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Article de recherche

Connaissance et mise en oeuvre de l'enseignement coopératif par les professeurs danglais en République Démocratique du Congo. Une étude de cas

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Résumé

Vingt enseignants danglais de dix écoles secondaires du district de Lukunga ont répondu à un questionnaire et ont été observés. Bien quils déclarent connaître lapprentissage coopératif, lobservation révèle quils ne mettent pas réellement en uvre cette méthode et privilégient une approche centrée sur lenseignant.

Mots-clés : apprentissage coopératif ; observation passive ; enseignant ; implémentation ; familiarité

Abstract

Twenty English teachers from ten high schools in the Lukunga district completed a survey and were observed. Although they reported being aware of cooperative learning, passive observation showed that they did not implement it in practice and mainly used a teacher-centered approach.

Keywords : cooperative learning ; passive observation ; teaching ; implementation ; awareness

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Introduction

Panitz (1998) recognizes the benefits of cooperative learning when he points out that it is an instructional strategy employing a variety of motivational techniques that make teaching more pertinent and allow the development of higher levels of awareness in students. As an EFL teacher, I have observed that high school graduates are not able to speak English fluently after six years of learning English in high schools. The few of them who manage to speak English fluently enough have had some extra English classes in language schools. The way English is taught to them does not allow them to speak it fluently. Taking into account the situation above, I am interested in discovering whether the EFL teacher in the Democratic Republic of Congo are aware of cooperative learning and check it while teaching English.

The goal of this paper is to look at awareness and implementation of cooperative learning by some EFL teachers of Lukunga district. It is hypothesized that the participants are not aware of cooperative learning and they do not implement it, either while teaching English. The following objectives are targeted : First, to disclose whether the participants are aware of cooperative learning strategy or not. Second, to observe passively the participants in order to check whether they implement the strategy or not. As the district of Lukunga was the investigation setting, five municipalities of the district were selected, namely Gombe, Ngaliema, KasaVubu, Barumbu and Kintambo. In these municipalities, two high schools respectively one private and one denominational or state one have been selected. In the ten selected high schools, twenty English teachers filled out survey questionnaire copies and they were passively observed in order to collect qualitative data. The researcher needed both quantitative and qualitative data.

I. On Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning (CL) is a learning method based on students teamwork. It includes diverse and numerous techniques in which students work together to achieve certain common objectives. The responsibility to achieve those objectives is shared among all team mem-

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bers (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Before going deeper into the concept of CL, it may be interesting to make an allusion to another concept that has been used lately : collaborative learning. Many authors do not differentiate between CL and collaborative learning and use them as synonyms. However, other authors do use these terms differently. Zañartu (2000) states that the basic difference between these two concepts is that in CL the teacher needs to plan and structure the task carefully, while in collaborative learning students have much more autonomy and the task needs very little structuring from the teacher. According to Panitz (2001), in collaborative learning students are the ones who design their structure of interactions and maintain control over the different decisions that may have an impact in their learning, while in CL it is the teacher who designs and maintains almost completely control over the structure of interactions and the results that they must obtain. Following these authors, the difference between these two types of learning is the degree of structure of the task and the interactions between students. Kagan (1992) asserts that CL refers to a series of instructional strategies in which the interaction student-student is required for the development of a particular theme or task as an essential part of the learning process. He also comments that CL is founded on the constructivist theory, which grants an important role to the students as actors of their own learning process. Johnson and Johnson (1987) emphasize that CL consists in using a highly structured student interaction in small groups so that students work together and make the most of their own learning. These authors define cooperation as a methodology in which students work together to achieve shared objectives and also highlight that within the cooperative activities students look for results that are beneficial for themselves and for the rest of the group members. Taking into account previous research (Johnson and Johnson, 1987), in a competitive learning situation, students compete with each other to achieve the expected results. This implies that a better performance of a student or group of students entails, necessarily, that the performance of others is inferior. A student will reach the goal if, and only if, the others do not. Therefore, each student will pursue the results that, being beneficial to him, are also harmful to other colleagues with whom they are competing. As the previously mentioned authors note, the maximum reward for a student will be received when he or she shows better results than their counterparts and also when their qualification is substantially inferior. Johnson and Johnson (1987) propose that in an individualistic learning situation the student focuses only in the accomplishment of his or her task and in the individual achievement of the expected results. Therefore, the fact that a student achieves the objectives or not does influence or depend on the achievement of the rest of their classmates. In this way, each student pursues his or her own benefit without taking into account the interest of his or her classmates. Thus, reward is determined by the work of each person, without taking into consideration others performance. On the other hand, as Johnson and Johnson (1967) comment, in a cooperative learning situation the group of students need to work together because the objectives will be achieved if, and only if, each member of the team gets theirs. The team needs the knowledge and work of all of the members. In this learning situation, group achievements are also everyone elses. The reward received by the student, in cooperative learning, is equivalent to the results obtained by the group. After having described the fundamental differences between the objectives of the different learning activities (competitive, individual and cooperatives), the fundamental components of Cooperative Learning are, namely Positive Interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills and group processing. According to the previously mentioned authors, there is positive interdependence when a student thinks he is bound to others in a way that he or she cannot be successful if the rest of the group members fail and vice versa. The students work together sharing a common objective. In other words, students must perceive that either they succeed or fail together. There are different ways of structuring positive interdependence, for example : the existence of collective rewards, dependence on others resources, the division of labor, and so forth. These authors signal the two main necessary steps to implement positive interdependence within the learning groups : - To formulate goals that aim to establish a positive interdependence among students. - To supplement and reinforce positive interdependence with respect to their main goals, and to incorporate additional forms of interdependence.

Whenever a team works cooperatively for their first time, their level of cooperation will have a scope inferior to what was expected so that it is necessary to reinforce it with other types of positive interdependence. For instance, promoting interdependence by giving prizes and rewards to those group members who work cooperatively, promote group cooperation, and praise and encourage others to do so. As for individual accountability, it requires that the teacher makes sure that each students results are evaluated individually and that these results are communicated to the individual and to the whole group. The whole group needs to know which member of the group is in need of help to finish the task, and also that anyone of them can 'hang' on the work of others. Some common ways of structuring individual accountability are : providing each student with an exam, the choice of a random student to present the results of the whole group, or by making individual questions while group work is supervised. There is positive face-to-face interaction when students interact between themselves orally, reflecting on how to solve a problem, the nature of certain concepts and the strategies that are being used. They teach what they know to each other and explain the connections between the past and present knowledge. This face-to-face interaction is positive in the sense that students help each other, assist each other, and encourage and support each other in their effort to learn. For the effective functioning of group cooperation certain social skills are required. Students must possess and be able to use the necessary leadership and decision-making abilities, to generate trust, to be able to communicate, and to be able to manage the conflicts that may arise. These skills must be taught as intentionally and precisely as any other academic skills. Many students may have never worked in cooperative learning situations and, therefore, lack the much-needed social skills to do so. Group processing involves the discussion of certain topics that may have an influence on the development of the task by the group. Some examples of these topics are : objectives achievement, problem solving, relationship building, and social interaction within the group. At the end of each work session the group analyzes the process by answering the following two questions : 1. What did each member do that was useful for the whole group ? 2. What can be done by each member so that the whole group works even better the following day.

This self-analysis enables the group to focus on its maintenance as a cohesive one, facilitates the learning of cooperative skills, ensures that all of the components receive feedback of their participation, and reminds students to practice their cooperative skills continuously. There are methods applied in cooperative learning. The following are mentioned : - Jigsaw is a method applicable to a variety of subjects and it was created by a group of scholars (Aronson & Stephan, 1978). In Jigsaw, students work in heterogeneous groups of six members. - The teacher does not give master classes. Instead, he or she is responsible for dividing the topic to be taught in six parts, each of them unique and indispensable to understand the subject, and to provide the necessary material for each part. - The task is carried out individually and each student receives a part of the task. Then, the student must study individually his or her part, discuss it within the group of experts and then explain it to the rest of the team. The reward received by the student is based on individual performance in exams or by the completion of the task (Aronson, Stephan et al 1978).

According to a study carried out by Slish (2005) the effectiveness of the Jigsaw method should be assessed not only by students performance on individual tests but to include group and individual goals.

According to this author, the students following the Jigsaw method were not seen to perform better in tests than the students following more studentpassive techniques. However, further studies should be conducted to show other possible benefits of this method. Regarding Jigsaw II, Slavin tried to solve some of the drawbacks of the method. For instance : preparing all the materials for each part of the task was excessively time consuming for the teacher, the difficulty to solve the task, the impossibility to divide the subject or task in several parts, or the fact that students become experts of a single part of the theme and sometimes they are seen not to understand the whole picture. These problems are overcome by the Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1986), adaptation of the Jigsaw I. In this method, students work in groups of four to five people. The teacher prepares the subject, cuts texts, adds information or writes new material, if needed. The task is meant to be solved in group. All students read the whole task, but each member of the team is given a subtopic on which he or she should be an expert. After reading the task individually, students discuss their subtopics in the so called groups of experts, which are groups formed by students focusing in the same part of the task. Then, students return to their teams to explain their part to the rest (Slavin, 1986). The reward, unlike in the original Jigsaw, is a group based on the sum of the scores obtained by all the team members in an individual examination of the subject. Jigsaw has been used, especially in the history subject, but also in areas of mathematics and written expression ; and Jigsaw II is more commonly used in science subjects. As far as Student Teams-Achievement Division (STAD) method is concerned, it is applicable to a variety of areas and it was created by Slavin in 1978. Students are assigned to heterogeneous teams of four to five members. The functions of the teacher and the characteristics of the task are similar to those described in Johnson and Johnsons Learning Together method (1991), with the difference that each student has his or her own job for the completion of the task. The reward obtained by each student is measured by the whole group performance. Students qualification will depend on their improvement from a pretest to the final test. Thus, grading depends on the improvement of students previous exam, not in their scores. Following this method, students receiving high or low scores in their previous exams have the possibility to contribute equally to their team's score (Slavin, 1978a). In its origins, STAD was used in the area of language (i.e. punctuation, grammar, and so forth). However, thanks to its flexibility, it has been implemented in many other areas. One of these areas is for instance Chemistry, for which Adesoji and Ibraheem (2009) decided to implement this method in order to gather information about its results in students achievement and attitude. They carried out a study in Nigeria in which three hundred students participated and their results showed significant positive effects in both areas. Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT) method is in general very similar to the STAD, with the only difference that the individual test and the team grade are replaced by a system of academic tournaments. As De Vries and Slavin (1978) explain, TGT basically consist in answering questions about the lesson presented by the teacher and worked by each student in their corresponding team. Each student plays at a tournament table against students of other teams with the same level, taking as reference a previous evaluation. The member of the table tournament who wins more points than the rest receives 6 points, the next 4 and the following 2. In this way, each student, whatever the level he or she has, has the opportunity to contribute a maximum score to their teams general score. For the following tournaments, the three students with higher scores form a new tournament table, the next three form another and so on. The reward is group based on the number of points each member gets in the tournament (De Vries & Slavin, 1978). Originally, this technique arose in the area of mathematics, but later, due to its flexibility of implementation, it has been used in various areas such as spelling or science. In the field of Economics, a study was carried out in 2011 by Wyk which purpose was to see whether students achievement was improved when following the TGT methods. Results showed that students following TGT obtained better results at the test final score and their attitude toward the method was also very positive. Team-Assisted Individualization (TAI) is a method specifically designed to teach mathematics in the first grades. It was created by Slavin and Leavey (1984). Students are divided into teams of four to five members, formed by pairs or trios belonging to different group levels of mathematical ability, based on a previous evaluation. Thus, a team can be formed by two students with a low level and two other students with a high level. The teacher prepares the lesson for each group, instead of the entire class, using direct teaching of mathematical skills. While the teacher focuses on a group, the rest of the students continue working in pairs on the material provided by the teacher which has been carefully designed to fit their level and that consists of different units. As the aforementioned authors explain, when a student has doubts in an exercise, he or she tries to solve it first by the cooperation with their group members or with other groups members before asking the teacher. Thus, the lesson is less teacher-centered, students learn to collaborate and the teacher has more time to solve doubts that cannot be answered by other peers. The reward is group based on the average of the scores obtained by the group members in an individual examination and the average number of units performed by the team every week. This method, which combines the use of cooperative teams with the individualized instruction in mathematics, emerged in order to offer the advantages of individualized or programmed teaching methods. In 2008, the scholars Tarim and Akdeniz carried out a study in which they compared the results of three different classes of Secondary School students in mathematics following TAI, STAD and the control group. Results showed that both classes using Cooperative Learning techniques had better results on achievement than the control group, TAI being the most effective (Tarim & Akdeniz, 2008). Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) is a specific method to teach reading and writing in the last stages of elementary school. This method was created by Stevens, Madden, et al(1987) and shares some characteristics with those of the TAI. For instance, teams training, teacher functions and the tasks that the students must carry out are quite similar. However, in CIRC, the teacher teaches specific reading comprehension skills such as the identification of main ideas and the students in their teams work in a series of reading and writing activities like reading stories to each other or looking up words in the dictionary. The reward is group based on the average of the scores obtained by the members of the group in an individual examination, the quality of the individual written composition, and the completion of daily activities. As the aforementioned authors comment, the CIRC method and the TAI also share some characteristics. Both follow a specific sequence. First, students are asked to form small and heterogeneous groups, then, they practice the contents provided by the teacher during a specific time, and finally students are evaluated by means of an exam and other forms of evaluation. Students cannot proceed to the exam until all team members are ready and willing to take the exam. Lastly, since students work with materials appropriate to their levels of reading and mathematics, respectively, they have the same opportunities to contribute to the team's success. This method was tested by Durukan (2011) on Secondary School children, showing positive results on reading, comprehension, and writing skills. Thus, this author goes as far as conclude by acknowledging the benefits of CIRC in language acquisition as compared to the traditional method. Constructive Controversy is a specific method usually employed to study controversial issues and was created by Johnson and Johnson (2000). The students work in groups of four members, subdivided in two pairs. One pair has to be "in favor" and the other "against" the given topic. The teacher does not give master classes, as in other traditional methods. His or her main functions are to prepare the materials on both postures and to supervise the work of the teams. As these authors comment, the task has to be carried out in group. At the end of the session, the team must write a group

report that collects, in the best way possible, the thoughts of all the members. In order to do so, first, each pair works on their own material and, subsequently, they share that information with the other two members of their group, exposing orally the relevant points or refuting some arguments. Then, students change their roles, if a pair of students was previously in favor now they have to be against the given topic. Finally, the whole team reaches a consensus. The reward is group based on the performance of each member in an individual examination that requires knowledge of both positions. This method requires, among others, higher reasoning skills so its use may be limited with very young students (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Thus, as Chen and Tjosvold (2002) assert in their study, the teams, which followed the Constructive Controversy method, rated themselves as open-minded, innovative, and loyal to a higher degree as compared to their counterparts following more independent goals.

II. On The Investigation

II.1. Data Analysis

As said earlier twenty teachers participated in this investigation, including eighteen males (90 percent) and two females(10 percent) :
The female participation makes the study homogenous.
Concerning seniority in teaching English as a foreign language, a similar situation is revealed, eighteen of them have taught for more than three years, whilethe remaining have taught for more than two years :
Concerning the awareness of cooperative learning, the participants are mostly aware of cooperative learning : eighteen of them confirmed to be aware of it, while few participants denied it.
It was not a surprise to notice that only the two participants who denied were not able to provide the way they understand cooperative learning. Eighteen participants provided different responses as displayed in the following table. An important number of them stated that it is a teaching method where students work in small groups to learn and help each other.
Regarding the implementation of the method, only one denied implementing it. Nearly all of them implement cooperative learning as illustrated below :
Concerning learners interaction and working in groups, the results have revealed that they all interact and they nearly all work in groups as the following tables ;
It was not interesting to notice that although they mostly agreed to be aware of cooperative learning, most of them did not provide answer concerning the seven techniques of cooperative learning. The four participants who tried to provide answers did not mention all the seven techniques. Their responses are below :
A question was asked to disclose whether the participants notice some drawbacks of cooperative learning. Many of them confirmed to have noticed some drawbacks. A few of them did not answer.
Ten participants provided answers concerning drawbacks of cooperative learning. This implies two participants who did not confirm to have noticed drawbacks have finally provided drawbacks.

II.2. Interpretation

Twenty English teachers from different high schools of Lukunga District participated in this investigation, which targeted their awareness of cooperative learning. Among the participants, they were eighteen males and two females. Eighteen of them have taught English for more than three years, a seniority ascertaining their awareness with cooperative learning. As expected, nearly all of them, that is eighteen participants confirmed to be aware of cooperative learning and the two denied it. While providing the way they understand it, the eighteen participants provided valid answers. The same number of participants confirmed to implement it. The two participants kept denying implementing, as they were sincere. Different questions were asked to make sure they are aware and implement cooperative learning also revealed valid answers as for examples, all of them confirmed that their learners interact and nearly all them stated that their learners work in groups. The participants provided some benefits and drawbacks of cooperative learning. However, most of the participants did not provide answers concerning the seven techniques of cooperative learning. The few who tried to answer provided answers for the following techniques Jigsaw, STAD, TGT and others. None of them provided correct answers for the seven techniques of cooperative learning. One could wonder how they implement cooperative learning in their classroom. The data from the passive observation revealed something different. This lead the researcher to state that the participants did not act out what they confirmed. In both denominational and private high schools, English teachers applies teacher-centered approach. To mention only a few cases, in Institut de la Gombe, the two teachers observed one in the fifth form and the other in the sixth form. Both of them applied teacher centered. The one teaching reading comprehension in the fifth form, he asked learners provide responses individually. The other one of the sixth form teaching reading vocabulary explained new words of the text by himself. In Bosembo private high school, one English teacher invited students to work in pairs during a grammar lesson. There was no interdependence. The other teacher wrote a text in the board and invites learners to make an individual reading and other students laughed at the student who was reading. No team organization, class. In another private school, CS Maniema, there was a kind of a mess when the teacher taught a song. Learners laughed at the way the teacher sang. Learners sang in disorder in a choral class. The other teacher taught grammar. He ended by giving individual tasks to learners. Although some drawbacks of cooperative learning mentioned the participants, there was a room for implementing it for the benefits of learners. For example, the teacher of Institut de la Gombe would have split the class into small groups and give them as tasks of making questions and answering them. Different groups could make different questions and if there are five groups with five different questions, the class will end up with many questions. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to look at the implementation of cooperative learning by some EFL teachers of Lukunga district. Two hypotheses underlined this study ; first, the participants are not aware of cooperative learning. Second, they do not implement it while teaching English. The results revealed that most of them are aware of cooperative learning although they do not accurately have details on the seven techniques of cooperative learning. A few of them (20 percent) tried to provide some details on the seven techniques. Among them, no one mentioned completely the seven techniques. As the study also targeted passive observation as said earlier, to allow the researcher to reconcile what the participants filled in the survey questionnaire copies and the reality on the ground. It was discovered that not all of them act out what they filled out. No one of the observed teacher implemented cooperative learning in their classrooms. Teacher- centered approach dominated and a few teachers applied pair works.

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TABLE 1 – Knowledge of cooperative learning

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	18	90,0	90,0	90,0
no	2	10,0	10,0	100,0
Total	20	100,0	100,0	

TABLE 2 – Understanding of cooperative learning

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No answers	2	10,0	10,0	10,0
cooperative learning consists in working in group for one class periods to several weeks to achieve learning goal	2	10,0	10,0	20,0
in cooperative learning, small groups of students work together as a team to solve a problem or complete a task	1	5,0	5,0	25,0
it consists in putting students in different groups , working together	1	5,0	5,0	30,0
it consists of in teams	1	5,0	5,0	35,0
it consists in making learners work in teams	1	5,0	5,0	40,0
It emphasizes interdependence . It is also a student centered teaching strategy	1	5,0	5,0	45,0
it finds out students' problems	2	10,0	10,0	55,0
it is a teaching method where students work together in small group in order to learn and help each other	8	40,0	40,0	95,0
students learn in groups they actively collaborate so that everyone in the group succeed in	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
Total	20	100,0	100,0	

TABLE 3 – Implementation of cooperative learning

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	19	95,0	95,0	95,0
no	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
Total	20	100,0	100,0	

TABLE 4 – Learner interaction

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative percent
Yes	20	100,0	100,0	100,0

TABLE 5 – Learners working in groups

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	19	95,0	95,0	95,0
no	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
Total	20	100,0	100,0	

TABLE 6 – Understanding of the seven cooperative-learning techniques

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No answers	16	80,0	80,0	80,0
in jigsaw, learners learn and teach others. inSTAD, they work in team and tested individually. In TGT, they compete in a game lesson. In TAI, they work individually, but help others.	1	5,0	5,0	85,0
in jigsaw, learners learn one part and teach it to their group. In jigsaw 2, the same to 1, but with shared materials and group reward. In STAD, students work in teams but test individually. In TGT, learners compete in groups. In TAT, they work individually, but help others. in CC, English club of learners discuss different topics	1	5,0	5,0	90,0
in jigsaw, students work together to learn different parts of a topic	1	5,0	5,0	95,0
in jigsaw, sutudents sit in group work. In TGT, students form different competing groups and CIRC, they read, understand and share ideas	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
Total	20	100,0	100,0	

TABLE 7 – Benefits of cooperative learning

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No answers	7	35,0	35,0	35,0
cooperative learning helps learners to read well	1	5,0	5,0	40,0
creates a positive classroom environment	1	5,0	5,0	45,0
im, eorove understanding. Encourages teamwork, increase participation and help weak learners improve their language learning	1	5,0	5,0	50,0
improve undestanding, encourages weak learners, mass participation	1	5,0	5,0	55,0
in cooperative learning, students work together in small and dipverse groups and maximize and mproves social skills for high level learning	1	5,0	5,0	60,0
it favours interaction	1	5,0	5,0	65,0
it makes the class vivid, it pushes students work,	2	10,0	10,0	75,0
students centered learning	1	5,0	5,0	80,0
students discuss, explain ideas and help each other directly while working together	1	5,0	5,0	85,0
The strategy raises achievement levels, improves attention of material and push learners on critical thinking	1	5,0	5,0	90,0
to improve student engagement and fill gaps , increase the knowledge, motivation	2	10,0	10,0	100,0
Total	20	100,0	100,0	

TABLE 8 – Reported drawbacks of cooperative learning

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	8	40,0	66,7	66,7
no	4	20,0	33,3	100,0
Total	12	60,0	100,0	
Missing	8	40,0		
System	20	100,0		

TABLE 9 – Drawbacks mentioned by participants

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No answers	10	50,0	50,0	50,0
if the class is crowd, no way to perform properly	1	5,0	5,0	55,0
it makes the classroom noisy. Some weak students will just rely on the active ones instead of developing their own understanding, it takes more time than individual work	1	5,0	5,0	60,0
lazy students do not contribute, they still reap the benefits of a group grade	1	5,0	5,0	65,0
learners are afraid of participating in a team task	1	5,0	5,0	70,0
question and answer technique	1	5,0	5,0	75,0
some learners do not participate, dominant learners control others. Noisy class and time consuming. Conflicts between learners	1	5,0	5,0	80,0
Some learners do not participate, dominant learners control others. Noisy class and time consuming. Conflicts between learners	1	5,0	5,0	85,0
some students still have problems	2	10,0	10,0	95,0
unequal participation and conflicts	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
Total	20	100,0	100,0	

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