, 7/5/2023: 9:47 PM)

"There is a comments column that is open for anyone to express their opinion regarding the content they are watching, which makes me interested in writing my comments too. Indirectly, before sending comments, I also have to correct my writing so that the message I mean can be conveyed to others." (OM, 7/5/2023: 9:47 PM)

As to the potential of YouTube in improving English language skills, it was found that the results are gradually increasing after the use of YouTube to teach social expression (Raj, Ann, Subramaniam, & Yunus, 2019).

Meanwhile, the other highest score is gained by Blogspot (SA = 23.81%). It is believed that Blogspot is one of the SNSs that solely helps users practice English writing. According to Said et al. (2013), it was found that blogging assists users in improving their English writing and increasing their motivation. Besides that, interestingly, WhatsApp gained the highest score in the Agree (A) category, which is 61.9%. One of the participants stated:

"I think WhatsApp can help with the growth of my writing skills. My professors and friends have sent me a ton of documents and explanations in English over WhatsApp, which has helped me improve my vocabulary and writing abilities." (RA, 7/6/2023: 6:35 AM)

The next highest score in the Agree category is 47.6% for Instagram, followed by Google+ (A = 38.1%), Telegram (A = 23.81%), Facebook (A = 14.3%) for Facebook, and Tumblr with 9.52%.

From this, it was also found that as many as 7.14% of participants agree that TikTok can also help them develop writing skills, followed by Wattpad with 4.8% and LinkedIn, Discord, Snapchat, and Omegle, which each have a score of 2.4%.

Slightly different from the results from the Azlan and Yunus (2020) study, it was found that Twitter has the highest percentage of 40.5% by looking at the SNS's preferences to practice English writing. Twitter is one of the most famous SNSs for sharing information mainly in text form (written) rather than other SNSs such as Instagram, for example. To facilitate users in presenting the information they want to convey, a thread feature is provided where users can share large amounts of information that normally cannot be conveyed in just one tweet so that the information in each tweet can be interconnected and conveyed to readers. The results show that using Twitter to learn to write has helped students learn to write because it contains a variety of information that can broaden their knowledge and the thread feature teaches them how to write lengthy pieces of information coherently so that readers can understand their meaning. In addition, Khoiriyah and Sa'adah (2017) found that participants thought Twitter was an effective online tool for learning English and that it gave students more confidence in using the language in their

daily lives. In diverse result, Styati (2016) reported that the utilizing Youtube is lower than pictures aid since more authentic and closer to the respondent. Utilizing pictures as authentic materials can enhance students' writing skills by enriching vocabulary, increasing engagement, motivating active participation, and reinforcing practical experience, ultimately influencing their overall writing performance. There is no restriction on the SNS's preference to practice English writing. It is still possible to use other SNSs to practice English writing as well, and therefore we provide a column where respondents can also share other opinions regarding other SNSs that they feel can help them develop their writing skills.

Table 3 Frequency of Perceptions on the Personal Use of SNSs

Category	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Personal	I feel comfortable practicing English writing on SNSs with my friends.	0	4.76	16.7	47.6	30.95
	I feel confident to use English on SNSs.	0	2.4	19.05	57.14	21.4
	I feel good to use English on SNSs.	0	2.4	21.4	59.5	16.7
	I feel comfortable having my peers read my writing in English through the SNS.	0	0	23.8	61.9	14.3
	I feel comfortable giving feedback to my peers on their writing in English using SNS.	0	4.76	28.6	28.6	16.7
	I feel comfortable posting ideas or opinions in English on SNS.	0	9.5	28.6	45.2	19.05

Table 3 displays the frequency of perception regarding the use of SNSs for personal purposes. It was found that the highest score for personal use is for the item "I felt comfortable practicing English writing on SNSs with my friends", which is (SA = 30.95%). From the item, it was supported by the open-ended section where the participant stated:

"Because I can easily share my writing on SNS, doing writing activities feels more fun and easier than in class, reducing my lack of confidence and worry when writing". (RM, 7/52023: 9:45 PM)

The students should be provided with a tool with which they can feel comfortable achieving the task assigned (Allen and Tay, 2012). By looking at the use of technology, Sorensen (2013) stated that students are more comfortable using technology for language learning.

The second highest for personal use is (SA = 21.4%) for the item "I feel confident to use English on SNSs". During the interview, it was found that one of the participants stated:

"I like to share the things I do and try through the writing that I put on my SNS account, and I believe that using SNS to practice my writing skills makes me feel confident, which I think is the key to everything, including success in learning languages. Confidence generates will, will generates ideas, and the combination of will and ideas produces results. So far, I think I have made a lot of progress in my writing by using English on my SNS account." (IN, 7/52023: 10:42 PM)

Besides that, the third highest score for perception on the personal use of SNSs is (SA = 19,05%) for the item I feel comfortable posting ideas or opinions on SNS. From the findings above, it was indicated that the participants have positive perceptions of the use of SNSs concerning the application of English for writing the contents.

In comparison with the study by Azlan and Yunus (2020) when it came to the perception of using SNSs for personal purposes, the item "I felt comfortable practicing English writing on SNSs with my friends" had the highest score (SA = 30.95%), followed by "I feel confident to use English on SNSs" (SA = 21.4%), and "I feel comfortable posting ideas or opinions on SNS" (SA = 19.05%). The majority of participants were comfortable using SNSs to practice their English writing with their friends. Together with their online friends, they can talk about things they enjoy and are passionate about, which naturally boosts students' motivation and enthusiasm for practicing every day, makes the learning process feel more enjoyable and fun than traditional learning, and reduces their lack of confidence and writing anxiety. By utilizing SNSs, users become more at ease expressing their ideas or opinions, which could have an impact on how they perceive the process of learning English. These SNS activities could promote collaborative learning in settings where it would be advantageous for students. Additionally, it has been found by Farrah (2012) that peer evaluation can improve student work by fostering critical thinking, confidence, creativity, and motivation.

Table 4 Frequency of Perceptions on the Use of SNSs for Academic Purposes

Category	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Academic Purposes	I think online chatting with my friends helps me to improve my English writing.	0	2.4	7.14	50	40.5
	I think SNSs (writing status, comment) help me to improve my writing.	0	2.4	14.3	45.24	38.1
	I think SNSs influence my formal writing positively.	2.4	0	33.3	42.86	23.8
	I use SNSs especially to enhance my English writing skill.	0	0	21.4	47.6	30.95
	I use SNSs for learning and academic purposes.	0	4.8	28.6	45.24	21.4
	I believe that SNSs are a good platform to learn.	0	0	9.5	59.5	30.95

Table 4 shows the frequency of perceptions about the use of SNSs for academic purposes. The highest score is (SA = 40.5%), which is for the item I think online chatting helps me to improve my English writing. During the interviews, one of the participants mentioned:

"In my opinion, the reason why online chatting can help me improve my writing skills is that when replying to messages, I have to think about how to arrange sentences so that what I write can be conveyed correctly. When replying to the message, I must try to use clear sentence structure or grammar so that later it does not confuse the other person. Besides that, the topics used when chatting online are usually topics that I like or am interested in, which makes me even more excited to write because I want to tell the things that I like to the people closest to me." (AP, 7/5/2023: 9:48 PM)

A similar result was found in a study by Hashim et al. (2018), where 60 people (66.0%) agreed that online chatting enhances English writing abilities.

It is then followed by another high score, which is (SA = 38.1%) for the item "I think SNSs (writing status, comments) help me to improve my English writing." One of the participants during the interviews stated:

"Most of us young people use SNSs every day, either to make statuses or just to comment on other people's posts, and I believe that the more we use SNS while practicing our writing skills, the more we can improve our English writing skills." (KL, 7/5/2023: 9:49 PM)

Aside from that, two other items had the same high score (SA = 30.95%), which are "I believe that SNSs are a good platform to learn." and "I use SNSs especially to enhance my English writing skills." A participant who approved during the interviews session said that:

"In my opinion, by utilizing various SNS to learn to write, our learning resources become more diverse, preventing us from becoming bored while practicing. Therefore, using SNS for learning is a wise decision." (HS, 7/5/2023: 9:51 PM)
"Using SNS really helps me enhance my writing skills as well as my vocabulary knowledge, which makes it easier for me to write essays now." (HS, 7/5/2023: 9:53 PM)

Based on the findings, the participants also exhibited a favorable impression of the use of SNSs for educational purposes. The findings show that online chat, status updates, and comments on social networking sites, can help students write in English better by encouraging them to implement proper grammar and sentence structure. Additionally, students frequently discuss subjects that they enjoy or are interested in when communicating online, which can boost their desire to write more. In addition, it was also revealed that students use SNSs for personal use and to seek information and knowledge by utilizing their SNS to learn to write and enrich their learning resources. Therefore, most of them also agree that SNSs can be a good platform to support their English learning, as they tend to share their information and knowledge with their friends or the community there. This confirms the findings of a study by Al-Rahmi and Zeki (2017) that social media is an ideal medium for disseminating knowledge and information among communities and educators. As a result, it is advantageous for students to use SNSs to learn new things while also having the opportunity to practice their English writing.

Table 5 Frequency of SNSs Use on the Perceptions of Functionality

Category	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Functionality	My friends will correct my mistakes on my status or comment.	0	2.4	42.86	50	4.8
	I am conscious of grammatical structure when I write on SNSs. (chat, comment, status)	0	2.4	35.7	52.4	9.5
	I am conscious of spelling when I write on SNSs. (chat, comment, status)	0	4.8	28.6	54.8	11.9
	I am conscious of punctuation when I write on SNSs (chat, comment, status)	1	2.4	28.6	57.14	9.5
	My friends' comments on the SNS really helped me to improve my writing in English	0	0	23.8	54.8	21.43

Table 5 shows the frequency of SNS use for the perception of functionality. The highest score is (SA = 21.43%), which is for the item "My friends' comments on the SNS really helped me to improve my writing in English". For this, one of the participants mentioned:

"Based on my experience, comments from my friends can usually help me develop my writing skills because they use a variety of vocabulary, and I can also see examples of using the correct tense from them. Sometimes I still make mistakes, and by looking at comments from friends, it becomes easier for me to understand." (ZK, 7/6/2023: 2:21 PM)

The participants also agree that "I am conscious of spelling when I write on SNSs", which has a high score (SA = 11.9%). One of the participants mentioned that :

"Using SNSs can help me raise awareness about using correct spelling when writing in English, especially when I use SNSs to interact with users from other countries who use English as their main or second language. I became familiar with the correct spelling because I saw it in the sentences they made. Apart from that, nowadays there is also an auto-correction feature on gadgets that can help identify spelling mistakes in sentences that we make." (RD, 7/5/2023: 9:52 PM)

This is in line with the results of a study by Ahmed (2016), which explained that it was found that the spell-check feature correction could help users to lessen spelling mistakes. Interestingly, there are two items with the same high score (SA = 9.5%), and they are for the statements "I am conscious of grammatical structure when I write on SNSs." and "I am conscious of punctuation when I write on SNSs". It is supported by one of the respondents:

"When writing on SNSs for practice, we typically check again to see if the grammar we use is correct or not before posting it and having our writing read by others." (D, 7/5/2023: 9:53 PM)

"We typically become quite careful about our writing on SNS and try to ensure that there are no errors as much as possible, even in tiny things like the usage of punctuation, since we obviously don't want others to see us making mistakes." (D, 7/5/2023: 9:55 PM)

Lastly, regarding the perception of functionality, the majority of participants believe that comments from their friends on SNSs have helped them improve their writing abilities. Comments from friends, particularly those who are from other countries, can help students improve their writing skills by exposing them to a variety of vocabulary and the proper usage of tenses. Additionally, it was also revealed that tools like spell-checkers might assist students in locating their writing problems and fixing them right away. Rimbar (2019) found that the spell-checker feature could help students get better at dictation and spelling. If utilized correctly and frequently, these features and benefits can help students improve their writing abilities and increase their awareness of spelling, grammar, and punctuation when writing in English. In general, it can be said that using SNSs and their features to help undergraduate students with their English skills has a lot of advantages in terms of function. In the similar findings, Villafuerte and Romero (2017) revealed that participants were in favor of using the SNS's functions and that they should be employed for English language instruction in higher education settings.

Discussion

In the final section of this discussion, although there are some differences from the study by Azlan and Yunus (2020) such as the highest preference for SNS in this study being Twitter, with YouTube coming in second, and several other minor details in the personal purpose the section where this time students feel comfortable actively practicing their writing skills with their friends rather than only being comfortable when their writing is to be read, and how most students this time feel that the comments of their online friends influence their writing is the function that has the most impact on them, it can be seen that the core of both research's findings support the use of SNSs as a technical tool for teaching and learning in higher education institutions because it is perceived as helpful and beneficial for the development of undergraduate students' English writing skills. It also

displayed the potential of SNSs by incorporating them into the teaching and learning process. This is consistent with a study by Villarruel et al. (2017) that found that using digital social networks as a technical tool is regarded as useful and beneficial for teaching and learning in higher education institutions. These results are significant enough to guide future attempts to raise the standard and efficiency of undergraduate students' English language instruction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the prior information on the findings, it can be said that undergraduate students have a favorable perception of using SNS to practice writing in English. Many respondents believed incorporating SNSs into their learning activities could significantly increase their writing ability in English. The learning contents on SNS are more engaging and diverse, and the learning process feels more relaxed and enjoyable than regular learning. In addition, the process of learning to write in English through the use of SNSs is not restricted to the same group of people, with their classmates and professors, but also globally, which can, of course, give them more experience, motivation and even feedback than they would typically receive in class. They can discuss things they like and are interested in with their online friends, increasing students' motivation and enthusiasm to practice every day. Not to mention that now various kinds of features can support students' writing practice, such as the thread feature and spelling or grammar correction where they can immediately find where their mistakes are when writing. If done correctly, using social networking sites (SNSs) as a learning tool for English can inject innovation into the student's learning process to prevent learning from becoming monotonous. This is especially true for writing in English, which is typically considered less fascinating and more challenging than other abilities. The teaching and learning process would undoubtedly greatly benefit from this and it is hoped that this can positively influence the development of students' writing skills. Therefore, so that we can continue to improve the efficacy of learning English in the future, studies on this topic still need to be done, including determining its effectiveness and impact on other language abilities such as speaking, reading, and listening.

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