A SURVEY STUDY OF SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN ONLINE REMOTE LEARNING

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Abstract: *Online remote learning is the most relevant learning mode applied to keep formal learning going during the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey study aimed to reveal learners' perception of the implementation and the difficulties they experience while taking part in online remote learning. Data were collected using a questionnaire distributed online to the 2018 cohorts of English Language Education (ELE) in Universitas Negeri Malang. The questionnaire was adapted from some items in the questionnaires developed by Aristovnik et al. (2020) and Muilenburg (2005). Findings show that learners see online remote learning as a practical learning mode. As part of the tech-savvy generation, the respondents reported that they managed to adapt to the new learning mode. However, although they found it easy to adapt to the learning mode, they were not problem-free. Some of the difficulties they experienced concerned an unreliable Internet connection, a more significant number of assignments, the insufficient explanation given by lecturers, distractions while learning from home, and costs spent to gain access.*

Keywords: *survey study, online remote learning, second-year ELE students, learners' perceptions, learners' difficulties*

INTRODUCTION

Based on an article from Yale Medicine, Corona virus Disease 2019 (known as COVID-19) is suspected of having an initial outbreak in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. However, the virus began to spread worldwide and was declared a pandemic in early March 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). A pandemic is a disease outbreak occurring over a wide geographic area and affects an exceptionally high population (Martin, 2015). The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, announced the first two confirmed COVID-19 cases on 2 March (Gorbiano, 2020). On 14 March 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture ordered (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 109 Tahun 2003) schools and universities to close until further notice. As a result, almost all universities in Indonesia started to adopt the remote learning mode in the middle of the month.

Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) is one of the universities that started to employ the mode and required its students to learn and lecturers to teach from home since 17 March 2020. UM has been supporting its online remote learning by using a learning management system (LMS) called SIPEJAR UM (Sistem Pengelolaan Pembelajaran), but lecturers and students are allowed to use other online media platforms to support emergency remote learning by using video conference apps, such as *Google Meet*, *Zoom*, and *Webex*, as well as open-sourced LMS, such as Edmodo, Schoology, and Google Classroom. However, little by little various problems and success stories surface as the consequences of the employment of remote learning.

In order to discover students' perceptions and difficulties that they experienced during the implementation of online remote learning, a study was conducted to replicate a survey done by Aristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj, Tomaževič, and Umek (2020) in Slovenia. In addition, they surveyed some universities across the globe to discover higher education students' perceptions towards the online teaching and learning process, social contacts, and how they were coping with the situation during the

COVID-19 pandemic. The final survey sample was 30,383 students from 62 countries. Indonesia was one of the countries in Asia that participated in this survey by contributing more than 500 respondents from various fields of study at the higher education level. However, from hundreds of universities in Indonesia, only six universities participated in the Aristovnik et al.'s study. The participating universities were Bina Nusantara University (BINUS), IAIN Tulungagung, Nursing Major Program of Poltekkes Kemenkes Banjarmasin, President University, Management Program Study of Universitas Bina Darma, and University of Mataram, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science. Aristovnik et al.'s survey (2020) assessed the general immediate economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in a large-scale online survey. However, the survey results were published in a pre-print version and have not been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The reported study tried to replicate the study by Aristovnik et al. (2020) in a more specific context of the English Language Education (ELE) study program in Universitas Negeri Malang. The present study aimed to investigate the students of the ELE study program's perceptions towards online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second-year students were invited to participate in the study that attempted to answer the following research questions.

(1) What are second-year students' perceptions towards online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
(2) What are the difficulties second-year students experienced during the implementation of online remote learning?

This study shed light upon the perceptions of second-year ELE students towards the implementation of online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the study results may be used to inform university stakeholders and lecturers of the needs and challenges of online remote learning from students' perspectives to improve the quality of the learning mode to better suit their students' needs.

METHOD

The study employs the survey research design that aimed to examine ELE students' perceptions towards online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 56 students of the 2018 cohorts of English Language Education (ELE) in Universitas Negeri Malang who participated in this survey. The 2018 cohorts were chosen because they were still studying language skill courses during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

A Likert-scale questionnaire with four options: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree, were used to examine the respondents' perception towards online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The values of the options vary from 1 for the least favorable to 4 for the most favorable. The middle-point option showing "neither agree nor disagree" was excluded to avoid unclear motivational tendencies. Some items in the questionnaires of Aristovnik et al. (2020) and Muilenburg (2005) were adopted. In addition, some questions related to synchronous and asynchronous learning modes were added to fit the context. The components of the questionnaire items are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Blueprint of Second Year Students' Questionnaire

Variable	Sub-Variable	Indicator	Item Number	Note
Perceptions	Online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic	- Resources	1 - 2	Adapted from Aristovnik et al.'s instrument
		- Performance	3 - 6	
		- Feedback	7	
		- Assessment	8	
	Synchronous and asynchronous learning mode	- Scheduling	9 - 10	Researcher's ideas
		- Activities	11 - 17	
		- Interaction	18 - 22	
Problems	Challenges of online remote learning	- Learn from home	23	Adapted from Muilenburg's instrument
		- Internet access	24	
		- Cost	25 - 27	
		- Proper technology	28	
		- Other challenges	29	

Data that have been collected were read, and the answers were classified according to the items of the questionnaire. Since most of the items were in Likert-scale, consisting of ordinal data, almost all of them were calculated in percentages. Moreover, since responses from the students were represented by numbers in the four Likert-scale of agreement, they were grouped into two poles: positive and negative. The positive perceptions consisted of strongly agree and agree answers, and the negative perceptions consisted of disagree and strongly disagree answers. The scale of agreement is listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Scales of Level of Agreement

Level of Agreement	Scale	Perception Pole
Strongly disagree	1-1.75	Negative
Disagree	1.76 – 2.50	
Agree	2.51 – 3.25	Positive
Strongly disagree	3.26 – 4	

The qualitative data that collected responses in the forms of students' experience were analyzed using the qualitative analysis technique suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). By using this technique, raw data were reduced into relevant information. They were then displayed in the forms of narrative description. Conclusions were then drawn from the data analysis.

FINDINGS

The demographics of the 56 students who participated in the study are summarized in Table 3. There were lots more female than male students in the study. This, however, reflects the actual condition in the study program that females dominate. The participants came from various regions in Indonesia, but most of them are from Java (82.1%), while the others are from outside Java (18%).

Table 3. Socio-demographic and geographic characteristics of the respondents (n=56)

Socio-demographic and geographic characteristics	Number (%)
Gender	
Male	18 (32.1%)
Female	38 (67.9%)
Origin – Island	
Java	46 (82.1%)
Sumatera	2 (3.6%)
Borneo	6 (10.7%)
Nusa Tenggara	2 (3.6%)
Access Online Remote Learning from	
Hometown	47 (83.9%)
Boarding house	9 (16.1%)

Learners' Perception of Online Remote Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

The first research question concerns learners' perception of the implementation of online remote learning. The analysis results of the first research question were categorized into seven indicators, i.e., resources, performance, feedback, assessment, scheduling, activities, and interaction.

Table 4. Learners' Perception Concerning Resources (n=56)

	1 Strongly disagree		2 Disagree		3 Agree		4 Strongly agree	
Resources	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Course assignment was given on a regular basis	1	1.8	1	1.8	30	53.6	24	42.9
Accessibility of given learning materials and assignments	1	1.8	10	17.9	32	57.1	13	23.2

The first category deals with two statements about resources. The first statement was about learners' perception of the course assignment given by the lecturers on a regular basis. They responded

positively when their lecturers gave them an assignment on a regular basis, although on-site classes were canceled. The second statement showed that the learners had a positive perception of the accessibility of learning materials and assignments if they were easily accessible.

The second category concerns with performance. The first statement that can be seen in Table 5 was about how the students adapted to the new teaching and learning experience. The results showed that most of them adapted well to the new teaching and learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second statement was about learners' difficulty to focus during online remote learning. Most of the respondents strongly agree that they found it hard to focus during online remote learning. The findings supported the responses given to the third statement. Since it was hard for them to focus, learners perceived the improvement in their performance during online remote learning rather negatively. The last statement in the performance category was about learners' perception of their worse performance during online remote learning. One third of the respondents felt that their performance was getting worse during the implementation online remote learning.

Table 5. Learners' Perception Concerning Performance (n=56)

	1		2		3		4	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
Performance	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Well adapted with new learning mode	3	5.4	19	33.9	27	48.2	7	12.5
Hardly focusing on online remote learning	3	5.4	8	14.3	16	28.6	29	51.8
Better performance	12	21.4	29	51.8	13	23.2	2	3.6
Worse performance	0	0	14	25	28	50	14	25

The students' responses to the third category, which was feedback, were less positive than the first two categories. For example, it can be seen in Figure 1 that only 60.7% of the respondents who responded positively towards the interaction that their lecturers gave in the form of feedback on their performance and assignments.

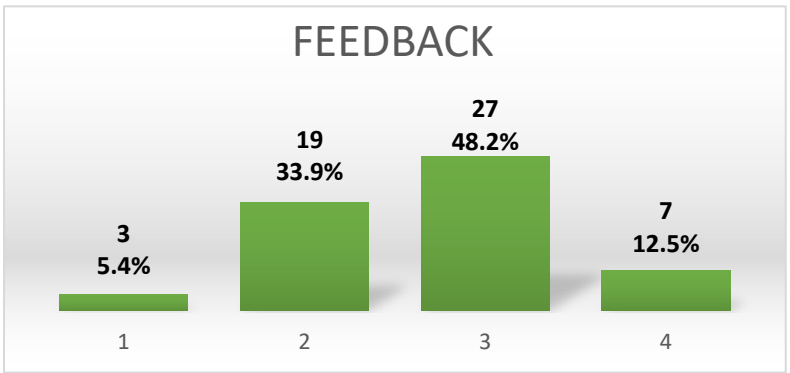

Figure 1. Learners' Perceptions on Feedback Given by Lecturers (n=56)

The fourth category that received almost equal positive and negative responses from the participants was assessment. When asked whether or not they perceive asynchronous learning mode helped them to self-reflect more on the course, only 53.6% responded positively (Figure 2).

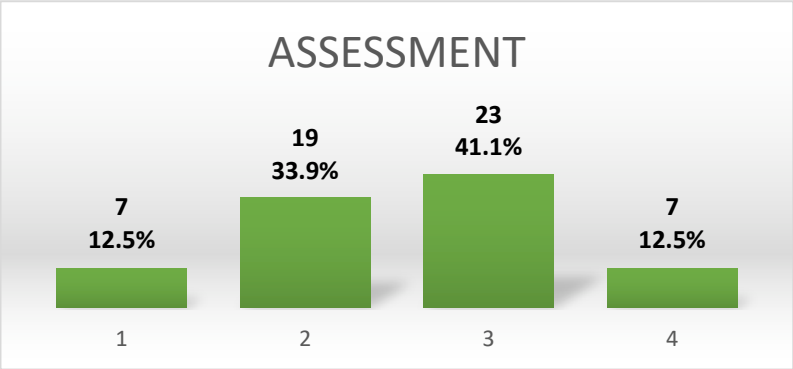

Figure 2. Learners' Perceptions on Whether or Not Asynchronous Learning Mode Helped Them Self-Reflect More (n=56)

Scheduling which was the fifth category in the survey, received quite different responses from the students because although they appreciate the flexibility of the learning mode, half of them feel that the schedule impacted their personal time. Table 6 shows that a majority (80.4%) of the students responded positively to the first statement related to the flexibility of asynchronous learning mode. Nevertheless, they were almost equally divided in their responses to the second statement that concerns whether or not the schedule of synchronous learning mode cut into their personal time.

Table 6. Learners' Perceptions Concerning Scheduling (n=56)

	1		2		3		4	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
Scheduling	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Flexible schedule of asynchronous learning mode	2	3.6	9	16.1	22	39.3	23	41.1
The schedule of synchronous learning mode cuts into learners' personal time	4	7.1	26	46.4	15	26.8	11	19.6

The sixth category in the survey was learners' perceptions concerning activities in online remote learning mode. There were eight statements in the category that described learners' perception towards the implementation of the learning mode. It is shown in Table 7 that most of the students (71.4%) had a positive perception of their ability to follow the schedule of synchronous learning mode. They (89.3%) were also able to make time to join rescheduled synchronous learning mode. Most learners (80.4%) think that online remote learning was an effective learning mode during the COVID-19 pandemic. Echoing their answers in the second category concerning performance, more than 60% of the students responded negatively to their mastery of skills' performance during online remote learning. A similar pattern is observed in the following statement concerning learners' perception of their ability to figure out how to do the most challenging classwork. Regarding their preference of synchronous or

asynchronous learning mode, the respondents preferred synchronous over asynchronous mode; 71.5% preferred synchronous learning, and 58.9% preferred asynchronous learning mode.

Table 7. Learners' Perceptions Concerning Activities (n=56)

	1		2		3		4	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
Activities	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
The ability to follow schedule of synchronous class	0	0	16	28.6	29	51.8	11	19.6
The ability to spare time for rescheduled synchronous class	0	0	6	10.7	26	46.4	24	42.9
The effectiveness of online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic	2	3.6	9	16.1	30	53.6	15	26.8
Learners' mastery of skills' performance	8	14.3	26	46.4	20	35.7	2	3.6
The ability to figure out the way to do the most difficult classwork	9	16.1	21	37.5	22	39.3	4	7.1
Learners' preference towards synchronous learning mode	2	3.6	14	25	23	41.1	17	30.4
Learners' preference towards asynchronous learning mode	4	7.1	19	33.9	27	48.2	6	10.7

Interaction was the last category that described learners' perception towards the implementation of online remote learning. This category consisted of five statements related to the interaction between lecturers and learners. The first statement was about whether or not they feel that their lecturer responded to their inquiries promptly or not. The analysis result presented in Table 8 showed that most learners had a positive perception of the statement. They agreed that their lecturers responded to their questions promptly. In relation to the lecturer's openness towards learners' suggestions and adjustments, most of the learners (76.8%) had a positive perception that some lecturers were open to their suggestions and made adjustments. The following statement was about the new format of examination during online remote learning. More than three-fourth of learners showed a positive perception of their lecturers' information about how exams would look like during the COVID-19 pandemic. The fourth statement was about learners' understanding of the learning materials their lecturer explained through the synchronous learning mode. The findings showed that three-quarters of the learners had a positive perception about their understanding towards lecture of learning material through synchronous learning mode since it is more closely resembles a face-to-face classroom. The last statement was the ability of the learners to ask for questions and clarification to the lecturer through synchronous learning mode. The result showed that most of the learners had a positive perception towards the advantage of synchronous learning mode, which helped them clarify the learning material they have not understood during the synchronous learning mode.

Table 8. Interaction (n=56)

	1 Strongly disagree		2 Disagree		3 Agree		4 Strongly agree	
Interaction	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Lecturer responded learners' questions in a timely manner	2	3.6	17	30.4	32	57.1	5	8.9
Lecturer's openness towards learners' suggestions and adjustments	1	1.8	12	21.4	30	53.6	13	23.2
Lecturer has informed the new format of examination	0	0	10	17.9	29	51.8	17	30.4
Learners understood learning materials well through synchronous learning mode	2	3.6	12	21.4	23	41.1	19	33.9
Learners were able to ask clarification directly about learning materials through synchronous learning mode	0	0	9	16.1	27	48.2	20	35.7

Difficulties Experienced during the Implementation of Online Remote Learning

The second research question of this study aimed to discover some of the difficulties learners experienced during the implementation of online remote learning. Therefore, the first six items in the questionnaire focused on some difficulties that learners faced, such as interruptions that they experienced during learning from home, inadequate Internet access, cost of online remote learning, and proper technology.

Table 9 presents the results of the quantitative data analysis. It can be seen that three quarters or more of the respondents experienced interruptions during learning from home, thought that synchronous learning mode and proper technology cost a lot, and believed in the efficiency of asynchronous learning mode. However, they thought they possessed the proper technology required for online remote learning, and only 16.1% saw ownership of proper technology as a problem. Regarding internet access adequacy, the respondents are almost equally divided between those who saw it as a problem (51.8%) over those who did not consider it a problem (48.2%).

The last item in the questionnaire was an open-ended one that looked closely into the problems frequently experienced by learners based on their experience while doing online remote learning. Seven challenges emerged from their answers, i.e., Internet connection, learning materials, assignments, learning schedule, distractions, devices, and other matters. Internet connection, learning materials, and assignments were frequently mentioned as learners' difficulties during the implementation of online remote learning. Other challenges frequently mentioned were the learning schedule, distractions, and proper devices. Moreover, two learners mentioned that they did not get feedback from some lecturers. Meanwhile, five respondents mentioned other issues, such as health issues, group work, learning media, and mindset.

Table 9. Problems During Online Remote Learning (n=56)

	1 Strongly disagree		2 Disagree		3 Agree		4 Strongly agree	
Difficulties	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Interruptions during learning from home	5	8.9	8	14.3	18	32.1	25	44.6
Inadequate Internet access	11	19.6	16	28.6	23	41.1	6	10.7
High cost of synchronous learning mode	1	1.8	8	14.3	20	35.7	27	48.2
The efficiency of asynchronous learning mode	1	1.8	13	23.2	18	32.1	24	42.9
High cost of proper technology	1	1.8	12	21.4	25	44.6	18	32.1
The ownership of proper technology	22	39.3	25	44.6	7	12.5	2	3.6

DISCUSSION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some ways have been done to keep learning and teaching activities going. Changing on-site classes into online remote learning becomes an alternative way to keep formal education running. Since all learning activities were done online, lecturers also prepared and distributed learning materials and assignments online to be accessed and learned easily. Although lecturers gave them assignments on a regular basis, most of the learners reported that they were overwhelmed with all learning materials and assignments from every course they were enrolled in. It is in line with Aristovnik et al.'s study (2020) that affirmed learners' workload had become larger or significantly more extensive during the implementation of online remote learning. Moreover, since the implementation of synchronous learning mode was limited by the campus, twice in a semester for each course, learners were required to learn by themselves. They received a little explanation that affected their understanding of the course. Allo's study (2020) mentioned the similar phenomenon that some lecturers only gave learners materials companied by coursework assignments without providing a proper explanation.

Online remote learning is a new challenge for everyone who is in the education sector. Learners, lecturers, and teachers were expected to adapt to this new challenge. Fortunately, most learners could cope with it because they are categorized as the tech-savvy younger generation. They have confidence in using online communication platforms, browsing online for information, and sharing digital content (Aristovnik et al., 2020). That is why they can easily adapt in a short period. However, problems are always there along the way. Since all schools and universities were closed, all learners started to learn from home. It was hard for them to focus on learning and teaching activities from home. Some of them got inadequate Internet connections since they were living in a rural area. Some of them also reported that they had to balance their online learning activities with their duty as a child to help their parents at home. Those problems were in line with a previous study from Azzahra (2020), who stated that learners who live in rural areas are more challenging to get a proper 4G signal, and a previous study of Nambiar (2020), who reported that learners could not manage both house and college work at the same time and

also having lack of supportive home environment. Moreover, related to the previous discussion, the lack of explanation also affected learners' performance and worsened during online remote learning. In line with Arstovnik's (2020) research, although learners have adapted quite well to online remote learning, they reported that their performance became worse. In the present study, learners reported that having online remote learning also made them could not master their skills' performance, and it was difficult for them to figure out how to finish their most challenging classwork. That is why provided feedback is needed to help them reflect on their performance (Aristovnik et al., 2020). However, although they lacked explanation in relation to the learning materials, most of the students (60.7%) had a positive perception of feedback on their assignments that their lecturers gave.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most learners (80.4%) had a positive perception that online remote learning is the most effective solution to continue their learning activities. There are two e-learning types that lecturers and learners use, they are synchronous and asynchronous learning modes. The number of learners who prefer having synchronous learning mode is more extensive than those who prefer having asynchronous learning. Nevertheless, it will be better to combine those synchronous and asynchronous learning modes to provide different learning activities (Hrastinski, 2008). Those learning modes have their advantages and disadvantages during the implementation of online remote learning. The use of synchronous learning mode has some benefits, such as it helps learners ask questions and clarifications about learning material (Aristovnik et al., 2020). It also helps learners get direct responses from the lecturer to be easier to understand their lecturers' explanation about the learning material (Aristovnik et al., 2020). On the other hand, one of the disadvantages of having a synchronous learning mode is that it requires learners to make time to join a real-time lecture. Moreover, it will be challenging to have a rescheduled synchronous lecture for those learners who have another activity, such as doing a part-time job. However, so far, most of the respondents in the present study can follow scheduled or rescheduled synchronous lectures and do not assume that synchronous learning mode cuts their personal time. Another disadvantage of having a synchronous learning mode is the cost that learners have to spend since it costs a lot of data connection and strong Internet connection. Fortunately, the Indonesian MoEC has provided a big budget as Rp 7.1 Trillion in phone credit and data package to support learners and teachers in having online remote learning (Adjie, 2020)

Like synchronous learning mode, the implementation of asynchronous learning mode also has some benefits. The significant advantage of asynchronous learning mode is its flexibility and its efficiency. Everyone can access asynchronous classes whenever and wherever they are, and it also costs lower than synchronous learning mode. Another advantage of the asynchronous learning mode is that it helps learners reflect more on learning materials (Hrastinski, 2008). It is because they can read the material first before the class starts. While on the other hand, a disadvantage of having asynchronous learning mode is that when learners could not understand the learning material, they could not get a direct answer to their question.

Besides those problems that have been discussed above, there are other difficulties that learners get during the implementation of online remote learning. Some of the difficulties are related to devices that learners have. For example, some learners do not have the proper technology to access and join online remote learning. Moreover, most of them agree that proper technology costs were high. Another difficulty that learners get relates to technology is facing a laptop or smartphone for an extended period makes them get a health issue such as sore eyes. It is supported by Cahya's (2020) statement that many learners have sore eyes since they stare at the screen of their device for long hours.

Other challenges that learners get are related to group work, learning media, and their mindset. Based on their statement, individual work will work more effectively on learners because it is difficult for them to get group members' attention through online applications. Another problem comes from some learning media that does not work on a particular learner. That is why lecturers must carefully choose a

certain learning media that suit learners' needs. Last but not least, one of them also stated that the problems arise from her/his own mindset that affects her/him to be lazier. It might be caused by a dozen of assignments that learners have and affect them to have low motivation to finish it (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that learners' perceptions of online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic though varied, are mostly positive. Most of the learners agreed that online remote learning helped them to keep their study running well. It is a normal thing that they struggled to adjust at the beginning of the new learning experience. Over time they are getting used to the new learning situation. Although learners responded positively to online remote learning, they experienced some difficulties during the implementation of online remote learning that needs to be carefully addressed. Some of them are concerning access to technology, but most are about pedagogy. When appropriately addressed, the once emergency remote learning mode may transform into a new way of learning. It will not be surprising if, after the pandemic is over, we will feel that face-to-face learning is no longer convenient and entirely online remote learning is not efficient. We may see that a combination of the two is a better option.

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