



The effect of Flipped Classroom Model on teaching Grammar and Reading Comprehension: The case of Iraqi intermediate EFL learners at University of Kufa

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أثر نموذج الفصل المقلوب في تدريس القواعد والفهم القرائي: حالة متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للمستوى المتوسط في جامعة الكوفة

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to examine the effect of using the flipped model for teaching Iraqi EFL learners grammar and reading comprehension. For this purpose, 100 intermediate male and female EFL learners at the English department, University of Kufa, were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. In addition, the study aimed to find out if differences between male and female learners affected their performance when the flipped model was in use. The results indicated that the flipped model significantly affected the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in using grammatical English and comprehending English texts. The finding further revealed that there was a significant difference between male and female learners regarding their reading comprehension performance skill. Finally, no difference was detected between the genders as far as learning grammar was concerned. This study has implications for EFL teachers and material designers regarding the use of technology-oriented techniques like flipped classroom model.

Key words: Flipped classroom model, reading comprehension, grammar

المستخلص

كانت هذه الدراسة محاولة لدراسة تأثير استخدام النموذج المقلوب لتعليم قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للمتعلمين العراقيين واستيعاب القراءة. لهذا الغرض، تم توزيع ١٠٠ متعلم من الذكور والإناث من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الكوفة بشكل عشوائي إلى المجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، هدفت الدراسة إلى معرفة ما إذا كانت الاختلافات بين المتعلمين والمتعلمات قد أثرت على أدائهم عند استخدام النموذج المقلوب. أشارت النتائج إلى أن النموذج المقلوب أثر بشكل كبير على أداء متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية وفهم النصوص الإنجليزية. وكشفت النتائج أيضاً عن وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المتعلمين الذكور والإناث فيما يتعلق بمهارة أداء الفهم القرآني. وأخيراً، لم يتم اكتشاف أي اختلاف بين الجنسين فيما يتعلق بتعلم قواعد اللغة. هذه الدراسة لها آثار على معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومصممي المواد فيما يتعلق باستخدام التقنيات الموجهة نحو التكنولوجيا مثل نموذج الفصول الدراسية المعكوسة. الكلمات المفتاحية: نموذج الفصل المقلوب، الفهم القرآني، القواعد

Introduction

English language teachers in Iraq, a developing country with a traditional (lecture-based, no/little technology-integrated) educational system, consider effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching of the English language a serious challenge. Large number of students (50-100) in classes, with different backgrounds and levels, and lack of teaching facilities are the challenges of English classes in Iraq.

Successful learning occurs when the principal effort of the teacher focuses on increasing learners' engagement and active learning (Bergtrom, 2011). In other words, in the 21st century, instructors try to avoid using the traditional passive learning. Instead, they move toward the active teaching and learning and therefore engage the learners in their own learning. From educational perspective, active learning has many positive impacts (Bergtrom, 2011). In concert with this Lee (2013) asserts:

The basic meaning of this kind of learning is understanding and remembering. Any sustained effort to learn about any topic, subjects, or activity will almost inevitably require students to acquire a basic understanding of particular data, concepts, relationships, and perspectives, as well as the ability to recall this knowledge in the future (p. 36).

In recent decades, teaching and learning a language using computers and technology has attracted the attention of many instructors and researchers. Many studies (e.g. Bahrani, 2011; Bataineh & Bani Hani, 2011; Stanley, 2013) suggest that using technology contribute to teaching/learning quality, can produce an authentic situation for learners, give information about the language, establish different social communities with many

language users, and facilitate the learning of language skills. Technology also familiarizes learners with the innovative world and shows users innovative world and provides them with further chances for more learning (Emelyanova & Voronina, 2017).

Moreover, the advent of new technologies in different fields has already encouraged teachers to beneficially use them in their classrooms. Teachers increasingly have employed different models of computer technologies and pushed learners to promote their learning via such instruments (Subramaniam & Muniandy, 2016). They have also integrated different forms of technology with traditional teaching. More innovative instructors, further, try to use instructional methodologies that both promote teaching/learning and motivate learners in their learning process ((Subramaniam & Muniandy, 2016).

Nowadays, teachers employ numerous strategies to make their teaching successful (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). The flipped classroom is a model that can, if designed correctly, change the classroom from teacher-centered to student-centered (Aronson, Arfstrom, & Tam, 2013; Bergmann and Sams, 2012). In a flipped classroom, the instructor presents the materials in an online environment in the form of audio or video clips, podcasts, films, or even games. This way, the entire face-to-face time will be allocated to communicative and interactive activities and practices. In other words, “an inverted (or flipped) classroom is a specific type of blended learning design that uses technology to move lectures outside the classroom and uses learning activities to move practice with concepts inside the classroom” (Strayer, 2012, p. 171).

The flipped classroom model employs technology to present the teaching materials to students outside of the classroom so that the students can practice and engage with the materials in the classroom later (Strayer, 2012). Moreover, Elian and Hamaidi (2018) stated that employing videos in the class permits the teacher to emphasize more standard learning activities, such as working with computers, using laboratories, giving a mediation role to teachers, and encouraging peer-peer learning. As mentioned by Hamdan et al (2013), flipped learning benefits from some major characteristics including a flexible environment, and planned or intentional teaching content. If applied correctly, the flipped classroom can bring about some benefits for learners such as more time for interaction and clarification, more time for a deeper knowledge of ideas, and more time for another learning objective (Boucher et al., 2013)

In Iraq today, there is considerable technological equipment, and the government is trying to make more facilities available. The internet is almost free with no limitations, and the schools are trying to equip themselves with the most recent facilities. If appropriately used in the Iraqi educational system, will most probably change the dominant classroom-based, teacher-centered condition into a more lively technology-based teaching/learning situation. The present study; therefore, aimed at investigating the effects of implementing a flipped classroom model for teaching grammar and reading comprehension to Iraqi EFL learners. Thus, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Does the Flipped classroom model have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL Intermediate learners' Grammatical performance?
2. Does the Flipped classroom model have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL Intermediate learners' reading comprehension performance?

3. Do Iraqi intermediate male and female EFL learners who attend flipped classroom models perform differently on tests of grammar and reading comprehension?

Methodology

Participants and setting

This study used an experimental design in order to examine the effect of the flipped classroom model on teaching Iraqi EFL intermediate learners grammar and reading comprehension. The participants of this study were 100 Iraqi EFL learners, who were studying English language and literature at the BA level at the University of Kufa, Iraq. They were both male and female. Their age range was from 19 to 24. The first language of all the participants was Arabic. The control group consisted of 19 male and 31 female learners, and the experimental group comprised 26 female and 24 male learners.

Instruments

Two tests, Oxford placement test (OPT) and Barron's TOEFL, were used to ensure that all participants met the intermediate level of English. Oxford Placement Test (OPT) placement test as a homogenizer. Version two of (OPT) was utilized as a tool for homogenizing students' levels in two groups of experimental and one control group. Then reading and grammar tests were selected from Barron's TOEFL test, as they are standard highly valid, and reliable items. Twenty-five reading comprehension items and twenty-five grammar ones. For pretests, the same amount from the same sources were used as posttest.

Procedure

As part of the university's curriculum, the participants were taught the courses: grammar, and reading comprehension. The experimental group received instruction via the Flipped classroom model and the control group via traditional methods. Then a post-test was carried out.

Results

The first question examined the effect of the Flipped classroom on EFL learners' grammatical achievement.

A paired sample t-test was applied to the data to address the first research question. The results are presented in the following Tables.

Table 1: Paired Sample t-test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	experimental pretest grammar	29.5800	50	2.60369	.36822
	experimental posttest grammar	32.2400	50	2.70721	.38286

In the above table, the average grammar scores of learners are shown before and after using the Flipped method in the experimental groups. The average reading comprehension score was equal to 29.58 in the pre-test and in the post-test equal to 32.24.

Table 2: Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	experimental pretest grammar - experimental posttest grammar	- 2.66000	3.71764	.52575	-3.71654	-1.60346	- 5.059	49	.000

According to the table, the probability level is $p < 0.000$ and is lower than 0.05, which means that using the Flipped method had a significant effect on EFL learners' grammatical performance.

The descriptive statistics related to the grammar scores of the Experimental and control groups depicted that the average grammar scores of the experimental group after the flipped treatment (32.24) are more than the average scores before using the Flipped model (29.58). Also, the average scores of female learners in both pre-test and post-test modes are more than the scores of male students. In the control group, the average scores of learners before and after Flipped are not significantly different from each other.

The second research question) examined the effect of Flipped on EFL learners' reading comprehension. A paired sample test parametric test was used to address this question.

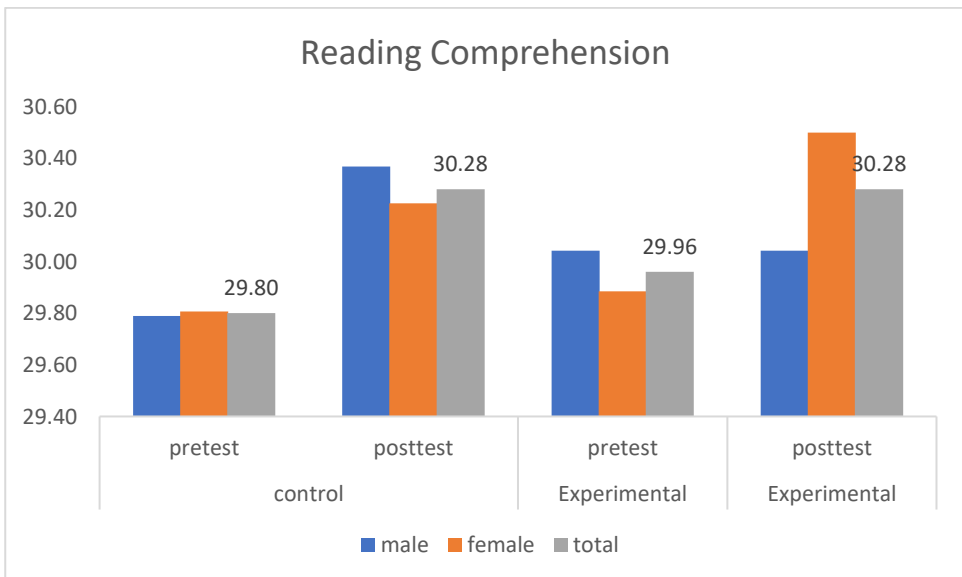
The results of running the test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of running paired sample t-test

Pair		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
1	experimental pretest reading - experimental posttest reading	-.32000	3.61087	.51065	-1.34620	.70620	-.627	49	.534

As indicated, the significant level detected here ($p = .534$) is above $.05$; therefore, the second research question received a negative answer. (sig=0.534 and is more than 0.05 therefore and the null hypothesis is not rejected); it means using Flipped method has no significant effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension.

The third research question Flipped classroom model and Iraqi male and female EFL learners' performance on tests of grammar and reading comprehension



		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	experimental pretest attitude	3.1600	50	.28268	.03998
	experimental posttest attitude	3.8160	50	.26352	.03727

Descriptive statistics of scores of the Language Learning Attitudes questionnaire of learners for both control and experimental groups, separated by gender and before and after Flipped, are shown. According to the graph, in the control and experimental groups, the attitude of the students increased in the pre-test, but this increase is more in the experimental group and less insignificant in the control group. Also, in both groups, in the post-test, the average attitude of female students is slightly higher than male students.

Paired Samples Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
				Paired Differences				
Pair 1 experimental pretest attitude - experimental posttest attitude	-.6560	.32933	.04657	-.74959	-.56241	-14.085	49	.000

Section 2:

The third research question

In the third question, the effect of the Flipped classroom on EFL learners Do Iraqi intermediate male and female EFL learners who attend flipped classroom models perform differently on tests of grammar and reading comprehension?

In this section, an independent t-test was used to examine the difference in grammatical and reading comprehension achievements between male and female learners.

To run the ANOVA, it was necessary to perform descriptive statistics and test of equality of variance. The results of this are shown in Tables (4, 5, and 6) below:

a-1: experimental group

Table 4: Group Statistics

	Experimental sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
experimental pretest grammar	male	24	29.1667	2.27781	.46496
	female	26	29.9615	2.86330	.56154
experimental posttest grammar	male	24	32.1667	2.83866	.57944
	female	26	32.3077	2.63468	.51670

The average grammar scores of male and female learners are presented in two pre-and post-test in the control group. According to the above table, the average grammar scores in the pre-test for male and female learners are equal to 29.17 and 29.96, respectively, and in post-test are equal to 32.31 and 30.17. One of the assumptions of the Independent T-Test is the equality of variances, for which Levene's Test was used.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
experimental pretest grammar	Equal variances assumed	1.252	.269	-1.080	48	.285	-.79487	.73577	-2.27424	.68449
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.090	47.012	.281	-.79487	.72905	-2.26151	.67177
experimental posttest grammar	Equal variances assumed	.219	.642	-.182	48	.856	-.14103	.77400	-1.69726	1.41521
	Equal variances not assumed			-.182	46.861	.857	-.14103	.77636	-1.70298	1.42093

According to the test results: it can be said gender has no effect on the grammatical achievement of learners in group experimental.

Discussion

In today's technologically advanced society, effective communication and telecommunication rely heavily on language skills. English is considered the most widely spoken language in the world, and mastering English grammar and reading comprehension is crucial for learning any language. Therefore, it is important to use the most effective and practical methods when teaching these skills. This study holds significance for both

students and teachers as it can foster collaboration and is one of the few studies of its kind conducted in Iraq. Utilizing a flipped classroom approach allows teachers to optimize class time by engaging students in collaborative activities and discussions, leading to improved academic performance. Moreover, implementing the flipped method can enhance interaction and cooperation between teachers and students, facilitating active learning and better academic outcomes. This study is the first of its kind to investigate the consequence of the application of the flipped approach. The growing popularity of flipped models in educational settings necessitates the exploration of their effects on language learning, which is particularly important in Iraq where the dominant method of teaching is the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM).

The initial question of the study focused on examining the effect of Flipped learning on the grammar skills of EFL learners. The researchers found that there was a significant increase in the learners' scores after using Flipped learning, indicating that it had a positive impact on their grammar skills. This finding is significant because it suggests that Flipped learning can enhance foreign language learning, particularly in terms of grammar instruction (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Webb & Doman, 2016). Importantly, grammar is a crucial aspect of language learning, and the ability to effectively use grammar rules is essential for effective communication in a second language. The findings of this study suggest that Flipped learning can contribute to improving learners' grammar skills. The reason behind this positive impact can be attributed to the students' effort outside the classroom. Chen Hsieh et al. (2017) explain that the success of Flipped learning depends on students' engagement in pre-class study. This indicates that the increased effort and preparation that

students put into their learning outside the classroom during Flipped instruction can lead to improved grammar skills.

Flipped model application in language learning allows for a more interactive and student-centered approach. By shifting the traditional classroom instruction to the outside of the classroom, learners have the opportunity to engage with the grammar material at their own pace and receive individualized attention and feedback. The increase in learners' scores indicates that the Flipped approach effectively enhanced their understanding and application of grammar rules. The self-paced nature of Flipped allows learners to review and practice grammar concepts until they master them, which could explain the improvement in scores. Furthermore, the Flipped approach provides learners with access to various multimedia resources such as videos, online exercises, and interactive activities that cater to different learning styles. This variety of resources can engage learners more effectively and enhance their understanding and retention of grammar concepts.

The use of the flipped classroom method has been found to be beneficial for improving EFL learners' proficiency in grammar (Allaahveisi & Aliakbari, 2020). This study aimed to investigate the impact of flipped learning on learners' grammar competency by redesigning the instructional approach both inside and outside the classroom. The findings of the study suggest that flipped learning is a highly effective method for teaching English grammar, as it led to substantial improvements in learners' grammar competency compared to traditional lecture-based classrooms. These findings are consistent with previous research (Adnan, 2017; Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017; Lubis & Rahmawati, 2021).

According to Hashemifardnia et al. (2018), the flipped classroom approach allows for more interactive and engaging learning

experiences compared to traditional lecture-based classrooms. It promotes student-teacher interaction, fosters collaboration among students, and emphasizes active learning. In a flipped classroom, students have the opportunity to engage in discussions, activities, problem-solving, and group work during class time. Additionally, as students already have prior knowledge of the content, they can more easily understand and learn the lesson. In a flipped classroom, students learn the content before class, at their own pace, and in their own private time, whereas in a traditional classroom, students learn the lesson in class according to the instructor's schedule and pace (Hashemifardnia et al., 2018). According to Karabulut-Ilgu et al. (2018), one of the main advantages of the flipped classroom is its flexibility, allowing learners to review pre-made content at their own pace and anytime they want.

Abaeian and Samadi's (2016) study involved 100 female EFL learners and found that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. The flipped classroom method has been shown to improve critical thinking skills in learners (Vidoni and Maddux, 2002). Zheng et al. (2008) also found that a WebQuest-based flipped classroom approach promotes critical thinking. Ebadi and Rahimi (2017) further emphasized that the flipped classroom enhances both learner responsibility and motivation compared to traditional teaching methods. Weinstein (2000) suggests that providing reliable information in the flipped classroom can improve critical thinking. Additionally, Bagheri and Ghanizadeh (2016) found a positive relationship between critical thinking and inferential reading comprehension in Iranian EFL students. Other studies have shown that students in the flipped classroom engage more deeply with

reading passages, as observed by Kim, et al. (2017) in a content-based instructional context.

In contrast to the previous findings, this study did not find any significant impact of the Flipped method on reading comprehension. This discrepancy could be attributed to various factors. Firstly, it is plausible that the implementation of the Flipped method in this study was not executed effectively. The design of the Flipped lessons, the quality of the video materials used, and the efficacy of the in-class activities may have all contributed to the lack of improvement in reading comprehension (Jones, 2018; Wang & Ouyang, 2020). Moreover, the duration of the study could have influenced the outcomes. If the Flipped method was only implemented for a short period of time, it may not have been sufficient to observe significant changes in EFL learners' reading comprehension abilities (Johnson, 2017). Thus, the ineffective implementation and short duration of the Flipped method might explain why it did not result in improved reading comprehension in this particular study.

There could be several reasons why the Flipped method was not effective in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension in this study:

a) Lack of Familiarity: EFL learners at the BA level may not be familiar with the Flipped method or may not have had prior experience with it. This lack of familiarity could lead to confusion or difficulty in navigating the Flipped learning materials, ultimately hindering their comprehension.

b) Insufficient Preparation: The Flipped method requires learners to independently review materials before class, which may require self-discipline and effective time management skills. If the EFL learners were not adequately prepared or lacked the necessary

motivation to engage with the pre-class materials, their comprehension may not have improved significantly.

c) Limited Interaction: The Flipped method often requires learners to engage in independent study or watch pre-recorded instructional videos. This reduced face-to-face interaction with the instructor and peers may have limited the learners' opportunities for clarification, discussion, and practice, which are essential for enhancing reading comprehension.

d) Learning Preferences: Different learners have varying learning preferences and styles. Some learners may thrive in a self-directed learning environment, while others may struggle to stay focused or motivated without direct teacher guidance. If the majority of the EFL learners in this study preferred teacher-centered instruction rather than a student-centered approach like Flipped, their lack of engagement and interest could have contributed to the ineffectiveness of the method.

e) Lack of Adequate Supplementary Activities: The Flipped method, when used solely, might not provide enough opportunities for learners to practice and apply their reading skills. Reading comprehension can be improved through various activities such as discussions, group work, and written tasks. If these supplementary activities were not incorporated or were not effectively integrated with the Flipped method, learners may not have had enough chances to reinforce their reading comprehension skills.

f) Sample Bias: It is possible that the group of EFL learners in this study had unique characteristics or circumstances that played a role in the ineffectiveness of the Flipped method. For example, cultural factors, educational background, or individual learning differences could have influenced the outcomes. Therefore, it is important to consider the specific context of the study and the characteristics of the participants when interpreting the results.

It is crucial to acknowledge these factors and consider them when designing future studies or implementing the Flipped method in educational contexts.

To address the third research question, the researcher utilized a questionnaire and conducted interviews to investigate the opinions of both students and teachers regarding the implementation of the flipped method in the classroom. Similarly, Akçayır and Akçayır (2018) conducted research on the advantages and challenges associated with the flipped method and found that it leads to positive academic outcomes. They pointed out various advantages of this approach, such as increased learning motivation and positive attitudes among students. However, the researchers acknowledged that more research is needed before generalizations can be made. They also identified several challenges, including the need for instructors to ensure the quality of instructional videos, the requirement for additional interaction and communication tools to assist students with obtaining feedback and help outside of class, and the necessity for instructors to assess the technological capabilities and competency levels of their students before implementing the flipped model. Moreover, Lundin et al. (2018) examined all the references in the Scopus database (n = 530) up until mid-June 2016 and discovered that there was a significant increase in the popularity of implementing flipped learning methods in classrooms.

As the results of this study suggested, flipped learning provides an opportunity for students to actively engage with the content outside the classroom. This can lead to increased motivation and interest in learning grammar and improving reading comprehension skills.

The flipped learning approach allows students to learn at their own pace and convenience. They can access learning materials and

resources at any time, which can be beneficial for individualized learning according to their specific needs and preferences. Flipped learning encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning by actively engaging with the material before coming to class. This can promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills as students have the opportunity to apply their knowledge during in-class discussions and activities.

Additionally, in a flipped learning approach, the time spent in the classroom can focus on the interaction between the teacher and students, allowing for more personalized guidance and support. This can lead to a better understanding of grammar concepts and improved reading comprehension skills through direct interaction with the teacher.

Moreover, flipped learning often involves providing students with additional resources such as video lectures, online exercises, and supplementary materials. This can enhance their understanding of grammar rules and provide additional practice opportunities for reading comprehension. Flipped learning empowers students to take control of their learning process. They can choose when and how to study, which can promote autonomy and independence in language learning.

Moreover, gender proved to have no effects on the use of flipped model in classrooms for several reasons:

- a) Equal exposure to flipped learning: Both male and female participants in this study have had similar opportunities to engage with the flipped learning approach. If the same resources, materials, and support were provided to all participants regardless of gender, it would minimize any potential gender-based differences in learning outcomes.
- b) Individual learning preferences: If both male and female participants were equally comfortable with the flipped learning

approach, their learning outcomes might not be influenced by their gender.

c) Instructional design: The flipped learning methodology used in this study has been designed in a way that caters to diverse learning styles and preferences, irrespective of gender differences. If the instructional design focused on providing engaging and interactive materials and activities that appealed to all learners, it would not show any variation based on gender.

d) Sample characteristics: The sample of participants in this study had similar English language proficiency levels and motivation, regardless of gender. If both male and female participants had a comparable starting point, it would be less likely for gender to have an impact on their flipped learning outcomes.

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